

Culture Committee CC-8-01(min)

MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 16 May 2001

Time: 9.00am

Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly Building

Attendance:

Rhodri Glyn Thomas (Plaid Cymru, Carmarthen East and Dinefwr, Chair)

Jenny Randerson (Liberal Democrat, Cardiff Central, Assembly Minister)

Owen John Thomas (Plaid Cymru, South Wales Central)

Rosemary Butler (Labour, Newport West)

Delyth Evans (Labour, Mid & West Wales)

Jonathan Morgan (Conservative, South Wales Central))

Alison Halford (Labour, Delyn)

Lorraine Barrett (Labour, Cardiff South and Penarth)

Dafydd Wigley (Plaid Cymru, Caernarfon – substituting for Gareth Jones (Plaid Cymru, Conwy))

Officials

Julia Annand (Committee Clerk)

Stephen Thomas (Deputy Committee Clerk)

Richard Davies (Director, National Assembly Education and Training Department)

Russell Thomas (Head, Culture, Sport and Welsh Language Division) –for item 3

Reg Kilpatrick (Culture, Sport and Welsh Language Division) –for items 1&2

Declarations of Interest: Rosemary Butler said that she was recently appointed to the Board of the National Maritime Industrial Museum in Swansea. Dafydd Wigley declared his membership of the Court and Council of the National Museums and Galleries of Wales, which would come to an end after the General Election.

Introductory remarks

The Chair welcomed Dafydd Wigley who was substituting for Gareth Jones but would become a full member of this Committee from next week.

Item 1: Discussion with representatives of the Wales Millennium Centre

Paper: CC-8-01(p.1)

Wales Millennium Centre' representatives:

Sir David Rowe-Beddoe, Chair

Kathryn McDowell, Chief Executive

The Chair congratulated Sir David Rowe-Beddoe on his recent appointment to Chair the WMC project, and Kathryn McDowell on her recent appointment as administrator of the City of London Festival.

Sir David Rowe-Beddoe wanted to put on record his appreciation of the Chief Executive's work during her tenure. He reminded the Committee of the Finance Minister's statement to Plenary in April, in which she set out three conditions which had to be met before the administration would give financial support to the project. Firstly, that the procurement method should be in place: the Wales Millennium Centre has now begun the process of validating the method of procurement. Secondly, that the Board would need to be strengthened: to this end, Robert Joyce, Director of Norwest Holst Plc and international arts building expert Charlotte Nassim are recent appointments. The WMC has also taken steps to compensate for the loss of their Chief Executive in August. A commercial manager has been appointed and a planning director

and general manager, seconded from the WDA. The third condition was that this Committee had to be assured about the soundness of WMC's business plan. Price Waterhouse Coopers have carefully analysed the business plan which has now been modified to take account of some of their recommendations.

The Chief Executive made a presentation on the revised business plan, the main points of which were as follows:

The Price Waterhouse Coopers report identified a number of high risk areas in the WMC's business plan. These included:

- The high costs of staging quality programmes
- Audience levels for pantomime, musicals and dance
- Levels of private sector sponsorship
- The service costs
- The break-even position
- The resident companies and their capacity to successfully function within the building

The key elements of WMC's income and expenditure were broken down as follows:

- Ticket sales – 70%
- Fund-raising – 3.5%
- Retail and catering – 5%
- Other events such as conferences – 5.9%
- Related income for conference sales – 6%
- Public investment in programmes – 8.7%

The main changes to the business plan are as follows:

- A reduction in the overall number of events staged by the WMC
- A greater focus on smaller events
- A reduction of the number of pantomime, dance and small-scale musicals, thereby reducing total audience projections by 10%, but maintaining a quality programme.

There will be a greater number of informal events in the WMC. The arts explorer programme will enable young people to explore their interest in the arts and to take work into the regions. The Urdd will also have a very strong involvement in the Centre. There will be an opportunity for Welsh artists to present their work in the studio theatre; a daily programme of free foyer performances and festivals involving residents and visiting companies. This whole package of activities, will give the Centre a daily buzz of activity.

