



**Cyfoeth
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Cymru
**Natural
Resources**
Wales

Natural Resources Wales: Conversations with the Cultural Sector

Spring 2021

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ARTICULTURE

About Natural Resources Wales

Natural Resources Body for Wales (Natural Resources Wales) is a Welsh Government Sponsored Body. It manages 7% of Wales' land area including woodlands, National Nature Reserves, water and flood defences, and it operates visitor centres, recreation facilities, hatcheries and a laboratory. Its purpose is to pursue sustainable management of natural resources. This means looking after air, land, water, wildlife, plants and soil to improve Wales' well-being and provide a better future for everyone.

Evidence at Natural Resources Wales

Natural Resources Wales is an evidence-based organisation. We seek to ensure that our strategy, decisions, operations and advice to Welsh Government and others are underpinned by sound, quality-assured evidence. We recognise that it is critically important to have a good understanding of our changing environment. We will realise this vision by:

- Maintaining and developing the technical specialist skills of our staff;
- Securing our data and information;
- Having a well-resourced proactive programme of evidence works;
- Continuing to review and add to our evidence to ensure it is fit for the challenges facing us;
- Communicating our evidence in an open and transparent way.

This report serves as a record of work carried out or commissioned by Natural Resources Wales. It also helps us to share and promote use of our evidence by others and develop future collaborations. However, the views and recommendations presented in this report are not necessarily those of NRW and should, therefore, not be attributed to NRW.

Why this report was commissioned by NRW

In the autumn of 2020, NRW and the Arts Council of Wales signed the [Creative Nature](#) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to help to cultivate the relationship between the environmental and cultural sectors. Both organisations feel that there is a clear synergy between their objectives and are already working towards improving the environmental, cultural, economic, social, physical and mental well-being of the people of Wales. This is important because:

- Nature is at the heart of Wales's cultural identity.
- The future of our natural environment is a concern to us all and everyone needs to be working towards a more sustainable and carbon positive way of living.
- The arts provide creative ways of engaging people and communities with the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources, developing increased awareness, providing new ways of expression and finding innovative solutions to environmental concerns.
- Nature is an inspiration to artists, performers, writers, poets, musicians and makers, and is a platform for many contemporary creative practices.

- There is the potential to grow the reach and audience of both the natural environment and the arts for longer term sustainability.
- Both nature and the arts can help promote wellbeing and improve the quality of people's lives.

The MoU highlights how both organisations will collaborate to achieve a shared vision, encouraging the cross pollination of ideas between sectors. The vision of *Creative Nature* as a partnership is a stronger relationship between the arts, nature and Wales's outdoor spaces. This vision is for:

- More people, particularly from under-represented groups, accessing the natural environment and the arts in new ways, benefiting from the combined effect that nature and the arts have on health and wellbeing.
- More people valuing nature and actively contributing to sustaining its future through engagement in creative activity.
- Increased economic activity in key parts of Wales, where the benefits are most needed, raising aspirations to both sustain local businesses and artistic career pathways.
- A cultural sector that recognises the value of the natural environment as a platform for delivering artistic and cultural activity and utilises the arts for wider social, ecological and environmental awareness and benefit.
- An environment sector that recognises the value of the arts and utilises them and culture professionals to give a voice to under-represented groups on important social, ecological and environmental issues.

As part of this MoU, Natural Resources Wales has also outlined an intention to, "*where possible, make the public land that it manages available to the cultural sector as a venue, or resource for research and development*".

To help facilitate that intention, this report documents a series of conversations with the cultural sector about their requirements to deliver cultural activities at outdoor venues across Wales. The report is for NRW staff, as well as useful reference for those taking part in the wider natural environment and cultural sectors in Wales.

Contents

About Natural Resources Wales	2
Evidence at Natural Resources Wales	2
Why this report was commissioned by NRW	2
Contents	4
Crynodeb Gweithredol	5
Executive summary	7
Introduction	9
Site environments	11
Production	13
Audience	16
Collaboration	20
Marketing & PR	23
Recommendations	25
Conclusion	28
Appendix 1: Contributors	29
Appendix 2 - Agenda	30

Crynodeb Gweithredol

Yng ngwanwyn 2021, comisiynodd CNC dri 'sgwrs' gyda'r sector diwylliannol yng Nghymru, gyda ffocws ar y rhai sy'n creu, neu sydd eisiau creu, gwaith yn yr awyr agored. Roedd y sgwrsiau'n canolbwyntio ar y cwestiwn:

'Beth sydd ei angen arnom i weithio gyda'n gilydd i greu a darparu profiadau a gweithgareddau diwylliannol yn yr amgylchedd naturiol yng Nghymru a fydd o fudd i bawb yn awr ac yn y dyfodol?'

Cyfrannodd 30 o bobl greadigol o Gymru at y sgwrsiau (gweler Atodiad A), a hwyluswyd gan Articulture, sefydliad sy'n cefnogi datblygiad celfyddydau awyr agored yng Nghymru.

Mae 'celfyddydau awyr agored', a elwir hefyd yn 'gelf mewn mannau cyhoeddus', yn cwmpasu myrdd o ffurfiau ar gelfyddyd, gan ddod â nhw at ei gilydd yn aml mewn cyfuniadau curadurol a chreadigol. O theatr, dawnys a syrcais i bypedwaith a cherddoriaeth, o osodiadau i berfformio a gorymdeithio, o'r ysblennydd i'r agos-atoch, mae gan y mudiad allu unigryw a phroffedig i symud, i ysbrydoli, i ddenu ac i ddifyrru ei gynulleidfaoedd, p'un a ydyn nhw'n gydweithredwyr, cyfranogwyr, gwylwyr neu wylwyr cyd-ddigwyddiadol.

Ni all yr adroddiad hwn geisio cynrychioli llawenydd ac ysbrydoliaeth celfyddydau awyr agored yn yr amgylchedd naturiol. Fodd bynnag, roedd grym posibl y cyfuniad hwn a'r buddion y gall eu cynnig i unigolion a'r gymdeithas wrth wraidd yr holl sgwrsiau, lle bu cyfranogwyr yn rhannu profiadau a oedd yn dangos sut y gall celfyddydau yn yr amgylchedd naturiol ddenu cymunedau lleol amrywiol ac ymgysylltu â nhw, gan eu helpu i feithrin cysylltiadau dyfnach â'i gilydd, ac â'r dirwedd y maent yn rhan ohoni.

Mae ein profiad ar y cyd o COVID-19 dros y deunaw mis diwethaf wedi tynnu sylw'n gyson at effaith gadarnhaol bod y tu allan ym myd natur ac archwilio ein creadigrwydd. Os gallwn weithio gyda'n gilydd i sicrhau bod mynediad cyfartal i gyfleoedd diwylliannol yn yr amgylchedd naturiol yn cael ei brofi'n gynhwysol ac yn gymunedol, yna mae rhywbeth gwych o'n blaenau.

Ni all y celfyddydau wyrdroi na hyd yn oed arafu'r newid yn yr hinsawdd, ond gall pobl, a bydd creu diwylliant lle mae pobl yn profi'r amgylchedd naturiol mewn ffordd sy'n gwneud iddynt deimlo'n dda yn dylanwadu ar sut maen nhw'n deall ei werth, a pha mor debygol yw hi iddyn nhw weithredu i'w amddiffyn a'i gefnogi.

