Arts 13

Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts

Response from Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales

Background

Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales was established by Royal Charter in 1907. The Museum receives its core funding through grant-in-aid from the Welsh Government as a Welsh Government Sponsored Body. Its Charter objective is *'the advancement of the education of the public'* involving developing, caring for, studying and sustaining access to Wales's national museum collections for the benefit of society in perpetuity. Amgueddfa Cymru's Vision, published following significant internal and external discussion and consultation, is to become 'a world class museum of learning' and we believe that we are well on our way to delivering this ambitious commitment.

For the context of this submission, it is important to note that Amgueddfa Cymru is a provider of a broad range of arts and cultural activities relating to art, history, science, music, drama, creative-writing, dance, photography and these all include elements of active participation. Through the leading role the Museum plays in this cultural and heritage provision, education, skills and tourism, we make a positive contribution to the social and economic life of Wales. With over 450,000 formal and informal education visits, Amgueddfa Cymru also provides many routes into life-long learning and training - all of which are crucial at a time of financial constraint.

In response to the Committee's questions:

1. Which groups of people participate in your organisation's arts activities?

Annually, Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales welcomes over 1.6m visits to its seven national museum sites. A wide range of groups of people participate in Amgueddfa Cymru's arts and cultural activities, e.g. school children, young people and families, as well as adults of all ages, including members of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups.

Through its aspiration to become a 'world-class museum of learning', Amgueddfa Cymru, is committed to delivering on a wide-ranging 'Learning and Access' policy and is a provider of a broad portfolio of routes into education and training. Amgueddfa Cymru's formal education programme is the best known part of its work in this area. It is Wales' largest provider of learning outside the classroom and currently attracts over 230,000 visits from school pupils and college students each year with many more schools utilising new curriculum resources developed by the Museum's Learning department. Special interest courses and facilitated events and activities at the Museum sites attract a further 260,000 'informal education' visits each year. While everyone who visits Amgueddfa Cymru museums and its on-line provision are offered a learning experience, these statistics are an indication of the power of the museum to be a 'civic space', providing a valuable way of encouraging individuals and groups into participation in education, training and social activity in a way that is alternative and complementary to the formal learning sectors.

The Museum works with schools in Communities First areas in a variety of creative ways including, for example, an art learning project (the Start Project) for pupils in Cardiff primary schools and their families who have previously had little or no contact with the Museum. The 'Schools Communities

Agenda 21 Network' (SCAN) project works directly with schools across the nation, giving pupils experience in identifying local animals and growing plants while contributing data to studies being undertaken at the Museum.

Many participants in specific and targeted outreach projects have been young people of school age who have 'dropped out' of the school or college setting. The Museum's projects, which take place in a diverse range of geographical locations around Wales, provide a bridge back into learning and training for those who are not in employment, education or training. The 'Learning Through Culture and Creativity' project, for example, innovatively combined the arts, museums and the Communities First vision framework to provide new opportunities for young people. The groups of young people work with museum staff and artists to create their artworks, videos and jewellery – anything from a simple ring to complex body adornments. The results will be displayed at National Museum Cardiff, celebrating the skills and talent of the young people involved.

Amgueddfa Cymru is continuing to promote its flagship Welsh for Adults learning resources. The comprehensive packs which contain materials for tutors and students of all levels, have been produced in conjunction with the Welsh Government's Department for Education and Skills for use at St Fagans: National History Museum, National Slate Museum, Big Pit: National Coal Museum and National Wool Museum. The resources create a framework for learners of Welsh to develop confidence and skills outside the classroom, and offer tutors a fresh way to encourage the use of language skills in everyday life. We also offer a variety of provision for Welsh learners, including initiatives for very small children and adults at the National Slate Museum and National Waterfront Museum.

The provision of 'Leisure' courses by universities and colleges has been significantly reduced in recent years, reflecting a stronger emphasis on qualifications and skills by course funders. However, informal, non-accredited intitiatives are recognised as a crucial way of encouraging people to return to or continue with learning. They are also vital for quality of life and good health. Amgueddfa Cymru offers provision in this area, from creative writing courses, to lecture series, as well as self-guided learning.

