

Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts in Wales

Meeting Venue:
Committee Room 2 – Senedd

Meeting date:
15 March 2012

Meeting time:
13:30

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



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Agenda

Private Pre-meeting (13.15 – 13.30)

1. Introductions, apologies and substitutions

2. Inquiry into Participation in the Arts

Hijinx Theatre (13.30 – 14.00) (Pages 1 – 6)
Arts(4)-01-12 : Paper 1

Val Hill, Administrative Director
Mike Clark, Chair of Trustees

Wales Association for the Performing Arts (14.00 – 14.30) (Pages 7 – 9)
Arts(4)-01-12 : Paper 2

Chris Ryde, Chair

**Voluntary Arts Wales / Disability Arts Cymru / Black Voluntary Sector Network
Wales (14.30 – 15.00)** (Pages 10 – 19)
Arts(4)-01-12 : Paper 3

Arts(4)-01-12 : Paper 4

Robin Simpson, Chief Executive, Voluntary Arts Wales

Maggie Hampton, Chief Executive, Disability Arts Cymru

Leanne Rahman, Senior Arts Development Officer, Black Voluntary Sector Network
Wales

Arts(4)-01-12 : Paper 1

Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts

Response from Hijinx Theatre

Hijinx Theatre welcomes this Task and Finish Inquiry being undertaken by the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee. We welcomed the huge amount of work that went into the inquiry into Accessibility of Arts & Cultural Activities in Wales undertaken during the last Assembly Term and hope the recommendations are taken forward and acted upon.

We are grateful that the Petitions Committee invited our oral evidence in November, and that this was the catalyst (along with petitions from other arts organisations) that led to the current inquiry.

Our response focuses on Hijinx's position, the changes brought about by the Investment Review and the part Hijinx plays in the arts map of Wales.

Hijinx's portfolio of activities is very wide and varied, although all interconnect and relate to each other. We would define "participation" as being activity that people take part in and watch as audience members. An audience member is participating in an event, sharing the emotions and journey of the characters on the stage, taking away memories and being inspired.

1 Which group of people participate in your organisation's arts activities?

Hijinx's overarching ethos is to include people with learning disabilities in all activities whenever possible and appropriate.

Professional Touring Productions

This includes our professional productions that tour throughout Wales and other areas of the UK. To date the people with learning disabilities who have performed in professional productions have developed their skills through our inclusive participatory group, Odyssey. Each stage of each production has to be carefully managed to ensure we don't set people up to fail just to tick a box of political correctness. This process starts with the writer and the script, and continues into rehearsals, specialist coaching and the support of the rest of the cast in the rehearsal room and on the road.

By casting people with learning disabilities in mainstream productions, we show clearly what people can do and don't focus on what they can't. We believe this is the way to challenge perceptions and prejudice and change hearts and minds of audience members – this all contributes to Wales as a nation who values equality and isn't afraid to say so.

As a year 12 pupil at Blackwood Comp wrote about our 2011 touring show " Andrew and Gareth (*both of whom have Down's syndrome*) may have a disability but are just as capable as acting as anyone else with or without a disability. I think it made many people realise this and made them think differently about people with disabilities however serious the disabilities may be." This,

along with the 100 or so other letters we received from year 12 pupils, demonstrates strongly the power of good theatre to open people's eyes to difference, to change the way they think, and ultimately to change lives.

Training for adults with learning disabilities

There are no opportunities to enable talented people with learning disabilities to undertake drama training; the usual academic route to Drama College is not generally open to them. Hijinx are currently trying to remedy this by offering 2 days of drama / performance training each week for up to 12 learning disabled students, for 50 weeks of the year, delivered in partnership with Vision 21.

The impetus for this is our commitment to inclusive casting and the realisation that we need a far bigger pool of local learning disabled actors to work with. Those we do have need the opportunity to develop their skills in a more focussed and professional way to take their place alongside experienced professionals. At RWCMD the undergraduate students have 25 hours of contact time, for 25 weeks of the year for 3 years. While we cannot provide this yet, we are making a start.

The Academy training will upskill learning disabled Odyssey members and so raise the bar for Odyssey productions. It will train students to take part in short Forum Theatre pieces for conferences and seminars; with the BBC drama village just opened down in the Bay with regular series like Casualty often featuring learning disabled characters – who knows what employment opportunities this may offer in the future.

Odyssey is Hijinx's participatory performance group made up of people from the local community including those with learning and other disabilities. The group has a membership of 26 and meets weekly for a 2 hour drama session. Members include an eclectic mix of age, gender, ethnicity and ability. Usually there is a Christmas show performed at the WMC's Weston Studio. During the autumn term music students from RWCMD and pupils and staff from Meadowbank Special School join the group, so there is often a cast of 50+ on stage.

