

Information:

The Spectacle Theatre company was established in 1979. The Arts Council of Wales has recently decided to cease its funding for the company, starting from the next financial year (April 2011).

Throughout decades of engagement with schools and diverse community projects in Rhondda Cynon Taf and other local authorities, Spectacle Theatre continues to produce high-quality theatrical work that addresses challenging social and other important issues. The company seeks to promote and enhance equality and a sense of citizenship, hence contributing to community cohesion. It seems clear that the ethos and work of the company has already internalised the spirit and practice of many, relevant elements of the *One Wales* document.

In a Cabinet statement on *One Wales Commitments to the Arts*, earlier in 2010, the Heritage Minister, Alun Ffred Jones stated that

Local communities matter, and providing arts for the people of Wales, wherever they live, to watch or participate in, is essential.

Spectacle Theatre continues to achieve this aim in reality. For example, over the past twelve months, the company has engaged in a total of 385 performance and workshop sessions, reaching a total of 14,329 participants, of which over 12,000 were schoolchildren.

The Minister added,

By laying firm foundations at home, we also ensure that we have high-quality arts to take abroad as part of our work to secure the reputation of Wales overseas.

Spectacle Theatre's international credentials have already been recognised when, in 2007, they achieved a double-award from the Shanghai International Childrens' Theatre Festival. The entry, *The Lazy Ant*, won both the best production and script prizes. The play was later toured within Wales.

Additionally, the loss of future funding for Spectacle Theatre will not only threaten the jobs of its six core staff, but also the potential employment and broad experience offered to many theatre workers (fifty over the past year).

Crucially, the Rhondda Valleys, already designated an area of 'need', together with other areas that the company embraces, will lose their English and Welsh language theatre provision for schools. Communities, too, will become all the more culturally impoverished if this extremely dedicated, professional, skilled and experienced company disbands.

Gwybodaeth:

Sefydlwyd Cwmni Theatr Spectacle ym 1979. Yn ddiweddar, penderfynodd Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru i beidio ag ariannu'r cwmni ymhellach, gan ddechrau yn y flwyddyn ariannol nesaf (o fis Ebrill 2011).

Ar ôl treulio degawdau yn ymgysylltu ag ysgolion a phrosiectau cymunedol amrywiol yn awdurdod Rhondda Cynon Taf ac awdurdodau lleol eraill, mae Cwmni Theatr Spectacle yn parhau i gynhyrchu gwaith theatr o ansawdd uchel sy'n mynd i'r afael â heriau cymdeithasol a materion pwysig eraill. Mae'r cwmni yn ceisio hyrwyddo cydraddoldeb a'r syniad o ddinasyddiaeth, a gwella'r sefyllfa yn hynny o beth, ac felly'n cyfrannu at gydlyniant cymunedol. Mae'n amlwg bod ysbryd sawl elfen berthnasol o ddogfen *Cymru'n Un*, yn ogystal ag ymarferion cysylltiedig, eisoes wedi'u mewnoli yng ngwaith y cwmni.

Mewn datganiad Cabinet a wnaed yn gynharach eleni ar *Ymrwymadau Cymru'n Un mewn perthynas â'r Celfyddydau*, dywedodd Alun Ffred Jones, y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth:

Mae cymunedau lleol yn bwysig, ac mae'n hanfodol rhoi'r cyfle i bobl Cymru wyllo neu gymryd rhan yn y celfyddydau ble bynnag maent yn byw.

Mae Cwmni Theatr Spectacle yn parhau i gyflawni'r nod hwn mewn modd ymarferol. Er enghraifft, yn ystod y 12 mis diwethaf, mae'r cwmni wedi cyfrannu at gyfanswm o 385 o berfformiadau a sesiynau gweithdy, ac felly wedi ymgysylltu â 14,329 o gyfranogwyr, gan gynnwys 12,000 o ddisgyblion ysgol yn eu plith.

Ychwanegodd y Gweinidog:

Drwy osod sylfeini cadarn yma yng Nghymru, yr ydym hefyd yn sicrhau fod gennym gelfyddydau uchel eu hansawdd i'w harddangos dramor fel rhan o'n gwaith i hyrwyddo ein henw da yn rhyngwladol.

Cydnabuwyd hygredd rhyngwladol Cwmni Theatr Spectacle yn 2007, pan enillodd y cwmni ddwy wobwr mewn gŵyl ryngwladol ar gyfer theatr plant a gynhaliwyd yn Shanghai. Mewn perthynas â'i gynhyrchiad o *The Lazy Ant*, enillodd y cwmni'r wobwr am y cynhyrchiad gorau a'r wobwr am y sgript orau. Aethpwyd â'r cynhyrchiad ar daith o amgylch Cymru yn dilyn yr ŵyl.

Bydd y penderfyniad i beidio ag ariannu Cwmni Theatr Spectacle ymhellach nid yn unig yn peryglu swyddi'r chwe aelod o staff craidd, ond bydd hefyd yn peryglu cyfleodd cyflogaeth eraill posibl a'r profiadau eang a gynigir i nifer o weithwyr theatr (oddeutu 50 dros y flwyddyn ddiwethaf).

