

Public Art Development

Summary of the consultation
and our response

December 2011



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Summary of the consultation and our response

Introduction

Our Investment Review committed us to explore a new model for the delivery of the residency programme, which was historically delivered through Cywaith Cymru/Artworks Wales, and subsequently by Safle, the former public art agency for Wales. We also stated our commitment to looking at ways in which the Arts Council of Wales would provide a platform for the advocacy of best practice in the commissioning of public art.

Our approach to the consultation was very much focused on the three areas of activity proposed in the consultation document

*Residencies,
Advocacy/Research,
Commissioning.*

We wanted to stimulate open debate rather than present the sector with a set of specific questions. These key areas had been outlined in the *Renewal and Transformation* document and related to the outcome of the Investment Review, where we said we would

- *"re-focus the artists residency programme – we will take this back 'in house' and deliver it over the period 2011-14 through arrangements with our galleries and venues network."*
- *"advocate and explain the value of public art – we will work with local authorities promoting and advocating a wide range of activity. The Arts Council has well-established structures for liaison and joint-planning with local authorities and with the Welsh Assembly Government. We will also include a new portal on our website relaying information and good practice."*
- *"broker' new opportunities – we'll ensure that potential new projects are matched with the growing body of knowledgeable freelancers who are now based in Wales."*
- *"encourage creative collaboration across the areas of Visual and Applied Art, Architecture, Design and the Environment."*

We held three consultation meetings in each of the regions during the period of the consultation; these were well attended and generated lively debates.

Post the Investment Review, during the early stage of development of our thinking, we researched into other models for the delivery of public art advocacy and research. This led us to develop conversations with ixia, the UK wide public art think tank based in Birmingham. We took the decision to invite Jonathan Banks, Chief Executive of ixia, to present the work of the organisation at all three consultation meetings. The rationale for this was to not only talk about ixia, but also provide a wider context and platform for discussing how the practice in the area of art in the public realm is changing and hence too matters of advocacy and its relevance to Wales.

Council approved an approach to Public art development in its November meeting and this provided the basis for a Framework document which we put out to public consultation.

By the closure of the consultation period 3rd March 2011 we'd received feedback from 25 people in response to the consultation.

25 contributed through written responses:

Revenue Funded Organisations (2010/11)	2
Other organisations	3
Individuals	13
Local Authorities	6

75 people attended consultation meetings held in each of our regions. Of these attendees, 14 also submitted written responses.

Meetings' data	Aberystwyth	Cardiff	Llandudno	Total
Revenue Funded Organisations (2010/11)	1	3	4	8
Other Organisations	2	9	4	15
Local Authorities	1	8	3	12
Individuals	9	17	6	32
Staff	1	5	2	8
Total	14	42	19	75

We'd like to thank everyone who responded to the consultation.

This paper summarises the findings of the consultation and provides an outline of what we believe are the main issues, themes and ideas that arose from these written responses and feed back at the sessions, together with our responses to them. It also provides a steer for the next stage of development.

Both in the submissions and at the meetings, there were specific issues raised in relation to the three programme areas, which are developed later on in this paper. However, there were also more generic issues relating to the overall document.

Respondents and attendees expressed a need for clarification with regards to the definitions used in the framework document across the three areas of the programme; *public art, residencies, commissioning*. It is our intention to refine those terms further as we develop the programme.

Respondents felt that the separation between residency programme and commissioning was unnecessary and clarification was sought to understand the rationale for the distinction between the two programmes. We acknowledge that there is a potential overlap between the residency programme and the commissioning, and that in recent years residency work has on occasion led to commissions, however our view is that the focus at this stage needs to be on the residency programme.

A number of overarching issues were raised in terms of the delivery of the programme. Those came out very strongly from the debates in the three regions, as well as in the written feedback. The discussions focussed mainly on the perceived limited resources, both human and financial:

- the management of the programme internally and relevant knowledge and expertise
- perception that limited finances could equate to a lack of commitment or unrealistic expectations

These are issues that we recognise, and which have been central to our thinking throughout this process. We will continue to discuss these internally in order to identify the appropriate level required to resource the programme. This will continue to be addressed as part of the formulation of the guidelines for the residency programme, as well as the construction of the web portal.

