

## **Communities and Culture Committee**

### **Inquiry into the Accessibility of Arts and Cultural Activities in Wales**

Response from Powys County Council - Arts & Museums Service.

#### **1. Do you consider the Welsh Government to have achieved its commitment of ensuring that 'high-quality cultural experiences are available to all people, irrespective of where they live or their background?' How effective has its investment in arts and cultural activities been in realising this objective?**

##### **Powys County Council's Arts Service response**

Investment via the Arts Council of Wales has undoubtedly sustained and developed cultural provision across Wales in recent years and has significantly contributed directly to the ability and will of Local Authorities to invest and deliver arts provision through its Local Authority Investment Programme and through jointly funding Arts Development posts, many of which have become permanent positions, as is the case in Powys. The Local Authority Investment Programme has played an important role in assisting active arts development, by supporting projects, infrastructure initiatives and also in strategic developments. Investment in artist's projects, venues and organisations has also contributed to ensuring that a certain level and range of cultural experiences occur in Powys. Without the investment made by the Arts Council of Wales, the recent level of activity generated by providers would have been far lower. It is this partnership working and importantly partnership funding with Local Authorities that has produced a stronger footing for the place of arts and culture in communities. There is considerable scope for a more integrated approach to arts funding between Local Authorities and the Arts Council of Wales to prevent the ever present danger of losing provision by failing to identify and align shared strategic objectives or through properly understanding the relationship with the voluntary sector at local level. A vast proportion of arts activity in Powys is generated from within the voluntary sector and this is often independent of direct local or national government influence. Understanding this layer is crucial when building and sustaining a healthy and multi faceted arts and cultural scene through top down investment. Equally, a recognition of the integrity and effectiveness of often marginalised small scale organisations delivering high quality arts provision is needed if these fundamental components of the overall arts and community sector are to continue making a valuable and crucial contribution to the cultural life of communities.

Whilst the need for and purpose of large scale and national companies is understood to contribute to national pride, to the economy and to the artistic and cultural identity of the nation, large scale urban based arts organisations make only fleeting and all too occasional appearances in the arts calendar for Powys residents and rarely genuinely engage with communities in a sustained way.

There are issues related to the stated commitment of ensuring that ‘high-quality cultural experiences are available to all people, irrespective of where they live or their background’. Powys is the largest and least densely populated county in Wales presenting significant challenges in affording residents accessibility to a wide range of statutory and non statutory service delivery, not least access to the arts. ‘True’ or ‘genuine’ accessibility has not been achieved due to a broad set of inter-dependent factors impacting on provision and participation such as transport and geographical location, and ability to pay, particularly for young people. Rural isolation can be a regular challenge for individuals and families wishing to access ‘high quality cultural experiences’, many of whom live in remote areas far from public transport links or other dwellings. For these people their nearest town, which maybe up to thirty miles away by car, represents their community where they expect to access a range of services including entertainment and cultural activity. Whilst small local communities are often very active in generating social events and often feature the arts in their focus for entertainment, such provision at community level is by its nature inclusive and usually voluntary and therefore quality in artistic terms is often not the main focus. This said, the work of community arts organisations at grass roots and the showcasing of local talent in a variety of artistic contexts – e.g. exhibition or performance, is regularly of the very highest standard.

Whilst ‘Arts Outside Cardiff’ has benefited Theatr Brycheiniog and equally the Beacon Status awarded to the Oriel Davies Gallery in Newtown provided valuable funding and recognition of the quality of its work putting it on the ‘national arts map’, these schemes have not had the effect of offsetting geographical investment inequalities or in re-balancing more fairly the nations art spread.

### **Powys County Council’s Museums Service response**

Although CyMAL is an important funding partner for many museums, the criteria for their grants do not always correspond with the needs of museums. At worst this results in museums simply not applying for grants but in most cases museums will compromise projects so that they meet WAG targets, but do not necessarily fulfil their own objectives.

The recognition during the last decade, of the critical importance of education and access programmes to encourage and enable involvement by all has come at a time when pressure on local government budgets has been increasing. Although CyMAL has made available some ‘seed corn’ funding to set up education and access posts it has been extremely difficult to maintain them. These posts are extremely important in developing and maintaining access for all in a large rural county like Powys but they at risk and likely to disappear in the forthcoming round of budget cuts. A Cultural Legislative Competence Order might help prevent this, but WAG does not make allowance for the extra cost of delivering services in a rural setting.

