

Culture Committee - CC-16-01(p.4)

Date: 7 November 2001

Time: 9.00 am - 12.15pm

Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly Building

REPORT OF THE MINISTER FOR CULTURE, SPORT AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE

Visit to UK With NY Festival – New York City

I visited New York over the weekend of 20/21st October. I felt it was important to show solidarity with New Yorkers and with our cultural events there after the decision to go ahead with the festival.

Its important to place the festival (and my visit) in context. New York is in a state of shock. The nervousness among the population is palpable – heavy policing on the streets (one of the hotels used for the festival was home to a large group of state troopers drafted in from upstate New York) and even the army at strategic points e.g. Grand Central Station. Security checks take place at every building, there have been numerous bomb and anthrax threats, restaurants close early, and taxi drivers report reduced passenger numbers.

The decision to go ahead with the festival was taken after careful consideration by the festival board and before the anthrax attacks. A number of artists took the personal decision, at that juncture, to pull out. Others decided they would take the risk.

I believe the decision to go ahead with the festival was right. Whilst audiences were certainly reduced, for the UK the festival has achieved a good deal. And for New Yorkers too. The UkwithNY street banners were all over town and there was a full screen in Times Square courtesy of Reuters. We filled a gap in New York's show and exhibition calendar, which New Yorkers themselves are in no mood to fill. Venues and spaces were pleased to be used. The Morriston Orpheus Choir singing "America the Beautiful" in Grand Central Station at an evening rush hour was a widely commented on event.

The festival has undoubtedly helped to put Wales on the map and raise our profile in the USA. The festival brochure referred directly to Wales 6 times. Eddie Ladd had a quarter page promotion in "Time Out." The Morriston Orpheus appeared not only at Grand Central and

Carnegie Hall (where they were nothing short of inspirational) but also on television, and the Sherman Theatre made a special impact on the students at the Tisch School of Art. Also in a joint UK exhibition Wales has held it's own with Betsan Rees' cutting edge "body art" along side three other British artists, but clearly the centre of attention; Sean O'Reilly 's installation was on view at Snug Harbour, again with other British artists. Welsh film was covered extensively in cinema and animation events.

A touching collection of letters from Welsh school children were displayed at a point of remembrance, and prayers as well as condolences from Wales were presented to the city at a special Welsh reception held at Carnegie Hall on Sunday 21st, which I hosted, supported by the National Assembly, the Welsh Development Agency, the Wales Tourist Board and the British Council. I also visited St Thomas' Church on Fifth Avenue, where a service had been held soon after the atrocities on 11st September, at which the Prime Minister paid his respects and showed determination and solidarity with the New Yorkers. I attended mass and spoke to the rector, Father Mead and his wife. The rector acknowledged Wales in his sermon and thanked us for our support. I also visited Ground Zero and paid my respects at the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary at Battery Park at the very southern tip of Manhattan, where I presented prayers and flowers from Wales.

Clwyd Theatr Cymru – Mobile Theatre

I was disappointed to hear that Clwyd Theatr Cymru's renewed application under Arts for All Lottery funding for their mobile theatre was turned down. I understand, however, that The Arts Council has proposed to Clwyd Theatr Cymru that it recognises CTC's desire to see the mobile tour as part of their core funded revenue work and that the Council wishes to meet with representatives of the Theatre and Flintshire County Council to discuss this,.

There is already ongoing liaison between The Arts Council and CTC about these plans.

I am expecting that a solution will be found to secure CTC's long term future.

Arts Council of Wales Restructuring

I have chaired a further meeting of the Arts Council Restructuring Group. This provided an update on progress with the restructuring of the organisation. I had formally approved their costed proposals in August 2001 and I was pleased to note that the arrangements for restructuring were progressing well. The new Chief Executive and his Deputy assumed their posts on 1 October and all other vacant posts have now been advertised. The response to these advertisements has been good and the Arts Council feels able to shortlist on all of the appointments. The Arts Council is proposing a Project Management approach to implementing this root and branch change of the organisation, which aims to have the new structure in place by 31 March 2002.

