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Well-being of Future Generations: An examination of Unlocking our Sounds Heritage project – **National Library of Wales**

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The team who delivered the work comprised Nicholas Raynor and Hefin Davies.

Contents

There are a number of positive examples of how the National Library of Wales (the Library) has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when designing and delivering the Unlocking Our Sounds Heritage project. The Library recognises there are opportunities to further embed the ways of working as it delivers this project.

Summary report

Summary	4
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Detailed report

Part One: Examination findings	7
--------------------------------	---

The project supports the Library's vision and has clear targets for preserving sound collections for the long term but the Library is yet to determine how the project will continue after the funding ends	7
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---

Prevention is intrinsic to the project and the Library has set prevention-focused targets but the Library does not yet fully understand the extent of sounds collections held by other bodies and does not yet have a plan to prevent a loss of skills after the project ends	8
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---

The project involves good cross-organisational, integrated working and there is a clear link between the project and the Library's wellbeing objectives but the link between the project and the national wellbeing goals has not been specifically considered	9
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---

There is evidence of good, early collaboration between the Library and project stakeholders but there is scope for even better collaboration, which could lead to wider benefits	11
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

The Library involves a wide range of stakeholders in delivering the project but the selection of external partners and collections being digitised could have been more diverse	12
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

Part Two: National Library of Wales' response	14
-----------------------------------------------	----

Appendices

Appendix 1: positive indicators of the five ways of working	16
-------------------------------------------------------------	----

Summary report

Summary

Why we undertook the examination

- 1 In accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act) the Auditor General for Wales (the Auditor General) is statutorily required to examine public bodies to assess the extent to which they have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting their wellbeing objectives; and taking steps to meet them.
- 2 The Act defines the sustainable development principle as acting in a manner: ‘...which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.
- 3 The Auditor General must provide a report on his examinations to the National Assembly for Wales at least a year before each Assembly election. The first such report must be published by 2020, before the 2021 Assembly election.
- 4 During 2018-19 the Auditor General is undertaking examinations across the 44 bodies covered by the Act to inform his report to the National Assembly.
- 5 In May 2018, the Auditor General published his report, **Reflecting on Year One – How have public bodies responded to the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)**. He concluded that public bodies support the principles of the Act and are taking steps to change how they work.
- 6 In developing our approach to undertaking the examinations during 2018-19 we engaged with a range of stakeholders including through our pilot work during 2017-18. We also worked closely with the Future Generations Commissioner.
- 7 As the preliminary work in year one included a consideration of how public bodies had set their wellbeing objectives, the principal focus of this work is the way in which public bodies are taking steps to meet their wellbeing objectives.
- 8 The findings in this report are based on fieldwork that we undertook during the period January 2019 to May 2019. We ran an initial workshop in January 2019 with National Library of Wales (the Library) staff involved with the Unlocking Our Sounds Heritage project. The workshop explored how each of the five ways of working had been applied. We also reviewed key project documents and undertook interviews with officers and an external project stakeholder.
- 9 This report sets out our findings from our examination of the Unlocking Our Sounds Heritage project, a step the Library is taking to meet its wellbeing objectives. The report also sets out the Library’s initial response to our findings.

What we examined

- 10 We examined the extent to which the Library is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in developing and carrying out the Unlocking Our Sound Heritage project (the project).
- 11 The project was established in the Library in September 2018 as part of the British Library-led **Save Our Sounds** programme. This programme, which is supported by the National Heritage Lottery Fund, aims to digitise and store sounds from across the UK, making them safe and accessible to the public for years to come.
- 12 The programme addresses the threat which faces the UK sound heritage, as a consequence of the degradation of physical carriers (ie the physical medium in which sounds are stored, such as tape or film) and the disappearance of equipment which can play back the content. The safeguarding of the sounds will be assured through the digitisation of vulnerable content, the development of skills and greater public access to the sound heritage. By June 2022, the heritage sector will be better able to care for audio archives, and a greater range of people will be able to access and enjoy their sound heritage.
- 13 Unlocking our Sound Heritage is a UK-wide project that will help save the nation's sounds and open them up to everyone. The project aims to:
 - transform access to and preserve the UK's most vulnerable and at-risk audio heritage;
 - raise awareness of the importance and value of the nation's sound heritage;
 - create sustainable centres of excellence in digital audio preservation around the UK; and
 - involve new audiences in engaging with their audio heritage in innovative ways.
- 14 The Library is one of ten organisational partners in the project and is the only hub in Wales. The British Library involved the hub partners in the creation of its application to the National Heritage Lottery Fund.
- 15 As its contribution to the project, over the next three years, the Library will digitise 4,921 at-risk items from its own collections and from other organisations in Wales. The Library will also hold 26 learning events, involve 42 volunteers and act as a centre of excellence for the digitisation of sound.
- 16 Since its foundation in 1907, the Library's purpose and vision have been to ensure that Wales' unique history, culture and heritage, which are documented in many different formats and media over time, will always be available forever and for all. This project reflects this purpose and aligns with its current strategy, as expressed in **The Nation's Memory: Informing the Future Strategic Plan, 2017-2021**. In this plan, the Library commits to preserving and providing access to its collections; working in partnership, both in a strategic and community context; supporting the volunteer programme; developing skills; participating in outreach and educational activities; increasing digital content and ensuring digital preservation over time.

