

Adolygiad Cerddoriaeth DRÅddoDíarol

Traditional Music Review

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Foreword by the Comisiynydd

Traditional music is, and has always been, the matter of ‘the people’, expressed through music and shared by the community. Today’s world often views that which is ‘traditional’ as part of the tattered fabric of the past, patched and kept alive because of some nostalgia for a bygone cultural heyday, but that only becomes true if the form becomes irrelevant – when the tradition fails to speak for the experience of being human or the communal and cultural structures which sustain it become threadbare. Certainly, the community structures through which our traditional music here in Wales once thrived have greatly changed, and yet the music and its matter still sing eloquently. Would we have had such an overwhelming response to this review survey – over 280 respondents – if it did not?

What we heard time and time again from those who engaged with this review is that the educational and community structures here in Wales are no longer adequate to keep the tradition alive: to pass on the skills, nurture enjoyment and hone talent in traditional music forms. This says more about community fragmentation and long underfunding of music education than it does about individual desire to participate and enjoy traditional music. Those who responded stressed that intervention is urgently needed to enable young and old to pick up an instrument or use their voice and learn the relatively simple rudiments of traditional music making, and also to stimulate and support activities that bring communities together around traditional music participation and enjoyment.

We also met and heard from practitioners in a few corners of Wales for whom traditional music-making remains central to their experience of community and culture and sense of identity. These are shining beacons of our music tradition at work. These places had three key things in common: they had a high percentage of Welsh speakers (both native speakers and learners), enough active tradition bearers locally to teach and hand down the tradition, and an active community who gathered regularly to play and enjoy this music. At a time when we are facing an epidemic of loneliness and poor mental health, stimulating and enabling reasons for more communities to gather and express and make music together in this way seems of vital importance to the individual, communal, cultural and environmental wellbeing of our nation.

A tradition is only safe and can only thrive if it is relevant. The matter of our traditional music: the human condition, nature, community, the tides of life, connection with land and landscape, are as relevant today as ever they were. Some of these are more relevant than ever as we face environmental collapse, mass species extinction, and a re-shaping of what we understand as community and cultural identity. Over the past decade, I’ve watched with interest a revival of English folk song and folk music, driven by the growth of the ecological movement and increasing environmental concern among young people. Projects such as [Sam Lee](#)’s ‘Singing with Nightingales’ and the [Nest Collective](#)’s annual programme of fireside gatherings which connect nature and music have sprung up to support and further catalyse this reconnection. Importantly, they enable a new generation to find expression for anxiety and a reason to gather, organise and act with traditional music at its beating heart. These are among the many models that we can learn from.

Traditional music is a rich ecosystem. Shifts in one part of the system impact another. Time and time again, the research and conversations demonstrate that a thriving traditional music sector needs talented exponents of the tradition, able and willing to share their skills at community level. Supporting the traditional musicians of Wales who wish to make their living through music to do so by ensuring that structures support the development of portfolio careers, as well as facilitating widespread and international performance opportunities, is of paramount importance to this whole sector. Here in Wales, professional fees for traditional music performances (as with other genres) have changed little in over 15 years. This puts immense pressure upon an artist's capacity to make a living, while also investing time in nurturing community activity – often expected free of charge. Nurturing and supporting our talented traditional musicians, therefore, to make, record and promote their music in order to build careers and make a living, enables them to offer their time to support and stimulate interest at grassroots level, while also ensuring that we have identifiable, culturally relevant exponents of the tradition to inspire future generations.

Despite best efforts, we did not receive enough responses from ethnically and culturally diverse music communities in Wales. More time and effort is required to nurture relationships and understand the specific requirements of diverse communities and the specifics of different music traditions, in order to effectively support these different traditional musics to flourish in Wales. This forms an important element within the recommendations of this review.

Finally, I would like to commend the team who have worked alongside me on this review. The process has not been without its challenging discussions, but we have not shied away from them. I am grateful for their determination to serve the traditional music scene in Wales by listening to and pondering the findings and recommendations, regardless of the impacts on a personal or organisational level and for generously offering their expertise to this work. Maintaining objectivity when praise and criticism land at your feet, and must be reported, is not easy, but it was imperative to attend to this work and its findings as though we were a team of completely impartial consultants and to present and represent the breadth of views that we encountered.

Of course, this review would be nothing without the generous offer of time and thought by all those who met with us, spoke to us, participated in workshops, and completed surveys. I hope that we have effectively represented their concerns and ideas and communicated them with the sense of urgency, hope, and energy with which they were shared with us.

Angharad Wynne, Comisiynydd, January 2025

Executive Summary

Following the Investment Review in 2023, the Arts Council of Wales (ACW) stated that it would undertake a strategic review of the Traditional Music sector in Wales to consider how best it can support the sector in future. [Tŷ Cerdd](#), in partnership with [Trac Cymru](#), were commissioned as the project management team and Angharad Wynne was appointed as the Comisiynydd for the review.

The consultation was carried out during October-November 2024. The public meetings and online survey were based on six key areas, with questions relating to each area of enquiry. An analogy of the traditional music sector as a tree and an ecosystem was offered through the consultation process, with the roots supporting the 'trunk' of development and the leaves, representing the professional sector, feeding the roots, describing the interconnected nature of the sector in Wales. This analogy helped to frame the six areas of the enquiry, which aligned with ACW's six funding priorities.

A total of 60 people attended the public meetings, 186 people responded via the online survey, and a further 10 undertook one-to-one interviews, making this the largest response to an ACW review consultation. The six areas are detailed below, along with the conclusions drawn from the consultation.

Grassroots

This area of the consultation received the most responses, both in the public-facing meetings and in the survey. The majority of responses support the need for greater access to learning opportunities for young people. Overall, Grassroots is the area of greatest concern, both for young people and intergenerational groups across communities.

These activities could be supported by:

- Strategic regional development postings supported by a central body.
- Ring-fenced Lottery fund for small grants towards traditional music.
- Strategic network of stakeholders (Mentrau Iaith, Urdd, music organisations, etc) fostering community, regional and grassroots connections.
- Instigating a programme of learning and participatory activity inspired by successful initiatives (e.g. Fêis Rois) to engage young people through informal sessions and jams.
- Targeting under-represented traditional music from minority communities across Wales.

Education

Traditional music education, both informal and formal, is closely linked to grassroots development. In terms of development in more formal education settings, the following points offer areas for advocacy, discussion and partnership with relevant education bodies:

- Cement a strategic partnership with National Music Service Wales to integrate traditional music content into existing programmes, teacher training, student resources, and classroom tools.
- Codify Welsh traditional music to preserve and disseminate its attributes, providing graded teaching resources to facilitate learning. Partnerships between education bodies and the music sector.
- Strategic partnership with higher education, initially as a syllabus capsule and, later, as a dedicated degree pathway.

Musician Development

This area of the review focused on development pathways and the opportunities that exist for musicians to move from grassroots involvement towards developing a potential career in traditional music. The responses to this area of the review suggest a holistic approach to artistic development, as illustrated by the 'tree' analogy. There was a clear response in support of young or early career artists needing more opportunities to perform and for targeted development projects. This area could be supported by:

- Instigating targeted musician development pathways across a range of career-needs delivered by the music sector and traditional musicians.
- Developing an ongoing programme of mentoring and support, networking and peer-support activities.
- Targeting under-represented traditional music from minority communities across Wales.

Professional Support & Development

This section of the survey focused on the needs of semi-professional and professional traditional musicians to develop their craft and careers. Opportunities for showcasing within the UK and internationally received support, as well as funding to enable artists to record and tour, and a need for more industry support. Training and mentoring opportunities were also identified as an area of need. Developments could be supported by:

- Instigating targeted musician development pathways across a range of career-needs delivered by the music sector and traditional musicians.
- Developing an ongoing programme of mentoring and support, networking and peer-support activities.
- Targeting under-represented traditional music from minority communities across Wales.

Networks and Communication

This area of the consultation focused on resources, information, expertise, funding and opportunities. The majority of responses reflected a difficulty in accessing different types of

information, e.g. repertoire, performance events listings, sessions, key sector contacts, funding sources and exponents of the tradition. To begin to address the issues raised, there is a need for:

- A sectoral assessment of existing assets in the traditional music sector and a resulting strategic plan around sector leadership, development and funding.
- Fostering sector-wide networking through regular online forums and improved information systems.

