



Communities, Equality &  
Local Government  
Committee -  
Inquiry into Participation in the  
Arts among some groups of  
people

March 2012



WLGA • CLILC

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales, and the three national park authorities, the three fire and rescue authorities, and four police authorities are associate members.
2. It seeks to provide representation to local authorities within an emerging policy framework that satisfies the key priorities of our members and delivers a broad range of services that add value to Welsh Local Government and the communities they serve.
3. The WLGA welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee on participation in the arts among some groups of people.
4. The WLGA are not intending to give a detailed response on the questions posed to Local Authorities individually, but are focusing their response on the work being undertaken by Local Authorities and its partners to address the issues raised in respect of funding reductions.
5. Local Authorities have a significant impact on the ground in respect of Arts participation through the direct management of facilities, indirect support of Trust managed facilities and Arts development. There has been for some considerable time a strong emphasis in Local Government and in its work with the Arts Council very clear objectives to target under represented groups, whether that is girls and women, individuals and groups in both financially and or geographically deprived communities, groups with disabilities etc. During these particularly difficult times, these issues are as relevant as they have ever been.
6. Local Authorities have been concerned for some time about the twin effect and impact on participation in the Arts caused by the effects of a general reduction in the disposable incomes of families and individuals and the reduced funding for services in Local Government.
7. There have been budget reductions in Local Authority arts resources, but where possible the remaining funding has been kept within the programmes delivered in the communities. There is a very strong base of community arts groups within Wales

ranging from choirs, silver / brass bands, choral societies, dance groups, operatic groups etc. Local authorities are aware of the difficulties these groups face in hiring affordable premises for rehearsals and shows and therefore work with these groups to find a way forward to ensure they are able to continue with their activities and to showcase their work. Very often it is these groups who not only provide participation opportunities in the performing arts in their area but they also raise funds for other charities in their communities.

8. Transport is a major barrier in participation in many activities and is not restricted to the arts. It is an issue for both rural and urban communities, however this is not a new issue but one which has been exacerbated recently by the spiralling cost of personal transport and is an issue that local authorities on their own are not able to address.
9. With the support of Welsh Government, The Arts Council for Wales, Local Authorities have been working together to find new ways of working to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of local authorities in the delivery of the Arts. One example of this proactive work has been the development of the Arts Connect Project covering the four authorities, Rhondda-Cynon-Taff, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil and the Vale of Glamorgan.
10. Since October 2011 in response to the then emerging Simpson Compact (Signed on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2011) a series of meetings have been held between local authorities (*Local Authorities have been represented by their Chief Leisure and Culture Officers*), senior Welsh Government officials and the Arts Council for Wales to discuss and determine how collaborative working can be improved. It is clearly recognised that by working together we can provide a more effective and efficient service. A report is being prepared by WLGA and CORL setting out how they will respond to the Simpson Compact and how they plan to work together with their partners (Welsh Government, Arts Council for Wales and the voluntary sector) across the regions to ensure that there is a sharing of good practice, retention of expertise advice and guidance.
11. It is important to note that there is little quantitative data available in respect of any fall off in participation in the Arts at this time either through budget reductions to arts groups or through families and individuals not attending and participating in the arts due to their own personal financial position.

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**For further information please contact:**

Peter Gomer  
Interim Policy Officer - Leisure, Culture, Tourism and Heritage  
[peter.gomer@wlga.gov.uk](mailto:peter.gomer@wlga.gov.uk)

Welsh Local Government Association  
Local Government House  
Drake walk  
Cardiff  
CF10 4LG

Tel: 029 2046 8648