

A snapshot of Wales Arts International's International Work and Strategy *A bridge between Wales and the World*

Wales Arts International supports a global outlook to the arts and culture of Wales and contribute towards Wales' global responsibility and to raising the profile of Wales internationally. Our investment in the sector enables experiences, relationships and activities that bridge the local with the global.

By offering a gateway between the arts of Wales and the world, Wales Arts International is a think-do tank for the Arts Council and the arts in Wales. It provides professional expertise and leadership that helps the Arts Council overall to research, test and deliver its international objectives.

The international activities of Arts Council of Wales extend across the whole of our organisation and across the breadth and depth of our investments. These activities are often (but not exclusively) developed, supported and / or co-ordinated by our in-house agency, Wales Arts International (WAI).

WAI's small core team of staff work with individuals across all of Arts Council's portfolio, as well as with Welsh Government officials, Arts Councils in the other UK Nations, British Council and international partners across the world. We work in partnership to develop a focused ambition and to realise the combined international potential of the sector we fund and support and of the institutions with shared responsibility.

WAI's purpose is to

- ensure Welsh artists engage internationally;
- help develop and enrich artistic practice, careers and ambition;
- grow new global opportunities for the arts and culture of Wales;
- invest in artistic collaborations that inspire and connect people in diverse communities in Wales.

As well as supporting the Council's corporate objectives and the arts sector's international ambitions (as identified in the International Strategy and corporate plan) **WAI has a 3-year strategic partnership agreement (2020-23) with Welsh Government's International Relations Department** in the First Minister's team. Through the agreement WAI develops international projects and relations that support the realisation of Welsh Government's International Strategy and action plans.

The agreement sets out:

- A shared programme of work in key markets;
- Global communications campaigns;
- Funding arrangements;
- Develop the methodology for evaluating international work against the seven goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act to ensure the agreement is yielding tangible benefits.

WAI works with various Welsh Government teams including in-country offices. Our current geographic focus is Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, India and Japan.

We also develop strategic partnerships with international organisations and agencies, including overseas government offices and embassies operating within the UK, and with pan international networks to develop programmes of mutual value and benefit.

Highlights of our international programme in 2021 include:

In 2021 WAI set out to **re-think our international work** in the context of four seismic global challenges which are felt locally in Wales – the Covid Pandemic, Climate Emergency and social justice and equalities, and establishing new international relationships following the EU exit.

We have recently also commissioned work to develop a logic model to guide our decision making and **a new evaluation framework to measure our international programme and investments against the seven goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.**

We've supported the creation of **Disability Arts Cymru's Give us our Creative Right Manifesto** and **Watch Africa Cymru report "Smooth Seas Don't Make Skillful Sailors"** and subsequent project Language is Treasure celebrating the diverse languages of Wales.

Global communications campaign

Launched as part of St Davids Day in lockdown 2021, our global campaign **#PethauBychain** **#SmallThings** highlights how **doing the small things can make a difference in our communities, to our planet, our own wellbeing, and for future generations.** It features a wealth of creative content made accessible to view globally through our social media. Our channel on AM Cymru – <https://www.amam.cymru/waicymruwales> - has been created and curated by individual artists and companies in Wales responding in their own ways to the 7 Wellbeing Goals of the Future Generations Act.

We resumed the **#PethauBychain** campaign in November 2021, sharing the messages of the 7 Wellbeing Goals through the arts on a weekly basis.

Embedding the Arts and culture into Brand Cymru

Welsh Government's diaspora approach supports its new international strategy to "deliver our priorities and ***be recognised internationally as a nation committed to creativity, sustainability and technology.***" The Government's target of engaging with "**500,000 of the Welsh diaspora, alumni and friends of Wales around the world,** using the wealth of knowledge they possess and their links to raise Wales' profile globally" is one new focus for the arts.

Covid19 has changed the context for the International Strategy and whilst normal profile raising activities have been paused there is an opportunity to bridge the diaspora approach with the **wellbeing culture being developed for the Wales brand** and to develop digital content to support the brand.

In its international strategy Arts Council of Wales' international agency Wales Arts International commits to identify opportunities for the arts, cultural and creative industries to contribute to and benefit from Welsh Government's international ambitions..... and to the global citizenship ambition of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. "**Placing the arts at the centre of Welsh Government's international strategy and branding** will help to project Wales' unique cultural identity and global personality in a post Brexit (and CV19) world."