Summary of responses to the key areas of the framework

1. Re-focus the Artists' Residency Programme

We will take this back 'in house' and deliver it over the period 2011-14 through arrangements with our galleries and venues network (Renewal and Transformation).

The overall response to the residency programme propositions was positive with the majority of respondents expressing support and welcoming the strategic and sustained approach to the programme concept and proposed delivery. Although there was an overall positive response to the residency strands of *people, ideas and place*, issues were raised about the time scale attached to the various strands which was seen to be too restricting both in artistic terms as well as the delivery.

The majority of respondents felt that the project management of the residencies was not going to be addressed appropriately through the new model and that the risk would be that artists would not be properly supported. However this was countered by a small number who thought that support to artists could be delivered through other means, rather than via a traditional project manager role.

The partnership led approach was strongly supported but some felt that among the examples mentioned in the consultation document, a number of potential partners such as heritage and arts therapy could also have been included.

Another issue which arose from the discussions at the meetings as well as through the responses concerned the selection processes, from partnerships through to selection of artists.

"Overall I find the proposals and the document very progressive and positive. It feels like if implemented well it should genuinely increase opportunities for both artists and public, connect artists better, and possibly produce higher quality of work."

"Yet nowhere in the document is there any reference to the increased manpower that will inevitably be needed to underpin these strategic imperatives. Given that almost all Public Art 'consciousness-raising' – good, bad or indifferent, depending on one's perspective – was carried out by staff of Saflé in the recent past it is difficult to envisage how ACW can take on so much onerous responsibility, in-house, without a corresponding increase in staffing capacity."

"The idea of developing three interlinking strands in which to contextualise the programme offers a thoughtful and tangible framework that will help to stimulate imaginative proposals for artists and commissioners alike, and one would hope lead to innovative collaborations and outcome."

“There was a separation evident in the demarcation of these three strands. It could be useful to remember that these constructed strands are, in fact, intrinsically linked. The programme overall would benefit from the acknowledgement that they are not firm boundaries between these areas and allow for and expect overlap.”

“The process for selecting projects to receive Residency and Capital funding is unclear and during the first round, especially, it is vital that this selection process is as transparent as possible and the guidelines for selection are well developed and communicated to those working in the sector.”

Our Response:

We note the concerns raised and acknowledge the need for flexibility across the strands. We will ensure that this flexibility is reflected in the final guidelines.

We are firmly of the view that, in the new model, the partnership clusters will need to demonstrate support for artists throughout the process. This is very much central to our thinking and it will need to be reflected in the ethos of the partnerships.

We are committed to developing diverse range of partnerships and will update the framework document appropriately with other categories of potential partners.

In the initial pilot year Arts Council of Wales Senior Officers in Visual and Applied Art will lead on to identifying and brokering partnerships, which will form part of the first year programme. Subsequently the selection process will be in line with guidelines which will be developed and tested.

2. Advocate and explain the value of public art

"We will work with local authorities promoting and advocating a wide range of activity. The Arts Council has well-established structures for liaison and joint-planning with local authorities and with the Welsh Assembly Government. We will also include a new portal on our website relaying information and good practice." (Renewal and Transformation)

Overall, there was a strong concern over the gap which would ensue with the winding up of Safle as the focal point for advocacy. This in turn led to a question of who would lead on this area and how it would be done. Respondents felt there was a lack of clarity over staffing and financial resources within the framework document.

Generally, there was a strong positive response to the presentation given by Jonathan Banks from ixia (the public art think tank organisation based in Birmingham), who spoke about the wider context, both nationally and internationally and outlined a model for the delivery of advocacy and research. There was an overall acknowledgement of the relevance of this work to Wales; however there were clear reservations as to whether ixia could sit comfortably within the Wales context.