Audience Development

The responses in this area of the consultation reflected the emphasis given to Grassroots, with participatory opportunities to develop engagement being a high priority for developing audiences. A desire for regular local performances and sessions also reflects a focus on support for community-based events. Many respondents also expressed a need for an increased profile for traditional music within Welsh media, radio and TV programming. There is an identified need for:

- Strategic relationships with the presenting and media sectors as part of the sector development and asset-based approach.
- Project-based experiments e.g. touring, engagement (through National Lottery supported grants and Night Out, etc.)

Key Findings from the One-to-one Interviews

The interviewees for these conversations with the Comisiynydd were selected on the basis of providing a breadth of views across the sector and their ability to offer in-depth insights and/or representing key partners or delivery allies specifically in areas of activity highlighted by the review. There were some recurring themes worth highlighting here, and which are material to the findings of the review and its conclusions and recommendations:

- A need for more collaborative working across the sector and joint initiatives.
- A vacuum where strategic leadership should be within the sector.
- There is a need to engage a broader talent pool in developing and delivering services and projects to the sector.

Sector Support Organisations

The review looked at 16 music organisations across the globe to compare different approaches to supporting and developing traditional music. From these, we can make some conclusions about common and best practices to inform the recommendations supporting the traditional music sector in Wales. Three organisations were identified for more in-depth analyses; Fèis Rois, Vi.BE and TRACS. These organisations were chosen because they were identified as examples of good practice, reflecting specific constituencies that fit well with the emerging themes from the consultation evidence.

Existing Arts Funding in the UK & Ireland

While the Arts Councils of the UK and Ireland all support traditional music in different forms there is no clear consensus amongst them of what constitutes a definitive description of traditional music. While there isn't a clear comparison it is true that the other Arts Councils identify an average of 2.9% of their overall distribution towards traditional music with Creative Scotland as the highest proportion with 4.8% in 2024 and Arts Council of Wales as the lowest at 0.66%. There is work that needs to be done to better identify statistical comparisons, but it is clear that ACW does not invest at the same scale as the other arts councils.

Introduction

The [Arts Council of Wales](#) (ACW) commissioned this strategic review of the Traditional Music sector in Wales to consider how best it can support the sector in future, and how the organisations active within the sector – across all levels – can work more cohesively on behalf of our musicians, communities and audiences.

Ours is a nation of increasing cultural richness and diversity, and so, alongside the traditional music OF Wales, this review aimed to actively embrace the breadth of traditional musics IN Wales, and to encourage practitioners, teachers and facilitators from across our diverse communities to offer their thoughts and speak to us of their particular needs.

Angharad Wynne was appointed as Comisiynydd for the review and [Tŷ Cerdd](#), in partnership with [Trac Cymru](#), were tasked with project managing the process. Tŷ Cerdd is a music development organisation and registered charity that aims to promote and celebrate the music of Wales through a range of activities. Trac Cymru is a folk music development organisation and registered charity which aims to promote and develop the music and dance traditions of Wales.

This team has an excellent track record of working consultatively across the music sectors of Wales. Antwn Owen-Hicks, who has a wealth of personal and professional experience within the sector, was appointed as lead project manager on behalf of Tŷ Cerdd.

Methodology

The review consultation was carried out during October-November 2024. The consultative meetings and survey were based on six key areas, with questions relating to each area of enquiry.

The review explored the nature of traditional music activities, access to and engagement with the music, pathways for education, development and professional careers, access to information, infrastructure and audience development/marketing. None of these areas stands alone. Each is intrinsically linked to the others and, of course, to broader social, political and environmental concerns, including community building, wellbeing, language development, cultural identity, equality, economic resilience and environmental awareness and action.

The review process began with two online sessions with invited representatives including arts professionals from the traditional music sector as well as promoters, community arts, venue managers, and other cultural practitioners (see Appendix 1). A total of 15 professionals attended the two sessions. The purpose of these two sessions was to develop the basis for the main areas of enquiry for the survey and the public in-person meetings. Additionally, the team held an online meeting with five key ACW personnel to gain their views and insights.

Six in-person meetings were held between 14 October and 7 November at the [Welfare Ystradgynlais](#), in conjunction with [Privilege Café](#), [Theatr Soar Merthyr Tudful](#), [Grange Pavilion](#)

[Cardiff](#), [Theatr Felinfach](#), [Tŷ Pawb Wrexham](#) and [Neuadd Ogwen Bethesda](#). A final online Zoom session was held on 11 November.

The online survey was launched on Friday 18 October and remained open to responses until 18 November.

Desk research was carried out into applicable models from other nations that might offer valuable information or inspiration. Out of the 16 organisational and project models we explored, a handful have proved relevant to the challenges faced by the sector or inspiration for how it might be better served. They are touched upon later in this report and further details are included in Appendix 3.

The Comisiynydd also undertook a series of one-to-one discussions with tradition bearers, educationalists, sector influencers and decision makers of key organisations to query and test the validity and workability of the recommendations. The outcomes of these interviews were broadly concurrent with those of the survey findings, but they also identified areas requiring attention, specific to the area of partnership working and collaborative development and the need for strategic leadership within the sector. These are outlined in the report below. (For a list of interviewees, see Appendix 1)

A total of 60 people attended the public meetings, 186 people responded via the online survey and a further 11 undertook a one-to-one interview, making this the largest response to an ACW review consultation and demonstrating the strength of feeling and passion in the sector for increased development work.

All the online and public meetings were conducted in English and Cymraeg, with simultaneous translation available for the online meetings. The six in-person meetings were led by Cymraeg speakers and those participating could respond in either English or Cymraeg. Of the 186 respondents to the survey, 64% were Cymraeg speakers, a significantly high percentage. Around 49% of respondents said that they are based in south Wales, with 26% stating mid and west Wales and 14% in north Wales. That leaves around 11% of respondents who didn't state their location.

Unfortunately, despite the review's aim to consider the range of traditional musics in Wales, there was little engagement from individuals or communities engaged with traditional music from minority cultural backgrounds.

The public session at The Welfare Ystradgynlais was held in conjunction with the Privilege Café, with a session on *Cynefin, home, place, language and race*. Members of the local Syrian community attended, although language was an obvious barrier to engagement. However, Mymuna Solema, founder of the Privilege Café and Somali dance practitioner did join the session and provided valuable input.

The public session in Cardiff was held at the Grange Pavilion with Dionne Bennett, Director of [TÂN Cerdd](#), assisting. This session did not attract members from the local community in the way that we had hoped. However, Dionne's input into that session was valuable.

This is an area that may need a specific focus by ACW and perhaps demonstrates a broader issue around arts engagement with minoritised communities in Wales. However, many of the issues and comments raised in the meetings and survey and the resulting recommendations are relevant and applicable across all forms of traditional music. Some further, in-depth conversation, may be needed to tease out some of the more specific issues and requirements of minoritised communities and how their traditional music forms can be supported.

A summary table of the responses is included in Appendix 2

Review Findings

During the first online session with arts professionals, aimed at establishing the main areas of focus for the review, one of the attendees described the traditional music sector as a tree and an ecosystem. The roots support the 'trunk' of development and the leaves, as the professional sector, feed the roots, in a cyclical process of growth and renewal.

CANOPY

Sustaining professional or semi-professional careers.

TRUNK

Pathways to professional or semi-professional careers and audience development

ROOTS

Community, education, learning, wellbeing. Music as recreation, participation.



This sense of the traditional music sector as an ecosystem was also mentioned by respondents during the consultation phase to express both the interrelatedness of the sector and how connected the music is with other aspects of life here in Wales.

"Our traditional music is a totally rooted part of Welsh identity.... It must be protected and promoted in Wales and beyond for the spiritual, cultural, linguistic and economic well-being of our nation. It should be instrumental in defining and creating communities."

"It is not enough to produce a handful of talented musicians, we must look closely at the entire ecosystem that has produced them and understand the work (which is often extremely frustrating as a result of a lack of funding) which has happened to enable this. Wales deserves better."

Perhaps unlike other art forms, the traditional music community sees itself as a web of relationships, roles that lie outside the usual expectations of artist, industry professional and audience member. This explains why many of the responses look towards a circle of engagement and that professional musicians talk as much about the social context of this music as they do about their careers and ambitions.

The six areas of enquiry identified are set out below, along with how they align with ACW's six funding priorities.