### **Powys County Council’s Archives response**

The investment in archives by the WAG through CyMAL has been relatively minor, concentrating on audience development and service innovation. Accommodation problems continue to be the difficult issues to address for several services across Wales, where both facilities for the public and storage for collections fall short of the

requirement. Unlike the Libraries for Life Scheme there has not been a similar investment in archives to help address these issues.

A strategic review of archive services in north Wales, was undertaken between July and December 2008, and it is unclear what the outcome of this was. The larger services in south Wales, for example, Glamorgan Archives and Gwent Record Office have invested substantial capital in developing new facilities, mainly with funding from the authorities they serve.

Essentially there appears to be no clear strategic direction developed by the WAG on the future of archive services across Wales, and there remains great disparity between services. Until this is evaluated and reviewed it cannot be said that, in terms of archives services, the WAG has achieved its commitment to ensure a high quality cultural experience irrespective of where they live.

### **Powys County Council's Libraries Service response**

The Public Library Service is a universal service with exceptional 'reach', both in terms of geographical coverage and in terms of take-up. Investment in the Service can provide tangible improvement for the people of Wales, wherever they happen to live, and irrespective of background. Services to some client groups, e.g. children, are relatively well-developed; others less so. There is scope to increase the focus of provision with regard to key client groups, in particular: the elderly & infirm, and the young unemployed. Public libraries could deliver on the Wales Government agenda in both areas with the benefit of targeted investment and strategic direction.

### **Powys County Council's Youth Service response (Youth Worker perspective)**

I believe that up to this point the Welsh Government has gone a long way to achieving its commitment of ensuring that high quality cultural experiences are available to all people throughout Wales. As a Youth Worker in a rural area there is currently a great deal of opportunity for young people to access the arts, whether this is through the traditional mediums of theatres, museums or galleries or through new media and the private enterprise.

The Youth Service in Powys actively promotes young people's access to the arts through projects based in individual clubs arts and with the appointment of an Activities Worker – Arts. Recent projects have included a mural project in Brecon, a video project in Ystradgynlais and larger projects provided in partnership with Arts providers such as Touching the Arts and the Powys Youth Arts Festival.

## **2.How exactly are arts and cultural venues – including museums, libraries and archives – actively promoting access, attracting new audiences and encouraging participation in line with the *One Wales* commitment and the Arts Council's strategies?**

### **Powys County Council's Arts Service response**

Theatre and arts venues supported by the Arts Council of Wales in Powys are by their nature serving small but widespread communities. They are necessarily well versed in the need to engage with the whole of such communities and as such regularly serve a wide

range of community needs complimentary to those of arts audiences. By acting as community hubs, new audiences are encouraged into buildings for a variety of purposes and often access venues for a range of reasons, for example to attend a community dance class, a national touring theatre production, a young farmers rally or an exhibition of local art work. Participation therefore commonly takes place at many levels ensuring genuine and sustained engagement.

The pressure on venues to perform well and to meet national and local strategic objectives is increasing, yet resources are diminishing, it is recognised as essential that they develop stronger and more sustainable relationships with the communities they serve and provide mutual support to other players in the field to maximise the benefits gained through networking and partnership working and critically to maximise funding outputs.

Powys County Council is proactive in working in partnership with arts and cultural venues to ensure that they deliver to Powys residents 'high quality arts practice that is imaginative, challenging and accessible and offers opportunities for people to experience the arts and develop their own creativity as participants , artists and audiences'. Arts and cultural venue based provision in Powys is already sparse and both Powys County Council and the Arts Council of Wales simply cannot justify serving certain areas of the county well and others not at all, particularly in light of the *One Wales Commitment*. Grave concerns exist around future provision shrinking, leading to reduced availability of arts and cultural experiences and poorer opportunities for participation, resulting in inequity and greater inaccessibility. In a rural area, if one arts venue or company is lost, there is not simply another over the hill, let alone around the next corner.

### **Powys County Council's Museums Service response**

Museums plan and promote temporary exhibition programmes, educational facilities, and a range of other events and activities in order to attract, appeal and are accessible to a wide range of audiences.