The projected annual income raised from fund-raising and sponsorship will be broken down as

follows:

- Sponsorship £100k
- Membership £125k
- Trusts/Donations £75k

The expenditure projections fall under the following categories:

Payment to visiting companies 57%

ArtsExplorer and other events 6.8%

Staff costs 20%

Marketing 5%

Service costs 9.7%

Other costs 1.5%

Expenditure on visiting companies has been adjusted to ensure that high quality programmes can be secured for WMC in order to profile Welsh cultural activity and international work.

The £500k support for operational costs from the National Assembly will be valuable in underpinning the business plan in the early years; it will enable WMC to grow its market and will provide for long term maintenance.

The £800k support for resident companies will cover the costs of the move to WMC and subsequent occupancy; the costs of residents' programmes and the costs of maximising potential that resident companies can offer to visitors to WMC.

The following venues have been used as comparators with the WMC:

- The New Theatre at Milton Keynes
- Edinburgh Festival Theatre
- The Birmingham Hippodrome
- South Bank, London

Figures from comparative venues show that occupancy rates vary between 56% and 80% for different theatres. The WMC is projecting a figure of 72% across the year. The Welsh National Opera is projecting an average audience of 70% at the WMC, averaging at 1193 attendees per

performance. This is 250 fewer attendees per performances than at other venues. The WMC's ticket prices will be competitive across the board.

In conclusion, the WMC's business plan compares favourably with other venues. The revised plan addresses the three main high risk areas – programmes, audiences and private sector sponsorship.

The following points were made in the subsequent question and answer session:

- If the WMC's visitor number projections were not met, there are operating cuts which could be made.
- The forecast spend on marketing (£420k) compares favourably with other venues. The WMC will be marketing jointly with the resident companies.
- The WMC has an agreement with the WNO for the lease of space and the use of the theatre. It is aware of the exact requirements of the WNO and has laid the foundation for a strong working partnership.
- The Chair of the WMC was not able to give a cast-iron guarantee that the project would be delivered within budget. Once the contract was settled however, he said that it would be delivered at the contract price.
- The Chair of WMC was hopeful of a positive resolution to negotiations with the City and County of Cardiff about the questions of land and car-parking.
- The WMC board is very conscious that the building must achieve iconic status like the Millennium Stadium. If such a situation were achieved, visitors would come on the strength of the building alone.
- Transport issues continue to pose a problem, but there will be a car park attached to the WMC site itself and there is a possibility that other car parks will be built in the Cardiff Bay area
- Additional visitors (estimated at 338,000 per annum) are hugely important to the success of the Centre, but not integral to the Business Plan. The 10,000 members of the Urdd who will stay in the building each year will be an important element, as will backstage tours, which are likely to attract 35-40,000 visitors a year. People are also likely to visit WMC for its retail and catering facilities; there may well be some overspill from events in the oval basin.
- Since the WNO would be central to the whole WMC enterprise, its future should be underpinned by grant aid over a period of years. The Minister said that there were on-going discussions with WNO, in particular about the stabilisation mechanisms put in place by the Arts Council of England.
- Many of the resident companies of WMC such as Diversions and the WNO already run successful outreach projects. The artsExplorer programme also aims to reach out to other parts of Wales.
- The Minister said that she'd looked at the Business Plan in detail and read many reports written about the Plan. She was content that the targets contained in the plan, were realistic, indeed, in many respects they may have erred on the pessimistic side. The

Minister also stressed that the WMC venture would not be detrimental to the arts in other parts of Wales. An additional £2m had been set aside for them and the recently announced audit of arts venues would help to clarify the pattern of position across Wales.

- The Chair summed up by saying that he felt that reassurances had been given about the feasibility of the business plan and that the Committee's questions had been satisfactorily addressed. He would now write to the Finance Minister stating that the Committee has looked at the business plan in some detail and was content that the project should proceed.

