

Arts Council of Wales

INSPIRE...

Our strategy for Creativity
and the Arts in Wales

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INSPIRE...

Our strategy for Creativity and the Arts in Wales

A mission to inspire

Challenging times call for determined action. It's more important than ever we continue to promote – with courage, imagination and optimism – what at the heart sustains, invigorates and enriches our lives.

That's what the arts are all about.

At the Arts Council, (<http://www.artswales.org/about-us>) our vision is of a creative Wales where the arts are central to the life of the nation. Together in Wales, we are embarked on an extraordinary journey. The destination is a Wales that is a creative country through and through. We see the arts as fundamental to the future of Wales - not a "nice to have" luxury, more a cornerstone in Wales's 21st century renewal.

This is a creativity rooted locally in the community and projected internationally in arts that have come to define Wales to the rest of the world.

The foundations of that creativity lie in the very stuff of imagination, human achievement and human possibility. It's what we look to our artists to create and it's what enjoying and taking part in the arts does for us – this revealing of human potential, and the creation of what we can call human 'capital'.

A united sense of purpose

We're ambitious for the arts in Wales. Our strategy aims to build a place where our best talents are revealed, nurtured and shared. So we set out our approach here to what the arts in Wales can be over the coming five years. We say what Council, our governing body, wants to achieve and the consensus that we hope to build amongst those who share our goals. For those seeking our support, the 10 Challenges set out later in this strategy provide the focus that will drive our funding and developmental decisions.

Our strategy is about creative ambition and endeavour in the arts; the need for the arts to connect and engage; and the skill needed to ensure that the impact of what the arts achieve renews itself and lasts.

Our strategy is straightforward – it’s summed up in just three words:

- **Make** –
- **Reach** –
- **Sustain** –

Simple, yes, but these words are invested with meaning.

We’re interested in the way that these meanings fuse powerfully together – reinforcing each other in a single thrust of purpose. We see making reaching and sustaining as components working together, mutually reinforcing each other, intertwined.

Making art, ensuring it connects and giving it a durable legacy are all part of the same picture.

When we talk about **Make**, we mean artistic creation. We want to foster an environment for our artists and arts organisations so they can create their best work. Because if we **Make** well, we inspire.

And if we inspire, people get it. They want it and value it. So we must inspire the people of Wales to enjoy and take part in the best that our nation has to offer. Because we believe that actually the experience of art only happens when that chord is struck – when what is made, connects.

This is at the heart of our ability to **Reach**, and crucially to reach further than before.

And if in doing this, something of worth is created in what is made or who is embraced, then we should ask how we protect and **Sustain** these things in ways that work economically and that can endure.

All the time, the goal is Wales - the creative country.

A different type of strategy

The ideas that define this strategy come directly from what people have been telling us. We have also used our judgement in working out where the Arts Council should best place its efforts and resources in the future.

However, what follows is not a prescriptive list of what we’ll do over the next five years. Neither is it particular to any one artform.

This is a significant change of approach.

It’s not that suddenly we’re not interested in music, or theatre, or the visual arts considered singly and in their own right. Of course we are. They’re not the starting point for this strategy. Single artform strategies drove achievements in past times, but

stood in isolation from what now are the broader challenges, actions and impacts of the arts taken as a whole.

An enabling strategy – which is what we want this to be – doesn't control or constrain. It lets the arts in Wales be defined by the imagination of the artist, rather than by the label of type or category. We want to recognise too that creative practice – and the work that artists want to do – crosses art boundaries as much as it is delineated by them.

We'll set the broad parameters for our public and accountable role in investment and support. It should be for the artist and our arts companies and organisations to flesh out how their work will contribute in this bigger picture. We ask those who seek our support and involvement to share our views and to think through how their ideas present a compelling investment case.

We're aware that this new approach depends on our continuing ability to listen and to engage – to debate, share and collaborate with those who feel as passionately as us about developing the arts in Wales. It will also be necessary for us to continue to research, stimulate and support new thinking. We'll explain why, in a changing and challenging world, we choose to emphasise some things above others. And we'll continue to look at and nurture an arts' ecology particular and distinctive to Wales.

Making meaning: Wales as a bi-lingual culture

On the threshold of the new millennium Wales found itself plunged anew into redefinition. As it emerged from the industrial and rural society that had defined it in the 20th century, it looked to a new civic identity through state devolution, new economic challenges and the dynamic of establishing a truly bi-lingual contemporary lived culture.

We're a bi-lingual nation – legally, socially, culturally, and as individuals and communities. And nothing makes Wales more distinctive than the Welsh Language.

The language provides the means to understand and enjoy an extraordinarily rich literature and culture. We make sense of our identity through the languages that we speak. We take pride in belonging to a community that identifies itself through the words that convey its cultural beliefs and experiences.

The Arts thrive on this exploration of the lived experience. And our vision embraces the fact that we're many 'Wales', culturally, geographically, economically and linguistically. If Art can capture this, then the possession and extension of the Welsh language becomes one of the keys to unlock the connective strands within our common culture.

The Welsh and English languages don't stand each in isolation. That's why we're also interested in works that boldly and imaginatively explore the to and fro between languages –the tensions, connections and interactions between them, and how the one influences and shapes the other and increasingly acts in an arena of language diversity.

So we'll promote vigorously the expectation that people have, that they can explore the richness of their own culture, their own creativity through the language of their choice, whether as audience, participant or artist.