International market engagement and activity

Year of Wales in Germany:

Although significantly impacted by Covid 19, the year has featured online seminars and exchanges; a delegation visit by Amgueddfa Cymru; a survey mapping artists working in Germany and funding provided through our International Opportunities Fund. Artists supported include seven north Wales based visual artists, featured as part of CARN (Caernarfon Artist Regional Network)'s pop-up exhibition at Neukölln 48hrs festival, Berlin. An arts and health collaboration between Welsh music prize winner Kelly Lee Owens and Berlin artist Lindred has been postponed into 2022 due to tour cancellations. Through our latest round of International Opportunities funding at the end of 2021, we supported some projects connecting artists in Wales with Germany, many of which will take place in 2022. We're also hopeful of a further round of the **Cultural Bridge programme** in 2022.

Ireland:

Following on from activity in Ireland for St David's Day 2020, we have continued to support artistic connections between Wales and Ireland. Under the shared Statement of Intent, signed by Welsh and Irish governments in March 2021, we have begun working with our counterparts in Arts Council Ireland towards a Memorandum of Understanding and exploring joint areas for future activity. As the event in Wales Climate week demonstrated, developing sustainable touring routes is part of that conversation. Through our International Opportunities fund, we supported Dirty Protest Theatre and Fishamble's online exploration of creative collaborations.

Japan:

With investment from Bunkacho (Cultural Agency of Government of Japan), digital workshops hosted by Wales' Aloud (Only Men Aloud) for school choirs in Oita, Kitakyushu and Kumamoto culminated in filmed performances in Japan in April 2021. This has formed part of the legacy of the cultural programme developed by WAI around Rugby World Cup 2019 and a marker for deepening future cultural activity between the two countries.

International Indigenous Music Summit:

In preparation for the launch of Mawr y Rhai Bychain – the first international indigenous music festival in Wales developed by Neuadd Ogwen in Bethesda - and to prepare for a year of collaboration between Wales and Canada in 2022, WAI supported Neuadd Ogwen and leading musician Lisa Jên to attend the hybrid the summit event.

WOMEX 2021:

Wales Arts International represented Wales as part of the Horizons partnership at WOMEX 2021 and hosted networking events and participated on panel discussions on artist mobility with On the Move, the European network for Artist mobility.

Focus Wales Wrexham:

The twice cancelled event returned in force in October 2021 and welcomed international delegates from across the world, with a particular focus on Canada and Quebec. The showcase programme featured an exciting strand of MOBO music from Wales including artists like Mace the Great who has been invited to showcase in several international events on the back of their performance at Focus Wales. WAI's partnership with Focus Wales has enabled many digital collaborations and events during lockdown, including music industry and public facing performances and panel events between Wales and Canada.

UK Four Nations International Partnership between Arts Councils

Arts Infopoint UK:

A pilot initiative to support the arts sector with information on practical issues relating to artist mobility which is co-funded by Arts Council of Wales, Welsh Government, Scottish Government, Arts Council of England and Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and delivered by Wales Arts International in partnership with Creative Scotland, Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Arts Council of Wales. The Infopoint team have run a programme of workshops across the year to support Welsh and UK artists to overcome barriers to work internationally as a result of the exit from the EU and Covid, and to advise and encourage international artists to work in Wales and the UK.

4 Nations International Collaboration Fund:

In partnership with Arts Council England, Arts Council Northern Ireland and Creative Scotland, Wales Arts International has been actively supporting the development of a new international collaboration fund for artists to collaborate with partners in the UK four nations and internationally. The full list of funded projects will be shared mid January 2022.

The **Cultural Bridge Partnership with Germany's Fonds Soziokultur Fund, Goethe Institut in London and the British Council** is another 4 nations collaboration Valleys Kids and German partner Emanuel Geibel School and Lübeck University of Musik are one of the awarded collaborative projects of the new pilot fund encouraging socially engaged collaboration between Wales and Germany.

Wellbeing of Future Generations Goals. Climate Emergency and Climate Justice

A **new partnership between WAI and Future Generations Commissioner** supports the role of the Future Generations Poet in Residence. It also supported the Wales COP26 Green zone event, which featured the creation of the empty chair for Future Generations by the National Eisteddfod and the Blot-deuwedd film by Ynys Blastig. WAI contributed to and attended the wider programme at COP and engaged with a number of leading global thinkers on the power and responsibility of the arts in terms of Climate Emergency and climate justice; these conversations were shared back into the sector in Wales through online key conversations such as through the Climate Week Cymru.

