

## **Arts Council of Wales**

### **Submission to the National Assembly for Wales – Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee**

# **Policy Review: Contribution of Arts and Sport to Community Regeneration**

"The Arts Council of Wales continues to recognise the important role the arts can play in regenerating our communities. In some circles, there remains the view that the arts are incidental in the task of regenerating neighbourhoods, particularly those suffering from multiple deprivation. The arts can tackle not only the symptoms of social exclusion in our communities; it can tackle the causes. Arts activities, particularly those delivered by community arts and voluntary arts organisations, have already demonstrated their direct impact upon the four key indicators of social exclusion: health, crime, education and employment.

However, this cannot be achieved in isolation, as the most effective arts and regeneration initiatives are those undertaken in partnership with other organisations. ACW will therefore seek to produce further evidence of the social impact of the arts in relation to community development and social exclusion and subsequently advocate increased investment from non-arts sources. "

Various projects funded by the Arts Council of Wales have consistently shown that the arts have an important role to play in the regeneration of economically, environmentally, socially and culturally disadvantaged areas. Anyone involved with the arts knows beyond doubt that they have a unique role to play in reaching people otherwise disenfranchised by society. The arts encourage young people into training and employment; support volunteers and participants in gaining personal confidence and are fundamental to the development of key social skills; improve the image that residents and outsiders have of an area; promote social cohesion and active citizenship and assist local people in recognising their own cultural identity and the part they can play in developing it – increasingly important in a culturally diverse Wales and in areas of Wales where there is a thriving bilingual community. The arts improve the quality of people's lives through individual and collective creativity and can attract people to come and visit and spend money in Wales by adding value to the 'Welsh cultural product' - thereby bringing direct economic and social benefits.

The arts alone will not solve all the problems of the disadvantaged areas in Wales but can play a vital role in any regeneration project. In order to raise the understanding of the potential of the arts, ACW has become more proactive in gathering evidence about the impact they are having and ensure that this is communicated to all stakeholders. ACW is increasingly developing strong partnerships with

regeneration agencies and projects and a number of very successful initiatives have been undertaken. At policy level, the arts have continued to gain recognition as a distinct and important tool for regeneration amongst the local authorities in Wales, although there is still much room for development and improvement as the arts are heavily reliant on a few key individuals that are personally very supportive.

## **What is the evidence to support this?**

Despite what might appear a relatively recent realisation, artists involved in the participatory, community and voluntary sectors, have longed claimed social benefits to their work. Since the 1960's the community art sector, in particular, has justified its claim for public funding upon principles that include the fun of taking part in the arts and more significantly the benefits that participation brings to people and communities, such as greater self-confidence and community spirit. Yet it was not until the mid 1990's that Comedia published the first tangible research into the social value of participation in the arts. *Use or Ornament?* (Matarasso, 1997) still remains the most significant work in this field as it not only attempts to demonstrate a causal link between participatory arts and social benefits, but it puts forward a methodology to evaluate the extent of such benefits. They can be summarised into six overall social impacts:

1. **Personal development:** By increasing self-confidence, becoming involved in other subsequent community activities, empowering groups to consider their rights and social responsibilities, gaining social skills, creativity and language development. Many people were found to have been encouraged to take up further training or education opportunities, most felt their new skills and confidence would help them secure jobs and some, especially those undertaking digital arts activities, found new jobs.
2. **Social cohesion:** By bringing people together, encouraging co-operation and building new friendships, promoting better understanding through different cultures or old and young people taking part collectively. The social outcomes of such feelings are argued to include a reduction in the fear of crime and promotion of neighbourhood security.
3. **Community empowerment and self-determination:** By building organisational skills and capacity through volunteering, nurturing local democracy, encouraging people to become more active citizens and gaining control over ones/their life. The arts can also facilitate more effective communication and consultation between communities and public agencies, particularly within regeneration programmes.
4. **Local image and identity:** By recognising and celebrating local traditions and cultures, developing a local pride and belonging and making people feel better about their local environment.
5. **Imagination and vision:** By inspiring people's creativity and simply enjoying taking part in a fun activity. Professionals in the fields of education, health, housing and social services stated they would use the arts again as part of their work. The arts were even felt to help public agencies to rethink their approach and be more open to new ways of working. The arts can embody values and raise expectations.
6. **Health and well-being:** By at very least improving people's quality of life and making people feel better or happier.

