

Culture Committee - CC-8-01(p.2)

Date: 16th May 2001

Time: 9.00am - 12.30pm

Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly Building

REPORT OF THE MINISTER FOR CULTURE, SPORT AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE FOR COMMITTEE ON 16 MAY 2001

FA Cup

Due to the recent, extensive media attention concerning the condition and costs of the pitch at the Millennium Stadium, I felt it appropriate to clarify the position and to outline the role of the Assembly.

Members will recall that the Finance Minister announced, in a statement to Plenary, that the Assembly was to make a contribution of £250k towards the extraordinary costs of staging the FA Cup and associated events.

A proportion of the package of costs related to the replacement of the pitch. From the outset, the Stadium management suggested that it was always likely that a new pitch would need to be re-laid for the purposes of the FA Cup final. The fact that problems were experienced with the opening and closing of the roof had nothing to do with the deterioration of the pitch.

Officials are currently finalising the details of the clawback arrangements, which will form a condition of grant.

Elite Sports Funding Review

Members will be aware that Dr Jack Cunningham MP has been leading an in-depth review of the funding, infrastructure and management of elite sports in the UK.

I met with Dr Cunningham on 2 May and am pleased to report that he has assured me that his recommendations will not jeopardise the future of the Elite Cymru scheme, in Wales. In fact, he highly praised the scheme and the success achieved by the Sports Council for Wales.

The final report is likely to be completed in the early summer.

Ryder Cup 2009

I met recently with Tony Lewis, who is leading the group taking forward the Welsh Bid. Tony agreed to write to a broad audience, including Assembly Members, seeking their support in maintaining the profile and momentum of the bid.

Cardiff's bid to be European Capital of Culture in 2008.

The Lord Mayor of the City and County of Cardiff accompanied by the Chief Executive of Cardiff County made a presentation to the Committee on 2nd May. Officials have now received a letter from Cardiff setting out an initial assessment of the potential impact which the winning of Capital of Culture status in 2008 would have for Cardiff and Wales. Attached to the letter was a consultant's report providing a Bid Process Analysis.

Cardiff's submission is being examined following the indication Cardiff was given in February that match funding could be available to help prepare a bid subject to value for money being demonstrated and, that as part of the bid preparation, there will be a cohesive arts and culture strategy in place to underpin the bid covering all facilities and developments.

Cymru'n Creu

Following the first meeting of Cymru'n Creu in February, the Arts Council of Wales, Welsh Development Agency and Welsh Tourist Board established a sub-group to consider how Wales' creative industries could benefit from European structural funding. The National Library of Wales, working alongside other member organisations, is looking at how we can make better use of ICT.

Elan Closs Stephens, Chair of S4C, offered to host the next meeting of Cymru'n Creu in Aberystwyth on 23rd May, where the members of working groups will report back on progress. There will also be presentations by Andrew Green (The National Library of Wales) covering "Wales on-line – Partnerships in Culture on-line", followed by a discussion. A similar format will be followed by Jonathan Jones (Wales Tourist Board) on "Cultural Tourism" and "Major Events Strategy"; Gwerfyl Pierce Jones (Welsh Books Council) on "Promoting the Publishing Industry"; and Sybil Crouch (Chair of the Arts Council of Wales) on "ACW and the International Dimension – promoting the arts abroad in partnership".

Audit of Arts Venues

I announced on 7 May that I had asked the Arts Council of Wales to undertake an audit of arts venues in Wales. This audit will identify what provision is available, who manages it, it's physical shape and what type of productions are put on and are capable of being put on.

This work is important in the context of the development of the Wales Millennium Centre as I have made it clear right from the outset that the development of the Centre should not be at the expense of artistic provision elsewhere in Wales.

Fantasmic Exhibition

Following the closure of the Centre for Visual Arts in Cardiff's old library, the part lottery funded Fantasmic exhibition, which was previously housed there, has been in the keeping of the Chapter Arts Centre until a new location for it could be found. As no home could be found in Wales, the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester will now be taking the exhibition.

Newport Borough Council had indicated that they might be interested in staging the exhibition, but their proposal included storing the exhibition for two years before making use of it. This was a major problem as putting the exhibition into storage was impractical, owing to the cost of repairing the inevitable deterioration during this period. In addition, the longer the exhibition remained out of use, certain modules would become out of date, incurring more expense to renew. Other funders of the Fantasmic exhibition were also pressing for its early relocation. Cardiff City Council had expressed an interest in housing the exhibition, but was unable to find a suitable home.

Minister's Group – ACW Restructuring

My group met again on 8 May. I welcome the progress made so far on the action plan for the Council and look forward to receiving costed proposals very soon.

Consortium of Welsh Library and Information Services Annual General Meeting

On 26 April I addressed the Consortium of Welsh Library and Information Services (CWLIS) at its Annual General Meeting at the University of Wales, Cardiff.

Established in 1997 CWLIS represents a wide range of information providers, including public, academic and special libraries, public organisations, and the voluntary sector. It seeks to foster cross-sectoral co-operation within Wales and to support initiatives, which aim to develop information provision. It currently has a membership of some 50 organisations.

I was delighted to have the opportunity to voice my support for the work undertaken by CWLIS and to describe how the library and information community can work together with the National Assembly.

Standards for Public Library in Wales: Response to Consultation Paper

I was grateful for the Committee's input into the consultation process at our meeting in March. We have received 31 responses to the consultation paper. The general response has been very constructive and positive. The comments are being analysed with a view to publishing the analysis and issuing a final set of standards in the autumn.

