

# Inspire . . .

## Our strategy for Creativity and the Arts in Wales



Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru  
Arts Council of Wales



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*The Starry Messenger* - Bedwyr Williams, Wales in Venice  
Image: Anna Arca

## A mission to inspire

Challenging times call for determined action. It's more important than ever we continue to promote – with courage, imagination and optimism – what sustains, invigorates and enriches our lives.

That's what the arts are all about.

At the Arts Council, ([www.artscouncilofwales.org.uk](http://www.artscouncilofwales.org.uk)) our vision is of a creative Wales where the arts are central to the life of the nation. Together in Wales, we're embarked on an extraordinary journey. The destination is a Wales that is a creative country through and through. We see the arts as fundamental to the future of Wales - not a "nice to have" luxury, more a cornerstone in Wales's 21st century renewal.

This is a creativity rooted locally in the community and projected internationally in arts that have come to define Wales to the rest of the world.

The foundations of that creativity lie in the very stuff of imagination, human achievement

and human possibility. It's what we look to our artists to create. And it's what enjoying and taking part in the arts does for us – this revealing of human potential, and the creation of what we might call human 'capital'.

## A united sense of purpose

We're ambitious for the arts in Wales. Our strategy is to build a place where our best talents are revealed, nurtured and shared. So we set out our approach here to what we believe the arts in Wales can be over the coming five years. We say what Council, our governing body, wants to achieve and the consensus that we'll try to forge among those who we hope share our goals.

For those seeking our support, the 10 Challenges set out later in this strategy provide the focus. These will drive our funding and developmental decisions. It's a strategy for an Arts Council, but an Arts Council looking for collaborative partnership with those who might share these goals and ambitions.

We're a key player in the cultural life of the nation. We need to prompt, advocate and to

lead, where it's appropriate. People look to us for that. But we don't assume a monopoly on good ideas neither do we possess the definitive blueprint for what the arts might be in contemporary Welsh society. It's as important that we encourage and inspire others to find their own place in our strategy as it is for us to push for what we want to see as results.

By listening and learning we remain relevant and in touch. This makes it more likely that we'll be able to offer programmes and services that are needed and which represent value for money to the Welsh taxpayer. Public accountability is hard wired into our organisational DNA. But it's about more than the responsible deployment of public money, important though that is. It's about relationships, enfranchisement and the right of the people of Wales to be able to experience equally, and in inclusive fashion, the best that the arts can offer.

Our strategy is about creative ambition and endeavour in the arts; the need for the arts to connect and engage. It's also about the skill needed to ensure that the impact of what the arts achieve renews itself and lasts.



*Catlin* - Eddie Ladd and Gwyn Emberton, directed by Deborah Light  
Image: Warren Orchard

Our strategy is straightforward – it’s summed up in just three words:

## Make | Reach | Sustain

Simple, yes, but these words are invested with meaning.

We’re interested in the way that these meanings fuse together – reinforcing each other in a single sense of purpose. Making art, ensuring it connects and giving it a durable legacy are all part of the same picture.

When we talk about **Make**, we mean artistic creation. We want to foster an environment for our artists and arts organisations so they can create their best work. Because if we **Make** well, we inspire.

And if we inspire, people get it. They want it and value it. So we must inspire the people of Wales to enjoy and take part in the best that our nation has to offer. Because we believe that actually the experience of art only happens when that chord is struck – when what is made, connects.

This is at the heart of our ability to **Reach**, and crucially to reach further than before.

If in doing this, something of worth is created in what is made or who is embraced, then we should ask how we protect and **Sustain** these things in ways that will endure.

And all the time, the goal is Wales - the creative country.

# creative ambition and endeavour in the arts



04 *An Invitation* - Jo Fong in association with Chapter  
Image: John Collingswood

## A different type of strategy

The ideas that define this strategy come directly from what people have been telling us. We have listened carefully and used our knowledge and judgement to work out where the Arts Council should best place its efforts and resources in the future.

However, what follows isn't a prescriptive list of what we'll do over the next five years. Neither is it particular to any one artform.

This is a significant change of approach.

It isn't that we've suddenly lost interest in music, or theatre, dance or the visual and applied arts. Of course we haven't. They're just not the starting point for this strategy. Single artform strategies drove achievements in past times, but stood in isolation from what are now the broader challenges, actions and impacts of the arts overall.

An enabling strategy – which is what we want this to be – doesn't control or constrain. It lets the arts in Wales be defined by the imagination of the artist, rather than by

the label of type or category. We want to recognise too that creative practice – and the work that artists want to do – crosses art boundaries as much as it is delineated by them.

We set out the broad parameters for our investment and support. But it should be for the artist and our arts companies and organisations to flesh out how their work will contribute in this bigger picture. We ask those who seek our support and involvement to share our views and to think through how their ideas present a compelling investment case.

We're aware that this new approach depends on our continuing ability to listen and to engage – to debate, share and collaborate with those who feel as passionately as us about developing the arts in Wales. It will also be necessary for us to continue to research, stimulate and support new thinking. We'll explain why, in a changing and challenging world, we choose to emphasise some things above others. And we'll show, through the research that underpins our decisions, how we've reached the conclusions that we have. And we'll continue to look at and nurture

an arts' ecology particular and distinctive to Wales.

More generally, we'll look to refresh our thinking around advocacy for the arts and how to deploy advocacy – what to be talking about, what knowledge we can draw on, how to make the telling points, who to partner in common endeavours, and how we might communicate effectively to raise debate and influence thinking and perceptions.

So the dialogue continues, and through that dialogue we'll strengthen the networks of experience and expertise that exist in such abundance across Wales. Whether in our Council, our staff or our National Advisers and more broadly amongst artists and organisations, these networks help shape and inform the ideas and new thinking on which innovation depends. They are a powerful resource.

## Making meaning: Wales as a bilingual culture

On the threshold of the new millennium Wales found itself plunged anew into redefinition. As it emerged from the industrial and rural society that had defined it in the 20th century, it looked to a new civic identity through state devolution, new economic challenges and the dynamic of establishing a truly bilingual contemporary lived culture.

We're a bilingual nation – legally, socially, culturally, and as individuals and communities. And nothing makes Wales more distinctive than the Welsh Language.

The language provides the means to understand and enjoy an extraordinarily rich literature and culture. We make sense of our identity through the languages that we speak. We take pride in belonging to a community that identifies itself through the words that convey its cultural beliefs and experiences.

The Arts thrive on this exploration of the lived experience. And our vision embraces the fact that we're many 'Wales', culturally,

geographically, economically and linguistically.