In an increasingly globalised world, we see the Welsh language, alongside English, as a basic civic attribute as well as an inherited culture. If it's to flourish and grow, the Welsh language and culture will look to innovation and responsiveness – to reflect the global trends and changes that guarantee relevance and usefulness. As a dynamic source that feeds and inspires, we welcome what comes from tradition, but not as an excuse for introversion, conventionality or complacency.

It is significant that vibrant bi-lingualism is seen with envy in other parts of the world where languages cling on or become learned not lived. This attribute will be essential to the vitality and originality of the Arts in Wales.

The Arts depend on the fresh flow of new ideas. And this includes new thinking that's conceived, developed and shared through the medium of Welsh. That's a creative challenge for all Welsh artists regardless of their traditional language of communication. Since Wales's linguistic identity is a common inheritance it's not the exclusive concern of practitioners through the medium of Welsh – it's something that should excite artists be they located in Blaenau Gwent or Blaenau Ffestiniog.

And we want to see the confidence and vitality displayed in work produced in Wales projected widely. As our artists have proved, Welsh language material can travel to Australia and Taiwan and India and hold its own on an international stage, finding resonance with seemingly disparate audiences. The culture of Wales is a world culture and this is the arena it needs to operate in locally and internationally.

Investing in the imagination

Art does not teach conformity, it questions, challenges and surprises. And we look to our artists to see beyond the obvious and the superficial – to use their insight and intuition, their most inquisitive curiosity, and to express through their talents and skills, the perceptions that will lead us to a deeper and more rooted understanding of the world around us or move us onto a different plane of experience. An Arts Council invests in imagination.

Why should this matter?

All societies at all ages in human evolution have sought expression and communication appropriate to the times. All societies have looked to both their reality and their imagination to help them to live... and to live better. Art opens out possibilities new horizons.

A successful, vibrant, interesting Wales is unimaginable without the arts. One of the key routes through which Wales will reinvent itself in the 21st century, lies precisely in the arts and creativity – a new investment in human potential. In the past, Wales saw its raw materials extracted to fuel economies elsewhere other than its own. Today the arts can be a home-grown source of inward investment in the potential of the country now.

Art is of course a moving target, constantly transgressing boundaries and refusing fixed definitions. The old comparisons between high art and popular culture with its zero sum game of polarities – excellence or accessibility, subsidised or market led, high or low – have always been contested and are now mostly irrelevant. Today's creative industries blur those boundaries to both stimulate new ideas and feed marketable skills – from publishing to design, architecture to broadcasting – the arts directly and indirectly contribute enormously to our common culture.

It's inconceivable, then, that our strategy would not recognise the central role within our everyday lives of those areas of activity that straddle the subsidised and the commercial. We're as concerned with the fledgling as with the fully formed - the future of a young band on the verge of its first record deal as we are with theatres, orchestras and opera companies; and as interested in the playwright as the screenwriter for film or television.

With the broader embrace of culture within contemporary life and with our conviction about the creative stimulus provided by the arts, we'll continue to look for the particular qualities that exemplify the best of the arts – those characteristics which mark the work out as distinctive, relevant, compelling and enduring. And we'll be passionate in our commitment to ensuring that vibrant living arts practice remains at the heart of what we exist to encourage.

Nothing around us that is designed or conceived is possible without the make believe of the arts.

Investing in potential

We're not interested in the dull or the routine, the formulaic. Why would we be?

We're passionate about investing in work that excites and inspires. We're particularly interested in the new and contemporary – work that seeks out and engages wider audiences. Because without the living arts, culture risks becoming a museum for recycled works, and a showcase for reproduced interpretations of the cultural

traditions of the past. So we're particularly interested in the 'now' of art – work that's alive before us and present in the moment.

We won't be afraid, when appropriate, to take risks. And we'll expect those who we invest in to do the same – not haphazardly or irresponsibly, but knowingly and confidently, equipped with the best instincts, knowledge and expertise. Our vision of the future depends on it. Because if we push beyond our comfort zones, with courage and curiosity, we might just bring into sharper focus Art that is different, challenging, and perhaps more interesting.

From potential we can help build capability; and from capability – being good at what you do, the door opens wider on pushing further.

We need that encouragement of exploration if the arts are to remain healthy and alive. And we need it to be clear sighted and well grounded, particularly coming from an organisation or company we fund. Qualities of imagination and inventiveness in how work is realised all begin to touch on if not revolve around ideas of sustainability and all that is involved in the approach to sustainability.

Make, Reach and Sustain -

Our 10 Creative Challenges

We are optimistic about the future of the arts, but there's a lot to do. As we have discussed and consulted on our ideas, it has become clearer that we face some real and significant challenges.

Our strategy is based on the 10 challenges that appear to us to be especially acute.

1. Creating the right environment for the artist and the arts to flourish

Fish are only as healthy as the water they swim in. Artists and arts organisations need a supportive environment to prosper. We'll play a clearer and more entrepreneurial role in identifying, nurturing and promoting our country's best creative talent across all kinds of art, media and interdisciplinary work.

We know we can provide support at key moments in an artist's career. Whether working singly or together, locally or globally, our goal is to create the circumstances in which our artists can pursue viable sustainable careers from a Welsh base.

Our support for the individual artist will continue to be built on developing the foundations of our Creative Wales and Creative Wales Ambassadors and production grants, and the existing support that we offer for training and in-career development. We want to go further.

We want to see more creative partnerships forged between artists and arts venues, encouraging those venues to provide the advice, facilities and resources that artists need to develop their work.

The special skills and capabilities that artists have enable them to work in a variety of settings and disciplines. The right artist will be as comfortable working on an urban planning team as they would be in a community setting, school or college.

This will require us to help creative networks to flourish.