The Unity Festival is an international, mixed ability arts festival. Started in 2008 it showcases and celebrates high quality work of companies from around the world who come to Cardiff to perform, run workshops and network. There is always an inclusive participatory project immediately before the Festival, culminating in performances during the Festival. Unity has become a major player in the world of international arts festivals. It's ethos of inclusion, equality and quality draws in a diverse audience from all over Wales, while the various companies and performers leave a strong legacy here in Wales. Unity brings the best of the world to Wales, and the best of the world take a small part of Wales home with them. In 2011 and 2012, Unity has received a project grant from ACW Funding for Festivals scheme.

Hijinx Pods are small performance pieces that are short and easily transportable. They have inclusive casts and grew initially from the Odyssey project, although they now stand alone. They range from a silent interactive mime pieces to a loud anarchic rock band. Some are moving to be semi professional and are in demand at conferences, launches and festivals e.g. for The Bevan Foundation and Escena Mobile Festival in Seville.

Hijinx Outreach offers workshop and project opportunities to a wide range of organisations. This work has been scaled down dramatically since the cut in funding, and with the new focus on providing focussed drama training is likely to diminish even further. We simply do not have the staff to manage, deliver or support Outreach projects to the extent we did in 2009/10 and 2010/11. The table in 2a below demonstrates the drop between 2010 and 2011.

2a Do you think that budget changes have affected participation in the arts, either positively or negatively?

The 32% cut in Hijinx’s ACW revenue grant coupled with the consolidation of the Odyssey project into core activity with no additional resources meant an overall reduction of 39.5% in revenue grant. This meant that 2011/12 was a catastrophic year for Hijinx and the audiences and participants that we serve. We undertook a radical restructure of activity and staffing, and had to make four valued members of staff redundant. Our output throughout the activity portfolio was reduced as energies were focussed on internal change rather than external engagement. This is hard for big organisations, but when it is being undertaken by a tiny organisation with a staff of four, who are still trying to plan dynamic, exciting and vibrant work it was very hard.

Hijinx’s professional production capacity reduced by 50%, with only one touring production.

Comparative performance totals between 2010 when our revenue grant was £234,448 and 2011 when it was £160,000 are in the table below.

	Total no of performances	Performances in Wales	Performances in England	Performances in Scotland	Number of touring weeks
2010	72	38	29	5	18
2011	24	14	9	0	6½
Percentage decrease	66.6%	63.75%	68.96%	100%	63.88%

Below are comparisons of Outreach projects between 2010 and 2011 that show a significant drop in activity

	Participation projects	No of participants	No of sessions of project
2010	6	110	134
2011	2	23	38

There was no Odyssey Christmas show in 2011 – the first time for 11 years. Odyssey members continued to meet for weekly workshops and those who were involved during the summer term played a large part in activities for the Unity Festival, plus a Glanfa performance at the WMC open day in November. Some members performed (busked) at Sainsburys Colchester Avenue (Hijinx are their Charity of the Year) and collected money from shoppers. But none of this replaced a Christmas production in the Weston Studio. Hijinx undertook no work at all with RWCMD music students who have previously participated as an assessed module as part of their

degree. We were only able to do a small project with pupils from Meadowbank Special School because of sponsorship from Wales and West Utilities.

This demonstrates clearly there has been a massive reduction of activity all round.

2b Do you think that certain groups of people have been affected more than others?

People in small communities throughout Wales have been affected by the cut in Hijinx's revenue grant. Less people are able to enjoy high quality theatre in their community, less people are able to see professional productions with an inclusive cast – less lives are touched and fewer people have their eyes opened to the joys of inclusivity. By no longer performing in small communities people who have difficulties travelling to mainstream venues, or cannot afford the ticket prices are disadvantaged. "... please do not rob us of this work ..." – comment from one audience member.

Adults with learning disabilities who live in supported housing and are not able to travel by bus are unable to access either performances or participatory activities. Performances in mainstream venues are often too expensive for them.

Vulnerable adults and older people are often anxious about travelling after dark. Our touring performances are at a time suitable for the community in which we are performing – this decision being taken at a local level - and in a place in which they feel safe.

As mentioned above, the loss of the 2011 Odyssey Christmas show was a great disappointment to Odyssey members. We were able to undertake a small project with Meadowbank children due to financial support from Wales & West Utilities. Music students had no opportunity for participation during the 2011 autumn term.

3 Are there gaps in provision for people to participate in arts activities, either demographically or geographically?

Our professional touring work has always performed at small venues throughout the whole of Wales. The amount of professional performances have been radically reduced since the massive cut in revenue funding, with some communities losing out entirely (see table in 2a above).

Odyssey is a participatory group who meet for 2 hours every Monday evening, there is no geographical exclusion for membership, but the practicalities of transport mean that members do come from the Cardiff area, The Vale of Glamorgan and Newport. We have had requests over the years to set up an inclusive Odyssey type group in other areas of Wales. While we have always offered mentoring, guidance and help in the initial stages of setting up such a project, it is not practical for Hijinx staff to run a weekly project over 25 miles from company base. A far larger and philosophical issue is that such a community project needs to have passionate and committed driver from within that community for it to succeed. It needs to work from the bottom up, not the top down.

While we have received ACW project funding for The Unity Festival (for which we are very grateful), the Festival is based in Cardiff. It is an international arts festival with people coming

from around the world, and while some audience members come from all over Wales, the reality is that the majority come from Cardiff and the south Wales area.