Nod yr argymhellion yn yr adroddiad hwn yw mapio ffyrdd ymlaen i CNC weithio gyda'r sector diwylliannol, er budd pawb. Fe'u tynnir o'r sgwrsiau, weithiau'n anuniongyrchol, ond yn llythrennol yn bennaf. Fel y sgwrsiau eu hunain, bwriedir iddynt beidio â bod yn ddiffiniol ond yn ddatblygiadol, i'w haddasu wrth i CNC a sector diwylliannol Cymru barhau â'u taith gyda'i gilydd.

Mae pum argymhelliad cyffredinol, a fydd, er eu bod wedi'u gwahanu yn yr adroddiad, yn anochel yn gorgyffwrdd ac yn cydblethu.

Mae cyfanrwydd sylfaenol pob argymhelliad yn dibynnu ar ddealltwriaeth wedi'i hymgorffori o dri ffactor craidd:

- **Iaith:** Mae Cymru yn genedl ddwyieithog ac mae angen i weithgarwch diwylliannol adlewyrchu hyn ledled Cymru wrth sicrhau hefyd nad yw'r cymunedau sy'n defnyddio ieithoedd eraill – iaith arwyddion, er enghraifft, yn cael eu heithrio.
- **Cynhwysiant:** Bydd angen i brofiadau diwylliannol yn yr amgylchedd naturiol fod yn hygyrch i bawb neu ni fyddan nhw'n effeithiol.
- **Newid yn yr hinsawdd:** Wrth greu profiadau diwylliannol yn yr amgylchedd naturiol i bobl elwa ohonynt nawr, mae angen ystyried yn ymwybodol a rhagweithiol sut y gall cenedlaethau'r dyfodol elwa hefyd.

Dyma'r argymhellion y manylir arnynt yn yr adroddiad wedi'u crynhoi'n fyr iawn:

- **Sefydlu gweithgor traws-sector** i helpu i rannu gwerthoedd a gweledigaeth. Bydd hyn yn ffurfio naratif a rennir sy'n llywio datblygiad strategaethau a chynlluniau wrth symud ymlaen.
- **Penodi 'broceriaid creadigol' o fewn CNC** a all weithredu fel llysgenhadon a chysylltwyr, a darparu datblygiad a, lle bo'n briodol, cymorth cyflenwi.
- **Creu fframwaith archwilio safle** a all roi dogfen waith i staff CNC, y gweithwyr creadigol a chynrychiolwyr cymunedol i'w defnyddio ar unrhyw safle posib. O hyn, cynnal rhai archwiliadau peilot mewn safleoedd amrywiol.
- **Archwilio ffyrdd newydd o weithio trwy ystod o archwiliadau peilot ac ymchwil**, megis gofod neu brofiad preswyllo hygyrch, 'lleoliad' celfyddydau awyr agored wedi'i gyd-guradu gan bobl creadigol a'r gymuned, system raddio ar gyfer mynediad i safleoedd a digwyddiadau, a chronfa o seilwaith symudol i gefnogi digwyddiadau mewn safleoedd amrywiol.
- **Adeiladu cronfa o astudiaethau achos** mewn fformatau amrywiol a hygyrch i gefnogi dysgu a datblygiad, ac yn y pen draw i'w bwydo i hunaniaeth Cymru.

Bydd yr argymhellion i gyd o fudd os cânt eu cynnal, gan gyfeirio at goladu nodiadau a gymerwyd o'r adroddiad sgysiau, a ddadansoddir mewn adrannau sy'n adlewyrchu'r agenda wreiddiol – Amgylcheddau Safleoedd, Cynhyrchu, Cynulleidfaoedd, Cydweithio, Marchnata.

I ailadrodd, mae'r sgysiau hyn rhwng y sector diwylliannol yng Nghymru ac CNC yn fan cychwyn. Bydd llawer o sgysiau eraill yn dilyn gyda llawer o bobl creadigol eraill, gan gynnwys ar lefel ardal o amgylch Cymru, ac yn arbennig felly os dilynir yr argymhelliad i aseinio 'broceriaid creadigol' o fewn CNC!

Mae diolch yn ddyledus i bawb a gyfrannodd at y sgysiau hyn, am gymryd rhan wrth gwrs, ond hefyd am eu hegni ysbrydoledig, eu hymrwymiad, a'u hangerdd dros eu crefft, eu cymunedau a'r amgylchedd naturiol.

Executive summary

In Spring 2021, NRW commissioned three ‘Conversations’ with the Cultural Sector in Wales, with a focus on those creating, or wanting to create work outdoors. The Conversations centred around the question:

“What do we need in order to work together to create and deliver cultural experiences and activities in the natural environment in Wales, that will benefit everyone both now and in the future?”

30 Wales-based creatives contributed to the Conversations (see Appendix A) which were facilitated by Articulture, an organisation that supports the development of outdoor arts in Wales.

‘Outdoor arts’, also known as ‘Arts in the Public Space’ encompasses a myriad of artforms, often bringing them together in curated and creative combinations. From theatre, dance and circus to puppetry and music, from installations to performance and procession, from the spectacular to the intimate, the movement has a unique and proven power to move, to inspire, to engage and to entertain its audiences whether they are collaborators, participants, spectators or coincidental bystanders.

This report cannot attempt to represent the joys and the inspiration of outdoor arts in the natural environment. However, the potential power of this combination and the benefits it can bring to individuals and society sat firmly at the heart of all the Conversations, where participants shared experiences that demonstrated how arts in the natural environment can draw in and engage diverse local communities, helping them forge deeper connections to each other, and to the landscape they are part of.

Our joint experience of Covid over the last 18 months has consistently highlighted the positive impact of both being outside in nature and exploring our creativity. If we can work together to ensure equal access to opportunities for culture in the natural environment to be experienced inclusively and communally, then we have at our fingertips a force for good.

The arts cannot reverse or even slow climate change but people can, and creating a culture where people experience the natural environment in a way that makes them feel good will influence how they understand its value, and how likely it is for them to act to protect and support it.

The recommendations in this report aim to map out ways forward for NRW to work with the cultural sector, for the benefit of all. They are drawn from the Conversations, occasionally indirectly, but mostly quite literally. Like the Conversations themselves, they are intended not as definitive but as developmental, to be adjusted as NRW and Wales’s cultural sector continue their journey together.

There are five over-arching recommendations, which although separated out in the report will inevitably overlap and intertwine.

The fundamental integrity of each recommendation is dependent on an embedded understanding of 3 core factors:

- **Language:** Wales is a bilingual nation and cultural activity needs to reflect this, throughout Wales whilst also ensuring the communities who use other languages – sign language, for example, are not excluded.
- **Inclusion:** The provision of cultural experiences in the natural environment will be as nothing if they are not equally accessed and accessible.
- **Climate Change:** Whilst creating cultural experiences in the natural environment for people to benefit from now, there needs to be a conscious and pro-active consideration of how future generations can also benefit.

To very briefly summarise the recommendations detailed in the report, they are to:

- **Establish a cross-sector working group** to help share values and vision. This will form a shared narrative that informs the development of strategies and plans going forward.
- **Engage ‘Creative Brokers’ within NRW** who can act as ambassadors and connectors, provide development and where appropriate, delivery support.
- **Create a site audit framework** that can provide NRW staff, creatives and community representatives with a working document to be used at any potential site. From this carry out some pilot audits at varied sites.
- **Explore new ways of working through a range of pilots and research.** such as an accessible residency space or experience, an outdoor arts ‘venue’ co-curated by creatives and community, a grading system for access to sites and events and a bank of mobile infrastructure to support events at varied sites.
- **Build a treasure chest of case studies** in diverse and accessible formats to support learning and development and ultimately feed into Wales’s identity.

