



Powys Arts Forum
linking artists & audiences
cysylltu celfyddwyr & chynulleidfaoedd
Fforwm Celf Powys

14/01/11

Dear Louise,

We have considered the document in as much depth as constraints of time would allow. All members of the Board have seen the document, and been given the opportunity to comment on it. The response is a synthesis of the comments and reflections which they have made. We do, however, regret the short amount of time that has been made available for consultation, and urge that a more generous period is allowed in future for any similar consultation. This would not only allow us more time to frame our response, but enable us to consult more widely with our members.

That quibble apart, we do welcome the arts strategy as you have set it out, and appreciate the hard work and careful thought which has gone into it. While we may depart on some small details and in emphasis here and there, we are on the whole in full support of this document and the tenor of its thought.

We are pleased to note that the Forum's role in Chance to Create is acknowledged. You also credit our work in developing arts month but as this appears under a section headed *Galleries* (p16) it may appear that we are supportive of visual artists rather than the full panoply of arts practitioners. If possible, we would welcome a re-drafting of that point.

And, at the risk of sounding self-obsessed, we would also like our role in securing funding for the Wavehill study, and our contribution to the steering group, acknowledged. Perhaps that, and some explanatory note on the interconnection between RDP, PRP, Glasu etc. After all, this is the sort of model that, presumably, the proposed Powys Arts Partnership would follow.

But none of the above should detract from our over-riding feeling that this is a sound piece of work, and has a lot more concrete and practical ideas in it than its predecessor. We are confident that the trend will continue into the action plan.

We'd like to feel that your work in partnership with the Forum has contributed in some small way to the development of these ideas, and look forward to continued partnership working in the future.

With all best wishes,

Ginny Graham : on behalf of the Board of Trustees of Powys Arts Forum

CREATIVE POWYS: Powys Arts Forum Response

PURPOSE

We feel it might be useful to provide a statement regarding the Arts Service's core function at the head of this document. We hope and believe it is about supporting the arts.

While the arts play an important role in areas such as community safety, economic regeneration and social cohesion, that does not mean that their role is exclusively in a supportive capacity within the society in which they operate. While "arts for art's sake" is a cliché which can be seen as self-detrimental, this document may be an opportunity to make a statement about the intrinsic value of artistic creativity, and a belief that within a well-functioning society this should be nurtured irrespective of immediate context.

An arts strategy should be about improving art irrespective of any of these things, though where they have a role to play in social or economic initiatives we warmly welcome it, but advocate that such work should be funded, at least in part, by the appropriate body, programme or budget.

Art functions best where it is unhampered by consideration of things outside itself. Only then can it provide the originality and vision that will make a real difference. It should be seen as a research and development department, occasionally but not always providing ideas that go into production and earn money, or have a therapeutic value in varied contexts.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The draft strategy document offers a review of the position and the actions needed to move forward in a way that we are almost completely in agreement with. The challenge is to fashion ways in which the ideas are realised, and that is what we want to devote most of our response to.

We would, however, offer a few general points first.

- 1 We believe (naturally) that Powys Arts Forum has a central role to play in developing the ways that artists can contribute to developing the planning framework needed to fulfil the vision in the strategy. We see this as complementary to the work of the Arts Development Officer.
- 2 We would endorse the need for change, but in this area the reality is that change has already been happening. The relationship between the Arts Service and the

Forum, and the way the Forum carries out its role, has been developing over the last three years. This is an example that other areas of local government would do well to study, and should be wholeheartedly supported.

- 3 There is a strong – and welcome – emphasis on community throughout the document. This should always be understood as community of interest, but the mechanisms for consulting such communities of interest are weaker than those for consulting geographical communities. A real improvement in equality of access could be made by investing in ways of bringing communities of e.g. poets and poetry-lovers together. We would see this as a tripartite process involving the Forum, the Arts Service, and the communities themselves. This would be in addition to the cluster development the Forum is already engaged upon.
- 4 The Powys Arts Forum conference provided invaluable opportunities to learn from best practice elsewhere (Highlands & Islands Hi-Arts) to have practical advice on marketing (Audiences Wales) to discuss community touring opportunities (Night Out) and to hear directly about exciting national initiatives (National Theatre of Wales). We would recommend that the support of such conferences should be an integral part of strategic planning. Powys Arts Forum would be very happy to work in partnership with the Arts Service in establishing this.

