# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TITLE** | **The development of the National Contemporary Art Gallery for Wales** |
| **DATE** | **19 July 2022** |
| **BY** | **Dawn Bowden MS, Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip** |

The development of a National Contemporary Art Gallery for Wales is a key commitment in our Programme for Government 2021-6 and the Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru. This statement updates Members about the next steps in its development.

I am grateful for the work undertaken so far, through the collaboration between the Arts Council of Wales, National Library of Wales and Amgueddfa Cymru. Good progress has been made on the digitisation of works from the National Collection – by the end of June 2022, 6,210 works had been photographed and 8,095 digital assets, including verso images. The development of the online gallery is gathering pace too, with early development focusing on mobile and desktop websites.

Building on the initial work undertaken by Event and then the Rural Office for Architecture (ROA), a dispersed model for the National Contemporary Art Gallery is being taken forward as a critical first phase, consisting of a number of venues across Wales. This geographically dispersed model will allow greater access to contemporary art to communities across Wales, bringing art closer to people across Wales.

Confidential discussions are continuing with venues to determine their state of readiness to participate in the dispersed model; timescales and the level of resources required. Up to 10 venues are currently being considered. A phased approach will be taken to set up the network of galleries across Wales and further announcements about progress will be made in the autumn.

We are also exploring the potential for an anchor site, which would provide a dedicated and permanent venue, where items from the national collection are exhibited and accessible throughout the year and where the best of Welsh and international contemporary art can be showcased, experienced and created.

Work has started to identify this anchor site. As a first stage, in line with our policy approach, we have invited public sector estate managers from across Wales, through Ystadau Cymru Board, to identify potential venues or land for an anchor site. This request for candidate sites will be issued this month, with responses requested by 31 August. The potential sites will be considered against the criteria set and any sites closely matching the criteria will be shortlisted for further assessment work.

The project partners will shortly be making a series of appointments to drive this work forward. The key appointment of a project director to lead the creative thinking, exhibition design and development and work with the partnership galleries across the distributed network will be a priority.

The National Contemporary Art Gallery steering group worked through the pandemic, to digitise assets in the collection as a basis for delivering several digital projects to entertain and educate, or to support NHS staff and patients. These were developed under the banner Celf ar y Cyd and included:

* Art 100 Celf – an interactive digital platform, which featured on Instagram, Amgueddfa Cymru’s website and the AM Platform. These 100 works have started a national tour of venues across Wales.
* Art in hospitals, which allowed staff to choose images for field hospitals and vaccination centres during the pandemic.
* Artists respond to the now – a short series of creative commissions were created for new contemporary art.
* The collection as a springboard (Cynfas) provided an outlet for diverse voices to discuss the national collection in a magazine format during the pandemic.

We will be engaging with the visual arts community more widely in the development of the National Contemporary Art Gallery.  
  
This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.