4 Are there enough funding sources available other than ACW? Are alternative funding sources accessible?

If there are they any regular sources of funding they have proved hard to find. Cardiff County Council have been very supportive during the past year and increased our revenue grant by £2K from £6,784 to £8,784 at a time when their own departments were having deep cuts. They have become pro-active in additional support, from finding us a city centre site in Queen Street, to including a page on our Unity Festival in their Summer Festival Brochure, both free of charge; plus advice and help from the Events team. But their grant is only a small part of our overall turnover.

Other income generation is always a challenge. Many Trusts and Foundations don't cover staff or core costs, and are mainly interested in new projects rather than supporting activity which is continuing. Many are hesitant to fund projects that have previously been publically funded, like Odyssey. The money they distribute relies mainly on investment income that in the current financial climate has a low percentage growth. As public funding is cut back on many social projects (homelessness, drugs projects etc) so there is far more call on Trusts and Foundations to step in to fill the gap, meaning arts projects miss out even when they fit the criteria.

Corporate giving is always hard to attract for small organisations who are not high-profile, although most companies do have a corporate social responsibility commitment. We have developed strong relationships with some companies who do sponsor us regularly, but their budgets are being cut and their own guidelines changing, their sponsorship declines, and the kind of projects they are allowed to support diminishes.

By losing touring weeks we lose the opportunity of performance income through the fees we charge venues. Although the training we are now offering to adults with learning disabilities does open up an income stream from social services departments who pay a daily rate for activities for vulnerable adults following an assessment of their needs. Vision 21 are our partners in this and undertake much of the complex negotiation with social services departments.

I recognise that the financial world is changing dramatically, but generating a grant of £500 takes as much time as generating £20,000. Many small awards need more servicing than one large one – this is particularly hard in a year when our staff capacity has reduced by 43%, with no dedicated fundraiser.

5 What role does the voluntary arts sector play in promoting participation in the arts in Wales and how can this be supported?

It plays a crucial role, but sadly many of the voluntary sector organisations disappeared following the Investment Review, and those who are struggling on are not able to support, promote and inspire the projects they could in the past.

6 Is the strategic relationship between the Welsh Government and the bodies that distribute arts funding effective in increasing participation?

- i) The Petitions Committee on 1st November requested that the Heritage Minister considered other AMs having an input into or discussions about the content of the annual remit letter to ACW. The Minister rejected this idea. We feel it is a major structural weakness that the decision that frames arts policy for the coming year resides with the Minister alone. We understand that decisions are made in the context of strategic priorities, but would welcome a more collaborative structural approach. At the very least a committee discussion, and ideally an annual plenary debate on arts priorities for the coming year. This to be followed by committee scrutiny on the progress of ACW during the year, rather than it again being the sole responsibility of The Minister, especially one who has such a massive and diverse portfolio.
- ii) We would welcome more cross-portfolio working. In the early days of the first Assembly matters were frequently discussed by Heritage, Education and Health Ministers. This was down to the individual Ministers at the time, with no structure in place to ensure it happens on a regular basis. Arts activities are not an add on, but are inter-linked with and have an impact on many portfolios, including economic development.
- iii) As a member of the WAPA executive it is important that WAPA, as the umbrella body representing the majority of professional arts organisations has a voice on the Arts Strategy Board or it's successor if it is no longer in operation. The professional sector cannot be represented by the funding body. Such an arrangement would enable a two way flow of information between the Welsh Government and the arts sector.

7 All public bodies in Wales will have published a strategic equality plan by April 2012. Do you think that these new equality duties will help to increase participation in the arts among under-represented groups in Wales?

It is impossible to crystal-ball gaze with any accuracy. People who work in the arts are generally optimists, hoping for good outcomes, but while strategies can help to establish a strategic framework and set goals, but are often left to gather dust on shelves. Real ground-breaking steps towards equality are made by changing hearts and minds, by engaging people in a real way – inspiring them, firing their emotions and showing real and positive images of what can be achieved when people with different abilities work together. This means participating in events as audiences or active participants at a grass roots level, being passionate about and really engaging in the event. This is the way for disenfranchised and under-represented people throughout Wales to engage in a wider society – the arts is a major pathway toward this.

Val Hill
Administrative Director
Hijinx Theatre
6th March 2012

Arts(4)-01-12 : Paper 2

Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts

Response from Wales Association for the Performing Arts

Introduction

- a) The Wales Association for the Performing Arts is the main lobbying and campaigning group for the professional performing arts in Wales. Formed in 1982, we represent the vast majority of the revenue funded arts organisation in the country including drama, dance opera and support organisations. We are self supporting and self financing.
- b) We very much welcome this Inquiry as we have been looking to the Welsh Government to take forward the recommendations of the Report of the Communities and Culture Committee Inquiry into the Accessibility of the Arts and Cultural Activities in Wales published in February 2011
- c) For the purposes of our submission we have interpreted “participation” in the widest possible way to include artists, practitioners, audiences and anyone who takes part in arts activity at any level.

