



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **STRATEGIC CULTURE AND ARTS STEERING GROUP**

**6<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021**

#### **AN UPDATE ON THE ARTS COUNCIL OF WALES INVESTMENT REVIEW AND THE ARTS SERVICE'S FUTURE FOCUS**

**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 Arts Council of Wales' Investment Review and the Arts Service's future focus.

#### **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 Arts Council of Wales' Investment Review and the Arts Services' future focus.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's RCT Theatres has been a member of the Arts Council of Wales Arts Portfolio of annual revenue funded clients since 2010.
- 4.2 RCT Theatres receive revenue funding of approximately £150,000 as presenting venues and a producing company.
- 4.3 The last Investment Review identified the Arts Portfolio Wales clients for the period 2015 to 2020. RCT Theatres were successful in continuing to be recognised as an Arts Portfolio Wales client at that time.

## **5. ARTS COUNCIL OF WALES INVESTMENT REVIEW**

- 5.1 The latest ACW Investment Review was to have taken place in early 2020. In light of the pandemic, the decision was made to defer the process and timetable.
- 5.2 A public consultation on the ACW Investment Review's guidance and application ended on January 10<sup>th</sup> 2020. The ACW's response to this consultation can be found [here](#).
- 5.3 A series of Investment Review workshops were held during September 2021 to gather further feedback from the sector on the process.
- 5.4 The review process was to resume at the end of 2021, with assessment of applications taking place in 2022 and a new Arts Portfolio Wales announced in April 2023.
- 5.5 The ACW have once again delayed the date to start funding a new Arts Portfolio Wales until 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.
- 5.6 In its press release on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021, the ACW stated that:
- “This is to make sure that the organisation has more time to respond to changes that have been suggested during a series of workshops with the arts sector, and so that the process can be synchronised with the appointment of a new Chief Executive.”
- 5.7 Further details are expected in early 2022; however, we understand that we will remain an Arts Portfolio Wales member in receipt of revenue funding during 2022/23 and 2023/2024.

## **6. PAVING THE WAY FORWARD**

### **6.1 Resetting the Dial**

- 6.1.1 As reported in a paper to the Steering Group members at the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021 meeting, 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.
- 6.1.2 Following on from our participation in the Arts Council of Wales funded 'Designing Public Value with Purpose' programme, and in preparation for determining our priorities for our ACW Investment Review application, we are working 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'.

- 6.1.3 Alongside her work with us, Lisa Baxter is working with the City of Bergen (Norway) on a similar project seeking to broaden civic understanding of how arts, culture and creativity can support community flourishing and trial new modes of funding, artist involvement and community engagement to that end.
- 6.1.4 In 'resetting the dial' we are planning a series of creative conversations with our communities, including theatre users, artists and reaching wider to identify those unheard voices within our communities.
- 6.1.5 The Graduate Community Engagement Officer commenced in post in September 2021 and is developing relationships to develop the concept of the cultural hub in Treorchy.
- 6.1.6 The Weston Jerwood Creative Bursary Fellow, who commenced in post in June 2021, is developing relationships with the creative sector across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

## **6.2 National Eisteddfod**

- 6.2.1 The National Eisteddfod will now visit Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2024.
- 6.2.2 As we heard at the meeting of the Steering Group on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021, the Eisteddfod has secured funding from the National Heritage Lottery fund to deliver a pilot community project within Rhondda Cynon Taf, creating opportunities for local people to take part in a wide range of pilot events, inspired by Welsh culture and heritage.
- 6.2.3 As part of this project, a Community Forum has been established in RCT, with representatives of local and national groups and organisations that operate locally. The Arts Service is a member of this forum, which the Eisteddfod will use to advise on their plans and help to identify opportunities locally to target resources and work.
- 6.2.4 The Arts Service is also meeting regularly with the Eisteddfod's Artistic and Community Team to share knowledge, developments and discuss ideas for collaboration

## **6.3 Arts Council of Wales: Connect and Flourish**

- 6.3.1 Many creatives whose practice we have helped to develop have been successful in their bids to the Arts Council of Wales' Connect and Flourish fund. The Arts Service is a key connector for these projects.
- 6.3.2 In a paper to the Steering Group members at the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021 meeting we outlined a list of those Connect and Flourish projects taking place within the county borough.

