

National Theatre Wales (NTW) Fact Sheet

Addressing some of the inaccuracies in recent media coverage of the charity:

- **NTW had an extensive first season and has not lived up to it since.**

NTW was able to offer 12 shows in its first year-long season because it pooled 2-3 years of its Arts Council Wales (ACW) grant to afford to do so and relied on staff working long hours, unremunerated. This model was unsustainable and led to burnout and a high staff turnover which largely continued until 2022 when the current Executive were able to stabilise working conditions through initiatives such as a new Well-being Policy, TOIL Policy and improved and applied Flexible Working Policy.

- **NTW has a vast budget.**

NTW has received a standstill **£1.6 million** annual average grant from ACW since it was established in 2007 in spite of spiralling inflation over this period. National Theatre Scotland received a **£4.26 million** grant from the Scottish Government in 2021/2022. The National Theatre in England has received a **£16.1 million** annual grant from Arts Council England for 2023/2024.

It should also be noted that whilst NTW has fundraised over **£7 million** in the last 3 years through trusts, foundations and other grant making bodies, the Company does not have any income generating capital asset so generates no income from presenting touring work, bar sales, hires, as in the case of venue-based organisations. This means that a much larger proportion of our public investment goes directly onto cultural activity but that it is harder for us to generate commercial income within the current model. National Theatre Scotland, for example, has been in receipt of **£10 million+** capital funding to develop its Rockvilla production facility, enabling it to generate a revenue model.

Arts Council England's investment allocations for 2023-2026 totalled £445 million annually. Arts Council Wales' for 2024-2027 is £29.6 million annually.

It is unrealistic to expect NTW to provide the same kind of scale and breadth of offers as the other national theatre companies in the UK.

- **NTW should stage 'the best' of Welsh theatre.**

Like all Arts Council Wales Portfolio Clients, NTW is tasked through its Revenue Funding Agreement to deliver on a range of political and strategic priorities for ACW and Welsh Government. These include the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales), the Cultural Contract, the Welsh Language Standards and ACWs' current key principles: Climate Justice, Nurturing Talent, Welsh Language, Transformation, Widening Engagement, Creativity. Given that NTW was the fourth highest grant

recipient within the Arts Portfolio Wales, NTW was expected to deliver on these at higher impact and scale than most other arts organisations.

As a result, NTW has stretched its activity beyond its productions and across a range of Creative Development opportunities for artists and theatre makers, and across an extensive Collaboration programme working with theatre makers and participants based in communities.

Given the cost of staging traditional theatre of the kind that the other UK national theatres deliver, the constraints of NTWs' budgets and its unique operational circumstances (e.g. being building-free - see above), NTW would have to operate a business model with an exclusive focus on productions in order for it to compete on those terms. Even then, the number of shows staged would be far fewer. Contractually, NTW cannot operate such a model. Equally, that approach is not consistent with the values of NTW, since traditional theatre predominantly appeals to repeat - and therefore low demographic diversity and already well-served - audiences.

In order to achieve goals aligned with ACWs' values and NTWs' mission to diversify audiences beyond traditional theatre audiences, NTW creates theatre in non-traditional ways and places and by involving people who've never engaged in theatre (because of multiple barriers) as participants and/or audiences.

At the same time, NTW has delivered some brilliant examples of more traditional theatre which have been lauded and awarded - e.g. *On Bear Ridge* (with Rhys Ifans). NTW included proposed plays along these lines in its 2023 ACW Investment Review application, alongside other forms which would appeal to other, wider audiences.

- **NTW has not worked in partnership with Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru.**

NTW has worked with Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru repeatedly and across all of its activity. Most recently, this includes the co-produced touring show *Petula* (2022), the script reading partnership initiative *Play On* (also 2022), and the partnership Culture Change leadership diversity programme (2023-2025). NTWs' 2023 Investment Review application included five partnership initiatives with Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru ranging from Welsh language apprenticeships on the Theatre Green Book to a shared website showcasing Wales' dramatic heritage, to commissioning 'missing audiences' research and working with them on the Wales Mid-Scale Touring Consortium (see below).

- **NTWs' audience figures are low.**

This is not true. Just a few key audience reach figures derived from the past 3 years - a period which includes the majority of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and outbreaks which seriously affected all theatres' ability to stage performances - include:

- *GALWAD* had a **5.4 million reach**
- The 2022/2023 programme reached **34,000 live audience members**
- Just over **9,000 people** watched *Go Tell the Bees* in Pembrokeshire, while the project trailer has 19,500 views and the project's Facebook page has a reach of 64,000
- *Petula*, our Theatr Genedlaethol and August 012 co-production, toured 6 Welsh venues, reaching **1,200+ audience members**
- **Performances at 5 out of 8 venues of our current tour of Circle of Fifths are sold out;** the others exceeded 70% capacity

It is also worth considering what constitutes 'low' and how this is being rationalised. NTW is not a venue with a repeat local audience who attend a mixture of genre performances, but instead offers site-specific and touring theatre productions. Venues are able to attract audiences through a variety of programming, from cinema to pantomimes to art exhibitions. As a building-free theatre company, NTW engages audiences from scratch for each project/show and/or relies on the venues it tours to market NTWs' shows (venues which are often under-resourced due to the challenging climate). NTWs' model prior to the last three years has not included a regular and consistent touring offer. The current business plan has centred this approach in order to enable sustained and consistent growth in partnership with venues. This is, however, a medium to long term strategy which will take time to produce results. NTWs' remit to commission and produce original work also focuses our activity, we believe rightly, on creating higher risk-higher reward projects.