WAI **hosted a discussion as part of Wales Climate Week** with international guests on the theme of International Touring and Climate Emergency: Curtain Raiser or Showstopper and can be seen from 1:04:20 [here](#). We have also maximised our participation in international networks such as On The Move and IETM to explore Climate Emergency, climate justice and de-colonisation.

We have also supported the **new partnership between Natural Resources Wales and Arts Council of Wales**, including the launch of Future Fellowships in 2022.

Funding for artist led international activity

International Opportunities Fund:

WAI reopened its longstanding fund for artist led activity, with the majority of the 41 artist collaborations, R&D and networking taking place digitally whilst many travel restrictions continued. Activity demonstrated the range of countries connected with Wales, from Brasil to Ethiopia, Germany to Indonesia.

International Showcase Fund

WAI partners with PRS for Music Foundation and other UK partners to fund musicians invited to showcase in international events. Although many of the showcases have been postponed or presented digitally, we are hoping that 2022 will bring more live events such as SXSW, Showcase Scotland, New SkoolRules and Classical Next.

Things to look out for and support in 2022:

Showcase Scotland and Celtic Connections:

On **2-4 February 2022**, Wales will be the featured international partner at **Showcase Scotland**, a showcase and international music trade event featuring talent from Scotland plus an annual international partner, which takes place annually during the Celtic Connections Festival in Glasgow. Due to the current Covid-19 restrictions, the live 5-day Showcase Scotland programme has been replaced with a 3-day online digital event. Celtic Connections is due to proceed as a hybrid event, with a reduced programme of live shows and an accompanying digital offer.

The focal point of the digital programme will be an **online Spotlight Cymru Wales Reception at Showcase Scotland at 15:00-16:00 on Friday 4 February to coincide with Dydd Miwsig Cymru** (Welsh Language Music Day), an annual celebration of Welsh language music both in Wales and internationally. The event will feature **showcase performances from 6 Welsh artists (N'famady Kouyaté, Eve Goodman, Pedair, Cynefin, The Trials of Cato and NoGood Boyo)** in front of global music industry delegates, leading to career development and increased touring opportunities.

This is a key opportunity to present a diverse, inclusive, bold, contemporary Wales, to challenge international perceptions of what 'Welsh' music is and carve out a space for it under the broader umbrella of 'Celtic' music (which an international audience traditionally associates with Irish/Scottish traditional music).

A delegation of international festivals was due to visit North Wales immediately after Showcase Scotland for the launch of Mawr y Rhai Bychain, the first international indigenous music festival programmed by Neuadd Ogwen Bethesda, but this event has been postponed due to the current Covid-19 restrictions.

***Gwranddo - Listening* at the start of the UN Decade of Indigenous Languages:**

To mark the first year, WAI will run **Gwranddo | Listening - a programme of activities to listen to the endangered languages of the world** particularly those affected by climate emergency.

Wales in Canada and Canada Goes Cymru:

Two distinct but linked seasons aimed at raising the profile of each nation in country, igniting new relationships and nurturing existing connections, and asking questions jointly about our futures.

Wales in Canada will be led by Welsh Government and Canada Goes Cymru by High Commission of Canada in the UK, with WAI the strategic and connecting partner for arts and culture activity.

Preparing for Year of Wales in France 2023

As we look forward to the year of **Wales in France 2023**, we will be looking to further develop and strengthen our connections with **Brittany in particular**, in partnership with Spectacle Vivant en Bretagne. We're also developing a pilot visual arts programme with our 4 nations sister agencies. And we will continue to support artists and companies from Wales to work on collaborative projects through our International Opportunities Fund.

Continuing with our partnership with Ireland:

In 2022 we'll be looking to agree our MOU with the Arts Council of Ireland; to commission a mapping report of the artistic connections between Wales and Ireland; and to work on activity particularly looking at sustainable touring and strengthening links with our nearest EU neighbour in a post Brexit world.

Review of our International Opportunities Fund to ensure that it supports the development of international connections by a greater range of artists from Wales, and responds to global conversations on climate justice, climate emergency and fair collaboration.

St David's Day 2022 will build on the #PethauBychain campaign with even more creative content (and hopefully some live events Covid permitting!)