



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru **The National Assembly for Wales**

Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol: Grŵp Gorchwyl a Gorffen ar Gyfranogiad yn y Celfyddydau yng Nghymru **The Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee: Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts in Wales**

Dydd Iau, 29 Mawrth 2012
Thursday, 29 March 2012

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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,
cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

Aelodau'r grŵp gorchwyl a gorffen yn bresennol
Task and finish group members in attendance

Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y grŵp gorchwyl a gorffen) Labour (Task and finish group Chair)
Rhodri Glyn Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Nick Capaldi	Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru The Arts Council of Wales
Peter Gomer	Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru The Welsh Local Government Association
Diane Hebb	Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru The Arts Council of Wales
Dr Chris Llewelyn	Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru The Welsh Local Government Association

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Hannah Johnson	Ymchwilydd Researcher
Marc Wyn Jones	Clerc Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 1.28 p.m.
The meeting began at 1.28 p.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good afternoon. We are now convened as the task and finish group looking at participation in the arts. I take it that we have all switched off our mobile phones. We can operate bilingually and interpretation is available on the headsets. Channel 0 provides the floor language and interpretation from Welsh to English is available on channel 1. We are not expecting the fire alarm to operate, so if it does, we will take our instructions from the ushers, but the assembly point is by the Pierhead building.

1.29 p.m.

Ymchwiliad i Gyfranogiad yn y Celfyddydau: Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru

Inquiry into Participation in the Arts: the Welsh Local Government Association

[2] **Ann Jones:** We are delighted to have the Welsh Local Government Association with us. Thank you for your paper. Will you introduce yourselves for the record, and then we can go straight to questions, because we have only half an hour?

[3] **Dr Llewelyn:** I am Chris Llewelyn, the director of lifelong learning at the WLGA.

[4] **Mr Gomer:** I am Peter Gomer, the interim policy officer for leisure, culture and heritage.

[5] **Ann Jones:** Thank you very much. I will start with the first question. How will budget reductions in local authorities affect the arts sector in the long term?

1.30 p.m.

[6] **Mr Gomer:** There will obviously be an impact. There has been an impact for some time in terms of budget reductions, because you will be aware that the arts are a discretionary service. Over the last couple of years, because of the focus on mainstream education and social services, the arts have probably taken a higher reduction in budgets than the reductions in the settlements. Local authorities have been innovative in trying to address some of those issues, but, without a doubt, there has been a loss of personnel in local authorities, which will have an effect on the ground. However, the information to date is that participation has not reduced in the arts in the areas. The information up to last year, which is the only reliable information there is, was that there was a year-on-year growth in arts participation. It will be interesting to see the impact in 2012, because some of the issues around there being a general recession and people's ability to pay, particularly due to travel costs, may well have a bigger impact than it has had over the last couple of years. So, it is inevitable that it will have an effect, but at the moment it is difficult to pinpoint any quantitative data around it.

[7] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Cawsom dystiolaeth a oedd yn awgrymu, fel rydych wedi dweud, fod y lefel o ymwneud â'r celfyddydau yn cynyddu, os rhywbeth, ar hyn o bryd. Fodd bynnag, yr ofn oedd y byddai'r elfennau mwyaf bregus o fewn y celfyddydau yn dioddef oherwydd y toriadau, lle'r oedd pawb sy'n ymwneud â phrif ffrwd y celfyddydau a diwylliant yn gallu dygymod â'r sefyllfa, ond y byddai'r toriadau yn effeithio ar yr elfennau mwyaf bregus hynny—grwpiau lleiafrifoedd ethnig a grwpiau sy'n gweithio gyda'r anabl, er enghraifft. A ydych yn cytuno â hynny?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: We had evidence that suggested, as you said, that the level of involvement in the arts, if anything, is increasing at the moment. However, the concern was that the most vulnerable elements within the arts would suffer due to the cuts, and that those involved in mainstream arts and culture would be able to cope with the situation, but that the cuts would impact on the most vulnerable elements, such as ethnic minority groups and groups working with disabled people, for example. Do you agree with that?

[8] **Mr Gomer:** The evidence from previous years—and the only real evidence that we have comes from the annual information from the Arts Council of Wales and the five-yearly information that it produces, most of which it collects through its surveys—is that there has not been a disproportionate impact on arts participation over the last few years. That is not to say that there is no such impact at the moment, because, as I have said, it is the results of the 2012 survey that will give us our most up to date information. Local authorities have not collated all of their data for participation as yet. Most of their participation data will be on audiences as opposed to data on general participation. However, the programmes that local authorities try to plan, along with working very closely with the arts council, means that vulnerable groups tend to be targeted more in terms of programmes, because historically there was seen to be a need to go to those groups and work with them. Interestingly, the information and the evidence from the arts council shows that black and minority ethnic groups, Welsh speakers and others in smaller communities often engage more in the arts as a proportion. However, the impact on household budgets, perhaps more than the cuts, may be the determining factor for those in deprived communities.

[9] The other issue is that local authorities work closely with their Communities First schemes and the new Families First schemes, and they are always conscious through those budgets to try to look at whether there is sufficient provision or not in order to target some of that provision. I cannot give you evidence on that today for some authorities, but it may be possible to go back to those authorities to ask ‘Have you targeted any additional provision?’. That is not something that we have done to date. However, there is no evidence at the moment that it is having a disproportionate effect.

