



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**STRATEGIC CULTURE AND ARTS STEERING GROUP**

**22<sup>ND</sup> NOVEMBER 2022**

**REPORT ON RCT THEATRES APPLICATION TO THE ARTS COUNCIL OF WALES INVESTMENT REVIEW 2022 AND THE FOCUS FOR THE FUTURE**

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH & COMMUNITIES, COUNCILLOR BOB HARRIS**

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**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform members of the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group of RCT Theatres intended application to the Arts Council of Wales Investment Review 2023 and its proposed focus for the future.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

- 2.1 Consider the contents of the report and comment on the proposed key priorities.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Arts Council of Wales is due to commence an Investment Review of its Arts Portfolio programme in early 2023. RCT Theatres is currently an Arts Portfolio Wales client and is intending to apply for continued funding to strengthen its engagement work with communities and increase the public value of its theatres in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 3.2 This report provides an opportunity for the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group to consider the Arts Service's proposed application to the Arts Council of Wales Investment Review and the Arts Service's focus for the future.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

4.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council 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.

4.4 A planned review for 2020 was postponed due to the retirement of the Arts Council's Chief Executive and the Covid-19 pandemic. The review is now scheduled to take place during 2023, following a consultation process that ended on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

4.5 RCT Theatres' Artistic Business Plan for this period outlined the following:

- Vision: We aim to inspire the people living in our communities to become more resilient by being creatively active in the arts and creative industries.
- Mission: To produce, present and enable participation in high quality artistic work at RCT Theatres by working in partnership with our communities, in order to enhance our standing within the industry at a local, national and international level.

4.6 Our proposed objectives were to:

- Present – to enrich people's lives and to increase audiences for the arts by presenting a high quality, balanced, exciting and thought - provoking programme that is accessible and relevant to our communities;
- Produce – to develop and sustain RCT Theatres as a producer that connects with our communities and helps break down barriers to engagement in the arts;
- Participate – to enable members of our community and workforce to be creatively active by taking part in arts activity that empowers them to develop and which contributes to their well-being and quality of life;
- Partnership – to build meaningful, strategic artistic and community partnerships for RCT Theatres that support the development of a dynamic regional Creative Hub to grow the arts infrastructure and develop audiences within RCT and the region.

4.7 These four objectives supported the delivery of the Arts Council of Wales' strategic priorities within its Corporate Plan 2013-2018:

- Make: nurture talent, creativity and capability;
- Reach: encourage more people to enjoy and take part in the arts;
- Sustain: supporting a dynamic and resilient arts sector.

4.8 During 2015-2022, RCT Theatres has focussed on delivering its objectives through:

- Developing the Creative Hub at the Park and Dare Theatre by introducing an Artist in Residence Scheme; supporting artists development through an Arts Associates scheme; co-producing work focused on families, Welsh language and new writing; and developing the new Stiwdio 1 space;
- Focusing on Audience Development through key partnerships with the Arts Services' Arts and Creative Industries Team, Young Carers, Library Service, the Equalities and Diversity Team and schools;
- Involvement in the Rhondda Arts Festival in Treorchy (RAFT) and Love Treorchy events;
- Presenting a programme of professional and community performances;
- Co-ordinating the Take pART participatory programme of weekly workshops, masterclasses and go-see opportunities.

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

5.1 In 2018 the Arts Council of Wales published its new Corporate Plan, 'For the Benefit of All 2018-2023' which highlights their continued focus on their strategy to 'make', 'reach' and 'sustain'.

5.2 The mission stated in 'For the Benefit of All' is '*Making the arts central to the life and wellbeing of the nation*'.

5.3 The priorities identified by the Arts Council of Wales are:

- Promoting Equalities as the foundation of a clear commitment to reach more widely and deeply into all the communities across Wales.
- Strengthening the Capability and Resilience of the arts, enabling creative talent to thrive.
- Enabling the Arts Council of Wales to work more effectively, collaborating more imaginatively with like-minded partners across Wales.

- 5.4 The public consultation on the Arts Council of Wales' Investment Reviews guidance and application ended on October 10<sup>th</sup> 2022 - we await their response to this.
- 5.5 Recent updates at meetings with Arts Council of Wales Officers have highlighted the importance of applications evidencing how they support meeting their priorities.
- 5.6 During the consultation period, the Arts Council announced its intention to assess organisations against the following six criteria:
- Creativity
  - Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
  - Welsh Language
  - Climate Justice
  - Nurturing Talent
  - Transformation
- 5.7 The application process will commence in January 2023 and close in April of that year. The outcome of the Investment Review will be announced in September 2023 with indicative funding agreed in principle (pending the Welsh Government's Budget Settlement). The new Arts Portfolio Wales will commence in April 2024.