Questionnaire answers

1. Which groups of people participate in your organisation’s arts activities?

Responding on a collective basis, WAPA members encourage the widest possible participation. This is predominantly as audience but will also include outreach and workshop work. The membership is committed to the building of new audiences as well as those who need encouragement to attend more regularly. One of our members, Earthfall Dance Co, reports that 48% of audience on their last tour attended as direct result of participatory activity.

2. a) Do you think that budget changes have affected participation in the arts, either positively or negatively?

There can be no doubt about a general negative effect, although individual organisations may have increased their reach on a local basis. You cannot withdraw funding to 32 arts organisations and expect participation not to be affected. In our submission to the Communities and Culture Committee Inquiry last year we pointed strongly to the geographical shortcomings of the new arts map of Wales. The East of Wales, notably Powys and Monmouthshire as well as the Gwent Valleys were badly affected. The three Young Peoples Theatre Companies that have ceased to exist in their previous form all operated in that part of Wales. Their core work has not been replaced.

b) Do you think that certain groups of people have been affected more than others?

We believe that young people have been badly affected. We feel that it regrettable and ironic that the dis-investment in Young Peoples Theatre that put Wales on the National UK and international map has happened at a time when the Welsh Government is so pre-occupied with addressing (quite rightly) the Child Poverty agenda, in which the new strategy for Wales lists “reducing inequalities that exist in health, education and economic outcomes of children and families by improving the outcomes of the poorest” as one of the three strategic objectives. School age children and young people have now had their opportunity to see issue based educational theatre severely reduced and there are major areas of the

country the poorer for it. There is a hugely diminished service in the Welsh language particularly, because schools do have the option to buy in English language product from anywhere, but Welsh Language educational theatre does not exist outside ACW funded companies. We believe that cuts in public spending in social services that has in places prevented less mobile members of the community attending and participating has reduced the diversity of certain events. The cost of transport or the cost of carers and support workers has made trips to theatres and the arts a non starter in many places. This applies equally to many schools.

3 Are there gaps in provision for people to participate in arts activities, either demographically or geographically?

Dance was particularly hard hit as Community Dance Wales and Welsh Independent Dance have both ceased to exist. India Dance Wales and Dance Blast were also cut but have continued to maintain a revised service with project and other funding. We have already mentioned in 2a) and 2b) above the geographical area most affected by the changes. Theatre provision equally affected is touring Community Theatre. This type of work produced previously by the above - cut - companies and removed from the remit of others, is now almost non-existent. Work of this sort has to be bought in from England or Scotland, and much of the flavour of community touring created by product about Wales, made by creative artists in Wales and seen around Wales, has been lost. The decimation of theatre services to young people in schools is in direct opposition to the (albeit previous) Welsh Government's objective to ensure that every young person should have the opportunity to experience theatre and allied arts activity at each key stage in their school-life.

4. Are there enough funding sources available other than the Arts Council for Wales? Are alternative funding sources accessible?

Very few. There are more and more charitable organisations chasing fewer and fewer pots of money, and the amount available from some UK based foundations is not that large in any case. The reserves and investments of all such Trusts have of course taken a hit over the last three years and with interest rates flat-lined, will remain in that state for the foreseeable future. For small organisations the time and expense in making applications to a variety of trusts is disproportionate to the amount that might be given out. It is also virtually impossible to find corporate sponsorship in the present financial climate. The largest arts clients, the WNO and the National Theatre Co's in both languages are finding it hard, so there is little or no chance for small community arts organisations.

5. What role does the voluntary arts sector play in promoting participation in the arts in Wales and how can this be supported?

We should stress that WAPA represents the professional arts, but we have always worked closely with the voluntary sector and many arts organisations rely very heavily on voluntary help. Voluntary Arts Wales was a member of WAPA until it lost its funding last April and the ability of the voluntary sector to have a strong and singular voice in Wales is the poorer.

6. Is the strategic relationship between the Welsh Government and the bodies that distribute arts funding effective in increasing participation?

WAPA feels strongly that strategic issues need to be looked at.

- a) The Report of the Communities and Culture Committee last year was critical of the strategic framework that led to the decisions made by the Arts Council in 2010. We believe that there should be a way in which Assembly Members through a Scrutiny Committee, like the one that has commissioned this Review, should be able to contribute to the Remit Letter issued by the appropriate Minister. We also believe that

the way in which that remit is applied by the Arts Council should be scrutinised at a later date. In other words, that the Arts Council should be subject to an element of democratic accountability for its decisions.

- b) We strongly believe that other Assembly Departments should have an input into the strategic framework. Education, Health and Economic Development are all areas impacted by output from the arts sector.
- c) We would suggest an Annual Arts Debate in the Senedd Chamber ,to pick up on the concerns and priorities of AM's from across Wales, where objectives can be laid.
- d) We would like the Welsh Government to provide clear leadership on the distribution of arts funding by and through Local Authorities. The Simpson Report is urging collaborative working and there may be Wales-wide initiatives that are needed.
- e) We would recommend that the professional sector be represented at the Arts Strategy Board chaired by the Minister in order that we can have an input into the discussions and are able to report back more effectively on the priorities of the Welsh Government.

