



Celf Cymru: yn bont o'n bro i'n byd
Wales Arts: a bridge to the world

International Strategy for the Arts Council of Wales
by Wales Arts International



Gareth Bonello and Zining Wang

Context

Arts Council of Wales' commitment to international working has never been more important. With the shifting sands of place and community around the globe, navigating tumultuous seas has become a new norm. At such times the arts are vital, shining a searching and illuminating light on the world we live in.

The arts help us to explore our sense of place and the world that's around us – to appreciate the wisdom, beauty, insight and understanding of cultures other than our own. It's our artists, observing the world in its sorrows and absurdities, its hopes and fears, that reinvent the cultural expression that illuminates our lives.

When the world seems more extreme and intolerant, arts and culture have a fundamental role to play in bridging our cultures and in uniting people – within Wales and with the world beyond.

This is why working internationally is so important, now more than ever, in developing a dynamic and exciting, open and welcoming country with creativity at its heart.

Our artists have always been natural explorers. Borders are not barriers, to the imagination or to the creative process. Our artists are cultural ambassadors and speak effectively for the world in which they work in Wales and for Wales when they're exploring the world.



Liminality, Delhi Manas Sharma (image:Janire Najera)

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 and our story is relatable around the world. From our experience of nurturing a bilingual culture; our ground breaking inclusive arts practice; our prioritisation of culture within sustainable development goals to our inspiring Creative Learning through the Arts Programme and our growing ambitions in Arts and Health – these all resonate internationally.

Every day we hear inspiring stories about the ways that artists and arts organisations are building community and civic life. But we're being challenged to show how we're responding to a new energy borne of the frustration of those who feel marginalised, ignored or forgotten. Others live their lives in fear of racism and cultural distrust of "the other" .

Inequalities and poverty in our communities are reflected in the many cultural, social, physical and economic barriers that impede people's access to the arts and their engagement with the world. In some cases, communities can feel as much of an affinity with a country elsewhere as they do with their fellow citizens here in Wales.

Creating a new cultural context that nurtures international understanding and tolerance through engaging with the diverse international communities in Wales, ensuring equalities of opportunities for all and sharing good practice in terms of inclusive work is a new ambition for the Arts Council, supported by this strategy.

As we mark 100 years since the end of the First World War, and as we develop a new relationship with the European continent, growing peaceful relations between peoples and communities in Wales and their relationship with the world is now at a premium.

We will not do this alone. Wales will respond more effectively to future challenges if it can develop a confident joined up approach to international engagement. For the Arts Council, this means working closer with other agencies in the broader cultural sector as well as increased communications with relevant Welsh and UK government departments and agencies responsible for culture and creativity; foreign policy; trade and industry.



Xian Zhang performing her inaugural concert as BBC National Orchestra of Wales' Principal Guest Conductor (Image: BBC/Ealovega)

Who we are ...

The international activities of the Council extend across the whole of our organisation and across the breadth and depth of our investments. These activities are often (but not exclusively) developed, supported and / or co-ordinated by our in house agency, **Wales Arts International**.

By offering a gateway between the arts of Wales and the world, Wales Arts International is a think-do tank for the Arts Council and the arts in Wales. It provides professional expertise and leadership that helps the Arts Council overall to research, test and deliver its international objectives.

WAI's small core team of staff work with individuals across all of Council's portfolio; as well as with Welsh Government Officials, British Council and others to support a global outlook to the arts and culture of Wales. We work in partnership to develop a focused ambition and to realise our combined international potential.

Our purpose is to

- ensure Welsh artists engage internationally;
- help develop and enrich artistic practice, careers and ambition;
- grow new global opportunities for the arts and culture of Wales;
- invest in artistic collaborations that inspire and connect people in diverse communities in Wales.

The **Values** that guide our approach to international work are:

Collaborative Multilingual
Sustainable Welcoming
Globally responsible Reciprocal
Meaningful Developmental
Respectful of other cultures

Our audiences

Our work will be driven by our audience engagement. Our audiences are varied and are global. They are:

- artists and artistic companies in Wales
- the people and diverse communities of Wales,
- policy makers, arts and cultural agencies in Wales, the UK and internationally.
- Arts Council of Wales, its staff and partners.



Block, NoFit State (image: Dan Tucker)

Making choices

Our international strategy

There are five main ambitions to our international work. They are:

1 Our sector is recognised on the world stage and has an impact internationally.

We will do this by...

a) building the capacity of Wales' arts sector to engage and participate internationally.

