

Senedd Cymru / Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

Ymchwiliad i'r achosion o COVID-19 ac effaith y feirws ar ddiwylliant, y diwydiannau creadigol, treftadaeth, cyfathrebu a chwaraeon / Inquiry into the COVID-19 outbreak and its impact on culture, creative industries, heritage, communications and sport

CWLC COV49

Ymateb gan Mid Wales Arts / Response from Mid Wales Arts

We have received a request from Lucinda Bevan, Arts officer for Powys to provide information for your consultation.

I am writing on behalf of Mid Wales Arts, a charitable organisation enabling the local community, artists, young people and those who are vulnerable or have special needs to access the arts in Mid Wales.

We encourage awareness, appreciation, education, enjoyment and participation through inclusivity and awareness of diversity. Acting as a hub for artistic excellence MWA provides a unique platform for art education and career development of artists.

We run an all year programme of exhibitions, art clubs, workshops and events such as poetry, music evenings. We run popular summer holiday art clubs for children and a Sculpteen programme in August.

We have developed a wide audience, visitors and tourists come from all over the UK and abroad. We have good reputation as a centre of excellence for the quality and originality of our exhibitions.

We are the home of Sculpture Cymru, the National Association of Sculptors in Wales and they have a Sculpture trail here set in our beautiful landscape.

The centre is mainly managed by volunteers but offers opportunities to artists to teach and sell their work. We promote and supports the local economy.

We have 3 viewing galleries, a cafe, 3 art studios and 2 Sculpture trails.

- *What has been the immediate impact of Covid-19 on the sector?*

We have closed and cancelled our 2020 programme. Costing us lost marketing materials, advertising and paid preparation time.

We had spent a lot of time applying for grants that are now unavailable.

We still have overheads and maintenance but are not generating any income.

We are storing a lot of work for artists unable to collect it.

We have stopped all paid staff, who work on a self employed basis.

We are unable to advise artists who were expecting to exhibit this year or next what the likelihood will be of that happening.

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Art exhibitions rely on the 'opening' which is a social occasion and cannot happen. We are not sure if it will be viable to reopen,

Will the public will be keen to risk infection or will they be desperate to get out and enjoy seeing art and walking around the gardens here?

Will they be able to afford art which is deemed non essential.

Our clubs are very important to many attendees mental health and social well being. Working with clay, meeting others and being in creative surroundings is vital for many people living in rural areas.

*□□ How effectively has the support provided by the Welsh Government, the UK Government and arms-length bodies addressed the sector's needs?*

So far we have been inundated with information and advice but not recieved any financial help

*What will the likely long-term impacts of Covid-19 be on the sector, and what support is needed to deal with those?*

We have undertaken careful risk assessments in order to make the make the site safe, we will need staff to monitor the public to ensure they keep to social distancing rules, some volunteers are over 70

Public confidence will make many people think twice before visiting a gallery, it is often an impulse decision. They may not want to queue. However we may well find Wales will be very popular with tourists and holiday makers this year and there are not many attractions in the area, so we could be very busy. We have to be prepared for both scdenarios.

If and when we are able to re open we will have to limit numbers and develop a booking system for places at our clubs. Incomes in Mid Wales are generally low, we can't raise the moderate charge we make but reduced numbers will make them uneconomic to run unless we get a grant to cover them We know how important they are to those who come.

We will have costs, acrylic screens, masks, gloves, cleaning, aprons, hand sanitiser etc.

We rely on the cafe and donations, many people no longer carry cash. We will Have to buy a contactless card machine.

We will have to limit numbers at events and video them This will make them uneconomic.

We have had to subscribe to Zoom in order to have meetings.

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MWA is an important place for artists to meet, work co-operatively and support each other. Practice will suffer without ensuring we continue to offer these opportunities.

The Welsh government must recognise the importance for creative growth, mental health, social cohesion and well-being that we offer and the cost to the NHS and society will be greater if we are not supported.

- *What lessons can be learnt from how the Welsh Government, the UK Government, arms-length bodies and the sector have dealt with Covid-19?*

The UK should have locked down much earlier and worked together. Different parts of the country have been affected at different times, needing region/site specific rules.

The English government has muddled through this, Wales and Scotland have taken a more sensible approach.

The creative sector will be a force for developing new ideas and ways of working.

The issue of climate change must be addressed, arts activities that are carbon neutral should be encouraged.

Film will be more important and encourage new audiences.

Museums and galleries are very important educationally and must not be allowed to close.

Many people will have taken up new art activities as they have had more time.

Outdoor venues and outdoor arts activities should be encouraged. We can run many of our activities outdoors, Children's holiday clubs, Sculpture, Yoga, Drawing, {Painting, ceramic sculpture etc.