Yn allweddol, bydd Cwm Rhondda, sydd eisoes wedi'i ddynodi'n ardal ag 'anghenion', ynghyd ag ardaloedd eraill y mae'r cwmni yn eu cynnwys yn ei weithgareddau, yn colli eu darpariaeth theatr ar gyfer ysgolion drwy gyfrwng

y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg. Bydd cymunedau hefyd yn cael eu hamddifadu ymhellach o ran diwylliant os caiff y cwmni proffesiynol, crefftus a phrofiadol hwn ei ddiddymu.

Further information from the petitioner

Additional Information

Over the years, the company has developed sound relationships with Educational and Arts Services within other local authorities, taking its Theatre in Education, and other community productions, to Rhondda Cynon-Taf, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil and Caerphilly.

It also maintains links with many Community First partnerships, providing community theatre services for them when appropriate.

A number of the company's officials sit on relevant committees. For example, the Administrative Director is a member of the executive committee of the Welsh Association of Performing Arts.

It is also worth highlighting that the most recent Arts Council of Wales Annual Review Report for Spectacle Theatre, (2009/2010) made the following statements. Commenting on one of their school productions, *Someone Else's Shoes*, the review team commented that the company

...demonstrated how powerful theatre in education can be when delivered by such an expert team whose members have developed such a strong rapport over many years (p.6)

The review team concluded that

Spectacle Theatre places itself at the heart of its community so it has a singularly important part to play in raising the artistic aspirations of its catchment area (p.7)

The company is immersed in its communities, exemplified by its true, community-oriented ethos and diverse, practical work. It is our opinion that, in economically difficult times, it is this kind of well-established company that provides an important, value-for-money role, particularly in already 'deprived' areas.

Alun Ffred Jones AC/AM
Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth
Minister for Heritage



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Ein cyf: AFJ/00095/11

Sandy Mewies AC

committee.business@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

16 Chwefror 2011

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Sandy Mewies'.

Diolch am eich llythyr dyddiedig 27 Ionawr, ynghyd â'r dogfennau a amgaewyd, ynglŷn â Theatr Gwent a Theatr mewn Addysg.

Amgaeaf, er gwybodaeth ichi, gopi o lythyr a anfonodd fy swyddogion mewn ymateb i'r e-bost oddi wrth Mr a Mrs James.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Alun Ffred Jones'.

Alun Ffred Jones AC
Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth

Ein cyf/Our ref AT/AFJ/00037/11

Mr & Mrs D James

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

4 February 2011

Dear Mr and Mrs James

Thank you for your further e-mail of 17 January. Taking your points in turn, I will try to provide answers, where I can, to your further questions. I have numbered your questions 1-11, and I have included your text, before providing a response to each question.

1. From further reading into the background to the 8 TIE's we understand that monies from the Welsh Assembly Government have specifically been given to the Arts Council of Wales for funding them, which aims to increase access to and participation in the arts by young people across Wales and it appears that at no point has it been withdrawn. **Is that correct? Therefore are we correct in our understanding that the Arts Council of Wales will now lose all of this money as they are not now supporting all of the 8 TIE companies the money was given to who covered the whole of Wales ?**

Response: No, ACW will not see this money withdrawn. TIE funding has not been ring-fenced within ACW's budget for some time and while this funding is, in future, not going to be utilised specifically for TIE, it will continue to be used to help achieve the core aims of increasing access to and participation in the arts by young people across Wales

2. Basically due to the funding withdrawal to 3 of the 8 TIE's by ACW, it appears Wales will not now be fully covered at each of the four key stages in education. These 3 areas make up a large area of the nation and the young people within these areas it appears will now no longer be covered by WAG's main commitments as outlined in 'The One Wales Document'. Therefore it would appear by these actions the Arts Council of Wales will be due for more of a cut and Heritage/WAG will have more in their coffers. **Is that correct?**

Response: As above.

3. Regarding the point of the 4% cut being quoted, BBC NEWS politics dated 29th June 2010 states: 'The ACW currently provides just over £23.5m to revenue funded organisations, as well as distributing funds from the National Lottery.' I understand the use of the word current in this instance means financial year 2010/2011?

Response: Yes.

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400

[Address]

Ref

4. In the New Funding Strategy from the Arts Council of Wales it states; 'Subject to confirmation in February of the Welsh Assembly Government's draft budget a new portfolio of 71 organisations will share funding of just over £24.25 million in 2011/2012.'

Therefore looking at these two sets of figures:

Just over £23.4 million to RFO's re 2010/2011 submitted and also quoted by Alun Ffred Jones AM Minister for Heritage, re cabinet minutes.