Modern Wales is a multi-cultural and multilingual society within a bilingual nation, and if Art can capture this, then the possession and extension of language becomes one of the keys to unlock the connective strands within our common culture.

So we'll promote vigorously the expectation that people have that they can explore the richness of their own culture, their own creativity through the language of their choice, whether as audience, participant or artist.

There are particular strengths vested in language and identity in Wales. In an increasingly globalised world, we see the Welsh language, alongside English, as a basic civic attribute as well as an inherited culture. If it's to flourish and grow, the Welsh language and culture will look to innovation and responsiveness – to reflect the global trends and changes that guarantee relevance and usefulness. As a dynamic source that feeds and inspires, we welcome what comes from tradition, but not as an excuse for introversion.

It is significant that vibrant bilingualism is seen with envy in other parts of the world where languages cling on, become learned not lived or slip remorselessly into decline. This attribute will be essential to the vitality and originality of the Arts in Wales.

The Arts depend on the fresh flow of new ideas. And this includes new thinking that's conceived, developed and shared through the medium of Welsh. That's a creative challenge for all Welsh artists regardless of their traditional language of communication. Since Wales's linguistic identity is a common inheritance, it's not the exclusive concern of practitioners through the medium of Welsh – it's something that should excite artists be they located in Blaenau Gwent or Blaenau Ffestiniog.

And we want to see this confidence and vitality projected widely. As our artists have proved, Welsh language material can travel to Australia and Taiwan and India and hold its own on an international stage, finding resonance with seemingly disparate audiences.

The culture of Wales is a world culture and this is the arena it needs to operate in, locally and internationally.

## Investing in the imagination

Art does not teach conformity, it questions, challenges and surprises. And we look to our artists to see beyond the obvious and the superficial – to use their insight and intuition, their most inquisitive curiosity, and to express through their talents and skills, the perceptions that will lead us to a deeper and more rooted understanding of the world around us or move us onto a different plane of experience. An Arts Council invests in imagination.

Why should this matter?

All societies at all ages in human evolution have sought expression and communication appropriate to the times. All societies have looked to both their reality and their imagination to help them to live... and to live better. Art opens out possibilities new horizons.

A successful, vibrant, interesting Wales is unimaginable without the arts. One of the ways in which Wales will reinvent itself in the 21st century, lies precisely in the arts and creativity – a new investment in human potential. In the past, Wales saw its

raw materials extracted to fuel economies elsewhere other than its own. Today the arts can be a home-grown source of inward investment in the potential of the country now.

Art is of course a moving target, constantly transgressing boundaries and refusing fixed definitions. The old comparisons with their zero sum game of polarities – excellence or accessibility, subsidised or market led, elitist or popular – have always been contested and are now mostly irrelevant. Today's creative industries blur those boundaries to both stimulate new ideas and feed marketable skills – from publishing to design, architecture to broadcasting – the arts directly and indirectly contribute to our common culture in a big way.

It's inconceivable, then, that our strategy would not recognise the central role within our everyday lives of those areas of activity that straddle the subsidised and the commercial. We're as concerned with the fledgling as with the fully formed - the future of a young band on the verge of its first record deal as we are with theatres, orchestras and opera companies; and as interested in the playwright as the screenwriter for film or television.

With the broader embrace of culture within contemporary life and with our conviction about the creative stimulus provided by the arts, we'll continue to look for the particular qualities that exemplify the best of the arts – those characteristics which mark the work out as distinctive, relevant, compelling and enduring. And we'll be passionate in our commitment to ensuring that vibrant living arts practice remains at the heart of what we exist to encourage.

Nothing around us that is designed or conceived is possible without the make believe of the arts.

## Investing in potential

We're not interested in the dull or the routine, the formulaic. Why would we be?

We're passionate about investing in work that excites and inspires. We're particularly interested in the new and contemporary – especially where this work seeks out and engages wider audiences. Because without the living arts, culture risks becoming a museum for recycled works, and a showcase for reproduced interpretations of the cultural traditions of the past. We accept that even the most familiar of artworks can offer a new or first encounter to somebody coming new to art. Astute programming recognises that and takes it into account. But we're particularly interested in the 'now' of art – work that's alive before us and present in the moment. We have a belief in what artists do and how the best artists connect and communicate.

In the end, getting the balance right is what characterises successful and imaginative programming. Commissioning, creation, presentation – these require more than the routine re-application of tried and tested

habitual formulae. What the market will stand can't be the sole arbiter. Public funding is there for a reason. It provides what the market can't – choice, innovation, affordability and the encouragement to take risk.

For our part, we certainly won't be afraid, when appropriate, to take risks. And we'll expect those who we invest in to do the same – not haphazardly or recklessly, but knowingly and confidently, equipped with their best instincts, knowledge and expertise. We need that encouragement of exploration if the arts are to remain healthy and alive. From such potential we can build capability, and from capability – being good at what you do – the door opens wider when it's pushed further. Our vision of the future depends on it. Because if we push beyond our comfort zones, with courage, intelligence and curiosity, we might just bring into sharper focus Art that is different, challenging, and perhaps more interesting.

# seeks out and engages wider audiences



*Mametz* - National Theatre Wales  
Image: Mark Douet

# Make ...Reach... Sustain...

## 10 Creative Challenges

We're optimistic about the future of the arts, but there's a lot to do. As we've discussed and consulted on our ideas, it has become clearer that we face some real and significant challenges.

Our strategy engages with the 10 challenges that appear to us to be especially pressing at this time.

we need to nurture



*To this I put my name*, Claire Curneen and Ruthin Craft Centre  
Image: Dewi Tannant Lloyd

## 1. Creating the right environment for the artist and the arts to flourish

Fish are only as healthy as the water they swim in. Artists and arts organisations need a supportive environment to prosper. We'll play a clearer and more entrepreneurial role in identifying, nurturing and promoting our country's best creative talent across all kinds of art, media and interdisciplinary work.

We know we can provide support at key moments in an artist's career. Whether working singly or together, locally or globally, our goal is to create the circumstances in which our artists can pursue viable, sustainable careers from a Welsh base.

Our support for the individual artist will continue to be built on developing the foundations of our Creative Wales and Creative Wales Ambassadors and production grants, and the existing support that we offer for training and in-career development. We want to go further.

We want to see more creative partnerships

forged between artists and arts venues, encouraging those venues to provide the advice, facilities and resources that artists need to develop their work.

