

16 June 2025

Dear

ATISN 24736 Grant Funding Conditions for Oriel y Parc, St Davids

Information requested

Thank you for your request which I received on 19 May. You asked for:

1. Copies of any **grant offer letters, funding agreements, or conditions of grant** issued by the Welsh Government or its agencies (including WEFO or Visit Wales) relating to the construction, capital development, or programming expectations of Oriel y Parc. Please include all documents referring to:
 - European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) contributions.
 - National Assembly or Welsh Government capital grants.
 - Any Lottery or arts infrastructure funding that passed through government oversight.
2. Any documents or internal assessments that define the **original intended use or core purpose** of the facility (e.g., art exhibition space, cultural attraction, landscape interpretation, or tourism hub), particularly where it relates to the exhibition of the national collection or the Graham Sutherland bequest.
3. Any subsequent **modifications, redefinitions, or compliance reports** (2008–present) assessing whether the facility continues to meet its funding conditions or deliverables as originally approved.
4. Any records of **concerns, complaints, or compliance reviews** carried out by or reported to the Welsh Government in relation to changes in the use of Oriel y Parc since 2018.

Our response

The information you requested is enclosed. The majority of the information identified was sourced from paper files and this information is attached in pdfs. Information available in electronic format is attached to this letter at Annex 1.

Next steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ

or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely,

Annex 1

From: Elizabeth Haines

Sent: 26 February 2025 08:29

To: Correspondence Mail - JS

Subject: The Pembrokeshire Landscape Gallery in St Davids

Dear Mr Sargeant,

Reading with great delight that you have secured additional funding for the arts, we are writing to draw your attention to a matter of great concern, namely plans to transform one of the few top class fine art galleries in Wales -- the Pembrokeshire Landscape Gallery at Oriel y Parc in St Davids -- into a National Park "discovery centre".

Oriel y Parc -- an extension to the visitors centre - was built for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) with £3.3 million in public and EU funds and opened in Britain's smallest city in 2008 by then First Minister for Wales Rhodri Morgan. The large complex specifically included an A1 gallery, one of just a few of that class in Wales, to provide a home for rotating exhibitions of Graham Sutherland's paintings bequeathed to the Welsh nation and as a venue for fine art exhibitions organised in partnership with Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum of Wales. The gallery was also intended to serve as a proper home for working artists.

The PCNPA itself declared on its opening that Oriel y Parc would "feature treasures from the collections of National Museum of Wales. Works by Picasso, Lowry and Rembrandt are among the pieces on display along with the works of Graham Sutherland whose art will form a permanent part of the gallery's rolling exhibitions".

The gallery started building an excellent reputation, drawing visitors from afar in large numbers, helping the highly seasonal local economy. In 2016 Constable's *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows* and other works of art, including by JMW Turner who painted in Pembrokeshire, attracted tens of thousands of visitors. But numbers have since declined and the free-entry public gallery has not been graced with a fine art exhibition or substantial display of Sutherland's work since around 2018.

In contrast, visitor numbers to the National Library of Wales leaped last year, drawn by a Canaletto loaned by the National Gallery to mark its 200th anniversary. Imagine the crowds that would have flocked to St Davids if it had been included in the year-long festivities now celebrating the 250th anniversary of the birth of JMW Turner whose paintings of Pembrokeshire draw crowds elsewhere.

Instead, PCNPA is planning to turn its back on the gallery's soaring ambitions and in particular the magnificent bequest of the Sutherland family, held mostly in national museum vaults, and repurpose the gallery as a National Park Discovery Centre. Details have not yet been made public, and our efforts to establish a dialogue with PCNPA have so far been fruitless.

One of the great British artists of the 20th century, Sutherland was born in London and studied at Goldsmith's College, but his name became forever tied with Wales after first visiting Pembrokeshire in 1934, in particular the area around St Davids. As an official war artist, he painted scenes of bomb damage in Swansea and later the famous Coventry

Cathedral tapestry. His bequest, including documents and letters (some from Picasso), is arguably the most important in Wales.

Here in St Davids we already have a precious, publicly funded, purpose-built gallery for this bequest and capable of hosting the nation's masters. It is a lack of vision, not funding, that risks erasing this valuable asset.

Prominent people in the Arts, and Pembrokeshire's own vibrant community of artists, are dismayed.

Raymond Jones, Administrator at MOMA Machynlleth, commented: *"I do hope that Oriel y Parc listens ... The gallery space should be continuing to show Graham Sutherland's works as well as other important works from national collections... A nation that neglects its culture, be it visual arts or performing arts will leave that nation so much poorer."*

Peter Lord, sculptor and art historian, stated: *"The national art institutions are under huge financial pressure. In this context it's difficult to understand why Oriel y Parc, a purpose-built gallery with the potential to provide access for local people and visitors to all the rich resources of the national collection is, it appears, not being fully and creatively exploited, both by display of the Sutherland works for which it was intended, and for changing shows of historic and new Welsh art. Let's not undervalue and waste the potential of this fine resource"*.

This is now a matter of some urgency as the PCNPA is apparently forging ahead with plans to spend considerable sums on cosmetic alterations to the façade of the building, instead of funding a curator and, very importantly, artists to come and run workshops based around the wonderfully rich heritage of art created in Pembrokeshire.

Speaking on behalf of a considerable number of concerned individuals who have set up a working group, we urge you please to intervene as minister of culture. We would be delighted to meet you at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

Nicola Schoenenberger: Artist, owner of Retail Shop/Gallery in St Davids

Elizabeth Haines: Artist, teacher and writer

Dan Wright: Artist, Gallery Owner in St Davids

Amanda Wright: Artist, Gallery Owner in St Davids

Christopher Taylor: St Davids Bookseller, former local journalist and former Mayor of St Davids.

Emma Bowen: General Manager at Retreats Group in St Davids, Artist.

Grahame Hurd-Wood: Artist