- 17 Through the grant provided by the National Heritage Lottery Fund, the Library has been able to employ four members of staff, who will develop their skills in project management, rights management, cataloguing, digitisation of audio material and technical support.
- 18 In order to act in accordance with the sustainable development principle, public bodies must take account of the following ‘ways of working’.

Exhibit 1: the ‘five ways of working’

The table below sets out the ‘five ways of working’ as defined in the Welsh Government’s ‘Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 The Essentials¹’ document.

The five ways of working
<p>Long term The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.</p>
<p>Prevention How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.</p>
<p>Integration Considering how the public body’s wellbeing objectives may impact upon each of the wellbeing goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.</p>
<p>Collaboration Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its wellbeing objectives.</p>
<p>Involvement The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the wellbeing goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.</p>

- 19 Our examination found that: **There are a number of positive examples of how the National Library of Wales has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when designing and delivering the Unlocking Our Sounds Heritage project. The Library recognises there are opportunities to further embed the ways of working as it delivers this project.**

¹ Welsh Government, Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 The Essentials, 2015

Detailed report

Part One: Examination findings

The project supports the Library's vision and has clear targets for preserving sound collections for the long term but the Library is yet to determine how the project will continue after the funding ends

What we looked for

- 20 We looked for evidence of:
- a thorough understanding of current and long-term needs and the associated challenges and opportunities;
 - planning over an appropriate timescale;
 - resources allocated to ensure long-term benefits; and
 - appropriate monitoring and review.
- 21 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for the 'long term' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.²

What we found

- 22 We identified the following strengths:
- the project strongly aligns with the Library's purpose and vision of ensuring that Wales' unique history, culture and heritage are documented in many different formats and media over time and will be available forever.
 - the project is designed to deliver short-term targets in the three-year grant funding period that will provide the benefit of making sound collections accessible in the long term.
 - the project is providing opportunities for sound preservation work to continue in the long term by:
 - developing the Library's capacity, skills and expertise in digitally preserving sounds;
 - securing specialist equipment for the Library to digitise collections; and
 - improving the workflows of the Library's preservation processes.

² See Appendix 1

23 We identified the following area for improvement:

- the end of the project's funding coincides with the end of the Library's current Strategic Plan and Operational Plan. It is not yet clear what the Library's long-term ambition is for digitising sound collections and whether the project's benefits can be sustained once the project's funding ends.

Prevention is intrinsic to the project and the Library has set prevention-focused targets but the Library does not yet fully understand the extent of sounds collections held by other bodies and does not yet have a plan to prevent a loss of skills after the project ends

What we looked for

24 We looked for evidence of:

- a thorough understanding of the nature and type of problem the step could help prevent from occurring or getting worse;
- resources allocated to ensure preventative benefits will be delivered; and
- monitoring and review of how effectively the step is preventing problems from occurring or getting worse.

25 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'prevention' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.³

What we found

26 We identified the following strengths:

- Library staff we engaged with clearly displayed their commitment to the project and preserving sound collections. They recognise the project's benefits and the implications for Welsh culture of the work not being done.
- sound collections held on physical formats risk being lost as the carriers degrade over time and the equipment to play them is no longer produced. The project is prioritising preservation work by focusing on fragile, at-risk collections.
- the project is developing and sharing essential skills and infrastructure needed to digitally preserve sound collections and prevent them being lost. The project funds four dedicated members of staff and is developing specialist skills and knowledge in the Library in a field of work where expertise is scarce. As well as preventing the loss of sound collections held

³ See Appendix 1

by the Library, the project is safeguarding collections in organisations that do not have the capability to digitise their sound collections.