Increasingly, artists are now working alongside cultural entrepreneurs and creative producers. We need to foster the development of both artists and such producers in Wales. We foresee developing the possibilities for artists linked to our already established relationships with Higher Education and our need to make more links to Further Education.

Only by making this investment in the development of high calibre artists and building the capabilities of creative producers across all disciplines, working locally and

globally, will we reap the reward in new ideas, innovation, new perceptions and sheer entertainment that contemporary Wales merits and crucially retain and renew the creative pool of talent working in the country.

2. Being fit for Purpose

In recent years we have re-focused the group of companies and organisations we regularly fund. We placed greater emphasis on their possibilities for creating and hosting new artistic work.

The Arts Council will continue this support of companies and organisations to enable them to make the best work that they can. We'll also want to encourage the ways in which making something can also be about shared learning through opening out the creative process to others. This generosity of spirit in making creative work is seen as a vital way to build the community that is supportive and involved in the work made.

We'll be flexible over the patterns of work that companies, galleries and organisations propose.

The Arts Council will put obvious emphasis on how the final work connects with people but it will also support approaches to work which use the appropriate research and development phase to deepen and strengthen a company or organisations' work and help build the appropriate collaborations for making this work.

We're especially interested in those projects and initiatives that find new places for the action of the arts, fostering the exchange of ideas and conjuring up the unexpected. Venues will assert the need to mixed economies in what they offer, but an Arts Council won't want this to translate into cultural complacency when the challenge is to offer the experience of the arts as promoting change and reflection in contemporary Welsh society.

The pattern of regular funding is unlikely to be extended in the coming years and yet it is culturally important that people with new ambitions can come through and assert themselves and their new and fresh voices.

And we look to the quality and panache of our Festivals as a regular meeting point for the internationally renowned and what can be celebrated as special in Wales. We have shifted investment into our Festival scene putting a premium on the unique characteristics of particular Festivals and what they are reputed for, the way they are shaped and the way can demonstrate distinctive content in a UK and European context. Our leading Festivals are, and need to be, unique to Wales.

3. Leading from the front – our National organisations

For a small nation we have high performing national companies who have a challenging remit to produce great work and connect across the country. The challenge is to do this in a credible and meaningful way, delivering real engagement and involvement with communities across Wales in the excellent work that they do.

Each national company needs to start from the question 'how are we national?'

Wales and its three million people have a right to ask not just how national companies exemplify their flagship designation, but how do they connect with people in Wales, bind them into what they have to offer, and how is what they do of the utmost relevance. All our national companies are passionate and highly accomplished in what they do. The challenge in the coming period is for them to touch even more lives than they have done to date.

National organisations remain at the heart of the Arts Council's strategy. They matter in and of themselves, but also for what they signify. For many people – especially those outside Wales – the reputation of our national organisations is a barometer of the strength and vibrancy of our country's arts.

Whilst the performing arts have flagship national companies, there are other areas of our national life without a fully-fledged 'national' entity. Five years ago discussion focussed around the need for a national centre for the visual arts. In the interim, the National Museum has extended its space and created welcome additional capacity for exhibiting the contemporary visual arts. The wider need remains. There is huge national potential in the contemporary visual arts and crafts and important aspect of our strategy over the coming period must be to explore how to bring about a sustainable appropriate national platform for the visual and applied arts.

We'll continue to support the Film Agency as a national organisation in its aims aligned to the Arts Council's of fostering talent and opportunities, exploiting digital platforms for Film and increasing the potential for the exhibition of film.

For our national companies being national is a responsibility, not an assumed right. It brings with it a particular obligation to be an exemplar in every way: creating work of national and international significance; showing leadership in developing the arts in Wales; nurturing the partnerships and relationships that will develop new artists; building the arts audiences of the future. It is clear that the nationals have a pivotal role in making, reaching and sustaining...certainly when looked at from within the companies themselves, but also when looked at externally from the perspective of their role as nationals.

If our national companies occupy a pre-eminent role in the cultural life of the nation, they do so only because they represent a pinnacle in terms of the creative reputation

of a country and as an outcome of their interface with the endeavours of a wide range of other talents, creators and creative producers in national life. We want to encourage this involvement so that it feels within and beyond the country that work of our nationals is 'minted' in Wales.

4. Making more of our arts' buildings

In Wales we have a network of leading arts centres and galleries threaded around areas of population. Beyond that network are traditions of Valleys towns and the legacy of halls for performing and educative Institutes and community facilities founded from the convictions of the industrial working population of the past. Further to that are networks of rural halls and market town facilities, some with recent developments signalling a focus on community renewal. Some major centres of population still have gaps in this respect and are missing the focal point an arts centre can provide.

At their best, these organisations not only pursue excellence in all that they do, they are also inseparable from the communities in which they're located and to which they relate.

For many people in Wales, their routine engagement with the arts is through one of the country's key galleries, arts centres or theatre spaces. Promoting diverse programmes of high quality activity, these organisations act as cultural entrepreneurs, commissioning and curating new work, exploiting this work (through touring or co-commissioning), and providing the space, opportunities and services that help artists to develop and grow their work.

Such arts centres have developed and reinvented themselves, and will need to continue to do so particularly down the path of their social engagement and their appetite to build their constituency. Many recognise that they are as much a social as a cultural hub and that the two are indivisible. We support this emphasis on community connection. These are organisations that are arts led and audience focused, with spaces owned and inhabited by the communities in which they are embedded. These are arts organisations that understand the role they play in local communities and work hard to build their own distinctive sense of place. Their brief we see is one of creative community renewal - something you can feel and see when you experience the building and what it has to offer.

