

Arts Council of Wales Response to the Welsh Language Mapping Report 2019/20 (author: Elen Ap Robert)

Introduction and summary

In November 2019 we commissioned research into the amount and strength of Welsh Language arts activity across Wales.

This piece of research was tendered for back in October 2019. An initiation meeting was held in January 2020 with the successful bidder, Elen ap Robert and the work was concluded with a presentation to the Arts Council in September 2020. Although the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic in March 2020 did not affect the bulk of the research period, it was a factor that was difficult to ignore from that point on. The fact of the matter is that the Welsh language has probably been disproportionately affected by the societal impact of Covid 19 - the inability to socialise at community level as usual, the move to digital platforms and the closing of schools for instance. A crisis in the wings has now come to centre stage.

It is clear that considerable time and effort that has gone into developing the research report, both by Elen ap Robert herself and the wide-ranging number of individuals and organisations that responded to the call-out for help and information. We thank you all for the ideas, the offers of help and the encouragement for us to improve our support.

This is our response to the report's findings. We accept the report's recommendations wholeheartedly and with a real sense of urgency. We are totally committed to acting on them with the partners and potential partners this report highlights.

For the Arts Council of Wales this represents an important step-change.

The report confronts us with the fact that it is no longer acceptable for us to be reactive in relation to the Welsh language. We have a clear role in developing it, encouraging its use and value at every opportunity and bringing creativity and imagination to the fight to keep the language flourishing. We need to have a better understanding of the quantity and quality of the Welsh language work we support alongside its effectiveness through the data we collect. We must improve the ways that we support the arts in Wales to embrace bilingualism and see the benefits of it in a contemporary intersectional Wales and global multilingual world.

Below, we explain how we intend to do this. These are high level actions designed to provide a clear direction and timeline for important strategic enabling actions. As such they offer a way of holding ourselves to account for progressing this vital work.

They do not attempt to address every aspect of our development work which will be invigorated and strengthened as an outcome of this report. We will however make sure that our Annual Report on the Welsh Language from now on will provide the scrutiny of them so that we can track progress.

Valuing and promoting the Welsh Language: our commitment

The language provides the means to understand and enjoy an extraordinarily rich literature and culture. The arts thrive on this and play a vital role at the heart of Welsh life.

We want to make sure that Welsh Language opportunities to make, enjoy, take part and work in the arts are as readily available through the medium of the Welsh Language as they are in English. Welsh Language is a civic enabler and a cultural force for richness and diversity.

Given our commitment, over many years, to develop our Welsh Language output it's disappointing that we've failed to make sufficient progress. We know that this must change. The research confirms the sad fact that too many people are unable to attend and take part in Welsh language events and activities close to home. In particular, we're aware that the current distribution of opportunities across Wales is uneven. And provision in our key cities – Cardiff, Swansea and Newport – is poor, relative to the population. Without easy and regular access to Welsh medium activity, it's very difficult to develop and sustain the use of language. This is a challenge that we're determined to be part of the solution of putting right.

The context

The Welsh Government has set out a clear message in its Welsh language strategy, [Cymraeg 2050](#) - the ambition to achieve 1 million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050.

In support of this, the Welsh Government's [Well-Being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act](#) identifies the Welsh language as one of its well-being goals ("A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language"). The Arts Council of Wales has a clear role to play supporting and promoting these agendas. We also have an opportunity to develop this work through our involvement in UNESCO's "Decade of Indigenous Languages".

Developing Welsh language work is one of our priorities in our Corporate Plan, [For the Benefit of All](#) as well as in our new [lottery strategy and the funding programmes that we manage](#).

As a public body, we have legal responsibilities for meeting Welsh Language standards defined in the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and have a [Policy for Promoting and Facilitating the use of Welsh](#).

We work through a range of partners and stakeholders, as well as the artists and arts organisations that we fund. We're aware that our ambitions aren't always as clear or visible to others, and progress in achieving our goals has been slower than we would have wished.

Our research shows that there isn't enough work in the Welsh language being funded by us, whether through our [Arts Portfolio Wales](#) or through the projects that support with National Lottery funding. We're also aware that, for whatever reason, many who can speak Welsh aren't progressing to careers in the arts in Wales. We need to understand why this is the case and find practical solutions.

We also note the diversity of Welsh language communities in Wales and recognise that there is not a one size fits all approach. We're aware that we need to consider how open and accessible activity is and want to commit to working with partners to develop an equal and inclusive approach to Welsh Language work. An intersectional approach to our Welsh language ambitions would extend the reach of Welsh medium arts provision to diverse audiences. Welsh medium arts provision needs and deserves our support across all of the protected characteristics. We are also keen to support Wales' international reputation for its relative success in language transmission and believe the arts have a greater role to play in this. Whilst we believe firmly in bilingual promotion of the arts, we are also keen to grow Wales' linguistic distinctiveness to encourage even more linguistic diversity in the arts in Wales and to innovate around the creative use of multiple languages.

