



Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru
Arts Council of Wales

Transformation and change

The outcome of the Arts Council of Wales' consultation on future arrangements for National Lottery funding for the arts.

June 2019



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Transformation and change

The outcome of the Arts Council of Wales' consultation on future arrangements for National Lottery funding for the arts.

On 24 March 1995 the Arts Council of Wales made its first ever National Lottery award.

Pontardulais Town Band was given £37,350 to build a new rehearsal hall. The Band is still going strong, winning prizes in UK competitions. The hall is used at least twice a week for junior and senior rehearsals and is where many young people will enjoy playing music for the first time.

Much has been achieved since those early days of the Lottery. In the 24 years since that first award we have:

- funded 13,813 projects throughout Wales (including 1,121 via our delegated Lottery funding partners)
- distributed £294m of Lottery funding (included delegated Lottery funding)

Over this time we've seen a transformation of arts facilities in Wales.

New landmark buildings have opened to the public including the Wales Millennium Centre, Galeri Caernarfon, Riverfront, Newport, Pontio, Bangor and most recently Ty Pawb in Wrexham. There have also been a number of important refurbishment projects which have brought new life to old buildings - the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery in Swansea, Theatr Mwldan in Cardigan, Valleys Kids in Tonypany, Arad Goch in Aberystwyth and Mostyn in Llandudno. National Lottery funding has reached across all corners many parts of Wales and helped us create spaces for people to enjoy and take part in the arts where previously there were few opportunities.

But this hasn't just been about buildings – far from it!

The Arts Council of Wales has used Lottery funding to support artists and organisations to make new and exciting work across the country for the last 20 years, supported Oscar nominated and BAFTA winning films, launched new programmes such as Creative Learning through the Arts which has worked with 70% of schools in Wales and given over 100,000 children the chance to take part in new and exciting activities.

Our Ideas: People: Places programme has developed new ways of working with communities to lead local regeneration projects, and our International Opportunities Fund has supported artists to develop new relationships and work opportunities across the world.

As we approached the 25th Anniversary of the National Lottery it seemed appropriate to reflect on the successes and consult on the future direction.

Between November 12th 2018 and February 15th 2019 we undertook a comprehensive consultation exercise across all parts of Wales. In all we met with 212 people and received 164 written responses. This document provides our response to the consultation.

**This consultation coincided with publication of our new corporate plan
“For the Benefit of All...”**

It's natural, therefore, that the priorities in the plan should feature so prominently in our consultation discussions. It can be all too easy to lose sight of the audience or participant – the ultimate beneficiary of Lottery funding. Our corporate plan puts the public – and the widest possible cross-section of that public – at the heart of the plan.

The consultation focussed on 12 topics.

They're repeated again here. In each case we summarise the key issues that we heard during the consultation and set out the key actions that we now propose to take. We've tried to play back, fairly and accurately, the comments that you shared with us. In the majority of cases we've been able to reflect genuine consensus in our proposals. In a very small number of instances, Council has concluded that it wants to take a different path. Where this is the case, we make clear the reasons for this decision.

Finally, it has been a rich and rewarding process and we're enormously grateful to those who gave so generously of their time to take part in the consultation. Diolch yn fawr!

Kath Davies
Director (Arts Funding Services)

June 2019

Topic 1: For the benefit of all

What we heard...



“Diversity in the arts is essential if we want to reflect a fair society, deliver our social responsibilities and encourage the best possible access of opportunities for all people”

“...the single biggest issue in the arts today”

We found an informed and well-developed understanding of the role that National Lottery funding plays in supporting projects and initiatives that contribute positively to creativity and well-being.

The Welsh Government’s Well-being of Future Generations Act provides the overall context and we heard eloquent testimony in favour of the belief that a generous, fair-minded and tolerant society values and respects the creativity of all its citizens. Throughout our consultation you’ve said you want to see a society that embraces inclusivity – a society where our culture is enriched and expanded by diverse and distinctive voices.

This reflects well commitments made in the Arts Council’s Corporate Plan, “For the Benefit of All...” Council’s most important priority is to promote Equalities as the foundation of a clear desire to reach more widely and deeply into all communities across Wales.

The consultation revealed a strong consensus around these principles. Indeed, there was strong support for the idea that the arts in general – and all funded organisations in particular – should commit actively to measures that remove the barriers preventing people from taking part in the arts.