Matarasso's work led directly to the UK Government's PAT 10 Report, which begins by stating:

"This report [Policy Action Team 10: Report on Social Exclusion] shows that arts and sport can not only make a valuable contribution to delivering key outcomes of lower long-term unemployment, less crime, better health and better qualifications, but can also help to develop the individual pride, community spirit and capacity for responsibility that enables communities to run regeneration programmes themselves" (Chris Smith MP, Sec. of State, DCMS,1999)

Since the publication of these two key reports a large volume of research has been undertaken and evidence collected, throughout Wales and the UK, which has largely concluded that the arts have a significant, sometimes critical and catalytic, role in successful community regeneration. For example, a recent study into the effectiveness of the arts in combating social exclusion (Turner, 2003) concludes that the social benefits of the arts can be grouped into three main categories – one of which is termed community impacts and is summarised as:

- 'Hard' outcomes: improvements in health, education, employment and reductions in crime.
- Personal development: increased confidence, esteem and prospects, being more creative, changing your ideas, a desire to learn new skills, improved language and social skills, enjoyment from taking part, greater happiness and feeling better.
- Community impacts: increased social contact and understanding, collective identity and pride, increased community involvement, celebrating diversity and local traditions, feeling better about the local environment, greater local democracy and active citizenship, building new friendships, bringing young and old together, people supporting each other, more places to meet, increased neighbourhood security and wider community regeneration improvements.

Moreover a recent evaluation (2003) of the Splash Extra programme funded by the New Opportunities Fund and Arts Council of England and run in partnership with the Youth Justice Board has provided some astonishing results. The programme has been running since 2000 in some of the most deprived areas in England, providing summer holiday activities for young people at risk of social exclusion and crime. The scheme offers many sporting and arts based activities for children as young as nine. The aims include reducing anti-social behaviour and crime, helping young people maintain an interest in constructive activities, encourage involvement in the local community, bringing together young people from different geographical and cultural communities, bringing about understanding and breaking down prejudices.

The results found evidence to show progress in all its aims, but the results relating to crime reduction are most significant. They found an overall reduction of 5.2% in street crimes and robbery in the ten participating street crime areas, between July and September, when the programme was running. In Avon and Somerset street crime and robbery fell by 31% compared to an increase of 56% in areas not running the scheme. In South Yorkshire, where non-participating areas saw a 63% increase in street crime and robbery involving young people, those areas taking part saw comparable crimes fall by 17%.

Clearly crime and fear of crime is eroding a sense of community cohesion in many parts of Wales. Through direct arts interventions crime levels can be reduced and communities can seek to rebuild their confidence and self-esteem.

Perhaps the most recent and convincing work in this field is that of Jackson (2000, 2001 and 2003) whose research is not only based on case studies but also statistical evidence including longitudinal surveys. For example in the social impact reviews of the Millennium Awards scheme, run by the Millennium Commission, it found 70% of respondents said that the project improved their confidence or motivation, 47% of Award winners have taken part in training or education as a result of their project, 23% said that the Award helped them get work, and 66% of Award winners have taken part in some form of community activity since undertaking their project and now feel more a part of their community. Team working skills, communication skills, leadership and negotiation skills were also developed by the majority of participants, who were often tackling issues clearly linked to social exclusion, such as drug abuse, racism and domestic violence.

However, more evidence remains to be documented and the Arts Council of Wales is currently contributing to the debate through the detailed evaluation of its pilot funding scheme - Arts in Targeted Community Development. The scheme was established in 2001, with additional funding from the Welsh Assembly Government, and has enabled six new projects across Wales.