In addition, new arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and review will be set in place. In terms of the Assembly's sponsorship role, officials will move to quarterly monitoring meetings with Council officials. I will meet the Chair formally twice a year, plus of course, whenever the need arises. I am pleased that the Restructuring Group has played an important part in guiding the council to a position of change and I am grateful to Anthony Everitt and Elan Closs Stephens for their valuable contributions. I feel confident that this major change to the Arts Council, together with the boost it is expected to receive in grant from the Assembly as announced in the draft budget, is a positive step forward for the Council.

The one aspect of the restructuring proposals yet to be decided upon is the Arts Council's proposals for premises. The Arts Council is preparing a business case for me to consider. I have asked the Arts Council for a rigorous proposal.

Centre for Visual Arts

The Old Library remains empty and Cardiff County Council is still considering its long-term future. The WDA will be using the building in the short term as part of its food promotion campaign and I understand that the Capital of Culture Project Management Team is using it as their base.

UK Sports Cabinet

I attended the UK Sports Cabinet meeting on 31 October in London. I will give an oral presentation at Committee on some of the issues raised.

The Ryder Cup and Developing the Game of Golf in Wales

Now that the bid to secure the Ryder Cup in 2010 was successful, emphasis will now turn to developing the game of golf in Wales. To help facilitate this, the Assembly has made available to the Sports Council for Wales increased funding to the tune of £250,000 for 2002-03. This additional funding will help deliver the golf development plan, which focuses on the provision of 'golf for all' with a particular emphasis on women and girls' participation.

As part of the plan, Golf Development Officers have been appointed to cover both North and South Wales to help promote the game of golf in Wales. They will work closely with the Golfing Unions, PGA, Sports Council, schools, private clubs, funding bodies and local authorities on developing a coherent and cohesive policy of development at all levels. The clear message to be delivered is that golf is fun and is accessible. They will also promote golf to participants in other sports, especially those in the age group (30 plus) who may be looking for a more flexible form of sports exercise.

The Golf Development Officers will be at the sharp end of expanding the golf market and will also work closely with Golf Clubs throughout Wales on attracting new members, retaining existing ones as well as organising Golf Open Days and Roadshows.

Mountain Safety

As you know, I delivered a statement in Plenary on Thursday 1 October highlighting my concerns about the amount of safety information available to those involved in outdoor pursuits activities. Discussions about establishing a forum to look at these issues in more detail are ongoing.

WIS Pool

There has been considerable press coverage about the future of the swimming pool at the Welsh Institute of Sport recently (WIS). I should just like to make it clear that WIS is owned and operated by the Sports Council for Wales. It was designed as a national training pool and not a local facility.

The Sports Council has made it clear that the pool is outdated and in need of considerable investment. A review is underway to examine the future of the pool and the Council will make decisions in due course.

I understand that the Sports Council for Wales is in discussion with Cardiff County Council to investigate ways of providing an alternative facility in the city. Ultimately, the provision of community leisure facilities is the responsibility of unitary authorities, who are eligible to apply for Lottery funds to build new, or upgrade existing, facilities.

Special Olympics UK

In addition to the Sports Council for Wales' package of support, the Assembly provided a grant of £64,000 towards the Games. This support contributed to the overall success of the event and helped ensure that many thousands of competitors, carers, supporters and volunteers have special memories of their visit to Cardiff and Wales.

Football Forum

On 1st October I launched the Football Forum. The Forum will develop a strategy for the development of football for young people in Wales. It will also examine and define the roles and responsibilities of the various footballing bodies within the new strategy. This will help support the future growth and development of grassroots football in Wales.

It was always going to be difficult to achieve the right balance but I believe the Forum is

representative of every aspect of Welsh football. Its members bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience in all facets of the game in Wales.

Although the first meeting of the Forum was held here in the Assembly building in Cardiff, it is hoped that future meetings will take place at venues throughout Wales. The minutes of the first meeting will be available following their ratification at the second meeting scheduled for 9th November.