Respondents noted that:

- The case for adopting a wider, fairer and more diverse approach to funding and developing the arts is inarguable
- If we’re to make the arts more attractive to a wider and more diverse public, we need to be prepared to change how the arts are made, and who they’re for
- A number of Arts Council projects, such as Ideas: People: Places, have found new ways of encouraging wider engagement – they offer important lessons for the future

- Meaningful community involvement sometimes needs a longer term approach and a willingness to be flexible – sustainable engagement requires the time and space for confidence to mature and partnerships to settle
- We need a new vocabulary for describing and illustrating our engagement activities in more accessible ways – language itself can be a barrier to those not familiar with arts funding
- The challenges facing communities are many and varied – each community will have a character of its own. The issues facing rural communities will be different to those of communities in our main cities
- Communities themselves will often have their own answers to the ‘problems’ that are assumed to affect them
- When we talk about ‘communities’ we need to be mindful of the particular demographics of Wales in shaping our response. No one size fits all.
- The principles of diversity and equality should be firmly embedded in *all* practice and *all* programmes that the Arts Council supports

What we'll do...

We should offer a clearer explanation of the type of activity that we're prepared to support, respecting the value of individuals' and communities' "everyday creativity". We want more people to enjoy and take part in the arts. But simply growing the numbers isn't *all* that we're about, important though this is. It's about reaching out to those who don't yet see themselves as traditional arts audiences. And it's about changing not only how we view public funding for the arts, but about the type of arts that we're prepared to support.

We will...

- Direct more funding to activities that engage people from under-represented communities
- Define a new community-focused change programme, funded for more than a single year, that delivers significant change in the diversity of those enjoying, making and taking part in the arts
- The extent to which organisations, projects, initiatives address the creative, social and demographic barriers to engagement will be amongst the key criteria that we use when assessing funding applications
- Develop the capacity, skills and expertise of those individuals and organisations who demonstrate an aptitude for community engaged work.
- Demonstrate through our research the progress that we're making in meeting the needs of those with protected characteristics. Protected characteristics are defined as follows;- disabled people; BAME; Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual; Children and Young People (25 and under); Pregnant and new mothers; specific religious beliefs; Transgender; Welsh Speakers; Families.

Topic 2: Reaching every part of Wales

What we heard...



“People’s needs are still complex...too often communities are characterised in a simplistic way...we need to ask, enquire, and listen”

“We support this in principle but its complex”

Two key themes dominated your discussions. The first focussed on what can be done to achieve a more equitable spread of funding across the whole of Wales. In communities where there’s a low level of engagement with the arts there’s nearly always a correspondingly low level of Lottery investment.

But there are complexities to unpick - not least the definition of community. For example there was agreement that communities cannot be simplistically defined along geographic lines. Consideration also needs to be given to the socio-economic context, and communities who define themselves by culture and identity, language, gender or disability. There was however, consensus around the view that all communities need to be empowered to recognise their legitimate right to access the arts in the first instance.

‘It isn’t possible for people to ask for something they don’t know exists.’ Tackling this poverty of cultural awareness is an important first step.

The second theme (and one which recurs in many areas of the consultation responses) is the need for longer term engagement at a grass roots level. ‘Parachuting’ in and out is seen by most as damaging, and ultimately detrimental to the kind of engagement that’s sustainable in the longer term.

We also asked whether a dispersed model of funding would be beneficial, reaching communities by delegating funding and decision-making to a more local level. The responses to this were mixed, reflecting a fairly consistent view that there were many concerns relating to the viability and appropriateness of such an approach had many potential pitfalls.

These included concerns about:

- The difficulty of maintaining a national strategy and priorities, consistently delivered across the country
- Potential variations in the quality of activity receiving public funds
- Difficulties in maintaining consistency in decision making
- The risk of bias and conflicts of interest

- Ability/capacity of local organisations to deliver the work
- The danger of creating another layer of bureaucracy

However, there was clear enthusiasm for greater engagement with 'local' stakeholders and in interest in seeing how they might be more closely involved in deciding how funds affecting their area should be allocated. It has been separately suggested that there might be a role for the Arts Council's new Arts Associates, especially if they can bring a local perspective to decision making. Local stakeholders will have knowledge and connections, and can help direct support in ways in which might represent better value for money.

What we'll do...

We recognise and agree the need to consider carefully the complexity of equitable funding distribution and the definition of 'community.' However, the principle of equality of opportunity remains fundamental to the Arts Council's vision.

