

Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts in Wales

Inquiry into Participation in the Arts in Wales

Response from Harlech and Arduwy Music Society

1. What organisation do you represent?

Harlech and Arduwy Music Society

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

Members of the Society and members of the general public. Members are mainly pensioners. They pay a membership fee of £10/annum and some make additional donations.

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

Yes, The Music Club lost its ACW grant about 3 years ago – approx. £2000/annum. This had been used to help pay musicians to perform at concerts and recitals we organise – typically 4 or 5/ year, in a local hotel often with lunch or in Theatr Harlech. Since losing this grant we have had to increase the charges for attending these concerts and had to engage less experienced (cheaper) musicians who have less professional experience than we engaged previously. The fact that we have managed to sustain our activities is a credit to the support of the members. Whilst we have continued to enjoy our concerts there has arguably been a reduction in the quality of the performances.

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

Yes, pensioners.

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

Yes, with the reduction in live arts performances in Theatr Harlech following the removal of its ACW revenue funding in 2010, the nearest venues for similar larger scale concerts are over an hour's drive away on the North Wales coast with no public transport available for evening events there. Driving such distances across mountain roads in winter is a major inhibitor to attending such concerts.

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

No other funding sources have been found for the Harlech and Ardudwy Music Society other than the increase financial contributions from its members.

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

The Harlech and Ardudwy Music Society is a good example of the voluntary sector continuing to promote live music in a remote area. We are conscious that other similar groups in North Wales have stopped functioning following the withdrawal of ACW support. The ACW should be encouraged and facilitated to resume its financial support for these small scale, local initiatives and to support revenue and capital expenditure at Theatr Harlech.

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

Not as far as I can see. The Minister responsible for the Arts washed his hands of any responsibility for the removal of the ACW revenue grant to Theatr Harlech saying it was nothing to do with him – a disgraceful response!

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?

Hopefully