VISION

These seem to us to be the right values with some slight and quibbling comments.

- 1 As well as economic and social wellbeing can we add cultural wellbeing? In many ways more important than the other two for the arts, but in reality they act as three legs of a tripod.

Customer Focus is a key value and one that, properly implemented, could revolutionise much of current practice; but is customer the right term? Terms such as partnership, engagement and involvement are nearer the mark.

Equality of Access needs to be carefully defined, and should take into account the diversity of Powys. It is acceptable, and desirable, that different populations are catered for differently and that the needs of individuals are not overlooked.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The priorities seem comprehensive and good – the challenge will be in fashioning mechanisms for delivery.

- 2 One aspect that might be emphasised more is cultural self determination, for individuals and communities. The difference between social inclusion and cultural self determination is the same as that between customer and participant.
- 3 We would want to clarify what is meant by the terms access and provision, and their relationship. We would suggest that some thought be given to ways in which individuals can identify their own needs and aspirations in ways that make lifelong learning a practical reality. This point is implicit in both the first and third bullet points but perhaps making it explicit would be useful.

PRIORITY ONE - ENSURE ACCESS

The emphasis on residents and geographical area here is not one we would support and we would prefer to be speaking of communities, including communities of interest. Furthermore, helping communities of interest to identify and pursue their cultural aims would seem to be desirable.

At the same time it is clearly unrealistic to expect every village to access world class performances at a price they can afford.

A mechanism needs to be devised which will address these issues, and take into account local diversity. Part of the solution will be the effort that communities put into providing the infrastructure, skills and knowledge.

Example Actions

Maintain support to enable an equitable range of high quality arts provision across the county.

What would/could this mean in practice? What it couldn't mean is identical provision. It might mean identical to e.g. citizens of Gwynedd, comparing like with like. But what is like what?

This is of great importance and developing a meaningful measure of this aspiration could be very significant for the future.

Support for targeted touring and outreach programmes.

Here too some criteria are needed to make such programmes effective. Partnership would be a key factor. The need for such programmes in a rural context is undisputed.

Work with arts sector providers to develop and implement the simplest, most effective way of co-ordinating and circulating information about activities

and events.

Yes. And also at planning and conception and development stages too. We would also suggest that PAF is a key player in this.

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.

And more than that. Cultural impact. Minorities. Planning and programming input.

Work with arts providers to encourage and facilitate free and concessionary ticket schemes.

Yes. For artists too in some cases, recognising the importance of stimulus.

PRIORITY TWO - ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

We would once more add the importance of cultural self determination. In addition the development of skills in the community mentioned in previous section might go here

Example Actions

Encourage and support greater community involvement in the management and programming of local arts facilities, events and activities.

Yes. And that must include communities of interest. Plus helping them to define themselves and their aspirations

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.

Yes and no. The funding for such work should not come from the arts provision but from other areas of council expenditure. Unless funds allocated for community safety are assessed for aesthetic values the opposite assessment would be unequal.

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.

Yes. But with additional emphasis placed on developing the relevant skills through training, mentoring and buddy systems. Minority artforms (e.g. poetry, folk music,) should be seen in the same light and offered the same support.

Increase support for the 'Night Out' rural touring scheme.

Yes. Double yes.

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.

Yes. More detail and further work needed on this. In particular there needs to be a close relationship between the engagement and influence of stakeholders. The "groups" currently being established by Powys Arts Forum could also be seen as providing a basis for such a partnership.

PRIORITY THREE - SUPPORT LEARNING

As part of this there is a need for knowledge and understanding of the range of arts activities that take place elsewhere.

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.

Yes. Perhaps overlapping provision.

Work in partnership with the Schools Service to assess current input by arts practitioners and organisations to schools and explore potential for coordination, improvement and future development.

Yes.