[10] **Dr Llewelyn:** It is one of these issues that we could look into further. As Peter says, there is a greater resilience in this sector generally, especially with regard to those specific target areas. Prior to the current financial crisis, there was always awareness within culture and leisure, within the heritage portfolio, that when things are difficult, they are the first to be hit. So, there is a tradition there of planning ahead and building in that greater resilience, because, naturally, authorities will focus on their statutory services—education, social services, and so on. However, when there is currently so much focus on education, with authorities increasing their spending on education in particular, coupled with the straightened financial climate, it is inevitable that there will be pressure elsewhere. However, I suspect that more than any other sector, this sector has that built-in resilience across the board.

[11] **Ann Jones:** We have received evidence that shows a slight increase in participation levels in 2011. However, in mid and west Wales—I apologise for talking about Joyce’s patch here—the level of participation dropped significantly from 36% to 29%. What are local authorities going to do to stop that decline and to put levels back up to the norm?

[12] **Mr Gomer:** Having read the evidence, it is difficult to pinpoint why that drop happened. As I touched on before, there are issues with transport and rurality. Even the commercial sector has talked about the drop in the amount of fuel that people are purchasing because it is so expensive. People are taking decisions not to travel as much because they need to make those savings. One thing that local authorities are doing, both historically and as a consequence of the Simpson compact, is working together better to look at good practice, benchmarking and programmes. One thing that I mention in my document is Arts Connect, which is based in the Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and Vale of Glamorgan area. Where they have lost capacity in relation to specialisms and so on, particularly when working out in the community, that scheme is looking to work across boundaries to help to target some of that work and give advice and guidance to make it more sustainable. I have to report back to another committee shortly on this issue.

[13] Local authorities are grouping together as regions. One region that is coming together is mid Wales and the west, which face similar issues around rurality and so on. Officials in that region are discussing at a senior level what they can do to ensure that there is a good level of service expertise, sharing good practice and using benchmarking and outcomes to drive what they do in their own authorities. Local authorities are already trying to do a lot of work, and some of the information that you gather will be helpful to those groups in prioritising some of the areas that they need to look at. On Monday, we talked about that baseline and where we should be with regard to participation, and that is one of the priority areas to look at. I cannot give you an example of a specific programme on the ground, but local authority planning is already coming together to try to plan cross-boundary services.

[14] **Dr Llewelyn:** A lot of development in this regard is set out in the Simpson compact. Much of the compact is focused on the main statutory services, but there is a considerable amount of activity set out in relation to the heritage portfolio, along with a lot of developmental work. Projects like Arts Connect have been in existence for some time, again in anticipation of the current circumstances but also due to the constant pressure on this sector. Although one gets the impression that there were no tangible outcomes, there is a lot

going on at the moment.

[15] **Ann Jones:** You mentioned the statutory services that local authorities are required to provide. Should the arts be included as something that must be provided rather than provided at the authorities' discretion?

[16] **Dr Llewelyn:** It is a contentious point. There has been considerable work in this area. The Stephens report looked at it most recently. Whenever it has been looked at in detail, opinion seems to be divided. The concern is that defining the statutory responsibility would be problematic at the very least—what exactly would it entail? Once a responsibility is recognised, there is the issue of how it might be funded. You would not want to have a minimum standard that resulted in providers reducing existing provision.

[17] **Ann Jones:** That never happened. That was always the argument about ring-fencing and hypothecation in local government in general, but you could never prove that because where people found a need, they would invest. That is the issue, is it not? That is a red herring. People say that if we had a minimum standard, people who had been doing great things would stop doing them, but that does not really stand up to scrutiny, does it?

[18] **Dr Llewelyn:** The various reviews that have looked into this have not come to a clear conclusion. As far as the WLGA's formal position goes, the association has always been prepared to engage in further discussion, to examine it and to see what is possible. So, it is certainly not the case that local government has refused to look at this. There is clearly a debate to be had, but it is a problematic issue.

[19] **Mr Gomer:** To respond on the collaboration agenda, okay, there is not statutory provision, but we recognise that provision in some authorities is greater than it is in others. There may have been a local issue in the past with one authority deciding that it is important or more important to it. However, one of the issues that chief leisure officers are looking at with regard to arts and leisure is developing a baseline, but, rather than everyone working to the lowest level, they would work to best practice. On the collaboration agenda, there is an issue to do with how we can get everyone doing their very best and following good practice, raising the bar. So, although it is not statutory provision, they themselves are recognising that they need to look at these issues, to ensure that it is sustainable and to raise the bar and hit all these targets to do with whether people are unable to take part. In the short term, rather than the long term—because it will take some time to get to a statutory position—at least we have something that we are putting in place that should help if not to improve the position, to prevent it deteriorating any further.

[20] **Joyce Watson:** I am going to talk about relationships—not mine, but yours with the arts council. How effective is the relationship between the Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales?