As part of the need for the creation of a web portal, there was strong support for undertaking a mapping exercise which would find hot/cold spots, research/identify/define models of best practice in Wales all of which tended to indicate that this had not been formed in recent years and placed in the public domain

A number of respondents expressed the view that there was a need to attract new artists to be involved in the practice of art in the public realm and that this would require a programme of advocacy and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) which also begged the question of who might be seen as a provider of this.

"The closure of Safle – the strategic organisation for public art in Wales, part funded by ACW, in October 2010 has led to a major concern that this very important aspect of the visual arts sector in Wales will become diminished to the point of obscurity as there is no body to provide a strategic view of its future and as other considerations and stronger lobbying groups take hold."

"The absence of any clear indication of resources, financial or in terms of staff time and expertise, questions the ability to deliver this work."

"There is a concern that ixia website will be adopted fully, rather than developing a Wales specific system."

"I welcome the suggestion that ixia Public Art Think Tank could include Wales in its remit and potentially take on the cross sector partnership work...The fact that ixia ...relies on freelancers from across sector to advise and consult could be welcomed, particularly if drawing on expertise that exists in Wales."

"In terms of the website, ACW has a long history of funding public art and residencies in Wales. There is a huge amount written and visual material at your disposal that may be mapped and drawn upon to provide relevant and exemplary case studies for an online resource."

Our Response:

We are committed to developing a resource point online for the dissemination of advocacy but we also recognise that given the limited resources we will need to develop key partnerships and work closely with stakeholders in order to maximise information exchange / knowledge transfer and interactivity.

We are clear that we will want to develop a partnership with ixia, which actively involves the relevant expertise from within Wales and develops mechanisms which enable the growth of the sector in Wales. The development of the portal will be a key tool and a catalyst for the wider dissemination of information.

We will be conducting an initial mapping exercise with ixia and a public art consultant from Wales. We will gather the evidence and use the findings to broker, facilitate future connections. Aside from senior officer time to lead on this, Council has set aside a developmental budget of £30,000 in 2011-12 to establish web-based resources and other advocacy and dissemination activity.

We acknowledge the need to nurture and develop new artists in the field of public art and will endeavour to create the right climate for the growth of new opportunities. We envisage that we will both initiate and partner in the delivery of seminars and CPD events for artists.

3. Broker new opportunities - *we'll ensure that potential new projects are matched with the growing body of knowledgeable freelancers who are now based in Wales (Renewal and Transformation).*

Encourage creative collaboration *across the areas of Visual and Applied Art, Architecture, Design and the Environment (Renewal and Transformation).*

It was generally felt that in the consultation paper the area of commissioning was not as developed as the residencies and the advocacy.

Respondents and attendees commented on the issues of project management and financial resource which straddle across both programmes (residencies and commissioning).

Some respondents raised issues about how the Arts Council was going to advocate for the commissioning of public art in a meaningful and sustainable way.

"The guidelines and logistics of supporting Commissioning is not as developed in the Consultation Paper as the Residency Programme. However, the production of temporary and permanent artworks by visual and applied artists and the interaction and dialogue that these works can generate must also be considered as an integral part of the strategic framework for the development of public art in Wales."

"It is not clear where Arts Council of Wales considers its position to be within these relationships and how it would be able to be 'pro-active in seeking new partnerships and identify new opportunities'."

"Under the new arrangements it isn't clear who will be taking on the advocacy work in persuading local authorities to put public art strategies in place and/or to embed them into planning regulations."

"There is a need to ensure that resources are invested effectively and sustainably, seeking funding partnerships which can not only up-scale projects but increase the quality and range of outputs."

"Whilst it is understood that ACW does not necessarily have the capacity to be involved in art activity, nor may it wish to, nor may it be invited to, the role of ACW itself in providing strong leadership for public arts must be developed and be developed fast."

Our Response:

We need to be realistic and acknowledge that a new model is required, which will promote a more pluralist approach to the dissemination of advocacy and best practice for the commissioning of public art.

