



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**STRATEGIC CULTURE AND ARTS STEERING GROUP**

**21<sup>st</sup> JUNE 2021**

**AN UPDATE ON THE RCT ARTS SERVICE'S WORK PROGRAMME  
(JANUARY – JUNE 2021)**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR - PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND  
COMMUNITY SERVICES, IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER  
FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES, WELLBEING AND CULTURAL  
SERVICES, COUNCILLOR, RHYS LEWIS**

**Author(s):** Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Arts & Culture Manager

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update members of the Steering Group on the RCT Arts Service's work programme undertaken from January 2021 to date.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group:

- 2.1 Note the update within the report.  
2.2 Consider whether they would like any further information.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That the members are updated on the RCT Arts Service's work programme undertaken from January 2021 to date.

**4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 A report was provided to members of the Steering Group at the meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 updating on the progress of the Arts Service in serving our communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

## **6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

## **7. RCT ARTS SERVICE**

### **7.1 RCT THEATRES**

- 7.1.1 The Coliseum Theatre and the Park and Dare Theatre remain closed to the public. Staff work at the theatres on a rota basis and the service is exploring how it can safely enable creative practice to take place within the theatres moving forward.

- 7.1.2 During April 2021 both theatres were used as community mass testing sites 7 days a week.

- 7.1.3 The programme of live events at RCT Theatres has been rescheduled or cancelled, with the first live event now scheduled for 11<sup>th</sup> August 2021 at the Park and Dare Theatre – Francis Rossi: I Talk Too Much and at the Coliseum Theatre on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2021 – The 80s Live.

- 7.1.4 The service is exploring re-opening within the government guidelines to provide a cinema offer during Summer 2021.

- 7.1.5 Capital works planned for each theatre include refurbishment of the men's toilets on the ground floor auditorium level at the Coliseum Theatre and the reconfiguration of the foyer area at the Park and Dare Theatre. Investment is secured for these improvements and the service is working with Corporate Estates to confirm the timescale of the works.

- 7.1.6 The service is working with ICT to secure its digital infrastructure for customers going forward, with the instalment of a new till system and an upgrade to the ProVenue box office system.

### **7.2 CREATIVE PROVISION – RCT THEATRES**

- 7.2.1 RCT Theatres continues to offer creative opportunities that encourage residents of all ages to be creatively active, thus supporting their positive health and wellbeing at such a difficult and challenging time for many.

- 7.2.2 With the uncertainty remaining, a paper was taken to Cabinet on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021 to approve the proposal to produce a digital Christmas offer of 'Aladdin' to share online during December 2021 and an additional budget of £30,000 to deliver the production.

7.2.3 RCT Theatres' 2020 digital Christmas offer 'Once Upon a Panto' – a series of 5 stories performed by traditional pantomime characters, was once again, accessible to all via our RCT Theatres YouTube channel during Easter 2021.

7.2.4 The Take pART programme's dance and drama provision, delivered by Dimensions, continues to be delivered within our communities on a weekly basis.

### 7.3 CREATIVE PROVISION – ARTS AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES TEAM

7.3.1 The Arts and Creative Industries Team continue to offer opportunities for children and young people via the Families First commissioned Youth Arts and SONIG Youth Music Industries programmes, Forte (funded by the Arts Council of Wales and the PRS Foundation), and Beacons (funded by Arts Council of Wales and Welsh Government's Creative Wales).

7.3.2 Provision continues to be provided online with plans being made to offer some face-to-face activity safely and within the guidelines.

7.3.3 The 'Search for a Rainbow' project culminates in an exhibition of the young people's work at The Worker's Gallery in Ynyshir from 10<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> June 2021. This project saw local high-profile artists Tea2Sugars challenge young artists to create their own 'rainbow' in the midst of the pandemic – through the medium of graffiti.