This work isn't always venue based. The special skills and capabilities that artists have enable them to work in a variety of settings and disciplines. The right artist will be as comfortable working on an urban planning team as they would be in a community setting or on a theatre stage. And we anticipate more possibilities for artists to be linked in the future with schools, Further and Higher Education.

But these new partnerships and relationships require us to help new creative networks to flourish.

Increasingly, artists are now working alongside cultural entrepreneurs and creative producers. We need to nurture, in Wales, the development of such artists and producers.

Only by making this investment in the development of high calibre artists and building the capabilities of creative producers across all disciplines, working locally and

globally, will we reap the reward in new ideas, innovation, new perceptions and sheer entertainment that contemporary Wales merits. Crucially, we will be better placed to retain and renew the creative pool of talent working in the country.

Over the life of this strategy we'll be bringing into sharper focus the specific actions we'll take to support the artist living and working in Wales. It will be a strategy that delivers the development of talent, opportunities, funding, and which creates peer group networks from the early to the mature career artist. It will be an approach which values the creative individual and that builds respect and appreciation for the contribution artists make to society.

## 2. Being fit for Purpose

In recent years we've re-focused our investment in a group of companies and organisations that we regularly fund, what we call our portfolio. We've placed greater emphasis on their potential to create and host new artistic work and their commitment to reach out to new and wider audiences. We've asked them to be the cultural exemplars, fit for purpose in meeting the challenges of 21st century Wales.

Supporting a portfolio of key organisations – enabling them to make the best work that they can – will continue to be at the core of our work. Such organisations will be dynamic in their vision, and collaborative in their approach. Artists and arts organisations are renowned for their generosity of spirit. Sharing the processes through which work is seen and made helps build a creative community that is supportive and involved in the work itself.

We'll be flexible over the patterns of work that companies, galleries and organisations propose, and we will continue to support a roster of Festivals with special rationales and particularity to Wales and with international connections and reach.

Value for money matters. And as the stewards of public funds we have an unequivocal responsibility to ensure that public investment delivers public benefit. We'll also put obvious emphasis on the quality of the work and how it connects with its eventual audience. But we're also looking for work which is well conceived – where appropriately designed research and development has deepened and strengthened the work, making a successful outcome a more rather than less likely outcome.

We're especially interested in those projects and initiatives that find different places for people to enjoy and take part in the arts – encouraging the new and unfamiliar, conjuring up the surprising and unexpected.

Well-established venues and promoters will assert the need to take a balanced approach in what they offer, and rightly so. But an Arts Council must always look beyond immediate preoccupations and ensure that considered programming doesn't translate into cultural complacency. With so much happening to change and reinvent contemporary Welsh society, our culture must be no less willing to adapt and evolve.

The pattern of regular funding is unlikely to be extended in the coming years and yet it is important that people with new ambitions and aspirations can come through and assert themselves and their fresh contributions and approaches to our culture.

encouraging the new and  
unfamiliar, conjuring  
up the surprising and  
unexpected.



*Under Milk Wood: an opera* - Taliesin Arts Centre in co-production with Le Chien qui chante (Quebec) & Companion Star (New York) and in association with Welsh National Opera  
Image: Kirsten McTernan

### 3. Leading from the front – our National organisations

For a small nation we have high performing national companies. They have a challenging remit to produce great work and connect across the country. The challenge is to do this in a credible and meaningful way, delivering real engagement and involvement with communities across Wales in the excellent work that they do.

Each national company needs to start from the question ‘how are we national?’

Wales and its three million people have a right to ask not just how national companies exemplify their flagship designation, but how do they connect with people in Wales, bind them into what they have to offer, and how is what they do of the utmost relevance. All our national companies are passionate and highly accomplished in what they do. The challenge in the coming period is for them to touch even more lives than they have done to date.

National organisations remain at the heart

of the Arts Council’s strategy. They matter in and of themselves, but also for what they signify. For many people – especially those outside Wales – the reputation of our national organisations is a barometer of the strength and vibrancy of our country’s arts.

Whilst the performing arts have flagship national companies, there are other areas of our national life without a fully-fledged ‘national’ entity. Five years ago discussion focussed around the need for a national centre for the visual arts. Since then, the National Museum has extended its space and created welcome additional capacity for exhibiting the contemporary visual arts. But the wider need remains. There’s huge national potential in the contemporary visual arts and crafts. An important aspect of our strategy over the coming period must be to explore how to bring about a sustainable and appropriate national platform for contemporary visual and applied arts.

We’ll continue to support our Lottery delegate partners Ffilm Cymru Wales and Literature Wales as national organisations with a special connection to the Arts Council’s work. These

are organisations who fund and develop projects on the Arts Council’s behalf and in the image of our own policy priorities. And they use their specialist expertise to interpret those priorities in ways relevant to their sectors.

For our national companies being national is a responsibility, not an assumed right. It brings with it a particular obligation to be an exemplar in every way: creating work of national and international significance; showing leadership in developing the arts in Wales; nurturing the partnerships and relationships that will develop new artists; building the arts audiences of the future.

If our national companies occupy a pre-eminent role in the cultural life of Wales, they do so only because they should represent a pinnacle in creative endeavour resulting from their interaction with a wide range of other talents, creators and creative producers in national life. We want to encourage this involvement so that it feels within and beyond the country, that the work of our nationals is ‘minted’ in Wales.



*Gwymon (seaweed)* Kate Lawrence and Lisa Spaul, Galeri Caernarfon  
Image: Chloe Rafferty

## 4. Making more of our Arts buildings

In Wales we have a network of leading arts centres, galleries, venues, large and small threaded around the country. For many people in Wales, their routine engagement with the arts is through one of these places. At their best, they not only pursue excellence in all that they do, they are also inseparable from the communities in which they're located and to which they relate. Promoting diverse programmes of high quality activity, these organisations act as cultural entrepreneurs, commissioning and curating new work, exploiting this work (through touring or co commissioning), and providing the space, opportunities and services that help artists to develop and grow their work.

Such arts centres have developed and reinvented themselves, and will need to continue to do so if they are to secure continued community support. Many recognise that they are as much a social as a cultural hub and that the two are indivisible.

We support this emphasis on community connection. But ultimately we are an Arts

Council. So we're particularly interested in those organisations that are arts led and audience focused, with spaces owned and inhabited by the communities in which they are embedded. These are arts organisations that understand the role they play in local communities and work hard to build their own distinctive sense of place. Their brief we see is one of creative community renewal - something you can feel and see when you experience the building and what it has to offer.

