

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015



Adrian Paci. *Per Speculum*, 2006. Film on 16mm, duration 8min.
Courtesy of Galleria Francesca Kaufman, Milan.

Consultation on the Statutory Guidance Response from the Arts Council of Wales

October 2015

“If the scientists are right, we’re living through the biggest thing that’s happened since human civilisation emerged. One species, ours, has by itself in the course of a couple of generations managed to powerfully raise the temperature of a whole planet, to knock its most basic systems out of kilter. But oddly, though we know about it, we don’t know about it. It hasn’t registered in our gut; it isn’t part of our culture. Where are the books? The poems? The plays? The goddamn operas?”

Bill McKibben *Open Democracy* (2005)

“This disparity between the rich and the poor has been noticed. It has been noticed, most acutely and not unnaturally, by the poor. Just because they have noticed it, it won't last for long. Whatever else in the world we know survives to the year 2000, that won't. Once the trick of getting rich is known, as it now is, the world can't survive half rich and half poor. It's just not on.”

C P Snow *The Two Cultures* (1959)

Introduction

Imagine...

Imagine Wales. And when you've done that – pictured it, heard it, enjoyed it, read about it, celebrated it – try to think of our country without song, the spoken word on stage and screen, without poetry and novels, and dance and sculptures and ceramics and paintings and images, and all of the living traditions that are making our contemporary culture so potentially dynamic.

In raw fact, as well as in our imagination, there's no human Wales without Art. Art shapes, defines and sustains – it is fundamental to our well-being, now and into the future.

About the Arts Council of Wales

The Arts Council of Wales is the country's official funding and development organisation for the arts. Our principal sponsor is the Welsh Government.

We also distribute funding from the National Lottery and raise additional money where we can from a variety of public and private sector sources. Working with a range of partners we support and promote the important role that the arts play in in people's lives, providing opportunities for people across Wales to enjoy and take part in creative activities. We invest around £45m each year in the arts in Wales.

The importance of the arts to local communities

It is easy to overlook what is fundamentally important and vital to a vibrant, prosperous, healthy Wales.

The arts contribute to all aspects of public life. The arts illuminate and give life to the wide range of strategies that underpin civil society. From arts and health to cultural tourism, public art to town centre re-generation, the arts bring meaning, authenticity and enjoyment to our everyday lives. They create and sustain jobs, enrich education services and bring people together.

The arts enrich our lives. Arts and culture underpin our sense of well-being and improve our quality of life. Arts and culture are reflections of life itself. The arts matter.

Seven reasons why the arts matter...

1. The Arts help to create **A Prosperous Wales** – the arts are important in their own right for the enjoyment and inspiration they offer. But the creative and cultural industries are also a vital engine for Wales' economy. They contribute directly in terms of job and wealth creation, through the creation, distribution and retail of goods and services.
2. The Arts help create **A Resilient Wales** – the arts nurture innovation and creativity. 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 and living.
3. The Arts help create **A Healthier Wales** – taking part in the arts can promote a healthier life-style, reducing stress, promoting the prevention of disease and fostering greater wellbeing. Arts, creativity and quality of design improve healthcare environments and provide better quality facilities for patients and healthcare staff.
4. The Arts help create **A More Equal Wales** – the arts instinctively reach out, touch and engage. And at their best they reach beyond the easy and the obvious, removing the cultural, economic, social and geographical impediments that might otherwise form a barrier to engagement. The benefits of the arts are important and life-enhancing – it must be axiomatic, therefore, that in a fair and tolerant society such benefits should be available to all.
5. The Arts help create **A Wales of Cohesive Communities** – engaging in creative activity increases individuals' and communities' confidence and sense of self-worth, builds social cohesion by creating friendship and a sense of 'belonging'. It can make people feel safer and more positive about where they live, taking a pride in their own culture or ethnicity
6. The Arts help create **A Wales of Vibrant Culture and thriving Welsh Language** – nothing makes Wales more distinctive than its culture and its languages. The Welsh language provides the means to understand and enjoy an extraordinarily rich literature and culture. Creativity thrives on this and is a key component in continuing the Welsh language's vital role at the heart of Welsh life.
7. The Arts help create **A Globally Responsible Wales** – the arts help us to appreciate and understand the world we live in. They inspire and excite. They also help us to question and explore, bringing new insights to familiar challenges. The arts unlock our creativity and imagination, helping us to become more engaged, active and fulfilled citizens.