[21] **Mr Gomer:** It is an improving relationship—not that it was that bad before. That is certainly my experience over the past year, from the arts strategy board and the arts council's willingness to come out to meet chief leisure officers and officers in the field. It is heavily engaged with us in looking at regional collaboration at the moment, right through from the chief executive to regional officers. In fact, there was a paper that came to the arts strategy board, which I wrote and it was party to, and that encouraged greater regional working. That is in the sense of its being able to have a dialogue with local authority individuals on specific issues and, on a regional basis, to be able to discuss those issues that affect a region rather than just one authority. The relationship is ever improving, but it does not come from a poor base in the past. People are seeing that there is more and more need to be totally joined up—so that is our Welsh Government officer colleagues, the arts council and local authorities. We now regularly sit in a room together and have discussions about how we can work together to

improve.

[22] **Joyce Watson:** Good. So, should the Welsh Government consult the arts organisations during the formulation of its annual remit letter to the Arts Council of Wales?

[23] **Mr Gomer:** That is a very good question. Consulting with those groups is very much the role of the arts council and local authorities. I suppose that the dilemma with consulting all arts groups is that you may get skewed away from real strategic planning. Obviously, consultation is important, but the issue is how it takes place. For example, the consultation on play that the Government is doing now is very much directed through local government and all. That is the very start of that process. Whether that has to continue in future is questionable, but my experience is that the current remit methodology and the current review are very sound and established on sound principles. The results speak for themselves when you look at the evidence coming through of participation increasing and the improvement of the groups as part of the review.

1.45 p.m.

[24] **Dr Llewelyn:** In this sector and other sectors, there is recognition that the role of the Government is to set the strategy nationally and it is then interpreted and delivered locally. It seems to me that there is consensus on the current balance between setting the strategy nationally and then allowing for local delivery. On the relationship between local government and the arts council but also relationships more generally, we referred earlier to the Stephens review, and things have moved on since that reported. Some of the issues highlighted in that report and lessons learned elsewhere have been picked up.

[25] **Joyce Watson:** Do you think that membership of the arts strategy board is broad enough?

[26] **Mr Gomer:** The arts strategy board itself has recently been discussing whether it needs a wider remit and representation, so it is looking at that. It is difficult—and I am new to this, so I do not whether Chris wants to comment on that—but I know that the board is examining its role and the invited attendees.

[27] **Dr Llewelyn:** When the board was set up, as I recall, the intention was to create a board that could be effective and have some impact. There are advantages to expanding its membership, because it would mean that more stakeholders are involved, giving them an opportunity to voice their views and concerns and so on. The difficulty with extending the membership of any such board too far is that it becomes a forum for the presentation of particular views and for posturing, if you like. It then diminishes the impact and effectiveness of the board. There is a balance to be struck somewhere between creating a board that is representative but that has impact, and a body that is fully representative but that is then so cumbersome that it cannot deliver on any of the discussion that takes place. It is clearly a subjective issue, but there is a balance to be struck there.

[28] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yn eich tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig, rydych yn cyfeirio mewn un man at weithdai addysgol y mae cwmni Hijinx yn eu darparu ar eich cyfer, neu'n cydweithio â chi arnynt. A wyf yn iawn i ddweud hynny?
Rhodri Glyn Thomas: In your written evidence, you refer in one place to educational workshops that Hijinx provides for you, or co-operates with you on. Am I right in saying that?

[29] **Mr Gomer:** I believe that that is part of the arts council's evidence.

[30] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Dof i'n ôl at **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I will come back to

hynny gyda chyngor y celfyddydau, felly. Hoffwn ofyn cwestiwn cyffredinol i chi am Hijinx, sy'n gwmni sy'n arbenigo mewn gwneud gwaith gyda phlant, pobl ifanc ac oedolion sydd ag anableddau. A ydych yn credu bod gwerth mewn cwmni felly, sy'n mynd â pherfformiadau ledled Cymru? Un o ganlyniadau'r toriadau fydd cyfyngu gweithgareddau Hijinx i Gaerdydd, i raddau helaeth.

that with the arts council, in that case. I would like to ask you a general question about Hijinx, which is a company that specialises in working with children, young people and adults who have disabilities. Do you believe that there is value in such a company, which takes performances out all across Wales? One outcome of the cuts will be to limit Hijinx's activities to the Cardiff area, to a great extent.

[31] **Mr Gomer:** That is difficult for me to answer. Even though I know of Hijinx's reputation and the work that it has done, it is difficult to comment on its new role and what it is doing. What I do know is that, through Hijinx and other arts organisation, whether within a local authority context or the voluntary sector, there is an enormous amount of good work going on pan-Wales with people who have disabilities. One example that I am familiar with is digital storytelling and the learning through that, with engagement in social and cultural activities. That tends to be a pan-age-group activity but one that is focusing on people who have disabilities. It is difficult for me to give an informed answer on one company's work when I know what is going on only generically and not specifically.

[32] **Dr Llewelyn:** Hoffwn ategu hynny. Mae'r cwestiwn a'r egwyddorion a amlinellwyd gan Peter yn ddilys, ond nid wyf yn meddwl ei fod yn addas inni fel cymdeithas gynnig sylwadau naill ai am waith cwmni unigol neu am y penderfyniad a ddylid ei ariannu. Fodd bynnag, fel roeddwn yn sôn, mae egwyddorion dilys i'r cwestiwn.