7. All public bodies in Wales will have published a strategic equality plan by April 2012. Do you think that these new public sector equality duties will help to increase participation in the arts among under-represented groups in Wales?

We believe it is too early to make a judgement, but we do feel that legislation in itself does not always change anything. This is a hearts and minds issue and it is important that culture and arts are given the opportunity to help bring about change through what they create as much as by how they behave.

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March 2012

Agenda Item 2c

Arts(4)-01-12 : Paper 3

Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts

Response from Voluntary Arts Wales

1. Which groups of people participate in your organisation's arts activities?

Voluntary Arts Wales represents around 4,000 amateur arts and crafts groups across Wales. This includes choirs, orchestras, brass bands, amateur theatre groups, folk dancers, lace makers, quilters and painters. Amateur arts groups are local voluntary organisations, governed by their participants. Most do not receive any public funding and are (almost) self-sufficient, covering their costs through the subscriptions paid by their members and the income from ticket sales for their performances or exhibitions. The members of amateur arts groups are volunteers from every walk of life. While many amateur arts groups may employ professional artists (as conductors or tutors) the groups are established and run by local volunteers. Voluntary Arts Wales represents the full range of arts and crafts. We work in partnership with umbrella bodies representing particular artforms, including both Wales-specific umbrella bodies (such as the Drama Association of Wales and Ty Cerdd) and UK-wide umbrella bodies with members in Wales (including Making Music and the National Operatic and Dramatic Association). Most arts participation happens in amateur arts groups: we estimate that approximately 650,000 people regularly participate in amateur arts groups in Wales.

2. a) Do you think that budget changes have affected participation in the arts, either positively or negatively?

In March 2011 Voluntary Arts Wales conducted a national survey on the effects of changes in funding and the financial climate on local, grassroots, voluntary arts activity across Wales. Based on the responses to the survey, the voluntary arts seemed to be fairly healthy. Participation seemed to be on the increase: some organisations had seen slight or no changes; others had seen significant increases e.g. a growth in interest in traditional music – “it seems to be appealing to people when times are stressful”.

Although most local voluntary arts groups receive little or no public funding, reductions in funding to the bodies that support and advise them, and to the venues and facilities they use, will clearly have an effect on their activities.

On 18 March 2011 Voluntary Arts Wales convened a meeting called ‘Charting a course for the voluntary arts’ at Theatr Powys Drama Centre in Llandrindod Wells to discuss whether voluntary arts activity was flourishing or in decline. Some of the comments made at this meeting included:

- In Caerphilly, community choirs appeared to be experiencing an increase in numbers, appealing more to young people because of its emphasis on ‘community’ and not ‘traditional’ male voice choirs.

- Some grassroots groups and activities were oblivious to funding cuts but there was concern that the impact would be felt at a later date.
- Some organisations/groups were entirely independent and did not access public funding e.g. Theatr Maldwyn, Powys.
- There are hidden costs/problems for voluntary/amateur activity e.g. affordable or free space; fuel costs in rural areas' increasing venue hire costs.
- Emphasis on activities/groups as 'big family' and participation in the arts is very important in these times. It brings people together e.g. Theatr Powys community productions were expensive to provide, were held in different locations, and were free at the point of delivery. Charging schools to participate in theatre in education could exclude some children, as some schools could afford to pay, others couldn't. If the service wasn't free, it should be as accessible as possible. There is evidence that increasing numbers of people are volunteering. If they had to pay to engage in arts activity, this could make it exclusive. There is a need to look at how it can be made available in these times. Need to look at how everyone can access the arts – it opens a door, like education.
- Some arts activities need to be subsidised to make them accessible e.g. CARAD subsidises creative writing workshops, otherwise they would not be affordable for people. Marches Poets, a very young collective of sixty people, organises poetry readings and needs to pay for poets and a venue. They do this under the 'protective banner' of Mid Wales and Border Arts. How long can this last? Being self-sufficient is important – sometimes a small amount of seed money can help.
- Communities are very good at supporting groups within them. The voluntary arts sector is resilient; creativity at grassroots level will survive and happen without us. But, for some it will mean that they will not be able to access or do what they want to do. It may not be as straightforward e.g. not as affordable, impact on venues, ambitions will be lowered. We could be our own worst enemy – Government withdraws funding, we go on doing it. This hides the complexity of the situation e.g. number of events, paying artists etc.
- There is a place for publicly funded, not for profit organisations in the community. Some activities e.g. poetry readings are priceless to individual and may be of more benefit than mass culture, and we need to get this across to funders.
- Too many terms and conditions attached to public funding can stifle the work and force groups to go in a different direction. It is getting harder to access money and there are more hoops to jump through.
- There were concerns about increasing demands of compliance for amateur arts groups (funding, health and safety etc)

b) Do you think that certain groups of people have been affected more than others?

