

## **RNIB Cymru's evidence on "Accessibility of Arts and Cultural Venues in Wales"**

### **Further Questions from the Communities and Culture Committee on the**

Thank you for hearing RNIB Cymru's evidence on the Accessibility of Arts and Cultural activities in Wales for people with sight problems, we welcomed the opportunity to present to the committee and hoped you found the exchange useful. Please find answers to the additional questions below:

#### **You note that Welsh speakers are disadvantaged in their provision of accessible information. Have you investigated why this might be the case?**

As cited in "Turning Policies into Practice" (2007) RNIB Cymru noted that Welsh speakers are less likely to be able to access information in their required format. We cannot be sure of the reasoning behind this but believe that this is because organisations feel that they have met their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act by providing information in English alternative formats. We believe there is a definite role to play for a Welsh language commissioner in protecting the rights of Welsh speakers with sight problems and have submitted evidence to this end.

The Welsh Synthetic Voice, which has been partly funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, will also provide a means for arts and cultural venues to communicate with people with sight problems. This will mean that blind and partially sighted Welsh speakers would be able to:

surf Welsh language websites,

write and send text messages in their first language,

access the curriculum using synthetic speech,

work in a Welsh medium environment,

scan or download Welsh books or

newspapers and create an mp3 for reading on the move.

The voice will be available from early in the new year, and we hope it will help transform communication with Welsh speaking people with sight problems by arts and cultural venues in Wales.

#### **You both refer to transport limitations impacting on access to cultural activities. Do you have any experience of good practice in transport providers and venues working together to benefit those reliant on public transport, or vice versa experience of obstructive relationships?**

Accessibility to public transport for people with disabilities is a huge issue in itself. The current inquiry by the Equality of Opportunity Committee shows transport can have a huge impact on people with sight problems in Wales. RNIB Cymru works closely with Guidedogs for the blind to promote the needs of people with sight problems in Wales in terms of accessing transport.

We do not have examples of good practice by cultural venues working with public transport providers, though we would of course welcome this. As a first course of action we would like to see venues taking local timetables into account, as we believe fitting a performance or event around public transport would widen access to more people in Wales. If, for example, a performance fits in with the bus timetable, then non-car users in general will have greater access.

If good practice is happening in terms of public transport provision then it needs to be widely advertised in a range of accessible formats (large print, audio, Braille) as people with sight problems need to know services are available in order that they are able to use it.

#### **For more information please contact:**

Mary van den Heuvel

Campaigns Officer

RNIB Cymru

mary.vandenheuvel@rnib.org.uk

02920 449591