

# **Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru/Arts Council of Wales**

## **International Policy**

### **International Ambition & Excellence An International Policy for the Arts Council of Wales**

#### **Preamble**

The Arts continue to be central, indeed vital, in developing appreciation and understanding between peoples and fostering intercultural dialogue. The exchange of ideas through the arts is enriching for all. The Arts can connect and communicate at levels beyond normal language or indeed when language is a barrier. The Arts Council of Wales has a track record of support for the growth of international arts work from and in Wales, both prior to Devolution and, in an ambience of added momentum and emphasis on such work, in the years since Devolution. The Council is taking an opportunity at present to re-affirm its interest in such work and publish an International Policy. This is integral to its support for developing the arts in Wales, so it brings together: an acknowledgement of the current international dimensions and aspirations of contemporary artistic practice coupled with the need to experience and be exposed to international work and perspectives within the country. Our policy also indicates some of the opportunities Wales has to focus and resource this work, and some of the diverse channels for this work along with the collaborations and partnerships needed to deliver the benefits of international work. The context for international work in the arts both from and into Wales is one of rapid change:

- Wales is now a devolved country within the UK and an expanded Europe. The Welsh Assembly has and is developing relationships internationally. Cultural and artistic components to these relations are important.
- The communications revolution of the last ten years has led to an expansion of artists' networks through use of new technologies and has added virtual artistic collaborations and exchanges to physical ones relying on touring or travelling. How artists work now almost implicitly sees them positioning themselves in international contexts.
- Wales sees itself in a dynamic relationship with a changing world and patterns of migration and interchange where cultures need to share and gain understanding.
- Wales is a bi-lingual country and shares particular perceptions and issues around cultural identity and confidence with other bi-or multi-lingual societies.

- Wales has a prestigious history of having strong cultural interfaces with the world, from the ambitions for sharing and world harmony for example at the root of the foundation of the Llangollen International Eisteddfod after the Second World War, through to challenge of Art to reflect humanity in the recently established Artes Mundi exhibition.
- In a post-Devolution Wales interest is growing in our distinctiveness within the global, with invitations growing to companies and individuals to appear in the context of foreign festivals or decisions to be present in key manifestations such as the Venice Biennale of Art. The activity of Welsh Literature Abroad also demonstrates the growing demand for Welsh voices in international arenas.
- Cultural Policy is now seen as a European-wide priority to be co-ordinated through the EU. Wales needs to register what it can bring distinctively to cultural debate, collaboration and partnerships in an expanded Europe against the background of the Lisbon Agenda.
- International dimensions to work in the arts fuel the creative economy of Wales.
- The arts have had a significant role in the application of European structural funds within Wales and could be a beneficial strand to current plans for Convergence funding and in future programmes.
- The promotion of Wales as a creative place boosts cultural tourism and supports other arguments for inward investment.
- ACW established a partnership organisation in Wales Arts International working principally in tandem with the British Council. Wales Arts International celebrates ten years of activity in 2007 and 2008 will herald a renewed partnership between ACW and the British Council through WAI.
- The Wales Arts Review in 2006 noted the international dimensions of work in the arts and was looking for an institutional response from Government, arts bodies and organisations to create more joined up working and practice.

### **Aims and Objectives in this Policy**

ACW seeks to develop, support and promote the work of artists and creative organisations in Wales in an international context. It is recognised that this will only be possible in partnership and through collaborations with Welsh, UK and international organisations and agencies.

This policy reinforces the importance and value of the international dimension for the arts in Wales – in terms of providing international opportunities for the

arts from Wales as well as opportunities for bringing international arts into Wales.

ACW wants to ensure that the arts sector in Wales is actively engaged in international networks and well placed to benefit from the opportunities.

For most people working in the arts, local, national and international work should be part of one continuum. International work increases artists' experience and through exchanges enriches opportunities for audiences in Wales. However, all artists and arts organisations face restrictions on international activities due to financial constraints. ACW wishes to play its part in identifying new international funding routes for the arts in Wales to reach global audiences.

ACW supports greater activity and exploitation of international opportunities. Our international work is not separate from our core activities. It rather grows out of our core values and principles. We value and will explore cooperation with other organisations when there is proven added value to the arts in Wales.

ACW will continue its international work through a renewed partnership agreement with the British Council. WAI will develop its own international strategy from 2008 to 2013 in the context of this renewed partnership.

### **Stakeholders in a Changing Landscape:**

ACW operates in a changing Wales. Devolution has led to a process of restructuring for the arts sector. Changes in the UK's creative economy offer practitioners in Wales new opportunities too as part of the Creative Economy Programme that aims to make the UK the "World's Creative Hub".

Our constituency consists of artists, arts organisations, artistic training providers and higher Education bodies, venues, festivals, facilitators, producers, curators, critics, galleries, youth and community organisations. Our commitment too is building audiences for the arts and opportunities for experience. ACW recognises the interdependency of work and infrastructure within Wales with that in the international arena.