The consultation questions

1. Does the Core guidance (SPSF 1) explain what is expected of public bodies and public service boards subject to the Act in a way that can be understood by public bodies and interested stakeholders?

Yes. We welcome the introduction of the Act and fully support what it is trying to achieve. We believe that the Arts Council of Wales individually, and the arts sector collectively, are well placed to help achieve the well-being goals.

The Core guidance is detailed and lengthy, but we believe it is clear.

2. Does the Statutory Guidance (SPSF 2) enable public bodies to discharge the requirements provided by Part 2 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?

Yes.

We anticipate no practical difficulties in meeting the requirement to:

- Set and publish well-being objectives
- Take all reasonable steps to meet those objectives
- Publish a statement about well-being objectives
- Publish an annual report of progress
- Publish our response to any recommendations made by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

We note that the Act gives flexibility to public bodies when setting well-being objectives to do so in a way that suits their role and functions. The guidance note specifically identifies the Arts Council of Wales as a national body with functions that relate to all of Wales.

In acknowledging our national role, the guidance anticipates that our well-being objectives will generally apply nationally. It does, however, note that there may be instances when we choose to set well-being objectives relevant to a particular part of Wales, if, for instance we wish to intervene on an important local issue.

In practice, operational delivery is more complex and subtle. The Arts Council is a national organisation with national policies, but we deliver locally through our funding of individuals and organisations in localities across Wales. For us, national and local are just two sides of the same developmental coin.

We therefore welcome the approach to planning at local spatial level as it is only at the point of delivery in communities that real, meaningful partnerships and collaborations and a citizen centred approach can be realised.

It will be a challenge for national public bodies such as ourselves with a specialist remit to ensure that we can support the interpretation and delivery of national strategies through the PSBs. But we believe it can be achieved with commitment on both sides. We would be looking for reassurance that national level ambitions would be given due importance and regard by PSBs. A focus on the local dimension should not equate to a lack of ambition for the reach and quality of what can be achieved locally – particularly in the cultural sphere.

For these reasons it therefore becomes very important to define the precise nature of the relationship between the Public Service Boards (PSBs) and those national organisations, designated by the act, who are not statutory members of the PSB but could – at the discretion, it would appear, of the PSB – attend as an ‘invited participant’. Guidance note SPSF2 contains no specific advice on this issue, although it is referred to in SPSF3 (paras. 24-27). At present, we do not feel that this is sufficiently clear.

Whilst we welcome the ability, allowed in the Act, for us to influence on a more local basis, but we are unclear as to the implications of a potential ‘intervention’ on the duties and responsibilities of the Public Service Board (PSB) in that locality. In some cases, an issue might be highlighted by the Arts Council, but the solution could rest with the Public Service Board. In such circumstances, what is the obligation, if any, on a PSB to accept the ‘advice’ of a national body? We would welcome further guidance on this point.

In practice, it is more likely that we would want to work collaboratively with PSBs, supporting them and offering positive assistance. We already have well-established local partnerships with local authorities and other partners across Wales, and we would want to preserve the advantages of this style of joint-working. This might, however, raise issues about how we could provide a meaningful level of support across all of the PSBs. (This is picked up again below.)

3. Does the Guidance (SPSF 2) explain how public bodies should respond to the recommendations of the Commissioner?

Yes – the provisions as set out in the Guidance seem proportionate and reasonable.

4. Does the Statutory Guidance (SPSF 3) enable public services boards to establish and complete all its functions as provided for in Part 4 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act?

Yes – but see comments below.

From our reading of the Guidance on Consultation (para 135), we assume that as one of the ‘other partners’ the PSB would be required to consult with us on the preparation of the Local Well-being Plan. For the avoidance of doubt, we believe there would be merit in specifically identifying those who would be involved.

5. Does the Statutory Guidance (SPSF 3) support public services boards to achieve a step change in the way they work collectively towards shared objectives?

Potentially, yes.

The process and mechanism is clearly set out in the Guidance and should encourage a greater focus around shared objectives. In practice, however, the process is complex and challenging. So as with most things, success will depend on the quality of the membership within the PSB, the vigour with which it drives forward its agenda and the openness with which it collaborates with other partners and a leadership framework that is determined and committed to implementing the spirit of the legislation.