**inseparable from the  
communities in which they're  
located and to which they relate**



EXPERIMENTICA13 at Chapter - Nick McArthur and Robert Molly Vaughan, *The Dancing Plague of 1518*  
Image: Warren Orchard

## 5. Wales in the world

Being both indigenous and international are these days far from incompatible. Our culture from Wales, our stories, our history, will chime with others and can strike chords around the world. The excellence and creativity of Wales's arts contributes powerfully to the development of our cultural, creative and economic relations with the rest of the world.

New work created and produced in Wales can patently hold its own in international arenas. And work from beyond the country that is relevant for us to see and experience here in Wales, needs to provide the regular benchmark and proving ground for our own quality of production. With partners, we have sought out and delivered such catalytic events as the international world music trade fair, WOMEX 13, to generate new possibilities for our artist musicians.

We have begun to look more strategically at our presence across the arts on the world stage in Biennales, Festivals and Showcases and what they can yield for artists, organisations and companies.

We'll attract activity into the country that benefits the arts in Wales. Wales needs to be "open for business", getting its share of the high-profile international market in cultural conferences, related trade fairs and major cultural events and tours. We need to be competing internationally, winning events for Wales and working on what Wales can create for itself that will pull the eyes of the world to Wales.

Critically, we need to develop an international profile for reasons of cultural connectivity and the sustainability of careers. Culture in the language, Culture in its engagement, Culture in its diversity from Wales – our Culture - needs to be more of a calling card. It will signal our values, our creativity and our ambition. And if showcasing internationally is to become a more prominent aspect of Welsh creative practice, then we must ensure that our support structures deliver work that can stand comparison with the best of international work.

We know that international initiatives and partnerships are forged by small companies and established institutions, by individual artists as well as large organisations.

Many of Wales's artists and arts organisations are internationally significant in their own right, and there's more to be done in opening new markets for their work, and developing their role as cultural ambassadors for Wales.

Through Wales Arts International, the international arm of the Arts Council, we'll develop our partnership with the Welsh Government, the British Council, other Wales' based partnerships and our European collaborators to ensure that artists from Wales are visible in key international arenas.

chime with others . . .  
strike chords around the  
world

## 6. More people creating, enjoying and taking part in the arts

Our research and survey work shows us that audiences and participants are becoming more diverse. But we know too that access to the arts is still hugely unequal for all kinds of social, economic, geographical, financial reasons and other barriers. We need to make sure our funding supports different kinds of arts and reaches a greater range of artists and communities. We want more people in Wales to be able to choose to make the arts a part of their lives. We know the arts in Wales will be stronger, more exciting and more relevant if they embrace more people. The arts still tend to be seen as for the most privileged in society. We need to change this. For some the place of the arts is unquestioned and economically and socially it seems natural to them. For others the arts continue to feel alien, remote, not for them, beyond their experience or marginal to their concerns or marginalised by prejudice or preconceptions.

Given real community engagement, it's rare for people not to see what the arts offer them.

Our job must be to multiply the occasions where this becomes possible. Wales has long experience of high quality transformative engagement with communities. We also have examples in recent years of projects of scale which have given communities a new understanding of what the arts can be.

Increasing the reach of the arts is fundamental to addressing inequality. More than this, we want to realise the unique cultural and aesthetic outcomes that diversity and equality bring to the arts. Our vision is of an arts sector in Wales that's naturally inclusive and diverse, and more vibrant, exciting and relevant because of this. Matters may be enshrined in law, and that's important. But beyond that, we recognise the dynamic force of art that's truly inclusive and makes use of talents of all members of our society. We'll work with the organisations we fund to help them build inclusion and equalities into their work and we'll support training in this area. We'll foreground best practice and seek inroads through those whom we fund as organisations, to adopt this agenda more strongly as a characteristic of their approach.

Our Strategic Equalities Plan, annually reviewed, is the benchmark against which we measure progress and outcomes. But the big prize will be to bring diverse work from the margins into the mainstream, through the organisations we support, the projects we fund and the behaviour and practice of our own organisation.

make the arts a part  
of their lives



supporting our young people to develop their creative talents; and,  
fostering an environment in which that talent can be identified,  
inspired, nurtured and celebrated



Sky Hawk, Clwyd Theatr Cymru Theatre for Young People  
Image: Catherine Ashmore

## 7. Nurturing young talent, lighting the spark

Nothing is more iniquitous and unacceptable than the theft of life chances from our young people.

We know that an active engagement with the arts can transform the way children and young people learn and explore the world around them. It can change the way they see themselves – even what they dream of for the future – as well as helping them to develop the self-respect and worth that will be such an important part of their life skills for the future.

The arts can nurture a young person's ability to question and make connections, to develop the capacity for independent, critical thought. They can inspire young people with new ambition and confidence, challenging poverty of aspiration and breaking the cycle of deprivation. This can be the key that unlocks the door to further and higher education, and in time employment.

From the youngest age Literacy and Numeracy are seen to underpin academic success. Success

in life depends on more – the integration of Creativity.

Our strategy over the next five years will pioneer ways in which more schools can draw on practical ways of bringing the excitement and inspiration of the arts into the classroom. It will also seek out the disadvantaged and the ignored – those who for whatever reason have become separated from mainstream training and education and who are in danger of falling between the cracks in the current system.

Young people have never been in a society before which teems with so much imagery and sound, a sensory assault. This demands new ways of learning and the nurturing of different ways of sharing and building experience, and delivering a sense of confidence, self respect and worth. We're convinced that new ways of realising talent and creativity will emerge. It's about helping education achieve its goals but also helping education re-define those goals.

Our approach focuses on two objectives: supporting our young people to develop their creative talents; and, fostering an environment in which that talent can be identified, inspired, nurtured and celebrated. We want to see

more attention given to young people learning through the experience of doing, inspired by the opportunity to work alongside our professional artists and arts organisations.

We want as many young people as possible in Wales to believe that the opportunity is there for them to be the best they can – or want – to be, performing with their peers at the highest level, celebrating and demonstrating their creative talents. Above all else, we want young people to have the opportunity to enjoy and take part in creative activity that they find relevant, contemporary, and exciting.

*A Review of Arts and Education* published by the Welsh Government in 2014 promotes Creativity as the essential third strand to the twin strands of Literacy and Numeracy. It challenged Government to place the arts at the heart of the school curriculum and to commit to identifying and rewarding high performing schools. It challenged the Arts Council to harness the power of the arts to reinvigorate the school day and through ambitious professional development to re-ignite the creativity of teachers themselves. We intend to meet that challenge.