- Broli Cymraeg in Flintshire
- Gurnos Community Ceramics Workshop in Merthyr Tydfil
- Arts in Upper Rhymney Valley Regeneration (Caerphilly CBC)
- Small World Theatre in Pembrokeshire
- Noddfa Community Church in Caernarfon
- Cywaith Cymru in Sandfields and Aberafan, Neath Port Talbot

All these projects are now in their third year and ACW has commissioned Voluntary Arts Wales to undertake an evaluation of their work. The final report is due in October 2004. However their preliminary findings indicate strong evidence that the arts have made significant contributions towards community regeneration, often despite a lack of support from wider community regeneration initiatives and planned partnerships. In addition, Voluntary Arts Wales will develop a tool kit to assist arts and community organisations undertake best practice in relation to arts and community regeneration.

Moreover, ACW has for many years, since the advent of Lottery funding, targeted areas of deprivation for its investment. DCMS research into Lottery spending within UK coalfields found that ACW had invested at a higher level than any other UK Lottery distributor in coalfield and ex-coalfield areas. It is highly encouraging that the majority of these projects have flourished and two have subsequently been awarded ACW Revenue Client status e.g. Valley Kids and Penrhys Partnership and Arts Centre. It is also important to note that not only are these projects aimed to promote community regeneration, but also they are being undertaken by community regeneration organisations rather than dedicated arts organisations, e.g. Gilfach Goch Community Association.

Most recently ACW has continued to extend its principle of access, through its targeting of the most disadvantaged communities in Wales, with additional funding for its Night Out scheme aimed exclusively at Communities First wards. The aim is to widen access to the arts by funding an additional 90+ professional performances each year in community centres based in Communities First areas. This approach will help encourage participation in other arts activities in the area and strengthen community cohesion and local pride by bringing people together and supporting them to work collectively as a community. The new Communities First programme began in July 2003 and has already resulted in 92 planned performance events in 45 different community locations – 34 of which are first-time users of the scheme. Some recent examples have been in Nantlle (Penygroes) where our partnership with Menter Iaith, Gwynedd presented Cwmni Theatr Arad Goch's play for young people "RIFF"; in Newport – the Gaer Community Partnership used a "Frank Hennessy & Friends" concert to launch their community development consultation process; and in Treharris (Merthyr Tydfil) the Communities First Co-ordinator organised a successful visit to The Tabernacl Chapel by the Welsh Brass Consort (brass players mainly from the WNO orchestra) by keeping ticket prices down to £2 and £1.

### **How does ACW fund arts and community regeneration activities?**

ACW funds a wide range of projects and organisations, some of which are detailed in the following section, to undertake community regeneration through the arts. There are too many to list in full but ACW main mechanism is via its 24 organisations with community arts revenue funding status in Wales. Some organisations have been in existence for nearly twenty years, such as Valley and Vale Community Arts or Pioneers Arts, whereas others are new initiatives established with the advent of Lottery funding, such as CARAD (Community Arts in Rhayader and District), Penrhys Partnership in RCT and Broli Cymraeg in Flintshire. They operate both geographically and by artform, and are listed below:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Geographical Remit</b>	<b>Artform</b>
Arts Care	Carmarthen	Carmarthenshire  Pembrokeshire  Swansea	Multi – especially in mental health and drug misuse
Arts Connection	Llanfyllin	N. Powys	Multi

Broli Cymraeg	Mostyn	Flintshire	Performing arts, especially circus and theatre of the oppressed
CADMAD	Cardiff	S. Wales Valleys  Cardiff, Swansea  Newport	Multi – with Black and Ethnic Minority Communities
CARAD	Rhayader	Mid Powys	Multi plus heritage programmes
Celf o Gwmpas	Llandrindod Wells	Powys	Multi – work with mental health sector in particular
Community Dance Wales	Cardiff	All Wales	Dance
Community Music Wales	Cardiff	All Wales	Music
Dance Blast	Chepstow	Torfean  Monmouthshire	Dance
Dawns I Bawb	Porthmadog	Yns Mon  Gwynedd  Conwy	Dance
Dawns Dyfed	Felinfach, Lampeter	Ceredigion Carmarthenshire  Pembrokeshire	Dance