Just over £24.25 million to 71 RFO's re 2011/2012 quoted from Arts Council of Wales site re: New Funding Strategy. **It appears that there will therefore be an increase of £750,000.00 in 2011/2012 for ACW's RFO's. Is that correct? Where therefore does the 4% decrease enter into all of this for the RFO's?**

Response: There appears to be some confusion surrounding this point. By reducing funding from 96 to 71 revenue funded organisations, with effect from next year, ACW is effectively making it possible to fund some organisations at a higher level than previously, in line with its investment review conclusions. I cannot confirm how much will specifically be spent on revenue funded organisations, because ACW will not be able to confirm this until the final budget figures have been announced. Provisionally, ACW has been allocated £30.612 million for all its revenue requirements in 2011-12, which include its own running costs and strategic services, as well as funding for arts organisations via revenue funding. By reorganising its priorities, ACW will be able to increase funding to its RFO's while still receiving a reduction in its overall budget. It should also be noted that the 4% reduction covers the period to 13/14; ACW's provisional allocation for 11/12 is lower than the 10/11 settlement

5. As stated and explained above, it appears there is a £750,000.00 increase for the RFO's. **Therefore what is the reasoning for withdrawing the funding to the 3 of the 8 TIE's; Gwent Theatre, Spectacle Theatre and Theatr Powys? Their joint funding at present we understand stands at just over £710,000.00. Why therefore are the ACW taking these actions? It appears there is no logical reasoning for this or can you supply one?**

Response: I refer you to previous correspondence from ACW, in which their Chief Executive has sought to explain to you his Council's decision to cease funding the three companies you mention.

6. One last point regarding TIE, Arts Council of Wales has submitted written evidence dated September 2010 to the Inquiry by the National Assembly for Wales Communities and Cultural Committee for the Accessibility of arts and cultural activities in Wales. On page 28 it states 'During the course of our Investment Review we became increasingly concerned about the challenges we faced around arts and young people, and especially arts in education. Initiatives that had been the cornerstone of our strategy for many years were proving increasingly difficult to sustain. A good example would be our strategy for supporting our eight revenue funded Theatre-in-Education (TiE) companies. Over a four year period 2005 to 2009 we increased our revenue support by 7% to the eight companies, but attendances for their TiE performances decreased by 17%. And they're not alone. 'From the ACW reports the overall revenue support to TIE was shown as; £1,926,524.00 in 2005/06 financial year. £1,970,950.00 in 2006/07 financial year. £2,019,398.00 in 2007/08 financial year. £2,019,398.00 in 2008/09 financial year. Therefore, the difference over the 4 year period from 2005/06 to 2008/09 =£92,874.00 which equates to we understand an increase support of just under 5% not the 7% quoted. From this how accurate are the TIE attendance figures quoted? Perhaps each TIE should be asked for their figures? A further point to be noted is that there has been no increase in

revenue support by the ACW to the TIE's since 2007/08 their funding has stayed the same for 4 years.

Response: The Welsh Assembly Government does not hold attendance figures for revenue funded organisations but you may wish to follow your own suggestion of contacting the companies concerned.

7. We understand that the Arts Council of Wales is an Assembly Government Sponsored Body and as such the Welsh Assembly Government is responsible to determine the level of remuneration for Chief Executives, Chairs and Board members of these bodies. Is that correct? According to WAG increase in salary, 'the Minister for Finance and Public Service delivery has agreed 'with effect from 1st April 2008 the max consolidated pay award for Chief Executives of Assembly Government Sponsored Bodies (AGSB) should be 1.5% There is also a paragraph in this document where it states max consolidated pay award for Chief Executives should be 2.5%, which is correct? Looking at the annual reports the previous Chief Executive for his final complete year 2007/08 received a salary of £70,422.00 + pension contribution. An increase from 2006/2007 of 2.5%. The current Chief Executive for his first complete year 2009/10 received a salary of £93,380 + pension contribution + (contribution towards accommodation (including tax and national insurance)). Could you now explain why the salary has increased by £22,958.00 + pension contribution + benefit in kind of £3,389.00? It appears that this is quite a substantial increase to his predecessor's salary 2 years prior. How is that? It would appear that the role of Chief Executive has increased by 4 emoluments bands, is that correct? This we understand is a lot more than the % increase recommended by the Welsh Assembly Government. **Are we correct in our understanding? Can you explain why this has happened?**

Response: The Welsh Assembly Government determines the rate of remuneration for the Chairman, together with any annual increases, and approves the initial salary of the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive's performance-related bonuses are recommended to the Council by a Remuneration Committee. The Welsh Assembly Government advises the percentage of the bonus which forms a consolidated pay increase with the remainder paid as a non-consolidated award.

The starting salary of the current Chief Executive was approved by the Welsh Assembly Government. The salary is comparable to similar organisations and reflects the market rate of the post.

