

17 October 2011

HIJINX THEATRE

Update for Petitions Committee – November 1st 2011

These additional comments relate mainly to the letter dated 19th July to the Chair of this Committee from the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage, plus up-dates on previous papers.

1 The Minister correctly points out that Hijinx have been successful in attracting additional grants from the Arts Council of Wales and we certainly welcome these grants and the confidence that the ACW have shown in Hijinx by awarding them. This is very good news but these grants are for specific purposes or projects and must only be used for them, and not the general development of core activity.

In the interests of clarity here is a comparative table of grants for 2010/11 and 2011/12.

	2010/11	2011/12
Core revenue grant	£234,448	£160,000
Odyssey project grant (Lottery) *	£29,990	0
Restructuring grant **	£20,000	0
Unity Festival grant (Lottery) *	0	£50,000
Delivering drama training for adults with learning disabilities (Lottery) *	0	£30,000
Total ACW grants	£284,438	£240,000

Key :

* all Lottery grants which are for specific purposes, the terms and conditions are governed by DCMS via ACW, which require Hijinx to raise at least 25% of matching funding.

** The restructuring grant of £20K (2010/11) was to pay statutory redundancy to 4 staff, specialised legal advice on employment matters, and an Arts Management Consultant to advise in the restructuring of the company. **This grant did not go into front-line arts projects or activity.**

2 The Lottery grants cannot be viewed as a replacement for the dramatic reduction in core revenue funding and will not enable Hijinx to replace the permanent staff recently made redundant or reinstate the levels of activity provided for work that includes people with learning disabilities, both professional and participatory.

3 Nevertheless Hijinx take pride in having secured the grants and will continue to ensure that all projects are delivered to the highest possible quality and focus on engagement of people of all abilities in everything we do.

4 Unity Festival 2011 was a huge international arts Festival, which included all art forms and people of all abilities working together. The £50K grant helped us to build on the

17 October 2011

success of 3 previous festivals which had been put together on a shoe-string. The aim is Unity continues to be an annual event, with annual applications to ACW. The Festival puts Wales at the forefront of inclusion and equality of opportunity – it has a growing international reputation with quality companies from around the world wanting to come and perform, run inclusive workshops and projects. It leaves a big legacy in Wales, and the international companies take a legacy of Wales back to their own countries.

5 The simple financial truth is that our revenue grant was cut by 32% and we were asked to continue to deliver the Odyssey project from within this reduced grant. If Odyssey was factored in, the cut was £39.5%. The community tour (which ACW no longer wanted to support) had a net cost of £33K, while the Lottery grant, which supported Odyssey from 1999 to March 2011, was £29,990. The cost of delivering and developing Odyssey is virtually equal to the net cost of the community tour.

6 Members should also be aware that the 3 year business plan submitted to the Arts Council at the end of September 2011 includes a programme of high quality professional productions and participatory projects aimed specifically at widening access and breaking down barriers to participation. This will not be deliverable if the revenue grant remains at standstill for the next 3 years, and we will be required to make even further cuts to our core activity unless a modest increase in core revenue funding is possible.

7 Offering drama training to adults with learning disabilities to enable them to perform and tour in professional productions is a new initiative. We are working in partnership with Vision 21, and will set up the Hijinx Academy in January 2012. ACW's grant of £30K is to bring in world renowned companies to run short residencies for the students between March and December 2012.

8 We welcome the Minister's commitment to personally keep a close eye on the impact of the Arts Council's Investment Review in terms of meeting the Welsh Government's key aims of widening access and breaking down barriers to participation in the arts for all the people of Wales.

9 We also support the arms-length principle that the Minister refers to in terms of grants to individual organisations.

10 Members of the Committee and The Minister can be reassured that Hijinx have enjoyed a close and constructive relationship with the Arts Council over many years and continue to do so. The current funding issue has not and will not have an impact on this relationship.