- Grassroots
 - Education
 - Musician Development
 - Professional Support & Development
 - Networks and Communication
 - Audience Development
-
- **Widening engagement** by focussing on stimulating and supporting grassroots participation in music making for all ages and abilities and developing education provision from primary to higher education.
 - **Creativity** – connecting traditional music with its origins as an expression of ‘the folk’ for participants and audiences, supporting how traditional music can gather people to make art that is both relevant and inclusive.
 - **Nurturing Talent** and innovative contemporary practice while honouring and supporting the roots of the tradition.
 - **Y Gymraeg** – celebrating regional distinctiveness with music-making as a means of breaking down barriers, including engagement with Cymraeg and Cymreictod. Supporting regional music activities by adopting a regional development approach.
 - **Climate Justice** – raising awareness of ecology and land rights, cultural identity, language and diversity, protest, human condition.
 - **Transform** – community engagement, cohesion and wellbeing by offering more intergenerational opportunities to gather around traditional music. Develop systems, funding, projects and activity that enable all of Wales's traditional musics and their communities to thrive.

Grassroots

This aspect of the consultation focused on community participation, early years involvement, intergenerational activities, workshops and sessions. It received by far the most responses of all the areas in the review, both in the public-facing meetings and in the survey.

Only 22% of respondents said that it was EASY to engage with traditional music in Wales. However, 57% said that engagement was FAIR.

Reasons for not selecting EASY mainly focused on insufficient local activities or opportunities to engage (64%), or that **“it’s not easy to identify where and when traditional music sessions, activities or performances are happening”** (59%). Of all the responses, 40% stated that there is a lack of affordable tutoring in their area.

Several clear themes and messages are evident throughout all of the responses in this section:

- Participation opportunities – availability and accessibility of community traditional music activities, regional hubs.
- Attracting people to traditional music.
- Breaking down barriers to participation.
- Initiatives such as Gwerin Gwallgo, tune clubs, etc.
- Intergenerational playing opportunities within communities.
- A need for improved Information systems.
- Better accessibility to traditional music repertoire.
- Suitable, cheap venues for sessions, twmpaths, small events.



When asked to provide more detail, some key responses about the difficulty of accessing traditional music stated:

- Distance to events can be a barrier as can a lack of local public transport.
- Not enough musicians to hold or lead a session, or to start new sessions outside established sessions.
- “There is no central database or Facebook group although a few of us set one up as individuals when we saw the lack.”
- “There are no ‘starter sessions’ or ‘slow jams’ or a way to get in. There is a lack of leadership in some sessions.”

On the other hand, some provided good examples of how they have engaged:

- “It’s easy once you’re inside the circle, I’m less sure how easy it would be to find it from scratch.”
- “Some Folk Clubs, Ethno Wales, yr Eisteddfod, yr Urdd, some individual teachers & educators, some Ysgol Feithrin (introducing some simple song, dance & stories.)”

- “Initiatives like Trac, CLERA and the development of tune clubs have greatly increased the opportunity to engage with Welsh traditional music.”

The need for regionally focused development of activities was a strong theme, including the creation of regional ‘hubs’ for traditional music, or for regional development leaders enabling local co-ordination and development of activities.

- “Focus on grassroots community settings where music is happening and support community groups to develop their own music groups.”
- “Establish 5 regional co-ordinators who have the knowledge and experience of working professionally so that they can advise and develop the musicians in their area, but also share information and special services across the areas.”
- “Creation of 5 regional officers – north-west, north-east, central, south-west, south-east.”

Conclusions

The majority of responses relating to grassroots, support the need for greater access to learning opportunities for young people, whether in education or informal community settings. Grassroots is the area of greatest concern, with a need for interventions to stimulate the ecosystem from the bottom up. These might include regular participatory activity at community and local level, workshops, sessions, tuition, etc, both for young people and intergenerational groups. These activities could be supported by:

- Strategic regional development managers
- A ring-fenced National Lottery fund for small grants towards traditional musics.
- Working collaboratively with a strategic network of stakeholders ([Mentrau Iaith](#), Urdd, music organisations, etc) to foster community, regional and grassroots connections.
- Instigating a programme of learning and participatory activity inspired by successful initiatives (e.g. Fêis Rois) to engage young people through informal sessions and jams.
- Targeting under-represented traditional music from minority communities across Wales.

Education

Traditional music education, both informal and formal, is closely linked to grassroots development. Comments provided regarding ease of access to traditional music also included the need for traditional music to be accessible in schools, as part of the curriculum.

When asked in the survey “What are the key factors impacting the learning of a music instrument or singing in traditional style here in Wales?”, 61.5% of respondents cited “Lack of teachers teaching in a traditional style locally”.

The main areas of concern raised by respondents were:

- Access and entry: the need for education and learning opportunities for young and old.
- A lack of provision in primary and secondary education.
- A need for regular ‘out of school’ socialising and playing opportunities for young people.
- Higher level education provision – the need for A level, degree and postgraduate provision

Some notable comments were:

- “A lack of regular tuition for children and teenagers. Gwerin Iau and Gwerin Gwallgo are fantastic, but once a year isn't anywhere near enough.”
- “Fund performances in schools. Subsidise cost of learning music.”
- “I didn't meet other young Welsh people who were interested in folk music until I attended Trac Cymru's Gwerin Gwallgo course when I was 14, and probably never would have met any if it weren't for that course.”
- “important...that this [traditional music] development is recognised, encouraged and funded at the higher education level – i.e. Music College.”

Conclusions

In terms of traditional music development in more formal education settings, the following points offer areas for advocacy, intervention and discussion with relevant education bodies:

- Cement a strategic partnership with National Music Service Wales to integrate traditional music content into existing programmes, teacher training, student resources, and classroom tools.
- Codify Welsh traditional music to preserve and disseminate its attributes, providing graded teaching resources to facilitate learning. Partnership between education bodies and music sector.
- Strategic partnership with higher education, initially as a syllabus capsule and, later, as a dedicated degree pathway.

Musician Development

This section of the review focused on development pathways, the opportunities that exist to move from grassroots involvement towards developing a potential career in traditional music.

When asked how more musicians could be supported to develop professional or semi-professional careers in traditional music, 65% of respondents selected **“Projects that bring together performers, venues, mentors and tradition-bearers to co-create, learn, share experiences and know-how, and performances”**.

47% of respondents selected “More supported opportunities to perform and develop performance experience”.

The clear themes that emerged from this area of enquiry are:

- Access to local or regional advanced teaching, mentoring and coaching.
- Clarifying and designing development pathways.
- Development interventions and projects, e.g. [10 Mewn Bws](#).
- Increasing performance opportunities.
- Skills development initiatives – business, marketing, audience development, performance and technical.
- More flexible funding sources, small grants and adjustments to the Night Out scheme to enable more musician led workshops.

Some survey responses highlighted the issues faced by folk musicians wanting to develop careers in music.

- “Projects such as [Twmpdaith](#) are great, but there needs to be more opportunities in all schools, including English schools, to promote the Welsh language.”
- “Projects such as 10 Mewn Bws, as well as supporting musicians to attend [WOMEX](#), alongside working with the [European Folk Network](#) have supported emerging artists.”
- “More funded opportunities for career development courses/mentorships/retreat type networking gatherings that are accessible for low incomes and are aimed at early career rather than only for young people.”
- “A coherent long-term strategy to support a body of work that offers, training, brokers information, micro delegated funding to experiment with new ideas, backed up with a plan delivered by experts in this area who are adequately resources both to deliver the work and develop a mixed income resource would make a long-term change.”

Conclusions

The responses to this area of the review suggest a desire for a very holistic approach to artistic development, as illustrated by the ‘tree’ analogy, that provides opportunities for early-career performers to access mentoring and at the same time, provide local communities with tutoring

and access to those performers. There is also a clear response in support of young or early career artists needing more opportunities to perform, as support acts, smaller stages at festivals, local folk clubs, etc., with the support of more experienced artists, organisational support, and funding for presenters to be able to 'take the risk'. The respondents also expressed a need for targeted development projects that provide early-career and developing artists opportunities to access tailored support, mentoring and skills development.

- Instigate targeted musician development pathways across a range of career-needs delivered by the music sector and traditional musicians.
- Develop an ongoing programme of mentoring and support, networking and peer-support activities.
- Target under-represented traditional music from minority communities across Wales.
- Continue to work with lead organisations such as Wales Arts International to identify appropriate residency opportunities for our musicians outside Wales.