North East Wales Dance	Llangollen	Denbighshire Wrexham Flintshire	Dance
Permanent Waves	Cardiff	Cardiff, Newport S. Wales Valleys	Multi – women’s arts
Penrhys Partnership	Penrhys	Penrhys and surrounding area	Multi
Pioneers Arts	Cardiff	All Wales	Visual Arts
Powys Dance	Llandrindod Wells	Powys	Dance
RCT Community Arts	Treorchy	RCT, Merthyr	Multi
Rubicon Dance	Cardiff	Cardiff, Newport	Dance
SWICA	Cardiff	Swansea S. Wales Valleys Cardiff	Multi – focusing on carnival arts
Tan Dance	Baglan	Neath Port Talbot Swansea	Dance
Theatr Felinfach	Felinfach, Lampeter	Cerdigion	Multi – focusing on Welsh Language culture
Valley and Vale Community Arts	Betws	Bridgend	Multi
Valleys Kids	Penygraig	Rhondda Valley	Multi

## Detailed examples of successful arts and community regeneration initiatives

### Ammanford Miners' Theatre

ACW awarded £10,910 to the Theatre in late 2002 for a project extending to September 2003. The Capacity Building project funded audience development at the Theatre, in particular encouraging more people to take part in arts activities in the Amman Valley, including Communities First area Upper Brynamman. The project was an excellent example of partnership working, with Carmarthenshire County Council, the Welsh Language Board and the Local Regeneration Fund contributing to the project. The Amman Gwendraeth Partnership was a driving force behind the project, promoting the involvement of communities and social and economic growth.

A wide range of activities took place, from monthly art demonstrations and master classes to setting up an Amman Valley Pop Idol competition including workshops and the opportunity to make recordings on CD. Dance, folk music, carnival skills and even re-cycling for schools were organised, and an African theme 'Africa in August' took place. This was a mixed media project aimed at involving as broad a cross-section of the community as possible, who took part in mask making, African dance, percussion sessions, story telling and poetry sessions.

### Broli Cymraeg

Based in Mostyn, Flintshire, Broli has an impressive base in the Clocktower building complete with auditorium, trapeze and circus equipment, meeting rooms and cafe in addition to a residential block. Broli use circus skills as a means of engaging with young people and they have an enviable reputation of working with disadvantaged and excluded youngsters in particular. Interestingly, Broli recently hosted their local primary school during recent extensive refurbishment. During this time, the head teacher reports that academic achievement improved across the board but in particular amongst low achieving pupils. Broli have facilitated the following:

- Physical regeneration of the Mostyn area through the capital lottery project
- Opportunities to participate in artistic activity



- Liaison with the WDA's Small Towns and Villages Initiative – Broli provided many activities requested by the community
- Provision of vocational training in Physical Theatre and Circus Skills
- Creation of a Forum Theatre Company – Cat's Paw – to deal with issues regularly raised by young people.

## **Bocswn/Soundbox**

Bocswn is a lively community music project run by Menter Môn in Amlwch Anglesey. One of the most deprived corners of the island, the town is particularly run down and identified as a Communities First area. Bocswn is a music studio offering a wide range of services – including the latest recording facilities and equipment – in a community setting. The project has been working closely with young peoples agencies on the island and using the project to engage young people in music making and music technology. The studios offer local bands the opportunity to rehearse in warm, sound proofed facilities and to record demos. Workshops are also run in the studio in anything from lyric writing to drums. The studio is also widely used by local choirs and groups, including Theatr Ieunctid Môn. The Bocswn also has a mobile unit capable of facilitating high quality workshops and performances with technicians in virtually any location from a beach to a local agricultural show. The project has so far delivered:

- 24 Track Digital Recording Studio
- Mastering facilities
- Technical and production back up
- Publishing back up (CD's, cassettes,etc)
- Rehearsal space
- DJ's Training booth with professional equipment
- Training opportunities – leading to accreditation
- Mobile unit for outreach purposes
- Increased opportunities for young people in the Amlwch area
- Economic benefits through the use of the studio facilities

## **Caerphilly County Borough Council -Arts and Communities First**

CCBC Arts Development has been involved in regeneration schemes since the "Culture Makes Communities" Conference (Joseph Rowntree Foundation) in 1999. Initially Arts Development Officers served on the Rhymney Development Officers Forum linking arts activities to other community developments. This included working closely with officers from GAVO (Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations). The Rhymney Partnership Board anticipated the development of Communities First Partnership Boards and acted as a model for future Partnerships.