8. We understand that there was an interim Chief Executive on a management fee of £69,600 For the period 21st April till 17th September 2008 (believe that those are the correct dates). However, the present Chief Executive took up his appointment we understand on 15th September 2008 his salary for financial year ending 2008/2009 being £50,089 + non-consolidated award not shown separately + pension contribution £9,317 + benefit in kind (contribution towards accommodation (including tax and national insurance)) £4,745, a total salary of £54,834 + pension contribution for just under 7 months. Again this we understand is a lot more than the % increase recommended by the Welsh Assembly Government. It appears to be a substantial increase from the previous Chief Executives salary who for the full year 2007/2008 received £70,422 + pension contribution for the full 12 months. It appears that the previous Chief Executive received £15,588 + pension contribution for working just over 5 months more. **Are we correct in our understanding? an you explain why this has happened? We understand that payment is also linked to which of the 5 bands is assigned to ACW, but has the banding dramatically increased in rate since 2007/08 or has ACW moved up in its banding? Also with the**

proposed reduction in funding cuts for the ACW along with staff costs they have to make are we to understand that the ACW will now be moving down in its banding?

Response: As above regarding the salary of the current Chief Executive. The salary of the current Chief Executive is not due to any percentage increase over his predecessor, it is a separate matter reflecting individual circumstances and the market situation at the time of the appointment. Please note that non-consolidated awards are always disclosed separately in the Arts Council's financial statements. As the current Chief Executive took up his post in September 2008, no performance award was due in 2008/09.

Reference to the AGSB banding is misleading in this instance. ACW remain a Band 3 organisation, as determined by the Welsh Assembly Government. There has been no movement up or down bandings. The position of an organisation within each banding is determined by a number of factors, staffing and funding levels are just two of these factors. I am not aware of any plans to review the position of individual AGSB's.

ACW have their own pay system and are not linked to WAG pay scales although they are required to have their pay remit approved annually by the Welsh Assembly Government.

9. It would also appear that the salary paid to the Chairman is not consistent to understand since he has received payment for his position as follows; £38,000 in 2004/05; £39,000 in 2005/06; £32,864 in 2006/07 shown in 2007/08 report (£38,000 shown in 2006/07 report); * which one is correct? £42,120 in 2007/08 (remuneration set at £324 per day) £43,160 in 2008/09 increase of 2.47% not 1.5% as per agreement for chair of AGSB's £43,809 in 2009/10 increase of 1.5% **Are we correct on our understanding with this? Can you explain why this has happened?**

Response: The rate of remuneration of the Chairman reflects the number of days committed to Arts Council business. The rise in the level of the change in remuneration since 2006/07 reflects an increase in the number of days worked by the Chair on Council business from 2 to 2.5 days per week. The two figures for 2006/07 reflects a recalculation of the rates paid to Chairs, which was only finalised after the first figure was published. The Welsh Assembly Government sets the level of remuneration for all AGSB Chairs annually. Any increase is based on cost of living indexes and is not consistent year on year. It has in recent years ranged between 2.5% and zero.

10. One final point is regarding Travel and subsistence expenses incurred and defrayed whilst on Council business by the Chief Executive and Chairman of the ACW. These expenses we believe have not been shown on the reports previously for the Chief Executive and Chairman separately. It is only since the 2008/09 annual report can they be seen on page 83 under; 'The total actual emoluments of the Chairman and Chief Executive were made up of:' This shows the figures for 2008/09 and also 2007/08 but we cannot find the figures in 2007/08 report could you tell us where they are shown? In the 2007/08 report it states Chair £2,259 and Chief Executives £15,762. **Haven't they been claimed before this date? If not why are they now?**

Response: There is no statutory obligation to disclose the amounts reimbursed to the Chairman and Chief Executive for travel and subsistence. With effect from 2007/08 the Arts Council has voluntarily disclosed this information.

11. **Finally why does the percentage charged to general activities and the national lottery fluctuate each year for the Chairman and Chief Executives emoluments/remuneration?**

Response: The level of funding ACW receives from Grant-in-Aid and Lottery sources is not constant. Running costs, including salaries, are apportioned between the Arts Council's general and lottery distribution activities on the basis of staff time. The apportionment is reviewed annually.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Stevenson
Arts Policy Branch

Alun Ffred Jones AC/AM
Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth
Minister for Heritage



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-308
Ein cyf/Our ref AFJ/00104/11

Christine Chapman AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA
committee.business@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

25 February 2011

Dear Christine,

Thank you for your letter of 26 January.

You have invited me to give a response on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government to your Committee's concerns about the "robustness of the investment review process, specifically in relation to the theatre-in-education process".

Arts Council for Wales (ACW) was remitted, by my predecessor, to conduct a wide-ranging review of its investments in light of what was judged to be a widely-agreed view that change was needed. In my Remit Letter of 2009/10 to ACW I re-affirmed this requirement. As you state in your letter, the design and management of the investment review and resulting decisions are the responsibility of the ACW. This is in line with the agreed approach to funding the arts in Wales, which has been debated at length by the National Assembly for Wales.

