



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru  
The National Assembly for Wales**

**Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau a Diwylliant  
The Communities and Culture Committee**

**Dydd Mercher, 6 Hydref 2010  
Wednesday, 6 October 2010**

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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

**Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol**  
**Committee members in attendance**

Mohammad Asghar	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Eleanor Burnham	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Mark Isherwood	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
David Lloyd	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Sandy Mewies	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Lynne Neagle	Llafur Labour
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

**Eraill yn bresennol**  
**Others in attendance**

Steve Davis	Cyfarwyddwr Artistig, Theatr Spectacle Artistic Director, Spectacle Theatre
Mai Jones	Rheolwr Cyffredinol, Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru ac Aelod Gweithredol Cymdeithas Celfyddydau Perfformio Cymru General Manager, Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru and Executive Member, Wales Association for the Performing Arts
Gary Meredith	Cyfarwyddwr Artistig, Theatr Gwent Artistic Director, Gwent Theatre
Sarah Rochira	Cyfarwyddwr, RNIB Cymru Director, RNIB Cymru
Chris Ryde	Trefnydd Cymru a'r De Orllewin, Equity Organiser for Wales and the South West, Equity
Richard Williams	Cyfarwyddwr, RNID Cymru Director, RNID Cymru

**Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol**  
**National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance**

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Tom Jackson	Clerc Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9 a.m.*  
*The meeting began at 9 a.m.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon**  
**Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **Sandy Mewies:** Good morning, everyone. I welcome everybody here today: our guests who are giving evidence, Members, and anyone in the public gallery. This is the first meeting of the Communities and Culture Committee of the autumn. Is it really? I am sure I was here last week. [*Laughter.*] Anyway, for those who do not know, we operate through the

medium of Welsh as well as of English. The translation is on channel 1 of the headset in front of you. For those who might have hearing difficulties, you can use channel 0 for amplification.

[2] I ask everyone to make sure they have switched off their mobile phones and their BlackBerrys and any other electronic devices that they might have about their person because they can interfere with the sound equipment. I have not been notified of any fire drill, so if an alarm sounds, please follow the ushers and they will lead us all safely out.

[3] I invite Members at this stage to make any relevant declarations of interest. I have received apologies from Bethan Jenkins and Alun Davies, and from Rosemary Butler, who would be substituting for Alun Davies. She may be able to get here for the end of the meeting. I am not sure; she is travelling at the moment.

[4] Members should be aware that one of the committee papers has changed. The Equity paper should be substituted for this one on the desk.

9.01 a.m.

**Ymchwiliad i Hygyrchedd Gweithgareddau Celfyddydol a Diwylliannol yng Nghymru:  
Casglu Tystiolaeth—RNIB Cymru a RNID Cymru  
Inquiry into Accessibility of Arts and Cultural Activities across Wales: Evidence  
Gathering—RNIB Cymru and RNID Cymru**

[5] **Sandy Mewies:** I welcome Sarah from the Royal National Institute of Blind People and Richard from the Royal National Institute for Deaf People. I understand that you are changing your name, Richard, next year.

[6] **Mr Williams:** Not me but the organisation, yes. [*Laughter.*]

[7] **Sandy Mewies:** I threw the clerk into a complete panic yesterday when I said that I thought that it had changed. He asked, ‘It is not wrong all the way through the papers, is it?’ and I said, ‘No, I think that it changes next year’.

[8] **Mr Williams:** Yes.

[9] **Sandy Mewies:** Welcome to you. This is the second meeting where we have taken oral evidence in this inquiry. We have had some very interesting responses so far and I am sure that we will have more today. We have two interesting papers from the RNIB and the RNID. Please assume that Members have read them. I will ask you whether you wish to make a short introduction, but most of the time will be devoted to Members’ questions, if that is okay. Richard, do you want to kick off?

[10] **Mr Williams:** Yes, thank you very much.

[11] Diolch yn fawr i chi am y cynnig i Thank you for the invitation to come here.  
ddod yma.

[12] The investigation that this committee has started is really timely in that RNID, probably two or three months ago, launched some research that we have done in Wales on accessibility to public services. A large section of that paper is around arts and leisure entertainment. It is purely coincidental, really, that both pieces of work come together, so it is really timely for us.

[13] Without going through the whole research, the point that comes out is the really high figure of people in Wales who have hearing loss who find it hard to access arts and entertainment. Around 79 per cent said it was very difficult to access and enjoy what most people take for granted. I think that it is important, when we are talking about deaf and hard of hearing people, to clarify at the outset the scale of what we are talking about: 480,000 people in Wales—one in seven people—have hearing loss. Obviously, with the population changes that we will see, that figure will rise in the coming years. For me, the point of this work is about ensuring full accessibility to the public, especially to what is publicly funded. At the moment, we have publicly funded services in Wales in the field of arts and entertainment that are not accessible to all. So, at the moment, the Welsh taxpayer is funding services that a seventh of the population does not have access to under any terms. That is just not a reasonable way for us to be delivering services.

[14] **Ms Rochira:** Good morning. Thank you for the invitation to be here this morning. While we do not have a formal report such as that which RNID has recently published, we are a member-based organisation and we are very close to our members in Wales. So, my job really is to act as their voice and to put forward and champion the issues that they raise. This is an issue that members across Wales raise with us on a frequent basis. You will note from the report that we held a recent member event at which we canvassed views. The views were typical of the types of issues that are raised with us all the time.

[15] I would echo some of Richard's comments, particularly in relation to the use of public funding. That is not to say there are not pockets of good practice, but it is not widespread enough. I also want to stress the key importance of access to the arts and the wider cultural tapestry of Wales, because it is about much more than just a legal equality of access. For many of the people that we support who are incredibly isolated, incredibly lonely and at risk of really severe mental health problems, access to the arts and culture is a key part of helping them stay independent. Enabling blind or partially sighted people to access arts and culture is crucial to helping them stay in employment, in education, and to helping minimise the risk of depression. So, for us it is much more than about equality duties or simple issues of equality of access.

[16] **Sandy Mewies:** Thank you very much. I am going to take the first question. There will be some changes to question times. I should have said that Dai, busy as always, is covering two committees this morning, so he may have to whip next door or wherever as and when he needs to. I remind other Members that we have a lot of questions to go through today. I will allow some supplementary questions, but only when I know that we have the time for them.

[17] This question is to Sarah. You have highlighted the difficulty in trying to obtain physical access to buildings and you make suggestions about how access could be improved for people with sight problems. Can you describe the ways in which you have tried to make cultural venues accessible, especially any influence that you have on the design of buildings and the guidance by which buildings are designed? I note that there have been several comments about the good practice in the Wales Millennium Centre, for example.

[18] **Ms Rochira:** Yes, perhaps I can share with you some examples of places where we have worked with the designers and also some of the more strategic work that we do on design guidance.

[19] I have pulled together some examples of a number of projects that we have been doing, and these were organisations that really wanted to engage with us. We did some work with St Fagans, where we provided a buddy scheme where sighted guides were trained to provide live audio description. They were then able to use that to guide blind and partially sighted people around. The response back was phenomenal. People found it very impressive.

We did something very similar with the National Roman Legion Museum in Caerleon.

[20] We have also done work with the Sherman Theatre on understanding sight loss training for staff. In fact, training for staff is probably one of the top three key impact interventions that we would highlight. We see that reinforced when we undertake the training.

[21] You referred to the millennium centre, where we have also trained and provided advice and accessible information. Again, the feedback is very immediate and very positive. We also part-fund a youth theatre and drama company called UCAN, which some Members will know about, which is for blind and partially sighted young people. That is part of our commitment to ensuring that people can not only access the art but can participate. If I had 10 times more money, I would put 10 times as much into UCAN. It is absolutely phenomenal.

[22] On how we work to try to ensure the physical accessibility of buildings, we have a design and accessibility team. It is a small team of two people; I do not want the word 'team' to be misleading. We already work closely with the Welsh Assembly Government in looking at design issues. At the moment, the strategic work that we do is not really focused around access to the arts and leisure. It has been focused around supported housing for people. We undertake work on a commissioned basis. So, organisations would approach us and say, 'Would you work with us to help us improve the accessibility of the building?'

[23] I go back to my point about training. A key issue for us is the training of staff so that they are aware of the needs of individuals. In a sense, that helps them broker around some of the physical difficulties.

[24] **Sandy Mewies:** Thank you. We will now move on to Mark, whose question is to Richard.

[25] **Mark Isherwood:** It is. Good morning, Richard. As somebody who is dependent on induction loops, I am aware that they are an effective provision, and you refer to this in your submission. Although I think that I possibly know the answer, I will ask the question. Why do you highlight this and what do you think the solutions could be?

[26] **Mr Williams:** The solutions are fairly straightforward, I think. There is a lack of awareness. Just to step back, I think that first of all there is a lack of strategy for how public venues engage with the public. I think that then there is a lack of awareness on the ground of why it is important. This key question of awareness really shows up in our research. I do not think that there is any will from anyone to block people from the arts and entertainment or any other public service; it is just that the penny has not dropped. Unless you tell people, they do not understand.

[27] So, I think that there is a lack of strategy and a lack of understanding and awareness. The solutions are fairly simple and in most cases all you have to do is ask people. Essentially, what we are talking about is good customer service and ensuring that a seventh of the population, in RNID's case, has the access that it needs.

9.10 a.m.

[28] In certain cases, that means loop systems that work. It is not just a question of installing a loop system, but of making sure that it is maintained, that it works and that the staff are able to understand it. You will be amazed at the number of times that an organisation spends thousands of pounds on a loop system, puts it in, puts the sticker in the window and thinks, 'That is it, we have done it'. Our members go in, a couple of years down the line, and it is not working. When you ask the staff to switch the loop on, the answer is, 'I don't know how to do it.' That is a very standard picture that we see.

[29] That is one aspect of it. Another aspect is accessibility for profoundly deaf people who use British Sign Language. There is a real shortage of access through interpretation. In the case of cinemas in particular, the shows are put on in the afternoon or the very last thing at night, which are really inaccessible hours. In theatres, the shows are not promoted properly so no-one is aware of them. It is just a lack of awareness and promotion. I go back to the point that it starts from strategy and then it goes to awareness, and then the delivery comes afterwards. I think that we need to get those two points right in the first place.