Professional Support and Development

This section of the survey focused on the needs of semi-professional and professional traditional musicians, to develop their craft and careers. Interestingly, in the survey and the workshops, this was the area that was least engaged with. That is not to say that it is not important to the sector, simply that at present, the sector's focus is very sharply on grassroots, education and early development. It is clear, however, that maintaining the health and flourishing of our professional musicians, and the visibility of our traditional musics that they provide, are vitally important for the health of the traditional music ecosystem and should not be overlooked.

Nearly 60% of respondents listed **“More opportunities for showcasing music, within Wales and beyond”** as the most important measure. The next most important area for development is the provision of funding, with 51.5% of respondents selecting **“Financial support for music recording, touring and career development”**.

The themes that emerged from this area of enquiry are:

- More showcasing opportunities as detailed above.
- Funding – as described above.
- Support to developing portfolio careers through tutoring and hosting more grassroots and development activity.
- Professional development, training and mentoring.
- A need for support infrastructure: labels, managers, promoters, agents.
- More creative collaboration in Wales, across genres, cultures and international programmes.

When asked “What one thing would you do to support the flourishing of professional traditional musicians in Wales?”, respondents expressed a range of observations and ideas, including:

- “Develop an infrastructure of managers, booking agents, digital marketers and labels that are passionate about the sector and who aren’t musicians themselves, but professionals within their field.”
- “Training for facilitators ([Community Music Wales](#) Tutor Training) to raise standards and training in how to deliver workshops in the sector, training and working in partnership with organisations for example, or community groups, engagement and project management.”
- “Developing national tours to take folk music around Wales through the Mentrau Iaith. Adequate funding e.g. Night Out, to hold ‘intimate’ evenings in remote locations as well as the more well-known locations.”
- “Work with culture/tourism/schools’ sectors to make Welsh folk music culturally visible in the same way as has been done in Ireland and Scotland. Tying into a wider narrative of Wales.”

Conclusions

Opportunities to showcase performers both within the UK and internationally is strongly supported. There's also strong support for funding to enable artists to record and tour, with a need for more industry support, particularly managers, agents and promoters. Many of these are issues that are applicable across the whole music industry in Wales. However, when looking at the traditional music sector in England, Scotland and Ireland, it's clear that a wide range of music industry support structures exist that are largely absent in Wales. This may need to be a targeted area of work, in partnership with [Creative Wales](#), to develop appropriate music industry support for the sector.

The semi-professional and professional sector would also benefit from the kinds of training and mentoring opportunities noted above under 'Musician Development', and there are clear synergies to be developed here. ACW also has a role in advocating on behalf of the sector, working in partnership with [Creative Wales](#) to develop industry support structures and industry funding opportunities for artists. Signposting artists to other sources of funding support from industry organisations such as PRS Foundation is already included on ACW's website.

- Instigate targeted musician development pathways across a range of career-needs delivered by the music sector and traditional musicians.
- Develop an ongoing programme of mentoring and support, networking, core business and technical skills training, and peer-support activities.
- Target under-represented traditional music from minority communities across Wales.
- Information about funding, career opportunities are scattered across sources of information. Work to gather and disseminate / signpost this information.

Networks and Communication

This section of the survey focused on areas such as resources, information, expertise, funding and opportunities, and also shines a light on some of the structural challenges within the sector. Where are the conversations and debates happening about the development of traditional music in Wales? How might information be better gathered, presented and shared?

When asked “how easy is it currently to access information about the traditional music scene in Wales? (Music Archives)”, only 5.4% of respondents stated it was EASY while 50% stated **“Requires a degree of pre-existing knowledge”**.

Across all of the questions about accessing different types of information, **“requires a degree of pre-existing knowledge”** was the most selected answer. ‘EASY’ was the answer least selected across all areas.

There is a varied range of organisations and societies in the traditional music sector in Wales, but respondents to the consultation feel that information is scattered and lacks a coherent, accessible structure. Many remarked in the survey about the need for a central hub of information, a traditional music portal, a one-stop-shop for information, links for activities, archives, etc, and funding to support the development of such an online presence.

As the main organisation for developing folk music in Wales, Trac Cymru was mentioned more times in the online survey than other organisations, both in terms of information and activities. Overall, respondents referred to the organisation and its work in a positive light, however, in one-to-one discussions with individuals and key organisations, the picture was far more mixed, highlighting a lack of strategic leadership within the sector.

When asked “What one thing could the Arts Council of Wales do to make its support of the traditional music sector in Wales more effective?” respondents provided a range of suggestions:

- “Improved information systems – easier access to gig information, training opportunities, funding.”
- “Create more funding opportunities for traditional music projects specifically. Develop a strategy that targets traditional music nourishment.”
- “We need general core funding that is not committed to special projects.”
- “A more professional structure.”
- “...support musicians with recording and mastering their first album. [They] currently fund projects that have performance outcomes, the development of new music but won't fund the creation of an EP which is an essential first step to marketing oneself as a musician and creating a sustainable music career.”

As part of this section on the sector, people were also asked, “Where are the important conversations about traditional music in Wales happening, and who’s involved?” 58% of

respondents said that **Festivals & Events** are where most of these conversations happen, followed by **Music Organisations** (48%).

Conclusions

The majority of respondents did not find it easy to access different types of information. This raises an important and pressing issue regarding access to our traditional music repertoire, performance events listings, sessions, key sector contacts, funding sources and exponents of the tradition. The desire for a 'one-stop shop' of information about the traditional music of Wales was a strong theme, the development of an online hub, details about sessions, activities, performances, etc.

It's interesting to note that the locations or events at which respondents believe the important conversations about traditional music are happening (i.e. festivals, events, within music organisations), contrasts with the locations or activities identified as important for traditional music to thrive – i.e. grassroots activities and local or community spaces. There's a sense that the important conversations are not happening where perhaps they ought, and that someone else is making decisions about the tradition. That said, community-based tune sessions were identified as hotbeds of discussion. However, some respondents feel that there are not enough conversations taking place outside the main areas identified above, expressing perhaps a desire that conversations about traditional music should be more inclusive and egalitarian.

There is a need for:

- Sectoral assessment of existing assets in the traditional music sector and a resulting strategic plan around sector leadership, development and funding.
- Fostering sector-wide networking through regular online forums and improved information systems.
- An identifiable hub for Welsh Traditional Music that pulls together sector intelligence and information and signposts users to where additional information, resources and funding may be found.

Audience Development

In the final section of the survey, respondents were asked to prioritise four different actions that could develop audiences for traditional music in Wales. The four actions were:

- Marketing: re-position traditional music in Wales so that while it remains true to its roots, it also speaks afresh to contemporary audiences and contemporary issues.
- Encourage and support ‘have a go’ opportunities: community/festival workshops to develop engagement with those who might never have picked up a folk instrument.
- Support for regular music performances or sessions in community venues with audience data capture and sharing of audience data with artists and venues.
- Better data sharing: digest and disseminate audience demographics and intelligence to help with marketing and social media targeting of potential traditional music audience groups.

“Encourage and support ‘have a go’ opportunities” received the highest percentage as a ‘first priority’ with 48% of respondents selecting this action. This reflects the overall response to the consultation regarding the need for greater focus on community engagement, encouraging participation as a way of also generating interest and audience, and grassroots activity.

The next highest action selected was **“Support for regular music performances or sessions”** with 47.5% of respondents selecting this action as a ‘second priority’. Again, this confirms a focus on a need to support community-based venues, sessions, promoters, etc.

“Better data sharing”, received the highest percentage as the ‘third priority’ with 54% of respondents selecting this action, reflecting the desire for more centralised information, listings, audience data etc.

When asked **“What one thing would you do to grow the audience for Wales’s traditional music?”** a large number of responses focused on the need for a greater profile in mainstream media, TV and radio (bespoke programming and traditional music as part of mainstream broadcasting), with [BBC Alba](#) cited as an example. Some mentioned the need for greater engagement in education and at community participation level. There were also a number of respondents who expressed a need for more mainstream programming of traditional music in large festivals and venues, where it is rarely seen. Some see the need for more industry professionals to support artists – managers, agents and promoters, as being critical to developing audiences. Some respondents would like to see the development of more small festivals providing opportunities for artists and audiences to engage at a more local level.