Amgueddfa Cymru's learning initiatives include a web-published resource for tutors bringing ESOL students (English for Speakers of Other Languages) to the Museum. The Museum has worked with the University of the 3rd Age (U3A) encouraging and enabling them to bring groups of older learners to its museums.

2. a) Do you think that budget changes have affected participation in the arts, either positively or negatively?
b) Do you think that certain groups of people have been more affected than others?

We are committed to maintaining front-line services as far as is possible, and to delivering the Vision. This is becoming more difficult year on year, with the impact of budget cuts further compounded by the fact that the Museum has had to find considerable savings to reflect the difference between the grant-in-aid received and the cost of annual pay settlements, coupled with significant increases in energy costs. In financial terms, our revenue grant has been cut by 4.28% over the three years to 2013/14, our capital maintenance grant was decreased by 35% in 2011/12 and continues at this reduced level over the same period. Similarly, there has been a considerable reduction in the level of specimen acquisition grant of 50% per annum over the same period. This equates to an overall budget reduction of some 18% over the three years 2011/12 to 2013/14.

We have put a range of measures in place to enable us to minimise the impact of the revenue grant-in-aid cuts on front-line services. However, the Museum will continue to make the case for the restoration of budgets in order to avoid front-line service cuts in the future. The cuts we currently face are having a serious impact on both our estate maintenance work and the Museum's ongoing ability to add to the collections. The Museum has and will continue to review our maintenance programme in order to provide a schedule that will maintain both safe access to its sites and investment in our ICT infrastructure. The cuts to the specimen acquisition grant will hamper the Museum's ability to add to the collections and maintain its level of collections research. It will also severely hamper the Museum's ability to lever in funds on the back of the specimen acquisition grant, something at which it has been particularly successful over the last few years. For example, Amgueddfa Cymru purchased William Dyce: *Welsh Landscape with Two Women Knitting,* 1860, in May 2010, and levered in grants of £166,000 from both the Art Fund and the National Heritage Memorial Fund, £25,000 (including gift aid) from a donor, and an exceptional number of other donations from the patrons and Friends of the Museum and other private individuals were also forthcoming. Another acquisition during 2010/11, was an oil on board by Christopher Wood (1901-1930): *The Rug Seller, Tréboul purchased* for £190,000 with grants levered in of £55,000 (the Derek Williams Trust) and £50,000 (the Art Fund), and a gift of £30,000 (William Gibbs).

In order to increase income, the Museum has a well developed Enterprise Company that operates its catering, retail, corporate hire and car parking facilities. Our commercial activities operated through the Museum sites exceed £4m per annum and return at least £500k each year to support and enhance our activities.

Allied to the cut in specimen grant, the Museum's fundraising department, which targets trusts, lottery funding, corporate sponsorship and individuals, is finding the current economic climate difficult. As the funding they raise is of a capital nature, this is a further challenge to our key capital development projects and specimen acquisitions.

A particular case in point is the cessation of our highly successful partnership scheme with a range of regional galleries – the Celf Cymru Cyfan – Artshare Wales scheme, owing to a lack of funding. This project, as well as facilitating the loan of artefacts and the sharing of expertise from Amgueddfa Cymru to enhance local resources, also generated additional involvement and participation for local audiences, which can otherwise be isolated from such opportunities. Up to now, through ArtShare Wales, the Museum has engaged in partnership with Bodelwyddan Castle, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea, Oriel Davies Gallery, Newtown, Oriel Mostyn Gallery, Llandudno, Ruthin Craft Centre, Locws International, Swansea, Brecknock Museum & Gallery, University of Glamorgan and Oriel y Parc, St Davids.

Impact of free entry

Since 2001, when the Welsh Government enabled Amgueddfa Cymru to make entry free to all of our sites, the Museum's visitor figures have increased significantly. It was introduced to enable everyone to enjoy the nation's rich heritage of arts, sciences and social and industrial history and the policy continues to be a remarkable success.

