

CC(3) AC 15

Communities and Culture Committee

Inquiry into the „accessibility of arts and cultural activities in Wales

Submission from Sybol Crouch

Response from What we'd like from you - consultation questions

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?

This is an ambitious & laudable target. However much remains to be done to reduce/remove social/economic & geographic barriers. One of the most important & successful areas of Welsh Govt investment has been the “Arts Outside Cardiff” (AoC) funding which enabled some progress in redressing the substantial imbalance of opportunity between the capital and other areas of Wales. However this funding stream has now been absorbed into general funding schemes.

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?

Taliesin Arts Centre has an ongoing commitment to promoting access, attracting new audiences & encouraging participation. We strive to deliver on this commitment through a variety of means including:

- Concessionary ticket prices for economically disadvantaged groups
- Special participatory projects for children & young people – especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds

- Arrangements for complimentary tickets with groups such as asylum seeker groups, organisations working with homeless and vulnerable people etc
- Taking the arts outside the building & into the streets through our annual Dance Days Festival

The University run “Egypt centre” offers a model for museums in its active commitment to promoting access which is delivered via a variety of actions/strategies:

- Exemplar Volunteer programme; 140 volunteers of all ages & abilities who are trained, supported & enthused.
- Targeted Saturday workshops for disadvantaged children
- Participation in government programmes to get people back into paid employment – including people with special needs
- Full programme of “hands on” activities for visitors and school groups
- Temporary exhibitions which support interdisciplinary learning

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 (eg in rural areas or areas of deprivation)?

The removal of grants to theatres/arts centres in Builth Wells, Harlech & Blackwood will have a detrimental effect on the ability of people in those areas to access, and participate in the arts.

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?

See above. The investment in these and other theatres/arts centres in areas of deprivation is relatively very modest indeed – for example , Wyeside Arts centre needs something in the order of £90k per year of ACW subsidy – a drop in the ocean compared with £3.5million to WMC.

The removal of support for Gwent Theatre & Theatr Powys will inevitably lead to a serious decrease in opportunities – especially young people – to participate in the arts.

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?

Whilst there may yet be opportunities to make strategic savings in arts expenditure (eg by merging National Theatre Wales & Theatre Genedlaethol to save on administrative costs) it is likely that further cuts will fall disproportionately on those activities/organisations which do not enjoy "elite" status.

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?

Given the harsh financial climate it seems very likely that all non-statutory functions will be cut to the bone. Ironically this will have the most impact in those authorities with a longstanding commitment to the arts eg City & County of Swansea & will be felt less in those areas where the local authority has not supported the arts - or in Cardiff which enjoys the benefit of national organisations which are funded by ACW/WAG.

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?

The difference is not as high as might be expected and is most likely to be explained by the level of disposable income. Differentials in attendance by socio economic group between different artforms is likely to be much more pronounced and whilst again due to cost/income is also influenced by expectation/education and opportunity differentials.

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?

This is too crude an analysis and may be explained for example by the very high numbers of 16-24 yr olds attending cinema and popular music events.

However for example in the case of Taliesin our cinema audience is largely in the 50+ age bracket due to the nature of the films screened i.e “independent/specialist” films as opposed to “blockbusters” and an aversion of this age group to attending city centre venues at night.

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?

Again, a more detailed analysis will show differentials between art forms. So our experience in Taliesin is that jazz will attract more males than for example contemporary dance, although the latter can be explained to an extent by the attendance of college groups to dance events – with dance courses being heavily subscribed by females. Generally the mix of male/female is fairly balanced.

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?

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