

CREATIVE POWYS

Powys Arts Strategy

2011 - 2016

DRAFT for Consultation – November 2010

DRAFT

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Introduction

We are in a time of great change for public services.

The effects of the global recession, reduced funding from Government and rising expectations from customers mean that we are facing significant pressures to change the way we work.¹ We are expected to deliver more with less. If we are to be successful in the future we need to work differently.

The Arts Strategy needs to take account of how these and other factors, including the rapidity of technological development, the effect of climate change and the need to reduce energy consumption will impact on our daily lives.

Foremost in our response is the need to strengthen partnerships and move to a more integrated approach to the support and provision of arts activity, and to explore how key arts providers from the public, private and voluntary sectors can work together more effectively to meet the needs of local people.

This draft strategy has been informed by a review of support for existing arts activity and facilities, residents views and opinions on arts provision taken from a citizen's panel survey, annual residents surveys and focus group meetings, consultation with council service managers, discussions with key providers and from the preliminary results of an economic and social impact study of festivals, events and the cultural and creative industries² due to be published early in 2011. It has also been informed by the extensive audit and consultation undertaken with children and young people and with providers of activities for these age groups as part of the work on the Children & Young People's Arts and Music Strategies, which form an integral part of the Arts Strategy itself.

We are now asking partners, stakeholders and members of the public for their feedback on our proposals. In particular we would like you to give us your views on the following:

- Are the Vision and Priorities appropriate for the next five years?
- Are there any new Priority Areas that we should consider?
- Do the Example Actions outlined best meet the Vision and help deliver the priorities or are there other actions we should consider for inclusion?

We would be grateful if you could send any comments and responses by **14th January 2011**.

¹ Powys Change Plan 2010 – 2014, Efficient Services for the Green Heart of Wales

² Research into festivals, events and the cultural and creative sector in Powys, Wavehill Consulting

Powys context (demography, geography, economy)

The total population of Powys is relatively small (132,598 - mid year est. 2008) and covers a quarter of Wales, making it the most sparsely populated county in England and Wales. The population has increased in recent years and is predicted to rise to 141,000 by 2016. The population is older than the average for Wales, highlighting the issue of the net outward migration of our young people in contrast to the net inward migration of older people. The rate of immigration from other countries is small. The most significant change affecting population in Powys will be the increase in people over the age of 65 years, more specifically those over the age of 80 years of age. Children form a smaller proportion of the population in Powys than in many other areas and this is predicted to fall. If Powys is to maintain and attract a higher proportion of young people to the county to counter balance the growing older population, then the retention of a lively arts and cultural scene will be essential.

Few landscapes are as varied, distinctive and beautiful as those of Powys but geographic isolation is a reality experienced by many communities and can be experienced on many levels. It can mean people have to, or are unable to, travel long distances to access arts and cultural venues, services and events. It substantially increases the costs of delivering arts and cultural activity and affects the options available to many communities. At the same time, the isolated nature of many small communities can give rise to strong local networks where people get involved to make things happen.

Transport and access to services is consistently identified by people in Powys as a priority issue. Even given the rural nature of the county, geographical access to services is poorer in Powys than anywhere else in Wales. It is estimated that 54% of residents in Powys live in the worst 10% of areas in Wales for access to services on foot or by bus.

In the past the Powys economy relied heavily on agriculture, forestry and fishing but the overall importance of these industries has diminished. There is a significant manufacturing sector but the growth area has been in the service industries and tourism, of which hotels and restaurants form an important part. The public administration, education and health sectors also provide a relatively high proportion of jobs but these will be hit by the forthcoming cuts in public spending. There is a dependence on high levels of self-employment in micro businesses and low take up of training and skills development within small and medium sized enterprises (SME's). Powys is one of the lowest waged areas in Wales.

The Creative Industries are the fastest growing sector in Wales and the growth of industries such as the performing and visual arts, film and new media continues to rise despite the existing national economic crisis. Recent evidence³ indicates that Powys has a high number of creative practitioners. The arts have a direct and positive effect on the economy and are an integral component in regeneration through business, tourism and recreation as well as helping to give communities a sense of place and identity. The arts and creative industries are affected by the nations' economy but by being innovative, flexible and responsive, in fact contribute notably to leading us out of recession. As a sector, they are typically 'green' in operation and tend to operate without a need for heavy built infrastructure, although the availability of good broadband links will be a key factor in future development.

It was estimated that 3.4 million people made a day visit to Powys 2007, and that a further 725,000 visitors stayed for a total of 2.1 million nights in Powys. Wales Spatial Plan identifies Tourism as a key growth sector for central Wales, together with the need to strengthen the competitiveness of niche manufacturing and social enterprises. Research was commissioned in 2009⁴, to assist in the creation of a cultural tourism action plan to realise the potential of Wales' cultural assets. This highlights the importance of art and craft galleries and workshops, museums, performing arts, festivals and events, the 'sense of place' in towns and villages and the Welsh language as crucial elements in strengthening the tourism economy of the future. Powys has a strong cultural offer which could be promoted to greater effect.

³ Appendix 11 Creative practitioners registered on the arts-engine database

'Research into festivals, events and the cultural and creative sector in Powys', Wavehill Consulting

⁴ Cultural Tourism Research 2009, Strategic Marketing

What we mean by ‘the Arts’

We take a broad, inclusive view of what makes up the ‘Arts’.

It includes, but is not limited to, all performing, literary and visual arts forms - drama, dance, musical theatre, pantomime, circus, music of all kinds, literature, poetry, crafts, painting, sculpture, printmaking, graphic design, photography, video and multi media work.

