

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / The Culture, Welsh Language
and Communications Committee
Ariannu addysg gerddoriaeth a mynediad ati / Funding for and access to
music education
CWLC(5) FAME10
Ymateb gan Ben Rackham / Evidence from Ben Rackham

I am now 21 and a university student, from Newport. I have benefited enormously from the wonderful work that Gwent Music do. At the age of 7 I first started learning the clarinet (later also playing saxophone) in school through Gwent Music and have had 4 different teachers until I left sixth form. The standard of teaching is very high and it is incredible to see the passion that these teachers have for music education.

As well as having lessons I have played in a number of school, Newport Music Centre and Greater Gwent Music ensembles, including orchestras, wind bands and big bands. The benefits of playing in a group extend far beyond music itself– many skills are developed such as working as part of a group, discipline, leadership skills, not to mention the social opportunities. Many of these are skills which it seems the Welsh Assembly Government is very keen to develop in young people, and tries to do so through failed, unpopular projects such as the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification. I urge them to consider investigating the use of further Music education for all school children, both inside and outside the classroom, to develop these skills and many more.

I have many fond memories of playing in some fantastic venues over the years, including the Celtic Manor, St Davids Hall and Birmingham's Symphony Hall. These opportunities should be open to as many children as possible. Gwent Music does a tremendous job at making music as accessible as they can, but has evidently been struggling recently due to losing almost all of their local authority funding. As a result, the rising costs of music lessons and participation in ensembles appears to be putting off younger children's parents from getting them involved in music. This is a great shame and the long term benefits could be very negative for the service unless their levels of funding increase.