Dr Llewelyn: I would support that. The question and the principles outlined by Peter are valid, but I do not think that it is appropriate for us as an association to comment either on the work of an individual company or on the decision of whether to fund it. However, as I mentioned, there are valid principles to that question.

[33] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Ar ryw ystyr, roedd yn gwestiwn annheg i'w ofyn ichi, ond gan mai cwmni Hijinx gyflwynodd y ddeiseb wreiddiol i'r Pwyllgor Deisebau sydd wedi esgor ar sefydlu'r grŵp hwn, roeddwn yn awyddus i'w ofyn.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: To some extent, it was an unfair question to ask you, but as it was Hijinx that submitted the original petition to the Petitions Committee that has given rise to the establishment of this group, I was keen to ask it.

[34] Hoffwn ofyn cwestiwn cyffredinol i chi am rôl llywodraeth leol o fewn y celfyddydau. A ydych yn credu bod gan lywodraeth leol gyfrifoldeb i roi cymorth i sefydliadau celfyddydol mewn materion ariannol neu gyllid? A yw hynny'n rhan o gyfrifoldeb llywodraeth leol?

I want to ask you a general question about the role of local government within the arts. Do you think that local government has a responsibility to give arts organisations support on funding or finance issues? Is that part of local government's responsibility?

[35] **Mr Gomer:** It is very much a role that it takes on board through arts development officers or officers in general. Local authorities, thankfully, tend not to work in silos or in isolation, so they are always there to talk with any groups within their community, whether in the arts sector, the third sector—through the Wales Council for Voluntary Action—or other sectors. Although there may be some specific issues for arts organisations that arts council staff and others can help with, local authorities can help more generally, as they will often have a Business Connect-type role within their community. So, if an arts organisation needs some advice and guidance on business planning or on financial or legal matters, often, that can come from a totally different source. It is about having staff who know what route to take—and that is particularly relevant to Communities First areas, which you asked about

earlier. They do have that type of network set up to be supportive of each other. So, it is not necessarily just the arts sector that will provide that information; it can quite often come from people from a wide background who know about local authority grants, local trust grants or other avenues of funding such as the lottery. There will be staff who know each other and who work through that network and knowledge base to help organisations to go in other directions.

[36] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** A oes mwy y gallai llywodraeth leol a Llywodraeth Cymru ei wneud i geisio sicrhau bod arian o'r sector preifat yn dod i mewn i noddi'r celfyddydau? **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Is there more that local government and the Welsh Government could do to try to ensure that private sector money comes in to sponsor the arts?

[37] **Mr Gomer:** That is a very good question. The present trend is that commerce is having a difficult time but, where you have excellence, you will often gain good sponsorship. I may be diverging here but, as an example, Disability Sport Wales is recognised as having a good product and as developing—and obviously there is the Paralympics—and it has secured substantial commercial investment, although I am not sure whether that is public knowledge yet. There are also arts groups that do simple things like get a local company to sponsor the publication of the programme for a show. That might be through personal contacts, but more often than not, it is because of what the company can get out of it and the excellence of the product that it is getting. That is one of the drivers in the arts to improvement, excellence and participation. The more we get of that, one would like to think the more sponsorship will be readily available, even in difficult times. That is the evidence at the moment. If you want sponsorship, you have to ensure that you are giving your clients something that they want to be associated with.

[38] **Dr Llewelyn:** Un peth sy'n nodweddiadol o'r cyfnod hwn yw bod awdurdodau lleol a'r cyrff cyhoeddus i gyd yn gorfod bod yn fwy creadigol wrth ddarparu gwasanaethau. Mae pwysau arnynt i gyd, ac maent yn gwerthfawrogi'r rhesymeg am hynny, i weithio mewn partneriaeth, gweithio gyda'u rhanddeiliaid ac edrych am bob math o ffynonellau i ariannu darpariaeth a gwasanaethau, boed yn arian refeniw neu'n arian cyfalaf. Dyma'r oes sydd ohoni a dyma'r her rydym i gyd yn ei hwynebu. Felly, byddwn yn tybio ei fod yn gwbl addas i awdurdodau lleol ystyried pob posibilrwydd. Mae bob amser yn bosibl i bob corff wneud mwy o ran y ffordd maent yn darparu gwasanaethau, ansawdd y gwasanaethau hynny ac yn y blaen. Felly, mae'r her honno yn un cyson. Trwy weithgareddau fel compact Simpson a'r holl gydweithio arall sy'n digwydd, mae'r disgwyliad bydd ffynonellau eraill yn cael eu darganfod yn rhywbeth sy'n dod yn fwyfwy amlwg. **Dr Llewelyn:** One thing that characterises this particular period of time is that all local authorities and public bodies have to be more creative in the way in which they deliver services. There is pressure on them all, and they appreciate the rationale for that, to work in partnership, to collaborate with their stakeholders and to consider all manner of different sources to fund provision and services, be that revenue funding or capital funding. That is just how it goes at the moment, and that is the challenge that faces us all. So, I would think that it would be entirely appropriate for local authorities to consider every possibility. It is always possible for every organisation with regard to the way in which they provide services, the quality of those services and so on. Therefore, that is a constant challenge. Through activities such as the Simpson compact and all the other collaboration that takes place, the expectation that other sources will be found is becoming increasingly apparent.