## 8. Putting communities first

Deprivation is often characterised by poverty of aspiration as a knock on from impoverished material circumstances. In the arts we believe that participating, experiencing, discovering and sharing are empowering.

The central challenge posed to us by the Welsh Government is to ensure that the wealth of the arts and the experiences they give are accessed by more people. Different means of engagement mean different sorts of project – finding different ways to connect with people. The arts as celebration, the arts as the organising principle underpinning planning, the arts as the basis of protest and dissent, the arts as surprise, contradiction and discomfort, the arts as the connective force that binds individuals and communities together. If the art is good it will also extend its audience.

An Arts Council must have a proper concern for the development of the professional artist, but this is not to say that we're disinterested in the amateur or volunteer. The contribution that the voluntary arts make to the cultural life of Wales is significant and important – for many,

it's often through this route that they get their first serious experience of the arts. A source of enjoyment and recreation, it can also be a first proving ground as nascent careers are developed. If our focus is rightly on developing the dimensions of the action of professional artists in society, we acknowledge that there are areas of voluntary and grass roots activity which can be thresholds for developing the arts, an interface for arts activities and part of a continuum in the way the arts work.

In Wales, the best community arts activity has a strong and distinct character. For us, it's about change, authorship and ownership – that remarkable ability of the skilled arts professional to work alongside individuals and communities, finding their voice, unlocking a new dimension of experience that would otherwise have remained unused or undiscovered. This is what we're interested in. Work which empowers and connects – work which is unique, authentic and life affirming, work which at its best is genuinely transformational.

We expect our work in this area to contribute positively to the implementation of the

Government's strategies for Child Poverty and Families First. Such strategies connect and overlap, so we must work hard to ensure that productive connections are made across cultural activities which might otherwise be disjointed at a local level. As a national body we have a particular responsibility to work with our peers to deliver coherent, joined up programmes of work. There's a lot already happening in many local communities – we must enhance and connect, not fragment and confuse.

In localities, the partnership between the Arts Council of Wales and local government provides the foundation of the arts in Wales. Between us, we have the potential to touch the lives of everyone in Wales. Local authorities bring to the table their local knowledge, broad range of responsibilities, their citizen focused delivery and their democratic representation. The Arts Council brings specialist expertise and a national and international perspective on arts practice and development. Both of us provide funding and investment that funds creative activity. It's a powerful combination.

But local authorities across Wales face

the prospect of having to make significant reductions in their future spending plans. As a discretionary area of spend, expenditure on arts continues to be squeezed as statutory spending demands an ever greater proportion of overall local authority budgets. This is going to demand a wholesale re-thinking of the way that the arts are supported and developed locally. Nobody has neat financial solutions to plug gaps opening up in the way matters have been organised to date. We must work with our local authority partners to establish a new compact that uses our best imagination and our most entrepreneurial thinking to find sustainable ways of protecting the local arts services that people value. We will want to work with authorities and others as they try to establish new and different local approaches. From an arts and culture perspective, we'll also take a keen interest in any reconfigurations of local authorities which might come forward in the near future. Whatever the future years hold in this respect we will want to see the arts operating at their best throughout Wales, reflective of our population spread and present in the differing contexts of city, town and country.



if the art is good it will also extend its audience



Veitch Veg, Swansea  
Image: Warren Orchard

## 9. Making new places

Wales has embarked on a process of re-invention for the 21st century...this is seen both in the physical and social renewal involved in regeneration.

The arts can foster new ways in addressing community empowerment and good design and imaginative planning.

The arts illuminate and give life to the wide range of strategies that underpin civic life. From arts and health to cultural tourism, public art to town centre and community regeneration, the arts bring meaning, authenticity and joy to our everyday lives. The arts create and sustain jobs, enrich education services, bring people together, enhance communities' well being, and improve our quality of life.

So we 'regenerate' communities and places. Yet in most cases what we really mean is 'generation' – starting afresh in the here and now, creating new models of enterprise, social cohesion and well being for communities that need to define themselves in the present,

not the past. It is this new thinking that we are especially keen to encourage, even if for ease of reference we continue to talk about Regeneration.

Our work around Art in the Public Realm has convinced us that we need to pay more attention to the meeting point between people, art, architecture, environment and design. We believe that well designed schemes, ones developed with engagement, creativity and imagination, are more likely to win community support, promote social well being and encourage more sustainable economic development. In short, we want to promote a creative approach to regeneration. And if we are serious about making a difference, we need to embrace (and integrate) the disciplines that inform good design.

Climate change and environmental protection are amongst the most urgent issues of our time. We want to help the arts sectors in understanding and addressing these issues, and to ensure that we demonstrate active leadership in helping to shape the cultural and creative industries for the future.

A truly intelligent approach to sustainability will extend beyond environmental concerns, important though they are, to embrace the cultural, economic and social considerations that sustain our sense of resilience and well being.

**the arts bring meaning, authenticity and joy to our everyday lives**

## 10. Our digital times

Creativity will permeate all areas of our social and economic activity in the future. Creativity reaches beyond the realm of arts and culture, though they are its natural nurturing ground. Creativity is a skill that can be used to bring innovative solutions to familiar problems, and encourage new ways of thinking across all sectors. The successful economies of the future will be those that can capitalise on their creative potential. Creativity can have many positive benefits, helping income generation, growth and employment to enabling social inclusion. It puts people and skills – ‘human capital’ – at its core. In today’s society this is as critical as any other economic resource.

Such an approach sustains the creative industries – those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. Key to this exploitation will be the imaginative and innovative use of new digital technologies.