Entry to Museums in the Powys Service are free to residents of the county, but a charge is made to visitors. WAG's policy of supporting free entry only applies to the National Museum. Many prospective visitors to Powys Museums are confused about charging policy and are put off by being asked to pay, since there is a common misapprehension that entry to all public museums is free of charge.

All the museums in Powys provide a range of activities often on a shoestring-budget, but with imagination and enthusiasm.

### **Powys County Council's Archives response**

Through CyMAL there have been some all Wales initiatives to improve access to archives, including the development of the Archives Wales website, which summarises the content of collections of archive material across Wales. Similarly there has been some audience development research, marketing, and the creation of a scheme for a single archive reader's ticket in Wales.

Whilst the success of these is reflected in increased visitor figures for some services, there is greater potential for attracting new audiences and encouraging participation

through online access. Welsh archive services and the National Library of Wales, for instance, have recently signed an agreement with Findmypast.co.uk to webmount digital copies and indexes of the parish registers of Wales. Remote access to archives clearly presents important opportunities for archives and should be an integral part of any strategic review of the sector.

### **Powys County Council's Libraries Service response**

There has been a renewed focus provided by all-Wales initiatives, e.g. the Libraries for Life Programme in particular.

### **Powys County Council's Youth Service response (Youth Worker perspective)**

There is a great deal of evidence on social networking sites that local arts providers are using these to attract new audiences. Again this is an example of cultural venues using new methods to attract younger people to the arts. An example of excellence in this area is the Powys Youth Arts Festival, a partnership project between Powys Youth service, CARAD, Arts Connection and Celf O Gwmpas (funded by ACW) - specifically aimed at engaging young people in the Arts through encouraging them to participate in high quality workshops and inspiring them to develop their artistic capabilities.

### **3. Is the current network of arts and cultural venues in Wales sufficient, and are there any geographic or other issues that continue to act as barriers to participation (e.g. in rural areas or areas of deprivation)?**

#### **Powys County Council's Arts Service response**

The geographic spread of main arts and cultural venues across Wales is insufficient and too sparse in Powys, though particular gaps in 'strategic provision' in rural areas are often augmented by private or voluntary sector arts infrastructure which by its nature is unique, often popular but limited in its requirement, desire or ability to meet government targets for access and equality.

Arts activity in rural areas tends to be less singularly reliant on arts venues due to the scarcity of them and relies heavily on the community and voluntary sector for provision. Whilst this is certainly a strength from a community cohesion perspective, it determines an 'arts offer' which tends to lean too heavily away from professional arts provision and the resultant assurance of quality.

Please also refer to comments in third paragraph in Q2 response above.

#### **Powys County Council's Museums Service response**

Considering the size of Powys, the provision of museums is particularly good ensuring that the council's heritage is well presented. Barriers associated with geography, rurality and deprivation are all present in Powys - factors which are not sufficiently considered in WAG's apportionment of funding for the county. However, they are all under-resourced and managing on minimal budgets. It is likely that the number will reduce in the coming round of public funding cuts.

### **Powys County Council's Archives response**

There is great variation in the pattern of local authority archive services across Wales, which consist of joint services run by West Glamorgan Archives, Glamorgan Archives and Gwent Record Office, and single authority services in mid, west and north Wales. Powys Archives for example serves the whole county from one access point in Llandrindod Wells, but is supported by the local studies libraries in Newtown, Brecon and Llandrindod Wells. The joint services in Wales are the larger services and are comparatively strong, but of course vulnerable to local government reorganisation. Participation is severely hampered by capacity and resources of the smaller services.

### **Powys County Council's Libraries Service response**

The main concern over the coming years will be on safeguarding the infrastructure and maintaining local service provision. This is essential both from the point of view of accessing library services, but also in order to ensure the health and sustainability of our smaller more vulnerable market towns in rural areas.

### **Powys County Council's Youth Service response (Youth Worker perspective)**

In a rural area the greatest barrier to access to high quality cultural experience is the need to travel to gain that access. This is a particular problem for young people who do not have access to transport and where public transport is, to say the least minimal. When promoting the Arts to young people who attend Youth service provision one of the highest costs incurred in the provision of an event would be transport. This then reduces the amount of money available for actually providing the project. In some instances transport can be up to 50% of the cost of the project. Where transport is not provided, attendance tends to be low due to the above mentioned barrier. This makes the cost per head very much higher than in urban areas for similar events.