- 6.3.3 A further development has been the service's involvement in the Age Cymru, Leeway Production and Menter Iaith RhCT project, 'Porth y Cwtsh'.
- 6.3.4 'Porth y Cwtsh' is a research and development place-based project focused on Porth. It aims to be the catalyst to open hearts and minds to look up and visualise future self. The project looks to build on what's strong, not on what's wrong.
- 6.3.5 In our connector role, the Arts Service has brokered the relationship between the project partners and the Council's Town Centre Team, with the team identifying a financial commitment and partnership agreement towards a project application to the next Connect and Flourish round in early 2022.
- 6.3.6 Furthermore, the 'Gwarchodfa Natur Pontypridd Nature Reserve' project, led by Addo Creative alongside Rhondda Cynon Taf based artists Catrin Doyle and Anne-Mie Melis, and education research company Pontydysgu, has also been invited to submit an application following a successful expression of interest. We have connected the project to the Canolfan Calon Taf development at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, as well as the Council's wider Parks and Countryside Team.
- 6.3.7 This project will look to explore how sustainable creative strategies and artist-led interventions, co-created by communities, organisations & artists based in Pontypridd and the surrounding area may reimagine Pontypridd as a nature reserve and engage new audiences / participants in environmental activism, promoting biodiversity and the development of sustainable ways of being and living in their local area.
- 6.4 **Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's Award for Civic Arts Organisations**
- 6.4.1 In November 2021, we submitted an application to the [Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's Award for Civic Arts Organisations](#). The second edition of the Award for Civic Arts Organisations shines a spotlight on how arts organisations are rethinking their own relationships with the communities they serve as we emerge from a period of disruption and acceleration of trends in the art world and in society. They are offering one award of £100,000 and two of £25,000.
- 6.4.2 The award is for organisations to continue their important and impactful work with their communities.

6.4.3 Shortlisted organisations will be notified in January 2022, with online presentations with the panel scheduled to take place in February 2022 and the presentation of the awards to successful applicants in March 2022.

## **6.5 Capital Developments**

6.5.1 Capital improvements are taking place at RCT Theatres, including to the foyer at the Park and Dare Theatre and the gentlemen's stall toilets at the Coliseum Theatre.

6.5.2 Furthermore, funding has been secured for capital works that will enable us to further develop our community engagement:

- A Welsh Government Place-making grant, through the Council's Regeneration Team and a Play Sufficiency grant, through the Council's Play Service, to develop the land adjacent to the Park and Dare Theatre as an outdoor community participation and performance space;
- Corporate capital funding to replace the carpet in the auditorium and the exploration of funding to install a flexible seating system at the Coliseum Theatre.

6.5.3 Within the Pontypridd area, the YMa development, funded by the Council, Arts Council of Wales, the Welsh Government's Community Facilities Programme fund and Moondance, will be opening its doors in Spring 2022, managed by Artis Community; and the successful Levelling Up funding bid to UK Government will redevelop the Muni Arts Centre, a partnership between the Council and Awen Cultural Trust, to reopen in 2024.

## **7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

7.1 No consultation exercise has been required.

## **8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

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

## **9. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

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

## **11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

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

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

12.1 The Arts Service's offer continues to support the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities.

12.2 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.

12.3 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.

### **13. CONCLUSION**

- 13.1 This report updates members of the Steering Group on the Arts Council of Wales’ Investment Review and the Arts Services’ future focus.
- 13.2 The Arts Service will be considering its priorities going forward to further understand and develop its civic role and public value.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

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

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**Background Papers - None**

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