National Botanic Garden of Wales

The National Botanic Garden of Wales submitted a request for funding to the Assembly for capital funding and short-term revenue funding. However, we are unable to consider this request without a detailed business case from the Botanic Garden. A copy of the Business Plan 2001-06 was received on 31 October and is being considered at present.

New Opportunities Fund (NOF)

The consultation on the third round of initiatives has closed. NOF will now begin to roll out programmes that will target money at PE and Sport in Schools; Outdoor Activities for Young People; Palliative Care; Reducing the Burden of Coronary Heart Disease, Stroke and Cancer; Transforming Communities; and Childcare, as well as establishing a small grants scheme. In total, approximately £95m will be committed in Wales over the next 3 to 5 years.

Wales Millennium Centre

During the summer I and my Ministerial colleagues had extensive discussions with Sir David Rowe Beddoe about the progress of the Wales Millennium Centre. In order that his team were in a position to negotiate a fixed price for the construction contract with their chosen partner, Sir Robert McAlpine, it was necessary to clarify the willingness of the Assembly to commit funds to the project.

As I reported at my last Oral Questions session on 25 October, it was agreed that the Assembly would set aside up to £37 million for the project, and would be willing to make the full amount available should it be required. This figure includes the £8 million previously committed, some of which has already been used to assist the project in reaching its current position. In setting aside the funds, we sought to set a limit on the risk to the Assembly within the terms of the Finance Minister's 5 April Statement. The project is now in the final stages of its discussions over the price of the construction contract and I look forward to an outcome shortly. When that is available, I shall make a full statement to Plenary on progress and the Assembly's ongoing involvement with the project.

National Museum and Galleries of Wales

My policy of free admission to the National Museum continues to be a resounding success. Last month I welcomed the millionth visitor to the Museum just seven months through the year. In comparison, last year when the Museum was charging for admission, it was able to attract only 690,000 visitors over the whole period. If this level of success continues, the Museum should be able to host almost twice the previous annual number of visitors this year.

I am also looking forward to receiving the Museum's draft public consultation document on the future of the display of art. This will be an important document and one critical to the future presentation of our national art collection. When the paper is published, I am sure the Committee will want to consider it and have an opportunity to discuss with the Museum the options for the future that it will explore.

Public Library Standards

I launched our standards for public libraries in Wales on 4 October at Pyle Library and Learning Centre. It was a very successful event which reflected the widespread welcome in Wales for the introduction of library standards. They will come into force from 1 April 2002 and library authorities will be expected to achieve the standards over a three year period. The introduction of the standards also establishes the need for a formal planning and reporting mechanism. Each library authority will produce a concise library plan once every three years starting next March, and a short annual progress report from June 2003 onwards. I have arranged for Professor Hywel Roberts, who helped prepare the standards, to run guidance seminars for authorities over the next few months on how to write the plans.

Appointments to the Library and Information Services Council (Wales)

I have re-appointed six members to my advisory body the Library and Information Services Council (Wales). Interviews were held yesterday for a new Chair and I hope to announce the appointment shortly, after consulting with Rhodri Glyn Thomas and Rosemary Butler.

Archives

Last month I had a constructive meeting with representatives from Archives Council Wales and the Society of Archivists (Wales). I am keen to raise the profile of archives especially within the lifelong learning and social inclusion agendas. I proposed that they send a representative to Cymru'n Creu and to Cymru'n Creu's ICT Group. In addition, whilst giving no guarantees, I invited them to submit a bid to me for the funding of an archives development officer for Wales.

Work on Place Names

A range of agencies (including local highway authorities, the Ordnance Survey, community councils and members of the public) seek advice from time to time about the correct form of place names in Welsh and English. Advice was until recently provided by the Place Names Advisory Committee, and associated administrative work was handled by Assembly officials.

I have decided to give the Welsh Language Board responsibility from now on for work on place names. The Place Names Advisory Committee is being discontinued, but the Board will make its own arrangements to ensure that the best historical and academic advice continues to be sought, as necessary. The Board also plans to work closely with the Ordnance Survey and other key partners to promote more consistency in this field. Under Standing Order 19, I should notify the committee that the Finance Minister and I have approved a transfer of £1,000 to the Welsh Language Board from the Place Names Advisory Committee BEL in the current financial year.