- the project has clearly defined, prevention-related targets. The Library's targets for the three-year grant funded period include:
 - 4,921 physical sound items to be digitised;
 - approximately 15,000 recordings to be ingested into the British Library's digital library system; and
 - minimum of 500 recordings to be added to [British Library Sounds](#) and available to listen to online.
- progress with achieving the targets is monitored and reported regularly to the British Library's Project Board and the Library's Internal Project Board.

27 We identified the following areas for improvement:

- post-project, a key challenge for the Library will be to gain a deeper understanding of sound collections held by other organisations in Wales and, over time, seek opportunities to digitise and prevent their loss.
- the project's funding ends in August 2021. If the Library's digitisation activity is then scaled back, there is a risk that the Library will lose the skills and knowledge being developed by the project to safeguard sound collections, along with the technical infrastructures being put in place.

The project involves good cross-organisational, integrated working and there is a clear link between the project and the Library's wellbeing objectives but the link between the project and the national wellbeing goals has not been specifically considered

What we looked for

28 We looked for evidence of consideration of:

- how this step could contribute to the seven national wellbeing goals;
- how delivery of this step will impact on the Library's wellbeing objectives and wider priorities; and
- how delivery of this step will impact on other public bodies' wellbeing objectives.

29 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'integration' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁴

⁴ See Appendix 1

What we found

30 We identified the following strengths:

- Library staff told us that the project involves good cross-organisational, integrated working.
- the project is governed by an Internal Project Board that includes appropriate representation from across the Library. An Activities subgroup of the Internal Project Board meets regularly to share information and discuss issues such as how departments can work together to deliver the project.
- the Library has clear project management and governance arrangements.
- the project is divided into work packages. Accountability for implementing each package is clearly set out in the Project Initiation Document, and in some cases this is jointly shared. For example, 'Work Package 4 – Web Access' is being implemented by IT, Systems and Standards, People's Collections and external partners.
- Library staff we spoke to could demonstrate how the project aligns with the Library's wellbeing objectives. The project was set up after the Library's Operational Plan was produced and so is not explicitly referenced in it, but eight of the Library's 18 wellbeing objectives are related to the digitisation of collections.

31 We identified the following area for improvement:

- Our workshop demonstrated that staff working on the project can explain how the project contributes to some of the national wellbeing goals. For example, when reflecting on how the project contributes to the national wellbeing goal 'A Healthier Wales', the workshop group was proud of the impact the project has on mental health for the older generation and those with dementia, by providing a shared memory and allowing them to reminisce about the past. However, the relationship between the project and the national goals has not been identified and articulated in project documentation. Demonstrating this relationship and emphasising the project's benefits may support opportunities to secure additional funding and continue the work of the project.

There is evidence of good, early collaboration between the Library and project stakeholders but there is scope for even better collaboration, which could lead to wider benefits

What we looked for

- 32 We looked for evidence that the Library:
- has considered how it could work with others to deliver the step (to meet its wellbeing objectives, or assist another body to meet its wellbeing objectives);
 - is collaborating effectively to deliver the step; and
 - is monitoring and reviewing whether the collaboration is helping it or its stakeholders meet wellbeing objectives.
- 33 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'collaboration' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁵

What we found

- 34 We identified the following strengths:
- there are good working relationships amongst Library staff working on the project. Individuals and teams are committed to delivering the project successfully, and there was no reporting of any cultural or procedural barriers hindering internal collaboration.
 - information is being shared in an honest, open way and all parties appear to understand their role and required contributions.
 - evidence of good collaborative working on the project includes:
 - teams have worked well together to develop and improve internal workflow processes of digitisation processes; and
 - the project's Hub partners met in June 2019 to consider how 'Train the Trainer' programmes can share knowledge and expertise on digitisation processes with the project's external partners.
 - the Library's project team has a good working relationship with the British Library. Workshop attendees are proud of the relationship the project has developed with the British Library and believe that the British Library considers the Library to be a peer body. This is indicated by the British Library inviting the Library to be the Hub partner that will sit on the British Library Project Board for 12 months from January 2020.