NTW has spent the past 18 months developing the Wales Mid-Scale Touring Consortium which is a commitment between 12 partner venues and commissioning theatre companies across Wales to come together to address a shared and urgent need-that touring homegrown artistic theatre in Wales is on the verge of being financially unviable. A business plan was presented to ACW by Creu Cymru on behalf of the consortium in April 2023 and ACW have not responded yet to our request to work together on this essential work.

And again, NTW delivers activity well beyond its productions, so focusing on audience figures as the single marker of its success or failure is a fundamental misunderstanding of NTWs' remit.

Finally, whilst NTW can and does engage more established, affluent, monocultural and long-standing theatre audiences based in urban areas who are already served well by the sector, it is strategically committed to and successful at attracting new and diverse audiences, and focused on creating a future generation of audiences for Welsh theatre. This work is about depth of engagement rather than breadth of engagement; this work takes more time and greater resourcing to achieve, and will generate smaller audience numbers initially, but in time will layer great public value for the sector and for Wales.

- **GALWAD was a failure.**

This is personal opinion specifically about the artistic ‘quality’ of the project and, in many ways, misses the point.

GALWAD funding (£5.91 million) brought an unprecedented level of income and investment to the theatre sector in Wales during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns and as we emerged from them. £1.13 million came direct from Unboxed/Festival 2022 as well as £4.64 million via CreativeWales, a £100,000 contribution from Sky Arts, as well as £28,000 (net) of Film TaxRelief credits (£256,000 gross before financing costs incurred by Mad as Birds in its generation) and £11,000 Access to Work funding from DWP. 84% of the total budget was spent in Wales and a total of £3.1 million spent on 485 freelancers and creatives in Wales, 25% of whom were from global majority backgrounds, and 27% of whom were deaf and/or disabled or living with a long-term medical condition. The experience and skills development for the 120 people involved in the world-building process - unseen in Wales before and delivered in partnership with the creatives behind the blockbuster film *Minority Report* - not to mention the multiple mentoring, step-up opportunities, residencies, shadowing components, trainees scheme and youth co-creation and co-ideation built into the project will yield legacy within the creative sector for a generation.

As above, the project had a reach of 5.4 million across 146 countries (the second highest reach of all the Unboxed Festival projects). There were also numerous other participant and audience engagement initiatives including citizen journalist opportunities, community participation in the filming and live elements and a schools strand of tie-in activity around the central project theme (climate emergency) which reached 11,010 pupils. The multi-platform story highlighted the diversity of lived experiences in Wales, and brought deaf storytelling and the Welsh language to global audiences. In industry firsts, content was provided in BSL, bilingual audio-description and captioned forms, and the project was used as a pilot for accurate carbon footprint tracking which is now being built upon in partnership with the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama in order to support target setting by the sector.

- **NTW does not contribute to the sector.**

There are numerous quantifiable ways in which NTW operates a central role within the Welsh theatre sector ecosystem as the only theatre company with the remit and ability to act for the benefit of all. Other theatre companies in Wales of course have their own specialisms and strengths but their business models mean that they have to almost always and exclusively prioritise their own needs. Just a few examples of how NTW has uniquely contributed to the sector include:

- Numerous leaders of smaller Welsh theatre companies - including many of those now funded by ACW following the 2023 Investment Review - have benefited from sustained professional development, freelance, staffing contract opportunities and TEAM membership at NTW.
- An annual creative development programme of opportunities for theatre makers including: Play On (script-reading service); R&Ds and commission funding; professional development conversations (Creative Chats); career development through assistant roles for shows; industry days (where freelancers meet agents, commissioning companies, partners); residencies; mentoring; bursaries to attend networking events.
- NTW TEAM delivers activity within and by communities and the health, social care, education and third sectors across Wales.
- NTW is co-ordinator and co-custodian of the Theatre Green Book which is the globally recognised sector-leading framework and innovator for delivering carbon neutral theatre. We actively share this knowledge: this year through carbon literacy training for Welsh theatre companies and organising sector events in Newport, Aberystwyth and Bangor.
- NTW is one of only three main producing English language theatre companies in Wales which tours theatre across the mid-scale venues here (Sherman Theatre and Theatr Clwyd are the other two). Venues rely on NTW for the income their shows bring. It also makes NTW one of the few theatre companies in Wales which is able to tour shows about Wales internationally.

- **NTW has taken funding away from other theatre companies.**

This is not true. ACWs' annual budget was increased by the grant that NTW received in order to support the establishment and future of NTW. NTWs' 2007 remit included partnership, co-production and touring within the existing infrastructure in order to add value rather than extract it. NTW has programmed accordingly, for example by not running Christmas shows which would reduce much relied upon revenue for other companies.