7.3.4 The team collaborated with Sports RCT to deliver the 'Capture the Spring in Your Step' Smartphone Photography challenge in celebration of Walking Month during May 2021. The project aimed to encourage our communities to go outdoors and walk, capture the sights on their smartphone camera and submit online with a chance of having the photograph published.

7.3.5 Arts will be the focus of enrichment activity as part of the Council's School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) to be delivered at school settings across RCT during the summer holidays for key worker children and those identified as vulnerable within our communities.

7.3.6 The Engaging Libraries Fake News project, in collaboration with Liverpool University and funded by Carnegie UK, is being delivered by the Library and Arts Services' Teams. Artist/researcher and filmmaker duo Mud and Thunder are engaging with our communities to capture their experiences of fake news.

## 7.4 STAFF

- 7.4.1 All staff who were either redeployed to Test, Track and Protect and to the Mass Testing provision have returned to their substantive posts within the service.
- 7.4.2 We welcomed our Weston Jerwood Creative Bursary Fellow in the role of Assistant Creative Producer to the team on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021. This year-long post will support the individual to develop knowledge and skills in working within the Arts Service and the communities it serves. As part of the Fellowship, the individual will also be participating in the Weston Jerwood Learning Programme and be assigned a mentor by the organisation.
- 7.4.3 We have been successful in establishing a post as part of the Council's Graduate Scheme and will be interviewing for a Graduate Community Engagement Officer to join the team in early July. This post will focus on Treorchy and engaging with the community in the development of a community hub focused on arts and culture between ourselves and the Library Service.

## 7.5 FUNDING

- 7.5.1 RCT Theatres continue to be an Arts Portfolio Wales client and will receive £152,000 revenue funding as a contribution towards its activity during 2021/22.
- 7.5.2 The Arts & Creative Industries Team have once again been commissioned by Families First to deliver its Youth Arts and SONIG Youth Music Industry programme for 2021/22 and will receive £94,000 revenue funding.
- 7.5.3 The Welsh Government's Freelancer Fund reopened in May 2021 enabling freelancers to apply for a further £2,500 of grant support. Administered by the Arts Service and supported by ICT and Finance colleagues, RCT have received 81 applications which are currently being assessed.

## 8. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS

### 8.1 ARTS COUNCIL OF WALES: CONNECT AND FLOURISH

- 8.1.1 RCT Arts Service are partnered with a number of organisations in the delivery of successful Arts Council of Wales Connect & Flourish applications:
- 'Torri'r Ffinniau | Breaking the Box' – led by Taking Flight this project will build a network of inclusive, accessible venues in Wales that are

confident & supported in welcoming diverse artists, backstage crew & administrators as well as audiences. There will be training & support for the emerging deaf & disabled theatre workforce & in building future roles for deaf & disabled creatives at Wales' venues.

- 'Where We Begin | Dechrau'r Daith' – led by Flossy and Boo, this is a collaboration with RCT Arts Service and Awen Cultural Trust to connect young people, venues and family audiences with freelance artists, exploring the barriers that families and young people face in experiencing the arts. Partners include Chapter Arts Centre, Grange Pavilion and Elan Isaacs. This is an important initiative with the aim of engaging targeted audiences more widely and reach those who are currently disengaged for a variety of reasons, and is set across 2 years.
- 'Together We Create/Creu Gyda'n Gilydd' – led by National Dance Company Wales, this is an artist led project based in Penrhys, with much of the groundwork in place being led by artist Matteo Marfoggia. Co-creation is central to the activity, with a strong mix of agencies operating at cultural and social levels, including Creative Lives (formally Voluntary Arts Wales), Sparc: Valleys Kids, Trivallis Housing Association, Tempo Time Credits and Digital Communities Wales.
- Make it! – led by emerging artists in RCT and hosted by Valleys Kids. This two-year proposal looks to create an emerging artist network and ecology where RCT is a place to sustain an arts career and work. The shared objectives are strong, built on extensive collaborative partnerships responding to evidence of need of younger emerging artists in RCT aged 18-30, at the early stage of their career. Five development stages are set to encourage innovation, continuous learning and development for both the emerging artists and all partners involved.