The responses to the proposal for a dispersed model of funding were both insightful and instructive. They provided a clear route map against which to plot the principles of future grant-giving.

We will...

- Ensure that our newly proposed community-focused change programme, funded for more than a single year, delivers significant change in the diversity of those enjoying, making and taking part in the arts
- Publish a funding strategy that addresses issues of more equitable access to funding and to the activities of funded organisations and schemes
- Create more open and transparent grant decision-making process by involving local stakeholders
- Provide clear information on why specific areas may be prioritised for investment and how and we are defining 'communities'

Topic 3: Making and enjoying the Arts in Welsh

What we heard...



“If the Welsh language is to flourish then the arts must lead the way”

“The Welsh language is different things to different people...If we want to see it flourish in a wider artistic context, horizons need to be broadened and alternative forms of Welsh language and bilingual activity need development and investment”

Making and enjoying the arts in Welsh is well represented both in the written responses and in the public consultation sessions. A prominent theme was the availability of Welsh language arts work. There is a clear view that insufficient work of quality is currently available, and there was a broad consensus around the need allocate specific funds to support the development of Welsh language product and to support artists working in Welsh. The need for a greater diversity of product was also highlighted.

There were, however, respondents who questioned aspects of this proposal and chose to focus instead on bilingualism and/or multilingualism. This view seemed to be based on the perception that supporting the creation of work in Welsh could somehow detract from support for other languages and cultures – and that this could in turn undermine our commitment to diversity. We do not support this view. The notion that the Welsh language is somehow in competition with other languages is no more relevant (or accurate) than if the same criticism was applied to the English language. As a matter of legal fact, Welsh and English are accorded equal status. However, the availability of work – and the levels of investment – are plainly not equal.

“We are not a binary bilingual nation. We are a multilingual nation.”

Some respondents argued that any support for Welsh language work should operate on a kind of ‘quota’ basis, reflecting demographics. (In other words, the availability of Welsh language work should be in proportion to the percentage of the population that speaks Welsh within a particular geographic area.) During the public discussion this felt like a very difficult position to accept. Most attendees at the consultation meetings were aware of the Welsh Government’s ambition to have 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050 and had a more dynamic view of the creativity through the medium of Welsh. This is a view that we would share.

What we'll do...

We're pleased to note the strong support for placing a priority on the making of work in the Welsh language. We also note the clear view that there needs to be a greater range of artistic product made in Welsh.

To date, discussion has tended to focus on drama. Some respondents have suggested that this could be 'opened up' to include musical theatre, music, and community engagement projects for example. We agree that we need to support and encourage the creation of Welsh language work across all genres. A number of responses highlighted the importance of supporting young Welsh talent. We agree. This could be delivered in a number of different ways – some of which are covered in other sections of this paper.

We've given detailed consideration to the comments made about bilingual and multilingual work. We don't accept the view that to focus on the Welsh language is in diametric opposition, or detrimental to, the recognition and promotion of a multilingual Wales. There is, and should be, room for all languages and cultures. We embrace and celebrate our multiculturalism. However, we believe that for Wales the fundamental principle of making work in Welsh only is one which must be protected and encouraged.

There should be more opportunities for people to learn and engage with the Welsh language and this is something we will ask all organisations and artists to consider in the making and presentation of work. This will be key in helping to achieve the Welsh Government's goal to raise the number of Welsh speakers to 1 million by 2050.

We will...

- Increase the amount of Arts Council funding invested in Welsh language work
- Provide time-defined financial incentives to commission, produce and promote Welsh language work
- Invest in initiatives that develop the capability and skills of creative professionals wanting to work through the medium of Welsh
- Improve the quality of the marketing and promotion of Welsh language activity in our key venues
- Develop opportunities for showcasing good quality Welsh language work

Topic 4: In for the long haul

What we heard...



“This is a key requirement of any new Lottery strategy”

“This is a major change to the distribution of Lottery funding in Wales, and if applied across the board would change the ecology of the arts in Wales dramatically”

There's very strong support across both the written responses and consultation meetings for a structured multi-year development programme of between 3 and 5 years in some areas of activity. For many respondents this offers a welcome move away from what's currently perceived as a *'hand to mouth'* existence.

Overall, the benefits might:

- enable long term strategic planning
- maximise potential for developing existing partnerships
- create deeper and better projects which would have greater impact on communities
- help organisations grow and become more sustainable and resilient
- reduce the amount of time spent writing applications 'at risk'

However, there are two caveats.