Item 2: Assembly Minister's report

Paper: CC-8-01(p.2)

In addition to the points made in the written report, the Minister said that she had decided to establish a Task and Finish Group to look at the funding of the Welsh Books Council and to develop the publishing industry in Wales. Delyth Evans will Chair the Group which will initially be comprised of officials and representatives of the Books Council, the Welsh Language Board and the Welsh Local Government Association. At its second stage, publishers, booksellers and representatives of the Welsh Development Agency will be invited to join the group. The first stage of the review should be complete by July.

The following questions and comments were raised in discussion:

- The Chair congratulated everyone involved in making the FA Cup Final such a great success. He said that Wales had received a large amount of publicity from the event. Several members echoed the congratulations, the only negative point being the poor rail links between North and South Wales.
- On the Assembly's Welsh Language Scheme, the Chair asked whether the Minister had accepted the Welsh Language Board's offer to advise on priorities for translation.
- In respect of the Ryder Cup, the Chair asked the Committee if it wanted to declare its support for the bid in 2009. He noted the problem faced by the bid over allocations of hotel beds.
- The Chair was concerned that the Fantasmic Exhibition had to leave Wales, following the closure of the Centre for Visual Arts and asked what steps had been taken to keep the exhibition in Wales?
- The Chair asked if members could see a copy of a letter received by officials and referred to in the Minister's report about the European Capital of Culture 2008. Officials agreed to seek the Finance Minister's permission for this.
- On the issue of the audit of arts venues, concern was expressed that both the New

Theatre and St David's Hall would suffer after the opening of the Wales Millennium Centre. The Minister was asked if the audit of arts venues would be conducted in conjunction with local authorities.

- The Group looking at the funding of the Books Council needed to take account of comments contained in the Grant Thornton report about its operation.
- Free entry to museums had been a great success, but one member wondered if the same policy could be extended to castles and other CADW buildings.
- There was some discussion about the structure of the Minister's report, with the comment made that it contained insufficient detail about issues such as the clawback mechanism for finances of the FA Cup.

The Minister replied to these questions in the following terms:

- On the FA Cup Final, she agreed that it had been a wonderful event for Cardiff and Wales and that the transport arrangements in Cardiff had worked effectively. Issues surrounding the clawback of finances were ones for the Finance Minister.
- On the Assembly's Welsh Language Scheme, the Minister replied that she was in continuous contact with the Welsh Language Board about the content of the Scheme.
- The Fantasmic Exhibition – a great deal of effort went into trying to retain this in Wales, but local authorities were unable to find a home for it for a sustainable period.
- The Welsh Books Council – the Task and Finish Group will be looking at every aspect of funding. The Minister emphasised that the review will not be limited to looking at Welsh language publications.
- The Ryder Cup – the Minister said that she could not dictate to the private sector about which hotels should commit their beds, but this was a problem faced by all prospective hosts.
- Entry to Museums – the Minister was delighted about the increase in museum attendances, Castles however fell under Sue Essex's responsibility.

The Committee agreed that the Chair should write to the organisers of the Ryder Cup bid 2009, to voice its support for the bid.

Item 3: Welsh Language review

Papers: CC-8-01(ps 3&4)

Presenter: Dr Mark Tewdwr-Jones, University College, London

Dr Tewdwr-Jones introduced himself as a chartered planner with interests specific to language and planning. The main points of his presentation were as follows:

- The Welsh language is in a unique position, having been a material planning consideration in the formulation of development plans and in determining planning applications since 1988.
- In planning terminology, the Welsh language is a social and cultural matter rather than a land use matter and local authorities have been uncertain as to how to use it in practice.
- There is the potential for policy-makers and planners to draft policies and make decisions that actively safeguards Welsh speaking communities or takes account of the pressure for new housing, or promotes housing for local Welsh-speaking people.
- The Technical Advice Note (TAN) is in place, and could be utilised more fully than hitherto by placing it in the context of social and linguistic issues. This is a positive device used to assist local people and local communities, but for the policy to work, this positive aspect must be stressed. It must not be used as a device to stop non-local people buying property.
- As far as actual decisions are concerned in relation to utilising national and local policies in relation, local authorities could be more pro-active in this regard and make the Welsh language an interest of acknowledged importance.
- In terms of what the National Assembly can do, calls have been made for a stronger form of national planning policy in relation to the Welsh language. Dr Tewdwr Jones, did not see the need for this, but commented that TAN 20 could be revised positively to encourage local planning authorities to take the initiative in relation to planning, the language and sustainable communities.
- In relation to the policy presumption in favour of development, the Assembly could consider reversing the policy presumption in certain linguistically-sensitive areas.
- Further research is vital and an essential step would be to assess the extent to which Circular 53/88 and TAN 20 have been used in practice by local planning authorities.

Presenter: Dr Dylan Phillips, Research Fellow, University of Wales, Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth

Dr Phillips presented evidence on the in-migration of non-Welsh speakers to rural Wales which leads to a process of language loss.

The main points of his presentation were as follows:

- In-migration has led to a serious decline in the percentage of Welsh speakers; every area of Wales has suffered in this regard, even the traditional heartlands in the North-West and South-West.
- Several other factors have contributed to the decline of the language, including depopulation, war, economic depression and the language's lack of official status, but the two main factors which have led to a decline in the language in the twentieth century is the out-migration of local people and the in-migration of non-Welsh speakers.
- In the Lake District, the Local Plan of the National Park Authority, enforces stringent

planning conditions in order to safeguard the interests and rights of the local population within the housing market.

- In-migration also caused other local difficulties, such as pushing up housing prices.
- Research has shown that:
 - Tourism acts as a catalyst to in-migration
 - There is less use of the Welsh language in communities that have a large percentage of non-Welsh speaking in-migrants
 - Only a small percentage of in-migrants have learnt the language
 - In-migration often causes local residents to be priced out of the housing market
 - The local population often feel threatened because the language is dying.
- Dr Phillips asked the Assembly to give serious consideration to this problem and to discuss it in a reasoned and intelligent way.

Presenter, Prof Colin Williams, Cardiff University

Prof Williams' remarks concerned the process of institutionalising the Welsh language. The main points of his presentation were as follows:

- Following the investment in the education system, speakers of Welsh have gained confidence in using the language in different domains.
- Following the 1993 Act, the status of the language has been raised.
- Following the activities of the Welsh Language Board, there are more opportunities to use the language in the workplace, the community and particularly in the public sector.
- The usage, status and opportunity are very important but are ineffective if the individual does not use the opportunities to their full potential because key elements in the process have not been put in place.
- The National Assembly for Wales has a crucial opportunity to realise its commitment to create a bilingual Wales by providing strategic leadership and investment in supporting infrastructure that will allow us to work bilingually.
- Up to now, the Welsh language has been sustained in the workplace and the economy through individual and group effort. Prof Williams said he would like to see part of the responsibility being transferred directly to the National Assembly to establish, if not necessarily to sustain at all times, the following elements in a national network. The National Assembly's endorsement would encourage other organisations to contribute to the maintenance of the infrastructure. The following are institutions in which the National Assembly could make its investment.