5. Wales in the world

Being both indigenous and international are these days far from incompatible. Our culture from Wales, our stories, will chime with others, and can strike chords around

the world. New work created and produced in Wales can patently hold its own in international arenas. And work from beyond the country that is relevant for us to see and experience here in Wales, needs to provide the regular benchmark and proving ground for our own quality of production. With partners, we have sought out and delivered such catalytic events as the international world music trade fair, WOMEX 13, to generate new possibilities for our artist musicians.

We have begun to look more strategically at our presence across the arts on the world stage in Biennales, Festivals and Showcases and what they can yield for artists, organisations and companies.

We'll attract activity into the country that benefits the arts in Wales. Wales needs to be "open for business", getting its share of the high-profile international market in cultural conferences, related trade fairs and major cultural events and tours. We need to be competing internationally, winning events for Wales and working on what Wales can create for itself that will pull the eyes of the world to Wales.

Critically, we need to support work to be able to develop internationally for reasons of cultural connectivity and the sustainability of careers. Culture in the language, Culture in its engagement, Culture in its diversity from Wales, needs to be more of a calling card. It will signal our values, our creativity and our ambition. And if showcasing internationally is to become more of a theme across the range of our creative practice, then we need to build up the supportive structure for production within Wales and our ability to benchmark what goes on here against the best and most relevant to Wales of international work.

We know that international initiatives and partnerships are forged by small companies and established institutions, by individual artists as well as large organisations. Many of Wales's artists and arts organisations are internationally significant in their own right, and there's more to be done in opening new markets for their work, and developing their role as cultural ambassadors for Wales.

The 'bread and butter' activity will be through the collaborations, projects, networks communication and exploitation of digital connectivity. And through Wales Arts International, the international arm of the Arts Council, we'll develop our partnership with the Welsh Government, the British Council, other Wales' based partnerships and our European collaborators to ensure that artists from Wales are visible in key international arenas.

The excellence and creativity of Wales's arts contributes powerfully to the development of our cultural, creative and economic relations with the rest of the world.

6. More people creating, enjoying and taking part in the arts

Our research and survey work shows us that audiences for and participants in the arts are becoming more diverse. We know too that access to the arts is still hugely unequal for all kinds of social, economic, geographical and financial reasons.

We want more people in Wales to be able to choose to make the arts a part of their lives. We know the arts in Wales will be stronger, more exciting and more relevant if they include more people. The arts still tend to be seen as for the most privileged in society. We need to change this. For some the place of the arts is unquestioned and economically and socially it seems natural to them. For others the arts continue to feel alien, remote, not for them, beyond their experience or marginal to their concerns. We know that given real community engagement, it is rare for people not to see what working through the arts offers them, when they get involved. Our job must be to multiply the occasions this becomes possible for people. Wales has long experience of such high quality transformative engagement with communities, but a patch work of how and where this has been achieved. We also have examples in recent years of projects of some scale in communities which have driven new experiences of what the arts can be.

We're also clear that these issues of the reach of the arts are also a fundamental part of advancing Equalities. Addressing obligations in these areas will underpin our future work – in the funds and services that we offer, and in the way that we manage our affairs. We need to make sure our funding supports different kinds of arts and reaches a greater range of artists and communities.

We're committed to addressing these inequalities. More than this, we'll constantly be looking to build on the momentum diversity and the equalities agenda offer for the development of the arts, since in our view this embrace of equalities is one of the dynamic factors for change in the arts. Matters may be enshrined in law and that's important, but beyond that, we recognise the motor force for a culture that results from making the most of inclusivity and diversity in its arts.

We'll work with the organisations we fund to help them build inclusion and equalities into their work and support training in this area. We'll foreground best practice in this area and seek inroads through those whom we fund as organisations to articulate this agenda more strongly as a characteristic of their approach.

Our vision is of an arts sector in Wales that's naturally inclusive and diverse, and more vibrant, exciting and relevant because of this.

7. Nurturing young talent, lighting the spark

Nothing is more iniquitous and unacceptable than the theft of life chances from our young people.

From a young age now Literacy and Numeracy are seen to underpin academic success. Success in life depends on more – the integration of Creativity.

Our strategy over the next five years will pioneer ways in which more schools can draw on exciting resources and practice derived from the arts. We have been particularly successful and will want to continue ways in which organisations we fund have developed innovatory programmes with young people - particularly those falling between the cracks in the current system.

Young people have never been in a society before which teems with so much imagery and sound, a sensory assault...this demands new ways of learning and the fostering of different ways of sharing and building experience and delivering a sense of self-respect and worth...we're persuaded that new ways of educating for new talents and ways of working are going to emerge and we'll be looking to see that what the arts have to offer is maximised since we can see that they offer much that can unleash young peoples' potential. It's about helping education achieve its goals but also helping education re-define those goals.

We know that an active engagement with the arts can transform the way children and young people learn and explore the world around them. It can change the way they see themselves – even what they dream of for the future – as well as helping them to develop the self-respect and worth that will be such an important part of their life skills for the future.

The arts can nurture a young person's ability to question and make connections, to develop the capacity for independent, critical thought. They can inspire young people with new ambition and confidence, challenging poverty of aspiration and breaking the cycle of deprivation. This can be the key that unlocks the door to further and higher education, and in time employment.

Our new approach called Young Creators, focuses on two objectives: supporting our young people to develop their creative talents; and, fostering an environment in which that talent can be identified, inspired, nurtured and celebrated. We want to see more attention given to young people learning through the experience of doing, inspired by the opportunity to work alongside our professional artists and arts organisations.