To exploit new international opportunities for the arts in Wales, there is a need for coordination with partners on many levels, not just on the Welsh national level, but also with local players, UK, European and international partners.

ACW recognises the Welsh Assembly Government's keen interest in the value of the arts in developing cultural relations and public diplomacy and as a powerful dimension of public policy in related areas like tourism and regeneration. ACW will seek to work closely with the Welsh Assembly Government's external relations initiatives and others in promoting arts from Wales internationally.

ACW sees itself and arts organisations, companies and individual artists as key to promoting the Wales international brand which is encapsulated thus in recent literature:

*“A nation prepared to follow its own path. A passionate people not afraid to speak their own minds. A country that is not unduly swayed by outside influence. A land that cherishes culture and creativity. A truly progressive country which prides itself on being different, alternative, innovative and lateral thinking.” (The Wales National Brand- David Stephens Wales Brand Manager)*

ACW will seek alignment with various WAG departments in order to exploit international opportunities to the maximum:

- European and External Affairs Division
- Department of Heritage
- International Business Wales, Creative Business Wales and spoke organisations in its hub
- Education and skills
- Sustainable Development
- Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO)

ACW recognises the following WAG policies and strategies as of fundamental relevance to the internationalisation of the arts in Wales:

- Creative Industries Strategy
- Wales a Vibrant Economy
- Digital strategy
- European Structural Funds programmes

There are many agencies with whom ACW work with in a national context but there are few for which ACW can envisage greater co-ordination being beneficial so international possibilities and perspectives are shared. These include amongst others:

- Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum Wales
- National Library of Wales
- National companies
- Universities
- Festivals
- Local authorities
- Welsh Language Board

There are furthermore increasing needs and opportunities to work with bodies on a UK European and international level.

- British Council Arts Group’s global network
- Department for Culture Media and Sport - DCMS (Creative Economy Programme)

- Arts Council England (ACE), Scottish Arts Council (SAC) and Arts Council Northern Ireland (ACNI)
- International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts (IETM)
- Visiting Arts
- Foundations

### **ACW's International Priorities & Approach to Partnership:**

In keeping with our priorities, partnerships and the landscape in which we operate, and in conjunction with both our Artform Strategies as well as the strategic priorities of Wales Arts International, our international vision for the arts in Wales is:

- ***To empower and support artists and the broader arts sector in Wales to work internationally – so that artists can develop their practice and arts from Wales are increasingly visible and recognised internationally***
- ***To attract work into the country to stimulate the arts here and to provide a benchmark for the indigenous arts sector.***
- ***To develop our own and our partners' capacity to carry out international work through investing in Wales Arts International.***
- ***To contribute towards raising the profile of Wales in the world***

#### **The remit of our international work is categorised into 4 key priorities:**

- 1) Develop international ambition & excellence - enhance the ability of artists and arts organisations to build an international profile
- 2) Create opportunities and possibilities for the arts allied to the strategic projects & geographic priorities of Wales Arts International
- 3) Strengthen the capacity of ACW and the sector to identify and exploit opportunities beyond Wales through partnerships and networks
- 4) Promote Wales' unique character and distinctive culture via artistic advocacy and cultural diplomacy

#### ***1) Develop international ambition & excellence - enhance the ability of artists and arts organisations to build an international profile***

Through the work of Wales Arts International, ACW supports excellence in the arts internationally and wishes to ensure that world class artists from Wales are supported onto international platforms

ACW supports both artist lead international initiatives as well as work by a variety of arts organisations that provide opportunities for artists from Wales internationally.

ACW acknowledges that there are obstacles for artists and arts organisations from working internationally, relating to both funding and other issues.

Financial limitations means that support needs to be strategic, targeted, supporting excellence, and delivered through partnership and/ or collaboration.

ACW working through Wales Arts International is committed to increase the levels of investment from other sources. Priority will be given to partnerships that offer match funding as investments into the arts in Wales.

International work is a two-way traffic and we believe that there are major benefits for the arts in Wales to have qualitative comparators on the international level.

ACW believes that international touring and co-production opportunities help companies in Wales to build their repertoire, to provide exposure for welsh artists and to develop commercial potential.

There is a continued need to provide support for artists to respond to international opportunities. Limited financial co-funding support already helps artists from Wales to take advantage of international invitations (through the International Opportunities Fund administered by WAI).

ACW also believes that providing other types of (i.e. non-financial) support is important to develop international ambition and excellence in the arts sector, in particular in terms of raising awareness and advocacy. Activities include:

- Participate in networks that increase opportunities for artists to be programmed elsewhere in the world
- Provide adequate communication to artists and arts organisations in Wales about international opportunities
- Develop international leadership skills within the arts in Wales
- Advice and advocacy to target groups on behalf of artists
- Provide help for partners to identify the best artists for events that promote Wales in the World
- Encourage artists and arts organisations to develop their own international plans, to become focused in their international development
- Promote artistic exchange through participation in international fairs, exhibitions and markets
- Assist artists and arts organisations to make effective use of support from other agencies such as International Business Wales
- Encourage international artistic collaboration
- Advocate a representation for Wales at the Council of Ministers for Culture on an European level

With growing budgetary pressures, there is a need to look to new sources of funding (from outside Wales) through transnational partnerships and projects. ACW prioritises projects that provide co-funding for international collaborations.