The recommendations will all benefit if carried out with reference to the collation of notes taken from the Conversations report, which are broken down in sections reflecting the original agenda – Site Environments, Production, Audiences, Collaboration, Marketing.

To reiterate, these Conversations between the cultural sector in Wales and NRW are a starting point. There will be many other conversations that follow with many other creatives, including at Area level around Wales, and especially so if the recommendation to assign ‘Creative Brokers’ from within NRW is followed up!

Thanks are due to all those who contributed to these Conversations, for taking part of course, but also for their inspiring energy, commitment and passion for their craft, communities and the natural environment.

Introduction

In Spring 2021 three 'conversations' between Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the cultural sector in Wales were commissioned by NRW, facilitated by Articulture (www.articulture-wales.co.uk).

Each of the conversations brought together a range of cultural practitioners (see full list in Appendix 1) working in different art forms, outdoors, across Wales, to answer the question:

'What do you need in order to create and deliver cultural experiences and activities in the natural environment in Wales?'

The conversations considered the broadest possible range of creative interventions, from performances and residencies to installations and exhibitions and considered many areas such as the environment, health, participation and learning. They were arranged to take place over three zoom meetings, each lasting three hours, each with a capacity to accommodate up to ten participants.

As the sessions were set up at relatively short notice, participants were grouped according to their availability rather than any other selection. The agenda for each of the meetings was the same, with Articulture facilitating and note-taking. Simultaneous translation for Welsh/English and British Sign Language was provided. (See Agenda in Appendix 2)

Context

The conversations took place during full Covid lockdown, one year from the start of the pandemic. The uncertainties wrought by Covid came up in varying degrees in all conversations with discussions on social distancing, audience gathering restrictions and the possibility of further lockdowns. For creatives used to working outdoors, uncertainties such as the weather are variables that they understand, risk assess and can adapt to. Covid undoubtedly brings new challenges but these were not seen as insurmountable.

Two further critical challenges that brought distinct themes to the conversations, with higher hurdles, were inequality in our society and climate change.

- Regarding inequality, throughout all the conversations there was a distinct awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion, a strong voice advocating for access, and a sense of urgency around confronting and redressing systemic oppression, including in the arts and environment.
- Climate change, whilst core to many artists' work for many years, appears to have an increasingly raised profile and has climbed the rank of priorities for people, featuring across all conversations.

Changes within NRW's cultural strategy in the last year also brought great interest and discussion about future collaboration, as participants learnt about NRW's new Memorandum of Understanding with the Arts Council of Wales, detailing their combined commitment to encouraging and enabling outdoor arts.

Conversation direction

The considerable social, cultural and political changes of the last year had a distinct and direct impact on the nature of the conversations and their ultimate direction.

In posing the lead question, the intention was to gather feedback from the participants that could provide a foundation for a full 'in-house' audit into the viability and value of parcels of NRW managed land across the different Area Statements being developed as venues for arts and cultural interventions. This would include analysing site facilities, sensitivity, ease of access, proximity to population, proximity to areas of social or economic need, and proximity to established cultural organisations, networks and audiences.

For the participants however, these conversations with NRW were about so much more than finding new workable venues or outdoor outlets for what they do. Overwhelmingly, the spirit of the conversations taken together is resoundingly impassioned, demonstrating a deep-seated belief in the power of the arts, particularly in tandem with the natural environment, and a drive towards ensuring that the benefits are shared out and enjoyed by all.

There were frequent references to, and examples given of:

- How the natural environment and culture benefit health and well-being.
- The opportunity that the arts in the natural environment provide in helping communities value and protect it, especially in the face of climate change.
- The more urgent than ever call to ensure that all reaches of society can access the natural environment and the arts.
- The recent steep learning curve in working with technology, and the understanding of the potential benefits of adding digital into the mix.
- The beauty and value of the small and intimate arts encounter in relation to audience access, Covid restrictions and the possibilities offered by technology.

The question very clearly asked by Natural Resources Wales in these conversations was *'What do you need in order to create and deliver cultural experiences and activities in the natural environment in Wales?'*

But the question was reframed as part of the engagement process and became...

'What do we need in order that we can work together to create and deliver cultural experiences and activities in the natural environment in Wales, that will benefit everyone both now and in the future?'

This report details the response to this question over several defined areas – Site environments, Production, Audience, Collaboration, Marketing and PR. These responses were noted down and distilled, drawing out key threads. Naturally, however these areas overlapped, as they are all interrelated.

Following this is an outline of initial recommendations for NRW to take forward as they work to develop and deliver an open, transparent and accessible cultural strategy in collaboration with the cultural sector in Wales.

Site environments

‘What do we need in order that we can work together to create and deliver cultural experiences and activities in the natural environment in Wales, that will benefit everyone both now and in the future?’

In this section participants were invited to share what locations or environments excited them when making creative work outdoors. This included landscape types and features, types of activity and former uses, special features, specific site sensitivities – positive and negative, proximity to places and facilities, and locations with strong connections, or potential to connect to communities.

It was clear from the discussion that there was no ‘one size fits all’ for the cultural sector, with much depending on the project or the ambition of the creative team. There was a desire for freedom and opportunity to explore and work with a wide range of landscapes and their resident communities across Wales, as each landscape and community brings a rich variety of opportunities and experiences. This arose multiple times, with the request that NRW did not over-invest in one space. There were some participants who also recognised the value of standard places for touring works – with a site and staff team that could offer a known package to creatives on tour.

The following points were raised as features of a site that would make it particularly attractive:

Sites that offer a variety of interesting features

Participants highlighted a range of features that would be of interest to creatives, with the emphasis on the value of sites that offer a variety (but not all) of these features in one place:

- **The unexpected** – not always the beauty spots but the places that have been closed or avoided - looking at them and creating a new lens, not necessarily pretty, but gritty, exploring together.
- **Natural** – such as woodlands that give a sense of closeness and intimacy, the way the light plays through leaves, the journey through forest and clearings.
- **Ancient** - connecting with the distant past of areas and acknowledging that societies have always had an impact on the natural environment and landscapes
- **Historical** – such as industrial remains can help provoke discussion on current issues such as industrialisation, human activity and how we imagine the future.
- **Popular and contemporary** – linking the past and the environment to recent and popular culture and valuing both.
- **Urban and the spaces on the edge** - the periphery of built-up areas and the overlap between natural and urban areas - the natural can be within the urban.
- **Unpredictability** – there is an inherent unpredictability to any site – such as the way a space sounds – birdsong, the wind in the trees, running water, that offers opportunity and improvisation.
- **Working with site features** – getting inspired and creative with both the challenges (such as a flood plain) and the opportunities (a natural bowl amphitheatre).

Sites that have existing infrastructure

Sites that offer key practical needs to undertake the work. Whilst many sites can be compelling and exciting to consider working with, participants highlighted there were key practical elements that would help define the choice of sites, depending on the proposed work. These are covered in detail in 'Production' and 'Audience'.

Sites that have transparency and flexibility in their management

Sites where there is openness and transparency about land ownership and management processes are valuable. This is so that the creative sector can understand and engage with this in a way that identifies barriers early on. This is covered in more detail in 'Collaboration'.