Looking forward, it embraces the rapidly developing digital technologies and their diverse applications in artistic production and communication. In our support for the creative industries⁵ it includes film, television, radio, software design, fashion, publishing and advertising.

It encompasses community, voluntary, amateur and professional arts activity.

We recognise that engagement with the arts is not only about the creation and appreciation of artistic work. It fundamentally affects our sense of identity as individuals and as a society, the connections we feel with where we live and the people we live among, and our spiritual, intellectual and emotional lives.

⁵ Creative Industries – those activities which have their origin in individual, skill and talent, and which have their potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. These have been taken to include the following key sectors; advertising, architecture, art and antiques, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software, television and radio. (DCMS 1999)

How the Arts can help strengthen and enrich our community

The arts are good for us as individuals and beneficial to the communities we live in. We know that the arts make a difference to people's lives. They can excite and inspire. They can make us feel we belong, give us a sense of who we are, where we've come from and what we want to do and be. They can make us healthier – mentally and physically. The arts can help us learn; for fun, for our education and for our work in new and creative ways. They broaden our horizons. They connect us with other people: locally, nationally and internationally. And they help us celebrate those connections and diversity. The arts are very good for us economically; creating jobs, attracting tourists and helping us create vital and engaging places to live and work.

Outcomes

An outcomes framework⁶ has been developed that identifies the contribution of arts activity to the achievement of the Council's improvement and efficiency priorities and the national priorities set out in the Welsh Assembly Government's 'One Wales' delivery plan.

Adult Living

Irrespective of age, ability or cultural background, the arts are a key factor in enriching and improving people's lives. Through the enjoyment of music, film, television, dancing, going to festivals, reading, singing, watching family and friends performing or getting involved ourselves, these activities contribute to our enjoyment and quality of life and to our appreciation and understanding of our environment and culture. Participation in and attendance at arts and cultural events helps us to maintain contact across the generations and an active involvement with the world.

Arts and cultural projects have an important role in promoting mental and community well-being, in health promotion, in strategies to combat substance misuse and health issues with vulnerable groups and to keep us active longer. Combining as they do, both mental and physical benefits with enjoyment and fun, arts projects are increasingly being used by health agencies and related professions interested in multi-agency approaches to engage people of all ages and to access the 'hard to reach' groups. Involvement in arts and crafts activities is particularly effective in reducing the social isolation of older people by providing a purposeful activity and a focus for community engagement.

⁶ Appendix; Outcomes Framework

On a wider scale, involvement and participation in arts and cultural events at a local level play an important part in the social life of rural communities, involving people of all ages, abilities and social backgrounds, including many who do not see themselves as being interested in the arts, and crossing boundaries between them. Such events are a focus of social interaction before and after the event, helping to reduce social isolation and loneliness, and getting people out to see and make friends. They motivate and encourage people to remain active and involved in community life.

Participation in arts activity increases confidence, sociability and self esteem and provides a sense of 'connectedness' to others. It can encourage a more positive outlook on life, engender a sense of well-being and a positive outlook.

Learning in the Community

Engagement with and participation in creative arts activity encourages us to consider, question and challenge. It provokes new ideas and new ways of thinking. It requires an imaginative and creative response.

Learning through the arts nurtures the creativity and innovation we require to address the many environmental, social and economic problems that we face as a society today. The arts provide a means by which attitudes and values can be confronted and explored by dealing with important issues in a way that enables reflective thinking.

The arts are important as a subject of study and learning themselves, but also as a means of learning other skills for people of all ages and levels of ability and in a variety of formal and informal contexts. The attainment of soft and key skills such as communication, working with others and problem solving is central to participating in arts activity, as is the increase in personal confidence and self esteem. The development of these skills contributes to a person's life chances and their engagement in employment and community. From helping to engage and motivate children and young people to learn and achieve their potential at school to the increasing number of older people wanting to develop their interests and keep active throughout life. Involvement in arts projects also contributes to the development of skills and to capacity building at community level and with rates of unemployment set to increase, the arts sector offers flexible pathways and supports opportunities to develop new knowledge and transferable skills to assist in the development of alternative careers and employment.

With the increasing importance of the creative sector to the economy, career pathways, skills development and training for young people and for those working in

the arts sector are crucial to the development of the creative workforce within the county and to support the growth of innovation and enterprise on a national basis.

Regeneration

A thriving cultural life is an essential component of sustainable communities.

Arts and cultural activity makes a major contribution to community regeneration through projects which promote participation, personal and community empowerment and help to develop the skills involved in the regeneration process. By increasing individuals' and communities' confidence and sense of self worth, improving self image and helping to create a sense of control over one's life, such projects contribute to people feeling more positive about where they live, engendering pride in their community, their own culture and their own and others achievements. The cultural identity of Powys defined through the arts helps to make the area a place where people want to live and work.

Creative arts projects, through their inclusive approach, are particularly successful in engaging members of disadvantaged groups. Creative work with young people in particular, is one of the most positive ways of tackling offending behaviour and countering disaffection and exclusion, helping to create safer communities.

The arts have an important role to play in regeneration and economic development, through employment in the cultural sector and as a driver of tourism. The creative industries are recognised in regional and national strategies as an important growth area. A strong creative and cultural sector acts as a catalyst to attract internal and external investment to regenerate and create vibrant, inclusive communities, and will help stimulate Powys to become a dynamic and innovative county with an international reputation.

