

Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts in Wales

Inquiry into Participation in the Arts in Wales

Response from The Theatres Trust

1. What organisation do you represent?

The Theatres Trust The Theatres Trust is The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres. The Theatres Trust Act 1976 states that 'The Theatres Trust exists to promote the better protection of theatres' and defines a theatre as 'any building or part of a building constructed wholly or mainly for the public performance of plays'. The Trust delivers statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use in England through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 (DMPO), Articles 16&17, Schedule 5, Para (w), that requires the Trust to be consulted by local authorities on planning applications which include 'development involving any land on which there is a theatre.' This applies to all theatre buildings, old and new, in current use, in other uses, or disused. It also includes ciné-variety buildings or structures that have been converted to theatre, circus buildings and performing art centres. Our main objective is to safeguard theatre use, or the potential for such use but we also provide expert advice on design, conservation, property and planning matters to theatre operators, local authorities and official bodies.

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

People that are interested in theatres, theatre history and theatre buildings.

3. Do you think that budget changes have affected participation in the arts, either positively or negatively?

Yes, the Trust does believe that budget changes have affected participation in the Arts, particularly theatre, in a negative way. For example, funding that pays for permanent staff, who then go on to organise and raise more funding from other sources, enabling projects to go ahead and making the arts organisation sustainable. Arts provision and other local community provision often go hand-in-hand. Arts organisations will work with children and young people in hospitals, adults with mental and physical health issues in the community and children in deprived areas, adding to their quality of life and giving them opportunities to interact with the arts. Some theatre and arts organisations work with people in prisons, some of whom go on to college or employment/volunteering as a result, looked-after children and teenagers in youth clubs, helping to keep them off the streets, The Theatres Trust believes that the arts should be accessible to everyone and that whether to engage with

them or not should be everyone's choice rather than have that choice taken away through lack of funding.

4. Do you think that certain groups of people have been affected more than others?

No Response

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

In terms of the provision of quality theatre across Wales it is of vital importance in not only nurturing the theatre artists and audiences of tomorrow but in also providing an accessible form of social and cultural development to young people. In recognition of the financial challenges that face both the wider arts sector and theatre organisation over the coming years it would be important to consider a needs assessment for the capital investment into theatres in Wales. There should also be an annual programme of co-ordinated training and skill development in order to advance the standards and provision of theatre delivery in Wales and the provision of platforms which provide the leaders, practitioners and participants of theatres with the opportunity to have an active involvement in the development of their sector.

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

No there is probably not enough sources available for theatres and the arts, other than the ACW. The Theatres Trust would like to see more collaboration between government departments which recognise the value of the arts across many other areas of policy – in education, tourism and inward investment and culture. We would like to see arts in every strand of public policy making. Policing and Crime – youth involvement in the arts (music, drama, photography, creative writing, dance, visual arts, film-making). Health and Wellbeing – involvement in the arts keeps people active, encourages communication and socialising, leads to less depressive and mental/emotional illness which in turn leads to fewer absences from work, fewer doctors' appointments, fewer prescriptions, lower drug bills. Education and community arts projects build bridges and opens the channel of communication between races, genders, age groups.

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

There are numerous ways that the voluntary arts sector participates in theatres. From costume, props and set design, to technical expertise, lighting, sound and stage management. There is volunteering front-of-house, selling programmes and ice creams, usher and working in the box office. Many theatres are

charities, so depend on volunteers to fill roles like these. Some have around 100 people volunteering, making up 90% of the box office staff and 99% that may operate and manage the organisation. Many theatres could not survive without volunteers. Volunteers help to create the unique atmosphere at theatres.

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

N/A

9. 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?

N/A