Finally, the survey gave respondents an opportunity to comment on the idea of traditional music as an ecosystem. This is a selection of some of the comments provided:

- “It is very rare to see such a wide range of people interested in an aspect of the arts. But by learning and performing folk tunes, dances and songs together pensioners, small children and all ages in between communicate in unique ways. The ‘lamb teaches the sheep’ at times too.”

- “The traditional music sector in Wales is an ecosystem of many musicians, organisations, traditions, cultures, languages, experts, audience members, venues, opportunities and ideas. – Agree 100%. It is a treasure of a community and there is a freshness associated with it, but it must be ensured that musicians can earn a fair living through the industry if it is to flourish and be passed on in a contemporary and appealing way to an audience and future generations.”
- “Creation of hubs across Wales to enable folk arts to be celebrated, developed, and supported (not only including music) which can act as focal points for communities can achieve this [ecosystem]. It would not only provide venues for the support of the arts, but also meet needs outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations Act through supporting a flourishing language and culture, alongside addressing wellbeing areas.”
- “Celebrating all traditional music traditions in Wales is key to fostering community cohesion, and the breaking down of cultural barriers through the most ancient of shared human experiences – the appreciation and creation of music.”

Conclusions

The responses in this section reflect the emphasis on grassroots in the overall responses to the survey, with ‘have a go’ opportunities, community and festival workshops to develop engagement being a high priority for audience development. The desire for support for more ‘regular music performances or sessions’ also reflects the focus on a support for community-based venues, sessions and promoters. Both of these ‘priorities’ underline the interconnectedness of the community and professional areas of traditional music. Greater access to information about events, gigs, sessions, etc, is also a key priority, with many respondents calling for a one-stop-shop for information.

Many respondents see a need for an increased profile for traditional music within Welsh media, radio and TV programming. Making traditional music more ‘mainstream’ and normalising it within music programmes. This is also the case for live festival and venue programming, where people see an opportunity to programme traditional music artists alongside other music genres.

There is a clear need for:

- Strategic relationships with the presenting and media sectors as part of the sector development and asset-based approach.
- Project-based experiments e.g. touring, engagement (through National Lottery and Night Out, etc.)

Key Findings from the One-to-one Interviews

The interviewees for these in-depth interviews with the Comisiynydd were selected on the basis of providing a breadth of views across the sector and their ability to offer valuable insights and/or to represent key partners or delivery allies specifically in areas of activity highlighted by the review. Some discussions also involved testing and refining ideas and potential activities outlined in the recommendations section. While the discussions broadly followed a similar format to those undertaken in the review workshops, often, these conversations developed their own specificities. Much of their content has fed into and provided additional detail to the recommendations. An overview of this area of research is included in Appendix 5. There were some recurring themes which are material to the conclusions and the narrative of the review:

- There is a wealth of untapped knowledge and experience in this sector, ready to support and drive forward the traditional music sector in Wales. They need to be engaged. Also, a sense that currently, it tends to be the same groups and individuals engaged time and time again. ‘Spread the net!’
- There are talented individuals making things happen on a small scale, in particular localities, that could thrive with some mentoring and support and play a bigger role in strategically developing the sector.
- There is a lot of good-will towards traditional music among partner and delivery organisations but frustration around a lack of engagement, action, leadership and response from Trac to key strategic initiatives and interventions.
- Great willingness to partner and form consortia for joint funding bids, partnership initiatives and projects, most of which require the pooling of small pots of investment to generate activity.

Conclusions

- A need for more collaborative working across the sector and joint initiatives.
- The lack of coherent leadership within the sector needs resolving.
- There is a need to engage a broader talent pool in developing and delivering services and projects to the sector.

Sector Support Organisations

Organisations in Wales currently supporting traditional music are, alphabetically: [Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru](#), [Clera](#), [Cymdeithas Alawon Gwerin Cymru](#), [Cymdeithas Cerdd Dant](#), [Cymdeithas Ddawns Werin Cymru](#), [Mentrau Iaith](#), [Trac Cymru](#), [Tŷ Cerdd](#) and [Urdd Gobaith Cymru](#). Their activity is funded by investment from Welsh Government, Arts Council of Wales, membership and ticket sales.

The review analysed 16 international models and has selected three models that operate at a scale likely to be achievable within Cymru. Two are in Scotland and one in Belgium. These organisations are Fèis Rois, TRACS and VI.BE.

The focus of activity for these organisations falls into three categories, evidenced in the review responses:

- Keeping the tradition alive by passing it on.
- Developing professional excellence.
- Advocating the benefits, both intrinsic and instrumental, for a healthy society.

Analysis of Exemplar Organisations and Models

The three in-depth analyses of the organisations listed below: [Fèis Rois](#), [Vi.BE](#) and [TRACS](#) have been chosen because they are examples of good practice, reflect specific constituencies that are reflected in Cymru and fit very well with the emerging themes from the evidence.

Fèis Rois

<https://feisrois.org/>

March 2024: 830,000 pounds. £450,000 from Creative Scotland, £100,000 from earned income, £175,000 from SLAs and over £100,000 from mixed grant income.

[Fèis Rois](#) supports the living Gàidhlig culture found in the north and west of Scotland, working through traditional music. By giving space for young musicians to advance their skills and learn from professionals, it has increased the number of young musicians seeking a career as professional musicians singing in Gàidhlig and has normalised the use of the language as a medium for new work. Their work closely matches many of the themes emerging from the review. Their scale of operations closely fits the scale of a key development organisations within Wales and offers an illustration of what Wales could achieve at this level.

They engage across generations; offer participatory & professional support; work locally & internationally; develop showcase opportunities & local events; commission exemplar works and contribute to large scale national projects. They work with Scotland's other folk development organisations - particularly [TRACS](#) & [Celtic Connections](#).

Their stable funding relationships allow them to develop a mixed economy that supports both the organisation and the tradition, through grant-in-aid, sponsorship and earned income.

TRACS

Scotland's Collective Voice for Traditional Arts & Culture

<https://tracscotland.org/about-us/>

TRACS TRACS is supported by The City of Edinburgh Council and Creative Scotland. Their turnover in 2024 was reported as £765,000.

TRACS is a representative organisation whose main function is to serve the interests of the tradition (both the indigenous traditions of Scotland and those of minorities living within the country). They work officially in three languages: Gàidhlig, English and Scots, but recognise where capacity and demand allows, the need to work with other languages.

Formally recognised by [UNESCO](#) as the representative body for Scotland's traditional Intangible Cultural Heritage, they run a mixture of training, learning and public events, a news service and publish extensively on the social benefits of traditional music.

VI.BE

<https://vi.be/>

VI.BE operates across all music genres and brings together a critical mass of expertise and enterprise into one strategic body with a large board & staff, its own premises and sufficient resources to be able to plan strategically.

Their dynamic website, newsletters and publications are aimed at engaging music supporters and audiences as well as musicians & music businesses within Flanders and Belgium. They have an ambitious international programme 'exporting' into global markets.

Many of the functions of VI.BE are paralleled in Wales, notably [FOCUS Wales](#), [Trac Cymru](#) and [Tŷ Cerdd](#) in terms of remit. Some of their activity falls within the remit of ACW/WAI and [Creative Wales](#) and some with other organisations such as the [Musicians' Union](#), [Help Musicians](#), [Youth Music](#), [PRS for Music](#) and the [Welsh Music Prize](#).

- Appendix 3 investigates formally constituted support organisations and Appendix 4 examines co-operative and collaborative models

Existing Arts Funding in the UK & Ireland

While the Arts Councils of the UK and Ireland all support traditional music in different forms there is no clear consensus amongst them of what constitutes a measurable description of traditional music, for example, Creative Scotland and Arts Council Ireland use the term traditional arts, and in Scotland they have further self-identifying categories of Scots and Gaelic language arts which have significant outputs of traditional music.

So, while there is no translatable comparison, our best endeavours to calculate Arts Councils' investment in traditional music using the figures and rationales they provided reveal a significant difference in levels of investment. These Arts Councils invest an average of 2.9% of their overall distribution towards traditional music, with Creative Scotland as the highest proportion with a contribution in the region of 4.8% (4.4 of a total of 91 million) in 2024. What is clear is that Arts Council of Wales contributes significantly less at something like 0.66% (£400,000 out of their total of 54,000,000). Even allowing for variances in calculation, the difference is significant. There is much work to be done to find statistically rigid comparisons, which might offer benefits of understanding the variances in funding context for traditional music across the regions.