Firstly, many of you felt that there still needs to be quick access to Lottery funding for short term activity that is devised in response to unexpected opportunities.

There also needs to be a balance to ensure that there's sufficient support for new and emerging talent. Budgets shouldn't become 'silted up' to the extent that the Arts Council is effectively 'closed' to new ideas for several years.

Secondly, there was some resistance to the suggestion that we should invite applications every two years for touring productions. The notion that we might research, develop and support a 'slate' of productions over a more extended period of time drew little specific support. On the whole, this proposal did not appear to be enthusiastically received.

“The arts are lively, exciting. Ideas suddenly emerge, connections are made, synergies found. They need funding then and there, striking whilst the iron's hot”

This didn't mean, however, that there was any lack of discussion around the current touring model. This has been a hotly debated topic for some time and it's clear that many of you believe that the current system is structurally failing both in terms of how we support

the various stages of production through a development process (from R&D through to touring), as well as the touring model itself. The development of craft skills, and opportunities for employment in the making process, are too important to be left to chance. It therefore seems sensible to have one further look at this important area of activity to identify proposals that better meet audience needs, represent value for money, and find greater favour with the sector itself.

What we'll do...

A clear consensus has emerged around the proposal to develop a structured multi-year investment programme in some areas. We also note the call to maintain an open programme which can support emerging talent and respond to specific circumstances and opportunities.

In contrast, the proposal to adopt a longer term approach to the development of touring product was less well supported. Two things have become clear through our analysis of what you have told us. Firstly, investment in the company rather than discrete projects/productions is seen as having far greater value, and secondly, there are other complex issues relating to touring both in and beyond Wales which need further investigation.

This feels counter-intuitive, not least because the current model is described as *'Expensive, heavy on resources, short term and often with token elements of engagement. There are more localised, embedded models that allow work to emerge from relationships that are developed over time.'*

It feels as though more work needs to be done in this area.

We will...

- Move forward with the development of a programme of structured multi-year funding for some programme areas
- An open programme of funding that offers developmental support for emerging artists and companies will remain an important aspect of our funding
- We'll ensure that funds are retained to respond quickly to specific circumstances
- More consideration needs to be given to the development of an effective touring model that maximises good quality work on a value for money basis. The 'slate' proposal has received little support, and we need to work with you further to identify a practicable and responsive structure to support the development and touring of work.

Topic 5: All about the artist

What we heard...



“Funding for artists is important for the ecology of the whole sector”

“One of the grotesqueries (sic) of public arts funding is that artists themselves are often the least well paid and last to be paid in the entire system...Why do you value artists and their experience so little? You need to make wholesale changes to the way you support artists. The status quo inflicts poverty on them”

“When money is SO tight there has to be responsibility on those who get a significant share of the funding to support, train (and employ) Wales based artists”

“Investing in people is the best way to sustain a career”

Unsurprisingly, this topic elicited significant, detailed written responses and debate during the consultation meetings. It was widely acknowledged that the most significant subsidies for the arts in Wales come from artists who are not receiving a fair level of remuneration for their work.

Respondents welcome the fact that we're able to provide support at key moments in an artist's career. However, building a viable, sustainable career from a Welsh base remains elusive for many.

By developing the capabilities of artists, we'll be better able to retain and renew the creative pool of talent working in Wales. We need approaches that deliver the development of talent, opportunities, funding, and which create peer group networks from the early to the mature career artist.

A wide range of ideas emerged through the consultation which can be grouped according to the following themes.

- Supporting the arts ecology – structures to make and show work
- Longer term investment in the artist.
- Helping provide access to work spaces
- Supporting other aspects of career development
- Clearer guidance on fees for artists
- More networking opportunities

Many respondents noted their frustration with the complexities of our current application system and called for a simplified process. This is noted and will be addressed in Topic 11.

What we'll do...

The range and detail of the responses received, alongside the discussions at the consultation meetings has been rich and constructive. Some very clear and consistent themes have emerged and in most instances we're in a position to take these forward.

It's interesting to note that some of the points raised don't relate directly to Lottery funding, but more to how the arts ecology and infrastructure could be improved. It's important that this is acknowledged in our wider strategies and ways of working.

We will...