[30] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yr ydych yn sôn am ffyrdd o sicrhau bod perfformiadau yn fwy hygyrch, er enghraifft drwy ddarparu perfformiadau â chapsiynau ac iaith arwyddion neu drwy ddefnyddio disgrifiadau sain. Beth sy'n cyfyngu ar allu lleoliadau i gynnig y cyfleusterau hyn? Yn eich barn chi, sut y gellid ymestyn y defnydd a wneir ohonynt?

**Eleanor Burnham:** You talk of ways to make performances more accessible, such as through captioned and signed performances, or through the use of audio description. What restricts the ability of venues to offer these facilities? How do you consider that their use might be extended?

[31] **Mr Williams:** Yr hyn sy'n cyfyngu ar eu gallu yw ymwybyddiaeth o bwysigrwydd y ddarpariaeth i bobl. Nid wyf yn meddwl bod neb yn bod yn faleisus nac yn ceisio rhwystro mynediad; yr hyn sy'n digwydd yw nad yw pobl yn gwybod. Dyna'r peth cyntaf. Yn ail, mae cost oherwydd nid yw offer fel dolen sain na dehonglydd iaith Arwyddion Prydain yn rhad ac am ddim. Mae'r ateb yn debyg iawn i'r ateb i'r cwestiwn cyntaf: daw hyn yn ôl i strategaeth yn gyntaf a dealltwriaeth a gwybodaeth am y pwnc ar ôl hynny.

**Mr Williams:** What is limiting their ability is awareness of the importance of provision to people. I do not think that anyone is being malevolent or trying to block access; what is happening is that people just do not know. That is the first thing. Secondly, there is a cost because equipment like a loop system or BSL interpreters do not come cheap. The answer is similar to that to the first question: it comes back to strategy first and understanding and knowledge of the subject after that.

[32] Weithiau, mae ffyrdd o gyfyngu ar y gost os ydych yn glyfar. Y gwastraff arian mwyaf amlwg yw rhywun yn prynu dolen sain ac wedyn yn methu â sicrhau ei bod yn gweithio. Nid oes neb yn ennill yn y sefyllfa honno: mae'r arian wedi ei wario, ond nid oes neb yn cael budd ohono.

Sometimes, there are ways of reducing the cost, if you are clever about it. The most obvious waste of money is someone buying a loop system and then failing to ensure that it works. No-one wins in that situation: the money has been spent, but no-one is benefiting from it.

[33] **Eleanor Burnham:** A yw'n bosibl rhannu'r adnoddau hyn rhwng grŵp o theatrau, er enghraifft?

**Eleanor Burnham:** Would it be possible to share these resources between a group of theatres, for example?

[34] **Mr Williams:** Ydy. Mae enghraifft dda o'r posibilïadau yng Nghaerdydd yng Nghanolfan Mileniwm Cymru. Mae hwn eto yn dangos un o wendidau'r system. Mae ganddi ddau beiriant ffantastig sy'n darparu testun ar y llwyfan. Felly, mae un yn gweithio yng Nghaerdydd ac mae'n fodlon rhannu'r llall â theatrau eraill. Maent yn dweud nad ydynt yn gallu cael cwmnïau eraill i gymryd mantais ohono. Dyna

**Mr Williams:** Yes. There is a good example of the possibilities in Cardiff in the Wales Millennium Centre. This also shows one of the weaknesses in the system. It has two fantastic machines that provide stage text. Therefore, one operates in Cardiff and it is willing to share the other with other theatres. They say that they cannot get other companies to take advantage of it. That is an example of an opportunity to do something

enghraifft lle mae cyfle i wneud rhywbeth much better with what has already been  
llawer gwell gyda'r hyn sydd wedi cael ei purchased.  
brynu'n barod.

[35] **Eleanor Burnham:** Beth am yr **Eleanor Burnham:** What about the RNIB?  
RNIB?

[36] **Ms Rochira:** Again, I would endorse a lot of the comments that Richard has made because there is a huge overlap and similarity across the sensory loss agenda. I think that one of the big issues, certainly with sight loss, is that people just do not appreciate what percentage of the population has sight loss. We always say that if you get it right for blind and partially sighted people, you are getting it right for a huge percentage of the older population and people with learning disabilities, and so the list goes on. So, while we talk about 450,000 between us, I think that that figure is far higher in accessibility terms.

[37] There are issues about people thinking it is difficult; it is just in the 'hard' box and there is an issue about raising awareness of how easy it is to provide audio description, in our case. I think that there is also—this goes back to the marketing of services—sometimes a lack of demand because blind and partially sighted people give up because they are isolated in their homes, they do not have much money to get anywhere, and over time they give up and stop asking. They do not know what is out there and it is a vicious circle. Until we start to market far more effectively and strategically what is available and what people have a right to go to see, and people start to ask for it, it is very easy for an organisation to come back and say, 'We have only ever had one person ask us'.

[38] It is a bit like the trains that Sandy and I were talking about. They always say, 'Please ask for the card in Braille'. I have made a decision now that I am going to ask for it every single time just to make the point that people with sight loss travel, and they also like to go to the theatre. We have a role in saying to our members, 'Ask for it because if you do not ask, people will not know that you need it'.

[39] I also agree with Richard in that I think that it should be a prerequisite of public funding. There is a role for the Arts Council of Wales to be very specific and say, 'If you want to receive public funding, you will need to be very clear about how you are making your services accessible'. It should also be more than that because the question, 'Can you provide audio description?' is the wrong question; it really should be, 'How many people benefited from audio description, what was the uptake and what have you done to increase that uptake?'. It is multifactorial, but in this day and age, for Richard with technology, for us with audio description, it should not be rocket science.

[40] I have one final point. Some of the examples of good practice that we have referred to, and Richard has referred to at the Wales Millennium Centre, are phenomenally important because they lead the way, but we must not forget the importance of arts and culture in communities where people live. We have huge rural populations. Many of our older people cannot travel and we need to be very careful we do not move to a system where it is great for some, but not really very good for others.

[41] **Lynne Neagle:** You have touched on this a little already. You both highlight in your evidence the importance of making information available in accessible formats. Why do you think that venues are not making information accessible now? How do you think that could be integrated into their normal working practices?

[42] **Mr Williams:** I go back to my first point again, which is that I do not think that there is a strategy; there is a little bit of a tick-box approach to it. I do not think that venue managers are aware of what the public's needs are. To reflect what Sarah has said, 70 per cent



of 70-year-olds have hearing loss. In the main, these are not people who will turn up at a theatre, knocking on the door saying, 'Where are my services? I want this. I demand that. It is my right'. That is not the nature of the constituents that we are talking about.

[43] It goes back to a lack of strategic planning and a lack of awareness. What could be done about it is obviously greater engagement with people. I go back to Sarah's point again, which is a good point. It is fine for the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff to have these fantastic facilities, but when you go 30 miles down the road you are talking about a different world. People need equity of access. It is great in Cardiff, but if you go to mid Wales you really struggle to find venues that are really accessible.

[44] On information, people tell us that when there is something on, they very rarely know about it. There is a problem with sporadic theatre performances, for instance. We are concentrating on theatre, but it is wider than that. The theatre performances are sporadic so, for instance, the accessible performance is on a Thursday. They take that sort of approach to it, where it just pops up randomly, and people find that hard to track.

[45] There is also a problem with people knowing where to look for the information. For our constituents, there is a lot of reliance on calling into venues and people find it hard to get information that way. It goes back to engagement. Local venues should be in touch with people locally such as the hard of hearing groups and deaf groups. In Sarah's case, I am sure there are similar platforms. They should be talking to their local communities, finding out what the local communities need and how they can engage with them.

[46] **Ms Rochira:** As with all things that are difficult, there are lots of pieces that have to come together. One of them is that it is sometimes hard for organisations as you do not know what you do not know, and it goes back to the point about people not asking. One thing that I would like to see is a specific piece of work by the Arts Council of Wales on the work that it does annually on the questionnaire that it issues. It knows that people with sensory loss are a really hard-to-reach group. It also knows that it is not because people do not want to engage, there are just too many barriers. I would like to see a piece of work digging down underneath that. If you look at its reports and the annual questionnaires, it is really hard to see and tease out these issues. We are representing 0.5 million people between us and I think that that warrants and merits a specific piece of work that will be published. We could then use that to talk to arts and cultural venues and providers about what it tells us that we need to do and how we could improve provision. We would start to have an evidence base. That would be incredibly useful.

[47] I also think that libraries have a huge role to play in relation to this. A number of years ago, on the back of government funding, most libraries were kitted out with ICT equipment, for example, which is incredibly important for blind and partially sighted people. In fact, again on the back of government funding, we ran a very successful programme to train library staff and blind and partially sighted people on how to use them.

9.20 a.m.

[48] That ended a few years ago. I suspect that there is kit in libraries now that could be used but staff are probably not trained to use it. It absolutely warrants going back and relooking at the role of libraries in promoting access. I think that that is an easy win, if I am honest, and one that would have huge immediate value to people.

[49] I have a very quick third point. We recognise that large print can be difficult because it spoils the look of your beautiful leaflet or pamphlet—and this applies to all sorts of things in life—especially when you do it in English and Welsh. Very often, people do it in Braille, but only 3 per cent of people use Braille, and we know that large print and audio are the

formats that large numbers of people want to use. This is not only for people with sight loss; I have got to an age now where I cannot read most things that come across my desk.

[50] **David Lloyd:** Yr wyf yn cytuno â'ch pwynt olaf. Dyna pam yr wyf yn gwisgo fy sbectol heddiw.

**David Lloyd:** I agree with your last point. That is why I am wearing my spectacles today.

[51] Diolch am eich papurau. Yr ydych yn crybwyll ynddynt—ac yr ydych wedi crybwyll yr un pwynt y bore yma—bwysigrwydd hyfforddiant i staff, er mwyn codi ymwybyddiaeth a gwneud rhywbeth i ddelio â'r broblem yn y lle cyntaf. Hoffwn roi cyfle ichi ehangu ar y pwynt hwnnw. A ydych yn gwybod am unrhyw raglenni sy'n hyrwyddo hyfforddiant i staff? A oes esiamplau o arfer da? A ydych yn gwybod pam nad yw rhai sefydliadau yn mynd i'r afael â hyfforddiant staff?

Thank you for your papers. You mention in them—and you have raised the same point today—the importance of staff training, in order to raise awareness and in order to do something to deal with the problem in the first place. I would like to give you an opportunity to expand on that point. Do you know of any programmes that promote staff training? Are there examples of good practice? Do you know why some organisations do not get to grips with staff training?