I would like to place on record again our appreciation of the work of Professor Gwynedd Pierce and Mr Tomos Roberts in their years of service on the Place Names Advisory Committee.

Deputy Minister's Publishing Group

The initial meeting of the Deputy Minister's Publishing Group in July produced a clear recommendation in favour of consolidating local authority funding for the Books Council as part of the Assembly's own funding. This point has already been actioned in the draft Budget. The group will be meeting again on 10 and 31 October; 9 and 28 November and 12 December. The Group is considering the needs of publishers; the needs of authors and libraries; marketing and increasing sales; funding arrangements and electronic publishing. I look forward to the Group's final report.

Wales-Canada Conference : 'Language and Governance'

The Assembly is running a conference on 29 and 30 November on 'Language and Governance' in partnership with the Forum of Federations from Canada. Delegates will come from Wales, Canada, Scotland and Ireland. The First Minister and Canada's Commissioner for Official Languages will be opening the conference. I know that some members of the Committee will be attending.

Visit to Brussels

On 15 October I visited Brussels. The main purpose of my visit was to support a conference of Language Boards from across Europe organised by the Welsh Language Board. Delegations from Catalonia, the Basque Country, Finland, Hungary and other language communities attended. I met with the Minister for Culture in the Basque Government, Miren Azkarate, and

held a joint press conference with her.

During my visit I had briefing meetings with the UK Permanent Representation (UkRep); the Wales European Centre and the Assembly Office in Brussels. I also visited the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture. These were opportunities to discuss European issues of interest to Wales, including the draft resolution on linguistic diversity and the draft resolution on development of the audiovisual sector; and the programmes Culture 2000 and Media Plus.

As part of ongoing work on establishing a Film Fund, I also visited the Ministry of the French Community of Belgium for a discussion on their support for film production.

VISITS

Details of my engagements from 30 July to 4 November are listed in Annex 1.

Annex 1

MINISTER'S LIST OF ENGAGEMENTS

30 JULY 2001 – 4 NOVEMBER 2001

JULY

Address Arts Seminar Bodelwyddan

AUGUST

Attend Talent Awards Scheme Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff

Address Special Olympics Closing Ceremony Cardiff Castle

Visit Arts Factory Rhondda

Attend St Fagans Theatre St Fagans

Attend Gala Evening (Wales Open) Celtic Manor

2 Days – Attend and Speak at Eisteddfod Denbigh

Perform Opening of Brecon Jazz Festival Brecon

Attend Wales Open Celtic Manor

Attend National Youth Orchestra of St Davids Hall

Wales

Visit Fishguard Tapestry Fishguard

Visit Aberglasney Gardens Aberglasney

Present UK National Challenger Trophy Cardiff Bay

(Sailing)

Address Opening of Presteigne Festival Presteigne

SEPTEMBER

Keynote Address at Creative Industries

Conference Aberystwyth

OCTOBER

Address 11th Worthington Football Awards Hensol

Launch Public Library Standards Pyle Life Centre

Visit Usk Rural Life Museum Usk

Attend Launch of Cynon Valley Millenium Aberdare College

Tapestry Project

Address Shermon Theatre Conference Cardiff

Address Wales Council for the Blind (Sport) Cardiff

Visit Butetown Artists Centre Cardiff

Attend with Jane Davidson International Caerleon

Film School

Attend WNO Performance of Leonare Sadlers Wells

Attend Wales v Ireland Rugby Cardiff

Deliver Harold Oakes Memorial Lecture Welsh Institute of Sport

Attend WLB meetings and Reception Brussels

Attend Cuban Delegation Dinner Cardiff

Address Sgrin Conference Coal Exchange

Address 1 millioneth visitor to National

Museum of Wales Cardiff

3 day Visit 'UK with New York' Cultural New York

Events

Address RNIB Conference Cardiff

Attend Sports Cabinet Meeting London

Attend Sapporo Symphony Orchestra Cardiff

Address Women & Girls in Sport Conference Llandrindod Wells