- Create a business development support service for artists
- Agree industry standard fee guidelines and make them a condition of funding
- Explore with the Arts Portfolio Wales ways in which those with work spaces and resources could make them more available to individual artists and small groups
- Explore with the Arts Portfolio Wales and other partners how we can develop a structured programme of creative residencies throughout Wales
- Create more networking opportunities for artists to meet and exchange knowledge and experience.
- Explore the viability of introducing some form of time-defined Living Wage 'allowance' for individual artists (examining, for example, similar schemes in Ireland, Canada and Finland). This could create time and space for an artist to concentrate more fully on their creative practice. We recognise, however, that this could be a controversial proposal as it would provide support for artists that is currently not available for other professions

Topic 6: Career development/leadership

What we heard...



“I strongly support your suggestions and would like to see them woven into a national strategy for workforce development that is sector led”

“Training is energising, inspiring, revitalising and crucial if Wales is to be vibrant and credible”

“It is important that professional development is not tied to employees or organisations as many creative practitioners will have portfolio careers”

There was a very strong consensus around the proposal to offer more structured professional support for people working in the arts. This would be complementary to the development of individual arts practice and might, for example, involve curators, producers, marketers and fundraisers. We also noted that career development opportunities should also be open to freelance workers who operate independently of an established organisation. People should have access to training at all stages of their career and that these opportunities should encompass a range of skills required in the sector.

The following themes were those highlighted in both the written submissions and public consultation meetings:

- Very strong support for career development for people from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Support for bespoke leadership programmes
- More networking opportunities
- The crucial role of the Arts Portfolio Wales organisations in offering apprenticeships, mentoring, placements/shadowing opportunities
- Freelance workers should have access to training

In the consultation paper we asked whether organisations would find it useful for support to be available that could offset the cost of releasing of staff for training. Whilst this was endorsed, there was less clarity as to what form this would take on a practical level. There did not appear to be clear support for short term cover or backfill. There was a sense that this might not represent best value for money when compared with other competing demands.

What we'll do...

We're pleased to note the strong consensus around the proposal to enhance and widen support for career development. We'll give further detailed consideration as to how we take this forward under the banner of a Workforce Development strategy. It's likely that the support will comprise a mix of structured programmes alongside bespoke individual training programmes.

We will...

- We'll work with like-minded Trusts and Foundations to extend the placement scheme for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds
- We'll offer bursaries to accredited leadership programmes
- Help create and support networking opportunities where learning can be shared
- Support freelance professionals to access training
- Explore the potential for increasing the number of placement/shadowing/internship/apprenticeship schemes provided by Arts Portfolio organisations.

Topic 7: Encouraging greater resilience

What we heard...



“Resilience affects all arts, from individual artists and small community organisations to large national organisations and venues”

“Avoid the hit and run of consultancy”

The importance of public investment in the arts is well-recognised and supported. However, in times of austerity we know that we must encourage greater resilience and sustainability: reducing the extent of dependence on public funding and helping organisations to maximise earned income. It was pointed out that this is as important for the individual artists as it is for organisations.

The proposal to open the current Resilience Programme beyond APW organisations was almost unanimously supported. (Only two respondents disagreed.) There was a clear recognition that all organisations (small, emerging, project-funded) face the same challenges as the Portfolio organisations – perhaps even more so.

Respondents noted that:

- the Resilience Programme needs to be open, far-reaching and wide-ranging
- there should be greater clarity regarding the Arts Council’s role in delivering these services
- The Arts Council should play a greater role in disseminating good practice and for organisations to do likewise
- other providers should be signposted where appropriate

The need to share learning and good practice was also a common theme which emerged with one respondent noting the need for *‘...a cascading environment where organisations receive funding for business support then share their learning with other organisations.’*

What we'll do...

We welcome the enthusiasm for this proposal. However, we do note the calls for more clarification as to what such a "version 2.0" Resilience Programme would offer and detail as to how it would be accessed. It's likely that we'll devise a programme which will be based on that which has been available to the Arts Portfolio to date. The Arts Council and its staff will manage the overall delivery of the programme, but specific activities will be undertaken by experienced expert Associates with a wide range of skills.

Sharing learning and good practice will be an integral part of the scheme and we envisage regular sessions where organisations and Associates will come together.

We will...

- Develop new Resilience scheme for non APWs
- Share learning in a more structured way
- Discontinue the current Business Development application strand of funding and devise an alternative access route.

Topic 8: Working with the Arts Portfolio Wales

What we heard...