[39] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yn y cyd-destun presennol, mae gwasgfa ariannol ar bawb, gan gynnwys llywodraeth leol, wrth gwrs. A ydych yn rhagweld y bydd y sector **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** In the current context, there is financial pressure on everyone, including local government, of course. Do you foresee that the voluntary arts

celfyddydau gwirfoddol yn edrych fwyfwy sector will look increasingly to local
 tuag at lywodraeth leol am gefnogaeth, government for support, sustenance and
 cynhaliaeth ac arweiniad? leadership?

[40] **Mr Gomer:** There are different issues there. Most authorities have a thriving community arts sector. Some are very independent. Our male voice choirs, operatic societies, drama groups, choral groups and so on can be very self-sufficient, but every so often, they might hit a barrier or a snag that they need to overcome. At the moment, there are some issues in relation to the hiring of premises and about the way in which we make that affordable. For example, a choir may put on a concert for a local charity, but they might want the local authority to give the facility free of charge—it brings to mind the old expression that charity starts at home. We may sometimes have to say to the choir that they need to agree what they are doing because it is not always possible for the local authority to give the facility free of charge, because if you set a precedent like that, suddenly everyone wants it free of charge. So, it is a matter of working with the groups.

[41] Local authorities have a very strong reputation, whether it is with a silver band or a choir or whatever, for sitting down with those groups. It can sometimes even be as simple as suspending the payment of business rates for a short period of time to get them over a hurdle, in the same way that it might do so for a sporting group. So, local authorities find every way possible to ensure the sustainability of groups, but it is about long-term sustainability. Sometimes, you can put something in place to get over a hurdle, but not give a constant feed, because that group may then become too reliant on that and some key individuals sometimes leave.

[42] It is also important that community-based arts groups have that independence—that they manage themselves and move on. Sometimes, a little bit of guidance, advice or help can make the difference. That is where local authorities have been, and probably will continue to be, responsive in taking that forward. That is probably the best answer that I can give to that question. The role has always been there. The difficult question is how much more they can do with a diminishing resource. So, that planning and collaboration will be all-important in the future.

[43] **Joyce Watson:** Will the public sector equality duty help to address gaps in arts provision by taking a whole-system approach, which takes into account transport, poverty and other barriers to participation?

[44] **Mr Gomer:** That is a very interesting question. One of the questions being considered at the moment is: how can we all work better together to ensure that the equalities agenda is addressed and where is there good practice? There is certainly a lot of good practice in Wales that demonstrates that local authorities and others take into account the impact of any decisions taken on minority groups. They take into account how they should target resources, how to engage certain communities and increase participation; sport is becoming much more community based, in the same way as the arts, because it has been recognised that it is only at the community level that you can increase participation, not generally at a higher level. Certainly the evidence out there demonstrates that authorities have not waited for this new duty, but that, prior to the Equality Act 2010 and since then, they have taken seriously their responsibility in relation to meeting equality needs across the board.

2.00 p.m.

[45] There is strong evidence out there of work being done on a practical basis, from converting premises, which often can be hundreds of years old and difficult to convert for access for people with disabilities, right through to targeting ethnic minorities, certainly in disadvantaged areas, through additional work that may involve Communities First

programmes, right down to things like the Night Out scheme, where we try to take the schemes into the local community and the village hall with the support of the arts council and the local authority. Maybe the new duty will focus minds even more, but certainly the evidence is that it is happening. There may be more rigour in it in terms of its examination, but certainly it is something that has always been there on the ground.

[46] **Ann Jones:** Thank you both very much for your evidence today. We have just managed to fit that in, running one minute over time. You will get a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy; you know that, because you attend committees quite regularly. Thank you for your participation. I appreciate it.

2.01 p.m.

Ymchwiliad i Gyfranogiad yn y Celfyddydau: Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru Inquiry into Participation in the Arts: Arts Council of Wales

[47] **Ann Jones:** We move on now to take evidence from the Arts Council of Wales. We are being joined at the table by Nick Capaldi, who is the chief executive of the Arts Council of Wales, and Diane Hebb, who is the director of engagement and participation. You are both very welcome. I thank you for your paper, and for coming to give evidence to us this afternoon. This is a short inquiry, and this will be the last evidence session, so we will soon be deliberating on the evidence received.

[48] I will start with the first question. What will be the long-term effect of the overall reductions in the Welsh Government budget, including the education budget, transport budget, and local authority budget, which all affect your sector here in Wales?

[49] **Mr Capaldi:** It is difficult to give a definitive answer to that, because one of the characteristics that we have seen over many years in the arts is that they are incredibly resilient, and they have imaginative, entrepreneurial solutions to combat difficulties in terms of funding and other pressures. However, if you keep reducing the funding, and if that is a dual reduction—by that I mean reductions both at a national level, from the Welsh Government through to the arts council and the arts, and at a local level, through local authorities—then there will come a point when there will be a real danger that activity will lessen. One of the things that we have seen over the years—and this is going back a few years now—is that, when there has been additional investment from the Welsh Government into the arts, we have seen significant increases in attendance and participation. Therefore, one logically has to consider that, if there are sustained reductions, the danger is that there could be a reduction in attendance and participation. We are not seeing that at the moment, but we are about to enter a very difficult period economically.