Conclusions

A consistent theme across the survey and the consultation meetings has been an identified need for additional funding for traditional music in Wales. Clear areas of need identified by this research period, and evidenced above, are in précis below. The Comisiynydd's recommendations will respond to these identified areas.

1. Grassroots

- Strategic regional development postings supported by a central body.
- A ring-fenced National Lottery fund for small grants towards traditional musics.
- Support for a network of stakeholders ([Mentrau Iaith](#), [Urdd](#), music organisations, etc) to support and foster community, regional and grassroots connections and activities to deliver traditional music activity and engagement.
- Instigate a programme of learning and participatory activity inspired by successful initiatives (e.g. [Fèis Rois](#)) to engage young people through informal sessions and jams.
- Targeting under-represented traditional music from minority communities across Wales.

2. Education

- Cement a strategic partnership with National Music Service Wales to integrate traditional music content into existing programmes, teacher training, student resources, and classroom tools.
- Codify Welsh traditional music to preserve and disseminate its attributes, providing graded teaching resources to facilitate learning. Partnership between education bodies and music sector.
- Strategic partnership with higher education, initially as a syllabus capsule and, later, as a dedicated degree pathway.

3. Musician Development & Professional Development

- Instigate targeted artist development pathways across a range of career-needs and ongoing programme of mentoring and support, delivered by music sector and traditional musicians.
- Work with partners to stimulate and support development of professional artist support: promoters, agents, managers, labels.
- Target under-represented traditional music from minority communities across Wales.

4. Networks & Communication

- A need for strategic leadership within the sector and a strategic plan around sector leadership, development and funding.

- Foster sector-wide networking through regular online forums and improved information systems.
- Need to engage a broader talent pool in developing and delivering services and projects to the sector. This might also involve some training / support / mentoring.
- Need for sectoral assessment of existing assets in the traditional music sector and provision of more coherent sector and audience information and signposting.

5. Audience Development

- Strategic relationship with the presenting sector as part of the sector development and asset-based approach.
- Project-based experiments e.g. touring, engagement (through National Lottery and [Night Out](#), etc).
- Advocacy for more traditional music in mainstream media.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Attendees at initial Zoom meetings, 24 & 29 September 2024

- Meeting one:
Dilwyn Davies, Ywain Myfyr, Nia Daniel, Joe Buirski, Lis McClean, Alun Llwyd, Stephen Rees, Yasmine Latkowski
- Meeting two:
Patrick Rimes, David Ball, Elin Ellis, Huw Williams, Jordan Price Williams, Angharad Jenkins, Owen Shiers

One-to-one conversations with the Comisiynydd

These included [Sioned Webb](#) (tradition bearer), [Patrick Rimes](#) (tradition bearer), [Angharad Jenkins](#) (tradition bearer), [Jordan Price Williams](#) (tradition bearer), Sioned Edwards ([Eisteddfod](#)), [Yasmine Latkowski](#) (composer/performer), Meinir Llwyd ([Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias](#)), Mari Pritchard ([National Music Service Wales](#)), Llio Maddocks ([Urdd](#)), Einir Sion (Welsh Language Enabler ACW / [Llais y Lle](#)) and Spike Griffiths ([Beacons Cymru](#)).

For an overview of discussions, see Appendix 5

Appendix 2

[Summary table of survey responses](#)

Appendix 3

Sector Support Organisations

16 organisations listed below are those that were researched, resulting in selecting three that provided useful models for traditional music development in Wales.

- [EFDSS](#)
- [TRACS](#)
- [Fèis Rois](#)
- [Hagyományak Hansa](#)
- [Sibelius Academy](#)
- [FAMDT](#)
- [Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann](#)
- [FolkOrg](#)
- [Folk Alliance International](#)
- [Matariki Cultural Foundation](#)
- [Cutlure Ireland](#)
- [Music Finland](#)
- [VI.BE](#)

- [Catalan Sounds](#)
- [Foundation Hiba](#)

Fèis Rois

<https://feisrois.org/>

Mission Statement

“We enable people of all ages to access, participate in and enjoy the traditional arts and Gaelic language through a diverse programme of activities in Ross & Cromarty, across Scotland and beyond.”

Background

Feis Róis is an organisation that forms an important part of the Fèisean movement within Scotland. The Fèisean (Fèis means festival) are largely cultural movements that emerged over 40 years ago in the Gàidhlig speaking communities of the north and west of Scotland to promote the traditional songs, music and dance in areas of the Highlands and Islands which were fast disappearing. There are no easy comparisons with Wales although many of their values and concerns can be found in the Eisteddfodau, Merched y Wawr, Ffermwyr Ifainc, Trac Cymru, Cymdeithasau Alawon, Cerdd Dant & Dawns Werin Cymru and Cymdeithas yr Iaith, as well as state funded organisations such as the many Mentrau Iaith who use a mixture of activities to engage their local communities in the living language and culture of Wales.

They are grass-roots organisations, mostly run by amateurs and participants, who concentrate on teaching Gàidhlig culture mostly through the media of traditional song, music and dance.

Fèisean nan Gàidheal <https://www.feisean.org/en/>

Although part of the broader Fèisean movement, Feis Róis is an independent organisation offering training, cultural activities, tuition, corporate and educational services. They have a core team of 7 and work with over 180 freelance musicians per year. They work digitally and in person offering residential events, direct supply to schools, cultural tourism, professional development, Lorient Festival, wider engagement models and the Ceili Trail - an immersive project that trains young musicians with repertoire, performance and organising and promoting their own gigs.

Financial Support

Funded by Creative Scotland, they actively seek core funding, project funding and other partnerships as well as raising income by delivering Service Level Agreements (SLA) within the education system. They also raise funds from offering courses and tuition.

Core funding currently comes from Creative Scotland, Highland Council Hugh Fraser Foundation and The MacRobert Trust. Project funding currently comes from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, British Council, Fèisean nan Gàidheal, Highland Third Sector Interface (Communities Mental Health Fund), Live Life Aberdeenshire, Dumfries & Galloway Council and Foulis Farms Ltd

Their turnover to March 2024 was 830,000 pounds. This was made up of over £450,000 from Creative Scotland, £100,000 from earned income, £175,000 from SLA and over £100,000 from other grant income.

Activity

They employ over 180 freelance professionals in their activities, which includes:

- Annual residential courses for young people and adults
- Gaelic language residential events
- Weekly classes
- One to one online tuition
- Afterschool music clubs
- Lullaby and young mother and baby singing groups
- In-school music tuition
- Sessions
- Performances in the UK, EU, Australia and Vietnam
- Commissioned performances and new works
- Environmental awareness through the language
- The Ceili Trail - the inspiration for AVANC and TWMPDaith
- Dedicated educational resources
- An app
- Online video tutorials
- A large bilingual website and e-news service
- Instrument hire and
- Delegated funding to community activities
- They are active members of
- European Folk Network (EFN)

VI.BE

<https://vi.be/>

Their mission

“VI.BE strengthens artists in a healthy music climate.”

Context

Flanders is an area of Belgium containing the capital city, Brussels. It is home to a language minority community (Flemish) as well as a large immigrant population. Traditional Belgian music in Belgium is rare. Many of its exponents see themselves as ground breakers reviving something lost. This lends tremendous freedom to many musicians working in folk, roots & traditional genres and a very open, fluid attitude towards what constitutes “tradition”. This can be seen in festivals

such as Gooikoorts, Dranbouter and Bruxella celebrating diverse folk musics and experimental music on the same stage.

Background

Evolving from Kunstenpunt, via Poppunt into VI.Be, this is an organisation that has grown by bringing together the diverse range of music support bodies in Flanders and using their collective strength to host a strategic music development team of 20 in Brussels. They offer advice, training, run tours, represent Flemish music worldwide, run festivals, websites, magazines and so very much more across ALL music genres. They offer strategic advice to local authorities

They have 20 staff and a board of 13 with a General Assembly of 10 (a particular function of Belgian law) as a parallel part of the governance. They receive financial and other support from High Five Amplo , National Lottery , PRG , Sabam for Culture , Studio Brussel and De Standaard.

Their website receives 500,000 impressions a year and their social media followers range from 16,000 FaceBook followers, 11,000 subscribers to their newsletter and 3,000 subscribers to their YouTube channels.