“We don’t think this criteria has been particularly clear to date”

“As an APW client...we are still reliant on Lottery funds to deliver some main aspects of our work....so the idea of dropping Lottery funding consideration for APWs to us feels frightening”

“In order to make the arts accessible for everyone and to achieve true diversity....then it is right to prioritise smaller organisations and individuals, as for many funding would make an invaluable difference”

We asked whether revenue-funded Arts Portfolio Wales organisations should also be eligible to apply for Lottery funding. Despite the apparent simplicity of the question, this is a complex and sometimes highly-charged subject. This is reflected in the range of responses received. We noted (in the consultation meetings in particular) that the majority recognised that APWs essentially underpin the arts ecology in Wales. As such they should be adequately funded.

There was a strong view that if Lottery funding was to be available to the APW, there needed to be a very high threshold of “additionality”. In particular, it was suggested that Portfolio Organisations might have a duty to support smaller organisations, alongside emerging and established artists. This view emanated from both within and beyond the Portfolio.

A new set of criteria emerged from the consultation responses which defined when additional Lottery funding would be appropriate.

- **Additionality and innovation.** There should be a strong presumption that APWs should only be able to access funds for initiatives which are innovative, different and clearly additional to what’s already on offer.
- **Funding the ‘best’ projects.** Some respondents noted that the issues to consider is not whether APWs can access Lottery funding – rather that the Arts Council should ensure that it is supporting projects which best meet its published criteria and strategies (wherever they come from).
- **Transparency of decision making.** There was a clear view that Arts Portfolio organisations should be able to apply for lottery funding as long as the process is clear and equitable. One respondent noted, *‘We don’t think this criteria has been particularly transparent to date’*

Perhaps the most significant issue is the acknowledgement that not all APWs are the same and that levels of funding within the Portfolio vary drastically. Many organisations would not be able to deliver a full programme of activity without access to additional funding. In reality, this isn't a demand that Lottery funding should be expected to meet.

Levels of grant-in-aid are usually reviewed every five years as part of the Investment Review process (next to be held in 2020). If there is any re-balancing of APW core costs, it can only be considered as part of that process.

What we'll do...

There are complex and multi-faceted issues here which will need a range of tailored responses – not all which will be matters of Lottery funding. Prominent amongst these is how our forthcoming Investment Review 2020 can resolve the question of 'proper funding' for the Portfolio. We recognise the view that too many organisations are reliant on additional funding in order to present a full programme of high quality work, but Lottery funding isn't necessarily the right answer.

The Arts Portfolio is often best placed to nurture and support artists and smaller organisations in their locality. However, we accept that they're often too stretched to be able to provide the service they would like to. Access to additional Lottery funding in these areas might help APWs extend and enhance the support they provide.

We're concerned that there appears to be a perception that there's a different regime for the assessment of APW Lottery applications. The impression seems to be that these applications for funding aren't subject to the same robust level of scrutiny as for those organisations who are not part of the Portfolio. This isn't something that we recognise – assessment criteria are consistently applied in all cases. However, if this perception exists, we need to remedy it.

We will...

- Ensure that we communicate our decision-making process in a more effective way. Our new programme Guidelines will include a step-by-step guide to the assessment process, and all criteria will be clearly explained. We're also looking at how we will involve external stakeholders in our decision-making (see Topic 2). Demonstrating that all applications are subject to a fair and open process is fundamental to good governance and accountability.
- Only consider funding to APW organisations if a) they're the only ones who can deliver a particular project; and b) that they meet a higher threshold test in demonstrating quality, innovation and public benefit
- Explore how APWs can best be supported to offer a range of services for artists and organisations within their locality.
- Ensure that we consider the Consultation responses when framing the terms of Reference for our forthcoming Investment Review

Topic 9: Taking Wales to the world

What we heard...



“All international projects are so important in so many ways. It shows the world that Wales is a place where exciting arts projects happen and can teach other cultures as well as learning from them. How else does society grow except by having new experiences and learning new skills? A very important part of the Arts Council’s support”

Just prior to this consultation, we published a new International Strategy. This itself has been the subject of extensive public consultation and discussion. We are also assisting the Welsh Government in co-ordinating consultation around its own international strategy.

The written responses endorse funding for international work, variously describing it as *imperative*, an *important part of the ecology* and *more important than it’s ever been*. Working internationally is therefore key to developing a dynamic and exciting, open and welcoming country with creativity at its heart.