[50] **Ann Jones:** You say in your paper that you are working in a more focused way with umbrella bodies. How important are those umbrella bodies in ensuring that specific groups of people are not affected disproportionately by any budget cut?

[51] **Mr Capaldi:** What umbrella bodies give us is a focus on particular constituencies, and what we have been doing over the past 12 months to two years is redefining our relationship with umbrella bodies, and focusing on specific things that we would like them to do on our behalf. For example, we have entered into a contract with Voluntary Arts Wales to roll out its Running Your Group programme, which provides practical assistance and help to voluntary organisations. With Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales, it is about artist training. With Audiences Wales, we have invested funding in improving its box-office data for venues across the performing arts. So, what we are trying to do at a time of decreasing resources is to be very strategic in terms of focusing on activity that we think will make a difference.

[52] **Joyce Watson:** Your paper says that there is a drop in participation levels in Mid and West Wales. I would like to know what you think the reasons for that are and what you are doing to tackle it.

[53] **Mr Capaldi:** It is difficult to come up with hard and fast reasons because so many different bodies invest in participatory activity. Certainly, if you look at the amount of money we spend in Powys per head of population, it is one of the highest. So, I do not think that it is necessarily to do with levels of funding. In rural areas, there can be particular problems to do with transport. Increasingly, we are seeing transport, or the lack of it, proving to be a very real and immediate barrier to attendance and participation. However, there are organisations we work with that we are encouraging to reach out further. We have our very successful and popular Night Out scheme, which places work in local community settings. That provides us with an opportunity to target activity at areas that appear to be declining.

[54] **Joyce Watson:** I am going to move on to the issue of relationships. Is the current relationship between the Arts Council of Wales and the Welsh Government effective? If you think that it could be more effective, I would like to hear your suggestions of ways to improve it.

[55] **Mr Capaldi:** That is an interesting question. It is a challenging relationship in that the context for our work is the annual remit letter, and the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage goes to some lengths, as have previous Ministers, to set out the Government's expectations of us. Those provide the focus for the meetings that my chair and I have with the Minister for heritage on a regular basis. We also have formal quarterly monitoring meetings with officials of the Welsh Government, who test us on our performance with regard to meeting the targets that we have set. Indeed, officials attend all council meetings. Therefore, although I would say that we have a good collaborative and positive working relationship with the heritage department, it is a testing one.

[56] To answer your second question on whether things could be better, one of the areas where we feel that we would like to see more is around what is familiarly called 'joined-up Government', and the work that the arts can contribute to a whole host of other areas, from education, to health, to economic development. The arts strategy board is intended to provide a vehicle for the arts council to liaise with Government as a whole, but, if you are asking me for my honest opinion on how effective that is, I would say that it is mixed and that we do not have quite as regular a relationship with other departments as we do with heritage.

[57] **Joyce Watson:** You have answered a few of my further questions, so I am not going to go through them. Should the Welsh Government consult arts organisations when it formulates the annual remit letter?

[58] **Mr Capaldi:** It is difficult to think how, practically, it might do that. There are hundreds of organisations and individual artists that we have a relationship with, but there are many others we do not have a relationship with. Ultimately, this is a matter for the heritage department, but we are always very interested to hear what it is the Government thinks we should be doing, and we are always very happy to respond to efforts to ensure that the remit letter is as useful and practical as possible.

[59] **Joyce Watson:** I think that you have answered most of the other questions. You mentioned the arts strategy board. Is it broad enough? That is the only part of the question I would still like an answer to.

[60] **Mr Capaldi:** No, it is not. Certainly, my interpretation of the original Stephens inquiry, which came up with the proposal for the arts strategy board, was that it should

provide a more effective vehicle for liaison, co-operation and consultation between the Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales. Therefore, if we are to reflect the full range of the Welsh Government's concerns, I would suggest that the membership of the arts strategy board needs to extend beyond the heritage department, but by all means be chaired by the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage. I think that we would just find it more efficient and more effective if more Government departments were linked in.

[61] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yn y dystiolaeth rydym wedi ei derbyn, cyfeiriwyd at swyddog penodedig yng y cyngor celfyddydau a oedd yn ymwneud â chynnig cyngor cyllidol i sefydliadau celfyddydol. A yw'r swydd honno'n bodoli? A oes swyddog neu swyddogion wedi eu penodi i wneud y gwaith hwnnw?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: In the evidence that we have received, reference has been made to a specific officer in the arts council who engaged in offering financial advice to arts organisations. Does that position exist? Have any officials been appointed to undertake that work?

[62] **Mr Capaldi:** All of our officers advise arts organisations on funding and on the raising of funds. Diane will be able to clarify or correct me if I get it wrong, but I think that it was in 1997 that we appointed someone to a part-time post to look specifically at targeting and raising funds from Europe. I think that that post was successful in raising some £9 million, which was invested in Reach the Heights.

[63] **Ms Hebb:** It was, but it was in 2007. That post was developed specifically to secure funding from the European social fund.

[64] **Mr Capaldi:** From time to time, arts organisations have suggested to us that we should have a sponsorship or fundraising officer, particularly to help smaller organisations that perhaps do not have a large staff to engage in fundraising. There are some practical problems with that, the first of which is that we would be reluctant to duplicate an activity that already exists and is already funded by the Welsh Government, namely Arts & Business Cymru. I think that you have had written evidence from Arts & Business Cymru. Through the work that it does, the private sector invests somewhere in the region of £18 million in the arts in Wales, which is very significant.