[52] **Mr Williams:** Oes, mae rhaglenni. Mae RNID yn cynnal un ac mae elusennau eraill yn cynnal pethau tebyg. Mae gan RNID raglen o'r enw *Louder than Words*, sy'n rhaglen i gyrrff bychain a mawr sy'n edrych ar sut y maent yn darparu gwasanaethau. I gael siarter *Louder than Words*, byddai'n rhaid cael dolen sain yn y gweithle neu ble bynnag mae'r gwasanaeth yn cael ei gynnis, darparu hyfforddiant ymwybyddiaeth byddardod i staff, rhaid cael golau da mewn ystafelloedd, a rhaid cynnis gwybodaeth mewn ffordd sy'n agored i bawb. Felly, mae siarter gan RNID ac mae elusennau eraill yn cynnis hyfforddiant hefyd.

**Mr Williams:** Yes, there are programmes. RNID offers one and other charities offer similar things. RNID has a programme called *Louder than Words*, which is a programme for small and large organisations and looks at the way in which they provide services. To get the *Louder than Words* charter, you would have to have an induction loop in the workplace or wherever the services are offered, provide deaf awareness training for staff, there has to be good lighting in room, and information must be offered in a format that is accessible to all. Therefore, RNID has a charter and other charities also offer training.

[53] Mae cwmnïau a chyrrff eraill yn gwneud yr un math o beth. Mae gan Ymddiriedolaeth GIG Gwasanaethau Ambywlans Cymru siarter *Louder than Words*. Mae'r sefydliad wedi gwneud tipyn o waith i sicrhau bod ei wasanaeth yn agored i bawb. Mae Sarah a fi yn gweithio gyda'r gwasanaeth iechyd yng Nghymru. Mae trafodaethau o ran sut y gallwn gynnwys hwn yn rhan o hyfforddiant cynefino y GIG. Yr ydym wedi cael ymateb positif o ran hynny.

Companies and other organisations are doing the same sort of thing. The Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust has a *Louder than Words* charter. The organisation has done extensive work to ensure that its service is open to everyone. Sarah and I are working with the health service in Wales. We are in discussions as to how we can include this as part of induction training within the NHS. We have had a positive response with regard to that.

[54] Felly, mae cyrrff yn cymryd rhan yn y rhaglen hon. Fodd bynnag, nid wyf yn ymwybodol o unrhyw sefydliad celfyddydol yng Nghymru sydd wedi'i chwblhau, sy'n peri pryder pan ystyriwn pa gwmnïau eraill sydd wedi ei chwblhau. Mae'r Ganolfan Byd Gwaith wedi cael siarter *Louder than Words*.

Therefore, organisations are participating in this programme. However, I am not aware of any arts organisations in Wales that have completed it, which is worrying when we consider the other companies that have completed it. Jobcentre Plus has received a *Louder than Words* charter. Therefore, there

Felly, mae cyrff sy'n gwneud y gwaith ac sy'n gallu gweld ei bod yn bwysig, ond mae bwlch mawr ym maes y celfyddydau. are organisations that are doing the work and can see that it is important, but there is a large gap with regard to the arts.

[55] **Ms Rochira:** I have just a few thoughts really around the training issue. It is really important that training for staff and people working within arts and culture is perceived to add value to what they do. We live in a very heavily trained world and lives are busy. It is really key to getting their engagement that they undergo the training and then very quickly more people start to come through the door and they get more positive feedback. I think that it is also important that the training is sustainable. We do not want always to be an organisation that comes in every year and says, 'Good news, it is time for your annual training session'. It is about training organisations to be self-sufficient so that we can provide quality assurance, keep developing good practice and push that out into standard practice. I think that we are some way from that.

[56] Like Richard, we provide a wide range of training and a wide range of formats for organisations. Some proactively come to us and ask for that. Others, like Cardiff Castle, we approach and they instantly get it and want to take part. However, it is variable. RNID and RNIB are increasingly looking at how we can do joint training because we understand that it is really hard when I come along on Monday and Richard comes along on Friday. So, the more we can develop joint training approaches and joint good practice guidance, the easier it will be for arts events to pick up on that and then the more appropriate it will be to hold them to account for that. We are both very clear that there is an issue with regard to holding them to account, because of the use of public money.

[57] **Sandy Mewies:** Eleanor, you have a question to both. Perhaps you would like to go first this time.

[58] **Eleanor Burnham:** Efallai eich bod yn teimlo eich bod wedi ateb y cwestiwn hwn yn barod. Pa gyfleoedd sydd gennych i sicrhau bod pobl sydd ag anawsterau clywed a gweld yn chwarae rhan weithredol wrth i Lywodraeth y Cynulliad a'i chyrrff diwylliannol ddatblygu polisi? **Eleanor Burnham:** You may feel that you have answered this question already. What opportunities do you have to ensure that people who have difficulties with their hearing or sight play an active part in the policy development of the Assembly Government and its cultural organisations?

[59] **Ms Rochira:** That is quite a difficult question. We were talking about this a little earlier while we were waiting to come in. I would not want this to be seen as a criticism, because in many ways we do engage, but I think that we do not engage systematically at an early enough stage. So, very often, when we are engaged in consultations it will be on the back of a fairly well-established piece of work. We are certainly keen to be involved at a much earlier stage in relation to that work. Libraries are a good example. In fact, libraries are so important we include them in our manifesto issues. We see them as being one of the very high impact areas. So, I think that we would like to be involved at a much earlier stage.

[60] There is a wider issue about the agenda and policy issues with regard to older persons in Wales and the extent to which people with sight loss are seen and reflected within that. I do not think that we have yet reached a position where it needs to be. It is partly about how you badge the work, whether we talk about our members as being older people because most of them are, or as people with sight loss, which then puts it into the equality pocket. I think that we still struggle to know where to badge people with sight loss in Wales. So, it is not that we are not involved; we are not involved at an early enough stage and in some of the right policy arenas.

[61] **Mr Williams:** Yes, I agree with Sarah. I think that, in Wales, there is good

consultation but the consultations are at the wrong point in the way we currently work. Normally, we are consulted about policy right at the end stage where we can say, 'Can we change this 'the' to an 'an'?' It is that sort of consultation, whereas if we were talking at an earlier point you would get genuine engagement and genuine consultation and improved policy ideas. It just backs up what Sarah said, really. You get better value from including people at an earlier point.

[62] A lot of this sort of discussion where we are talking about wider direction and wider access to the arts and culture is symptomatic in that people are not involved at an early enough stage. However, if you were running a theatre venue and did include your local community in what provision you had on, you would not be at this point now where you are saying, 'Why is a seventh of the population not included?' Any normal business would have made sure at the outset that it did engage in that way. So, it is symptomatic of that whole thing where people get a bit of paper at the end and say, 'What do you think of that?' I just think that it is the wrong approach.

[63] **Eleanor Burnham:** Your constituents perhaps are not quite in the age category because surely there are many people who are much younger—I do not know.

[64] **Mr Williams:** Yes, our constituency is mainly an older constituency, but there have been examples and there are pockets again where we have been involved in policy development but they do tend to be around specifics. For example, if we have raised something with a Minister, we then get invited to work on an area. Mental health is one specific area.

[65] **Eleanor Burnham:** I think that Sarah wants to come back briefly, Chair.

[66] **Ms Rochira:** I just have one very quick point.

[67] **Sandy Mewies:** Can we keep the supplementary questions short because we are going to run out of time if we are not careful? I am keeping a close eye on the time now. We will do this quickly and then we will move on to Joyce.

[68] **Ms Rochira:** I have just one very quick point in relation to policy development. I think that the move towards single equality duties and a wider pan-disability approach is quite a challenge for people with sight loss and a challenge for statutory sector organisations as well because the danger is that we become lost among the higher profile groups within that.

[69] **Joyce Watson:** The RNID talks of a failure to fully implement the Welsh Government's 2004 guidance, 'Delivering in British Sign Language: Advice for Public Services', and the need to make arts groups and activities aware of their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Why are venues and bodies failing to implement such requirements effectively, in your opinion?

[70] **Mr Williams:** We have seen the results of it quite clearly through our research, so we know they are failing. There is no question about it; 78 per cent of the people tell us that they feel that access is difficult and the figures for those who rely on BSL are much higher. There is a significant difference in the accessibility rates of hard-of-hearing people and people who use BSL.

9.30 a.m.

[71] To go inside the mind of why it is not working I think is a difficult thing. We have no evidence. I could guess at it. My personal view on it is from guidance that has been issued. Anecdotally, when I ask people about it, there does not seem to be much awareness of it when

you speak to public service managers. I also think that there is a lack of understanding again. I do not think that people get it. When you sit down with somebody and explain why it is important they get it, but I just think that people are not aware of it. It is a document that arrived on a lot of people's desks and it went into the pile with their other papers and they have not done it.

[72] The bottom line is that there is no penalty and the people whom we represent are not the type of people who will come knocking on people's doors shouting about it. I think that it would be quite interesting to look at how the report was responded to by public services and to get some evidence. We have evidence of the public's view of whether it is working, but there is nothing that I have seen from the other side, on public services. What has their response been to the paper and how have they changed their behaviours? I think that it would be quite interesting if a small focus group found out, from their point of view, what the block is and why they are not responding to it. I could only guess at it.

[73] **Sandy Mewies:** Sarah, do you have anything to add?

[74] **Ms Rochira:** To pick up on Richard's point, which is quite important—and we touched on it in our paper—bodies that receive public funding should be open and should publish what they are doing to ensure that services are accessible, but they should do more than that, and say how many people with sensory loss are using those services. Part of that should include their response, if there is good practice guidance and information. There is an increased role to play in holding to account, particularly as money becomes increasingly scarce. We need to ensure that it is targeted at those who need it the most.

[75] **Mohammad Asghar:** Good morning to you both. My question is to both of you and is about monitoring accessibility. You suggest that there is a poor method for recording accessibility at venues. How would you like to see such a process work?

[76] **Ms Rochira:** That is a very good question. The Arts Council of Wales has a key role to play within that. I suspect that Richard will say something about this as well. We recently went to meet with the arts council to talk through some of these issues. It is difficult for us to say whether it is poor, but what it does not seem to be is terribly transparent, so it is not very easy to see how public money is helping to widen accessibility.