Arts Development work is often targeted at the most needy communities so easily fitted with the

development of Communities First areas across the county borough.

One of the major projects undertaken by CCBC Arts Development has been the Inside Out Project – free community arts workshops for people with mental health issues. This project has grown alongside the development of Healthy Living Centres across the county borough (particularly in the Upper Rhymney Valley). The Inside Out Project has a presence with HLC's in Rhymney, Fochriw, Abertysswg and Lansbury Park. A further HLC is due to open in Pontlottyn in March.

Meetings with the whole Communities First team have been arranged. This gives an opportunity for CF officers to learn more about how the arts can be effectively used in community development schemes. It also gives Arts Development Officers (ADOs) direct links to community groups at grassroots level. In this way CF Officers can make sure that the arts are not left out of the community plans being developed and ADOs can offer advice to local groups with their funding applications. Similar meetings have been set up with the GAVO Lasting Officers.

The meetings also act as a channel to provide information about funding. ADOs can disseminate information about ACW grants and opportunities – including the Night Out scheme that is especially appropriate in the context community development. Communities First officers can help community groups access funding to develop arts projects and can help ensure their sustainability.

A pilot scheme has been set up to organise taster workshops in dance and digital storytelling in areas served by Communities First partnerships. In some areas these projects will act as a catalyst for community development, helping Communities Officers to identify key "movers and shakers" in their area. This is particularly useful in areas where there are few constituted organisations and a lack of community confidence. The two art forms were chosen because of their potential to assist community development.

Communities First Officers disseminate information about arts opportunities to the individual partnership boards. These can call upon the services of the ADOs as and when required. This makes better use of the ADOs limited staff resources.

## **Cambria Arts Association**

Cambria Arts is mainly a volunteer run organisation with one part-time Development Officer. They have a regular programme of artistic activity within the Communities First area of Tregaron in Ceredigion that includes annual festivals, workshops, and performances. In addition, the organisation has recently expanded their programme to include visual arts within a building made available to them in Tregaron as a gallery and a base for workshops. The building is also used as an administration base and the development of up to date technology enable links to be made with artists in the community.

## **Deeside Community Arts**

Based in Connahs Quay, Flintshire, Deeside Community Arts were established in 1998 to stimulate and encourage creative expression as a relevant and meaningful activity in the lives of the people of Deeside. They do not employ staff but have 11 members and 4 advisers".

They are a very effective arts development agency in their area. They work closely with the local schools and various local groups and organisations instigating artistic projects and organising events:

- Numerous events
- Schools arts initiatives
- Developing school and community links
- Flintshire Youth Theatre

## **Galeri Caernarfon**

The opening of Galeri Caernarfon (formerly known as the Creative Enterprise Centre) in March 2005 will be the culmination of a 5-year development project pioneered by Cwmni Tref Caernarfon. Inspired by the success of various creative clusters elsewhere, Cwmni Tref Caernarfon embarked on an ambitious programme of community development through the arts and creative industries including constructing a major new arts centre on Victoria Dock in Caernarfon – itself a brown field site - and representing physical regeneration on a significant scale. Alongside pursuing the capital development, Cwmni Tref Caernarfon have organised a major community arts initiative involving dance, drama, music, writing and rock music – particularly aiming at young people – in order to create demand for, and audiences for the new centre on construction. With two of the top 20 most deprived wards in Wales in Caernarfon, the need for regeneration is undisputed and the project – Prosiect Celf Caernarfon - has been hugely successful with a long waiting list of participants and affecting many individual life changing experiences along the way. 3 arts organisations are scheduled to move into the new centre along with the administration for Prosiect Celf itself. This will create an exciting environment for creativity and already, many ideas and embryonic partnerships are emerging.