[65] The second issue is that if business sponsors and other sponsors want to get involved in supporting the arts, they like and enjoy the authentic, direct connection to a project that they believe in and want to support. They are very reluctant to channel support or otherwise go through what they see as public agencies or bodies such as the arts council.

[66] **Ms Hebb:** I would just like to add that we utilised some capacity with that post to investigate the possibility of having a much more strategic funding relationship with organisations such as the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Carnegie UK Trust and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Through discussions and investigations, it was felt, as Nick has said, that it was much more productive to develop those kinds of relationships closer to the ground with arts organisations directly rather than through us.

[67] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch am hynny; rwy'n credu ei fod yn ein galluogi i weld y ffordd y mae'r cyngor celfyddydau'n gweithredu yn y maes hwnnw. Ym maes cynnig cyngor a chyfarwyddyd i bobl am gyllid, a oes cyfrifoldeb gan y cyngor celfyddydau i sefydliadau nad ydynt yn cael eu hariannu'n uniongyrchol gennych?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Thank you for that; I think that it enables us to see how the arts council operates in that area. With regard to offering advice and direction to people about funding, does the arts council have any responsibility to organisations that are not directly funded by you?

2.15 p.m.

[68] **Mr Capaldi:** Yes, absolutely. This is one of the most important aspects of our work. We see ourselves very much as a public service that should be available and accessible to everyone in Wales, whether they are funded by the arts council or not. In particular, during the difficult times that we are facing, ensuring that we are providing good quality and practical advice and information is going to be more and not less important. So, through an internal reorganisation of staff, we are creating a new information service. We are going to invest more time and energy in producing better information. We are going to start running information and advisory surgeries across Wales. We will try to ensure that we are providing more advisory and information services at a local level, for people who perhaps cannot travel to our regional offices across Wales. So, we are trying to turn ourselves inside out as an organisation. Yes, we are a national body, but we believe that our work is delivered at a very local level.

[69] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr iawn. O ran y modd y mae'r cyngor celfyddydau'n cyllido sefydliadau, mae'r dystiolaeth sydd wedi dod i law yn cynnwys trafodaeth helaeth ynghylch yr arian sydd wedi'i dargedu, ynghyd ag arian cyffredinol ar gyfer y celfyddydau. A allwch chi esbonio pam, ar adegau, y mae'r arian hwnnw wedi'i dargedu ar gyfer math arbennig o weithgaredd, yn hytrach na chael ei drin yn gyllid neu adnodd cyffredinol ar gyfer y celfyddydau? Hefyd, yn eich barn chi, pa mor effeithiol yw hynny?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Thank you very much. In terms of the way in which the arts council funds organisations, the evidence that we have received includes an extensive discussion regarding targeted funding, as well as general funding for the arts. Could you explain why, on occasion, that money is targeted at certain activities, rather than being treated as general funding or a general resource for the arts? Also, in your view, how effective is that?

[70] **Mr Capaldi:** I am struggling to think of any general funding that we give that is not specifically targeted towards a purpose. We have a very clear plan and very clear priorities. Whether you are a revenue-funded organisation that receives an annual grant, or a lottery-funded organisation or individual receiving funding for specific purposes, there are very clear expectations and targets. There is no general money that I can think of that does not have a funding purpose and targets and expectations attached to it.

[71] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I accept what you are saying about the fact that there are always expectations attached to your investment in the arts. However, I think that some of the money is specifically targeted and the criteria are quite tight. Sometimes, organisations feel that they lose out because they are just outside those criteria, and they would like greater flexibility. They accept that there would be expectations. Obviously, you would not be doling out money and saying, 'Carry on.' However, they feel that if there was greater flexibility, it would allow them to function more effectively.

[72] **Mr Capaldi:** I think that I can see the point that you are making. It is the case that we have conversations with artists and arts organisations who feel that our funding priorities are, on occasion, drawn very tightly and very specifically and they would like greater freedom. It is a very difficult balance to strike. As set out in our remit letter, at the end of the day, the Welsh Government has expectations of us to achieve specific things. Therefore, the most efficient way for us to fulfil them is for us, in turn, to be very specific about the funds that we allocate. However, we have experienced situations where arts organisations and individuals, particularly in some of the harder to reach areas, have said to us: 'Look, we cannot even begin to find our way in. This is an impenetrable set of barriers.' So, one of the things that we introduced this year was a programme called Creative Steps. I will ask Diane to talk a bit about that. It was specifically intended to address individuals and organisations that had

previously faced barriers to receiving our support.

[73] **Ms Hebb:** Yes, our targeted development programmes are usually targeted at areas, groups, communities, or communities of artists that cannot access the more general funding, such as schemes funding, or are not part of our revenue portfolio. We do deliver targeted programmes of activity, and Creative Steps is an example of that. It is there to reach artists who, for many different reasons, have experienced some kind of barrier to accessing our funding, or even having a working relationship with us. So, Creative Steps looks to target artists who might, for example, come under the protected characteristics in the new Equality Act 2010. It is a very different way of working. It is about identifying those people, inviting them to come and have conversations with us, and then looking at the work that they have been doing, what their development needs might be, what kind of projects they might wish to develop, and working much more closely with them to look at what kind of funding might be appropriate.