## 8.2 CREATIVE PONTYPRIDD

8.2.1 It is an exciting time for Pontypridd. Alongside significant investment dedicated to its transport infrastructure and town centre regeneration, there are major building developments including:

- The redevelopment of the YMCA into a community facility run by Artis Community on behalf of Pontypridd YMCA;
- The transfer of the Muni Arts Centre to Awen Cultural Trust and investment planned for its refurbishment;
- Ambitious plans for the future of Clwb y Bont;
- Establishment of the library/leisure hub at Llys Cadwyn;
- Investment in Ynysangharad War Memorial Park;

- Redevelopment of Pontypridd Museum being undertaken by Pontypridd Town Council.

8.2.2 Pontypridd is highlighted as a significant town within the Capital City Region. We have a unique opportunity to harness these assets alongside well established facilities to develop a cultural quarter that will not only serve the local community but the wider communities across RCT and SE Wales.

8.2.3 An inaugural meeting of Creative Pontypridd took place on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021 with representation from cultural organisations in Pontypridd. This inaugural meeting discussed the draft Terms of Reference and a further meeting will be held in late June to agree a way forward for the group.

### 8.3 NATIONAL HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND

8.3.1 RCT has been identified as a priority area within the National Heritage Lottery's Strategic Funding Framework 2019–2024.

8.3.2 The successful application to the National Heritage Lottery Fund has secured £1.4 million to restore and enhance Ynysangharad War Memorial Park Pontypridd (YWMP) and connect local people, communities and visitors with its heritage. The Bandstand, Sunken Garden, Mock Rock Outcrop and toilet block will be restored and improvements made to the surrounding woodland, shrubbery and pathways. A Training Centre – Canolfan Calon Taf - will provide educational and recreational activities for the local community led by the Council's Adult Education Service. A Centre Co-ordinator post will be advertised shortly – the post will also be responsible for developing with partners the programme of activities at the Bandstand.

### 8.4 THE NATIONAL EISTEDDFOD

8.4.1 The National Eisteddfod will be hosted by Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2024 following the postponement of its 2020 and 2021 Eisteddfod in Ceredigion.

8.4.2 The National Eisteddfod have successfully applied to the National Heritage Lottery Fund to support its community engagement work in RCT, working with its team to develop a series of activities and pilot events, co-create a strategy with local people, and create a Community Forum in RCT to advise on their plans and help them identify local opportunities to target resources and work.

## 9. TAKING THE PULSE

### 9.1 ARTS COUNCIL OF WALES

9.1.1 During Autumn 2021, the Arts Council of Wales will commence its Investment Review of its Arts Portfolio Wales clients. To be considered as a Portfolio member from April 2023 onwards RCT Arts Service will be required to apply.

9.1.2 The Arts Council of Wales have appointed a new Chief Executive Officer, Sian Tomos, who is currently the Director of Arts Development at the Arts Council of Wales. Sian will commence in post September.

## 9.2 WELSH GOVERNMENT

9.2.1 The Welsh Government and Arts Council of Wales are developing a 'Cultural Contract' which is designed to encourage organisations to transform the future reach and impact of their activities, improve the diversity of their boards and workforce, provide new opportunities for freelance artists, commit to fair rates of pay, and improve the environmental impact of what they do. The cultural contract is designed to ensure that, as organisations adapt to new ways of working, public investment is deployed with a cultural and social purpose.

9.2.2 The Welsh Government are developing a Public Sector Freelancer Pledge and recognise that the Culture Recovery Fund (CRF), while specifically designed to support the culture and creative sectors through the COVID-19 pandemic, also provided an opportunity to design a new approach to the way in which the public sector works with the freelance community.

9.2.3 The Public Sector Freelancer Pledge Working Group has representation from the freelance sector, trade unions, Arts Council of Wales, Office of the Future Generations and local authority.