Digital connectivity brings access – provided

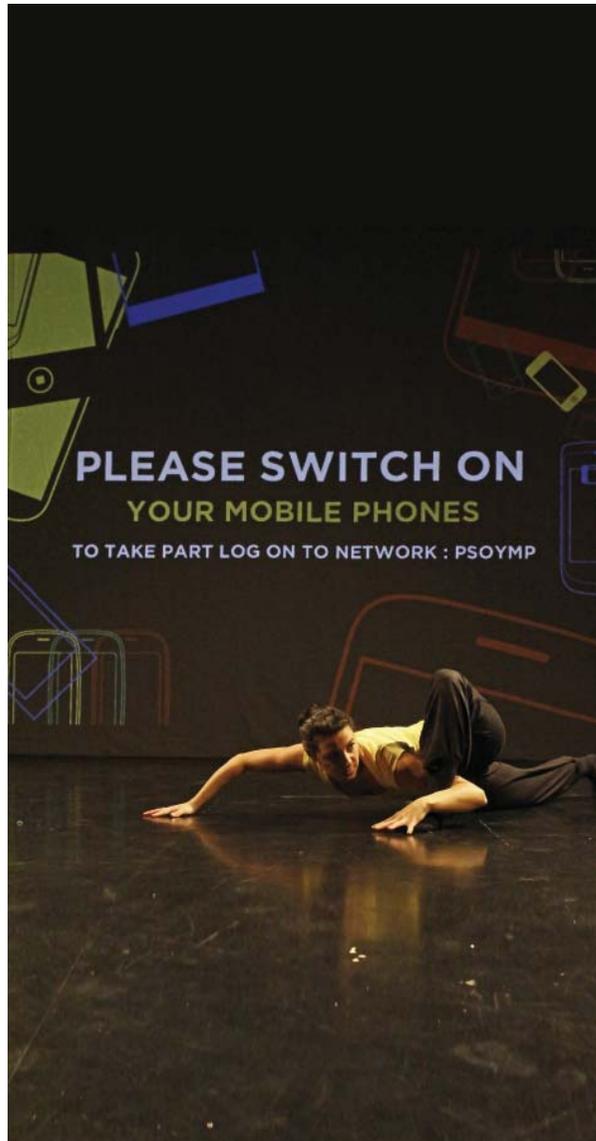
you are connected – to virtually any type of content. Film, music, games, books and news journalism can all be viewed from the comfort of your mobile phone. The morning commuter sits on the train buried in their book – hard back, paper back, or ‘i-backed’.

Technology is getting smaller, cheaper, more powerful, pervasive and personal. It’s also becoming more interactive, and it’s changing the way that we ‘consume’ content. Thanks to the web, we’ve become accustomed to being able to get whatever we want, whenever we want it, delivered directly to the platform we choose. So it’s essential, if they’re to thrive in this competitive market place, that media businesses in Wales are able to offer the kind of convenience, flexibility and choice that people now have in other aspects of their lives.

The internet is no longer just a digital notice board, it’s a social and cultural space. We’ve moved from communicating through e-mail to embracing My Space, Facebook and Twitter. Technology is increasingly making it possible to create content and engage with it in new ways. This presents both opportunities

and challenges for content producers. The expectations of the generations growing up in a digital world are very different from those that preceded it. Low cost technology is offering new ways for the rapid exchange of views, ideas and content as well as new business models.

Digital presents all sorts of possibilities in its own right for the making of art and opens up whole new means to ends. Some traditional and familiar tasks are transformed and wholly new possibilities are opened out. We will want to make sure our arts sector in Wales builds its capability and is innovating and path-finding some of those new possibilities.



*Please Switch On Your Mobile Phones - TaikaBox*  
Image: John Collingswood

## Making it happen

The challenges we are posing, for ourselves and our collaborators, feed into our aims to create the best environment for our arts to flourish.

This means looking at what artists need, in order for them to create and have sustainable careers in Wales, careers that can be well linked internationally.

There is then the question of a well-functioning infrastructure of companies, organisations, arts centres and other places providing opportunities to create, produce and share work.

We face the challenge of developing the make-up of the arts more fully, through cultural diversity and extending the reach of arts throughout our communities and particularly to overcome barriers, culturally, socially, environmentally and extend the action of the arts in our society.

Wrapped around those two themes of how we will make and reach, is the whole question of

innovative solutions and the approach needed to be more consciously sustainable and resilient. So the ten challenges are areas for us all to work at together for change.

# Make ...Reach... Sustain...

## What we will be doing as an Arts Council

**Make... Reach... Sustain** as an approach will be delivered through activity reflected in a series of specific objectives. Each objective translates into programmes of work for the Arts Council of Wales. Our **Corporate Plan** captures the overall framing of our objectives as an Arts Council:

In the life of this strategy we can see areas of activity and initiatives which will make Inspire a reality. What we will be doing as an Arts Council is set out on an annual basis in our **Operational Plan**. In the period 2014-19 our activity is to be shaped by what the Make Reach and Sustain agenda encompasses. It is an agenda which we want our portfolio to share and one which will determine our developmental work and our funding decisions. We will be looking for the best fit to the ideas which lie behind the themes of Making Reaching and Sustaining for the arts in Wales.

Theme	Objectives
<b>Make</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creating the environment for the arts to flourish</li> <li>2. Increasing the value of international cultural exchange to the arts in Wales</li> </ol>
<b>Reach</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Funding new opportunities, ways and places for people to enjoy and take part in the arts</li> <li>4. Developing the creativity of children and young people</li> </ol>
<b>Sustain</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Encouraging innovation, resilience and sustainability</li> <li>6. Protecting and growing the economic base for the arts in Wales</li> <li>7. Demonstrating the value of the arts</li> <li>8. Making the Arts Council an efficient and effective public body</li> </ol>

# Make...

**... encompasses everything that we do to support artists, companies and organisations to make their best work.**

Making art, sharing art, being part of it – on our own, in the community, in performance, on film, off the page, in the gallery, in our imagination, in our lives – this is when art works, when it connects inspirationally, individually, collectively. The Arts Council's role is to create the circumstances which allow artists to develop their craft and build sustainable careers. From the developing newcomer to the mature artist, it's about nurturing talent and creating opportunities.

This is a mission that will involve all those who have a role to play in making and presenting art. It will require an open minded and generous approach to collaboration, working together to exploit the cultural capital that the arts in Wales possess.

Development starts at the very youngest age – identifying and nurturing talent. But as an artist's practice forms and their career develops

we must be on hand to nurture. In an age increasingly defined by the 'portfolio' career we must be relevant in the support we offer and flexible in recognising the different types of need. If an artist is to make a career based in Wales, it will be because producers, galleries and venues will themselves have a stake in nurturing Wales's creative talent. An artist in any discipline needs a critical mass of activity to support their work.

The Arts Council will offer a range of support from Creative Wales awards to investment in training and production. We'll also look at how artists can exploit the intellectual capital that rests in work, through innovation, access to finance and the development of an 'export ready' approach to international activity. We also need to help foster stimulating networks and opportunities for creative encounters and collaborations. In our revenue funded organisations we will want to support annual programmes of ambitious creative work.