We will encourage our artists and organisations to travel, broaden their experience and develop new creative connections. We will work with them to ensure that they are prepared and equipped to exploit established international markets. We also expect them to share their experiences to inspire people and communities in Wales to engage with the world.

b) supporting opportunities to showcase Wales' art and artists internationally.

We will invest in projects at home and abroad that connects Wales' arts to international opportunities at home and abroad to promote and sell their work.

2 Assisting Welsh Government in the delivery of its international ambitions.

We will work with the Welsh Government to identify opportunities for the arts, cultural and creative industries to contribute to and benefit from the impact of international trade deals and delegations as well as to the global citizenship ambition of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

Placing the arts at the centre of Welsh Government's international strategy and branding will help to project Wales' unique cultural identity and global personality in a post Brexit world.

3 Redefining our relationship with Europe.

We will renew and strengthen our relationships with key networks and cultural sector institutions. We will do this by participating in key European networks (IETM, On the Move, Culture Action Europe and NPLD*) in partnership with Welsh Government global offices and its cultural agencies as well as with British Council and UK government agencies.



Meet Fred, Hijinx (image: Tom Beardshaw)

4 Building cultural bridges with international communities living and working in Wales.

We will use arts practice as a way of building better relationships between Wales' many diverse communities, and use our international links to find new ways of building cultural bridges between the different languages and cultures in Wales.

5 Providing information, intelligence and advice for our audiences.

Developing Wales Arts International as a trusted brand and an authoritative source of information on opportunities and advice on international matters and on the arts in Wales for international partners will be a priority. We will also research and explore emerging trends and potential new markets.

Our global relationships

We are a small nation with large ambitions. Whilst we take an active interest in the work of our artists, wherever in the world they are working, from Cameroon to Brazil, our principal strategic partnerships are focused on a smaller number of countries.

We will develop our work as much as possible in those places where there is a “greater good” benefit for Wales. We will, as often as possible, work collaboratively with a plethora of Welsh and international partners in areas of geographic priority.

Strategic activities led by artists and companies in other countries will be encouraged and supported.

Our own strategic efforts are focused where we can best make a difference, where it is in Wales’ cultural interests to do so, where there is reciprocity, and where we are present with a long term engagement that has cultural and / or financial weight.

Geographic priorities for Arts Council of Wales are those where:

- Welsh Government has mandated us to develop cultural relations
- Wales is present with a long term engagement and with political, cultural and financial weight and a sustainable relationship
- the opportunities to exercise soft power achieve outcomes beneficial to Wales
- there are significant development opportunities for the arts in Wales
- there are relevant connections to the cultural life of Wales
- there is a reciprocated commitment to working with Wales

Our current geographical focus is:

Europe – re-defining our relationships with EU countries

China – growing the impact of the China-Wales Cultural Memorandum of Understanding for the arts

Canada – developing a new focus for our Americas work and revisiting our long standing cultural conversations with Quebec

India – a legacy programme from the recent India – Wales programme, involving Sub-Indian continent communities in Wales

Nations and regions with longstanding cultural & linguistic connections to Wales – in the context of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, the Cymraeg 2050 strategy and the UNESCO Year of Indigenous Languages 2019, we will develop relationships, through artistic collaboration, with other languages and minorities.