We want as many young people as possible in Wales to believe that the opportunity is there for them to be the best they can – or want – to be, performing with their peers at the highest level, celebrating and demonstrating their creative talents. Above all else, we want young people to have the opportunity to enjoy and take part in creative activity that they find relevant, contemporary, and exciting.

A Review of Arts and Education commissioned by the Welsh Government promotes Creativity as the essential third strand to the twin strands of Literacy and Numeracy. It challenges Government to place the arts at the heart of the school curriculum and to commit to identifying and rewarding high performing schools. It challenges the Arts Council to harness the power of the arts to reinvigorate the school day and through ambitious professional development to re-ignite the creativity of teachers themselves. We intend to meet that challenge.

8. Putting communities first

Deprivation is often about poverty of aspiration as much as material circumstances. In the arts we believe that participating, experiencing, discovering and sharing are empowering.

The profoundest challenge posed to us by the Welsh Government is to ensure that the wealth of the arts and their experience is accessed by more people. This way of making the arts more engaging means different sorts of projects, different connections with people. The arts as part of celebrations, the arts as part of planning, the arts as a way of protesting, the arts as part of cementing, the arts as breaking out, the arts as surprising, contradicting, gainsaying.

This is how what we support should be working. If the art is good we know it has never reached all the audience it could, but this has to be energetically embraced by companies and organisations. Our strategy will look to support individuals, companies and organisations to extend their reach and think more ambitiously about extending the community for their work.

In Wales, the best community arts activity has a strong and distinct character. For us, it's about change, authorship and ownership – that remarkable ability of the skilled arts professional to work alongside individuals and communities, finding their voice, unlocking a new dimension of experience that would otherwise have remained unused or undiscovered. This is what we're interested in. Work which empowers and connects – work which is unique, authentic and life affirming, work which at its best is genuinely transformational.

We expect our work in this area to contribute positively to the implementation of the Government's Child Poverty and Families First strategies, tackling the theft of the life chances of too many of our citizens.

In localities, the partnership between the Arts Council of Wales and local government provides the foundation of the arts in Wales. Between us, we have the potential to touch the lives of everyone in Wales. Local authorities bring to the table their local knowledge, broad range of responsibilities, their citizen focused delivery and their democratic representation. The Arts Council brings specialist expertise and a national

and international perspective on arts practice and development. Both of us provide funding and investment that funds creative activity. It's a powerful combination.

Local Authorities face years now of the most extreme pressure on their discretionary spend beyond the services which they are obliged to provide. This is going to demand wholesale re-thinking of arts in localities. Nobody has neat financial solutions to plug gaps opening up in the way matters have been ordained to date. It could lead to profound disinvestment in arts particularly in localities and certainly in patterns that appeared well established. An Arts Council must look to working with local authority partners as they and others in the localities try to establish new and different local approaches against the background, too, of potentially wholesale strategic re-configuration of local authorities in Wales.

9. Making new places

Wales has embarked on a process of re-invention for the 21st century...this is seen both in the physical and social renewal around regeneration.

The arts can foster new ways in addressing community empowerment and good design and imaginative planning.

The arts illuminate and give life to the wide range of strategies that underpin civic life. From arts and health to cultural tourism, public art to town centre and community regeneration, the arts bring meaning, authenticity and joy to our everyday lives. The arts create and sustain jobs, enrich education services, bring people together, enhance communities' well-being, and improve our quality of life.

So we 'regenerate' communities and places. Yet in most cases what we really mean is 'generation' – starting afresh in the here and now, creating new models of enterprise, social cohesion and well-being for communities that need to define themselves in the present, not the past. It is this new thinking that we are especially keen to encourage, even if for ease of reference we continue to talk about Regeneration.

Our work around Art in the Public Realm has convinced us that we need to pay more attention to the meeting point between people, art, architecture, environment and design. We believe that well designed schemes, ones developed with engagement, creativity and imagination, are more likely to win community support, promote social well-being and encourage more sustainable economic development. In short, we want to promote a creative approach to regeneration. And if we are serious about making a difference, we need to embrace (and integrate) the disciplines that inform good design.

Climate change and environmental protection are amongst the most urgent issues of our time. We want to help the arts sectors in understanding and addressing these

issues, and to ensure that we demonstrate active leadership in helping to shape the cultural and creative industries for the future.

A truly intelligent approach to sustainability will extend beyond environmental concerns, important though they are, to embrace the cultural, economic and social considerations that sustain our sense of resilience and well-being.

More generally, the Arts Council will look to refresh its whole thinking around advocacy and how to deploy advocacy – what to be talking about, what knowledge we can draw on, how to make the telling points, who to partner in common endeavours, and how we might communicate effectively to raise debate and influence thinking and perceptions.

10. Our digital times

Creativity will permeate all areas of our social and economic activity in the future. Creativity reaches beyond the realm of arts and culture, though they are its natural nurturing ground. Creativity is a skill that can be used to bring innovative solutions to familiar problems, and encourage new ways of thinking across all sectors. The successful economies of the future will be those that can capitalise on their creative potential. Creativity can have many positive benefits, helping income generation, growth and employment to enabling social inclusion. It puts people and skills – ‘human capital’ – at its core. In today’s society this is as critical as any other economic resource.

Such an approach is what sustains the creative industries – those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.

Key to this exploitation will be the imaginative and innovative use of new digital technologies.

Digital connectivity brings access – provided you are connected – to virtually any type of content. Film, music, games, books and news journalism can all be viewed from the comfort of your mobile phone. The morning commuter sits on the train buried in their book – hard back, paper back, or ‘i-backed’.