Urdd Gobaith Cymru

On 28 April I announced extra support of £150,000 for Urdd Gobaith Cymru in the current financial year. This is on top of the annual core grant paid to the Urdd by the Language Board, which is £325,000 in 2001-02. The money will help the Urdd re-establish activities and run a membership drive this autumn. A marketing campaign will help to make young people across Wales aware of the Urdd's programme of activities. Some of the Urdd's activities have been seriously curtailed so far this year because of the foot and mouth outbreak.

The Eisteddfod has had to be cancelled, and overnight stays at the Llangrannog and Glan Llyn camps are well down on previous years. I want to help the Urdd regain momentum for the second half of the year.

The funding replaces the Assembly's original plan to provide a grant of £150,000 to support the costs of the Urdd's 2002 Eisteddfod in Llandudno, in recognition of the experimental nature of that event. Following this year's cancellation, the 2002 event will now be held in Cardiff.

National Eisteddfod

On 6 April I issued a guarantee for £150,000 to the National Eisteddfod. I gave full details of this guarantee in my statement to Plenary on 8 May. The purpose of the guarantee was to underwrite part of the financial risk being run by the Eisteddfod in continuing to make preparations for holding the 2001 event on agricultural land near Denbigh. I have agreed with the Finance Minister that this guarantee be backed by money from the 2001-02 Reserve.

I plan to meet with the National Eisteddfod again at the end of the month to review the latest position with them.

S4C

Rhodri Glyn Thomas, Rosemary Butler and I have agreed a shortlist of candidates for 2 positions, which will shortly fall vacant on the Board of S4C. Interviews will now be held. Appointments to S4C's Board are made by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in consultation with the National Assembly.

Wales Screen Commission

The WDA and Sgrîn, in partnership with regional film commissions, are taking forward an initiative to restructure film commission work in Wales. (This area of activity includes the marketing of Wales as a location for filming and

assistance to filmmakers when they are working here).

It is proposed to establish a new Wales Screen Commission brand. Wales Screen Commission will include a national office located at Sgrîn, working together with regional offices. Full details of the changes are still under discussion. I greatly welcome this development, particularly given the financial difficulties which the regional film commissions have recently faced.

The Wales Millennium Centre

The Finance Minister's statement on 5 April set out clearly the conditions that the project will need to meet to enable the Assembly to consider finally whether to support it. These conditions were that the procurement method should be based on a fixed price contract – which the new Chairman, Sir David Rowe Beddoe has already put in hand; the fixed price must enable the project to be delivered within the £92 million cost envelope; and that the Subject Committee should take stock – and be reassured – of the Business Plan and the extent to which there is a reasonable expectation that if the WMC fails to operate without public subsidy, revenue costs could be contained within £2 million.

Free admission to Museums

Since the introduction of free admission to the National Museum on 1 April there has been a significant rise in visitor numbers. During last month there were more than 150,000 visitors to all sites of the Museum, which was almost double the numbers for the equivalent period last year. These figures show clearly that free admission is a resounding success and will contribute enormously to increasing access to our national collections for all people in Wales.

Meeting with ASPBs

I am in the process of meeting all my sponsored bodies in order to set out for them my policies and priorities. The meetings also provide them with an opportunity to explain to me their ideas for future developments and how these will fit both with my plans and those of the Assembly more widely. The occasions are also invaluable opportunities to explore and understand any financial issues within the ASPBs in the run up to the next Budget Planning Round.

Meeting with the WCVA

I met with the WCVA on 26th March – the first of a series of meetings which I will be holding every six months as required under the Voluntary Sector Scheme and in line with the Assembly's desire for openness and Partnership. The WCVA welcomed the opportunity for discussion and to identify issues where progress could be made. Also present were representatives from Voluntary Arts in Wales, the Welsh Amateur Music Federation, Arts Disability Wales, Community Music Wales, Mentrau Iaith Cymru and the Welsh Sports Council.

During the meeting we discussed the distribution of lottery funding, Cymru'n Creu and Welsh language issues. I gave an assurance that the ASPB's in my portfolio will be reminded of the importance of forging better links with the Voluntary sector. I am particularly keen to encourage the wider adoption of Welsh language schemes, and to that end the WCVA will be consulting with Voluntary Organisations and will be bringing a paper to the next meeting.

Visits

Details of my engagements from the end of March to the end of May 2001 are listed at Annex 1.

Annex 1

Visits made by Jenny Randerson, AM, Minister for Culture, Sport and Welsh Language from the end of March to the end of May 2001.

March

Visit Newport Museum and Art Gallery and Central Library (accompanied by Rosemary Butler AM)	Newport
Visit Tredegar House (Theatre and Arts presentation) (accompanied by Rosemary Butler AM)	Newport
Visit Spytty Park Sports Complex (accompanied by Rosemary Butler AM)	Newport
Joint NOF Sport Funding photoshoot with Jane Davidson	Newport

April

Opening of British University Sports Association	Univ of Glam
Private Viewing 'Let Paul Robeson Sing'	Cardiff
Visit Old Brewery Quarter	Cardiff
Visit Cardiff University Sport & Recreation Dept	Cardiff
Visit Caernarfon Castle	Caernarfon
Visit Lloyd George Museum	Llanystumdwy
Open Academi's Literature Festival	Criccieth
Travel on Snowdon Mountain Railway	Snowdon
Visit Portmeirion	Portmeirion
Launch House for the Future	St Fagan's
Address Consortium of Welsh Library & Info Services	Cardiff
Attend Chapter Arts Centre 30 th Anniversary	Cardiff
Launch ACW Cultural Diversity Strategy	Cardiff
Attend/Present National Squash League Finals	Vale of Glam

MAY

Visit Banwen Library & Education Centre	Dulais Valley
Visit Menter Iaith Aman Tawe	Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen
Visit Coed Gwilym Park Multi Sport Complex	Forest Fach
Visit Glyn Vivian Art Gallery	Swansea
Attend UWIC Sports Awards Dinner	Cardiff