

CC(3)-15-10 : Paper 6 – additional information from Ty Cerdd

1. In your written evidence, you refer to the demise of the Music Development Fund. Could you describe the impact that losing this programme has had on communities, and how this gap in provision might effectively be filled in future?

Members will be aware that the Music Development Fund (MDF) was set up as one of the first acts of the new Welsh Assembly Government, and provided around £4.5million (some from ACW Lottery, some from local authorities, some from WAG) toward the development of practical music provision throughout Wales. The funding was used in a variety of ways, but an important thread running through the various strands of provision was the widening of access through the provision of more peripatetic staff, the development of different forms of music-making (rock, singing, steel pans, Indian and African drumming, guitar, keyboards, etc), and the showcasing of achievement. The MDF was never specifically ring-fenced, we understand, and after a few years was reduced to around £1.5m, and has now all but disappeared. (This contrasts markedly with the situation in Scotland and England, where, even given the larger populations, provision was at a very much higher rate and, to the best of our knowledge, still continues.) The statistics provided to the National Assembly for Wales by the various music services demonstrated a very significant increase in the numbers of children and young people taking up practical music-making. Significantly, in some areas, the MDF underpinned or enabled the provision of singing peripatetics – a need long overdue, as the Assembly’s own CanSing initiative now underlines. In fairness, it was made clear that the MDF would be available for three years, and the fact that the WAG was able to continue some provision after that date is very much to be applauded.

2. In your written evidence, you raise concerns at the threat to the provision of music at county level. What would be the implications of this being further eroded?

The impact of its loss on local communities is two-fold. Firstly, it endangers the already fragile provision of music opportunities at school and county level (see below). Secondly, in the long term it illustrates the obvious fact that if we don’t sow we won’t harvest. Ty Cerdd is firmly committed to the concept of the music pyramid – ie if the early years grass roots are not nurtured then there will be fewer seeking further training; if there are fewer musicians being trained, then we will see fewer artists of high quality, and the number of high quality “trainers” will fall. Each part of the pyramid depends on the others. It is a simple message, but is illustrated by artists like Bryn Terfel and Katherine Jenkins, who started their careers – as so many do in Wales – in their local school and community choir, the Urdd, the

National Youth Choir of Wales, the music conservatoire, and then the professional stage. It is significant that both give back much to their “roots”, and in their different ways provide the inspiration and incentive to aspire. Instrumentalists like Gareth Small, Rhys Owens, Robert Samuel each learned their craft through school and local bands, then the National Youth Brass Band of Wales, the conservatoire, and are now principals in national orchestras. Each has returned to tutor other young players in the national youth music ensembles. Each still plays with a local community based ensemble.

In our meetings with heads of music services throughout Wales (CAGAC), we are made all too aware of their concerns that the excellent structure of extra-curricular music provision is under enormous pressure. In one sense, the difficulties are hidden, as, despite the odds, county ensembles still perform to an amazingly high standard. Music still remains the “showcase” for many schools throughout Wales. Ty Cerdd still auditions annually around 400 young musicians for its national music ensembles (NYBBW, NYCW, NYTCW, NYJW, NYWOW), in addition to those auditioned for the NYOW. But scratch the surface, and it soon becomes obvious that there are huge stresses on the service, that fees paid by schools and children themselves are increasing, and that in consequence accessibility to provision is more difficult. Yet it is acknowledged that involvement in music-making has many holistic benefits – whether it be in instilling self discipline, self-worth, social skills, aspiration, or that extra “something” that the Oxbridge and other universities look for in recruiting their students. This is particularly important in areas of social deprivation, where it can widen horizons and excite young people to discover a hitherto unknown range of opportunities. The implications of any further erosion in this provision would, in our view, not just mean that there would be fewer children involved in music-making, or that fewer peripatetic teachers could be employed, but that the whole structure would be threatened.

Therefore (though for local authorities faced with the current financial climate this is far easier to state than to implement), the “simple” answer is to ensure that the funding for this service is not further reduced. As has been found in England, it is very expensive to re-introduce music provision once the huge impact of its loss - artistically and socially - has been realised.