My responsibility was to ensure that the review process was fair and robust and that the strategic direction taken by ACW was in line with Welsh Assembly Government policy. In line with this, I have received regular briefings on the conduct of the review and on the action which ACW have taken subsequently. I am satisfied that the process by which these decisions were taken was rigorous and fair. It is also worth reiterating that this was also the view of the Council's independent auditors, RSM Tenon, who gave the review a "substantial" assessment on the three occasions on which they assessed the investment review. The robustness of ACW's decisions was also tested through an independent appeals process.

The Council made its decisions on which organisations should receive revenue funding on the basis that they represented the highest priority for support when assessed against the detailed criteria that ACW had developed and consulted upon with all those who would be affected.

I am aware that the decision not to fund theatre in education projects has drawn considerable criticism from some quarters. I note your particular concern that "the Arts Council for Wales approach to theatre-in-education changed in the middle of the investment

review". I do not support this view. In my remit letter of 2009-10 to ACW, I included the specific instruction that any future strategy should include "a fresh look at funding strategy and be prepared to look robustly at the effectiveness of current investment". All funded organisations will have been fully aware of this advice. I am not aware that in any of its submission guidance ACW committed to the continuation of theatre in education provision, or the procurement of a new service in this field. Instead, the potential of all organisations was considered, both on the individual merits of their case, and their wider strategic commitment to arts priorities.

It was fully in line with the remit I had issued for the Council to come to difficult but important decisions on priorities and for these decisions to be based on the evidence submitted by the companies and a thorough review of their business plans.

The Council could as you note have decided to halt the review process based on the evidence which the review process generated on theatre in education. Given the importance of this matter I would have been surprised if they had not considered all of the available options. Fundamentally, however, ACW has explained that decisions about theatre in education had to be considered within the wider context of theatre activity in Wales.

As it begins to implement the results of the investment review I have been determined to ensure that ACW should now bring a new focus to the wider opportunities available to children and young people to attend, and participate in, arts activities. ACW is currently consulting on proposals in a strategy paper on young people and the arts "Changing Lives"; consultation ends on 10 March. I have discussed this with ACW in some detail, including at a meeting with the Chair and Chief Executive on 1 February, given that our aim must be to maximise access to the arts in all parts of Wales including the areas served by Gwent Theatre and Spectacle Theatre. I would note that there has been a misconception among some parties that theatre in education has been universally provided across Wales. Provision in schools in NW Wales has been strong, as it has been in Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire. In Pembrokeshire, however, provision has been to 31% of schools, while it has been between 45-60% in NE Wales and Bridgend. According to ACW data, Spectacle Theatre has performed in less than half of the schools in its catchment area (RCT, Merthyr Tydfil, and parts of Caerphilly and Bridgend). Similarly, Gwent Theatre has performed in a high number of schools in Monmouthshire, but only in between 20-33% of the total number of schools in Newport, Caerphilly and Torfaen; none of these three local authorities currently funds theatre in education.

The assumption that has been made by some that activity in other parts of Wales will continue unchanged next year is wrong. We will see changes in approach consistent with the new strategy and the five companies that previously provided theatre in education and which will continue to be funded will, in future, deliver theatre more broadly and in a way that is not restricted to the school environment. There will also be greater expectations placed on a wider range of arts organisations who have a part to play in enthusing and entertaining young audiences. I have recently issued a remit letter for 2011-12 to the Chair of ACW, in which I told Professor Smith that I was concerned "that there should be exciting, high-quality and challenging opportunities for children and young people to experience, create and take part in artistic activity". I have tasked ACW with addressing the question of geographical availability and instructed them to report to me before the beginning of the next academic year.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the commitment and hard work of all those engaged in delivering the vitally important creative programmes of arts bodies in Wales, whether or not they are revenue-funded clients of ACW. The investment review process has been very challenging for some organisations. But I believe that ACW was correct to

believe that we needed to submit all arts organisations to a process of rigorous assessment and review. The consultation which ACW conducted ahead of its review suggested that there was widespread agreement on that point across the arts community. I am satisfied that the review was conducted transparently and effectively. The outcome of the review leaves us better placed to ensure that we can now maximise the public benefits associated with our investment in the arts, and I very much look forward to a reinvigorated approach to arts provision for children and young people in the near future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Alun Ffred Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Alun Ffred Jones AC/AM

Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth/Minister for Heritage

Alun Ffred Jones AC/AM
Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth
Minister for Heritage



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-314, P-03-303
Ein cyf/Our ref SF/AJ/0033/11

Christine Chapman AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA
committee.business@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

10th March 2011

Dear Christine,

Thank you for your letters to me of 1 March, and to the Deputy First Minister, of 3 March; as Minister with responsibility for arts funding, we have agreed that I will reply to both letters.

I have noted that you have now received a petition on behalf of "Save Theatre Powys" and "Mid Powys Youth Theatre", in addition to petitions already received from "Save Gwent Theatre" and "Spectacle Theatre".

Dealing first with the points raised in your letter to me, I welcome the Committee's close interest in the provision of arts opportunities for children and young people. It was my intention that the letter I sent you on 25 February should describe the position we have reached as comprehensively as possible because of the importance I attach to extending artistic opportunities for young people. I am sorry you felt my reply did not fully respond to the Committee's concerns.