Encourage and promote career opportunities in the creative and cultural industries.

Yes.

Encourage and support work placement opportunities and apprenticeship schemes.

Yes.

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.

Yes. How? And to learn about the arts.

PRIORITY FOUR - SUPPORT THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

We would urge Powys to explore the possibility of creating a modest *Chance to Create* grant scheme to support the development of artists in Powys. Even if the present economic climate is unfavourable, there should be an opportunity in the future to invest. Even a modest £100,000 per annum would make a difference.

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.

Yes. New grant scheme please.

Establish collaborative working relationships in support of new and existing creative industry businesses developing the use of new technologies and media in their enterprises.

Yes. How?

Attract young and new creative businesses to Powys.

Yes. How?

To support the development of the independent artists sector, raise the profile of artists and craftspeople through improved marketing initiatives and increased exhibiting opportunities.

Yes.

Encourage and support the formation of artists' clusters to promote artist-led initiatives.

Yes. This initiative is already being undertaken by PAF, and this work would benefit from support to enable sustainability.

Explore and establish a mentoring scheme to support new talent and encourage business development.

Yes. But be careful not to silo as some skills may be just as relevant to community cohesion and combating social exclusion.

Implement the recommendations of the 'Research Study into Festivals, Events and the Cultural and Creative Sector in Powys'.

Yes. When we know what they are. (We will shortly be able to add some detail on this)

PRIORITY FIVE - SENSE OF PLACE

This is very important, and the developing of strong links with other partners in the tourism world would be an important mechanism for doing this.

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.

Yes. How? Starter units as at Aber?

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.

Yes. How?

Promote Powys as an area with strong cultural venues, festivals and special events for the enjoyment of local people and visitors.

Yes. How?

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.

Yes. How?

Maximise opportunities offered through future development projects to enhance the public realm.

Yes. How?

PRIORITY SIX – ADVOCACY

We would particularly welcome the strong evidential base, and the development of analytical tools.

Example Actions

Contribute to and co-ordinate the collation of quantitative and qualitative evidence of the benefits of arts activity.

Yes. Build on Wavehill. Set benchmarks.

Produce and publicise case studies of successful stories or pilot projects.

Yes. How? Websites – hard copy? Press officer with PAF? Integrate marketing.

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.

Yes. How?

PRIORITY SEVEN - STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

We wholeheartedly support a more wide-ranging approach. In addition we would like to see a feedback mechanisms built into the action plan so that it becomes a live and evolving document.

Like, we suspect, many respondents and potential respondents to this document we regret the short time available to respond to this document. An indication that this process is live and evolving would go some way towards addressing that concern.

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.

Yes. Through the Forum & Arts Partnership.

Initiate integrated delivery models amongst independent arts providers to maximise the use of limited resources.

Yes. Through the Forum & Arts Partnership.

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

Yes. But wider than this?

Develop closer working arrangements with neighbouring local authorities to reduce costs and maximise benefits for Powys residents.

Yes. But not at the loss of accountability. We assume this means neighbouring counties of England too.

SOME SPECIFIC ACTION POINTS

Set out below are what seems to be the key actions proposed, together with our own ideas for

development.

4 **Powys Arts Partnership.**

- o We would advocate this is made up in equal thirds of:
 - Venues, galleries, companies receiving revenue grants from Powys
 - County Council officers (e.g. Arts Service, Community Department, Glasu)
 - Powys Arts Forum members with specific specialisms
- o In addition advisors and specialists would attend its meetings for specific items or for general advice.
- o Its roles might include
 - Development of communities of interest which the Forum could undertake if commissioned
 - Maximise opportunities offered through future development projects to enhance the public realm.
 - Advise on best practice (see below)
- o Advise on cross-border working

5 **Marketing of the Arts/Data Gathering.** We would expect this to be a further development of Arts Engine with additional connections to Info Engine and Powys Arts Forum's own website as well as others. An integration of information-gathering and information output is clearly needed and needs to be developed around IT systems. We recommend this as an area of study and development on a partnership basis.