The consultation paper proposed three priorities; continued support for artists and organisations through the International Opportunities Fund; investing in Wales-based artists to develop new international markets, participate in international showcasing events and support skills development. There was also support for conferences and opportunities to build international networks. All three received strong support, but not as an end in themselves. The true value of these initiatives is best realised through a carefully planned and progressive programme of development with individual artists and organisations.

‘Programmers respond to meeting artists and seeing their work in the context of their own cultural language.’

Several respondents were aware of research being undertaken by the British Council and proposed that an International Showcase should be held in Wales, although there was no consensus around what form this might take.

There was a desire for increased collaboration with other agencies in order to share ideas, contacts and resources.

This topic raised debate about the relationship between Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland. There were calls for more to be done to encourage joint working and touring across the other ‘home’ nations.

What we'll do...

Our arts, our culture and our languages give Wales its unique global personality. And this unique cultural context resonates with many other minority languages and cultures. This will be a strong feature of our work around the UNESCO Year of Indigenous Languages.

We want to create a new cultural context that nurtures international understanding and tolerance through engaging with the diverse international communities in Wales. It is not enough for us to see international working as an opportunity to 'exploit,' we must find ways of giving back and enriching cultural connections. This becomes all the more important in a post-Brexit context where we have to re-define our relationship with Europe.

We will...

- Continue to deliver the International Opportunities Fund
- Work with the new Resilience business processes to ensure that artists and arts organisations with the potential to develop new international opportunities are market ready
- Provide support for a designated programme of international showcase events as part of a wider programme of professional development
- Invest in projects that build cultural bridges with international communities living and working in Wales. An international outlook should also help us to better understand and engage with the diverse communities who have made Wales their home.

Topic 10: Funding for Capital projects

What we heard...



“If the ACW is interested in developing a healthy, fit for purpose arts scene across Wales, then it is appropriate that there is funding for capital projects”

“Vital, essential and a necessity”

The responses to this topic were on the whole, very straightforward. There was a strong endorsement of a Capital programme which focussed on projects which would support organisations to become more operationally and financially resilient. This included schemes which improve physical access and those which increase environmental sustainability and efficiency.

Respondents encouraged partnership working with a range of organisations including Local Authority regeneration teams and other Lottery distributors. There were also calls for investment in other types of project including rehearsal/work spaces, vehicles, stage equipment and support for digital initiatives. We note that the need for rehearsal and work spaces has been raised elsewhere within the consultation responses. It is a consistent theme in relation to individual artists and organisations that are not venue based.

Within the consultation meetings in particular there was a consistent call to find ways in which smaller touring companies could access equipment and vehicles through some form of pan-Wales ‘loan’ scheme’. It was felt by many that this would help reduce costs and also lighten the administrative burden.

When respondents addressed the scale of investment, there was a sense that Capital funding should be smaller scale for smaller organisations and more widely distributed.

What we'll do...

Although our Capital Programme is closed to any major new projects, we recognise that we need to consider the maintenance of a very focussed programme which can offer support to some of the areas noted above. As Lottery funding has declined in real terms, the budget will be relatively modest and any projects supported will clearly need to be aligned with the three priority areas.

We are interested in the ideas for an equipment/vehicle loan scheme and recognise that this could be beneficial to many touring companies. We will explore the feasibility of such a scheme in greater detail.

We will...

- Establish a modest Capital investment programme with a clear focus on **environmental sustainability and efficiency, improving physical access in all areas, improving financial and operational resilience.**
- Work with other partners to explore how we can help increase access to workspaces for artists and smaller organisations
- Undertake a feasibility study to explore an equipment loan scheme

Topic 11 – Making things easier for you

What we heard...



“The challenges for any funding body are huge: balancing the need for fairness, simplicity and rigour, with pressure both on assessment time and available resource. However, subsidy plays a huge role in the shaping the sector, and the way it is shared is a strong statement about who and what is valued”

“Strands are variously described as being – confusing, limiting, inflexible”

“The lack of creative communication between ACW’s officers and its clients, and the emphasis based on process are a major barrier”

This topic focussed on the process of applying for Lottery funding. The proposal to end the multiplicity of strands received wholehearted support. And a number of respondents expressed frustration at having to make a project ‘fit’ current requirements. There was recognition that the strands will need to be replaced with alternative criteria which focus investment on the priorities in the Arts Council’s Corporate Plan.

The proposal for a new entry level ‘super-fast track’ programme for lower amounts of funding (up to £2,000) was strongly endorsed. There were many comments on the current financial ‘banding’ level for small grants in general. The current cap of £5,000 is seen as restrictive and often means that artists and practitioners are being paid very low fees. The proposal to improve support in the application process for disabled people also received widespread support.