Back in 2000/01, the last year in which a charge was made for admission, there were 764,599 visits to National Museum sites per year. The introduction of free entry resulted in a substantial increase in visitor figures to 1,430,428 (+ 87.8%) in 2001-02. The momentum has been maintained and has in fact accelerated.

Our recent visitor figures have been excellent. In 2010-11 (the last full financial year), 1,656,340 visits were made to Wales's seven national museums - the highest figure on record, with the exception of 2007-2008 (1.67m), which included our Centenary celebrations.

In the first 11 months of this current financial year, April 2011 – February 2012, we have achieved 1,559,995 visits - compared to 1,534,203 in the same period in 2010-11. This represents an increase of 25,792 (+ 2%) - so we are set to perform very well again in 2011-12.

One particular success story this year has been the opening of the new National Museum of Art at National Museum Cardiff in July 2011. This has proved to be very popular with new audiences – 47,338 more visits (+ 14%) have been made to National Museum Cardiff during April-February 2011-12 as compared to April-February 2010-11.

Amgueddfa Cymru has spent a lot of time and energy on ensuring that its Communications and Marketing is based on the formulation and implementation of effective Audience Development Action Plans at each of the seven individual museums. Striking the right balance between meeting the needs and expectations of existing loyal visitors and attracting new, harder to reach audiences has been critical both in terms of increasing the volume and also, within that total, increasing the number of visitors from the C2, D and E socio-economic categories. In 2000-01 fewer than 250,000 of visits were made by people from these less affluent groups. Over the years, the figure has increased to over 500,000 – one in every three visits.

We are proud of the fact that, year on year, more people in Wales are able to access the national collections. During the economic downturn we have seen a further increase in visitors to our museums illustrating that this is a policy which underpins social well-being at a time when people are most under stress. We know that difficult times are ahead and we have been working to ensure that we, and the Welsh Government, are united in doing everything that we can to ensure that the free entry policy is maintained.

Our collections are the nation's collections, and we believe that everyone has the right to enjoy them, without charge. While free admission is an important policy strand, it is not the only way in which we are working to ensure that 'high quality cultural experiences' are available to all. We are also proud of our education, programming and partnership work across Wales which seeks to engage with people from every corner of Wales enabling them to come into contact with our work in a variety of ways (see responses to question 1 and question 3).

3. Are there gaps in provision for people to participate in arts activities, either demographically or geographically?

Currently, Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales operates seven national museums across Wales: National Museum Cardiff, St Fagans: National History Museum, National Roman Legion Museum, Caerleon, Big Pit: National Coal Museum, Blaenafon, National Wool Museum, Dre-fach Felindre, National Slate Museum, Llanberis and National Waterfront Museum, Swansea. Amgueddfa Cymru believes that the current network of a combination of national museum sites, partnerships, loans of national museum objects and virtual provision does provide an appropriate level of provision across the whole of Wales but we are always looking for new and innovative ways to develop this.

Partnerships

In order to enable wider engagement with our collections by individuals who live at a distance from our sites, we are working closely with CyMAL (Welsh Government) and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in a new and revised version of the highly successful and well-established Cyfoeth Cymru Cyfan – Sharing Treasures scheme which is already attracting a range of varied applications from museums across Wales in its first round which closes in March. Through the Sharing Treasures programme, Amgueddfa Cymru has already worked with: Brecknock Museum & Gallery, Oriel Ynys Mon, Llangefni, Wrexham County Borough Museum, Pontypool Museum, Carmarthenshire County

Museum, Scolton Manor Museum, Haverfordwest, Abergavenny Museum, Llandudno Museum, Chepstow Museum and Rhyl Museum.

In addition to working very closely with partner venues throughout Wales identified through the Sharing Treasure scheme, we have close relationships with Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority's Oriel y Parc, Wrexham Museum through our permanent presence, along with the National Library, in Gallery 2 of their redeveloped Museum, Gwynedd County Council to support the on-going relationship with the slate heritage partnership, Cardiff Story, with whom we have recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding, Snowdonia National Park in their acquisition of Yr Ysgwrn, the home of the late Hedd Wyn, the National Library of Wales on a range of initiatives including collaborative tendering, Communities First partnerships to deliver projects to areas of deprivation and contribute to Welsh Government's anti-poverty agenda for children and young people, Visit Wales in delivering the Welsh Government's Cultural Tourism Action plan and the Historic Environment Group, to name but a few.