Career pathways for emerging artists and facilitators are an area of priority. It aligns closely with the work that we're developing with our Creative Learning team and the work that they're doing to support the roll-out of a new curriculum in Welsh schools. There is a dual challenge here: firstly, ensuring a depth to the "offer" available to those who want to develop language and artistic skills; and secondly, improving the prospects (and opportunities) for those who want to develop and sustain a career in Welsh.

The Arts Portfolio Wales, as our principal funded partners, have an important role to play in this and we'll intensify our approach to working with them to bring about productive change.

Welsh language considerations will also play a key role in our Investment Review decision-making. Investment Reviews are our five-yearly examination of the Arts Portfolio Wales – the nation-wide network of key arts organisations who receive annual revenue funding. The Investment Review scheduled for 2020 has been deferred because

of the impact of Covid-19. It will now begin in 2021 and will conclude with new funding arrangements for a new Portfolio taking effect from 1 April 2023.

Alongside this research, we've commissioned work looking at the marketing of Welsh language work. We hope to publish this in the final quarter of 2020/21. We expect its findings to also inform the ongoing delivery of our Welsh language development work.

The Objectives of the Research

The specific objectives of the **Welsh Language Arts Activity Mapping** research were:

- To provide a comprehensive picture of Welsh language arts activity happening across Wales, with a particular focus on activity that is not funded by the Arts Council of Wales. This should include reference to the language development sector in Wales.
- To develop a list of potential partners and connectors / influencers for our work (this to include those outside of our usual sphere of influence)
- To develop a list of recommendations / opportunities associated with our current work and the findings of the research
- To support us in developing our vision for the Welsh language that flows from this work
- To develop an action plan that will support us to achieve this

Our response

We welcome – and endorse – the findings of the report. And we're committed to driving forwards the recommendations within it in a timely manner.

We recognise that there's much to do. We can't do this alone. The report's focus on partnership working is an aspiration that we very much share. It's good to note that many in the language sector feel the same. The research provides us a comprehensive list of potential partners who are both ready and willing to work with us.

The recommendations

The Mapping Report highlights 10 recommendations that align with the objectives of our corporate plan *For the Benefit of All*. Set out below you'll find our response to each of the Report's recommendations.

Recommendation 1	“ACW to lead on the creation of a long-term cross sector strategic partnership and associated Memorandum of Understanding between the arts sector and Welsh Language sector, adopting a match funding model for specific agreed initiatives and national projects”
What we'll do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a meeting for the key public sector organisations identified in the research to meet and discuss options for collaborative working. • Facilitate the development of a strategic partnership with clear goals for advancing Welsh language activity • Attempt to establish a Memorandum of Understanding between ourselves and the network before the end of the 2020/21 financial year. • Make sure that our activities support – and reportable against – the requirements of our Wellbeing of Future Generations Act commitments.
By when	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial meetings to be held by November 2020. • Strategic partnership in place by end of March 2021. • Memorandum of Understanding prepared by the end of March 2021

Recommendation 2	“ACW / Welsh Language development sector to establish a Welsh Language Consortium and network made up of members of the Welsh Language sector and the Arts Portfolio Sector, to implement agreed priorities, and to develop closer collaborative working and sharing of expertise and knowledge.”
What we’ll do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite key organisations identified in the research from both the Arts Portfolio Wales and Welsh language sector to meet to discuss options for creative collaborative working. • If shared objectives can be agreed between partners, we will encourage and support the formal development of a Welsh Language Arts Consortium. Our goal would be for this to develop a roster of potential creative ideas for development in line with our objectives. • Ensure that the consortium is diverse and includes Welsh speaking representatives of all protected characteristics
By when	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial meeting by end of November 2020. • Agree whether it is possible to proceed as a consortium by January 2021.

Recommendation 3	“ACW and Language development sector to create a new joint post of Welsh language Arts Development Manager to lead on implementing closer cross organisational/sector working”
What we’ll do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing our capacity to support Welsh language developments is key and we’ll earmark funding to support this recommendation in this financial year. • In consultation with the potential partners identified in the report (and possibly the Strategic Partnership if it’s established quickly), we’ll investigate the most cost-effective way of delivering the recommendation as a matter of urgency
By when	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigation to take place Autumn 2020 • Budget set aside from 2020/21 funds • Post in place by the end of the financial year.