In your latest letter you have quoted the evidence provided to you by ACW. You are concerned that ACW adopted a significant change of approach during its consideration of business plans submitted to the investment review. Your conclusion is that those companies whose focus was theatre in education were in some way uniquely disadvantaged by this irregularity in the Investment Review process. I would repeat my view that I do not believe this to be the case.

ACW's Council had a complex task before it, which related to all the art forms it supports, and to all the companies who submitted business cases. I am satisfied that ACW acted in line with the remit I issued in the way they conducted the investment review. My instruction to the Council was that they should undertake a root and branch review of all areas of funded activity. My expectation was that the effectiveness of all aspects of activity should be scrutinised in the same robust fashion as part of the review process. It was not my intention that any individual areas of activity should be accorded special protected status. ACW provided clear written advice in advance of the review to all those who would be

affected by it explaining the approach that it intended to follow. I have seen no evidence that this approach was not pursued consistently throughout the Investment Review process.

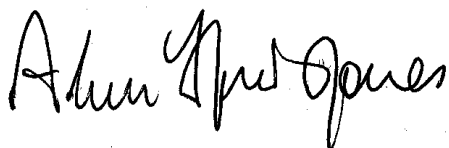
ACW did not commence the review by declaring that it was setting in stone its strategic expectations or by undertaking that no area of provision would change in any art form. Indeed, it was made abundantly clear that changes would be made. In the statement I made to the National Assembly for Wales on 29 June last year, I said that “The review requires ACW to acknowledge and address areas of weakness in our arts provision, to continue to develop the arts in Wales across all art forms, and to work with its core clientele of arts organisations to ensure that these companies are supported to give of their best.” Just as some companies involved in the provision of, for example, dance, literature, and public art may have been surprised at the radical decisions ACW have taken in relation to those strategic areas, the announcements relating to theatre in education were unwelcome to some, while they have been welcomed by others. For each strategic debate, in the various art form areas, the Council had to look at all the available options, as it did in the case of theatre in education.

I have been advised that ACW is actively engaged in constructive discussions around future activity in the areas served by the three companies who are the subject of petitions to your Committee. In the case of two of those companies, the possibilities for continued funding from ACW, in the form of project support, are being explored, with some projects already agreed for the coming financial year. In the case of the third – which is in fact a local authority service, rather than an independent organisation – ACW is in dialogue with that local authority about how it wishes to support activity for young people in the future.

In terms of funding from the European Structural Funds programmes 2007–2013, from your letter, it appears that, on this occasion, the petitioning companies are looking to backfill a shortfall in funding for their ‘core’ activities, which is unlikely to qualify for direct Structural Funds support.

However, many organisations benefit indirectly from European funding as beneficiaries of EU projects and by tendering to deliver activities of EU projects. As an example, the *Reach the Heights* EU funded scheme, led by the Assembly Government’s Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills and delivered in partnership with ACW, is aimed at people aged 11-19 who either are, or are at risk of, disengaging from mainstream education and training. This scheme may be a viable funding option for the petitioning companies and I would therefore advise them to look into this option via their contacts at ACW. I understand that one of the companies has already held discussions with ACW about engaging with the *Reach the Heights* scheme and that there may be scope for the company in question to obtain funding via this route should a second round of funding be available.

Yours Sincerely,



Alun Ffred Jones AC/AM

Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth/Minister for Heritage

Spectacle response

16th. March 2011

Dear Mrs. Chapman,

Re: P-03 - 311. Response to the documentation regarding Save Gwent Theatre, Spectacle Theatre and Theatre Powys and Mid Powys Youth Theatre.

Thank you for the documentation relating to the 'Friends of Spectacle Theatre' petition, and for the opportunity to respond. I would add that my response, on behalf of the group, is derived from very limited background knowledge and experience of the organisational and policy-making processes of theatre companies and the arts *per se*. I hope you will read the following in the light of what may seem, at times, rather limited and naive comments.

I have also elicited the views of Spectacle Theatre on the content of the documentation, and have included their response in a separate attachment.

My first reaction to the letter from the Heritage and Culture Minister was one of perplexity, disappointment and not a little frustration. It seems extraordinary that, even at this very late stage, an apparent dichotomy exists between the Minister and the Arts Council in a crucial aspect of the latter's Investment Review process. In this context, it would appear that the theatre companies affected by funding cuts have indeed been disadvantaged by the changes made in funding application criteria during the review. Frankly, the current situation appears completely unfair.

It seems curious that, if the process was as smooth and clear as suggested by the Arts Council, the theatres concerned should have mounted such a rigorous objection to the outcomes. With such a great deal at stake for the theatres themselves, including their professional workforce, future participants and audiences, particularly younger people, I do think there should at least be a delay in withdrawing such funding until a further, in depth, independent analysis is made of the whole strategic and funding review. This is particularly required in what now seems to be a flawed process, especially when reference has been made in evidence that, at one stage, the Arts Council discussed halting the review to consider the changed situation. The claim that time, potential overwhelming volume of work, and the urgency to complete the process militated against halting the process appears inadequate, in light of what has since occurred.

