



# AHRC Creative Communities

## Policy Lab: Environment | Wales

### Policy Contexts

Through devolution, the [Welsh Government](#) is responsible for key areas of public life, including education, health, local government, transport, planning, economic development, social services, culture, Welsh language, environment and agriculture and rural affairs. Wales has [two governments](#), with some matters still governed by the UK Government, and as such, there are Members of the UK Parliament elected from all constituencies in Wales.

Many political, social, and economic factors are involved in the protection and care of the environment. Devolved policy plays a key role in unlocking the potential of arts, culture, and the creative industries to address opportunities and challenges arising from environmental contexts in contemporary Wales.

### Environment

Since [declaring a climate emergency](#) in 2019, and responding to advice from the Climate Change Committee, Wales has legislated to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2050. Under the [Co-operation agreement](#), the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru commissioned an independent group to explore pathways to achieve [net zero by 2035](#), but the [Climate Change](#) Committee estimates an emissions reduction for Wales of only 81% by 2035. [Net Zero Wales](#) sets an ambition for the Welsh “public sector to collectively reach net zero by 2030”.

The [Environment \(Wales\) Act](#) (2016) requires that public authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity and in so doing, promote the resilience of ecosystems, to ensure the benefits they provide for social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing are available now and for future generations. The [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act](#) (2015) requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. The [Planning \(Wales\) Act](#) (2015) makes provision about sustainable development in the exercise of functions relating to development planning and applications for planning permission.

The [Placemaking Wales Charter](#) has been developed by Welsh Government and the Design Commission for Wales in collaboration with the Placemaking Wales Partnership – a multi-disciplinary group representing professions and organisations working within the

built and natural environment. Signatories pledge to involve the local community in the development of proposals, to choose sustainable locations for new development and to prioritise walking, cycling and public transport.

Wales has four [UNESCO World Heritage Sites](#), a title reserved only for the planet's most significant landmarks: The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales, Castles and Town Walls of King Edward I, Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal and Blaenavon Industrial Landscape. As Wales's newest UNESCO site, the [Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales](#) has developed a philosophy for governance of the area in which conservation and sustainable development are at the heart, whilst promoting a vibrant regional economy.

## Culture

In the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, the goal of 'A Wales of [Vibrant Culture](#) and Thriving Welsh Language' is defined as "a society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh Language and which encourages people to participate in the arts and sport and recreation." Creative Wales and the Arts Council of Wales agreed a [partnership](#) in 2023 committing to the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and building firm foundations to work more effectively with people, communities, and each other. The Arts Council of Wales's new [Strategic Plan](#) will be published in 2024 and is framed by the six principles developed during the consultation for the 2023 Investment Review: Creativity; Widening Engagement; Welsh Language; Climate Justice; Nurturing Talent; and Transformation.

The [Creative Nature Programme](#) is an agreement between Natural Resources Wales and the Arts Council of Wales to cultivate the relationship between the arts and the natural environment, as part of a shared commitment to improve the environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales.

Developing a [Culture Strategy](#) for Wales is a Programme for Government and Co-operation Agreement commitment. Overseen by an Overarching Steering Group, strategy development has included interviews and workshops with stakeholders across the arts, culture and heritage sectors, arm's length bodies, local sector organisations, sector practitioners and communities. The Culture Strategy will focus on how to protect, conserve, and promote the arts, culture and historic assets and collections now and for future generations. The [strategy remains in draft](#) and the Deputy Minister explained it will require further consideration in light of the publication of the Welsh Government's 2024 – 25 draft budget and the potential impacts on the cultural, heritage and creative sectors.

## Creative Economy

The estimated total turnover of Wales's [creative industries](#) was £4.2bn in 2022, 4.6% of the total turnover in Wales.

The Welsh Government's [2024-25 Draft Budget](#) has proposed a 10.5% cut to the Arts Council of Wales's budget. The Arts Council of Wales, which distributes the majority of its

funding to the sector, [noted that this allocation "is the lowest since 2007/8"](#). As a result, the Arts Council of Wales have issued [revised offers](#) for Investment Review multi-year funded applications, with a cut of 2.5% to be applied consistently to the initial offers made to the 81 successful applicant organisations.

The creative industries were significantly affected by the pandemic, with the first lockdown seeing a suspension of live shows, concerts, and film and TV production. In 2020 the turnover of the creative industries shrunk by 14%, taking it back to 2013 levels. But 2022 saw a recovery, with 12% growth in turnover and the sector recording its highest ever figures. This growth is not evenly shared across the creative industries. While the [screen sector](#) has grown significantly, the music industry and arts still struggle with the impact of the pandemic, energy costs, inflation, reduced incomes, and attendances remaining below pre-Covid levels.