Our strategic partnerships

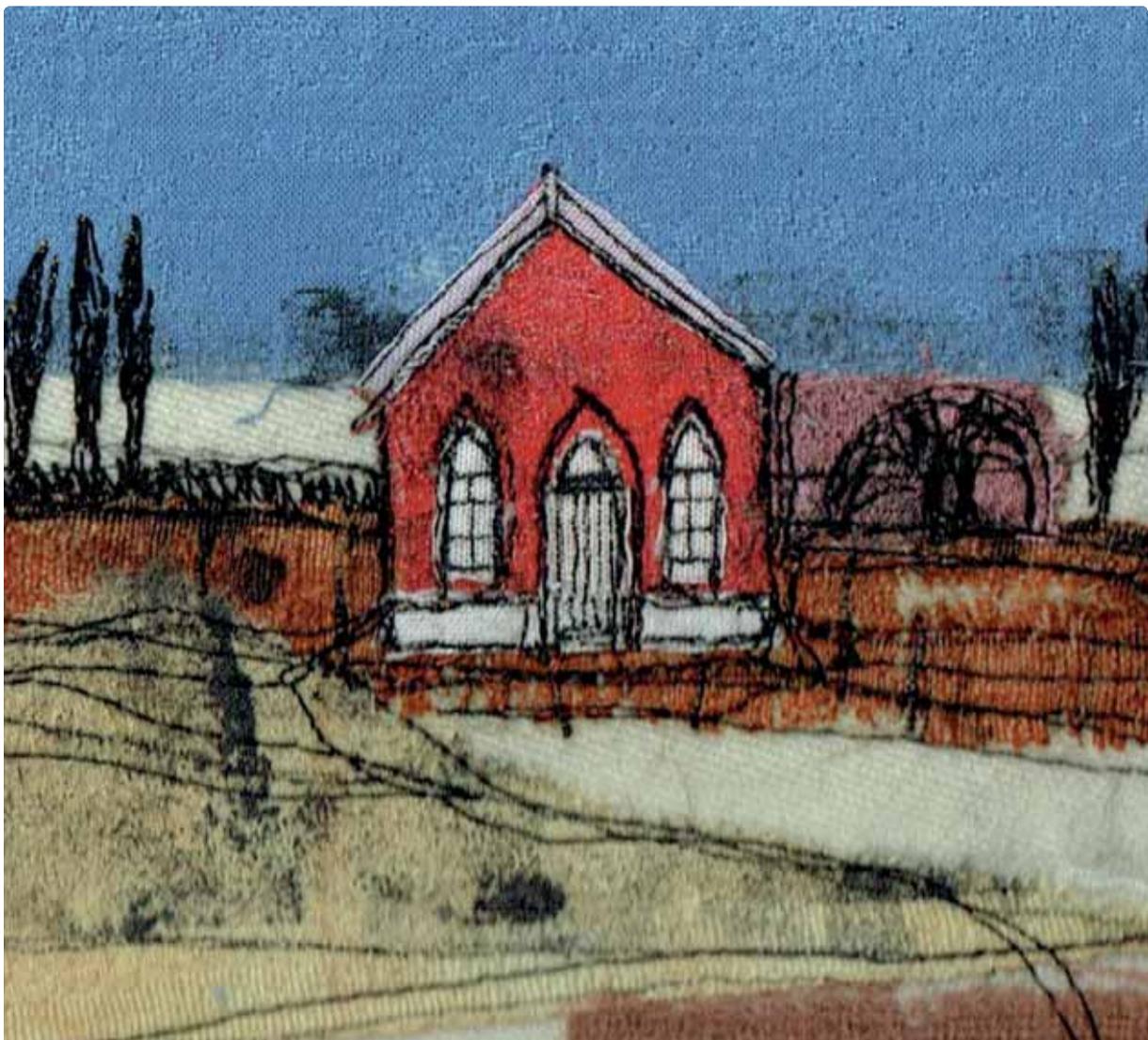
Partnership and collaboration is at the heart of our international work.

We continually nurture existing partnership and develop new ones.

Our main partner is our financial Sponsor, Welsh Government, and we will continue to develop our connections with Welsh Government's international team globally.

The Arts Council of Wales has worked in partnership with the British Council for more than two decades. It is a relationship that is fundamental to Wales' success in the international arena.

The powerful combination of the British Council's established international networks and the Arts Council's in-depth knowledge of the arts in Wales strengthen our nation's international reputation as a centre of creative excellence.



Capel Patagonia, Cefyn Burgess

The services we provide

- **we support and develop high quality arts activity** – we invest public money, using these funds to create opportunities for people to enjoy and take part in the arts.
- **we provide expert information and advice about working internationally in the arts** – we're the national centre in Wales, and part of formal and informal network of information providers (in the UK and internationally) that gather and share intelligence about the arts at home and abroad. Through our Council, our staff and our associates we have the largest concentration of specialist arts expertise in Wales, many with leading international experiences, connections and expertise.
- **We provide advice for international partners engaging with the arts in Wales** – we develop and maintain relationships with key agents and partners in geographic priority areas. We introduce artists from Wales to UK and international contacts and respective opportunities.
- **we raise the international profile of the arts in Wales** – we're the national voice for the arts in Wales, promoting the quality, value and importance of the country's artists and arts organisations.
- **we generate more money for the arts economy** – we explore new international partnerships and avenues of funding and financing to grow the arts in Wales, and we have a presence at international events at home and abroad that open up new markets for Welsh artists.
- **we influence planners and decision-makers** – The arts take place in many different settings. They can have a dramatic impact on the quality of people's lives, and the places in which they live and work. The arts are also frequently at the heart of initiatives to promote the profile of Wales internationally. Our job, in working with different government agencies in Wales and the UK, is to ensure that the contribution that the arts can make is recognised.
- **we research and develop international opportunities in the arts** – in partnership with Welsh Government and UK cultural organisations such as the British Council, we promote internationally the contemporary culture of Wales, and we encourage international exchange and collaboration between artists and arts organisations.
- **we bring people together** through the arts to engender cultural understanding and tolerance.

www.wai.org.uk



Nawr yr Arwr / Now the Hero, Marc Rees (image: Warren Orchard)

Being Sustainable

The **Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015** is a landmark piece of legislation. It aims to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle. All 44 public bodies in Wales – including the Arts Council – have a statutory duty to embark on this journey of change, and to embed the sustainable development into their organisations. We are proud to support Wales' pioneering approach to sustainable development placing culture at its heart as the fourth pillar along with environmental, economic and social sustainability.