[74] We have been awarding funding—£120,000 in this first phase—to those artists, and it is an interesting learning process for us to have the conversations with them and find out why they have not felt able to come to talk to us before. Through this process, we will hopefully learn how to look at and review our broader schemes, and develop them so that we remove those barriers in future. It is a really important programme for us. Those are the kind of areas that we might be targeting. It is usually because there are communities of artists or communities in geographical areas that are not accessing arts activities or arts funding through other means.

[75] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** In terms of the way in which you are funded by the Welsh Government, if there was greater flexibility there, would that make your work of funding arts organisations in Wales easier and more effective?

[76] **Mr Capaldi:** Part of me says ‘yes, please’, but I believe that there is a particular and important contract, for want of a better word, between an arm’s-length body and a publicly elected, democratic body, which the Welsh Government is. It is still possible for independent decision-making bodies such as the arts council to exercise judgment within a framework of national policy that is defined by the Welsh Government. However, it is very important that the public and taxpayers in Wales can see a direct connection between Welsh Government funding and their expectations of the public bodies that it supports. While the pragmatic side of me says, ‘yes, please, as much flexibility as possible’, the more democratic and accountable side of me says, ‘no, it is important that there are necessary and proper lines of accountability’.

[77] There is one area of flexibility that would make an enormous difference to our work, although I suspect that, because of UK Government Treasury rules, it would difficult to achieve, and that is the ability to use Government funding over more than one year, and to plan on a three to five-year basis. The Welsh Government does what it can to give information and indications of support for more than one year, but it is only in the few months before the beginning of each financial year that we know on a confirmed basis what our funding will be. Some of our larger organisations in particular, such as National Theatre Wales, are making contracts for and talking about projects five, six or seven years hence, and it is very difficult for them to plan on that basis.

[78] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** One example that was given to me was of trying to organise a national event and having to work within a financial year. Although you allow up to three years of preparation, you are talking about the same sum of money, whether it is over three years or a year, because of the constraints on you as an organisation.

[79] This is the last question from me, because I have taken up too much time, I am sorry,

Chair.

[80] **Ann Jones:** That is all right.

[81] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** On private sector funding, is there anything more that the arts council, the Government of Wales or local government can do?

[82] **Mr Capaldi:** As I was saying earlier, private sector sponsorship is unusual and feels counter-intuitive but, in comparison with the rest of the country, what private sector support there is here seems to be holding up well. Businesses in Wales seem to have a better and more rooted understanding of the importance of supporting activity culturally and in their local community. We will be entering a programme of work with Arts & Business Cymru, which is the specialist in this area, to train and support arts organisations to develop their fundraising skills. In this day and age, everyone has to look at diverse sources of funding, so we intend to provide the training, help and support to enable them to do that.

[83] **Joyce Watson:** How is the Arts Council of Wales developing the voluntary sector in the arts?

[84] **Mr Capaldi:** We support voluntary sector activity through a number of different routes. First, through the funding that we offer, obviously, and a number of voluntary organisations apply to us and receive funding each year. We also have delegated arrangements with organisations such as Tŷ Cerdd whereby we pass support to it so that it can support choirs, brass bands and performing groups across Wales. Then there is the strategic support that I referred to earlier, whereby we might work with organisations such as Voluntary Arts Wales.

[85] **Ann Jones:** On equality, which we have touched on throughout, how confident are you that your revenue-funded organisations have the capacity to deliver your equality objectives?

[86] **Mr Capaldi:** I am confident that some will do so very well because it is ingrained in their way of working. For example, this has been part and parcel of the work of a number of organisations for many years, mostly those that operate within a community context, as you might expect. There are then a number of organisations for which this will be very new territory, particularly the expansion of the number of protected characteristics. While we have been talking to them for some time about how they will broaden the range of people who experience their activity, this will be a challenge, as is the child poverty agenda. A number of arts organisations have come to us to say that they simply do not understand the contribution that they can make to this, but we are very clear about the contribution that the arts can make. Do you want to say something about the help and support that we are offering?

[87] **Ms Hebb:** Yes. We have a development programme with our portfolio of revenue organisations, and part of that looks at how they will help us to address child poverty and the equalities agenda. We will be implementing that over the next 12 months. For many of those organisations, it is about understanding better what they are already delivering, and not thinking, 'Goodness gracious me, we now have the Equalities Act 2010 so we must need to be doing something else'. For some organisations, it is about understanding that they are already delivering. There is more that some organisations can be doing, but we can help them to understand the context of their work a lot better through the development programme.

[88] **Mr Capaldi:** To allow myself a very brief bit of trumpet-blowing, if I may, in 2011, we were Diverse Cymru's public sector organisation of the year, and I heard today that we have won three awards voted on by children and young people for our child poverty action strategy.

[89] **Ann Jones:** That sounds like a really good note to finish on. Thank you both for coming today to give evidence to this task and finish group. You will be sent a copy of the transcript for you to check for accuracy. That brings us to the close of this meeting. Thank you all very much.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 2.30 p.m.
The meeting ended at 2.30 p.m.