We acknowledge the need to provide a platform for Wales based freelance project managers, and will ensure that this is addressed in the new online resource.

We are, working internally to develop a more holistic and pro-active way of encouraging a small number of exemplary public art commissions. We are committed to developing a more joined-up approach between the way in which we support commissions through our own capital programme when its new strategy comes into place and the new programme of residencies. We obviously recognise that opportunities for potential commissions will arise in commercial and other public sector contexts. A first step to routing potential interest we see as residing in the web-based resources we can develop.

4. Consultation and evaluation *is essential over the three years. So rather than the consultation process being a separate strand we believe it is more meaningful for it to be integrated into the main programme of activity with a particular focus on the first year (public Art Consultation document).*

We proposed that ongoing consultation and evaluation of the programme and structure need not be seen as an 'add on' but would be more effectively embedded within the pilot year. This was on the whole well received and seen as a good model of practice.

We proposed the creation of an advisory group to facilitate the consultation/evaluation process, as well as the development of the programme. Again this was well received; however clarification was sought in relation to the terms of reference for the group.

Furthermore respondents wanted more clarity about the mechanisms for evaluation and expressed the need for clear guidelines. A key question was, who will evaluate and what will they evaluate? Is it the development of the programme structure or individual projects?

"We agree that advocacy, research and strategies are often most useful when they are demonstrated and carried out through practice and as actions and reflective processes, they also form an integral part of consultation and evaluation."

"Arts Council of Wales also perceives that consultation and evaluation is an essential tool regarding the 'health and wellbeing' of the sector, which is admirable. They talk of an advisory group which if it has genuine status within Arts Council of Wales and the sector and can be a forum for dialogue and advocacy, then it has significant possibilities and influence."

"I would like to see in the document greater clarity about the purpose and form of evaluation. At present the document tends to confuse or co-mix evaluation of the process of public art development and evaluation of public art projects."

Our Response:

We are confident that the concept of embedding consultation/evaluation in development of the programme structure will allow us to maintain clear direction and communication. This will not only be delivered through the advisory group but also via the portal and proposed CPD events and symposia.

The formulation of the advisory group is part of the next stage. We will be drawing up terms of reference with a view to having an advisory group in place in the coming months recruited in an accountable manner.

We acknowledge that the evaluation of projects is crucial and that this needs to be embedded in the development of the projects from the onset. We will explore the possibilities of an HE partner interested in research models to evaluate impact of art in the public realm.

5. Recommendations for next stage of development of the programme

- Commissioning the mapping exercise in response to the calls expressed in the consultation. Significantly this is felt as a necessary gap needing to be filled in order to inform further work. There is no current directory to draw on as a legacy from the previous agencies. And with so much change in the public sector, establishing this knowledge base in the current context is needed.
- Agree the terms of an initial partnership with ixia for the development of the advocacy framework and the way this will work in the context of Wales.
- Develop the framework for the web portal internally
- Agree the overall time frame for the pilot year with milestones
- Establish the internal mechanism for the delivery of the programme in the first year
- Continue to research and establish the initial partnership clusters for the launch of the programme
- Create the guidelines for the residency programme.
- Establish the advisory group
- Agree on an appropriate time for the launch of the programme
- Deliver first raft of projects, leveraging in partnership contributions
- Establish timeframe for a first symposium

Respondents to the consultation:

Lynne Denman

Cyngor Gwynedd

Rachel Rosen

Theatr Bara Caws

Elbow Room

RCT

Chris Coppock

Carmarthenshire County Council

Brenda Oakes

Engage Cymru

Emma Geliot

Patricia Aithie

Nia Roberts

Shelagh Hourahane

Newport City Council

Vale of Glamorgan Council

Wiard Sterk

Clwyd Theatr Cymru

Powys County Council

Sarah Pace & Tracy Simpson

South Wales Regional Committee Members

Catrin Cooke

Polly Mason, Member of the Carmarthen Public Art Group & Volunteer at the National Botanic Garden of Wales

Ffion Lloyd, Head of Continuing Learning and Leisure