**4. What will be the impact of the Arts Council's Investment Review on the network of venues and cultural activities that take place across Wales? Do you consider that the Arts Council's decision to discontinue funding to 32 organisations, as a result of the Investment Review, will have a significant impact on the accessibility of cultural venues or activities? Does a concentration of funding avoid it being spread too thinly, and achieving little?**

### **Powys County Council's Arts Service response**

There are few ACW revenue funded mid scale companies/organisations based in Powys - two mid scale venues (Theatr Brycheiniog, Theatr Hafren), one contemporary art gallery (Oriol Davies Gallery), a community dance company (Powys Dance) and a single small scale community arts organisation (Arts Connection), and there are no national companies/organisations in the largest and most central county in Wales. Whilst each of these are recognised as delivering high quality to their particular remits, this naturally limits the range and therefore the overall quality of arts provision offered in the locality in

that the offer is in itself limited as well as the ability for all residents to physically access venues and activities.

It is therefore necessary to develop and support a portfolio that represents a variety in type and scale appropriate to geographical location whilst also taking into account the variances of population spread without penalising access for those in areas of low populations.

Powys County Council recognises the necessity of the Arts Council of Wales Investment Review. Equally it is understood that change is inevitable and that with change constructive outcomes can arise.

However it is felt that mid Powys has taken a significant hit as the result of the Investment Review resulting in three key rural arts providers being cut from the revenue funded client portfolio – Theatr Powys, Wyeside Arts Centre and CARAD. Without these organisations delivering arts in this region and beyond, there will be none other than the aforementioned occasional voluntary arts provision – there is simply nothing else to replace it. Additionally the community arts outreach and community touring theatre activity generated by two of these organisations will be lost to wider Powys.

Without ACW funding, Powys County Council cannot sustain the position of providing enough funding to ensure the continuation of current arts provision to the mid Powys community.

The principle of concentrating funding can work at large scale and in urban areas where there is likely to be a density of activity, but such a principle can have the opposite effect in a rural area and at small scale where scattered micro activity can operate highly effectively with relatively diluted resources. Comparing the outputs in participation and activity in terms of community arts organisations, it is evident that modest but guaranteed investment can significantly address the issue of serving rural communities appropriately. We believe it important to consider the funding allocated to the main revenue clients within the wider context of overall ACW funding for the arts including project grant funding, where a re-balancing of investment into organisations operating in rural areas is called for. This smaller scale professional activity takes place close to the heart of communities and plays a key role in developing audiences, increasing participation and advocating the arts at grass roots level – high outputs at a relatively low cost. We believe funding policy and the setting of strategic objectives should take into account the need for both an ‘outside in’ (national companies touring and outreach programmes into rural areas) and ‘inside out’ (local community arts, arts projects and private provision) approach to initiating and supporting arts activity. The ‘inside out’ approach involving locally based providers being drawn out and linked to the larger local venues and organisations that can provide support, share resources, skills and audiences.

### ***A rural funding model proposal in concept***

We strongly believe that strategic investment is required in the smaller scale (realistically through project funding where revenue funding is not available) through strategic collaboration with the Local Authority and key stakeholders to enable some of these micro organisations to expand into the existing and emerging gaps and to develop sustainable links with the larger revenue funded organisations and venues. This will not necessarily require additional funding from WAG, simply a better partnership approach

between local authorities and ACW towards allocating project funding on a Local Authority area basis. Developing a closer working partnership between ACW and Local Authorities will not diminish their difference of purpose but will strengthen the possibility for better outcomes overall. At a time of radically diminishing resources, the luxury of simply assessing funding applications solely on artistic merit and against broad brush national priorities (which do not always match local priorities), no longer exists. Regional vagaries and nuances can no longer be disregarded. Indeed taking such differences into account will result in a more sophisticated, efficient and sustainable investment approach. The allocation of future funding will require careful balancing against a set of underlying locally identified strategic aims - this will protect and nurture the seedbed of arts and cultural activity essential to the health and sustainability of the overall arts sector. This approach will be highly dependent on the formation of much closer strategic partnerships.