[77] I would like to see it at two levels. The operational detail is a task for people better than I. I would like to see it at a very public strategic level on a pan-Wales basis with a specific focus not just on disability but on people with sensory loss. I would also like to see it at local venue level. It is completely appropriate for local venues to be asked, 'How many people with sensory loss used your services last year? How many people use them this year? What are you doing to push those numbers up?' What we do not want to see are 42,000 pages of equality impact assessment published. That is process. What we want to see is one side of paper that says, 'Last year we did a piece of work and found out that blind and partially sighted people were not using our services. As a result of that we did a range of things. This year we are delighted to tell you that, for the first time, we have had 100 blind and partially sighted people come through the door'. That is the kind of outcome stuff that we need to see published.

[78] **Mr Williams:** The arts council is a big player in this. We did have a meeting with the arts council after the publication of our report. Choosing my words carefully, there is a lot of work to do. I am not sure how much money the arts council gets every year in funding, and I know it has been reduced, but it is not robust in ensuring accessibility for the people whom we work for. I am talking about simple things like having a list of accessible venues in Wales. I would presume that a decision on funding would be linked to accessibility in some way, and having a list of venues would seem a basic thing before coming to any decision about how

money is spent. The conversation that we had with the arts council was about us wanting to work with it on securing more robust monitoring.

[79] Stepping back from the arts council, this applies to everything that comes out of the Assembly. For every 1p spent in Wales, the basic premise should be that accessibility is built into it. Currently, it does have a feel of a tick-box exercise. When you scrutinise what comes out at the other end, after the money reaches the public, it is not working. We need to go back to take a look at the first step of how the Assembly ensures full accessibility for all the money that is spent, and then, individually through each organisation, to make sure that that drops through so that the public see the results at the other end.

[80] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you for that answer. I have another question for Sarah. Can you expand on your statement that accessibility criteria should become a core prerequisite to funding being allocated through the arts council and explain the potential impact on art venues, please?

[81] **Ms Rochira:** We are very clear that, if public money is being spent, it needs to be spent in a way that promotes and supports accessibility. It cannot be spent for very small groups that exclude other people. That is a very basic premise that we start from. We are pragmatic. We understand that, improving accessibility often involves not just one thing. We think that there are a few high impact areas, some of which I have touched on. For some venues, it will take time and that is fine—it is fine if it takes a year, 18 months, three years, five years to make those changes happen. Blind and partially sighted people face so many challenges that they are nothing if not realistic, but we want to see organisations start that journey. We want to see a very clear message sent to them that that journey needs to begin, with all seriousness, to increase numbers of people going through.

[82] So, it is not about having a big stick, and saying to people, ‘You are failing because you do not do this’. We recognise the challenges around that. It is about saying that many organisations across many sectors could do better, and now is the time that we need to start doing better.

[83] **Sandy Mewies:** I thank the witnesses. We have a few more questions that we would have asked if we had the time, so if you do not mind, I will put those in writing to you. Thank you both for the papers. They were most interesting and raised issues of which we may or may not have been aware, but they are important issues that need to be raised. You will be sent a transcript of today’s proceedings, which you can factually correct if you wish. Thank you.

[84] We now move to our next witnesses and our next paper. Good morning and welcome to you both. We have a paper from the Wales Association for the Performing Arts. I welcome Chris Ryde, who is Equity’s organiser for Wales and the south-west, and Mai Jones, Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru’s general manager, and an executive member of the Wales Association for the Performing Arts. We have had your paper, you will be pleased to know, and Members will have read it. I will ask you to give a very brief introduction, if you wish. As you can see, I do run fairly strictly to time, because I like to give Members the opportunity to ask their questions. So, if you do wish to say anything now is your opportunity to do it.

[85] **Mr Ryde:** No, I think that it would be much better if we responded to questions, and then we will be able to tease out what issues Members feel most strongly about.

[86] **Sandy Mewies:** Mai, do you want to say anything?

[87] **Ms Jones:** No, I concur.

[88] **Sandy Mewies:** I should have explained that we operate bilingually. On your headsets, translation is available on channel 1, and channel 0 can be used if you need help with hearing what is going on. You do not need to touch the microphones; they will operate themselves.

[89] You state that the objectives of the Welsh Government, local authorities and the Arts Council of Wales must be to ensure arts provision of the highest quality, available to as many communities as possible, regardless of where they are, delivered in an inclusive way to a diverse audience who are both new and established. That is the point, in many ways, of this inquiry. To what extent do you consider that the Welsh Government has achieved its commitment to date of ensuring that these high-quality cultural experiences are available to everyone, irrespective of where they live or their background?

9.40 a.m.

[90] **Mr Ryde:** I think that we in the arts feel that we have had a very positive relationship with the Assembly since it started in 1999. We have had a lot of engagement with individual Members and with committees during that time and there have been a considerable number of inquiries that impact on the sector, as a result of which a lot of our arguments have been listened to. The situation over the last 10 years has improved steadily. If you look back to 1999 and compare it with 2009-10 you will find that the topography, if you like, of the arts in Wales is much stronger now than it was before, not just as a result of 'One Wales', but pre-dating that. Mai works for Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru and the Assembly was instrumental in creating the Welsh-language national theatre in 2003, and, in 2007 or thereabouts, an English-language national theatre. We have a strong national dance company, the national opera has been around for some time, and there is the investment in the millennium centre. All the engagement that the various Ministers have had, which I have cited in our paper, with the theatre in education and the educational theatre for young people sector has been extremely positive, which is why we are so disaffected by the situation we currently face, because all the feedback we have had from Ministers for education and Ministers for culture—the Minister responsible for culture is now called the Minister for Heritage, of course, but it was 'for culture' previously—has been extremely positive.

[91] So, with regard to the general trend of inclusivity and the geographical remit, we think that everything has been working very positively. That is part of the exercise that we are involved in now, that is, to say to you that this is an opportunity for you to remind the Assembly Government of the successes that we have had and to ask it to influence, in the short and medium term, how we maintain those rather than lose those. For me, it would be a crying shame, having been campaigning and lobbying for the last 20 years, for it to happen that, as it has been achieved, it is going to be snatched from us if we lose considerable central funding and there is a disproportionate effect on the number of companies and organisations that exist as a result.

[92] **Sandy Mewies:** Thank you. Mai, did you have anything to add?

[93] **Ms Jones:** No, I am quite happy with that.

[94] **Sandy Mewies:** I will go on. You touched on theatre in education. In fact, it is mentioned in your paper as well. You have talked about the strengths and weaknesses of what has happened over the years. In what ways do you consider that the Welsh Government's arts and young people strategy might fail to address the gap that would be left by this policy going?

[95] **Mr Ryde:** I do not know the answer to that, because I am not wholly familiar with the arts and young people strategy of the Assembly Government.

[96] **Sandy Mewies:** But you have made the point about theatre in education anyway, have you not?

[97] **Mr Ryde:** Yes. The point about theatre in education is that we have had continuous support from Ministers for education and for heritage for the success of that and how it fits into the infrastructure of the Assembly Government's policies for young people. It has been a nationwide success, with universal coverage, and it will be abandoned. What I am concerned about is that there does not seem to have been any debate at Assembly Government level about this. The mission statement that was established in around 2002-03 about the amount of work that was going to be seen at each key stage was something that we thought was, if not a contract, then at least an understanding, between the sector and the Assembly Government that it would be built on. Therefore, we assumed that if it was going to be dismantled in any way—and what is happening now is a severe dismantling—there would be much more debate at Assembly Government level or committee level about how that was going to take place. It is that missing part of the process that we are concerned about, because the decisions have been made. They appear on the face of it to be irrevocable, but we think that there should be some review of them, because of the unintended consequences that they will have.

[98] **Lynne Neagle:** I see in your evidence that you highlight the geographical impact of the changes to theatre in education, specifically the losses in Gwent, the south Wales Valleys and Powys. Could you say a bit more about the geographical impact? As some of those communities are among the most deprived in Britain, what particular challenges do you feel that will raise in ensuring that we make the arts accessible to people in deprived communities?

[99] **Mr Ryde:** Thank you for that. I do not understand, if you are creating a strategic remit for Wales, why the arts council would have decided that a whole swathe across the east of Wales should now be deprived of theatre in education. It does not seem like a sensible strategic decision to me. You will hear from those companies shortly, so I am sure they will articulate better than I can what the effect of that will be. Those are not just theatre companies that happen to be sited in those areas; they are, essentially, community hubs as well. They do a lot of other work. Theatre Powys and Gwent Theatre have associated with them two of the most successful youth theatre operations in Wales, which, as far as we are concerned, is the next generation of audience. In some cases it is the next generation of performer as well—there have been lots of success stories—and there is no guarantee that that sort of thing will be able to continue.

[100] It is no coincidence that both Gwent Theatre and Theatre Powys, for instance, are based in something called a drama centre. In Llandrindod Wells it is one that the arts council supported through lottery money very recently, and it would be again a huge shame if the facilities available in the drama centre, which are more extensive than both the young people's theatre and theatre in education, went to waste, because they are also hubs for general activity connected with the arts. There is a little theatre in the one in Abergavenny, and we would want to protect that as well.

[101] I think that there is also more than just a geographical impact, because in my paper to you, from my own sectoral interest in Equity, I pointed out that I think that one of the effects will be that we will have a deluge of companies into Wales that are low quality and that will probably not pay people properly, because they are available in England and they will seize their opportunity to work in Wales. Of course, they cannot provide a service in the Welsh language. There is nobody else that can provide a service in the Welsh language. All the companies that have been cut, as well as all the ones that continue to exist, have as part of their brief a bilingual responsibility, so where are any of the Welsh schools in the areas that have been cut going to receive any of their service from? There is just nobody else, absolutely



nobody, that can provide that.

[102] **Sandy Mewies:** We will be posing these questions perhaps to the relevant Minister about what has gone on and what discussion has taken place over that. Lynne, did you have a further question?

[103] **Lynne Neagle:** Just on the point of deprivation. As you know, these companies serve some of the most deprived communities in Wales. What kind of impact do you think that this will have on those communities? How are they going to get access to this kind of provision without these companies?

[104] **Mr Ryde:** There is a question that we have asked the arts council, to which we have not had a satisfactory answer: what are you going to do to widen the access of existing companies in order to move into those areas? As far as I know, those companies, the ones that will continue to exist, have told me that they have not put in their business plans any proposals to widen their areas of activity, because they have a remit that is sometimes connected with their own local authority area and, therefore, they have to deliver there, and the whole infrastructure does not look as though it will have enough money in it for any of those companies to expand in any case. There is no indication that anything will be expanding in the arts. We are talking about retraction, so those companies that continue to exist will possibly not be able to do as much as they are doing already. So, I do not see any of them being able to do much about servicing the areas that you are concerned about.