## ***2) Create opportunities and possibilities for the arts allied to strategic projects & geographic priorities of Wales Arts International***

Faced with increased international opportunities and more demand, ACW will prioritise its international ambitions strategically through Wales Arts International in partnership with the British Council and the Welsh Assembly Government. WAI's strategy and priorities will take into account:

- i) **Artform priorities**- identified in ACW's Artform Strategies and their development
- ii) **Geographic priorities** - based on:
  - a) On going partnership, commitment and sustainable support to individual art forms and artists from Wales by international partners as exemplified by the government of Quebec.
  - b) Key priority countries of the Welsh Assembly Government;
  - c) Opportunities for greater investment in the arts in Wales through new partnership and funding opportunities provided by a) the British Council b) other relevant funding bodies (e.g. European Commission)

## ***3) Strengthen the capacity of the sector to identify and exploit opportunities beyond Wales through partnerships and networks***

Artists of every genre in Wales participate in a vast number of networks through their own work. There is no doubt that the demand for more artists from Wales to participate in international opportunities is increasing and needs further support through:

- a) Increasing the capacity through support in developing skills and knowledge
- b) More strategic approach to international work through shared strategies (e.g. WAI)
- c) Increasing opportunities to network

There are growing opportunities for ACW and partners to be involved in international partnership, projects exchanges and networks. WAI communicates opportunities to the sector and promotes effective use of international networks.

There are also an increasing number of relevant or sectoral e-networks and technological developments that remove geographical barriers that existed in the past to a certain extent for artists in Wales. These need to be further explored and exploited.

ACW will work with our key partners to identify opportunities for artists from Wales to be showcased abroad, which include:

- i) British Council Arts Group Global network and art form showcases
- ii) Welsh Assembly Government's international and external relations initiatives. This includes International Business Wales (and its sub divisions e.g. Creative Business Wales), European and External Affairs Division, Department for Culture Media and Sport
- iii) ACW wishes to explore further the links between the arts and the creative economy and to ensure that Wales plays a part and benefit from Department of Culture Media and Sport's aim to make the UK the World leader in terms of the creative economy
- iv) Membership and cooperation with the appropriate European and international foundations and companies with international remits in priority countries (e.g. Visiting Arts)
- v) Creating opportunities for programmers, producers and curators to support Welsh artists and to find new work both inside Wales and internationally

#### ***4) Promote Wales' unique character and distinctive culture via artistic advocacy and cultural diplomacy***

Through the work of Wales Arts International, ACW will work in partnership with the British Council and the Welsh Assembly Government (and other relevant partners) to promote the arts and culture of Wales in the World. ACW believes that investing in promoting the broader culture of Wales will also help to raise the profile of the arts and vice versa.

ACW believes that international artists from Wales of all genres are *de facto* cultural ambassadors. They already play a central role in promoting Wales through their own artform.

There is a growing demand on artists to participate in broader activities labelled as cultural diplomacy. ACW will advise artists on these opportunities and will continue to advocate the principles of artistic excellence and artistic autonomy in this respect. The value of artistic activity comes from its independence, its freedom and the fact that it represents and connects people. ACW supports further discussion with the relevant partners in terms of developing Wales's cultural diplomacy approach.

The arts and culture also play a significant part in creating a sense of place and to attract both visitors and investors to Wales.

### **Current Mechanisms/Opportunities for supporting International Work**

ACW has a number of mechanisms/opportunities to support international work:

- 1) Investment via Wales Arts International (in partnership with the British Council)
- 2) Project support (through Arts lottery)
- 3) Support for Venues (Arts outside Cardiff funding)
- 4) Strategic support for key partnership & access to European and International funding opportunities (e.g. developing opportunities 2007-13 with Creative Business Wales, International Business Wales and WAG's European and External Affairs Department)
- 5) Support for raising the profile of arts from Wales at showcase events e.g. Wales at the Venice Biennale, Edinburgh Festival, Celtic Connections, World Music Expo (WOMEX), South By South West (SXSW), Sculpture Objects and Functional Art Expositions (SOFA) Chicago etc
- 6) Support for festivals and events with clear international dimensions for the arts in Wales (e.g. Brecon Jazz, Llangollen, Hay on Wye, Cultural Olympiad 2012)

### **Conclusion:**

- ACW will continue to invest strategically in the work of Wales Arts International and will work in partnership, for the benefit of the arts in Wales, with the British Council and our funders in the Welsh Assembly Government.
- ACW will seek to continuously improve Wales' reputation for quality arts across the spectrum.
- ACW will support artists and arts organisations to fully engage with and benefit from international opportunities.
- ACW will continue to promote contemporary culture of Wales – and to work with other organisations to ensure that contemporary arts and culture support the promotion of Wales as a creative place