6. Does the Statutory Guidance (SPSF 4) to Community and Town Councils make clear which councils are subject to the duty in Section 40 and what those affected are required to do?

We have no specific comments to make on this issue.

7. In the context of Local Government Reform and new authorities to be in place in 2020, we would welcome your views on the appropriate arrangements for the development of assessments of local well-being and local well-being plans, in order to enable the Act to be implemented in a timely and effective manner but in a way that minimises the need to duplicate effort.

Please refer to 2 above.

We would want to understand how we, and our partners in the arts sector, would have an input into the development and assessment of the local well-being plans.

The arts can bring creativity, imagination and innovation to education, design and the physical environment of the places that people live, work and play in, developing economically thriving and socially just communities – building places that people are proud to live. These are all areas in which the arts excel.

We have a track-record of making a real difference – in particular with local authorities who have worked in partnership with us over many years. We would like to see the PSBs as a mechanism to see this best practice approach extended and embraced in all 22 localities. Less than this would undervalue the contribution that the cultural sector can make to the work of the public sector in the spirit of the over-arching aims of the Well-being legislation. Creativity starts with thinking and we see time and time again how valuable it is to have creative people around a table as a stimulus for ideas and debate in the public sector – and not just limited to sector specific issues either.

8. Do you have examples of good practice that show key actions under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that could be shared with other public bodies?

The Arts Council of Wales has an extensive track-record of funding and delivering activity that meets each of the Well-being goals. Examples include:

A Prosperous Wales

- our portfolio of key arts organisations employ nearly 5,000 people and the economic activity that they generate provides indirect employment for many more. Arts Council funding to this portfolio of £27m underpins a turnover in excess of £100m
- our investment in the nation’s arts infrastructure through our Lottery capital funding programme has supported 1,662 projects, investing nearly £120million into the Welsh economy. This has levered total spending of around £537million
- Arts Council funding enables artists to build professional careers in Wales, developing their creative, craft and technical skills. And for those organisations who are ‘market ready’, our international division, Wales Arts International, invests in the research and development that opens up pathways to new overseas opportunities

A Resilient Wales

- our business development programme equips arts organisations with the skills and capability to exploit the financial potential of their creative activity
- we are supporting several peer to peer initiatives including several networks to promote sharing of best practice, advice and support including the Clore Fellows network, Creu Cymru, Emergence, Artsworks and PIRC

A Healthier Wales

- the Arts Council funded Gwanwyn Festival promotes arts activity by and for older people across 11 local authorities in Wales
- Valley and Vale's Arts Council funded Person Centred Creativity programme is adopted in a wide range of healthcare and wellbeing settings with over 300 care professionals benefitting from the organisation's training
- Menu 4 Life is a programme of arts and mental health activities, to be delivered in two Communities First Clusters in the Ebbw Fach Valley. Programme is now integral to the Healthier Communities Action Plan

A More Equal Wales

- the Arts Council spent over £7.1m in 2014/15 in Communities First areas
- the Unity Festival, one of Europe's largest inclusive arts festivals, celebrates the inclusion of people with disability or learning disability in the creation and presentation of their work
- *Hynt*, the Arts Council initiated national ticketing scheme, is helping more disabled people to attend the arts

A Wales of Cohesive Communities

- the Arts Council supports a network of organisations embedded in local communities, offering stable, dependable day-to-day access to the arts across Wales
- community arts organisations are tackling poverty of opportunity, access and aspiration, delivering programmes that provide training, skills development and capacity building
- partners, such as Tai Calon Community Housing, are using arts-led public consultation around its new £14m environmental improvements plan involving 9 artists, delivering 60 arts sessions in 8 locations across Blaenau Gwent, generating 854 participants from 'hard to reach' parts of the community

A Wales of Vibrant Culture and thriving Welsh Language

- Welsh band 9Bach wins album of the year in the 2015 BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards
- Ffilm Cymru develop and produce 12 films, including three in the Welsh language
- the reputation of Welsh arts is felt at home and abroad – BBC National Orchestra of Wales gives 60 concerts across Wales and 43 broadcasts in 2014/15; Nofit State present three productions across the UK and tour to France, the Netherlands and Ireland; Welsh National Opera flies the flag for Wales overseas in Scandinavia and the Middle East

A Globally Responsible Wales

- *Emergence*, a major arts and sustainability action research project, promotes sustainability

9. We have asked 8 specific questions of the draft guidance. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please express your views here.