[105] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yr ydych yn tynnu sylw hefyd at ofn y gallai penderfyniad cyngor y celfyddydau i dynnu cyllid yn ôl gael ei ystyried yn arwydd i lawer o awdurdodau lleol wneud yr un fath. Yr oedd Lynne yn sôn am bryderon, ac yr wyf yn pryderu'n fawr am sefyllfa gogledd-orllewin Cymru. Mae Theatr Harlech yn wynebu her; mae Theatr Gwynedd wedi'i chau ers dwy flynedd. Mae pryder mawr yn fy rhanbarth. Pa wybodaeth sydd gennych gan awdurdodau lleol ynghylch pryderon a allai gadarnhau'r ofnau yr ydych wedi'u crybwyll yn eich papur? Mae'r cwestiwn hwnnw i'r ddau ohonoch.

**Eleanor Burnham:** You also highlight a fear that the decision of the arts council to withdraw funding might be seen a sign by many local authorities to do likewise. Lynne mentioned concerns, and I am very concerned about the situation in north-east Wales. Theatr Harlech faces a challenge; Theatr Gwynedd has been closed for two years. There is great concern in my region. What information do you have from local authorities about concerns that could confirm the fears that you have mentioned in your paper? That question is both of you.

9.50 a.m.

[106] **Ms Jones:** Yr wyf yn bendant yn cytuno bod gennym bryderon mawr yn y sector Cymraeg am nad oes darpariaeth yn y gogledd-orllewin ar hyn o bryd. Nid oedd a wnelo cau Theatr Gwynedd â'r buddsoddiad, ond mae wedi creu effaith anhygoel. Mae'r ffaith y bydd Theatr Harlech hefyd yn cau yn golygu bod y cyfleoedd i bobl yn yr ardal gael mynediad at y celfyddydau yn fach iawn, fel y mae'r cyfleoedd i gwmnïau fel ni, y theatr genedlaethol, Cwmni Theatr Bara Caws, ac ati i berfformio iddynt. Mae hynny'n bendant yn bryder mawr inni.

**Ms Jones:** I definitely agree that we have strong concerns in the Welsh sector as there is no provision in the north-west at the moment. Closing Theatr Gwynedd had nothing to do with the investment, but it has had an incredible impact. The fact that Theatr Harlech is also to close means that the opportunities for people in the area to have access to the arts are very limited, as are the opportunities for companies such as ours, the national theatre, Cwmni Theatr Bara Caws and so on to perform to them. That is definitely of great concern to us.

[107] O ran awdurdodau lleol, ni allaf ateb hwnnw, yn anffodus.

On local authorities, I cannot answer that, unfortunately.

[108] **Eleanor Burnham:** Mae pryder am drafnidiaeth i deithio ymhellach yn rhan o'r pryderon mawr hyn, onid yw?

**Eleanor Burnham:** Concern about transport to travel further is a part of these great concerns, is it not?

[109] **Ms Jones:** Ydy, achos mae'r gynulleidfa yn gorfod teithio'n eithaf helaeth ar hyn o bryd. Mae Galeri yn bodoli wrth gwrs, sy'n gwneud gwaith ardderchog, ond honno yw'r unig ganolfan yn yr ardal sy'n gallu cynnig y ddarpariaeth honno i Gymry Cymraeg—ac i Gymry di-Gymraeg hefyd.

**Ms Jones:** It is, because the audience already has to travel fairly extensively as it is. There is Galeri, of course, which does excellent work, but that is the only centre in the area that can offer that kind of provision to Welsh speakers—as well as to non-Welsh speakers.

[110] **Joyce Watson:** I am going to move on now. You note with regret, you say, that an Assembly Measure to place a statutory obligation on local authorities to promote culture will not be initiated before the 2011 elections. In the absence of this legislation, how in your opinion might the Welsh Assembly Government address your fears that local authorities might reduce funding to arts and cultural activities at a time of budget cuts or restraint?

[111] **Mr Ryde:** That is very difficult because I do not know what powers you have in that direction that you can exercise. Any lobbying that you could do would be extremely welcome, but I think that that legislative framework was seen as a good sign of intent—and we responded positively to it at the time—although we know that it was not a solution in itself.

[112] There are a couple of areas that I can try to indicate. You will recall, I hope, that one of the recommendations of the Stephens review that Alun Pugh initiated some years back was to set up an arts strategy board. As far as I know, that arts strategy board is still in existence and the Minister has control of it, effectively. I do not know what that arts strategy board is doing. I do not know what powers it has and I do not know where that discussion is happening, but that is supposed to be the forum in which the arts council, local authorities and a number of other interested parties, such as Wales Arts International and the voluntary sector, meet and determine some strategic arrangements for the delivery of arts. We have echoed some concerns about involving young people and deprived areas in the arts and, to me, that is exactly what the debate should be about, but I have seen no minutes of meetings or any announcements from those meetings, although I assume that they still take place. So, I do not know whether a review of that arts strategy board is overdue so that it can be strengthened to deliver some of those objectives, with local authority partners.

[113] As a result of that, we started a dialogue with the Welsh Local Government Association as an organisation to see whether we could make some of our concerns known at a general local government level. We have not had one of those meetings for a few months, but we did start that process. I know that you, as a Government, are concerned about joint working initiatives between local authorities. That is public information as far as health and education are concerned, but I do not know quite how deeply that has been explored as far as arts and culture are concerned. It may well be that there are distinct possibilities of joint working between local authorities and that benefits can be achieved.

[114] Until last year, I was the chair of Audiences Wales, which is one of the organisations whose funding the arts council has cut. Audiences Wales was co-funded by the arts council and 14 local authorities—well, it still is. It was one of the best examples in the arts of a co-ordinated local authority/arts council strategic partnership. That is not easy to maintain, but the fact is that it cost the individual local authorities under £10,000 to be partners in the

service, which was worth some £300,000 or £350,000 in turnover, because 14 of them were able to work jointly to deliver the marketing and audience development services that Audiences Wales provided for the whole of Wales. So, that sort of model may be possible in other areas. The irony is that that one is now under considerable threat as a result of the recent decision.

[115] **Sandy Mewies:** Okay. Before we move on, I should just remind people about the distinction between the National Assembly and the Assembly Government. We are split and our duty here, as a committee, is to scrutinise what the Government is doing. That is what you are helping us to do.

[116] **Mohammad Asghar:** My question is on funding and is to both of you. You highlight how performing arts organisations in Wales would like to rely less on Government funding but are limited by the amount of corporate businesses, big trusts and foundations based outside Wales. You recommend that business support be offered by the Assembly Government to small and medium-sized enterprises in the sector to enable them to position themselves more effectively when applying to trusts, foundations and sponsors. Could you explain to us how you would like to see that work in practice?

[117] **Mr Ryde:** Yes, I will. First of all, there is an organisation that was set up some years ago called Arts and Business which I think has suffered considerably, particularly in England, from cuts in Government funding. I think that there is probably a role for Arts and Business, which is more widespread and effective now than it was when it was originally set up. I may be wrong, but I think that the Arts and Business responsibilities in Wales now are more or less limited to providing various training schemes and training help to professional organisations to help them to go out and find money. It is a fairly limited role and I think that role might widen.

[118] The general point is that many of the initiatives that the Assembly Government has set up for small businesses are geared towards the commercial sector. They are geared towards manufacturing and supply businesses and not really towards the arts industry. I think that more one-to-one mentoring in those areas would be effective and useful.

[119] In the past couple of weeks, I have been approached by a group of fundraisers who work for other organisations in Cardiff, and they have ideas about how their services might expand to help companies that cannot afford to employ an individual fundraiser to search out these trusts and foundations and other sources of funding on which they will have to rely. We hope to put together some sort of proposal, which may involve mentoring or giving smaller organisations a fundraiser on a very limited basis, but all that will require money or some sort of resource help. Where we go for that is a key issue. We are not absolutely sure, because we are still at the first stage of plans for that sort of thing.

[120] Fundraising is crucial. In essence, the organisations that will be left in the arts council portfolio or involved in the arts in general simply do not have the money to have expert marketing and expert fundraising as part of their fabric; therefore, they will have to go to those services outside. The irony of that is that a number of the service organisations that have been cut by the arts council are precisely those that have hitherto supplied those sorts of services. There are organisations in England, such as the Independent Theatre Council, which also have a UK-wide responsibility to provide training on marketing and fundraising and so on. I understand that their training facilities are in some danger now because of the money underpinning them being taken away. It could be that with Audiences Wales, Arts and Business and the Independent Theatre Council no longer being able to provide that, a lot of the training and service provision to the companies in Wales will dry up, and we have to look at ways of providing it.

10.00 a.m.

[121] We have done a little bit of that in our own organisation. We identify areas of training and upskilling that are not provided by other organisations and we try to find the money from our own resources or occasionally from the Arts Council of Wales or other outside sources to provide that. However, it is very small and very piecemeal. I think that it will need to be done on a much larger scale as a result of the situation we are going to find ourselves in in the next few months.

[122] **Sandy Mewies:** Thank you. I have two more questions I would like to get in before this session ends at 10.10 a.m.. Lynne, you are first and then Mark has a question afterwards. We have 10 minutes to go and I really would like to get through these two questions.

[123] **Lynne Neagle:** I do not have another question; I asked mine earlier.

[124] **Sandy Mewies:** Okay. Mark, then, it is you.

[125] **Mark Isherwood:** Do you want to go straight to the final one?

[126] **Sandy Mewies:** Yes, please.

[127] **Mark Isherwood:** Okay. You have referred to the impact of the arts on jobs, the economy and tourism. What analysis, if any, have you undertaken of the impact of the current funding reductions and future anticipated deficit reductions on those areas and particularly on jobs?

[128] **Mr Ryde:** We are not in a position to undertake a survey at a professional level, because we are a voluntary organisation that does not have that infrastructure. I just know from the general meetings we have had and from talking to individual companies that there is concern that there will be a disproportionate effect as a result of any cuts that occur in the future. A letter was sent out last week by the chief executive of the arts council, who you saw a couple of weeks ago, in which he told organisations that they should be tightening their belts now. These are the organisations that have already been told that they are, hopefully, going to receive additional funding as a result of the investment review, but they are now being told that they have to tighten their belts. Well, that means, I presume, that they are going to have to face cutbacks in this financial year. Within the theatre aspect, that usually means reducing the number of people performing in a play or reducing the number of weeks that that play goes on for; the same is true in dance and in opera. That is how most of these companies cut back, but I do not have any figures for that. I do not know if Mai can add anything.