**As an Arts Council, this is what we will be doing:**

## Make...

- Make... We will ensure that support to artists is at the heart of all that we do, investing in the creative individual, helping them to develop their work, skills, and potential. We will focus on artists but also creative producers, curators and cultural entrepreneurs.
- Make... We will focus on initiatives that create business opportunities for artists and companies to develop new markets or open up new possibilities for their work. We will do more to exploit the potential of showcases, providing more opportunities for the arts of Wales to be seen and heard.
- Make... We will encourage initiatives that support creative individuals – through studios, workspaces, resources, residencies, technology, rehearsal, development and incubation spaces. We are particularly keen to support artists through early and mid-career, helping to retain and grow the base of high calibre artists in Wales.

- Make... We will continue our support to the best of Wales's companies and organisations and Festivals to enable them to create new and engaging work and to support the circumstances and opportunities for this work to be developed.
- Make... We will support ambitious programming, especially where it encourages audiences to enjoy and take part in a wider range of activity.
- Make... We will encourage opportunities for artists to build sustained relationships with organisations in mutually beneficial partnerships. We will invest in arts organisations and projects that develop creative talent.
- Make... We will deepen our links with Higher Education and Further Education, creating focussed partnerships that research and support the ideas and projects that develop artistic careers and types and content of artistic work.
- Make... We will support, on a selective basis, international work to come to Wales to where it can offer new artistic insights or provide a challenging benchmark against which we can measure our own work.
- Make... We will foster better links with partner agencies across the UK to facilitate improved circumstances for the touring of work, and creative collaborations.
- Make... We will focus on networking and joining up, promoting the opportunities, virtual and real, which help to foster new and productive relationships for artists, organisations and companies, in Wales and beyond Wales.
- Make... We will proactively develop the dynamic of creative diversity in contemporary Wales.
- Make... We will be an energetic delivery partner in nationwide arts and cultural initiatives
- Make... We will explore hosting arts events which can act as catalysts for significant challenge and development of our arts in Wales.

# Reach

As a public body we, and the activities that we support, should be accessible to everyone in Wales. Equalities must be at the heart of our work. Equalities are a moral, social, creative and cultural imperative. We're committed to reaching out to the many diverse communities across Wales. But our challenge is to ensure that we don't falter as recession and economic austerity bite. So we redouble our efforts to reach out further and not be satisfied with the established audience for the arts, or the ways that art is made and shared. The potential is, as ever, greater than the actuality.

To **Reach** is to touch, to engage, to encounter. It is also, in some sense, a determination to go beyond the easy and the obvious, to remove the impediments that might otherwise form a barrier. And if the benefits of the arts are so important and life enhancing, it must be the case that our contemporary society such benefits should be available to all.

It's about the ambitious and the imaginative, those projects that involve large numbers of

people as audiences, participants and co-creators. New media and technologies will hold part of the answer as the possibilities for digital connectivity grow. But we must never lose sight of the power of live, in the moment person to person connection.

Our community arts organisations have long been involved in imaginative engagement and social regeneration. So how do we create more cumulative impact, more critical mass, more joining up of what can be disparate and isolated pockets of activity?

As an Arts Council, this is what we will be doing:

## Reach...

- Reach... We will tackle the barriers to engagement and encourage the widest inclusion for the people of Wales to access the arts. Our Strategic Equality Plan provides the framework that will guide our actions. We will be looking for positive action to foster change here, in ourselves and in those we support and fund.
- Reach... Literacy, Numeracy... and Creativity. We will collaborate with the Welsh Government on the recommendations of the Government commissioned Arts and Education Review. This will mean far-reaching ambitious initiatives to address the part arts and creativity can play in young lives and their futures.
- Reach... We will work with partners to initiate a programme of work focussing on changing the prospects of those young people in danger of economic inactivity

coming out of school, helping them find new possibilities and confidence through the arts.(The Momentum programme)

- Reach... We will work with young people to identify and create a celebratory festival like event around their creativity.
- Reach... We will put a premium on imaginative work created for young people.
- Reach... We will encourage and support the transformational arts work advanced by our community arts organisations.
- Reach... We will support innovative and creative uses of technology, helping artists to fully exploit the potential of new digital platforms in promoting and distributing their work.
- Reach... We will work with our Revenue Funded Organisations – our portfolio of key arts organisations – to develop audience building initiatives and social engagement and the understanding of audiences and organisations' connectivity to their communities and publics.
- Reach... We will develop our work to

connect arts and people through creative partnerships with Local Authorities and Communities First areas. We'll actively support the Welsh Government's Communities First agenda, doing more to bring high quality arts opportunities within reach of the most disadvantaged people in our most deprived areas.

- Reach... We will work on joining up the dots between arts centres, community arts organisations, our Night Out programme, Communities First organisations and other agencies in sharing and maximising community focussed work.
- Reach... We will seek out opportunities to scale up and undertake projects which build in broad reach and exploit new media platforms to involve and engage people.
- Reach... We will monitor our investment, and the activities that it supports, to ensure that people in all parts of the country have a fair chance to benefit from the activity that we support.
- Reach... We will look to our partnership working to extend significant possibilities for

the arts and their reach. Our partnerships are with broadcasters such as BBC and S4C in now established public value partnerships and with others such as the British Council fostered by project working. We are currently looking to build on work with Cadw, The National Trust, Welsh Water, Glandŵr Cymru The Canal & River Trust in Wales and the Centre for Alternative Technology.

- Reach... We will develop the possibilities for our artists to reach new markets and audiences for their work through the UK and internationally.
- Reach... We will develop new European projects to connect to valuable networks and develop strategic projects.
- Reach... We will work with the National companies to articulate, encourage and evidence the development of their national remit.
- Reach... We will increase the geographical reach of the arts by funding the touring of work and supporting and extending our work into communities through Night Out's touring.

# Sustain...

Where will the new ideas emerge from that reveal the insightful cultural, economic and social models of the future? How do we break out of the old mould of bankrupt thinking to develop more positive responses to achieving resilient and sustainable solutions that endure? The challenge is a global one, but the most imaginative solutions are likely to be locally based and ethically driven.

This is about the resilience and robustness in the organisations we value, the relationships we have with our partners and a wider understanding of how the things that we care about can be nurtured and protected for future generations. And we must do this without these things (literally) costing the earth.

It is in part about purposeful collaboration and diversification of the funding base. And it is about those organisations that are pioneering ways of working involving different forms of economy and exchange in a more sustainable world. It's not just about money, although we know money matters.

In times of economic austerity we need to reduce the dependency on public funds and find the new business models that encourage resilience and longevity. Stability can't be guaranteed from structure, systems and processes. It comes from an organisation's enduring sense of purpose, from making the appropriate connections and from being relevant to people.