The project has resulted in:

- A new arts centre for Caernarfon including a 450 seat auditorium, gallery, dance studio, studio, two meeting rooms, retail and catering opportunities, scheduled for completion March 2005
- A creative cluster around the centre including Canolfan William Mathias, Dawns i Bawb Community Dance and Cwmni'r Fran Wen, theatre in education company
- Studio spaces for creative businesses and artists creating economic opportunities
- A dynamic community arts project engaging at ground level
- Increased opportunities to access the arts for some of the most deprived communities in North

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- Promoting the use of the Welsh language through the arts
- Physical regeneration – the new centre has been designed by award winning Scottish architect, Richard Murphy. He engaged with the community at the outset through Cant y Cant Caernarfon – a planning for real exercise in the town. Iwan Bala has also been contracted as the project artist – liaising between the design team and the community by involving local schools and various interested groups and individuals.

## **Inside Out project - Caerphilly**

The Inside Out project in Caerphilly is funded through the Targeted Community Development scheme over three years and initiated by Caerphilly CBC Arts Development. The project is a programme of participatory arts activities aimed at adults with mental illness, including creative writing, digital storytelling, music, dance and photography. A steering group was created, including a number of the project's participants, to direct the activities over the three-year period of the project. Since beginning the project in July 2003 the project has produced two CDs of original material (one music, one poetry) and two photographic exhibitions. A band has also developed from the project (Nine Mile Point), which has performed both at mental health awareness events and in mainstream venues and festivals in Caerphilly County Borough.

A partnership has been developed between Inside Out and Hafal, an organisation for people with severe mental illness. This will involve the appointment, by Hafal, of a co-ordinator for the Inside Out project for three days a week over twelve months, to facilitate the transition of management at the end of the three-year ACW funded project, thus strengthening the long-term sustainability of the activity.

## **Maindee Festival**

Maindee Festival received £10,000 of ACW project funding in 2003 to enable it to deliver the Maindee Festival and various workshop activities leading up to it. The festival brings together different community groups such as Charter Housing, Maindee Youth Service and the Local Health Group in partnership with Newport City Council. The links made between the various agencies and groups through the festival have had a lasting impact on the area through the year leading to longer term working partnerships. The Festival has been running for some years now and is an excellent example of a multi-cultural community celebratory event.

## **Music and Sound Experience (MASE)**

Two musicians dedicated to using music to reach young people otherwise disenfranchised by society

and formal education established MASE. The project has aimed to encourage young people interested in performing in rock and pop bands to rehearse properly in supervised facilities, to use the skills of the tutors to develop their own and to create opportunities to perform. They run a monthly showcasing event at the North Wales Theatre that is always very well attended (up to 600 young people each time) and standards are high. Audiences are attracted from all over North Wales and there is extensive liaison with other musical groups and festivals in North Wales. They also work closely with the various regeneration agencies in the county of Conwy where they are based.

- Monthly gigs and show casings
- Opportunities for rock and pop workshops in a variety of community settings
- Professional mentoring
- Skills acquisition – personal and social development
- Improved facilities through capital development
- New multi-arts performance/sound studio will be opening May 2004 in Old Colwyn

## **Rubicon Dance**

Rubicon Dance were awarded an Arts for All grant of £118,865 to enable them to deliver a three year project employing two Dance Development Officers, one working in Cardiff and the other in Newport.

In Cardiff, just in the Autumn programme, Rubicon held a total of 664 sessions with 10,917 people attending. Sessions were held in areas of Cardiff that are recognised as being socially disadvantaged, such as Ely, Caerau, Gabalfa, Llanrumney, Adamsdown and Splott; some of these are designated Communities First areas . In addition, the project also includes sessions for young people with disabilities. These are regular ongoing sessions where the Dance Development Officer/Rubicon is able to build up partnerships with the schools and community groups. One headteacher has said 'Rubicon's contribution to the development of individual pupil skills and experiences has been outstanding'. The project also strives to engage boys (aged 6-11 years), a generally difficult group to engage in dance or other activities.