A common theme which emerged both in the public consultation meetings and through the written responses is the need for more support from the Arts Council throughout the application process. There is clearly a desire for Officers to be more visible and to offer clear, practical and consistent advice and support through face to face dialogue.

Numerous practical suggestions were made to improve the application process.

What we'll do...

The number of responses to this topic – both written and in the consultation meetings - and the rich variety of ideas, persuades us that a 'root and branch' review of this aspect of our work is needed. Whilst there are certain obligations that we need to fulfil as a Lottery Distributor, we agree that much can be done to simplify and streamline the current process. Some key principles – such as raising the financial limit, introducing an entry-level scheme, and improving support for disabled applicants can be agreed immediately however.

We also note the very clear view that we could do more to support you throughout the application process. The point relating to increasing visibility and availability of our Officers is well made and consistently recurs in other parts of the consultation. During the coming months we will take forward:

We will...

- Undertake a root and branch review of the current process which aims to simplify and streamline
- Replace the current 'strands' with a more open format guided by the 3 key principles of our Corporate plan
- Devise a new entry-level programme for first time applicants
- Amend the current small grant banding 'cap' from £5,000 to £10,000, and explore the financial implications of raising the upper cap on larger applications above £30,000
- Introduce structured professional support for disabled applicants
- Ensure that our Officers are available to provide advice and support throughout the application process.

Topic 12 – Over to you

What we heard...



This open topic drew a wide range of responses. In particular there was a focus on the strategic and practical expectations that you have of the Arts Council, the services we provide now and could provide in future, and what support you need from our Officers.

Four key themes emerged.

- **Advocacy.** Many of you felt strongly that we should do more to demonstrate the importance of the arts and the added value they bring to society. The Arts Council should be better at promoting the work it funds and do more to share success stories.
- **Partnerships.** The Arts Council should seek out and forge strategic partnerships that bring tangible benefits to the sector. We should also broker relationships between organisations to help deliver our strategic objectives. This message permeated all topics presented within the Consultation paper.
- **Information sharing.** There are many calls for us to be better at sharing information that could benefit the sector. The Arts Council should be signposting more effectively across a wide range of subjects and enable sharing of learning and best practice. We should also provide more accessible and user-friendly support via webinars, Q&As and the publication of the data that we collect.
- **Arts Council Officers.** There is a real demand for a shift in what's perceived to be our Officers' current working practice. It's felt that they need to be more visible in localities across Wales and in doing so challenge the often held view that the Arts Council is Cardiff focussed. We need to be more 'on the ground' seeing more work, forming relationships across the breadth of the sector, offering sustained practical advice and support that goes beyond the application process.

What we'll do...

Once again the range and focus of the responses are rich and insightful, highlighting particular areas where the Arts Council could improve its services to you. We recognise most of the points you make and in some cases we are already exploring what we can do better.

We will....

- **Advocacy.** We wholeheartedly agree with the points made here. We know we have some fantastic stories to tell and we need to tell them better. We have a new Communications Strategy which reflects this ambition, and we hope that our new website will be a far more effective resource than previously. We hope that you will notice a marked change in our (and your) public visibility over the next few months. We also need your help to identify and share material.
- **Partnerships.** Again we fully agree the points made. Indeed, partnership is one cornerstone of our Corporate Plan and will be central to the way we work over the next five years. Partnership will be an underlying principle to many aspects of our work and will run through our new Lottery programmes too.
- **Information sharing.** From the responses received in writing, and the discussions in the public meetings in particular, we realise that this is an area where we really need to do better. It was uncomfortable to hear that people had little knowledge of the services available across the Arts Council, and to note the relatively low awareness of many of our schemes. We also agree that there should be more opportunities for sharing good practice across the sector. This will be a key part of our ongoing Communications Strategy.
- **Arts Council Officers.** We are a small team and have had to reduce significantly staffing numbers over recent years. Nevertheless, we can't ignore the fact that a recurring theme throughout the consultation was a desire to see us working differently. We must listen carefully to what you are saying. Some of the comments made were uncomfortable to read and listen to, but we also take heart from the view that where it works well, the work of our Officers is viewed as essential and of quality. Over the next few months we'll look closely at ways in which we can improve our visibility and increase the accessibility of our staff. We will keep you posted on a range of new initiatives currently under consideration.