⁵ See Appendix 1

35 We identified the following area for improvement:

- the Library's relationships with the project's external partners are still at an early stage of development, but there is scope for the Library to work in a more collaborative way with the collections it digitises for its external partners, to secure wider benefits. For example, rather than just requesting content that meets the funding criteria and returning it in a digitised format, the Library could work to expand the scope of its work with external partners, to actively increase awareness of the digitised material and maximise access to it by the public.

The Library involves a wide range of stakeholders in delivering the project but the selection of external partners and collections being digitised could have been more diverse

What we looked for

36 We looked for evidence that the Library has:

- identified who it needs to involve in designing and delivering the step;
- effectively involved key stakeholders in designing and delivering the step;
- used the results of involvement to shape the development and delivery of the step; and
- sought to learn lessons and improve its approach to involvement.

37 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'involvement' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁶

What we found

38 We identified the following strengths:

- The Library works well with the diverse range of stakeholders involved in delivering the project, such as volunteers, community partners, schools and Aberystwyth University.
- The Library actively uses volunteers on the project. The contract with the British Library sets the Library targets of involving 42 volunteers over the three-year period, for a total of 1,115 days. Good progress is being made to achieve these targets. A Volunteer Plan sets out the volunteer targets, the nature of tasks to be carried out by volunteers and the arrangements for managing them.

⁶ See Appendix 1

- the contract between the British Library and the Library clearly sets out how the Library will deliver learning and public engagement activities through three strands of work: community outreach, schools and higher education.
 - community outreach – the Library will work with community partners and special interest groups in the Welsh regions to create digital online resources on different themes inspired by sound collections. This will involve working with writers, artists and musicians to interpret material.
 - schools – through the Library’s Education Services department, the project will deliver five schools-based projects and develop a teachers’ resource, which will provide specific guidance to tie in with Wales’ Curriculum.
 - higher education – students on Aberystwyth University’s MA in Archive Administration course are involved in digitising the project’s collections. This involvement is helping to develop a future generation of archivists with digitisation skills.
- the contract’s targets for involving stakeholders under each strand of work are regularly monitored and reported to the British Library.

39 We identified the following area for improvement:

- the pre-project audit that informed the selection of external partners was led by the British Library. The Library’s lack of involvement in this audit, and the short duration of the audit, restricted opportunities to explore involving a more diverse range of external partners and a wider variety of collections in the project.

Part Two: National Library of Wales' response

40 Following the conclusion of our fieldwork we presented our findings to the Library at a workshop in September 2019. At this workshop the Library began to consider its response to our findings and as a result of discussions at the workshop and further reflection on our findings the Library has developed the following actions.

Exhibit 2: National Library of Wales' response

Ways of working	Areas for improvement	Library actions	Details
Long term	Sustainability following the end of the project in 2021.	<p>Advocate for the importance of the project.</p> <p>Act sustainably by upcycling and recycling equipment to repair machines used to digitise collections.</p> <p>Seek additional funding through grants and partnerships, including Pilgrim Trust, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, etc.</p> <p>Look for opportunities for income generation.</p>	<p>Research will start in October/November 2019 and continue until the end of the project.</p> <p>British Library will lead a committee to look at sustainability for all hub partners – this will include a Library staff member.</p> <p>Digitising sound will be included in the Library's next strategic plan.</p>
Prevention	Extend understanding of location and condition of other vulnerable collections throughout Wales.	Contact organisations throughout Wales to gain a picture of the vulnerable collections and prioritise.	<p>Inform the Library's understanding of collections when engaging with external organisations and raising awareness of the project.</p> <p>Conduct a review of collections held by organisations after five years.</p>

Ways of working	Areas for improvement	Library actions	Details
Prevention	Sustainability of the skills, knowledge and technical infrastructure developed by the project.	Ongoing programme of skills sharing and knowledge transfer to mainstream skills.	British Library and hub project managers to meet in October 2019 to create a training plan for staff, other institutions and the public. Working with the University of Wales Aberystwyth to include sound digitisation in their MA Media course and offer student training and advice – 2020.
Integration	Relationship between the project and national goals has not been identified or articulated in the project documentation.	The value of the sound collection will be highlighted in the next strategic plan and be linked to delivery by the Library of the seven wellbeing objectives. The Library is currently preparing a Well-being Statement which will align with the national goals, and will use the project as a case study.	BTEC students to be trained to prepare sound archives that can be used in Homes of the Elderly to enhance quality of life and wellbeing. Lessons learnt from UOSH will be integrated to future projects and used as case studies.
Collaboration	Passive relationship with external partners.	Advocate the value of the content with partners and support.	Include reference to the project in Library promotional material. The Friends of the National Library of Wales have donated a 'sound bench' to the Library. This will be on display at different locations across Wales over the next few years and will raise awareness of the project by playing a selection of audio clips digitised through the project.