The voluntary/amateur arts sector is so big (encompassing approximately 4,000 local groups involving around 650,000 people across Wales) that it is dangerous to generalise. Within our sector there is huge diversity and almost sections of the population are involved in amateur arts activity. Within any one particular amateur arts group, however, it is true that there is probably room for improvement in terms of inclusion and access. The nature of amateur arts groups, which tend to be formed by friends coming together because they want to sing or dance or act, makes them likely to

create (completely accidentally and unintentionally) barriers to access to people who aren't like them. Although the amateur arts sector is largely self-sufficient, resilient and sustainable, one key aspect in which it does need support is in helping groups to become more inclusive and diverse – both to ensure that there are opportunities to participate for all sections of society and to help groups find new members and audiences to help them survive and thrive. Cuts in funding to umbrella bodies and networks in the amateur arts in Wales threaten this kind of support and make it harder to ensure that those parts of the population who tend to be under-represented in arts participation are able to join amateur arts groups.

Also, the presence of a self-organised local amateur arts group is, to some extent, an indicator of a relatively healthy community (or section of the community). Reductions in funding to professional participatory arts initiatives (community arts) is likely to affect the numbers of people from more disadvantaged communities participating in the arts for the first time. As a crude generalisation, people get involved in arts participation in three ways:

- through the voluntary/amateur arts – by setting up or joining a local amateur group, attending an evening class, or being self-taught;
- through a professionally-led community arts project or initiative;
- through an outreach programme run by a professional arts institution.

While the voluntary/amateur route is fairly self-sufficient and sustainable, regardless of public funding, people without strong early life experience of the arts and people from less cohesive or affluent communities are more likely to need the professional support and encouragement provided by the other two routes in order to start participating in the arts. So cuts in funding to professional community artists and outreach programmes may not make a significant change to the overall statistics for arts participation across Wales but are likely to reduce the number of people from more disadvantaged backgrounds participating.

Traditionally there has been a disappointingly poor level of connection between the three routes into arts participation. Intuitively it would make sense for people who have been attracted to start participating in the arts through a professionally-led community arts project or outreach programme to then be helped to find a local amateur group to join to ensure that they continue their arts participation in a long-term, sustainable way. In practice this has often been difficult to achieve. This might be because the people involved in each of these three routes have very different motivations and values: amateur artists are usually motivated by a passion for their artform, whereas professional community artists are often focussed on using the arts to develop a community or address other social goals. Bringing these different worlds together in order to encourage long-term sustainable arts participation that is truly diverse and inclusive is a key priority for Voluntary Arts Wales but reductions in our own public funding have made it much more difficult to pursue this goal.

Another major issue in relation to arts participation is transport. For those who have to travel to participate, for example in rural areas with longer distances to travel, the rising cost of fuel is a significant factor and many people are dependent on public transport services that face cuts. 'Arts and Public Engagement: Patterns, processes and levers for change' (published by the Arts Council of Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government in 2008) concluded that: *"In both rural and urban areas*

the lack of public transport, especially during the evening is a critical barrier to both attendance and participation in arts activities.”

3. Are there gaps in provision for people to participate in arts activities, either demographically or geographically?

It is difficult to give a definitive answer to this question as there is no comprehensive national survey or database of arts participation. Voluntary Arts Wales has been campaigning for some years for a national audit or mapping of the voluntary arts sector in Wales. In England in 2008 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England commissioned the first national study of the amateur arts in England ('Our Creative Talent', DCMS 2008). We feel that a similar national survey is needed in Wales. In February 2011 the Welsh Assembly Government Communities and Culture Committee published a report following an enquiry into 'The Accessibility of Arts and Cultural Activities in Wales'. The report makes 16 recommendations to the Welsh Government, including: *"7. To work with partners to enable the identification of geographic areas in Wales where people have particularly limited access to arts and cultural experiences. Following this work, to encourage partners to strategically utilise such information to develop increased access to arts and cultural activities in areas where people have particularly limited access to arts and cultural activities."* Voluntary Arts Wales is keen to see this recommendation implemented and would be delighted to support such work.

Without the detailed information that such a survey would provide, we can say fairly confidently that amateur arts groups exist in almost every geographic area but that their membership does not always fully reflect the wider community in which they are located (see Q 2b, above). Typically those parts of the population that tend to be under-represented in arts participation include the lower socio-economic classes, black and minority ethnic people and disabled people.

It is, however, important to consider our definition of 'arts activities'. 'Arts and Public Engagement: Patterns, processes and levers for change' (published by the Arts Council of Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government in 2008) written by a research team led by Professor Dave Adamson and Professor Hamish Fyfe of the University of Glamorgan explored the reasons for lower levels of arts participation in key social groups, including those living in areas characterised by deprivation. The research identified a *"two tier' definition of the arts in which respondents initially identify a very formal definition of what they term the 'proper arts'. However, on further exploration they provide a wider definition associated with acts of creativity which includes a broader spectrum of activities they associate with as art in practice."* One of the ten actionable findings in this report was the recommendation *"That ACW strengthens its relationship with umbrella organisations and develops a network of relationships between community artists, VAW, WCVA and the county based Arts Development Officers."*

4. Are there enough funding sources available other than the Arts Council for Wales? Are alternative funding sources accessible?