[129] **Ms Jones:** Nid oes gennyf ffigurau, ond mewn ardaloedd fel Caerfyrddin, lle yr ydym ni wedi ein lleoli, pan fyddwn yn gwneud cynhyrchiad, yr ydym yn dod â phobl i mewn i'r ardal—efallai rhwng 10 ac 20 o bobl ar y tro. Yn amlwg, yr ydym yn creu gwaith ar gyfer y bobl hyn, ond hefyd mae'r bobl hynny yn dod i aros yn yr ardal, maent yn mynd i fwytai, ac yn y blaen. Felly, mae'r effaith o orfod torri i lawr ar y cynyrchiadau neu'r gweithgareddau i'r gymuned, nifer yr actorion y gallwn eu cyflogi neu nifer yr wythnosau y byddant yn yr ardal yn creu tipyn o broblem i ardal fel

**Ms Jones:** I do not have figures, but in areas such as Carmarthen, where we are located, when we put on a production, we bring people into the area—maybe between around 10 or 20 people at a time. Obviously, we are creating work for these people, but those people also come to stay in the area, they go to restaurants, and so on. Therefore, the impact of having to cut down on the productions or activities for the community, the number of actors whom we can employ or the number of weeks that they spend in the area will create quite a problem in an area like Carmarthen.

Caerfyrddin.

[130] **Sandy Mewies:** Okay. Thank you for that. I note that you have made recommendations in your paper, which we will be paying close attention to as well. Thank you very much for the paper and, indeed, for answering questions here today. As is normal, you will get a transcript of the evidence, and you are welcome to make any factual corrections. Indeed, if you want to add anything, please send the information to the clerk. Thank you very much.

10.05 a.m.

**Ymchwiliad i Hygyrchedd Gweithgareddau Celfyddydol a Diwylliannol yng Nghymru:  
Casglu Tystiolaeth—Theatr Spectacle a Theatr Gwent  
Inquiry into Accessibility of Arts and Cultural Activities across Wales: Evidence  
Gathering—Spectacle Theatre and Gwent Theatre**

[131] **Sandy Mewies:** Good morning.

[132] **Mr Meredith:** Good morning. I have brought you a present. I hope that you do not mind.

[133] **Sandy Mewies:** No, not at all. [*Laughter.*]

[134] **Mr Meredith:** I will leave the documents on the table.

[135] **Sandy Mewies:** Give them to the clerk and we will make sure they are given out.

[136] **Mr Meredith:** It is a couple of years old but it is a brochure that we had to celebrate 50 years of the Gwent Young People's Theatre at its fiftieth birthday and 30 years of the Gwent Theatre company. It is just to show some of the achievements of those organisations over the years.

[137] **Sandy Mewies:** Thank you. We will make sure that they are circulated.

[138] **Mr Meredith:** I hope you do not mind my being cheeky.

[139] **Sandy Mewies:** Not at all. Like anybody else, I love presents. [*Laughter.*]

[140] I welcome Spectacle Theatre and Gwent Theatre. We have Steve Davis, the artistic director of Spectacle Theatre, and Gary Meredith, the artistic director of Gwent Theatre. Thank you very much for coming to give evidence today and, indeed, for the written evidence we have had from you. If you want to make a short introduction, please feel free to do so. Members wish to ask questions and, as you have seen, I have to push these sessions along. I would like to give every member the opportunity to ask their questions as well. Would you like to do a short introductory piece or not?

[141] **Mr Meredith:** I am happy to go straight to questions, Chair.

[142] **Mr Davis:** Yes, I am the same.

[143] **Sandy Mewies:** We do operate bilingually, so some people will be asking questions in Welsh. It is channel 1 for Welsh. If you have difficulties with hearing, it is channel 0. Please make sure you have turned off any mobile phones or BlackBerry devices. You do not need to operate the microphones yourself, they are operated remotely.

[144] I will ask the first question. Gwent Theatre outlines the strategic context in which it works to meet culture, education and young people policies. Can you describe for us how you work with the Welsh Government and its bodies to fulfil the aims of its strategies and the implications for those strategies of the arts council's investment review? That is to both of you.

[145] **Mr Meredith:** I do not think that we have allied what we do directly to the Welsh Assembly Government's policies as such, other than the policy that was important to us, which was arrived at some years ago, namely the aspiration that every child in Wales would receive a theatre in education experience at each of the key stages of their education and that this would be free at the point of delivery. That was signed up to some years ago and there was an uplift in funding to the companies at that time. There was a substantial increase in the amount of work and the accessibility of that work to an increasing number of schools and children. Regrettably, that policy has now been dumped by the arts council in the middle of a process where it is supposedly deciding on a strategy for young people, which seems to me to be a little cock-eyed. It would seem from the minutes of the meeting at which the decisions about cuts were made that the decision to dump the strategy was taken at that meeting. So, presumably, it was done without reference to the Minister.

[146] On the Welsh Assembly Government's aspirations, I think that we go a long way towards making the work accessible to all manner of children and young people in our communities. We work in schools, which are representative of the ethnic make-up of those particular communities, and so on. In our particular case, we are still able to provide the service free at the point of delivery in Blaenau Gwent and in Monmouthshire because those two authorities still currently provide revenue funding to us. In the other three authorities that comprise what was formerly Gwent—Torfaen, Newport and Caerphilly—there is a charge to schools and sometimes the authorities buy in directly. I think it true to say that we have done a good job on accessibility over the years—not just the Gwent Theatre company, but the whole theatre in education sector.

[147] **Mr Davis:** We work throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr, Bridgend, Caerphilly and further afield. As a company, we work mainly in schools, but we class ourselves as a community theatre company. I would go along with a lot of what Gary was saying. It is similar for Spectacle Theatre. Another aspect of our work is the work that we do with the crime and safety partnerships, creating projects to raise awareness about doorstep crime.

10.10 a.m.

[148] We run social cohesion projects working with many of the Communities First areas, working in partnership with them and with groups such as police and communities together—known as PACT. We work with women's guilds, we work with young people identified through the detached youth teams, and we create projects in which our company becomes the catalyst to bring all of those different groups together, which support social cohesion projects.

[149] We work with Barnardo's and with Genesis projects, particularly working with young pregnant women from the age of about 14. We work within the prison at Parc and we work with E3 projects, particularly in Rhondda Cynon Taf. We work within colleges, particularly mentoring and supporting young people to find ways to train and enter the profession. We have a longstanding relationship with quite a lot of young people—we continue to mentor many of them years after first becoming involved. We work in Merthyr with the peer-education-led groups. Each year, we work with every secondary school in Merthyr and with the police to enable them to develop a project that goes into each school to do with substance misuse and various other subjects. What I am trying to explain is that we, as a community theatre company, work with many partners in the area, all of which are challenged with

delivering your agenda on a local basis. We see ourselves as very much part of that.

[150] The last thing that I would say is that, following on from what Gary was saying about working within schools, we see schools as part of our community. That is why we work in schools. We take theatre to places wherever people congregate. If we are invited to go to work with people, that is where we will go to. It is not driven by the national curriculum, necessarily, and it is not didactic in its nature; in fact, it is the opposite of that.

[151] **Mr Meredith:** Steve has been through a large list of organisations and, similarly, we also work with a number of organisations, recently with the children and young people's strategy division of the Welsh Assembly Government, which helped and advised us with the programme that we are preparing to take into schools next week called 'Seize the Day', which is about the empowerment of young people and about young people finding a voice. It is very much to do with children and young people's rights and perceptions of young people as well in the media. We have an advisory panel that comprises a number of agencies throughout our communities with which we work.

[152] It also gives companies like us the ability to go out to seek additional funding. A year or two ago we had substantial funding from the Wellcome Trust. It funded an entire project, so we were able to add a whole new project at no cost to the taxpayer. That would have been impossible without revenue funding from the arts council and our local authorities. We had funding from the Home Office to run a special project dealing with the very difficult and sensitive issue of domestic abuse. That, again, provided a project that was in addition to our normal work. These sorts of things will now be lost.

[153] **Lynne Neagle:** One of the One Wales Government's main commitments is that high-quality cultural experiences should be available to all people irrespective of where they live or their background. Spectacle's paper talks about the entitlement to access arts provision regardless of social, financial or geographical barriers. Could both of you comment on how you feel the investment review changes will impact on both geographical access and access for some of the most deprived communities in Wales?

[154] **Mr Davis:** I would like to respond to that. I think that what the investment review will do is disenfranchise the heart and soul of Wales. It is disenfranchisement of those communities. It does it because it has removed from the heart and soul of Wales all producing companies. I do not believe that the Arts Council of Wales understands the complex interrelationship between a producing theatre company and other artists living in those areas. I have received letters and seen letters that Nick Capaldi has written. While they attempt to address that question, the response does not understand what actually happens in those areas.

[155] As a result of the impact of this disenfranchisement, there are young people in communities who will not receive any access to the arts. It seems to me that what is happening is that the investment review seems to have what I call a 'metropolitan idea'—that people have to come to a place in order to receive arts. That is the exact opposite of what companies such as Spectacle, Gwent Theatre or Theatr Powys do. We take theatre to where people are. The quality provided by these companies over the last 30 years I have not seen anywhere else in the world. I have not been all over the world, but I have been to many places, and the quality that we produce in Wales is equal to at least what is produced elsewhere. We are certainly at the cutting edge—I talk about Spectacle Theatre—of how you engage with young people, be they on the street or in a school or in education. We work with lots of different partners to access this.

[156] So, my response is that it has disenfranchised a lot of communities. I have read nothing and seen nothing coming out from the arts council at the moment that changes my opinion.

[157] **Mr Meredith:** Yes, I would certainly agree with what Steve said. In the course of a year, we would work with and for in the region of 20,000 to 22,000 young people in their schools, in their communities and through other community involvement. That will clearly disappear very soon, probably before the end of the financial year. So, the densely populated eastern and western Valleys will be completely devoid of anything. The arts council has offered no indication that there will be anything to replace this, other than the vague idea that something will happen at some point in the future, but I would want to ask the arts council how that will happen and who will make that happen.