So we Sustain to enhance the wellbeing of people and communities, achieving a better quality of life today and tomorrow for our own and future generations. We remain alive to new ideas, new patterns of working. It's about growing the possibilities for the arts economy and what, in turn, it can offer for the quality of life to be experienced in Wales.

We will invest in projects that research new approaches, stimulate ideas and foster the growth of networks in Wales. And through this work we hope to trial and pioneer adventurous communal insights.

In a more immediate sense the Arts Council is going to favour new patterns of collaboration, innovative thinking and the careful management of resources.

As an Arts Council, this is what we will be doing:

## Sustain...

- Sustain... We will advise arts organisations, companies, venues to build more resilient business models and
- Sustain... We will apply the same disciplines to ourselves.
- Sustain... We will support the initiatives and projects that foster new approaches to cultural, social, economic and environmental sustainability.
- Sustain... We will develop a funding programme that incentivises change in organisations, encouraging them to improve their sustainability and be less dependent on public funding.
- Sustain... We will explain, clearly and accurately, the impact that our investment is having in achieving our priorities. We will be clear about the basis for the funding decisions that we take. The framework that we'll use will be built around four areas of

impact and action – Arts, Social, Economic and Environmental.

- Sustain... We will expect the arts sector to commit to increased environmental sustainability by reducing its carbon footprint
- Sustain... We will expect arts organisations that we fund to demonstrate effective leadership and governance
- Sustain... We will develop the networks and collaborative practice that exploit the efficiency and the dividends of sharing, collaborating and maximising resources
- Sustain... We will continue to support the creative use of the Welsh Language and creative expression through the medium of Welsh, enabling Welsh speaking artists to work in the language of their choice for the whole of their careers.
- Sustain... We will work closely with our Local Authority partners across Wales to sustain their engagement with the arts where we are co-partners in venues and services

- Sustain... We will pilot new re-generational work through our far reaching programme Ideas: People: Places
- Sustain... We will support activities that provide new approaches to building sustainable careers in the arts
- Sustain... We will review and develop new approaches to advocacy. We will look at the content of what we advocate, the research we need and the methods and approaches we can take to campaign effectively for the arts.
- Sustain... We will develop work that addresses well-being in health and community engagement, adding value to quality of life in Wales



## Matching strategy to investment

The arts change and evolve, as does the world around us. Our funding strategy must reflect that.

We need to take the long view. A strategy is defined variously as a plan, a policy, an approach, a tactic or a stratagem. It implies, indeed requires, change...

We need to be pragmatic and responsive, alive in the moment, ready to react to or seize on things that come up. But we need to plan the journey and plot the route ahead.

We must also be mindful of the opportunities and constraints on those who will join us in the journey.

In the face of several more years of economic austerity, and the squeeze on public funding that this implies, we'll continue to advocate the importance of public investment in the arts. But growth cannot simply rely on increases in public funding. Neither should we consign ourselves to presiding over a downward spiral of decline.

Key organisations will be expected to demonstrate high levels of commercial acumen, because in the future an over reliance on public subsidy will be both undesirable and unsustainable. The funding ladder that leads eventually to the prize of revenue funding will no longer provide the gold seal of relative financial security that once it did.

## Striking the right balance

We will continue to review, from time to time, whether the organisations that we're funding deserve that support, especially those who receive the lion's share of funding – our portfolio of revenue funded organisations. The membership of the portfolio will almost certainly change and evolve – indeed, if fresh exciting art is to be rewarded, it must. However, we're not expecting to see a significant increase in either the numbers of organisations receiving revenue funding, or the proportion of Arts Council funding allocated for this purpose.

The public rightly demands that the individuals and organisations that they finance are efficient and cost effective. So we expect

those who we work with to get the basics right and to ensure that they manage their affairs in a straightforward and business like way. Public funding is not an entitlement – it has to be earned. We expect the key organisations that we fund to play a leadership role in terms of both artistic innovation, audience development and in the way they conduct their business. Increasingly this will hinge on the business and creative model they create for themselves. We expect them to be well managed and governed, and we will be rigorous in assessing whether this is the case. In return, we'll support them to develop their work and encourage them to develop ideas and markets, and new approaches to the sustainability of their activities.

We'll expect to see organisations underpinned by a wider mix of public and private funding and new business models that are better able to exploit the commercial potential of the intellectual property that resides in their creative activities. And we, the Arts Council, must find the best, the most intelligent, the entrepreneurial strategy that enhances the whole through the careful application of government and Lottery funding.

Different organisations will need to find the model that works for them. There won't be one size that fits all. Nevertheless the key issue will be the extent to which public subsidy as a proportion of overall income can be reduced.

We realise that this will seem a harsh message, but it's a realistic one. We recognise too, that there are potential contradictions in the demands for greater self sufficiency – Getting the balance right depends on high levels of cultural entrepreneurship. But balance there must be if our country is not to fatally undermine the very vitality and sustainability of the artists who chose to live and work in Wales.

We firmly believe that the organisations who most successfully meet these challenges will be those who are the embodiment of this strategy's underlying philosophy Make – Reach – Sustain. Because in the end, we must all fight against a diminution of ambition or imagination that leads not to more opportunities, but fewer.

## Inspiring Success

Our time is 21st century austerity Wales – a post devolution bilingual country with new political powers and a post-industrial inheritance. A Wales threatened by growing inequality, attainment gaps, financial fragility, impending global climate change. A Wales only part plugged into the digital revolution. A Wales joined together through the warp and weft of its languages and its culture of rurality, market towns and the tensions, pushes and pulls of would-be city regions.

Yet the arts, buffeted by the flux and change of the world around them, prove themselves time and again. The arts are a proper recipient of public funding and public attention – a source of inward investment now in the cultural, social and economic potential of the country tomorrow.

We do not play down the difficulties that lie ahead. But if together we can make, reach and sustain, what might we achieve over the next five years?

We might see a Wales where the intelligent management of public investment allows the arts to flourish beyond a dependency on subsidy alone. A Wales where the role of the artist and cultural entrepreneur has been able to develop significantly and is acknowledged and valued. A Wales where the reach of the arts extends across all communities, regardless of wealth, language or locality. A Wales that has transformed the life chances of our young people, equipping them for adult life. A Wales that is dynamically connected to the rest of the world through the activities of the arts and the networks that they create.

And bringing all these things to life, art that inspires, excites and moves us.

In short, Wales the creative country.



Emergence Summit 2012: Land Journey - curated and designed by Simon Whitehead  
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Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru  
Arts Council of Wales

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