We wish to note that the Night Out Touring scheme has been particularly successful in Powys since it fundamentally addresses rural issues in its concept and we also hope that the new National Theatre of Wales will take into account the needs of rural communities in its artistic planning, again the concept of site specific theatre production is conducive to rural areas.

### **Powys County Council's Museums Service response**

The Arts Council of Wales has cut revenue funding Community Arts Rhayader & District (CARAD) and its recently established Community Museum because it views the organisation as a museum rather than an arts facility.

In reality, many Museums' collections contain art works and promote engagement with art works in exhibitions, activities and events as part of their regular programmes. The funding and support systems do not adequately recognise the close relationship between art and cultural heritage.

### **Powys County Council's Archives response**

The Arts Council's decision to discontinue funding to organisations in Powys has a significant impact on the accessibility of cultural venues and activities. Those that remain, including Powys Archives, are poorly funded, but are highly valued and rated by communities across Powys.

### **Powys County Council's Youth Service response (Youth Worker perspective)**

Of obvious interest here is the removal of revenue funding from both Theatr Powys and CARAD. Both of these providers are highly proactive in encouraging young people to access the arts, in a rural environment. The removal of this funding means that a large swathe of Mid Wales may well have very little, or no, funded provision. The rural nature of the area would always mean that audiences would be small and therefore would not be of interest to private sector providers. This means young people will have to either travel large distances or not access the provision. In Powys there are similar providers to CARAD in Arts Connection, revenue funded (based in Llanfyllin) and Arts Alive, who are not revenue funded (based in Crickhowell) but these are nearly 100 miles apart. I believe

that both young people and adults in mid Powys will choose not to access these providers and this will limit access to cultural activities.

The removal of this funding will also make partnership work in mid Powys much more expensive as transport costs will increase further.

**5. The Welsh Government will not be announcing the Arts Council's budget for 2011-2012 until December 2010. What impact do you believe a reduction in the Arts Council's budget would have on the accessibility of arts and cultural activities in Wales?**

**Powys County Council's Arts Service response**

The impact of a further reduction in the Arts Council budget will simply further reduce accessibility but crucially will limit the possibilities for realigning support at small scale differently.

Larger funding commitments are likely to be sustained at the expense of new growth being encouraged which will lead to the near strangulation of grass roots creative ambition and support to a new generation of arts industry practitioners. The long term effect of this may, on the one hand, encourage yet more resourceful practice such as joint and partnership working but, on the other hand, will tighten up the 'arts machine' into a more static and less dynamic state.

There is a critical point below which smaller organisations in particular have nowhere left to make efficiency savings and can tighten their belts no further. Non revenue funded organisations such as Arts Alive in Crickhowell and the Assembly Rooms in Presteigne have been operating on such minute budgets for so long that should any further spending cuts affect their access to project funding, they would collapse. Each of these examples represent extraordinary value for money and warrant recognition of their contribution to both local and national strategic arts objectives by being funded more fairly i.e. cuts elsewhere allowing for micro investment of this type. These accessible and community focused organisations hold a crucial position within the arts hierarchy, particularly when the larger organisations are forced to operate at a leaner level. It is precisely this type of future consideration which is less likely to be possible should the Art's Council's budget be reduced further.

Any expectations that local authorities will 'step up' following the recent ACW review are deluded, this will not happen.

Please also refer to comments in Q6 response below.

The accessibility of arts and culture is reliant on resources, any further reduction in government arts budgets will inevitably impact negatively on accessibility to those most disadvantaged, including those disadvantaged by rural isolation.

When isolated in a rural location, the importance of locally accessible community and social activity is heightened. When this community activity is reduced, the default position presents as a danger of community members turning inwards and in the case of children and young people turning inwards and becoming more reliant on an already imposing virtual world, serious issues for concern may arise, as yet not fully understood. The very principle of arts development and the encouragement of participation in the arts exists in part to counterbalance this anti-community focused societal tendency.

Please also refer to comments in Q2 & Q3 response above.

### **Powys County Council's Archives response**

Powys Archives is one of the more poorly funded local authority archive services in Wales, and the current economic outlook is giving great cause for concern. There is no capacity to reduce the service further, both in Powys and in many of the local authority archive services in Wales.