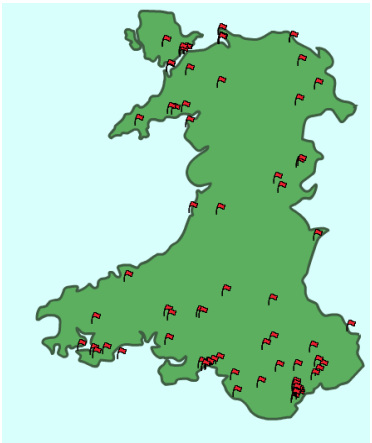
Digital access

Through being a lead partner on the hugely significant 'Peoples Collection Wales' initiative, and through the development of our own Rhagor website as an 'on-line collections resource', and the Amgueddfa Cymru website, we have expanded our audience reach, opened new avenues for developing areas of activity and created new sources of cultural value. In addition, we have a large number of research standard collections online opening up access to some of the 5 million objects in the national collections.

Improvements to physical, sensory and intellectual access

We work in a range of ways to ensure that physical access is not a barrier to our sites and activities, from the provision of audio and BSL tours to Braille and tactile images, touch trails, and large print publications, for example. All of the labels in our galleries are compliant with the Equalities Act (2010) and we have invested heavily in recent years to improve physical access. In particular, 'Changing Places' toilets have been installed at both St Fagans: National History Museum and National Museum Cardiff.

We are constantly creating mechanisms and opportunities for communities who do not have access to the established national museum sites to engage with the national collections. Whilst we work with our partner venues such as those cited above, we have also worked with community venues, festivals and non-building based organisations to ensure the reach of our work extends as far as possible. This has been through structured schemes such as 'On Common Ground' our outreach programme for 14 -24 year olds or through one-off events and projects.



Over and above these partnership projects, Amgueddfa Cymru has an extensive loans programme and the ***map left shows the location of objects from the Museum's collections on loan throughout Wales during 2009/10.***

Barriers to participation
We are constantly looking to expand our partnerships across Wales and a current barrier to working with visual arts venues which are not accredited as a museum, library or archive is the lack of funding for our previously successful ArtShare scheme. This had been very generously funded by a Trust for three years and we are now seeking funding from other organisations, though with limited success to date.

We are also aware that schools are often prevented from taking up cultural activities owing to the cost of transport to national museum sites, even though they are free to enter and believe that a limited subsidy scheme could act to widen the network and make it more accessible.

Amgueddfa Cymru is currently consulting on its Child Poverty Strategy 'Transforming Children's Futures..... by creating pathways for cultural participation' and looks forward to developing a range of new initiatives, building on our existing strengths in this area. Inequality of wealth has affected children more than any other demographic group, with the shocking fact that one in three children in Wales lives in poverty – the highest level in the United Kingdom. While, for most children, life chances in terms of health, wealth, safety and educational attainment have improved over the last generation, the life chances of vulnerable and disadvantaged children are as bad as ever, and in many cases worse. Children should not have to grow up against the odds. Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales has always been about transforming children's futures by enabling them to experience life in the past and present. For many years it has had a commitment to creating pathways through which the children of Wales can participate in cultural activities and enrichment.

Over the past decade, Amgueddfa Cymru has worked with partners supporting children and families in poverty to pilot projects that open up pathways and enable them to engage with culture in a positive and affirming way. Transforming Children's Futures is our strategy for building on these projects and partnerships over the next three years and into the long term. We recognise that working in partnership with organizations 'on the ground' is essential if we are to forge the pathways that enable children, young people and their families living in low-income households to participate in our activities.