- Bilingual Resource Centre to prepare software applications for businesses.
 - National Standardising Centre for terminology.
 - Centre for Language Planning that is a partnership between the National Assembly, the Welsh Language Board, Local Authorities and academia.
 - National Centre for Teaching Welsh and teaching through the medium of Welsh, placing the emphasis on second language learners of all ages, developing innovative and exciting new teaching methods, and researching the integration of new speakers into the established networks of Welsh speakers.
 - Advisory Board on Bilingualism involving the Assembly, the Welsh Language Board, Mentrau Iaith and sectoral representatives to study the effect of socio-economic changes including regional planning, the economy, transport, electronic communications, media and International Developments.
 - Develop permanent links with countries that can offer examples of good practice, like Catalunya, Basque country, Ireland, Quebec, New Zealand and others.
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- These elements will offer the National Assembly a golden opportunity to show its willingness to develop and maintain bilingualism as an integral part of community life, and will ensure that other countries will turn to Wales for a concrete example and inspiration.
 - The relationship between Planning and Language Planning are not direct. They are different academic disciplines but there are overlapping issues as soon as the holistic view of language planning is taken by the Assembly.
 - There needs to be an open and wide-ranging discussion of issues on a national level. It is essential that Local Authorities use this review process to make regular assessments of the state of Welsh in their area in a holistic, not simply cultural, context including using 'linguistic sensors'.
 - The Welsh Language Board through its policy and planning division has gone as far as its remit allows, but the National Assembly needs to have a mechanism in place that ensures that Wales is in touch with developments internationally and that this information is cascaded effectively through the system so that every part of democratic government has a clear understanding of the practical and theoretical aspects of language planning.
 - Prof Williams hoped that the National Assembly would take on this proactive role in the institutionalising process. No other body can do this with authority. This committee should take advantage of the concordat that exists between Wales and Catalunya, to benefit from their policies.

The main points in the question and answer session were as follows:

- In response to a question about paragraph 9 of TAN 20, Dr Tewdwr-Jones said that this

paragraph was inserted to ensure that individual local authorities did not go beyond the legal boundaries. If the paragraph were taken out of the advisory note, then local authorities might interpret this as being given free rein. In terms of how to utilise national planning policy, the National Assembly needs to clarify the role of this policy on the Welsh language for local authority use and this needs to occur as part of wider statement on the relationship between culture, society and planning. Planning lawyers would view the Welsh language as a social and linguistic issue, but careful planning and packaging of the differing needs and concerns of communities, would make it easier for decision-makers, planning inspectors and lawyers to take these issues into account.

- Dr Phillips was asked how the proposed Language Planning Authority for Wales would differ from the Welsh Language Board. He replied that it would be a larger organisation than the Board and with access to greater resources. In terms of new institutions, the establishment of a Language Planning Centre was probably more vital to the future of the language.
- Prof Williams said targeting resources at a few language strongholds and designated areas has been attempted in other countries but was found to be impractical.
- In reply to a question about whether local authorities should spend money on promoting the language in areas that were predominantly English speaking, Dr Phillips felt that there was a good deal of goodwill towards the language in Wales and most people felt that gaining a second-language was a major advantage. Language promotion needs to be done with sensitivity, but many lessons have been learnt in recent years. Commenting on holiday homes, he said he was not advocating their abolition, but they do cause some social problems and that more emphasis should be placed on controlling the market. Dr Phillips said that tourism, especially cultural tourism brought many benefits to localities, however tourism also operates as a catalyst for people to move into areas in which they've spent holidays.
- In reply to a question about why we are battling against the inevitable decline of the language, Prof Williams said that he did not believe that it was inevitable that the language would disappear. If greater investment in the language had taken place earlier in the twentieth century, then it would not face the problems of today. The tension between the two languages still exists in certain areas, but Prof Williams hoped that through the education system, ownership of the language will be an integral part of future generations. The Assembly should set the agenda for the language, this does not necessarily mean spending more money, but greater prioritisation in the policy agenda.
- Dr Phillips added that we need to do more to protect cultural diversity in Wales. The resources currently being aimed at Welsh learners are not succeeding. He agreed however, that out-migration was as great a problem as in-migration.

The Chair thanked the presenters for attending and contributing to a fascinating session.

Item 4: Minutes of the meeting held on 2 May

Paper: CC-7-01(min)

These were agreed without amendment.

The Chair reminded members about the additional meeting scheduled for 24 May and the Welsh language roadshow scheduled for 6 June in Aberystwyth; this would be followed by a visit to the Welsh Books Council.

ACTION POINTS

- Officials agreed to seek the Finance Minister's permission for copying to members a letter about the European Capital of Culture 2008.
- Chair to write to the Finance Minister about the Wales Millennium Centre.
- Chair to write in support of Wales' Ryder Cup bid 2009.

Committee Secretariat

May 2001