Technology is getting smaller, cheaper, more powerful, pervasive and personal. It’s also becoming more interactive, and it’s changing the way that we ‘consume’ content. Thanks to the web, we’ve become accustomed to being able to get whatever we want, whenever we want it, delivered directly to the platform we choose. So it’s essential, if they’re to thrive in this competitive market-place, that media businesses in Wales are able to offer the kind of convenience, flexibility and choice that people now have in

other aspects of their lives.

The internet is no longer just a digital notice-board, it's a social and cultural space. We've moved from communicating through e-mail to embracing My Space, Facebook and Twitter. Technology is increasingly making it possible to create content and engage with it in new ways. This presents both opportunities and challenges for content producers. The expectations of the generations growing up in a digital world are very different from those that preceded it. Low-cost technology is offering new ways for the rapid exchange of views, ideas and content as well as new business models.

Digital presents all sorts of possibilities in its own right for the making of art and opens up whole new means to ends. Some traditional and familiar tasks are transformed and wholly new possibilities are opened out. We will want to make sure our arts sector in Wales builds its capability and is innovating and path-finding some of those new possibilities.

Make ...Reach... Sustain...

Make

encompasses everything that we do to support artists, companies and organisations to make their best work and create art of real quality. Making art, sharing art, being part of it – on our own, in the community, in performance, on film, off the page, in the gallery, in our imagination, in our lives – this is when art works, when it connects inspirationally, individually, collectively. The Arts Council's background role needs to be around influencing the formation of artists and sustaining careers. We envisage a growing role in encouraging routes for a creative talent to begin to define itself from a young age. Beyond that we can identify a clutch of opportunities beyond an artist's initial professional formation which will determine whether an artist can make a career based in Wales. This turns in part on our venues' involvement with artists and their programming and work with artists. It hinges too on production support and support for professional development of individuals and companies. An artist in any discipline needs a critical mass of activity to support their work and maybe a "portfolio" career. Our work will focus on the growth and development of our Creative Wales Awards and other patterns of support to individuals. We also need to help foster the right sort of stimulating networks and opportunities for creative encounters and collaborations. An Arts Council can helpfully support aspects of getting work in the arts to market and to audiences with a view to artists developing sustainable and independent careers. An Arts Council can grow and support the production and presentation possibilities within Wales but it also increasingly needs to help art from Wales to be "export ready" and internationally connected. Models for our support are set to evolve beyond subsidy, into loans, and stakeholder investment. In our revenue funded organisations we will continue to support annual programmes of ambitious creative work.

What we will be doing:

Make...

- **Make...** we will place a greater emphasis on our support to artists, investing in the creative individual, helping them to develop their work, skills, and potential
- **Make ...**we will invest in arts organisations and projects that develop creative talent
- **Make ...**we will focus on initiatives that create business opportunities for artists and companies to get to market or open up new possibilities for their work.

We will do more to exploit the potential of showcases, providing more opportunities for the arts of Wales to be seen and heard

- **Make...**we will deepen our links with Higher Education and Further Education, creating focussed partnerships that research and support the ideas and projects that develop artistic careers and types and content of artistic work.
- **Make...**we will encourage initiatives that support makers – via studios, resources, technology, rehearsal, development and incubation spaces. We are particularly keen to support artists through their early and mid-career opportunities, helping to retain and grow the artistic base in Wales.
- **Make...**we will continue our support to companies and organisations creating new and engaging work and support the circumstances for the creation and development of this work.
- **Make ...**we will support ambitious programming, encouraging audiences to enjoy and take part in a wider range of activity.
- **Make...**we will encourage the pairing of artists to organisations in mutually beneficial relationships.
- **Make...**we will support a measure of international work to come to Wales to provide requisite exposure to work that can be influential and can benchmark what we do here.
- **Make...**we will focus on networking and joining up, promoting the opportunities, virtual and real, which help to foster new and productive relationships for artists, organisations and companies, in Wales and beyond Wales.
- **Make...**we will proactively develop the dynamic of creative diversity in contributing to the fulfilment of the potential of the arts.
- **Make...**we will be an energetic delivery partner in nationwide arts and cultural initiatives and in Festivals growing the cultural offer of Wales and the platform they offer both for artists and audiences.
- **Make...** we will explore hosting arts events which can act as catalysts for significant challenge and development of our arts in Wales.

Reach

The challenge is how can artists, organisations, the Council itself, realise exponential change here in the coming years? As continued recession and economic and social challenges bite, we can our ability to engage and reach faltering just at the point when the challenge is to reach out further and not be satisfied with the established audience for the arts or the ways art can be made. The potential is, as ever, greater than the actuality.

To **Reach** is to touch, to engage, to encounter. It is also, in some sense, a determination to go beyond the easy and the obvious, to remove the impediments that might otherwise form a barrier. And if the benefits of the arts are so important and life enhancing, it must be axiomatic that in a fair and tolerant society such benefits should be available to all.

It is fundamentally a new discourse of a nation and its sense of what it is about. It's about projects where the canvas has the possibility to involve lots of people in co-creation of sorts. We have seen audiences and participants grow over recent years driven by quality of work and engagement as well as strategic audience initiatives. Our community arts organisations have long been involved in imaginative engagement and social regeneration. How do we create more cumulative effects; more critical mass, more joining up of what can be disparate and isolated pockets of activity?

To deliver reach means making the best use of new media and technologies to drive this potential through digital connectivity.

And Equalities must be at the heart of our future work. Equalities are a moral, a cultural, a creative and a social, imperative.

What we will be doing:

Reach...