Climate Change

The arts play a significant part in helping to raise awareness of environmental issues and promoting interest in sustainability. Festivals, events and community projects in schools and community settings foster and support creative approaches to greener lifestyles, promoting the use of recycled and local products, and reducing the carbon footprint and waste.

Attendance & Participation in the Arts

The most recent survey conducted by the Arts Council of Wales⁷ found that there has been a significant increase in arts engagement in Wales, both in terms of attendance and participation. The largest increases were recorded for cinema, live music, art galleries and exhibitions, plays and musicals.

The highest levels of engagement in Wales were recorded in Powys for both participation (86% against the Wales average of 81%) and attendance (35% vs 22%).

Attendance and participation amongst some groups, including B&ME population and residents of Community First areas were found to have increased over the last five years and are now broadly similar level to those recorded for the rest of the population.

The survey recorded that people with any level of Welsh language ability were a lot more likely to participate in the arts but only slightly more likely to attend arts events, although a high percentage are more likely to visit art galleries, attend festivals or participate in music of any kind.

The percentage of people attending once a year or more was greatest for Film (55%) and when compared with the Wales average, people from Powys were more likely to attend Carnivals or Street Arts (51% vs 33%), Plays (37% vs 27%) and Art Galleries and Exhibitions (35% vs 26%).

At the same time there are key groups of people who are less likely to attend or participate in arts activities. Overall these groups are most likely to include older people, people with a limiting disability and those with lower incomes, particularly people with no educational qualifications.

'Entertainment and enjoyment' has become increasingly important as a motivation for attending arts events and performances (54% of events attended), with 'a social event or night out' (28%) and 'developing creativity and self-expression' (29%) continuing to be key motivations.

The most frequently mentioned barriers preventing attendance and participation were lack of time and cost. Limited awareness of what is on offer and a perception that the arts are elitist and 'not for them', with a lack of confidence in engaging and

⁷ 'Arts in Wales 2010: Attitudes, Attendance and Participation', July 2010

fear that they might feel out of place were also cited as barriers in Powys own consultation with children and young people, and in focus group meetings.

As to be expected, financial barriers are particularly acute for young people and people on low incomes, including older people and people with a limiting disability.

Availability of transport is a key issue. Although Powys has a higher than average level of car ownership, for people without access to a car or who depend upon others to drive (particularly children and young people⁸) there is often no public transport or it doesn't go to the right places at the right times.

Assisted transport schemes, targeted programmes of activity, concessionary ticket schemes and better information systems are necessary if involvement in arts activities is to be a real option for all residents.

⁸ Children & Young Peoples Arts Strategy: Discussion Paper

Attitudes to the Arts

Support for the arts continues to be high, particularly with regards to arts provision in schools, public funding of the arts and the belief that arts and cultural activity can help build confidence.

The ACW report⁹ notes that in addition to the high proportion of the population engaging with the arts through attendance and participation, another strong message from the survey is the high levels of support for the arts sector in general. Encouragingly, this high level of support exists throughout Wales, amongst different age groups and across the social economic spectrum. It is also notable that around three quarters of those people who neither attend nor participate in the arts, agree with the public funding of arts.

Most respondents to the ACW survey see the benefits of arts provision at both a national and local level, agreeing that arts and culture make Wales a better place to live and valuing the arts and cultural activities available in the area they live in.

The majority of Welsh adults (86%) support the public funding of the arts. 97% agreed that 'all children should have the opportunity to learn to play an instrument and participate in arts activity at school' and 92% that 'taking part in arts and cultural activity helps to build confidence.'

The ACW findings correlate well with the results of the 2008/09 Powys Citizen's Panel Arts Survey which also indicated that a high proportion of people agree that arts and culture improve their quality of life;

- 80% agreed that they were personally interested in arts and cultural events
- 98% agreed that all schoolchildren should have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument or participate in other arts activities
- 88% agreed that 'if my area lost its arts and cultural activities the people living here would lose something of value'
- 83% agreed 'arts and cultural activity help to enrich the quality of life'
- 84% agreed 'that there should be public funding of arts and cultural projects'

In the ACW survey it reports that 78% of Powys respondents were satisfied with arts provision in the county, which is borne out by the results of the most recent Powys Residents Survey 2009/10, which registered a 75.8% satisfaction rate with arts provision.

Residents place particular value on local arts provision and facilities and there is a desire for 'more things to do', particularly for young people.

"As essential as collecting the rubbish but more fun"

comment by a member of the Citizen's Panel

⁹ 'Arts in Wales 2010: Attitudes, Attendance and Participation', July 2010

Existing Arts Activity

We are proud of the richness, diversity and excellence of arts activity happening at all levels across the county.

At community level amateur and voluntary activities continue to flourish. There are several high quality, professional theatres and galleries which have attracted considerable inward investment over the years, a very active annual programme of festivals and events, and the county is home to a wide variety and growing number of artists and creative practitioners of all kinds.

Arts in the Community

Arts clubs, classes, amateur dramatic and music groups, community performances, events and carnivals, young farmers clubs and local eisteddfodau have existed and developed over decades supported by local fund-raising and small one-off grants from the council – local activity centred around particular communities. This activity is at the heart of community life and continued support for YFC co-ordination and for the network of village halls will be crucial in maintaining it.