The claim was made that at least two further activities were unable to be carried out because of the time and effort required. One was the possible production of business

plan summaries for scrutiny, hence providing a more detailed understanding of the Investment Review process. Apart from the claim that to reveal the content of the plans would break confidentiality, it was also claimed that the time needed to make them accessible would be almost prohibitive. Yet, there are references made in the verbal evidence to business plan assessments being the basis for much of the decision-making. This implies that forms of assessment outcomes were readily accessible to the Council to make such decisions. In this context, too, it would have been most useful if the procedure and criteria for final decision-making were clearly explained. I still have no idea of how each funding outcome was arrived at, and by whom. For example, what differentiation was made between the five retained theatres and the theatres that failed to meet the criteria? Additionally, if the public interest is to be served, I believe it imperative that there should be unfettered access to all documentation that recorded the process leading to these decisions, especially if requested by a committee of the Welsh Assembly.

The second reference to a lack of time and potential work overload, was in response to the Investment Review consultation. I am concerned that, as the Arts Council receives such a huge amount of public funding, it seems to have failed to gather the views of a broad swathe of the general public in informing the development of their new strategy. After all, isn't it the people who help create, define, and carry the traditions and potential for art and cultural development within their communities? Indeed, the thousands of individuals who signed the petitions have made a powerful statement of public concern by doing so.

Overall, has already highlighted, references to a lack of time, and the prospect of a high volume of additional work, appears a weak response to the profound outcomes that must have been envisaged by the Arts Council.

Even as a theatrical novice, I am concerned about the issue and, indeed, future of Theatre in Education funding. Evidence from Mr. Capaldi puts into perspective the erratic nature of this provision throughout Wales. However, the statistics produced in the Arts Council letter are meaningless in the absence of context, given the variables involved (this point is addressed in the Spectacle Theatre attachment). I would like to state that, having experienced first hand the positive and important impact that theatre and drama can have, in this instance on the development of just one group of younger people over a relatively short period of time, I feel it is imperative that such a system remains in place. Steps should be taken to ensure its continuation on a more

equitable, nationwide basis. Is it now something that should be addressed via the Education Minister? I understand that the 'Changing Lives' consultation process is due to report on the provision of 'the arts' to younger people. Their findings and recommendations are awaited with interest.

With such huge amounts of public finance to be managed, I, as a recent inductee into such processes and procedures, was very surprised to learn of the 'arms length' principle applied to the work of the Arts Council. I trust this is not synonymous with 'hands off!' I am bewildered regarding to whom the Council and its members are actually accountable.

I feel that I, and others in the petitioning group, and crucially, the people of Rhondda Cynon Taf, and other areas served by Spectacle Theatre for over thirty years, have been greatly let down, and potentially deprived of an enormously experienced, dynamic and invaluable theatre and drama asset. My personal perception is that, rather than creating confidence and harmony, the current decisions by the Arts Council have possibly served to create division and disharmony in some quarters.

From my own perception, I feel that it is crucial to ensure that such a high profile public body maintains public trust and confidence. I fear that, no matter what the rationale offered by the Arts Council to justify its decisions, it surely cannot be morally right to make and defend such crucially important decisions when an apparent, fundamental procedural flaw in the Investment Review process is recognised, yet does not appear to have been adequately addressed. It has produced an ethical dilemma that, in all decency, must be fully and satisfactorily investigated and resolved.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Jones.

(Petition organiser for
Friends of Spectacle Theatre).

Response from Spectacle Theatre.

The observations below refer mainly to the information letter from the Arts Council of Wales, and concludes with a brief, statistical overview of work undertaken by Spectacle Theatre.

I have read these letters with utter dismay. Why has Spectacle's laudable provision of theatre for schools and communities been omitted from these figures? The Arts Council letter uses statistics, which, without a particular context, are meaningless. but here they are used as a way to suggest the company is failing.

If you read this letter without any knowledge of the actual provision, you would get the impression that Spectacle Theatre contributes very little. This is not the case and can be evidenced.

If the examples used by the Arts Council were placed alongside Spectacle's provision, we would not be found to be failing, but are providing an excellent service of a high quality.

Page Two

The fact the other organisations mentioned work with young people, does not mean they provide the same kind of provision. Not one of these organisations is a touring theatre company, or creators and providers of theatre for young people and communities.

Spectacle Theatre reaches areas by touring work, which enables greater access, removes barriers too hard-to-reach groups, or those who cannot travel or are travel resistant audiences. This removes financial and social barriers which otherwise would prevent access to any kind of art experience. The provision mentioned in the letter is different. It has a different function, which is why we work in close partnership with several of these organisations.

We not only promote theatre, we also create it, tour it, and present it in hard-to-reach communities, and develop audiences for theatre.