Their annual report is available [here](#)

Financial Support

Their accounts are not easily findable online however the National Bank of Belgium hosts all company reports and VI.BE's balance sheet for 2023 showed a turnover of €790,000. They receive a core grant from the National Lottery, strategic support from regional government and sponsorship, drawing other funds from their activities.

Activity

- They attend or host 70 events per year, both locally and internationally, 13 of which are showcase/conference events.
- run awards for all genres
- Offer networking and exchange forums to bring musicians together, advertise jobs
- Run a mixture of online and print publications concentrating on different 'scenes'
- Run residential professional training events
- Advise on funding and project development
- Commission and publish reports that ground their advocacy for the music business
- Host a large website detailing everything they do with news items and quick reads of developments and trends
- Host a member only service

They are active members of

- European Music Exporters Exchange (EMEE)
- ESNS Exchange

- Excite
- Europe Jazz Network (EJN)
- European Folk Network (EFN)

TRACS

Scotland's Collective Voice for Traditional Arts & Culture

<https://tracscotland.org/about-us/>

Their mission

“...we empower communities across Scotland, to discover, develop and practise their unique traditional arts and heritage in the context of our daily lives.

Community.

Knowledge.

Practice.

Access.

Advocacy.

Sustainability.”

TRACS is a co-operative network which champions [their] shared traditions of music, song, storytelling, dance, crafts, customs and local languages.

Context

Scotland, with historically different legislative and administrative responsibilities, has always had significant differences to the rest of the UK state. Its traditional music has had a larger role to play in its cultural life which is reflected in a larger number of folk clubs, festivals and events. Its flagship festival, Glasgow's Celtic Connections is a month-long festival of Scottish and related folk music. BBC Alba and other Scottish media broadcast significant amounts of traditional music as part of mainstream output.

It is also worth noting that “traditional music” is understood as not only music, dance and song but also storytelling, including Gaidhlig, English and Scots language activities and related crafts and customs. Scotland also possesses a strong infrastructure of music professionals (agents, promoters, publicists, festivals, venue managers, etc), national music centres and museums who focus on traditional music culture as well as a degree course who all operate in a mixed economy of private business and public investment.

Creative Scotland invests significantly in its traditional arts. 7% of all awards and 5% of the value of its investment goes to organisations and projects that self-identify as “traditional”. If we compare this to ACW’s investment of around 1% in folk and related music, it should not be surprising that traditional music is well-supported in Scotland. Creative Scotland’s 22/23 performance report notes the following for comparison:

<https://www.creativescotland.com/binaries/content/assets/creative-scotland/resources-and-publications/publications/annual-reviews/2022-23/2022-23-annual-review-final-pdf.pdf>

Out of a distribution budget of £91 million they made the following awards:

97 awards to Gaelic Arts, Amount Awarded £5.3M

68 Awards to Scots Arts, Amount Awarded £2.3M

122 Awards Traditional Arts, Amount Awarded £4.4M

History

TRACS was formed in 2012, bringing together the [Traditional Music Forum](#), the [Scottish Storytelling Forum](#), and the [Traditional Dance Forum of Scotland](#), each of which are separately constituted bodies who focus on particular areas of Scotland’s traditional music, song, dance and storytelling.

It was brought together to bring a strategic voice for the arts of tradition into public life and to ensure that the traditional music community was connected, prepared and served by a dedicated organisation for the benefit of everyone. Some of that was inspired by the work of Trac Cymru and Trac Cymru was their ‘critical friend’ during their 2022 formal strategic renewal process.

Financial Support

TRACS is supported by The City of Edinburgh Council and Creative Scotland. And their turnover in 2024 was reported as expenditure of £765,000 and an income of £695,000. Their expenditure and income in 2023 was £800,000 and £890,000 respectively.

Board and Staff

They have a Board of 11 and a staff of 10 who work from their dedicated offices in Edinburgh. Unusually, they have a joint leadership of two Directors, currently David Francis and Dr Steve Byrne, both of whom are practising musicians.

Activity

Their projects include:

- The People’s Parish, that aims to include every parish in Scotland with traditional music activity

- Traditional Arts Mentoring that offers personal and professional development to practitioners of all traditions across Scotland
- Gifting Every Child, offering online and other resources to both the formal and informal education sectors
- Intangible Cultural Heritage as a formally accredited ICH organisation
- Administration and integration of the work of three national artform forums
- Commissioning and publishing reports that ground their advocacy for traditional music in Scotland
- Hosting a large website and newsletter service detailing reports, news, resources for learning, information and networking
- Commissioning new works and distribute micro grants as part of their project work
- They offer training and development in cultural, environmental and education for others to adopt

They are active members of the [European Folk Network](#).

Appendix 4

Co-operative & Collective Models

A small but significant approach to music representation and support in the north of Europe is a DIY/Collective approach. Independent musicians and DJs work together collectively to perform the functions that a band needs. They tend to be time-based, local and small. Very often they have no constitution or formal memberships. Occasionally they come together globally in response to identified needs.

One large and relatively successful model is [Global Music Match](#)

<https://www.globalmusicmatch.com/about-us/>

Brought together during the COVID pandemic, the export agencies [Showcase Scotland](#), FOCUS Wales, Sounds Australia and East Coast Music Association (Canada) set up a peer-to-peer self-help collective in which participating artists 'introduced' the other global participants to each other's audiences. This process was facilitated by the participating music export associations and a bespoke collective of mentors from the industry.

[Copenhagen Music](#)

<https://www.copenhagenmusic.dk/> is a collective membership association of 6 orchestras and choirs with an elected 'board' of 5 drawn from the membership. Currently they consist of:

BEAT THAT BLUE - Pop and rock choirs singing away the Monday blues

CHRISTMAS - Acapella vocal group with beat box

COPENHAGEN SHOW BAND - Festive orchestral pop, choreography and dance

GERMAN RED CROSS - Riot jazz, "I don't give a damn", brass, winning mentality

HEIDIS AND PANTS - Tyrolean music in a cool way with a modern twist

VOICE - Ambitious, rhythmic acapella choir

They take collective responsibility for arranging the details of rehearsals, performances, repertoire, insurance, logistics, permits etc.

SKINT

<https://www.skintdance.org.uk/faqs/>

SKINT describes itself as "A warm, budget-friendly Scandi and International folk weekend...where everyone pitches in to help". It is part of the 30-year-old 'English Bal' movement and is very much a hands on collective. It is a festival and network that happens in village halls where all the participants attend as audience, catering team, stagehands, musicians, callers and door staff.

Incubation Models

Incubation models are very similar throughout the world. They involve investing time in musicians to develop not only their repertoire and instrumental skills but also the other disciplines needed to be an exponent of one's chosen art form.

Finland's [Sibelius Academy](#) and [Kaustinen Music College](#), Scotland's [Royal Conservatoire of Music](#) and [Villjandi University](#) in Estonia all offer degree level education in folk music and the skills needed to be a musician. While we may recommend working with at least one Welsh university to develop a degree in traditional music, we recognise that that outcome is likely to be some time off and that a more 'open' level may be more appropriate.

Outside the university system, a number of regions offer hothouses. [Trac Cymru](#) has been working with its own ensemble under the name [AVANC](#) elsewhere in Wales there is [BBC Horizons](#) and [Beacons](#) offering similar schemes. [Trac Cymru](#) and [Tŷ Cerdd](#) have been working to develop some of this work during their artist training projects building up to the Wales presence at WOMEX each year.

Folk development organisations like the English Folk Dance and Song Society ([EFDSS](#)) have a youth ensemble. The vast majority are aimed at young teenagers and form part of an outside school development programme similar to Trac Cymru's 'Gwerin Ifainc' project.

By far the most advanced incubation model in Europe is [Kreizh Breizh Akademi](#)

<https://www.drom-kba.eu/What-is-KBA.html>

The Kreiz Breizh Akademi (KBA) is based on the transmission of Breton music and language, as well as an understanding of modal music and improvisation within a discipline.

The language used in the songs is Breton language in its local variants (like in “kan ha diskan” and “gwerzioù”).

The three main goals of the program are:

- To teach musical techniques based on modal understanding;
- to develop skills around composition, improvisation, arrangement methods and orchestra playing;
- To learn stage craft techniques.

KBA offers three-year courses including a 12-month training programme followed by a 24-month support in professional practice, through album production and concerts.

KBA has between 12 and 18 member musicians depending on the session, with specific goals:

- To improve employability of the “new entrants” on the labour market.
- To contribute to the building of a clear professional identity.
- To strengthen the skills of the professional musicians.
- To enrich musical know-how and cultural knowledge.
- To master the legal and professional environment of the music sector.