Sites where there is a willingness to explore difficult or emotive themes

The cultural sector will often want to explore contemporary themes that challenge society, such as colonisation, land ownership and climate change. Most participants noted that many sites across Wales offered stories and associations that could present great opportunity for creating new perspectives and new conversations, across a wide range of different groups of people and places. Thoughts offered when discussing this included –

- Opportunity for creating spaces for cross-sector conversations between different parts of the public, such as farmers and those in the city. Farmers are already helping provide solutions, for example becoming trained in peatland carbon footprint, but there is little awareness of this especially in the urban areas. We need to connect not just people to the environment but people to people – unlocking tensions, creating dialogue, problem solving and looking together to the future to see how we can become good ancestors.
- Look at the complexity of places - where the power lies, the level of interests that are both local and global. We need to 'unearth how we think about places and the universal impact of power' - and how this interacts with colonialism.
- Interest in sites that are in transition or contested in some way – good to know the challenges of a site and have engagement as part of the process – activating work around contention.
- Land ownership in Wales – the existing power dynamics - there is something about having to come through facilities owned by others, something about going onto land that looks unmanaged or unowned
- Could an 'artist rapid response unit' be created to focus on the local impact of global issues e.g.: helping communities at risk of displacement due to sea-level rise to understand what's happening, to communicate their feelings and to consider their futures?
- The power of bringing together people local to a site to experience a creative event, who may just be used to walking their dog in a space but can through outdoor arts discover a new important perspective on a site and on their community.

Sites where managers feel comfortable facilitating conversations such as these would be particularly valuable to the cultural sector.

Sites that want to be promoted as visitor destinations

Sites that are suitable for exploring ways to showcase Wales are valuable, working with partners such as Visit Wales and new technology to embrace new opportunities. All participants recognised the lure of Wales's landscapes and culture to creatives and audiences, both in the country and beyond. They also recognised the opportunities offered by this to showcase Wales to the world, not just through live events and projects, but also digitally using new technology and new methods trialled during the pandemic. Thoughts offered when discussing this included:

- Journeys through landscapes to the site itself can be a valuable process of adventure and unwinding for creatives and audiences. We could offer this more in Wales. Existing successful examples - Laugharne, Hay-on-Wye and Green Man Festival. There is also synergy here with Visit Wales' strategy 'The Wales Way' - www.visitwales.com/inspire-me/wales-way.
- Streaming from sites or the use of 360 degree cameras and augmented realities can reach a wider, international audience. This works well where the site/work can only be accessed by a small audience but has a wider appeal – many participants had successfully started sharing more online, eg via social media or via streaming companies.
- equally thought, there was advice not to sacrifice the live experience for the digital – rather create a blend of the two and harness the benefits of both.

Production

'What do we need in order that we can work together to create and deliver cultural experiences and activities in the natural environment in Wales, that will benefit everyone both now and in the future?'

In this section participants were invited to share what practical requirements are generally 'essential' and what is 'useful'- based on their experience and ambitions for future work and acknowledging that each project is different.

Infrastructure

The following points were raised as key infrastructure requirements of developing productions in the natural environment:

- **Safe performance spaces:** This can involve multiple factors depending on the project or event, but key examples that were shared were - natural arenas (those that are naturally protected – 'in a bowl' – open circle, or places that have key defining features such as a quarry with a large rock slab); flat spaces and surfaces for staging and structures and for artforms such as dance; good lighting of spaces to ensure performers can see what's there and avoid injury.
- **Paths and walkways:** An accessible network of paths will enable audiences to navigate to the performance or installation spaces safely.
- **Accessible, high-quality toilets:** this is seen to reflect how thought-about, cared for and welcome people feel. It was noted 'if you get the toilets right, people will forgive

you anything! It was also noted that NRW visitor centres tend to be better equipped than hire-in portals.

- **Transport to site:** Availability of local transport at suitable times, or the possibility of providing temporary transport for the project or event. Participants highlighted the need to ensure there is enough space on site for turning circles, especially for larger vehicles such as coaches and buses; the magical mystery tour element when providing transport to site was noted as something that can add to the experience.
- **Parking:** Adequate parking for the project or events team and visiting audience including cars, bicycles, disabled access, as well as additional access and space for deliveries such as staging.
- **Power:** Access or support in using green energy on site. There were relatively few participants who said they would absolutely require power at an NRW site, but there were conversations around the supply of charging points for mobility aids, electric vehicles and around the advantages of 12-volt batteries or a clean green power supply (maybe a portable bank of solar panels) - over a generator. There was an acknowledgement that events need to budget for green energy.
- **Broadband and internet:** Access to good broadband infrastructure and good mobile internet. Note that there are also quite a few internet black-out zones across Wales that still exist, and this will have an impact to a degree. This is not essential to the creation and delivery of all work, but some participants noted that visiting audience may need it to find places when travelling, and it would be useful from a marketing perspective as people arrive and leave – sharing their experiences digitally.
- **Other resources for on-site creation:** Support in the provision of resources for work such as research or rehearsals, prior to an event or project going live. This includes items such as storage, shelter if the weather is bad, toilets.

Information from experts

Access to a range of site information from the outset from someone who knows the site, or from experts they can form relationships with to learn. This would include opportunities for pre-creation site visits - essential if a site-specific piece, and often even if not. This comes with an awareness that environments change, for example storms can change landscape, trees grow etc. Examples given of questions that may be asked included:

- What facilities does a site have? (toilets, café, parking etc)
- What are the physical, historical, ecological and community parameters of a site?
- What is the ecology? Are there protected wildlife areas, eg: 'will these trees have nests in by spring?'
- This is a valley so where does the sound carry to and who / which wildlife does it affect?
- What challenges are there here – overhead military jets? flooding? events? land covenants or potentially conflicting user groups? How can the challenges be managed / resolved, if at all?
- Is there mobile signal / 4G?
- Who are the key stakeholders in the area?
- Is the parking free or paid for / sole use for the event or shared?
- What is already happening on the site? Are there any special features, stand-out characteristics or connections that can be incorporated into the project to strengthen its local identity and relevance?

Accessibility for D/deaf or disabled people

It was acknowledged by all that accessibility covers a wide area, and means different things to different people. A clear and informed process for thinking through access with site partners is therefore needed, working with recognised national standards and resulting in a working plan that could be undertaken by all involved in site-based projects to ensure all collaborators feel welcome.

Examples of questions that arose:

- What needs to be considered right from the start? Sightlines, interpreters, movement through the site and?
- Are there flat areas where possible, gentle slopes or ramps, hand-rails where there are steps? (And how flat is 'flat'?...)
- How can we position British Sign Language interpretation to ensure visibility for those who need it?
- Could NRW have a viewing platform at certain venues – mobile? What might that look like?
- Could there be a grading system for paths – easy, moderate (rougher underfoot but not steep) etc –
- What are the least restrictive circular routes that take in car parks, seating areas etc?
- How can captions work outdoors (considering sunshine which can interfere with it), and would power be needed?
- What impact do any Covid restrictions have on accessibility? It was noted that COVID has caused particular difficulties for the D/deaf community – eg: wearing of masks means a lot of people don't know if someone is talking to them as they can't lip read or see that someone is talking.
- How can we sign-post this event well – in advance and live?
- What community transport hubs and schemes exist that could help us?
- UK Festivals have a code system for grading how accessible they are – bronze, silver, gold with the organisation 'Attitude is Everything' – think about something similar for events or sites for NRW?

Several participants noted that accessibility starts at the beginning of creative development collaborating with those who are D/deaf or disabled and harnessing their experience and expertise, to weave accessibility in a creative and meaningful way through the project. In this section wider accessibility issues were also raised, such as lack of accessible accommodation for disabled people in Wales generally, which could impact the potential for disabled performers to work on NRW sites and for disabled visitors from away.