Again the letter seems to suggest that Spectacle Theatre does not form a part of the provision of theatre presented at Blackwood Miners, Riverfront, Borough, Theatre, or the Coliseum and Park and Dare when in fact we do. The list of activities does not include the work Spectacle does in these areas, which is considerable.

Page Three

The organisations mentioned have produced a small amount of provision in the area. Spectacle Theatre also provides work for children and families. Spectacle ran the award winning Rhondda Cynon Taf Youth Theatre until funding was no longer available for such activity.

It would be interesting to compare the funding level and activity return per pound of these organisations. Additionally, we work in partnership with these organisations, and not in competition.

Page Four

Spectacle Theatre pioneered the 'Night Out' network for over a decade in the valley's area, developing venues and audiences. Yes, the 'Night Out' project has grown, yet its basic function of providing live, professional theatre to communities that otherwise could not access them, is something Spectacle Theatre brought to the Arts Council. Additionally, the excellent youth arts work of Valleys Kids was developed in partnership with Spectacle Theatre. In fact our Youth Arts Workers still leads this work for Valleys Kids. Spectacle pioneered this work and continues to be at the cutting edge of developing work for young people and communities, in particular disadvantaged communities that little, if any, other arts provision reaches.

Why has Spectacle been omitted from the list of company's that deliver this work through the 'Night Out' scheme?

Page Five

Again, the same previously mentioned arguments could be used.

Cultural Olympiad money was distributed at the discretion of the Arts Council, and not on an application basis!

The other groups mentioned also work with us, for example, Merthyr Academy of Performing Arts. We have recently toured our production of 'The Witch' to this organisation, which is a newly formed group. Incidentally, the young woman that runs the group stated she became involved because of Spectacle visiting her school.

Bigfoot Arts Education doesn't produce theatre, while Stagecoach Theatre School is an expensive commercial franchise, not a theatre company. It is financially out of the reach of most young people, which is why we run youth groups around the valley to ensure young people can access arts training.

Page Six

The third paragraph states that 'some companies choose to provide a significant amount of activity in established theatre venues as an alternative to peripatetic schools provision.', however, there are some companies that don't, because they have different beliefs. Spectacle Theatre actually provides a mix of this activity, but firmly believes in going to audiences, rather than expecting audiences to come to us. It is not always financially viable for schools to pay for transport to go to theatres. Theatre Clwyd has a bus stop directly outside the Theatre.

It is a false argument to use statistics to evidence levels of activity due to a number of reasons. For example:

1. The unitary authorities have different populations
2. The companies have different levels of funding.
3. Some companies offer free provision, while others are forced to charge.
4. All of Spectacle's projects are offered to all people in the target age group.
5. There is equality of opportunity. We have policies to encourage new schools who have never booked.
6. It would be impossible to reach all the schools in our area in a year!

That said, when we have found additional funding, we have performed in 100% of all English and Welsh language schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The figures and statistics, if taken in context, need to be applauded, not used as a way to insinuate failure.

In relation to Theatre in Education, we formed a national agency of all TiE companies to ensure provision was increased, and best practise shared. Yes, there is a long way to go, we are only in the fifth year of a ten year agreed strategy with the Arts Council. Now they have abandoned it without consultation, and have no other strategy in its place.

The result of the Investment Review means that there is no producing company in Bridgend, Caerphilly, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr, Gwent, Monmouth, Powys etc., and no touring theatre provision being created in these areas.

The skills, resources and expertise have been completely jeopardised. When such resources disappear they never return. The eventual funding settlement for the Arts Council from the Welsh Assemble Government, did not even require cuts to be made.

Page Seven.

The Arts Council are using different figures for different years for Theatr Iolo (2006 and 2010) and Spectacle Theatre (2008/9). Why is this? They collect the same information from the company's at the end of each year.

Theatr Iolo only produce work for children, Spectacle is a community company, this invariably means we only work for two thirds of the time with schools.

The following is a brief, statistical account of the theatrical and drama work carried out by Spectacle Theatre within schools and communities, between the years 2006 and 2010,

Projects that toured into schools included 19 productions. There were 815 school performances to audiences totalling 39,623. In addition we undertook 2 community/venue tours and took our schools production into venues for 95 performances, in front of total audience numbers of 8,636.

During this period we have produced, and co-produced with Theatr Iolo and Gwent Theatre, 21 productions, with 916 performances. In total, our audience figures over this whole period was 48,944. In addition, we also provided 33 participation projects in 249 sessions, working with 5,668 young/older people.

I have not included any figures for the current financial year, which will be slightly lower, because we have not been able to tour for the same amount of weeks that we normally tour for.

Spectacle Theatre is more than happy for the Petitions Committee to see the business plan we submitted to the Arts Council of Wales for the Investment Review process. In fact, I'm sure we sent a copy to Mr. Leighton Andrews.

Sandra Jones (Administrative Director)

Stepen Davies (Artistic Director)

Spectacle Theatre - 16th. march 2011.