Clearly the current financial climate is one of austerity and funding is in short supply across the board. Nevertheless there is still funding available to support arts participation in Wales. It is all too common for arts organisations not to see beyond the Arts Council of Wales but arts participation contributes to a wide range of agendas and interests a wide range of funders. Over recent years,

across the UK, Voluntary Arts and the amateur arts groups we represent have secured funding related to adult learning, volunteering, health and wellbeing, creative industries, community cohesion and more. There are two significant barriers to such 'alternative' funding sources:

- a requirement for substantial partnership funding to be found in cash: this is an ongoing problem for small amateur arts groups as for them the amount of in-kind support will be proportionately higher than the amount in a major company. There are many items (e.g. use of venue, printing costs, advertising, volunteer time etc.) that can be provided as support in-kind and these often make up to 30 to 40 per cent of total project costs. Even seemingly spontaneous events such as 'flashmobs' cost significant amounts to stage, and limits to how much of the partnership funding can be in-kind can prevent projects happening.
- amateur arts groups not seeing themselves as 'voluntary' or 'community' organisations: most amateur arts groups think of themselves as arts organisations and many do not realise they are eligible to apply for a wide range of funding sources aimed at the voluntary and community sector. Voluntary Arts Wales provides information and advice on such funding but reductions in our own funding and in that of several of the main voluntary arts umbrella bodies in Wales have reduced our capacity to help groups access alternative funding sources.

5. What role does the voluntary arts sector play in promoting participation in the arts in Wales and how can this be supported?

Most arts participation happens in local amateur arts groups. People engage with the voluntary arts on a local level and are more likely to participate here. Many of the best professional artists began as amateurs. The voluntary arts sector provides a massive number of long-term, resilient and sustainable opportunities to participate in the arts which will survive any recession. As we have explained above, however, amateur arts groups are not always as inclusive as they could be and people from some sections of the population, particularly those from more disadvantaged areas, tend to find it more difficult to get involved in the amateur arts. Fortunately the voluntary arts sector has always created its own strong, organic network of infrastructure organisations, from grassroots upwards, which provides the ideal way to support and build capacity in the sector. Voluntary Arts Wales and the network of national umbrella bodies we work with are the trusted and respected voices of a huge sector across Wales and have a strong track record of helping local groups to develop, improve and expand arts participation.

In June 2010 the Arts Council of Wales announced initial funding decisions following a detailed investment review carried out between 2009 and 2010. ACW announced the portfolio of 71 revenue funded organisations (RFOs) that would be prioritised for support from April 2011 onwards, and named 32 organisations that would no longer receive revenue funding. ACW made bold decisions, concentrating funding on fewer organisations rather than making cuts across the board. They took a strategic decision to concentrate funds on 'front line' delivery (those whose core activity is the direct creation, presentation or exhibition of the arts) rather than the activities of agency, umbrella and service organisations. Four voluntary sector umbrella bodies – including Voluntary Arts Wales – were amongst the 32 organisations to lose their revenue funding.

We believe that the ACW review process was clear, open and transparent but we are concerned about the decision to concentrate on 'front line' delivery and to withdraw funding from voluntary

arts infrastructure organisations. Whilst ACW was absolutely within its rights to make the strategic decisions it did, we believe that the decision to withdraw support from so many voluntary arts infrastructure bodies was somewhat short-sighted. There are a huge number of small voluntary groups providing local access to arts experiences that do not access ACW funding directly but benefit indirectly from the funding previously given to infrastructure bodies. They need support, and it is the infrastructure bodies that are best placed to provide that support.

The Welsh Assembly Government Communities and Culture Committee report ('The Accessibility of Arts and Cultural Activities in Wales', February 2011) noted that VAW and others had warned it that the ACW Investment Review had created structural gaps with the discontinuation of funding for a range of umbrella bodies and the Committee formally recognised "*the important function provided by umbrella bodies in providing infrastructure for the arts sector*".

6. Is the strategic relationship between the Welsh Government and the bodies that distribute arts funding effective in increasing participation?

We believe strongly in the 'arm's length' principle, with the Arts Council of Wales making decisions about arts funding independently from the Welsh Government. In relationship to arts participation, however, it is important to realise that the vast majority of arts participation in Wales is not a result of ACW funding. To really effect a step change in overall levels of arts participation we feel there is a need to work more collaboratively, involving the voluntary arts sector, professional community arts sector, professional arts organisations, local authorities and the wider voluntary and community sector. In England, Arts Council England has recently launched an ambitious new national programme to increase arts engagement in some of the parts of the country that currently have the lowest levels of arts engagement ('Creative People and Places', launched 30 January 2012). This programme is developing local consortia involving professional arts organisations, amateur arts organisations, local authorities and community groups. We believe that a similar collaborative approach is necessary in Wales in order to make any significant impact to overall levels of arts participation. To seriously tackle the challenge of increasing participation it is vital for the Arts Council of Wales to find ways of working with those parts of the arts sector that it does not directly fund – particularly local amateur arts groups.