Ways of working	Areas for improvement	Library actions	Details
Involvement	Lack of diversity in selection of partners and collections.	Undertake promotion and advocacy through communication channels to attract new partners and collections.	<p>Staff of People's Collection to be trained on uploading sound tapes which will raise awareness of project with new audiences.</p> <p>Train the Trainers session so project staff can train people within partner communities.</p> <p>End of 2019.</p>

Appendix 1

Positive indicators of the five ways of working

The table below sets out 'positive indicators' for each of the five ways of working that we have identified and will use to help inform our assessments of the extent to which bodies may be applying the Sustainable Development Principle (SDP). We do not intend to use the indicators as a 'checklist'. They should be viewed as 'indicators' that will help us to form conclusions, rather than 'determinants' of the extent to which a body is acting in accordance with the SDP in taking steps to meet its well-being objectives.

Exhibit 3: Positive indicators of the five ways of working

What would show a body is fully applying the long-term way of working?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a clear understanding of what 'long term' means in the context of the Act.• They have designed the step to deliver the wellbeing objective/s and contribute to their long-term vision.• They have designed the step to deliver short or medium-term benefits, which are balanced with the impact over the long term (within the project context).• They have designed the step based on a sophisticated understanding of current and future need and pressures, including analysis of future trends.• Consequently, there is a comprehensive understanding of current and future risks and opportunities.• Resources have been allocated to ensure long-term as well as short-term benefits are delivered.• There is a focus on delivering outcomes, with milestones/progression steps identified where outcomes will be delivered over the long term.• They are open to new ways of doing things which could help deliver benefits over the longer term.• They value intelligence and pursue evidence-based approaches.
What would show a body is fully applying the preventative way of working?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The body seeks to understand the root causes of problems so that negative cycles and intergenerational challenges can be tackled.• The body sees challenges from a system-wide perspective, recognising and valuing the long-term benefits that they can deliver for people and places.• The body allocates resources to preventative action that is likely to contribute to better outcomes and use of resources over the longer term, even where this may limit the ability to meet some short-term needs.• There are decision-making and accountability arrangements that recognise the value of preventative action and accept short-term reductions in performance and resources in the pursuit of anticipated improvements in outcomes and use of resources.

What would show a body is taking an 'integrated' approach?

- Individuals at all levels understand their contribution to the delivery of the vision and wellbeing objectives.
- Individuals at all levels understand what different parts of the organisation do and proactively seek opportunities to work across organisational boundaries. This is replicated in their work with other public bodies.
- Individuals at all levels recognise the cross-organisation dependencies of achieving the ambition and objectives.
- There is an open culture where information is shared.
- There is a well-developed understanding of how the wellbeing objectives and steps to meet them impact on other public sector bodies.
- Individuals proactively work across organisational boundaries to maximise their contribution across the wellbeing goals and minimise negative impacts.
- Governance, structures and processes support this, as do behaviours.

What would show a body is collaborating effectively?

- The body is focused on place, community and outcomes rather than organisational boundaries.
- The body has a good understanding of partners' objectives and their responsibilities, which helps to drive collaborative activity.
- The body has positive and mature relationships with stakeholders, where information is shared in an open and transparent way.
- The body recognises and values the contributions that all partners can make.
- The body seeks to establish shared processes and ways of working, where appropriate.

What would show a body is involving people effectively?

- Having an understanding of who needs to be involved and why.
- Reflecting on how well the needs and challenges facing those people are currently understood.
- Working co-productively, working with stakeholders to design and deliver.
- Seeing the views of stakeholders as a vital source of information that will help deliver better outcomes.
- Ensuring that the full diversity of stakeholders is represented and they are able to take part.
- Having mature and trusting relationships with its stakeholders where there is ongoing dialogue and information is shared in an open and transparent way.
- Ensure stakeholders understand the impact of their contribution.
- Seek feedback from key stakeholders which is used to help learn and improve.

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