Community Arts

We use the term ‘community arts’ to describe a particular approach to arts practice, which focuses on work with groups of people and which emphasises and supports community involvement and collaboration. This approach involves professional input, and can assist in the exploration of local issues and contribute to community development through strengthening social networks, building confidence and the developing the skills of those involved, who come together to create artwork, (for instance, a community play or performance, or a piece of public art). Within Powys, this approach is used by many arts organisations and is significantly demonstrated in the work of Arts Connection (Llanfyllin), Community Arts Rhayader and District (CARAD) and Arts Alive (Crickhowell)¹⁰. These organisations also play an important role in the planning and delivery of creative arts work with target groups such as disaffected young people and in the promotion of health and well-being.

Schools & Further Education

Schools provide a range of arts activity and learning through the requirements of the curriculum and this is supported and enhanced by input from arts providers and individual artists and tutors who are bought in. Most recently, the introduction of the Foundation Phase for 3 – 5 yr olds has offered particular opportunities for input from the arts sector.

Theatr Powys has provided theatre in education programmes for schools across the county in both English and Welsh language for almost forty years, but the future of this service is now uncertain following the recent decision by the Arts Council of Wales to cease revenue funding the organisation from the end of March 2011.

¹⁰ Appendix: Principle Community Arts Organisations in Powys

Powys Dance provides touring performance and workshop programmes in mainstream and special schools, as well as professional INSET training courses and support for teachers.

Theatres are often able to offer workshops with touring companies and subsidised opportunities for school pupils to attend performances. However, for an increasing number of schools the cost of tickets and transport to the venue can be prohibitive and schools are unable to take up the offer.

The many independent arts providers in the county offer arts activity to schools in their area, whether workshops, performances, or tailor-made projects or residencies, and several have developed good links with their local schools. However, coverage is inconsistent and very dependent on the individual relationships and the skills immediately available in a particular area. For instance Oriel Davies Gallery is able to offer high quality workshops in visual arts, and participation in their 'Young Curators' scheme, to schools in the Newtown area but does not have the capacity to extend this to a wider geographical area; Film 15, based in Machynlleth provides a range of film-making activities for children and young people in schools and community settings in the North of the county but this is not available to schools further South.

All are keen to develop their relationships and offer to schools, but unsure of the best way of approaching the service itself to discuss more strategic proposals for developing input. Schools value this input highly but their ability to buy in additional arts activity is already constrained by budget limitations, a position that will worsen in the future.

More effective methods of communication and coordination are needed to ensure that schools are able to make the most of what is available.

In the field of Further Education, Coleg Powys provides an opportunity for young people to develop their skills and experience through their BTEC Performing Arts course. The college is currently assessing the potential to develop a greater variety of vocational arts based courses both at the college and with key arts providers. This is an exciting prospect and one that we wish to explore fully.

Theatres

There are four main professional theatre venues in the county and a number of others within reach of the county's borders¹¹, which ensure that a majority of the county's residents live within a 40 minute travel time¹² of a professionally programmed and managed theatre.

Theatr Brycheiniog (Brecon), Theatr Hafren (Newtown), Wyeside (Builth Wells) and The Miners Welfare Hall (Ystradgynlais) are four of the eight mid Wales venues which make up the 'Circuit'.

¹¹ Appendix: Principle Theatre Venues in and around Powys

¹² Appendix: Powys Theatre Venues – 40 minute drive times

In addition to the presentation of diverse programmes of professional and community based live performance, they are all important hubs for a range of community activity - providing key professional support for local organisations such as Brecknock Little Theatre, Newtown Musical Theatre Company and YFC productions. Depending upon their individual facilities and capacity, some also offer other participative arts activities, whether from hiring out their facilities to local organisations and groups or by directly generating projects themselves.

Analysis of attendance post code data demonstrates that these theatres serve not only their local communities but draw in audiences from a wide area¹³, contributing significantly to the local economy.

With the increased pressure on sources of financial support, we need to explore with these partners whether efficiency savings can be achieved through joint management and working arrangements, or it is likely that some may close. If they are to continue to operate, it is important that they be kept in good condition, fit for purpose, accessible and energy efficient.

There also a number of community-based arts organisations which act as small-scale venues and promote programmes of live performance on a regular basis, such as Mid Border Arts (Presteigne), CARAD, The Living Willow Theatre (Rhayader) and Y Tabernacle (Machynlleth).

These are supplemented by a number of schools and leisure centre based performance spaces including Theatr Clera (Welshpool), and on a community level, village halls, community centres and churches are all used for local performance as are a variety of pubs, clubs, and other facilities.

These small-scale venues are supported through the 'Night Out'¹⁴ rural touring scheme¹⁵ that enables local groups to choose, book and promote performances in their own village hall, community centre, church or other venue for their local communities.

Disability Arts

Physical access to the county's principal building based arts venues is good, and generally better than the majority of public buildings in the county, although there is still room for improvement.

A number of organisations are active in working with people with learning differences, foremost amongst them being Celf o Gwmpas. Powys Dance and Arts Connection also provide a significant level of creative arts activity with and for this group and a number of organisations, agencies and individual arts practitioners are involved working with disabled people and people with mental health issues. However, this is an area that has been identified as requiring greater support.

¹³ Appendices: Powys Theatre Venues – attendance by postcode area 2009/10

¹⁴ 'Night Out' scheme run by ACW Community Touring Unit in partnership with Welsh local authorities

¹⁵ Appendix: 'Night Out' rural touring scheme promoters 2007/10

Galleries

The county is home to the Oriel Davies Gallery (Newtown), which is developing an international profile, the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA, Machynlleth) and the Bleddfa Gallery (Knighton).

Several museums offer strong arts exhibition and education programmes, most notably Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery (Brecon) and the Andrew Logan Museum of Sculpture (Berriew).