As the development agency for the Arts in Wales, we are one of these public bodies and have a fundamental and significant role in the realisation of the wellbeing goals.

The Seven **Wellbeing Goals** are:

1. A prosperous Wales
2. A resilient Wales
3. A healthy Wales
4. A more equal Wales
5. A Wales of Cohesive Communities
6. A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language
7. A globally responsible Wales

5 ways of working commit us to thinking and acting differently.

They're about:

- how we plan and think **long term** about how the decisions that we make, thinking through how we meet the needs of the present whilst protecting the needs of the future
- how we **involve** people from diverse communities
- how we **collaborate** with our partners
- how we **integrate** with other public bodies' well-being objectives that might have impact or affect us
- how we **prevent** problems happening or getting worse.

From the day-to-day management and running of our offices to policy development, all our corporate infrastructure; planning, training and development and financial strategies, we are committed to placing the sustainable development principle at the heart of what we do.

Working internationally presents obvious and significant sustainability challenges, especially issues of environmental sustainability associated with international travel.

Over the period of this Plan we will work with specialist agencies, to improve the sustainability of our activities.

The framework that we operate within is Well being of Future Generations. However, we know that the impact of poverty, food insecurity, illiteracy, income inequality, and poor healthcare, are the lived challenges that many people face on a daily basis.

As responsible global citizens we want our actions to improve the current situation. As one of the world's largest industries, culture can be a key means of bringing foreign money into developing economies, increasing demand for local goods and services, increasing infrastructure and education, and introducing needed foreign investment. However, when managed irresponsibly, international working has the potential to exacerbate current inequalities.

Measuring our progress

It's essential that public funds are spent on activities that provide the greatest possible cultural, economic and social benefit. We need to be able to explain – clearly and accurately – the impact that our investment is having in achieving our priorities. To help us to do this, we attach particular importance to monitoring and evaluation.

Our approach recognises the importance of evaluation at the heart of policy

development. And it will emphasise that the ability to obtain good evaluation evidence rests as much on the design and implementation of policy as it does on the design of the evaluation. These disciplines will be embedded at the heart of our future policy and project development.

Key actions, programmes and activities will be monitored and reported on a regular basis.

Level	Reporting & Monitoring Processes
Corporate Level (five year) commitments	Progress will be monitored annually and adjusted if necessary by Council as part of its annual planning processes.
Operational (annual) Targets	Progress will be monitored as part of the routine quarterly reporting to Council and the Welsh Government.
Projects	Significant projects will be managed using the Arts Council's project management methodology. Where appropriate, projects might also be selected as candidates for external evaluation.
Customer satisfaction	We will undertake 'quick surveys' on a regular basis to assess the extent to which we are meeting our users' expectations.
Conferences, events and workshops	Feedback will be sought on the effectiveness of all public events that we deliver.



So what might be possible, now and in the future?



Carnifal y Môr, National Eisteddfod, Cardiff (image: Nick Treharne)

Wales is changing, and changing fast. A generous, fair-minded and tolerant society values and respects the creativity of all its citizens. It's a society that embraces equality and celebrates difference, wherever it's found in race, gender, sexuality, language, age or disability. These differences are our possibly our strongest assets. They provide an unique cultural narrative for Wales and connectors with others internationally. Our culture is enriched and expanded by learning from the experiences of others from around the world. And as we explore cultures further afield, we learn more about ourselves.

So what could we see, what could you hear in a world in which Culture is understood as central to the meaning of Life?

A world in which Culture joins with those other basic entitlements of security, health, education and prosperity as the means to allow human beings in all their diversity to thrive?

A world in which political and social structures are enlivened by the ability of people to envision themselves and their purposes, individual and social, in the collective delivery of a more equal, fair and sustainable society?

This is why, in pursuit of our international ambitions, we work collaboratively with others to foster cultural understanding between people, governments and nations.

 wales arts international
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