Sound in the natural environment

Embracing conversations around the opportunities, challenges and limitations of noise, and locating and working with natural amphitheatres for sound such as quarries, versus 'bought-in' amplification. Key observations that came up included:

- Creating pieces that are sympathetic to the environment and generate a connection with the natural environment and its soundscape.

- Power of technology to amplify sound in the natural environment, and how to enable this experience to feel unmediated.
- Cost and visual intrusion of speakers.
- Potential havoc the natural environment can play with equipment and what the tech can cope with for long term work/events.
- Understanding noise pollution and how sound travels.
- Accessing expertise to help people make decisions about suitable sound levels, direction of speakers etc – concept of the ‘muted festival’.
- Sound absorption – look at feasibility studies and toolkits available.
- The use of audience headphones in open spaces, for example large scale silent disco.

Environmental impact and legacy

In order to minimise any negative impact on a site and to maximise a project’s positive legacy, there needs to be a clear and informed process for thinking through environmental aspects of the project/event with site partners, against recognised national standards. This could then result in a working plan that could be undertaken by site-based projects. Several participants asked - ‘How can we ensure that the arts that we create outdoors do not contribute to environmental destruction and climate change?’.

Suggestions made in this section included engaging public transport companies, accessing maps and calendars of ecological points and influences on wildlife, engaging local partners and experts and using local materials. These factors need to be built into the project and its budget from the start and developed with someone who has knowledge that is bespoke to that place. ‘Julie’s Bicycle’ has practical tools for measuring and budgeting according to carbon impact, including the question of planned offset programmes for the sector, planting in rural and urban areas, and individual responsibilities for understanding practices in relation to reduce, reuse, recycle.

Covid guidelines

Safety for all collaborators involved in work was a keen focus. In particular there was discussion around what support there could be for artists when responding and adapting to any Covid guidelines that may be live at the time of creating and delivering work together. It was noted that even in outdoor works we need to think about space and proximity and that uncertainty around how restrictions may wax and wane poses economic and well-being challenges.

Audience

‘What do we need in order that we can work together to create and deliver cultural experiences and activities in the natural environment in Wales, that will benefit everyone both now and in the future?’

In this section participants were invited to share their feedback on what is important to them in this realm when developing and delivering projects. The cross-over between audience and collaborators (as opposed to spectators or even participants) was noted,

particularly where an equal footing is critical to maximise engagement and achieve the desired aims of an event or programme.

Value of audience and initiating relationships

An understanding and valuing of the local community or 'audience' and building good relationships was deemed essential and it was suggested that a co-created audience development plan could inform NRW's cultural strategy. This relates to the 'Marketing and PR' section. Cardiff's Music Strategy was given as a good example of this, and how to empower the audience journey - <https://tinyurl.com/4dmtv6nu>

Most participants expressed that local community or 'audience' was central to their work, with their stories, concerns and insights key to inspiration and creation. As acknowledged earlier in site environments, getting to know and building a deep relationship with communities in and around the site can be key to the success of projects, bringing a richer experience for all involved and a longer legacy.

This is unpacked more over the course of this section, but in the first instance participants noted the importance of:

- Working with sites that have a close proximity to a community or audience to build a relationship appropriate to the scale of the project being considered, incorporating both current and potential users. New technology offers opportunities to take this further.
- Site and community leaders taking time to share knowledge of all local stakeholders and landowners, and to broker and build relationships together around a site.
- Tapping into cultivated audiences that already exist, including the site users themselves, and developing relationships with local organisations such as arts centres. Several participants gave examples of successful working relationships with venues when working in the natural environment. This however is dependent on their relationship with locality, interest, and resources to support outdoor arts that are on their doorstep, beyond the venue itself.

Getting to know audiences and working long-term

An openness and understanding of the value of long-term and continued conversations and work with communities, so that connections and relations are built more slowly and meaningfully. This avoids what was observed as a common problem of artists parachuting into communities, often vulnerable or marginalised and working in an extractive and ultimately destructive way. Key feedback around this included:

- Not presupposing who audiences are when considering a project, but taking time to investigate and build relationships, and being open to all possibilities. Outdoor arts can bring different audiences, with one participant noting that 60% of audience for a recent project they were part of at a CADW site were new visitors to the monument.
- Taking time to talk to and truly understand audiences and their stories and concerns. For example, it was noted by several that rural communities can present a microcosm of society. In some instances, divisions and disagreements can be starker and may have been sharpened by Covid – partly due to escaping to the countryside and the pressures of migration to second homes or day visitors to beauty spots – this is

culturally changing communities. In this situation there was also caution in befriending one audience base which can end up alienating another – it needs sensitivity.

- Taking time to listen to people can also reveal personal concerns they have but might not share at first, such as people who may be losing their sight, hearing or mobility and who stop going out into nature and to cultural experiences because they feel vulnerable.
- Engaging communities and audiences as collaborators, rather than consumers was discussed, and it was acknowledged that creators and artists are often part of the communities around sites too.
- Taking inspiration from arts venue practice was suggested - they often build audience relationships over 2+years, valuing feedback, holding scratch performances etc – as a way to achieve real sustainability and relationships. But this needs to be resourced, so built in to planning and fundraising from the start.

Inclusion

An openness and commitment to creating processes and experiences that ensures people from all backgrounds feel welcome and included. There was an acknowledgment by many of a common issue for both the culture and natural environment sectors that access to both is challenging for the marginalised – ‘it is often hard to feel like you are welcome and can belong there’. Making people feel welcome was identified as key – with different takes on this from participants depending on their practice and experience, including:

- Natural spaces can feel like they belong to people in the community compared to theatres which can feel inhospitable. There is a responsibility not to let people down ‘in their own spaces’
- Representation of all parts of the community among site staff and creative teams is vital and urgent, and is an area where culture and the natural environment could support each other and work together.
- Identifying expertise and key allies when working with specific groups and integrating their insights and recommendations into audience development planning, as well as project creation and delivery. This includes but is not limited to:
 - Working with organisations, community members and artists who identify as D/deaf and disabled, to develop accessibility that is truly meaningful, caring and practical.
 - Working with organisations, community members and artists who identify as Black or People of Colour – providing guidance on what it means to be a person of colour, navigating conversations around inclusion, systemic racism, and bringing about meaningful and positive change. In this area Karen Larbi from POC in Nature was recommended specifically - A Black-led community for people of colour to explore the healing power of nature, environmental justice & land-honouring ancestral traditions - <https://twitter.com/pocinnature>
- Ensuring an equality of language, considering Wales is bilingual and including British Sign Language.
- Reaching those who are geographically isolated. Whole swathes of Wales have hardly any arts provision near to where they live. It would be good to take the opportunity to work and provide experiences in new places – not just the same venues all the time.

- Opportunities for collaboration and new work are evolving around social prescribing and benefits of the arts in nature for mental and physical health. The value of nature in healing is already well known, and now with Covid, the arts are becoming more so too. Artists can be part of the social prescribing offer.
There is a potential for collaborating with prescribers in places like local authorities and GP surgeries and for training.
- Considering the barriers of poverty – what can be offered to overcome this to collaborators/audience? Financial exclusion often gets overlooked, yet as demand for foodbanks grows it is important to think of ways to ensure that poverty does not render certain audiences invisible.
- Taking an experience at a site out into the community – those in hospitals, care homes – what can we do to bring the outside in? What elements of outdoor arts can connect with these audiences?
- Ensuring that alternatives created for inclusion are equal to, if not better than the central experience and that they are of quality, thought through from the start of creation.