There are many small, independently run art and craft galleries and outlets throughout the county, some privately owned and some created as joint enterprises by cluster groups of artists working together, such as The Hay Makers. New independent galleries are also developing, such as the Maesmawr Gallery (Caersws), supported through the Rural Development Plan, 'Cyfle I Greu / Chance to Create' scheme.

The theatres offer exhibition spaces, as do many community and public buildings, including Libraries, hospitals and council offices. The gallery incorporated into the CRiC centre (Crickhowell Resource & Information Centre), which houses a number of local services including a Tourist Information point, is a good example of how a public building can be designed and operated to maximum effect for this purpose.

Nevertheless, there is considerable demand for more exhibition spaces and opportunities to promote the work of the many artists and craftspeople working in the county, and that of local arts societies. Powys Arts Forum has taken a lead in providing networking opportunities for individual artists, and has initiated 'Powys Arts Month' as a bi-annual event.

Cinema

The county is provided with a number of local cinemas¹⁶, most being privately owned and independently run. The Council does not fund cinema as a stand alone activity, although it does support two venues (Wyeside and The Miners Welfare Hall) which include cinema as part of their programme. Residents have commented that some cinemas lack range and quality in the programmes they offer and that the times of film showings are not always convenient, particularly for older residents. However, there are also a small but growing number film clubs and organisations, such as the Presteigne Film Society offering a wider selection of films on a regular basis. Residents have suggested that the 'Night Out' scheme be extended to include film showings, or the introduction of a 'Flicks in the Sticks' scheme, similar to that provided in Shropshire.

Creative Industries

Powys Arts Service has established and continues to develop excellent communication with individual artists and creative industry businesses. With broadband extending to rural areas, new opportunities exist for viable businesses to

¹⁶ Appendix: Cinemas in and around Powys

be fully operational from rurally isolated bases. There is also a small but growing number of media based businesses in the county. The creation of the arts-engine website to promote creative professionals in the county, and the response to the 'Cyfle i Greu Chance to Create' grant scheme to support innovation and creative businesses developed in partnership with Powys Arts Forum under the Rural Development Plan, have evidenced a large number of individuals and micro enterprises working in this sector¹⁷.

It will be important to ensure that support for creative industry development is included within the new Powys Regeneration Strategy, in order to realise their contribution to regeneration at a local and regional level.

Festivals & Events

The county is home to huge number of festivals, carnivals and outdoor events of all kinds, the main reason for Powys having the highest rate of participation and attendance for this area of activity in Wales. These events are also significant in the extent to which the Welsh language is used, particularly on the local level. From village shows and craft fairs, to festivals of regional, national and international reputation - Gwyl Gregynog, Presteigne Festival of Music, Brecon Jazz, Hay Festival - these events play an important role in the calendar of local life and in raising the profile of Powys in the national consciousness, helping to put it on the map.

Youth Arts

Creative arts activity and provision for children and young people has been the subject of a separate, but linked, audit and consultation process. The findings, issues and priorities for future development are contained within the Draft Powys Children & Young Peoples Arts Strategy. It is noted here that issues of equity and some gaps in the provision of arts activity for this age group need particular consideration.

Opportunities to participate in film and media work are currently scarce within the county, although this is the area of greatest interest for this age group.

With Montgomeryshire Youth Theatre (Welshpool), Cwmni Theatr Maldwyn (Newtown), Mid Powys Youth Theatre (Llandrindod Wells), Red Kite Theatre (Hay on Wye) and the new English and Welsh language youth theatre initiatives in Brecon, opportunities for involvement in youth theatre are currently spread across the county, although each operates on a different basis and there is little communication between them.

Similarly in the field of dance, where there are variety of opportunities for children and young people to participate including Powys Dance' county network of community dance classes and recent Powys Youth Dance Company initiative, private dance provision such as the Mid Wales Academy of Dance (Brecon), and a variety of classes and tuition provided by individual freelance dance tutors.

¹⁷ Appendix: Creative arts practitioners registered on arts-engine July 2010

The implementation of the Powys Children & Young People's Music Strategy is currently focusing on providing greater support for children at pre-school and Foundation phase, and on working with key providers such as the North Powys Youth Music Trust and South Powys Youth Music to ensure that young people from all areas of Powys have the opportunity to develop their skills at county level. The development of a county network and support structure for peripatetic and community music tutors is a priority.

However, there is a potential for the development of a more equitable and co-ordinated infrastructure for the provision youth theatre, youth dance and youth music across the county that we would like explore further.

Multi-media work

Most importantly, with the growth of technology, and particularly amongst younger people, there is a growing expectation of interconnection and complexity in the conception and reception of arts work and creative and cultural activity. Young people are much less likely to experience arts activity and conceive of the arts in separate art-form 'pigeonholes'. We must be prepared to take a fresh look at, and learn from, the way young people want to develop their creative potential.

Support for arts activity and events in the Welsh language

There is some notable Welsh language based arts activity, such as that produced by Cwmni Theatr Maldwyn, but opportunities to participate in arts activity in the Welsh language need to be nurtured. As Council services, both Theatr Powys and Powys Dance offer bi-lingual programmes of work, but other facilities and organisations vary in the extent to which they offer a welcoming bi-lingual environment and Welsh language based activity. The 'Night Out' rural touring scheme is significant in this respect, since a larger proportion of the performances chosen and promoted through 'Night Out' are Welsh language events, compared with the proportion of performances presented by the major theatre venues.