Since its creation in 2003, Kreiz Breizh Akademi has been supported by:

- The "Leader +" European programme, Région Bretagne,
- Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles,
- Conseils Généraux des Côtes d’Armor, du Finistère et du Morbihan.

Sound Roots

<https://www.soundroots.uk/>

Sound Roots is the organisation that runs the English Folk Expo, its allied Manchester Folk Festival, Sound Roots Connect - to build a network for the folk and music industry in the north of England and an Artist Mentoring Programme (<https://www.englishfolkexpo.com/artist-mentoring-programme/>)

The Artists mentoring Programme is described as:

“Building a career as a professional musician in the UK music industry has changed significantly in recent years. This is especially true with specialist genres like folk, roots and acoustic music. Over the past decade, the opportunities to create music are more readily available, but earning money for this work is more of a challenge. Coupled with this, COVID-19, cost of living challenges and international factors like Brexit make building a sustainable career even more precarious.

As a result, it is absolutely essential for any musician at the start of their career to understand the industry they are working in, learning how to operate and grow their own businesses. Being a musician is far more than playing music, but for many artists even knowing where to start can be overwhelming. This programme aims to give emerging artists the skills and networks to thrive both in the UK and in the growing international markets.”

Taking four artists annually, the programme focuses on Recording, Touring, Audience Development and career skills. It offers a mixture of residential events, mentoring and facilitated attendance at showcase and conferences.

Learning from Co-operative and Incubator Models

There are two distinctive elements to these models. The former is independent, flexible and participant/member-led. The latter is facilitated to advance professional level skills within a discipline. But both value Action Learning, self-reflection, peer-to-peer support and supporting the whole person rather than one small, specific skillset.

Both models have emerged in response to a need to advantage future generations by learning from lived experience and - like all traditional musics - draw heavily upon tradition bearers, trail blazers and previous recipients of investment within a living evaluation process that informs future iterations.

Both models are very reliant on co-operative modelling, responding to the needs of the participants as much as the ‘wisdom’ of that community’s ‘elders’.

Many of the core elements of these models already exist to some extent in Wales within industry development projects, although the models shown above either rely on adequate funding support, or the investment of time from a membership.

Given the fluid nature of Wales’ traditional music sector, and the high proportion of small-scale, co-operative working within the industry, these models could offer an innovative way to achieve significant and strategic results over time that will revolutionise the quality, perception and economic reach of Welsh traditional music.

These models are not genre (or even music_-specific, and have the capacity to radically transform how we, as a nation, invest in the capacity and ambition of our creative sector if we can begin with our indigenous artforms and grow from there.

Appendix 5

One-to-one Interviews

The interviewees for these in-depth interviews with the Comisiynydd were selected on the basis of these individuals providing a breadth of views across the sector and their ability to offer valuable insights and/or to represent key partners or delivery allies specifically in areas of activity highlighted by the review. Some discussions also involved testing and refining ideas and potential

activities outlined in the recommendations section. While the discussions broadly followed a similar format to those undertaken in the review workshops, often these conversations developed their own specificities. Just as there was an option for survey respondents to offer their views anonymously, these conversations were undertaken confidentially. While the vast majority of the content requires no such care, for some conversations, this aspect became important. Findings are therefore reported with these sensitivities in mind.

Interviewees included (Sioned Webb (tradition bearer), [Patrick Rimes](#) (tradition bearer), [Angharad Jenkins](#) (tradition bearer), [Jordan Price Williams](#) (tradition bearer), Sioned Edwards ([Eisteddfod](#)), [Yasmine Latkowski](#) (composer/performer), Meinir Llwyd ([Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias](#)), Mari Pritchard ([National Music Service Wales](#)), Llio Maddocks ([Urdd](#)), Einir Sion (Welsh Language Enabler ACW / [Llais y Lle](#)) and Spike Griffiths ([Beacons Cymru](#)).

Synopsis of key subjects and challenges discussed.

Grassroots

- The urgent need to change focus to working at grassroots and educational level.
- The importance of contact with Welsh folk songs and music in early life and the development of an interest in music and how it can introduce Cymreictod and Cymraeg to both children and parents, e.g. Canolfan William Mathias, Camau Cerdd for mothers and babies.
- Taking away barriers to engagement with traditional music, e.g. development of a simple, Welsh Folk Music learning structure (e.g. beginner / intermediate / advanced) and an associated simple grading exam to support a sense of attainment for those who wished it.
- Discussion of the individuals' own journeys into trad music and their professional development routes.
- How the sector might develop and nurture important connections with minority communities in Wales and their musics.
- How might the review team and ACW ensure that the recommendations supported the traditional musics of all our diverse communities to flourish and interact with each other.
- The important and intertwined relationship between traditional music and the Welsh language, culture and communities.
- Discussion of how rural communities in Wales are changing, the impact on the usual structures that have held and stimulated traditional music over the centuries and how interventions now might have a positive impact, not just on traditional music but on the health and well-being and bringing together of communities – particularly rural communities in Wales.
- Lots of examples of good projects happening in pockets around Wales, that might form excellent models for replication in other parts.
- The importance of community-led development and how that can be supported.
- The merits and challenges of competition and attainment in the context of traditional music.

Education

- Discussions around music education, the historic lack of funding, the need for providing resources direct to educators, and for proactive engagement of educators.
- General support and enthusiasm for the idea of codification of the tradition,
- How to enable educators to offer traditional music lessons and the need to support educators with training, initiatives and ideas around stimulating grassroots activity.
- The structures, strands of work and ways in which traditional music could engage with the work being undertaken by National Music Service Wales to stimulate engagement by educators and children using the systems now in place.
- There was much enthusiasm for the functionalities of the developed educational resource website *Cheranga* and the many ways in which this could be a valuable channel for delivering key resources to children and educators.
- Variance in provision across regions of Wales and how that is reflected in Local Authority opt into Traditional Music as a strand of work in their schools.

Musician Development

- Discussed the difficulty of finding clear pathways of development for traditional musicians in Wales.
- Exploration of the experience of being working musicians / composers within the traditional music sector in Wales – what had worked, what had not and what might be useful for musicians who often straddle genres.
- The challenges faced by the disappearance of important, small, reasonably priced venues at which musicians would often begin to gig or perform and which have traditionally formed an important foothold for musicians in their early careers.
- The importance of understanding the local scene and working to support and nurture activity for developing musicians within their communities and localities. Work at community and regional level.

Professional Support and Development

- There is a wealth of untapped knowledge and experience in this sector, ready to support and drive forward the traditional music sector in Wales. They need to be engaged. Also, a sense that currently, it tends to be the same groups and individuals engaged time and time again. ‘Spread the net!’
- The importance and impact of key tradition bearers who are very active in regions. How individuals generating activity at a local level shape the future of the tradition in these places. How these individuals need support – they could thrive with some mentoring and support and play a bigger role in strategically developing the sector.
- How to address the lack of promoters, agents, managers and labels for traditional music in Wales.

- Exploration of what might be possible in terms of initiatives in partnership with Beacons Cymru and Creative Wales and how this might also form part of any projects and developments to address these key support structure issues.
- The challenge of showcasing artists and developing professional careers without managers, agents, etc.

Networks and Communication

- Concern about a lack of connectivity across the sector, lack of sector development and clear emergence of new artists.
- Frustration around a lack of engagement, action, and response from Trac to key strategic initiatives and interventions. A sense that their activity is often at odds with sector need – e.g. too much focus on international work, not enough on grass roots or addressing the development issues faced by the sector.
- A perceived over-dependence on a few excellent artists to carry the tradition and be at the forefront.
- Need for more collaboration and joined-up thinking across the sector; an acknowledgement that some happens, but that more is needed.
- The complexity of looking after the span of ‘the tradition’ from the need to cherish and protect historical aspects of the tradition to the need to keep it alive through innovation based on a solid grounding in the tradition.
- The benefits of a regional structure
- Great willingness to partner and form consortia for joint funding bids, partnership initiatives and projects, most of which require the pooling of small pots of investment to generate activity. The perceived absence of a traditional music partner to engage with.

Audience Development

- There is a need for more gigs for young people that involve standing and dancing rather than a sit-down concert format to engage young audiences.
- The need for more traditional music across media, not just ghettoised in ‘traditional music’ programming.