Very importantly, we are committed, as part of our Vision, to establishing St Fagans as the National History Museum for Wales, which will transform the way people engage with Welsh history. The aim is to create an innovative, participatory museum that will transform the understanding of Welsh history by telling the stories of the peoples of Wales from the earliest times to the present day at the one site. This new kind of museum, will totally integrate the display and interpretation of the archaeology and history collections utilising thematic galleries, historical buildings and the landscape to create one all-encompassing visitor experience. There will be an increase in the amount of high quality indoor spaces at the site in order to make more of the collections accessible to the public and to move the Museum towards being an all-year attraction and it will revitalise St Fagans so that it remains the cornerstone of the cultural tourism offer in Wales. We are about to submit a Round 2 bid to the HLF project to support this £24.5m project.

4. Are there enough funding sources available other than the Arts Council for Wales? Are alternative funding sources accessible?

The cessation of Amgueddfa Cymru's partnership programme ArtShare has been noted in the responses to questions above. We firmly believe that the investment in this scheme is of vital importance in supporting non-accredited venues across Wales in the provision of high quality cultural services at a local level.

As already mentioned, the Museum's fundraising department, which targets trusts, lottery funding, corporate sponsorship and individuals, is finding the current economic climate difficult. As the funding they raise is of a capital nature, this is a further challenge to our key capital development projects and specimen acquisitions. This is often further compounded by UK funding schemes often either not available to Welsh applicants (e.g. NESTA Digital Research & Development Fund) or unsuitable for application in the Welsh context (e.g. HLF Catalyst funding).

Despite this, we are creative in our approach towards levering in funding and are about to submit a bid to HLF for funding towards the £24.5m redevelopment of St Fagans as Wales' National History Museum (see above). The HLF is an extremely important source of funding for heritage in Wales and has provided invaluable support to Amgueddfa Cymru, in the redevelopment of its industrial museums over the past decade. Recently, we were successfully awarded funding from the Clore Duffield Foundation and the Foyle Foundation for 3 new learning spaces at National Museum Cardiff, including a dedicated art studio. Communities First Outcomes Funding has enabled us to work with young people in Communities First areas on an artistic response to our collections and the Prince's Foundation for Children and the Arts has funded our Start programme engaging children and families from disadvantaged areas who do not have an existing relationship with National Museum Cardiff.

5. What role does the voluntary arts sector play in promoting participation in the arts in Wales and how can this be supported?

The voluntary arts sector is a crucial component and we actively seek ways in which we can work with this sector in support of their work. Some examples of our work in this area include hosting the Everyman theatre at St Fagans during the summer, working with Women and Jazz at National Waterfront Museum Swansea, and working with a range of voluntary arts groups to support the Chinese festival and Diwali celebrations at National Museum Cardiff.

6. Is the strategic relationship between the Welsh Government and the bodies that distribute arts funding effective in increasing participation?

The Welsh Government's Museums Strategy is a major step forward for the museums sector in Wales. Its overall guiding principles, 'Museums for everyone', 'A collection for the nation', and 'Working effectively', align closely with the priority areas of Amgueddfa Cymru's Vision for the future and with our 3-year Vision Map. Amgueddfa Cymru has welcomed the nature of the development on the strategy, and the consultation on it was very constructive, open and transparent. We are committed to supporting the delivery of actions in the Strategy and in supporting local museums as they deliver actions in line with the strategy, both those run by local authorities and by private trusts, across Wales. Amgueddfa Cymru is represented on the Museums Strategy Steering Group which is developing excellent partnership working in delivery of the strategy objectives. In relation to this strategy the strategic relationship between CyMAL (Welsh Government) and the distribution of funding is very effective.

7. All public bodies in Wales will have published a strategic equality plan by April 2012. Do you think that these new public sector equality duties will help to increase participation in the arts among under-represented groups in Wales?

Amgueddfa Cymru will publish its strategic Equality Action Plan by April 2012 and believes that it is an extremely positive step for public bodies to be aligned and developing joint approaches to increase participation. This is complemented by the requirement on public bodies to produce Child Poverty Strategies in accordance with the Children and Families Measure (2010) Wales.