Participant Feedback and Evaluation

Individual arts organisations and providers vary a great deal in how much and often they seek user / participant feedback and evaluation. Some do not carry out regular surveys of their audiences and participants, but take a broad judgement on the basis of whether an event is well attended or not. Community arts organisations generally offer the strongest models of user consultation and involvement in both the planning and evaluation of project work and satisfaction rates with this type of activity are high. In providing support for arts facilities and activities, we need to ensure that users' feedback is sought and taken into account in future planning.

Social & Leisure Trends

Economic

- rising unemployment
- in an economic downturn people stay closer to home for their leisure activities and spend less
- tourists take holidays at home rather than abroad, more short breaks rather than weeks

Environmental

- people are increasingly seeking to live in rural or semi-rural areas with an expectation that this will offer a better quality of life
- people becoming more aware of the impact of climate change and the need to protect the environment

Social

- leisure activities related to well-being are increasing as people become more aware of the need to look after their physical fitness and mental health
- an increased desire to develop interests, knowledge and skills for enjoyment, self-improvement and employability through learning, particularly in the middle - older age groups
- increasing desire for and take up of courses and learning activity holidays
- higher proportion of older people, and more who want to stay active and involved in community life
- increased emphasis on and awareness of customer satisfaction and accountability

Technological

- new forms of communication – email, text, mobile phone
- rapid increase in social networking – twitter, facebook, youtube
- advances in ICT affecting office systems
- rapid development of online marketing and selling
- developments in entertainment industry technology – lighting, sound, projection, 3D cinema with increasingly sophisticated expectations from audiences
- continuous expansion of DVD and satellite based home entertainment, broadband culture, mp3 players, digital broadcasting, interactive television
- changing media technologies from the radio and television broadcast model, to a more decentralised and self controlled technology offered by digital technology and the internet

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- strong diverse cultural base
- high level of amateur and voluntary arts activity, especially music and drama
- strong voluntary and community support
- some notable 'centres of excellence' – arts venues, events and practice
- full-time Arts Development Officer with strong relationships with creative practitioners working in the sector

Weaknesses

- very large county with diverse communities, arts provision varies
- rural area - cost of providing arts activity is high
- some arts and community venues in poor condition, including inappropriate or inadequate facilities for disabled people
- inadequate public transport to travel to arts events and activities
- poor communication

Opportunities

- a growing recognition by the Welsh Assembly Government and national and regional agencies in the value of the arts to achieving better aims including social inclusion, promoting a prosperous economy and improving health
- to develop stronger partnerships with external agencies and organisations
- to develop stronger internal partnerships between Council services
- greater use of available council buildings for arts space e.g. libraries, offices
- digital communication technology potential to eliminate the disadvantages linked to the geographical isolation and create new pathways for marketing, information, education and training
- development of cultural and green tourism
- growth of the creative and cultural industries sector

Threats

- loss of young talent
- reductions in public spending
- the qualitative benefits, broader outcomes and additional value provided by the arts are costly and time-consuming to measure
- the potential of the arts to contribute to cross-cutting agendas insufficiently recognised in key Council strategies
- that the Arts be regarded as a weak political priority at a time when the Council is under pressure to improve service delivery with less money
- many arts organisations in the county at the limit of their financial sustainability
- lack of capital investment to maintain buildings
- a reliance on short term project funding to maintain key arts infrastructure
- intensifying pressure on funding from grant-making trusts and other sources

Key Issues for the Future

Customer Focus, Community Involvement

We will actively seek residents' and users' views about arts services and facilities, and use their feedback to shape future delivery. We will encourage arts providers to seek customer feedback and involve users in programming and designing service delivery.

Diminishing Resources

Cuts in public spending are impacting on our capacity to support the arts, and on that of our major partner, the Arts Council of Wales (ACW).

ACW funding for Powys has been substantial, with the county receiving one of the highest allocations in Wales per head of population. In 2008/09 ACW funding to Powys totalled £1,371.916, which translates into £10.80 per head of the Powys population.

ACW have recently carried out an Investment Review, with the result that revenue funding for 32 organisations in Wales will cease at the end of March 2011. Powys, and particularly mid Powys, has been badly hit by the ACW decisions, with Theatr Powys, Wyeside Arts Centre and Community Arts Rhayader and District (CARAD) amongst this number¹⁸. Discussions about the future of these organisations are ongoing and we will work with ACW to obtain the best possible outcomes for the future. Nevertheless, these decisions are likely to have a substantial impact on the range and accessibility of arts activity across the county.

The council itself also has to make substantial reductions in expenditure. We wish to respond to this situation as positively as possible and maintain a fair spread of opportunities and facilities. Where there is so much change there are also opportunities, and we want to creatively explore that potential with our partners to ensure the best outcomes for Powys residents.

Infrastructure / Ecology

Maintaining a costly physical infrastructure of building based venues will become difficult given the reduction in capital funding available. The strategy needs to minimise capital commitments.

¹⁸ Appendix: ACW revenue funded organisations 2010/11

However, we also need to ensure an equitable spread of arts venues and facilities. In our citizen's panel survey and in focus group discussions, we have received a clear message that residents value local provision and not having to travel too far.

Service Delivery

From the public's viewpoint, it is often difficult to tell whether a particular facility or service is owned by, delivered by, or supported by the council or what the council's relationship with an arts provider is. Residents have told us that they do not care, as long as they are able to access and enjoy the activities and facilities as they wish. This is influenced by the fact that, unlike most other council services, the programming and delivery of arts activity is already widely managed and provided by external, independent organisations and individuals and this approach undoubtedly delivers a wide range benefits for the county's residents and visitors.