### **Powys County Council's Youth Service response (Youth Worker perspective)**

Any further reduction would obviously further exacerbate the above problem.

### **6. Do you have any concerns about the variation in range and quality of local authority cultural services and activities provided across Wales? Are local authorities adequately resourced to consistently fund and support cultural activities in the current economic climate?**

#### **Powys County Council's Arts Service response**

Whilst Powys County Council has a strong track record of support for the arts and places a high value on culture, its own budget is under severe threat and the arts, as a non statutory element of service, is particularly vulnerable to cuts. Powys County Council has received the lowest WAG budget settlement of any Local Authority in Wales for the last two or more years. The calculation used to determine budget settlements does not take into account the extra cost of delivering services in a rural area and the arts, as a non statutory area of service delivery, are likely to suffer.

Powys County Council is not adequately resourced to consistently fund and support cultural activities within the current economic climate whilst recognising the importance of doing so. If the WAG government settlement follows the pattern of recent years or worsens, then facilities and provision will inevitably be lost.

Powys County Council is currently undertaking a review of its own Arts Strategy to ensure that what is provided in the county is as equitable and accessible as possible – however when working with what we consider as less than adequate local provision which is in itself under threat this is impossible. Powys and other rural areas of Wales neither have the range or quality of cultural services that more urban areas benefit from and with subsequent pressures on the local authority to do more with less, then we have grave concerns about how cultural services and activities can continue to be provided at the existing level.

The effects of the ACW Review have not yet cut in, nor indeed has the impact of a possible second wave of cuts been considered in real terms - this in the context of Powys County Council undertaking a review of its own Arts Strategy. This state of flux, whilst causing understandable concern throughout the sector also allows for change.

Communication at a high level needs to be heightened in order to optimise the chance to realise creative solutions when taking cuts so that preparations are made for yet further challenges being imposed allowing for the sector itself to re-group.

### **Powys County Council's Museums Service response**

Despite limited funding Powys Museum Service provides a quality service and, compared to many other local authority areas in Wales, the museums cover the county's heritage and culture very well.

No, Powys is not adequately resourced to fund and support its Museum Service. It is important that politicians both within the council itself and within WAG remain/become aware and appreciative of this cultural richness and its social and economic value.

As a non-statutory service museums are easy targets to cut, although the financial savings are minimal compared to the loss in terms of local heritage, educational facilities and tourist attraction.

WAG should strengthen and increase support for the museum sector by a considered introduction of the Cultural Legislative Competency Order thereby recognising and advocating the importance and benefits provided by museums, both in terms of the role they play not only in recording, conserving and interpreting the nation's cultural history but also in terms of the important contribution they make towards lifelong learning, physical and mental health, community engagement and economic development.

### **Powys County Council's Libraries Service response**

The variation in range and quality of library services is a concern, and one that threatens a number of Assembly initiatives e.g. Public Library Entitlements Agenda. Recent evidence suggests that the disparity is widening.

### **Powys County Council's Youth Service response (Youth Worker perspective)**

Up until now Local Authorities in Wales have done a very good job in providing cultural services to the local population. As with any service at the moment though there is obvious concern as to whether this will continue in the future due to financial constraints. At the moment we do not know what these constraints will be.

**7. The Arts Council of Wales's 2008 [Omnibus Survey](#) suggested that people who were professionals, qualified or involved in non-manual work were more likely to attend an art event than those who were Skilled or semi-skilled manual workers, and non-working people. Is this consistent with your own experiences? Can you provide an explanation for this variation, and how can this variation be addressed?**

### **Powys County Council's Arts Service response**

Powys County Council does not hold recent data which can be used to respond with reasonable authority to this question.

### **Powys County Council's Libraries Service response**

This does not reflect the take-up of public library services in Wales; a high proportion of users are those who did not go on to higher education

**8. The Arts Council of Wales's 2008 [Omnibus Survey](#) suggested that younger adults were more likely to attend an arts event than older adults. Is this consistent with your own experiences? Can you provide an explanation for this variation, and how can this variation be addressed?**

**Powys County Council's Arts Service response**

Powys County Council does not hold recent data which can be used to respond with reasonable authority to this question. However it would appear to be highly dependent on the nature of the arts event.