Different work – different Audiences

An openness and understanding of how different art forms and types of performance and installation will appeal to and reach different communities and audiences.

- **Site-specific work** – Responding to the environmental, ecological, historical, social, contemporary – there is no one angle of any site, plus you can alter the lens by looking at it from different people's eyes, and it can be long term – sometimes years.
- **Touring works** – Doesn't all have to be site-specific, can be sites-specific, themed around commonalities – good to share works across wider areas, possibly work that tours but adapts to the venues and communities.
- **Scale** – Large-scale has traditionally had the advantage of reaching bigger audience numbers and offering shared experiences, with greater economic return if ticketed; but small-scale has become more viable as we recover from Covid with recognition of the value of smaller, more intimate encounters and experiences that can then be shared digitally. Similar applies to the duration of works.
- **Location on site** - Work can be static, or staged, or take place in different spaces on a site, forming a trail or promenade performance.
- **Unplanned encounters** – Creating work that interacts with the 'desire lines' of people who currently use the site – dog walkers etc. There was acknowledgement that this kind of encounter can come with a lot less barriers for audiences – no buildings, less anxiety etc – it can have huge benefits but it's difficult to capture feedback from these audiences.
- **Digital** – As in previous sections reaching audiences beyond site was seen as a positive. Example's given included Anagram's huge pair of binoculars and Celtic Connections Festival - when they started filming the shows, the audience went global.

Collaboration

'What do we need in order that we can work together to create and deliver cultural experiences and activities in the natural environment in Wales, that will benefit everyone both now and in the future?'

In this section participants were invited to consider what a good collaborative relationship would look like for NRW and the cultural sector. It was interesting to note that no one at any point in the conversations really talked about funding, although the need to respect the environment and leave zero trace, the need to take time to develop projects and access requirements were discussed in terms of putting them in the budget from the start.

Clarity of NRW's priorities, aspirations and resources

Clear and transparent sharing of NRW's priorities, aspirations and resources. This can be done online, via NRW's website, and through strategy and other working documents. The following are the key questions that came up when discussing this area:

- What priorities does NRW have for outdoor arts?
- What are the routes into NRW – how can we collaborate with NRW, what connections and collaborations are available?
- What land / areas are available for artists to work in?
- Who do I approach if I want to do research or create a project at a site close to me?
- What permissions are needed to work on a site, what are the time-lines for this and who are the key people involved?
- I am at the start of my career - I don't have a lot of experience – would NRW still consider collaborating with me?
- What if I have only a spark of an idea but want to develop it with NRW as a creative partnership – is that possible?
- What can and can't NRW do as part of a collaboration – marketing, budget, stewarding – hands-on or hands-off or is it different in different places?
- Who will do the event management plan / risk assessments – does the artist need a producer to do this or are there templates that can be used?
- Is there an accessibility audit document available for this site? Is there a template that sites could complete?
- Is there a collaboration agreement for artists and NRW to sign up to – something meaningful and short, rather than a long legal document?

Identifying together common goals and values

Openness and commitment to building a mutual understanding between creatives and NRW – both on a national scale and on a local level, through sharing and identification of common goals and values. Some common goals that were discussed:

- Profile raising and problem solving around the impact of Climate change.
- Addressing the lack of equality, inclusion and representation in the culture and natural environment sectors.

- Instigating social change where we perceive it is needed – ‘What’s the working culture, what is emergent, how do we relate to social justice, what are our systems of care, how can our respective practices affect change? We need to acknowledge that our relationships with institutions can have an impact in a relatively small nation like Wales and we need to be ambitious about our conversations’

It was felt that investing time and energy in establishing these shared goals and values would help address issues such as the following:

- The very different ways of working according to environment, institution, professions and personalities – things can easily get lost in translation. There is a difference also in understanding between those in permanent jobs and the self-employed, which creatives often are. The former rarely understand that those not in paid employment have different ways of operating, are skilled but more vulnerable, have no security and often take personal risk to commit to a project.
- Institutional barriers such as ‘assumptions’, ‘unresponsiveness’ and ‘bureaucracy’

Getting to know a site and its community

Support and collaboration in getting to know a site and its community, including NRW staff, often over a long period of time is of immense value. Many participants (some of whom have worked on natural environment sites for up to 2-3 years) highlighted this is key to the success of any project, bringing a richer experience for all involved and a longer legacy, whether the work is touring, or site specific, over months or years. It was also highlighted by the majority of participants that the longer the relationship, the better. This included:

- Sharing of knowledge of a site, and support to identify and work with both the inspirational and practical elements – such as its wildlife residents, stories, hidden gems, facilities, rhythms; allowing time to ‘feel’ the place.
- Sharing knowledge of all local stakeholders and landowners, and brokering and building relationships together around a site. Many participants said local communities are central, with their stories and concerns and insights being key to inspiring their work.

It was acknowledged that some of the information will be generic across NRW managed land, but some will be specific to the regions / sites / communities. Whilst it is good to have information or ‘leads’ available to artists, exploring, researching is also part of the creative process.

Residencies

The freedom and opportunity to explore and work with sites and local communities long-term, with residencies at NRW sites. Thoughts offered when discussing this included:

- How there is currently little opportunity to collectively meet as creatives in the natural environment with local communities and those working in the natural environment sector - to think and talk away from business, to connect and engage with rural communities, to take time for self-care and restoration. National Theatre of Wales’ ‘Egin’ two-week residency was cited as a good example of this.

- How residency is different for different people, depending on their practice and needs.
- The benefits of freeform residencies – such as a cabin or caravan. Offering a space for exploration - not just about productivity, but doing work at a different pace, and 'blue sky' thinking.
- The possibility of a 'moving residency' – a walk across Wales by a collective of collaborators, to connect with sites and communities and inspire new work to emerge.
- How time in the natural environment can significantly inspire most creative work, even if ultimately the work is created in theatres and not outside.

Starting small scale

Openness and understanding of the value of working small-scale as a starting point for other works and projects to develop. As identified throughout, most participants acknowledged that the more fruitful collaborations come through relationships, and these take time to build. It is often good therefore to start small-scale, to allow time for testing things out and for error. For many this formed part of their usual practice - creating on-site - exploring, improvising, writing, rehearsing, holding scratch performances etc. Small scale work had also seen a rise in popularity and value with some participants since Covid, with many working at this scale during the last year.

Creative brokers

The creation and provision of creative Brokers or Enablers who understand the values, procedures and imperatives of NRW but who can equally understand artists and their processes. The Brokers should be empowered with the means to effectively navigate the systems and connect with the decision makers, facilitating conversations.

Key thoughts around this role included:

- Brokers would need to be open to the conventional, the experimental and the popular – not one particular style or aesthetic.
- There needs to be a single, trained, informed, contact and ally in the organisation who knows NRW and the site but also understands the value of the arts.
- If there is only one point of contact, that is the only relationship developed – so what happens when that person moves on? Some participants felt there should be more than one person, not just for this situation but also to have a variety of interests, skills and personalities.
- Should there be one such person allocated to each of NRW's Area Statements? Some people talked about having regional 'champions' for the arts, who also form part of a Wales-wide group so they can share best practice, training, networks etc. CADW was cited as an organisation who has upskilled all its monument staff in curating and event management skills.
- The Broker(s) could also be the conduit for collecting, evaluating and sharing project work, best practice and resources created through outdoor arts at NRW sites.