Partnership

We cannot achieve the objectives laid out in this strategy in isolation. We will work with artists, arts organisations, the voluntary, public and private sectors to support the provision of arts activities and events for local people and visitors.

There is potential for resources to be used more effectively and efficiently by encouraging closer partnership working between arts service providers, and by moving to a more integrated approach to local service delivery.

There could also be advantages in developing closer partnership arrangements with neighbouring local authorities. This idea is being considered in two areas of Wales¹⁹.

Quality

Arts organisations and providers should strive for quality and artistic excellence in both the process as well as the end product. This should apply to amateur, community, voluntary and professional projects and activities. We recognise that Powys residents deserve the best and we will work to encourage high standards in both the artistic and operational quality of the activities and services supported.

Equity / Equality / Access

"Meeting different needs, being fair, flexible and customer-focused are all essential parts of delivering good quality services...We have a role to ensure our services promote Equality and the Welsh language, as we contribute to the creation of a truly prosperous, inclusive and bilingual Wales"²⁰.

¹⁹ Appendix - Regional Arts Partnerships

²⁰ Powys Leisure & Recreation Service Strategy

We will strive to ensure that opportunities to become involved in arts activities and events are accessible to all including, disadvantaged and socially excluded people, disabled people, older and frail people, young people and those living in rural and isolated communities. We are committed to fair access to services and will expect arts organisations and providers to enable participation by all members of the community.

Sustainability

“Sustainable development is about understanding, recognising and responding to the total impact of our decisions on current and future generations”.

Consideration of sustainability encompasses the total effect we have upon the environment, as well the operational and financial sustainability of organisations operating in the sector. We want to ensure that providers of arts activities operate in a ‘green’ and environmentally friendly manner, and will encourage them to establish a broad funding base and develop their capacity to adapt, grow and thrive in a constantly changing environment.

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VISION

Inspire to Aspire!

We want the arts to enrich the life of every resident and visitor to Powys.

We want to excite and inspire through the arts, offering an opportunity for all people to experience and enjoy the arts and develop their own creativity as participants, artists and audiences in a county where a thriving arts and cultural scene makes a significant contribution to economic and social well-being.

Values

- **Customer Focus**
- **Equality / Access**
- **Partnership**
- **Sustainability**

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Strategic Priorities

This strategy aims to:

- To ensure that residents are able to access a range of high quality arts activities, events and experiences through both the Welsh and English languages.
- To support community cohesion and social inclusion through active participation in the arts.
- To support opportunities for children and adults to develop their creativity and acquire new skills.
- To support and promote the role of the creative and cultural industries in developing a strong and resilient economy.
- To develop and promote Powys as a vital, creative place to live, work and visit.
- To advocate the use of the arts in contributing to the quality of people's lives and as a valuable tool for achieving a wide variety of council objectives.
- To provide a strong strategic planning and contracting framework to recognise and focus the arts contribution to the achievement of the Council's objectives and ensure value for money.

Priority 1

ENSURE ACCESS

- To ensure that residents are able to access of a range of high quality arts activities, events and experiences though both the Welsh and English languages.

Outcomes

- Increased resident satisfaction with arts provision in their local area.
- Increased attendances and active participation by vulnerable, disadvantaged and disabled people.
- People are able to access information about what is on in their area easily.
- Barriers to people's participation in the arts are reduced.
- People are able to access arts activities and events in their locality.

Example actions

- Maintain support to enable an equitable range of high quality arts provision across the county.
- Support for targeted touring and outreach programmes.
- Work with arts sector providers to develop and implement the simplest, most effective way of co-ordinating and circulating information about activities and events.
- Require and assist organisations in receipt of revenue funding to conduct an equality impact assessment and action plan in respect of the services they offer.
- Work with arts providers to encourage and facilitate free and concessionary ticket schemes.

Priority 2

ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

- To support community cohesion and social inclusion through active participation in the planning and enjoyment of arts activities.

Outcomes

- More people involved in initiating, planning and promoting arts activity in their local area.
- Increased participation by children and young people in positive activities.
- Increased self-confidence in abilities and potential.
- More active and empowered local people and communities.
- More people participating in and attending arts activities and events of their choice.
- Availability of high quality arts activities and events that attract people of all ages and abilities.

Example actions

- Encourage and support greater community involvement in the management and programming of local arts facilities, events and activities.
- Greater focus on special initiatives in communities of greatest need e.g. rural isolation, high levels of deprivation or high levels of youth offending, disability and mental health, and collaborate with other council services and agencies to maximise impact.
- Continue to implement an enabling grants scheme to support local community based arts initiatives, with a particular focus on new and innovative projects and increased participation.
- Increase support for the 'Night Out' rural touring scheme.
- Establish a Powys Arts Partnership comprising of key arts venue, organisation and stakeholder representation to share good practice and to enable an integrated Powys wide model delivering imaginative, challenging and inspiring arts activities.

Priority 3

SUPPORT LEARNING & SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- To support and promote opportunities for children and adults to develop their creativity and acquire new skills.

Outcomes

- More people gaining new knowledge and skills through the arts.
- A range of options available for people wishing to pursue their interests and develop their talents in the arts and creative industries.
- More people in paid and unpaid work and volunteering in arts and culture.
- More people have higher aspirations.
- Higher attainment and skills levels.