- **Reach...** we will tackle the barriers to engagement and foster the widest inclusion for the people of Wales to access the arts. Our Strategic Equality Plan provides the framework that will guide our actions. We will be looking for positive action to foster change here in ourselves and in those we support and fund.

- **Reach...Literacy, Numeracy... and Creativity.** We will collaborate with the Welsh Government on the recommendations of the Government commissioned Arts and Education Review. This will mean far-reaching ambitious initiatives to address the part arts and creativity can play in young lives and their futures.
- **Reach...**we will work with partners to open out a programme of work focussing on changing prospects particularly for those young people in danger of economic inactivity coming out of school, helping them find new possibilities and confidence through the arts.
- **Reach ...**we will work with young people to identify and create a celebratory festival like event around their creativity
- **Reach...**we will put a premium on imaginative work created for young people.
- **Reach...**we will encourage and support the transformational arts work advanced by our community arts organisations
- **Reach...** we will support innovative and creative uses of technology, helping artists to fully exploit the potential of new digital platforms in promoting and distributing their work
- **Reach...** we will work particularly with our Revenue Funded organisations – our portfolio of key arts organisations – to develop audience building initiatives and social engagement and the understanding of audiences and organisations' connectivity to their communities and publics.
- **Reach...** we will develop our work to connect arts and people through creative partnerships with Local Authorities and Communities First.
- **Reach ...**we will work on joining up the dots between arts centres , community arts organisations, our Night Out programme, Communities First organisations and other agencies in sharing and maximising community focussed work
- **Reach...**we'll actively support the Welsh Government's *Communities First* agenda, doing more to bring high quality arts opportunities within reach of the most disadvantaged people in our most deprived areas.
- **Reach...**we will seek out opportunities to scale up and undertake projects which build in broad reach and exploit new media platforms to involve and engage people
- **Reach...** We will look to our partnership working to extend significant possibilities for the arts and their reach. Our partnerships are with broadcasters such as BBC, and S4C in now established public value partnerships, and with others fostered by project working with such as partners as Cadw, The National

Trust, Welsh Water, Canals and Waterways Trust, the Centre for Alternative Technology.

- **Reach**...we will develop the possibilities for our artists to reach new markets and audiences for their work through the UK and internationally.
- **Reach** ...we will develop new European projects
- **Reach** we will work with the National companies to articulate, encourage and evidence the development of their national remit.
- **Reach** we will increase the geographical reach of the arts by funding the touring of work and supporting and extending our work into communities through our Night Out touring set up.

Sustain

Where will the new ideas emerge that give us new cultural, economic and social models and ways of doing things to break out of the mould and develop the positive responses to some of the bankruptcy of old ways and the lack of resilience they have demonstrated? The background is a global challenge but the ways forward are often locally based and ethically driven.

This is about the resilience and robustness in the organisations we value, the relationships we have with our partners and a wider understanding of how the things that we care about can be nurtured and protected for future generations without these literally costing the earth.

It is in part about purposeful collaboration and diversification of the funding base. And it is about those organisations that are pioneering ways of working involving different forms of economy and exchange in a more sustainable world. It is about how we collectively rise to the challenge the Welsh Government has set to put environmental, social and economic and cultural sustainability at the heart of public service organisations.

It's not just about money, although we know money matters.

In times of economic austerity we need to reduce the dependency on public funds and find the new business models that encourage resilience and longevity. Stability can't be guaranteed from structure, systems and processes. It comes from an organisation's enduring sense of purpose, from making the appropriate connections and from being relevant to people. It's about shaping the future, rather than surviving unwelcome shocks.

So we **Sustain** to enhance the wellbeing of people and communities, achieving a better quality of life today and tomorrow for our own and future generations. We remain alive to mobilising new ideas, new patterns of working and growing the possibilities for the arts economy and what, in turn, it offers for the quality of life to be experienced in Wales.

The Arts Council has embarked on work with the likes of Mission, Money Models, the Centre for Alternative Technology and with Emergence to stimulate ideas and foster the growth of networks in Wales which can trial and pioneer the adventurous communal insights into these desired changes.

In a more immediate sense the Arts Council is going to favour new patterns of collaboration, innovative thinking and the careful management of resources which together demonstrate this fresh sense of responsibility and convictions.

What we will be doing:

Sustain

- **Sustain...** we will help to build new and more resilient business models for arts organisations, companies, venues and ourselves
- **Sustain...** we will support the initiatives and projects that foster new approaches to cultural, social, economic and environmental sustainability
- **Sustain...** we will expect the arts sector to commit to increased environmental sustainability by reducing its carbon footprint
- **Sustain...** we will expect arts organisations that we fund to demonstrate effective leadership and governance
- **Sustain...** we will develop the networks and collaborative practice that exploit the efficiency and the dividends of sharing, collaborating and maximising resources
- **Sustain...** we will continue to support the creative use of the Welsh Language and creative expression through the medium of Welsh, enabling Welsh speaking artists to work in the language of their choice for the whole of their careers.
- **Sustain...** we will work closely with our Local Authority partners across Wales to sustain their engagement with the arts where we are co-partners in venues and services
- **Sustain...** we will pilot new re-generational work through our far reaching programme Ideas People Places
- **Sustain...** we will support activities that provide new approaches to building sustainable careers
- **Sustain...** we will review and develop new approaches to advocacy looking both at the content of what we advocate for and the research we need and the methods and approaches we can take to effective advocacy.
- **Sustain...** we will develop work that addresses well-being in health and community engagement, adding value to quality of life in Wales

Making it happen

The challenges we are posing, for ourselves and our collaborators, feed into our aims to create the best environment for our arts to flourish.