7. All public bodies in Wales will have published a strategic equality plan by April 2012. Do you think that these new public sector equality duties will help to increase participation in the arts among under-represented groups in Wales?

We believe that these strategic equality plans may help but will not be enough on their own to increase participation in the arts among under-represented groups in Wales. As explained above we believe this will require:

- some mapping or audit of existing arts participation;
- greater links between the amateur arts, professional community arts and professional arts organisations;
- increased support for Voluntary Arts Wales and the national voluntary arts umbrella bodies in order to improve inclusivity and diversity within local amateur arts groups;

- more holistic collaboration between amateur and professional arts, local authorities and the wider voluntary and community sector.
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Voluntary Arts Wales **Celfyddydau Gwirfoddol Cymru**

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The Voluntary Arts Network (VAN) is registered in Scotland as Company No.139147 and Charity No.SC 020345, registered office: 2nd Floor, 54 Manor Place, Edinburgh, EH3 7EH.

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Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts

Response from Disability Arts Cymru

1. People participating in Disability Arts Cymru's arts activities include:

Disabled artists (visual artists, musicians, writers, actors, directors, dancers, photographers)

Disabled children and young people (9 to 25)

The term 'disabled' used here refers to the broad spectrum of disability: mobility impairment, sensory impairment, learning difficulties, mental health issues, hidden impairments such as diabetes, epilepsy etc

2. Budget changes affecting participation in the arts

a) For Disability Arts Cymru, the change in the way the arts are funded by the Arts Council of Wales has been a positive thing. Before the Investment Review we were seriously underfunded and struggling to survive. We are now part of ACW's portfolio of revenue funded clients, and our revenue grant has doubled. This enables us to employ officers to work in West Wales and North Wales, where before we only had a minimal presence. We have also increased the hours of our Development Manager in Cardiff and have a much needed Admin Officer. The result for DAC is that we are reaching more disabled people and developing stronger networks and working relationships with other arts organisations.

Also disabled young people have benefitted from funding through Power of the Flame, a 4 year programme of lottery funding from Legacy Trust UK which is managed and administered by ACW. As one of the Power of the flame partners, DAC runs *Whose Flame is it Anyway?* a series of arts projects for young disabled people across Wales. Through this project, which finishes September this year, over 300 young disabled people have participated in the arts in Wales. Many of these young people are new to DAC.

Significant changes in arts funding include the drop in Lottery funds due to money being diverted to the Olympics. This has had a negative impact on many arts organisations running participatory activities, especially those heavily dependant upon project funding.

When an arts organisation loses funding, the impact will always be felt by those who engaged in their arts activities. It takes time for any loss or imbalance to be redressed, and that may not always be possible in some cases.

All arts organisations funded by ACW have a duty to address issues of participation and engagement, especially by those groups and communities which are already marginalised (those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010). The reality of this is that some do very well, others less so. It takes time to change behaviours, especially where a cultural shift is necessary.

The economic recession has a big impact on participation in the arts. This is not just about funding for arts organisations / events. It is as much about the general cost of living, availability of transport, petrol costs, access support (care) and worries about benefits.

As well, economic recession makes arts providers more cautious, less likely to take risks in programming, therefore less likely to work with disabled artists whose work may be very different or challenging. It may also cause arts organisations to compromise on providing access at participatory events e.g. sign language interpreters.

b) Have certain groups of people been affected

Yes, marginalised groups (those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act) are usually the ones who feel the impact of any cuts. This is exacerbated by the fact that there has never been a level playing field in terms of opportunity to participate, though many changes have been put in place over the years which may lessen the impact to a certain extent.

3. Demographic or geographical gaps in provision

As outlined above, poorer communities will feel the impact due to the wider effects of recession. Poorer communities are more likely to include

marginalised groups and individuals, though disability is no respecter of income, ethnicity, age or gender.

4. Funding sources other than ACW

There are very few. Charitable trusts are over-subscribed and everyone seems to be scrabbling for the same pots of money. There are fewer local authority initiatives, and arts classes in further education being heavily cut.

5. Voluntary arts

We need the voluntary arts sector for its expertise in networking and supporting community and voluntary arts, which are often outside of the arts establishment, but are hugely valuable to those who participate. The voluntary arts sector is a great advocate for the arts, and especially for people who may be disengaged from arts activities.

6. Strategic relationship between WG and arts finding bodies.

We would like to see much stronger relationships developed. Much more can be done by WG and by Local Authorities to recognise the value of arts participation, and to fund their arts officers (where arts officers exist), to address the issues. Funding initiatives by local authorities would make such a huge difference to participation, which has untold benefits on peoples health and their sense of well-being. Arts can strengthen communities and ease the strain on the health / social services budgets.

7. Strategic Equality Plan.

The equality duties will definitely help to increase participation among under represented groups if accompanied by a robust action plans and by active partnerships with those organisations working with under represented groups.

Maggie Hampton

Director

Disability Arts Cymru