6 **Supporting touring,** outreach, and Night Out seem to belong together. We suggest:

- o Host venues should be encouraged to develop their own artistic vision and policy
- o That schemes remain simple to use – Night Out is exemplary in this way, though Community Enablement is not far behind it.

7 **Disseminating best practice**

- o Concessionary ticket schemes developed by bi-lateral discussions within agreed framework

- o A periodic review of venues, galleries etc. to be designed in a way that is creative and enjoyable rather than bureaucratic. Meeting the public and discussing with them what the vision is, plus being confronted with people's aspirations could be invigorating, not a tedious monitoring chore. Detailed administrative discussions and business approaches should be structured in a supportive way.
- o Work placement and similar could be progressed bi-laterally within a framework document that potential employers sign up to. Recognition of their willingness to do that could be recognised through a 'charter mark' of some kind.
- o It would be desirable to adopt similar practices with non-revenue clients. We suggest exploring a voluntary review process that would include a charter mark – similar to the *Investors in People*, perhaps.
- o Encouragement of high quality crafts and art venues prioritizing exhibition and sales of the work of Powys artists and craftspeople.

"Made in Powys" kitemark? This also implies training of curators etc.

8 **Strategic Funding.** We would recommend that funding be found for the following:

- o Son or Daughter of *Chance to Create* grant scheme needed.
- o Mentoring scheme needed
- o Conference
- o Incubation units needed. Network of them?
- o Night Out Scheme
- o Revenue funding the Forum

9 **Tourism.** Developing cultural tourism with partners in the tourism industry would seem to be needed. Work on this could be progressed via the Sustainable Tourism strand of RDP.

10 **Data gathering.** Following the work by Wavehill, gathering and analysing data is needs to be continued.

- o Can this be undertaken by the Powys Data Observatory?
- o We seem to be suggesting the arts is a cross-cutting theme. Can this be explored with the thematic partnerships?

RESPONSE TO CREATIVE FUTURES

Many of the issues regarding art for Children and Young People are very similar so we haven't made a detailed response to that document. We were also labouring under time restraints. There are, however, a number of specific points we would like to make regarding the ideas outlined in Creative Futures.

- 1 We welcome the attempt to canvas the views of young people but think the data gathered from taster sessions and inevitably unrepresentative sessions should be treated with caution.
- 2 This leads to the need to establish reliable baseline data as a strategic priority so that we can speak with more confidence about what young people want, and be able to start to measure how effective we have been in addressing that.
- 3 We would place particular emphasis on the training of artists to work with young people as outlined in Priority 4.
- 4 The consultation and involvement of young people is extremely important, but care needs to be taken that the methods used ensure response from a diversity of young people. We wouldn't want to place undue emphasis on the views of 13 year olds who enjoy long committee meetings.

5 There is such a long journey from pre-school to young professional that it is unlikely that the same system can encompass all. We would like to see some thought given to overlapping systems that provides continuity of provision into adulthood. That might for example mean a Youth Arts Partnership that focuses on education, a Training Partnership that enables acquisition of skills and experience, and a mentoring system allied to work placement that gets them started in life. Each of these should be in touch with each other. *(Regarding the question of a Youth Arts Partnership, I understand that this is now not on the cards. I would, however, urge that consideration is given to making the discussion of the arts a distinct area of the work of the Youth Council, drawing on both those with aspirations but no*

experience, and also young people who have experience to bring to the discussions. GG)

- 6 Transport is a perennial problem for everything in Powys, but for young people it is even worse as they are dependant on others. While this is identified as an issue by the children themselves (p12) it doesn't seem to be addressed in the document. The problem may be intractable, but that shouldn't prevent us from trying to address it. We suggest that the document recommends a cross-cutting approach from Powys, and maybe something that can be raised with the LSB (through the CYPP) and the Programme Regeneration Board. It is also an issue that the PRP has identified, though not specifically regarding young people.
- 7 We recommend that schools be asked to develop an arts policy, and that part of the requirement would be that they consult at least three artists. This might involve using an agreed database (drawn from PAF members?). We wouldn't want this to be too onerous. Just one afternoon's discussion with head and senior staff and artists plus an action plan would suffice.