Example actions

- Form practical, working links between the Arts Development Service, Youth Service, Schools Service, Coleg Powys and national agencies to develop curricular and extra curricular formal and non-formal training and accreditation programmes in the arts.
- Work in partnership with the Schools Service to assess current input by arts practitioners and organisations to schools and explore potential for co-ordination, improvement and future development.
- Encourage and promote career opportunities in the creative and cultural industries.
- Encourage and support work placement opportunities and apprenticeship schemes.
- Promotion of the arts as a medium to learn other skills: language learning and development, adult literacy, healthy living, basic skills and individuals' physical, emotional, personal and social development.

Priority 4

PROMOTE THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

- To support and promote the significant role of the creative and cultural industries in developing a strong and resilient economy.

Outcomes

- A range of options and support available for practitioners wishing to develop professional careers and businesses in the arts and creative industries.
- Increase in the number of successful, sustainable creative businesses.
- Growth in the creative economy.
- Growth in innovation and enterprise.
- Increased inward investment.

Example actions

- Build on the success of the 'Chance to Create' devolved grant scheme to further develop plans to support the growth of self-employment, micro businesses and social enterprises in visual art, crafts, design, digital art and new media.
- Establish collaborative working relationships in support of new and existing creative industry businesses developing the use of new technologies and media in their enterprises.
- Attract young and new creative businesses to Powys.
- To support the development of the independent artists sector, raise the profile of artists and craftspeople through improved marketing initiatives and increased exhibiting opportunities.
- Encourage and support the formation of artists' clusters to promote artist-led initiatives.
- Explore and establish a mentoring scheme to support new talent and encourage business development.
- Implement the recommendations of the 'Research Study into Festivals, Events and the Cultural and Creative Sector in Powys'.

Priority 5

'SENSE OF PLACE'

- To develop and promote Powys as a vital, creative place to live, work and visit.

Outcomes

- Improved arts and culture offer and quality of place.
- Increased attractiveness of places to live, work and visit.
- Increased resident pride and satisfaction with their local area.
- Strengthened tourism sector.
- Increased inward investment.

Example actions

- Champion Powys as fertile ground for setting up and establishing the growth of creative industry businesses and as a showcase for artistic innovation, experimentation and achievement.
- Strengthen support for the development of cultural tourism, such as the promotion of Powys Arts Month, Art & Craft trails promoting galleries, studios, craft centres and other public venues, reinforcing positive links with the natural environment and historical heritage.
- Promote Powys as an area with strong cultural venues, festivals and special events for the enjoyment of local people and visitors.
- Strengthen strategic partnerships that support the inclusion of creative activity within community regeneration, economic development, social inclusion and crime reduction projects, with particular reference to area regeneration schemes such as the Western Valleys Initiative.
- Maximise opportunities offered through future development projects to enhance the public realm.

Priority 6

ADVOCACY

- To advocate the use of the arts in contributing to the quality of peoples lives and as a valuable tool for achieving a wide variety of council objectives.

Outcomes

- Strengthened evidential base demonstrating value, benefits and impact of involvement of the arts.
- Increased availability of case study material.
- Widened use of the arts as a tool for achieving social and economic objectives.
- Greater recognition of the value and contribution of arts activity to residents' quality of life.

Example actions

- Contribute to and co-ordinate the collation of quantitative and qualitative evidence of the benefits of arts activity.
- Produce and publicise case studies of successful stories or pilot projects.
- Ensure that the role and contribution of arts activity to achieving objectives is considered and recognised in key council strategies and plans, and through the thematic partnerships.

Priority 7

STRENGTHEN ARTS PLANNING FRAMEWORK

To provide a strong strategic planning and contracting framework to recognise and focus the arts contribution to the achievement of corporate objectives and ensure value for money.

Outcomes

- Shared service approach to provision of arts services and activity
- Increased cross border co-operation
- Transparent decision making
- Integrated delivery models
- Effective evaluation and monitoring
- Better value for money

Example actions

- Strengthen co-ordination to enable a robust cross-service implementation of the arts strategy and to ensure the development of an informed and integrated approach to the future support and delivery of arts initiatives and activity.
- Initiate integrated delivery models amongst independent arts providers to maximise the use of limited resources.
- Develop micro / macro partnership working models whereby larger organisations or venues affiliate with a range of smaller scale providers or practitioners to provide mutual support and extended access to a broader range of communities and audiences for their respective products and services.
- Develop closer working arrangements with neighbouring local authorities to reduce costs and maximise benefits for Powys residents.

How the Powys Arts Strategy will be delivered

Consultation over this draft strategy will offer an opportunity to work together with all those who have an interest in shaping and delivering its priorities.

It is intended that the implementation of the arts strategy will build and strengthen contact and partnership working with and between council services and with creative practitioners and arts activity providers and deliverers working in the voluntary and private sector.

The draft strategy has suggested some possible actions. It is expected that these may change through the consultative process. The intention is to develop a programme of practical actions that are realistic and achievable.

The implementation of the strategy will depend upon resources. How far any of the priorities and actions outlined can be addressed will depend in part upon the council's forthcoming budget decisions, but also upon the partnerships that can be strengthened and developed to maximise support.

The Powys Arts Strategy has been developed alongside and will be implemented together with the Children and Young People's Powys Arts Strategy and the Powys Children & Young People's Music Strategy. In order to progress the aims of this strategy it is important that it also has clear links to other key strategies and documents concerned with improving the lives of people in Powys and as such adheres to principles contained within: -

Powys Community Strategy

Powys Change Plan

Powys One Plan

Powys Children and Young People's Plan

Powys Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategy

Powys Regeneration Strategy

ACW Plans and Strategies

Welsh Assembly Government 'One Wales'

Welsh Assembly Government Wales Spatial Plan

Contact details

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