An opportunity for transformational change

We welcome the mainstreaming of the Act into the core work of key public bodies. If the objectives of the Act are to be met, it is vital that well-being and sustainability drives the corporate plans of organisations (as outlined in the Guidance). It must be fundamental to organisations' planning, not an adjunct to it.

Taking the long view

Long term planning enables organisation to look further into the future and plan more ambitious outcomes. However, the financial regime in Wales – with budgets agreed on an annual basis – militates against longer term planning. We would welcome being able to plan ahead financially and with the ability to carry funds across financial years. Developments that have been planned and budgeted for often fall across financial years and sometimes fall behind schedule for good, legitimate reasons. Being able to plan resources across the life-span of a project, as opposed to financial years, would be beneficial.

Measuring what matters – the letter and the spirit of the Act

There needs to be appropriate means of evaluation and ensuring public value that respect the spirit of the legislation. We welcome the move to evaluate outcomes and quality not quantity, but in a way the whole holistic principles behind sustainable development imply a different, more intrinsic approach is needed in response.

We are aware that the Wales Audit Office is investigating models of auditing and reporting that start to address these issues. We endorse the exploration of these alternative approaches. We must take the opportunity that the Act offers us to re-imagine accountability and public value. If we do not do this, there is a danger the front-end of the process is undermined by the back-end or – even worse – that incredibly burdensome methodologies emerge for public bodies to account for themselves in response to the legislation. Many aspects of well-being do not lend themselves easily to numerically driven measurement and evaluation.

We endorse the intention to ensure that the 7 Well-being Goals are considered in the round. There will be many occasions where actions may score highly against one goal and very low against another. Consider, for example, hospital food that is sourced cheaply but of a poor quality and driven in from a long distance away. The cheaper food would score well on the economic benefit of releasing more money for health care, but it could be of poor nutritional value to recovering patients and damage the local economy by taking business away from local suppliers. It is not clear how the different pressures would be balanced by the

PSBs in the Guidance. The status quo will not deliver the ambitions of the WFGA. The Act calls for a radically different decision making framework and we see a role for creative thinking in that.

Affecting change – resources and investment

The legislation opens up the possibilities of numerous collaborations and partnerships that could benefit citizens. However, at the same time public funding has never been under greater pressure. The current division of local authority responsibilities (and funding) between Statutory and Discretionary puts much third sector at risk. It is desperately in need of reform.

A new vision and a new financial strategy are needed.

A binary approach to statutory/discretionary does not adequately reflect the more subtle approach to investment, funding and services that will be needed if the Government is to meet its well-being goals.

It is the role of the Welsh Government to set the strategic framework and policy direction for services at a national level and it is the role of local government to deliver those services taking account of the local circumstances and pressures.

We would therefore suggest that as future new structures are introduced for the delivery of public services in Wales, it is essential that the Welsh Government offers a clear and explicit vision that sets out the role of third sector activity (such as arts and culture) as part of an intelligent interpretation of how well-being goals will be delivered.

Concluding comments

So now, imagine again...

Imagine the Wales we might create if together we do all this and more.

A Wales in which Art is understood as the meaning of Life. A Wales in which the survival mechanisms of a Welfare State – from Health, to Social Security to Education – become the means to allow human beings to thrive. A Wales whose democracy is enlivened by the ability of its people to envision themselves and their purposes, individual and social, in the collective pursuit and delivery of a better quality of life.

The Arts Council is clear on the leading role that we wish to adopt.

Our vision for the future is nothing less than a creative Wales where the arts are central to the life of the nation – a place where our best talents are revealed, nurtured and shared, and where communities across Wales have the opportunity to enjoy and take part in the best that our artists and arts organisations can offer.

We welcome the Welsh Government's commitment to putting well-being and sustainable development at the heart of government and the wider public sector.

As in so many areas of civic and cultural life, the arts have a key role to play in supporting the principles of well-being and sustainability. And addressing these issues will help to create resilient communities with individuals whose lives are creative, positive and productive.

We look forward to playing our part.