[158] I think that the likelihood is that the vacuum will be filled with commercial companies coming across the border. They often exploit young actors and produce rather poor quality work, not because the young actors are poor actors or performers, necessarily, but because they are exploited and the main aim is to make money and not to provide art of any quality or excellence.

[159] **Mr Davis:** I will add one other point to follow on from what Gary is saying. As part of being a community theatre company, one thing that we do—being based in the area, the pound is spent in that area—is to create theatre for people who live and work in that area. By removing the producing companies, the review has ensured that there is no longer that element within those areas. What will happen is that companies will be bringing a product into those areas as opposed to creating a product in those areas. I know that there are other organisations that are revenue funded within those areas, but they tend to be organisations to which young people or communities have to go. What we produce in those areas is unique and the kind of work that we produce is not available from any other group.

[160] I would also add one last thing. I do not believe that the Arts Council of Wales, in its decision making here, has based decisions on what we do. I do not believe that it has a model or a framework to assess artistic quality. I say that on the basis of work produced in the Valleys—

[161] **Sandy Mewies:** You are going into our next question. Could you just confine yourself to the question?

[162] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yr ydych wedi dechrau ateb y cwestiwn yr oeddwn ar fin ei ofyn, ynglŷn a'ch barn chi am system y cyngor— **Eleanor Burnham:** You have started to answer the question that I was about to ask, regarding your opinion of the council's system—

[163] **Mr Meredith:** I am sorry, I am not hearing very well.

[164] **Eleanor Burnham:** It is channel 1.

[165] **Mr Meredith:** I can hear, but it is the volume, sorry.

[166] **Eleanor Burnham:** That is okay, I will start again.

[167] Yr ydych wedi sôn am y ffaith nad ydych yn credu bod y system gyfredol a ddefnyddir gan gangor y celfyddydau i asesu ansawdd artistig yn dryloyw, a bod cymunedau'r Cymoedd wedi'u difreinio o'r herwydd. A allwch fanylu ar eich pryderon am y system a sut y byddech yn hoffi gweld eich pryderon yn cael sylw? You have already said that you do not believe that the system currently used by the arts council to assess artistic quality is transparent, and that Valleys communities are, as a result, disenfranchised. Can you expand on your concerns about the system and on how you would like to see your concerns addressed?



10.20 a.m.

[168] **Mr Meredith:** With regard to quality, it is difficult to know quite where to start. If we look at the way in which the decision was made about which companies to fund, we were wholly and totally dissatisfied with the explanations from the arts council about that process. The arts council's paper trail is immaculate on the process up to that point. Our report was so positive you could easily have put at the end of it, 'We therefore recommend that Gwent Theatre continue to be included in the revenue funding portfolio'. Our chairman was astonished because he said, 'You change that one sentence and the whole picture changes for Gwent'.

[169] In a face-to-face meeting with the arts council after we had received notification of its decision, we sought clarification on what the concerns or issues were that meant that we were not to be funded and other companies were. It was implied that our work was inconsistent so that there was a little question mark about quality. We pressed them on this and said quality has never been an issue with us. All our arts council reports have always been either good or excellent. All our reports from other quarters—people who observe the work—have always been good. I am not pretending that we always get everything right or that we are perfect; we are an arts organisation and sometimes we take risks and sometimes things do not work out as well as we would have liked. We were told by the arts council that the brave would be rewarded. We were told to be honest and rigorous in the way in which we self-appraised our work. In my last report to the arts council on behalf of the company, I was exactly that because I have perhaps an unfortunate element in my nature that means that I tend to be honest, and I am extremely critical of my work and the work of my colleagues. We are extremely critical of it because we care very passionately about what we do and we are always looking at ways in which we can improve our work. So, I was very critical of one particular project that we had undertaken with which we had a number of difficulties. It was not a disaster—it was not a turkey—but it did not live up to the expectations that we had of it. It is clear in my report. That was the only example the arts council was able to give me of concern. So, we pressed its representatives further on this and they said, 'We have talked to lots of people in local authorities'. We asked, 'Who did you speak to? What questions did you ask them and what responses did you get?'. They were unable to answer because there was no note, no documentation of any of those conversations. I do not find that satisfactory at all. We asked them if they could give an example of why one company was funded and another not.

[170] **Sandy Mewies:** We are not going to get to the end of our questions if we carry on with lengthy answers. If you would like to come back in at the end, if we have time, you would be more than welcome to do so. Steve, would you like to come in?

[171] **Mr Davis:** On the mechanism, I think that what took place with the investment review was that the people who use the services of Spectacle Theatre, Gwent Theatre and perhaps Powys Theatre were disenfranchised. The response that we had from the Arts Council of Wales said that normally they would take the viewpoints of those people into consideration and that would be good enough, but in this instance they decided not to use that. Therefore, in my opinion, having had the meeting with the arts council, the people who took the decision about our company's work and not to continue the funding of it, or to include us within the portfolio, are people who have not actually seen the work. I do not believe that the officers who have seen some of the work—it has been a very patchy connection over the years—have been listened to. I say that on the basis of conversations that I have had with various people.

[172] I have also been a member of the south Wales committee of the arts council for the last four years and I have some knowledge of how certain decisions are made. A group of people in the arts council are making decisions, but what are those decisions based on? What

are the criteria based on? I have grave misgivings in this case as to how the decision has been reached. I also have to say the same about the beacon funding. I felt much the same at that point and expressed my opinion then.

[173] On the changes, there are models that could be utilised in Wales, but I think that the biggest difficulty we have in Wales, in fact in Britain, with arts funding is that we always make a decision about artistic quality, whatever mechanism we are using, at the point we are trying to fund something. It is always based on something that is yet to come, is yet to happen. If we want to talk about artistic quality, one of the central questions that we have to ask ourselves is: at what time do you assess the artistic quality of a product or of a piece of work? We are linked so much in Wales into this business of always assessing it at the point when you put an application in.

[174] I was doing some work in Denmark recently. A model has been developed there to address this particular question called the IAN model. It is only a tool, but it is an extremely useful tool that could be utilised in Wales. It is not the only tool, but it is certainly an advance on anything else I have read about. That could be used to look at artistic quality. Is it the arts council's development role to be assessing how you assess artistic quality, to look for models for that and to disassociate that from the funding, or is its role purely to fund? The two things are connected in the mind in such a way that I still believe it disenfranchises the communities in the heart and soul of Wales. I think that that is a fact.

[175] **Sandy Mewies:** At what point in what process are you saying that the artistic quality should be assessed?

[176] **Mr Davis:** There are many different points at which you need to assess artistic quality. It is always linked to funding in Wales.

[177] **Sandy Mewies:** So, you would like to see the two things separated.

[178] **Mr Davis:** Yes, I would like to see the two things separated.

[179] **Joyce Watson:** What was the name of that model?

[180] **Mr Davis:** It is called the IAN model. I am quite happy to provide links to the research.

[181] **Sandy Mewies:** Thank you; that would be useful.

[182] **Mohammad Asghar:** My question is to you both on the investment review. Spectacle Theatre says that its experience to date of the transition programme does not fill it with confidence or a level of trust that the process is either transparent or supportive. Could you both describe your experiences to date with the arts council's continuing support for providers following its investment review decisions and any concerns that you have about the process?

[183] **Mr Davis:** This is our experience to date, from the meeting that we had with the arts council and everything I have read, including comments made again this week by Nick Capaldi about how they are helping companies to achieve the transition. As you can understand, if your company has been operating in a certain way for x amount of years, it is very difficult to make a transition to something else. My experience has been that we put in an application for transition funding as required by the Arts Council of Wales, and we were asked to put what was called a light touch to that, which I took to mean not a hugely detailed report or business plan, but a sketch or outline of what it was that we required the funding for, and we subsequently had some swapping of e-mails and letters for the last I do not know how

long, and it continues to happen. We have had subsequent phone calls with David Newland and other people saying that they need more information about that.

[184] What it feels like is that the decision as to whether we will get transition funding or not is continually being delayed. I feel that if we were to press now and say that we need a decision in order to plan and to move on to the new company that we will become, I think that the answer would be 'no'. That is what I feel. If we allow it to go on, we will just end up being squeezed and eventually the money will be of no use to us because we will have reached a position where we could not utilise it properly. That is why I write that at this moment.

[185] We are continuing to discuss it with the arts council. In fact, when I leave this meeting I am going to another meeting to talk about the transition funding and what we are now being asked to provide at this time to attempt to do that. Spectacle Theatre will close. I do not share Nick Capaldi's asserted opinion that these companies will be healthy and running in a year's time. That is not the case. These companies will fold. All of the other work that we do to deliver the Welsh Assembly's work is done because we have that revenue funding to support the basis of the company there.

10.30 a.m.

[186] There is a very strong need for what we do, and my colleagues and I will not give up on the audiences and the communities that we serve. So, we will find a way. The final thing I will say is I am not finding the process helpful or supportive at the moment.

[187] **Mr Meredith:** On transparency, I am sorry, but I went off on one in an earlier question which began to touch on that point. We have not been happy that the process has really, truly been transparent because we have not been provided with any substantial answers to our questions about how the decision was made and how it was evaluated. We were told at the meeting that it was intuited. That is their word, not mine; I have not made that up. The decision to fund one company and not another was so fine you could have put a cigarette paper between it. So, we asked what the critical differences were that led to company A being funded and company B not, if it was that fine. We received no answers to that. I do not think that that is fair or satisfactory, especially when there is the rather insidious implication that the quality of the work might not be quite up to scratch. So, on that level we are very unhappy with that.

[188] With regard to relations with the arts council since the decision, it has been quite helpful because I think that it will be relieved to shut us down and get rid of us. My colleague had a face-to-face meeting with the arts council recently about transition funding, and it was very helpful and said that it could be very flexible about the way in which this money was spent. The reality is that this money will not be a transition to a new future, as Steve has indicated. This transition money will be necessary to wind up the company effectively, for the company to meet its financial obligations, and to honour the contractual obligations that it has to its employees in the form of redundancy payments where applicable and so on.

[189] So, the reality is that Gwent Theatre, like Spectacle, will cease to exist as an operating theatre-in-education company some time next year. We are hoping that we can go on delivering a programme of work possibly to the end of the financial year. That does not seem very likely, but we will go on as far as we can. We are determined that we want to deliver what we can to the best of our ability to our communities for as long as we can. That is the reality.

[190] Now, it has been helpful in suggesting how we might wind up and use the money, but it is not really very helpful in suggesting a future for theatre in education in our areas and for

our communities.