Recommendation 4	“ACW to make it a condition that all arts portfolio boards have at least 25% Welsh speaking member representation”
What we'll do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the boards of all Arts Portfolio Wales organisations represent the public that they serve and champion equalities. (25% may be unrealistic for some organisations depending on their location and purpose. We therefore embrace the spirit of this recommendation but will find an alternative approach to the imposition of prescribed quotas and percentages) • We recognise the influence that a board has on an organisation. We also acknowledge the importance of boards of lived experience of the Welsh language on boards. As overall progress to inclusive and diverse boards has been unacceptably slow, we'll be more proactive in our demands around the make-up of APW boards so that they become more representative and knowledgeable about the needs and interests of those they serve. This will be built into our annual funding agreements for 2021/22 and will be requirement of funding.
By when	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We'll issue clear guidance on the make-up of boards and governance structures, to be established by April 2021

Recommendation 5	“ACW to bring about a step-change in the awareness of the Welsh language – its culture and history, within the arts sector starting with an introduction on language, culture and the history of the Welsh language led by Professor Peredur Lynch and Professor Mererid Hopwood, with all ACW staff”
What we’ll do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure an online learning programme on Welsh cultural history and context is available. • Commission inspirational speakers to prepare audio visual talks for sharing.
By when	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2021

Recommendation 6	<p>“ACW to include, within its wider Welsh Language strategy, a bold and inspiring 5 year strategy (along with an action plan with measurable targets) specifically on increasing the level, variety and consistency of live arts product/content of quality available for audiences across Wales.”</p>
What we'll do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a new inspirational and dynamic Arts Council of Wales Vision Statement for Welsh Language Development in response to the urgent situation we now find ourselves. It will show how we can mobilise all aspects of our work to support the Welsh language. • Work with our APW organisations and our research team to develop measurable targets for the consistency and quality of available product for Welsh language audiences and participants in Wales so that we can work together to show a real improvement. • Work closely with Welsh Language Strategic Network and Arts Consortium (when established) to work in partnership with us on the Vision to ensure that we are using the 5 Ways of Working under the WFGA. • Using our policy for Promoting and Facilitating the Use of Welsh to encourage better scrutiny of National Lottery applications to assess their impact on the Welsh Language. • Ensure a commitment to equality, inclusion and access in all our activities as these are as vitally important in the Welsh language also. • Vision to include Wales' contribution towards protecting linguistic diversity as part of UN Goals and Wellbeing goal of global responsibility.
By when	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision Statement to be develop as soon as possible. • Better data gathering built in the new grant management system by January 2021 • UNESCO project developed with Welsh Government by March 2021 • Our policy for Promoting and Facilitating the Use of Welsh (as required by the Welsh Language Measure's Standard 90) already incorporated into our grant making.

Recommendation 7	“To develop clear and creative pathways into a sustainable career in the arts in the Welsh Language with the FE/HE sector, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and ACW Creative Schools programme.”
What we’ll do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that discussions developed at the Strategic Network have a focus on creative pathways through the medium of Welsh. • Ensure that Welsh language provision and opportunities are appropriately embedded in the delivery of our Creative Learning through the Arts programme • Continue to work on developing imaginative solutions with key partners and individuals/freelancers.
By when	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 2021

Recommendation 8	“ACW to set up and ensure ongoing management of a dynamic central data base of Welsh speaking arts practitioners/artists, thus helping to ‘provide expert information and advice about the arts (ACW corporate plan) identifying the present level baseline”
What we’ll do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider issues relevant to General Data Protection Regulations that might impact on our ability to action this recommendation • Internal baseline of existing knowledge to be captured. • Work with the Welsh Government via their Freelancer Pledge around the possibilities of this recommendation.
By when	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 2020

Recommendation 9	“To significantly increase the number of Welsh speaking practitioners by an agreed %”
What we’ll do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urgently review how this can be actioned through our Creative Pathways programme once an accurate baseline has been established. • Step up our work to support apprentices, mentoring opportunities and work experience in the Welsh language.
By when	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included in the operational plan by April 2021

Recommendation 10	“ACW to share with the sector, information around best practice in Welsh Language marketing and marketing to Welsh language audiences and undertake related research into the needs of Welsh language audiences.”
What we’ll do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We’ve already commissioned a piece of research into Welsh language marketing. This project will conclude in Autumn 2020 and we will subsequently develop our response and associated action plan to drive this agenda forwards in the most appropriate manner • As part of our work to meet Standard 90 of the Welsh Language Measures, we have developed a “Tool Kit” promoting good practice. • Better partnerships with the Welsh Language Sector should enable us to tune into academic, practical and technological developments in a timely manner and extend their profile and use in the arts community. • As a matter of urgency, bring more creativity and imagination into this important work.
By when	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 2021 • Tool Kit to support Bilingual Working already live.

Conclusion

The task ahead is enormous, but we're confident that with the development of strong partnerships and the appointment of dedicated and expert capacity we can achieve our ambitions in a collaborative and involving manner.

COVID-19 has presented us with many challenges, but we hope that the time is right to commit afresh to this journey. We recognise that we, like many others, are looking tentatively at their next steps in supporting the building of a better, more inclusive Wales that recognises and celebrates its diversity and uniqueness. This report is an important step in this journey.

We know that culture and the Welsh language have a key role to play in creating the Wales we want to see. We're committed to being a key part of driving forwards this agenda. Our language is part of our identity as a nation and we recognise our role as an Arts Council in nurturing, embedding and valuing this. As we venture into the uncharted territory of a post COVID-19 world the environment is particularly hostile for the nurturing of the Welsh language. The time for urgent and radical action is now.

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