9.2.4 The Public Sector Freelancer Pledge aims to seek commitment from and opportunity for public sector bodies and the freelance sector to match project and programme opportunities delivered by the public sector with the required skillsets within the freelance community.

## 9.3 RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

9.3.1 The Council have published its new Corporate Plan 'Making A Difference 2020-2024' focusing on the following three priorities:

- Ensuring People: are independent, healthy and successful;
- Creating Places: where people are proud to live, work and play;
- Enabling Prosperity: creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.

#### 9.4 RCT ARTS SERVICE

- 9.4.1 As a public arts service we need to consider the new context in which we are working in and the impact of Covid on our staff, communities and the creative sector. As such, it was noted in our report given to members in January that 2021 will be a year in which we pause to review what and how we do things and ensure that the service meets identified needs.
- 9.4.2 We continue our journey of organisational development as a host within the Weston Jerwood Creative Bursary programme and led by 'People make it work' which has provided us with the opportunity to reflect, learn and share knowledge with other hosts across the UK.
- 9.4.3 Following on from our participation in the Arts Council of Wales funded 'Designing Public Value with Purpose' programme, we will shortly be working again with Lisa Baxter of The Experience Business to consider our next steps in relation to service priorities and delivery, and to support us in 'resetting the dial'.

#### 10. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 10.1 No consultation exercise has been required.

#### 11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 11.1 There are no financial implications aligned to the recommendations in this report.

#### 12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 12.1 There are no legal implications aligned to the recommendations in this report.

#### 13. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 13.1 The Arts Service's offer continues to support the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities.
- 13.2 Our focus going forward will enable us to more effectively contribute to the seven national wellbeing goals, particularly:
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language;
  - A prosperous Wales;
  - A healthier Wales;
  - A Wales of cohesive communities.



13.3 The service provision and way of working is consistent with the sustainable approach promoted by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act through the five ways of working:

- Long-term – understanding our public value and relevance enables us to gain support for a long-term and sustainable arts and creative industries provision within the County Borough.
- Prevention – by understanding our operating context, communities’ needs, concerns, opportunities, and aspiration we can provide engagement and participation opportunities that address needs identified.
- Integrated – understanding our public value and relevance will enable us to contribute more effectively to a range of local, regional, and national strategic priorities, in an integrated and coherent way.
- Collaboration – understanding our public value and relevance will enable us to identify stakeholders (locally, regionally, and nationally), whose values align with ours and with whom we can work in partnership to meet our communities’ needs.
- Involvement – exploring the communities’ needs and exploring how the service can support through creative conversations, co-creation, collaboration, and professional networks.

## **14. CONCLUSION**

14.1 This report updates members of the Steering Group on the RCT Arts Service’s work programme undertaken from January 2021 to date.

14.2 RCT Theatres remain closed to the public with capital and ICT improvement plans in process.

14.3 The Take pART participatory offer continues to be provided at venues within the community.

14.4 The Arts and Creative Industries Team have continued to support children and young people through online provision across a variety of art forms.

14.5 The Arts Service are partnering with Taking Flight, Flossy and Boo, Valleys Kids and National Dance Company Wales in the delivery of four Connect and Flourish projects within RCT.

14.6 The Arts Service will be considering its priorities going forward and understanding its operating context within the Council and the Arts and Cultural Sector within Wales.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**STRATEGIC CULTURE AND ARTS STEERING GROUP**

**21<sup>st</sup> JUNE 2021**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR - PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND  
COMMUNITY SERVICES, IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER  
FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES, WELLBEING AND CULTURAL  
SERVICES, COUNCILLOR, RHYS LEWIS**

**AN UPDATE ON THE RCT ARTS SERVICE'S WORK PROGRAMME  
(JANUARY – JUNE 2021)**

**Background Papers - None**

**Officer to contact:** Caroline O'Neill – Strategic Arts & Culture Manager