## **6. RCT THEATRES: 2023 ONWARDS**

### **6.1 Objectives**

- 6.1.1 It is proposed that RCT Theatres' Arts Council of Wales Investment Review application focuses on the following transformational objectives:
- Engage more deeply with our local communities as partners and drivers of positive change;
  - Reposition Park & Dare Theatre, alongside Treorchy Library as a Cultural Hub invested and embedded in its community and with other public, private and third sector partners;
  - Move beyond compliance to creatively effect positive change in relation to climate justice;
  - Through creativity, create opportunity and drive prosperity for those who live and work in Rhondda Cynon Taf;
  - Become the means through which the community can flourish within a thriving cultural democracy;

- Embed equitable thinking, behaviours, and practice into everything we do.
- 6.1.2 These objectives build upon the service's work with Lisa Baxter of The Experience Business following participation in her 'Designing Public Value with Purpose' programme funded by the Arts Council Wales, , supporting arts venues, artist and communities to develop a deeper understanding of their locality and realise the potential of creativity in helping local communities to flourish.
- 6.1.3 These objectives will ensure that the Park & Dare Theatre, and the Cultural Hub, are fully embedded within their communities, are involving audiences and individuals in its decision making, and are seen as exemplars and leaders in their field.
- 6.1.4 In terms of the wider Arts Service and Coliseum Theatre, the service aims to:
- Cultural Hub Development – developing the Park and Dare Theatre's role alongside that of Treorchy Library as the two buildings that form the first Cultural Hub within Rhondda Cynon Taf, as well as exploring further capital development;
  - Community Engagement – as a result of the 'Designing Public Value with Purpose' programme; realising the public value of the Park and Dare Theatre throughout its surrounding communities and taking the learning to consider a community engagement approach relevant for the Coliseum Theatre;
  - Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2024 – co-creating a professional Welsh language offer for the Maes as well as opportunities for all communities to engage with cultural opportunities at RCT Theatres and across the Borough before, during and after the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol's visit to Rhondda Cynon Taf;
  - Responding to the Climate Emergency – working with partners to explore the use of arts and culture in raising awareness of the Climate Emergency, changing behaviour, and fostering a sense of shared ownership amongst residents, communities and businesses;
  - Building Audiences – developing a dialogue with existing and new audiences to co-create opportunities at RCT Theatres performance spaces, particularly at the Park and Dare Theatre and its Stiwdio 1;

- Explore the realisation of capital ambitions for the Coliseum Theatre in the creation of participation space and a flexible seating auditorium.
- The Take pART Participation Programme will continue to provide opportunities within the Park and Dare Theatre and within community settings across RCT.
- The SONIG Youth Music Industries Young Promoters Network will be delivered as part of the participation programme at RCT Theatres, particularly focused on developing engagement with young people through music within the Park and Dare Theatre's Stiwidio 1.
- The Coliseum Theatre's focus will be as a presenting venue, with a programme consisting of RCT Theatres produced and co-produced work, commercial product and community performances due to its space limitations and the demographic of its surrounding communities.

## **7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

- 7.1 The report is for information purposes only.

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

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment including the socio-economic duty is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only. Any implications to equality will be presented within each of the reports outlined within the work programme.

## **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. Any implications to the Welsh language will be presented within each of the reports outlined within the work programme.

## **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 As an Arts Portfolio Wales client, we are supported to not only contribute to the delivery of the Arts Council of Wales' priorities but also the Council's corporate priorities, 'Prosperity', 'People' and 'Place'.
- 12.2 RCT Theatres will be further enabled to 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 programme and our involvement is consistent with the sustainable approach promoted by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act through the five ways of working:
- Long-term – enabling us to co-create work, engage with our communities and build audiences that seek to achieve a more resilient and sustainable arts and creative industries provision within the County Borough;
  - Prevention – by understanding our community's needs, concerns, opportunities and aspiration, we can provide engagement, participation and performance opportunities that address the early intervention and prevention agenda;
  - Integrated – through community engagement work with key partners and contributing more effectively to a range of local, regional and national strategic priorities in an integrated and coherent way;
  - Collaboration – through creating and working with our communities in collaboration with key artists and arts organisations whose values align with ours and with whom we can work in partnership to achieve our goals;
  - Involvement – developing our creativity and community engagement through consultation, feedback, advisory groups and professional networks.

## **13. CONCLUSION**

- 13.1 This report informs members of the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group on RCT Theatres intended application to the Arts Council of Wales' Investment Review 2023 and its proposed focus for the future.
- 13.2 It is proposed that RCT Theatres Arts Council of Wales Investment Review application focuses on two objectives:

- To Create Art that is ambitious and resonates with individuals & communities in a relevant and sustainable way
  - To engage with individuals and communities so that they can make, co-create and experience art on their own terms
- 13.3 The main focus of the delivery of these two objectives will be at the Creative Hub that is the Park and Dare Theatre and its development as a Cultural Hub alongside Treorchy Library.
- 13.4 Ambitions for the Coliseum Theatre, the key presentation venue, will be explored over the next five years.
- 13.5 The proposed key priorities for RCT Theatres are intended to increase its resilience and sustainability.