Marketing & PR

‘What do we need in order that we can work together to create and deliver cultural experiences and activities in the natural environment in Wales, that will benefit everyone both now and in the future?’

In this section participants were invited to share what support would be needed with regards Marketing & PR. This section is closely related to ‘Audience’, with developing a relationship with local communities as collaborators seen as the core work in building audiences. The following expands on this.

Creating shared values and story

The development of a shared identity, values and story that underpins all marketing related to cultural activity on NRW sites. This relates closely to the sections on collaboration and audience sections of the conversation. Marketing and PR needs to champion more than just an event – it needs to look at what shared values we have and champion them together – to do this we need to be flexible and open – and there is probably a learning process to go through.

It was suggested that it would be valuable to develop a brand between the Arts Council of Wales and NRW that all associated work can sit under. This would support the ethos of cross sector working promoted by the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. One participant stated: *‘We have to keep crossing sectors wherever we can – it’s important to explore together ways of working and methodologies, and to grow our stories together’*.

Developing work collaboratively and strategically

A clear process for each project/event on site to develop a marketing plan for delivery, that links into an overarching audience development strategy. It was recognised that there was considerable opportunity to increase and reach new audiences together through this work, and that joined up working was essential to pool resources and reach common goals. This could consider:

- Identification of mutual ambitions and target audiences.
- Appraisal of the capabilities and responsibilities of those involved – NRW staff, artists, local collaborators, funders etc (recognising that artists’ marketing skills vary considerably, and very few are experts), and any potential local support such as arts organisations, key individual community ‘connectors’ who use the site, PR companies.
- Involving the wider NRW staff team to enjoy and take part, such as inviting all staff to a free rehearsal, so that they understand and can talk about the work with site users and others.

Just as there is the need for clarity, compromise can be needed... *‘both organisations had to let go of something, to allow the new to happen’*

Using creativity to reach new audiences

Embracing new ways of communicating and reaching current and new audiences –through new relationships and experimentation. There was an observation made numerous times

that always going through the same channels will reach the same audiences, so those who are marginalised will most likely remain out of reach. One-size doesn't fit all, it depends on who you want to reach and what it is you are marketing. Experience from a couple of participants was shared that it was good to develop and distribute materials with the audience, rather than getting hung up on branded marketing. An example given was posters in local places – these work well because it's an opportunity to talk to draw people in as the posters are distributed. It also serves to help build new relationships.

Supporting the Welsh language

Commitment to working and presenting in the Welsh language – an example given was that subtitles enabled Welsh digital streaming to go out world-wide, but the audience can still hear the Welsh being spoken. In this section a wider marketing issue was also raised about the lack of a central listing / ticket booking website in Wales for cultural work.

Collaborating to problem solve around restrictions

An openness and commitment to problem solve around restrictions.

Two examples were given –

- Ensuring GDPR is followed to jointly collect and share data (observed as essential alongside audience feedback to build evidence of success and areas to improve).
- Possible NRW corporate protocols / branding issues that could impact joint marketing.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been distilled from the points outlined in the conversations. These recommendations are not intended to be static, but part of a process to allow quality cultural experiences and activities in the natural environment to grow. In this way they could increase the connections and engagement and lead to a commonly understood and desired impetus to protect and nurture the environment.

The fundamental integrity of each of the 5 recommendations below is dependent on an embedded understanding of 3 core factors

- **Language:** Wales is a bilingual nation and cultural activity needs to reflect this, throughout Wales whilst also ensuring the communities who use other languages – sign language, for example, are not excluded.
- **Inclusion:** The provision of cultural experiences in the natural environment will be as nothing if they are not equally accessed and accessible.
- **Climate Change:** Whilst creating cultural experiences in the natural environment for people to benefit from now, there needs to be a conscious and pro-active consideration of how future generations can also benefit.

Recommendation 1: Establish a cross-sector working group to help share values and vision

Establish a small, possibly time-limited, working group to capture shared values, aims and a vision of collaborative work between NRW, the cultural sector and communities. Distil from this an identity and narrative that can be shared, so that all people can understand it and feel inspired to take part.

This working group would include representatives from both the cultural and natural environment sectors who specialise in communications and audience development, as well as having input from specialists in key focus areas (Karen Larbi, for example, in relation to People of Colour accessing the natural environment).

The group would draw on the Memorandum of Understanding between NRW and ACW, and be informed by these Conversations, continuing these where needed and potentially forming further focus groups and meetings. This identity and narrative would then serve to underpin the creation of:

- A shared guide or strategy for co-curating a programme of collaborative, cultural work.

Examples given in the Conversations include creating opportunities that:

- Provide long-term working where possible, so that relationships and work can develop meaningfully
- Embrace digital possibilities on and off site
- Share risk, with partnerships that are equal despite size
- Allow for stories, ideas and solutions to build around important issues such as inequality, climate change, land ownership and colonisation and for these to be explored through specific site selection or themes of investigation.

- An audience and communications plan that guides:
 - How the agreed identity and narrative are communicated internally in NRW for staff to understand, support and engage with the work.
 - How they are communicated externally for the cultural sector, particularly amongst those currently under-represented, guiding them on how to actively engage in collaboration.
 - The creation of a process for audience development and marketing for each individual project delivered at NRW sites. The process each time will bring different resources, limitations and experiences together across sectors.
- "Job" specifications and recruitment of 'Creative Brokers' to support the delivery of collaborative work.
- The tone and presentation of key working documents such as the 'Site Audit Guide'.

Recommendation 2: Engage 'Creative Brokers' within NRW

The creation and provision of creative 'Brokers' or 'Enablers' who understand the values, procedures and imperatives of NRW, but who can equally understand the world of the cultural sector and participatory work. Their role could include:

- Communication of the values and processes for collaborative work, acting as ambassadors and connectors.
- Providing support at the crucial stage prior to funding, being available to support the project's development, as well as delivery of the project itself.
- Collecting, evaluating and sharing work.

Recommendation 3: Create a Site Audit Framework

Create a site audit framework that would provide NRW staff, creatives and local community representatives with a working document they can use for a new project at any potential site, as a starting point for information exchange and a shared delivery plan.

The guide would:

- Bring together a series of checklists and questions that can be collated from those suggested in the Conversations, looking at both onsite and off-site factors and covering production, collaboration, audience, marketing, site environment, access and legacy
- Draw on published resources in key areas such as access and environment (eg: Without Walls' 'Outdoor Arts Festivals and Events Access Guide' 2020, and Julie's Bicycle 'Productions and Exhibitions Guide' 2015.
- Be in line with professional health and safety standards in the outdoor events management sector using resources such as HSE's The Purple Guide www.thepurpleguide.co.uk, and include templates for a Event Management Plan and for risk assessments.
- Be trialed at several sites by a pilot working group of NRW staff, community representatives, artists or arts organisations and relevant professionals (such as ecologists), to feedback, refine and finalise
- Be promoted and made available on NRW's website and shared with key organisations such as Arts Council Wales and Visit Wales for information and use.
- Be used as a basis for a simple collaboration agreement for confirmed projects.