**Powys County Council's Libraries Service response**

Public library services to children under 11 years have traditionally been well-developed with a focus on promotional and outreach activity. The challenge remains to extend this beyond this age group.

**9. The Arts Council of Wales's 2008 [Omnibus Survey](#) suggested that females were more likely to attend an arts event than males. Is this consistent with your own experiences? Can you provide an explanation for this variation, and how can this variation be addressed?**

**Powys County Council's Arts Service response**

Powys County Council does not hold recent data which can be used to respond with reasonable authority to this question. Again, it would appear to be dependent on the nature of the arts event.

**Powys County Council's Libraries Service response**

Females outnumber males in terms of take-up of library services. This reflects the traditional gender gap amongst library staff, most of whom are female. A better gender balance in the workforce would assist in encouraging the appeal to boys and men: important in addressing the 'literacy lag' compared to the performance of girls in the educational system.

**10. The Arts Council of Wales's 2008 [Omnibus Survey](#) suggested that Welsh Language Speakers were more likely to directly participate in the arts than non Welsh Language Speakers. Is this consistent with your own experiences? Can you provide an explanation for this variation, and how can this variation be addressed?**

**Powys County Council's Arts Service response**

Powys County Council does not hold recent data which can be used to respond with reasonable authority to this question, although Powys County Council recognises the great success of the Urdd and Eisteddfodau in engaging participants in arts activities. Welsh speakers often transfer their passion for the language and their connectivity to the country's heritage through language into all areas of their recreational and creative lives. A passion for traditional and contemporary heritage is perhaps stronger amongst Welsh

speakers and the arts provide a natural and traditional means for expressing and exploring identity.

### **Powys County Council's Libraries Service response**

There is concern at the level of take-up for Welsh Language borrowing amongst adult Welsh speakers, many of whom would have been educated through the medium of English. CyMAL sponsorship is currently being sought to undertake a research project in order to investigate the barriers and recommend strategies for more effective promotion through libraries.

### **11. Are you aware of any other significant variations in the public's attendance and participation in the arts and cultural activities (for example based on ethnic background, disabilities, location in an urban or rural area)?**

#### **Powys County Council's Arts Service response**

Powys County Council does not hold recent data which can be used to respond with reasonable authority to this question.

### **Powys County Council's Libraries Service response**

There is a concern that library users in rural areas will be disproportionately affected by service cuts in the future. In the interest of equality of access it is suggested that this is an area the Assembly Government might keep under review.

### **12. Are there any further comments you'd like to make about the accessibility of arts and cultural activities in Wales?**

#### **Powys County Council's Arts Service response**

Since a significant proportion of Arts Council of Wales investment is made into national companies, many of whom are South Wales or Cardiff based, it will be increasingly important that such companies, with a Wales wide remit reach into the rural heart of mid Wales - Powys, through touring, outreach and education work to ameliorate the gap recently formed through withdrawal of revenue funding to three key players in mid Powys and to add into local arts activity tiers. Furthermore an emphasis on funding for innovative rurally based arts practice will be necessary to allow for creative growth to displace activity lost in the recent review. The development of a vibrant and connected arts infrastructure is currently under serious threat and without creative investment into that which remains and that which may emerge, recent years of investment will leave a vastly diminished legacy of arts for rural populations.

What is lost is not easily recoverable or replaceable. The greatest loss imaginable would be for the people of Wales to lose connection with the sense of cultural identity found through the creative expression and enlightenment offered by the contemporary arts. The arts nourish individuals and communities, binding them; cultivating them; expanding them - without the arts individuals and communities will be diminished, reduced and mal-

nourished. At a time when the resources necessary to provide a full range of holistic services to individuals and communities are limited, let the creative needs of people's hearts and minds not be ignored when formulating funding priorities.

**Powys County Council wishes to thank the Communities and Culture Committee for conducting this inquiry into the 'accessibility of arts and cultural activities in Wales'. We hope that our response will be given detailed and thorough consideration.**

**Contact for response: Lucy Bevan, Arts Development Officer, Powys County Council  
t.01597 827564 e:lucy.bevan@powys.gov.uk**