This means looking at what artists need, in order for them to create and have sustainable careers in Wales, careers that can be well linked internationally.

There is then the question of a well-functioning infrastructure of companies, organisations, arts centres and other places providing opportunities to create, produce and share work.

We face the challenge of developing the make-up of the arts more fully, through cultural diversity and extending the reach of arts throughout our communities and particularly to overcome barriers, culturally, socially, environmentally and extend the action of the arts in our society.

Wrapped around those two themes of how we will make and reach, is the whole question of innovative solutions and the approach needed to be more consciously sustainable and resilient. So our ten challenges are areas for us all to work at together for change.

Make: Reach: Sustain will be delivered through activity organised under a series of specific **objectives**. Each objective translates into programmes of work for the Arts Council of Wales.

Theme	Objectives
Make	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Creating the environment for the arts to flourish.2. Increasing the value of international cultural exchange to the arts in Wales
Reach	<ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Funding new opportunities, ways and places for people to enjoy and take part in the arts4. Developing the creativity of children and young people

Sustain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Encouraging innovation, resilience and sustainability 6. Protecting and growing the economic base for the arts in Wales 7. Demonstrating the value of the arts 8. Making the Arts Council an efficient and effective public body
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The arts change and evolve, as does the world around us. Our funding strategy must reflect that.

We need to take the long view. A strategy is defined variously as a plan, a policy, an approach, a tactic or a stratagem. It implies, indeed requires, change...

We need to be pragmatic and responsive, alive in the moment, ready to react to or seize on things that come up. But we need to plan the journey and plot the route map.

We must also build partnerships that retain their developmental ambition.

Our relationships, especially with local authorities, must not see us becoming the box ticking monitors of ever more unsustainable arts services. Challenging though it will be we have to find a new way of maintaining grass-roots, local development.

And this is likely to happen in the face of several more years of economic austerity and the squeeze on public funding that this implies. We will continue to advocate the importance of public investment in the arts. But growth cannot simply rely on increases in public funding. Neither should we consign ourselves to presiding over a downward spiral of decline.

Key organisations will be expected to demonstrate high levels of commercial acumen, because in the future an over reliance on public subsidy will be both undesirable and unsustainable. The funding ladder that leads eventually to the prize of revenue funding will no longer provide the gold seal of relative financial security that once it did. We will continue to review, from time to time, whether the organisations that we're funding deserve that support. However, we're not expecting to see a significant increase in the numbers of organisations receiving revenue funding from the Arts Council.

The public rightly demands that the individuals and organisations that they finance are efficient and cost effective. So we expect those who we work with to get the basics right and to ensure that they manage their affairs in a straightforward and

business-like way. Public funding is not an entitlement – it has to be earned. We expect the key organisations that we fund to play a leadership role in terms of both artistic innovation, audience development and in the way they conduct their business. Increasingly this will hinge on the business and creative model they create for themselves. We expect them to be well managed and governed, and we will be rigorous in assessing whether this is the case. In return, we'll support them to develop their work and encourage them to develop their new ideas and markets and approaches to sustainability for their activities.

We realise that this will seem a harsh message, but it's a realistic one. We recognise too, that there are potential contradictions in the demands for greater self-sufficiency – for example, lucrative digital screenings of high arts events around the world threaten to squeeze out work made and based in Wales; and the financially necessary pursuit of populist programming potentially limits choice and diversity, one of the underlying principles of public support. Getting the balance right depends on high levels of cultural entrepreneurship. But balance there must be if our country is not to fatally undermine the very vitality and sustainability of the artists who chose to live and work in Wales.

We'll expect to see organisations underpinned by a wider mix of public and private funding and new business models that are better able to exploit the commercial potential of the intellectual property that resides in their creative activities. And we, the Arts Council, must find the best, the most intelligent, the entrepreneurial strategy that enhances the whole through the careful application of government and Lottery funding.

Different organisations will need to find the model that works for them. There won't be one size that fits all. Nevertheless the key issue will be the extent to which public subsidy as a proportion of overall income can be reduced.

We firmly believe that the organisations who most successfully meet this challenge will be those who are the embodiment of this strategy's underlying philosophy Make – Reach – Sustain. Because in the end, we must all fight against a diminution of ambition or imagination that leads not to more opportunities, but fewer.

Inspiring Success

Our time is 21st century austerity Wales – a post devolution bi-lingual country with new political powers and a post-industrial inheritance, a Wales characterised by growing inequality, attainment gaps, financial fragility, impending global climate change and a Wales only part plugged into the digital revolution. A Wales joined together through the warp and weft of its languages and its culture of rurality, market towns and the tensions, pushes and pulls of would-be city regions.

Yet the arts, buffeted by the flux and change of the world around them, prove themselves time and again. The arts are a proper recipient of public funding and public attention – a source of inward investment now in the cultural, social and economic potential of the country tomorrow.

We would not play down the difficulties that lie ahead. But if together we can make, reach and sustain, what might we achieve over the next five years?

We might see a Wales where the intelligent management of public investment allows the arts to flourish beyond a dependency on subsidy alone. A Wales where the role of the artist and cultural entrepreneur has been able to develop significantly and is acknowledged and valued. A Wales where the reach of the arts extends across all communities, regardless of wealth, language or locality. A Wales that has transformed the life chances of our young people, equipping them for adult life. A Wales that is dynamically connected to the rest of the world through the activities of the arts and the networks that they create.

And bringing all these things to life, art that inspires, excites and moves us. In short, Wales the creative country.