[191] **Joyce Watson:** That leads me on nicely to my question, really. You consider that the arts council's support for revenue funded organisations in the Valleys areas is generally centre based rather than tour based. That is what you have said. Do you think that there is a valid reason for maintaining centre-based funding rather than tour-based funding to maintain the capital value of investments on the ground?

[192] **Mr Davis:** I think that you need both. What is currently happening is that the investment review has removed one strategic aspect of it, namely the touring bit. You might have an organisation such as Valleys Kids, for example, which does excellent work, but most of its work is done in centres in different places and young people in specific areas go to those places. Companies such as Spectacle go to other places—places where other people cannot reach. It is often demand led. Somebody, for instance a youth worker in Pen-y-waun, may say, 'We have a particular project that we would like to deliver up here'. Spectacle might be invited to be involved in that and then bring other partners into that particular project. You will reach people you cannot otherwise reach.

[193] With regard to the work that we do, for example, within the criminal justice setting or in the pupil referral unit, those people do not have the freedom to go to other places and yet they are part of our community. There are other people who are resistant to getting involved in certain things, but there are ways of creating work, which you begin to develop. It takes a long time. There are other people in the black and minority ethnic community, for example, within our communities who do not have centres or places to go. We have been creating work that we hope, over a long period of time, will say, 'This place does represent where you are at' or, 'The work we are bringing into this school or this community centre, or sometimes fish and chip shop, is relevant to you'.

[194] **Mr Meredith:** There is every reason to support theatre or centre-based work—of course there is. It is an essential part of the arts provision in our country. However, work that goes into schools and the community in the way that Steve has just described is essential, particularly in the areas in which we work—not only those areas, but throughout Wales. There are problems of geography with our country, as we know. We have the huge rural county of Powys and Theatr Powys serves that area. There will be nothing. It is not an easy matter if you live in Builth Wells to jump in the car and drive to Cardiff with your kids. Some people do not even have a car. Certainly, in the areas in which we work, many of our children receive free school meals. So, going to Cardiff or even to Newport, and the expense that that entails, to see a play that might be a pantomime or a piece of children's theatre—and I am not diminishing that—is going to be very low on the list of that family's priorities and their ability to afford it. We provide work that is created for children and young people and most of it is new work. It reflects the needs and values of our communities and our children. That is what the arts council is throwing away.

[195] **Mr Davis:** Can I make one short point on that as well?

[196] **Sandy Mewies:** You can at the end of the session. I want to give Members an opportunity to ask questions. You have answered my question. I will move on now to Mark Isherwood.

[197] **Mark Isherwood:** I would say also travelling to Mold, but there we are.

[198] **Mr Meredith:** Indeed. [*Laughter.*]

[199] **Mark Isherwood:** What relationship does each of you have with local authorities on programme funding and delivery?

[200] **Mr Meredith:** We were formally revenue funded by Gwent, when it existed as a large local authority. When the reorganisation of local government took place and it was changed to five unitary authorities, initially, all five unitary authorities provided revenue funding for the company. That continued for quite some time in partnership with the Arts Council of Wales. One by one, they dropped out for different reasons—budgetary constraints, the usual kinds of things. Two continue to revenue fund us, namely Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent. It is rather ironic that the smallest and poorest authorities continue to fund the arts and put it so high on their agenda.

[201] The other authorities, although they no longer revenue fund us are still extremely supportive in all manner of ways. Sometimes, an authority will buy in a package. So, the authority will come upfront with money for a number of schools in their area rather than the individual schools paying. That happens on occasion. So, we have very good links with our authority. Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent have said that they will continue to fund us in the last quarter of the year after Christmas even if there is little or no artistic activity because they realise how difficult the situation is for us and what the company will need to do in order to honour its obligations. That is the measure of their support, which is fantastic. Monmouthshire has also said that it will continue to fund the young people's theatre. The young people's theatre is not and never has been funded by the Arts Council of Wales, but it has been administered under the umbrella of the Gwent Theatre company. So, a new mechanism for running that will have to be invented, but that is possible without it costing an awful lot of money.

[202] So, out of the wreckage, we hope that we will be able to salvage something for those young people who want to take part in youth theatre activities. I should mention that it is also funded by the Workers' Educational Association.

[203] **Mr Davis:** In the early 1990s, the area that we were working in, Mid Glamorgan, disappeared as an area, so we fell between a few. Since then we have not received direct funding from any of the local unitary authorities that we work in; however, we have extremely good relationships with all of the areas that we work in. Within RCT, for example, we work very closely with cultural services, children's services and youth services. We sometimes bid for and receive service level agreements to deliver work in all schools. We work with the youth service in delivering after-school work in the E3+ area.

10.40 a.m.

[204] We work in Merthyr in much the same way, but mainly through the youth service these days and within the schools. We have a good relationship with Bridgend and regularly present our work at teachers' meetings and so on, and programme our work based with its cultural services. It is the same within Caerphilly, which is an area we also work in with Gwent. So, I would say that we have good relationships with them, but all the funding is project led and it comes that way as opposed to there being direct funding of the company.

[205] **Sandy Mewies:** If Members do not mind, I will move on to some quick questions now. You have addressed great swathes of the questions that we have for you. I will give Eleanor the opportunity to ask about jobs.

[206] **Eleanor Burnham:** A ydych wedi llunio unrhyw amcangyfrif o'r effaith a gaiff colli swyddi, o ganlyniad i'r adolygiad buddsoddi, ar eich cwmnïau chi a chwmnïau eraill? **Eleanor Burnham:** Have you made any estimate of the impact of job losses, as a result of the investment review, on your companies and other companies?

[207] **Mr Davis:** There are two things on that. The impact on Spectacle Theatre is that the entire company will be made redundant, which is about six people. However, we work with around 50 people in a year. There are no other main employers of theatre people within the area that we work in, so that will go. As I mentioned before, the pound is spent locally and, therefore, there is an impact on the local economy. While we may not have huge amounts of funding, I assure you that that has a big impact on that.

[208] The other impact that is hidden is that as a producing company we have a turnover of people who come and work at Spectacle, are trained at Spectacle and work in specific communities. You can look at any number of community organisations in the Valleys that have people who have been trained and worked at Spectacle Theatre who now work in other organisations and take the ideas and the methods of delivery into those organisations. A classic example of that would be Miranda Ballin, who works at Valleys Kids. We worked very many years ago with Valleys Kids in order to develop a youth theatre and as part of youth development work that we were developing throughout Mid Glamorgan. That is a classic example; so those are hidden jobs. There are many Communities First co-ordinators who came into the area to work for Spectacle, trained there and are now delivering outside. I will leave it at that.

[209] **Mr Meredith:** Gwent will lose six full-time jobs and around 30 short-term contract jobs in the year. Sometimes it is more, but that is a fairly reasonable reflection. Those jobs would include the commission of writers, designers, actors, musicians and all the allied skills and crafts that go into making theatre. I have here an audit of activity for all the theatre in education companies for 2009.

[210] **Sandy Mewies:** Would you like to submit that?

[211] **Mr Meredith:** I will leave that with you. It shows the total number of actor weeks for all the companies.

[212] **Sandy Mewies:** We will circulate it. The final question is from me. Can you describe to us any impact that your work has had on encouraging theatre participation and access through the Welsh language?

[213] **Mr Meredith:** Yes. Steve's company, Spectacle, and our company, in partnership with Theatr Iolo, which is based in Cardiff, have been working together over a number of years now on Welsh-language provision. We have worked collaboratively over a number of years to create a piece of Welsh language theatre that has then toured in the Gwent, Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf areas and, of course, in Cardiff, where Theatr Iolo operates. We have done this to maximise the use of resources and, hopefully, to provide good value for money. As you will know, the Gwent area does not have a high proportion of Welsh speakers, but nevertheless it is essential that—

[214] **Sandy Mewies:** It is still important, perhaps more important.

[215] **Mr Meredith:** Absolutely. I was going to make the point that we instituted a Welsh-language policy many years ago, when there were only two Welsh-language units in Gwent. There was not even a Welsh-language school of any description. So, that will be lost because that collaborative ability will not exist. Theatr Iolo will not be able to afford to deliver it on its own unless ACW gives it a considerable uplift in its grant.

[216] **Sandy Mewies:** Steve, would you like to comment?

[217] **Mr Davis:** Yes. I support what Gary says. Spectacle has been delivering Welsh-language productions since about 1982. We then moved with our sister companies to take that

in partnership throughout the whole of southeast Wales.

[218] The other thing about Spectacle Theatre is that it is a bilingual theatre company. The nature of our area is that we have many secondary schools and primary schools working through the medium of Welsh. If we are working in a particular community of an evening the young people can respond in whatever language they wish to respond in, because the make-up of our company is such that we always have Welsh speakers within the company who are from the area. That will also be lost. If we go to a social cohesion project, say, there will be adults there who prefer to converse through the medium of Welsh. Our policy is to respond in the language that we are asked to as a team, although it not necessarily that case that each individual is bilingual.

[219] **Sandy Mewies:** I am going to let Lynne ask a very short question for a very short answer.

[220] **Lynne Neagle:** It is not a question; it is a point, actually, before we move on from this item. Clearly, large chunks of Wales will lose their provision as a result of this, including the poorest communities. I think that the transparency issue does get to the heart of the matter. I have had three different answers from the arts council on its process.

[221] **Sandy Mewies:** Lynne, when we go on to discuss what we are doing on this, that is the time for that point.

[222] **Lynne Neagle:** I want to make a suggestion, Sandy. I have had three different answers and I know other companies have had different answers. Could the committee write to the arts council and ask for a definitive answer?

[223] **Sandy Mewies:** I have already discussed with the clerk what we will be doing next. We are going into private session afterwards and we can go through that then.

[224] Thank you very much. It has been very interesting to hear what you have had to say today about the process in particular. We will send you a transcript of the evidence for you to check for factual accuracy. If you feel that there is something else you would like to add, please feel free to send that in. If you leave the information that you mentioned, with the clerk we will make sure it is circulated to everyone. Thank you once again for coming today.

10.50 a.m.

### **Cynnig Trefniadol Procedural Motion**

[225] **Sandy Mewies:** Subject to the committee's agreement, the last item of the meeting will be held in private to allow the committee to consider its report on financial inclusion and the impact of financial education. I move that

*the committee resolves to exclude the public from the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 10.37.*

[226] I see that the committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.  
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.50 a.m.  
The public part of the meeting ended at 10.50 a.m.*