Recommendation 4: Explore new ways of working through a range of pilots

Develop an understanding of the cultural sector's working practice through a range of small, time limited, pilots. These could include:

- **An accessible residency space:** A residency space at an NRW site that provides space for independent or community led work by creatives, short or long term. There is also the possibility of thinking of this residency space in a different shape or form such as -
 - A group journey by creatives across the whole of Wales, over 12 months, in various stages: conversing, collaborating, constructing with communities to feed into a future cultural manifesto. This takes inspiration from Bureau des guides du GR2013 (bureaudeguides-gr2013.fr/en/home) and the original vision for National Theatre Wales' first year and a 'Theatre Map of Wales', adapting it as a connected, physical manifestation. A literal road map to recovery after Covid to, review, address, reinvent, heal, change - individually, as a sector and as a nation.
 - A creative collective who can be mobilised to engage with communities near NRW sites who have been negatively impacted by climate change, responding to any needs the community may have long term.
- **An outdoor arts 'venue':** Development of an outdoor arts 'venue' at a selected NRW site, in partnership with artists and local communities, where together they could programme a blend of local and touring works. The site audit framework can be used to identify potential NRW site(s) for this outdoor arts venue. The venue should already be well-resourced in terms of what is required and have a regularly updated site audit report readily available for reference by those interested in collaborating.
- **A grading system for access for NRW sites and/or projects:** Consider a grading system that could draw on those in existence already, such as NRW's for grading walking and cycling routes, and Attitude is Everything's Venue and Festival Charter, which comes with achievement awards for accessibility practice in gold, silver, bronze (attitudeiseverything.org.uk/the-charter-of-best-practice).
- **A bank of infrastructure to support project delivery:** To support the circular economy agenda, explore the possibility, usefulness and practicalities of NRW building up a range of infrastructure items that they could own and loan out, such as mobile viewing platform, mobile bank of solar panels, pop-up structures for shelter and storage, toilets, trackway, bi-lingual event signage etc.

Recommendation 5: Build a treasure chest of case studies

Following on from the recommendations above; develop a series of case studies to provide information and learning for those (NRW, creatives, local communities) creating and delivering cultural work in the natural environment. They would also provide evidence of impact to share and to support future work. The case studies would loosely link to the site audit framework, providing opportunity for further creative thinking, learning and guidance in key areas.

The 'treasure chest' would include a combination of written documents, images, films, podcasts and webinars, acknowledging that different projects lend themselves to different formats, and that people take in information differently.

Focus topics could include:

- Long term collaborations between natural environment organisations, creatives and local communities, where everyone plays a crucial part
- Integrated access planning from the outset, both creatively and in site production.
- Developing a bilingual, inclusive project and shared communication plan
- Minimising environmental impact and carbon footprint across different landscapes.
- Works that highlight and provoke positive change
- Opportunities, challenges and considerations when working with site ecology

An example of how one topic could be mapped out in podcast / webinar form:

'The opportunities, challenges and considerations when working with sound'. This could include: how can natural sounds be sensitively amplified and used in outdoor arts? how does sound travel? when does 'sound' become 'noise pollution', for people and for wildlife? how can digital technology minimise volume but maximise impact? etc.

Conclusion

In reflecting on the process of hosting these conversations, possibly the most exciting aspect for participants is that they are not seen as an end in themselves. Rather they offer a positive and promising beginning for a collaborative journey between NRW and the cultural sector in Wales.

There was a general recognition that knitting together the voices from the natural environment and the cultural landscapes in Wales may have its hurdles. In particular, ensuring that community voices around Wales, in all their diversity, are pro-actively integrated into the way forward for arts in the natural environment faces far more hurdles and will take significantly more effort, but if the commitment is there, the result will match all effort.

However, the openness, the energy and the connections already made through these conversations indicate that the journey can be a good one, that both NRW and the cultural sector are ready to embrace.

Articulture Team – Spring 2021

Appendix 1: Contributors

Melissa Appleton, Creative Director, Peak

Lorne Campbell, Artistic Director, National Theatre Wales

Lindsey Colbourne, Artist, Facilitator

Karine Decorne, Founder / Artistic Director & CEO, Migrations

Jony Easterby, Artist, Producer

Elen Elis, Organiser & Artistic Director at National Eisteddfod of Wales

Gethin Evans, Artistic Director, Franwen

Sian Fitzgerald, Community Arts Officer, Active Communities, Denbighshire Leisure Ltd

Rabab Ghazoul, Founder & Director, Gentle/Radical, Director, Gentle/Radical Film Club

Arwel Gruffydd, Artistic Director, Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru

Jenny Hall, Artistic Director, Crafted Space

Georgina Harris, Artistic Director, Tin Shed Theatre

Toby Hay, Musician

Julie Ann Heskin, Co-Director Articulture Wales

Paul Kaynes, CEO, National Dance Company Wales

Eddie Ladd, Dance and Performance Artist

Krystal Lowe, Dancer, Choreographer, Writer, Artistic Director Kokoro Arts

Louise Miles Crust, Director, Creu Cymru

Sarah Morton, Co-Director Articulture Wales

Zoe Munn, Producer

Catherine Paskell, Artistic Director, Dirty Protest Theatre

Ben Pettitt-Wade – Artistic Director, Hijinx

Professor Marc Rees, Curator and Creator

Dr Ffion Reynolds, Heritage & Arts Manager, Cadw

James Roberts, Artistic Director, Citrus Arts

John Rostron, Wales Manager, Making Music UK

Elise Davison, Artistic Director, Taking Flight Theatre

Ali Williams, Producer

Iwan Williams, Producer and Director, Ffiwsar

Stephanie Back, Artist and Performer

Cymen Caf, Simultaneous translation

Claire Anderson, British Sign Language Interpretation

Rebecca Mahoney, British Sign Language Interpretation

Appendix 2 - Agenda

09.00 - Welcome - Rosie Strang (Facilitator), Annie Grundy (Observer & Note taker), Joe Roberts (Lead Specialist Advisor: Recreation and Access, NRW)

- Context and purpose of this work
- Agenda for today

09.15 – Group Introductions (20mins)

09.35 - Site environments (30 mins)

What locations or environments excite you for making creative work outdoors?

- Landscape types and features
- Types of activity and former uses
- Stories
- Special features
- Specific site sensitivities – positive and negative (challenges)
- Proximity to particular places / facilities
- Locations with strong connections / potential to connect to communities

10.05 - Production (25 mins)

Based on your experience and ambitions for future work, and acknowledging that each project is different, what practical requirements are generally 'essential' and what is 'useful'?

10.30 - Break (30 mins)

We encourage you to go outside if possible, to have a stretch, breathe the air; to bring back an observation of beauty to share.

11.00 – Return to Conversation

11.05 - Audience (25 mins)

Audience is at the heart of this work. What is important for you in this realm when developing and delivering projects?

11.30 - Collaboration (30 mins)

What would a good collaborative relationship look like on both sides between NRW and Creatives?

- Welcome - What would be the best-case scenario if enquiring to collaborate with NRW?
- Offer - What would the ideal 'open door' and/or opportunities to engage with NRW's sites look like for you?
- Working culture – What is the working culture needed to deliver cultural experiences and activities in collaboration with NRW?
- Values & Principles- What shared values and principles are needed, and how can they show up in this work?
- Relationship building - Who will ideally be invested and involved?
- Roles – What key roles will be needed and what will the responsibilities be?
- Timescales – What timescales are needed to allow for possibilities to emerge, develop ideas, undertake site visits?

- Building in inclusion and access for all those involved
- Welsh language
- Financing and budgets

12.00 - Marketing & PR (15mins)

From your experience, what support if any would you need for a project in this field from the site partner?

- Mediums
- Shared messages
- Welsh language

12.15 - Wrap & Next Steps

12.30 – End Session