In Newport, Rubicon had worked closely with the Newport City Council's Arts Development Team to again target the most under provided for areas of Newport in partnership with Schools and Community Centres. These areas include Duffryn, Maesglas, Gaer, Ringland, Pill and Maindee.

## **South Wales Intercultural Community Arts (SWICA)**

In addition to their ACW revenue grant, SWICA received c£72,000 in 2003 to enable them to deliver the Swansea MAS Carnival and Caerphilly Lantern Parade.

Both projects aim to empower and inspire local community participants and groups to come together - through the medium of participatory arts - to celebrate collectively. Both projects were delivered in socially disadvantaged areas and SWICA worked in partnership with a wide variety of other agencies with the aim of supporting sustainable community development. Project participants included some from sections of society that are often excluded from community activities such as disabled people, asylum seekers, victims of domestic violence and those on probation or at risk.

The Swansea Carnival is particularly successful in drawing in ethnic minority groups such as the Chinese, Thai and Filipino communities to come together and meet other community groups in a relaxed setting. Arts Council England's Senior Officer for Carnival, who is acknowledged to be an expert in the field, praised this event and SWICA's management and delivery of it, which are probably the biggest outdoor participatory arts events in Wales.

In Caerphilly the activities provided by SWICA are included as a key element in Caerphilly County Borough Council's Five Counties Regeneration Framework, 'The Smart Alternative', as an action point to aid the creation of strong communities. The event parade itself involved thousands of residents of Caerphilly either as participants or spectators.

### **Swansea City and County Council**

This project represents a major partnership initiative between ACW and the City and County of Swansea. The three year project established a team of community arts officers to deliver a comprehensive programme of arts activity within six targeted geographical areas of Swansea. The total grant from the Arts Council of Wales was £150,000 which was matched by the Local Authority with European Objective 1 Structural Funding.

The project is working in areas where projects in social regeneration are in place. It provides support through arts events for these communities, encouraging as many people as possible to take parts in arts events, and providing relevant training for those involved.

The project is a shining example of how best practice in community arts can make a real difference, promoting positive community involvement and targeting young people in particular. In addition, the project seeks to build community arts work into other regeneration schemes – a model which has been proven to work in other areas. The project has been given a longer future, thanks to the commitment of the City and Council of Swansea, who now employ the project managers. There are four arts development officers continuing this work with the communities.

## **Tabernacl Bethesda**

As part of the Gwynedd Council's Adfwyio project in the Bethesda and Dyffryn Ogwen area, we have been working closely with a community group called Tabernacl Bethesda. We have part funded a community arts development post and have been closely involved in the project planning. The project has so far achieved:

- The development of a children's art club in a local chapel vestry
- The production of a stained glass window to commemorate the end of the Great Strike in the Penrhyn Quarry in 1904.
- Chris Bird Jones appointed as project artist working in glass. The local community was involved in the design and execution of the window with local people inscribing the panes with something of significance to them. This helped develop research skills, literacy skills (many wanted to quote poems or englynau) and creative skills and brought the community together through interaction
- A major festival around the Super Furry Animals concert. A community concert was held on the Sunday involving the showcasing of various community arts initiatives.
- Economic benefits arising out of the large influx of visitors during the festival

A community choir being established following a series of workshops with two gospel singers

## **Valleys Kids**

Valleys Kids, formerly known as Penygraig Community Project, is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee that was established in 1978. It exists to "provide and assist in the provision of facilities and services for education, play, arts, recreation and other leisure time occupation for the benefit of the residents of South Wales." The organisation currently employs twenty full time and twelve part time members of staff, as well as sessional workers. Over 140 volunteers work for the organisation, which has more than 2,500 members. The Director and Funding Director were awarded MBEs in the late 90s in recognition of their work over the last 25 years.

Valleys Kids has been extraordinarily effective in running arts projects (specialising in drama) that have provided opportunities for disaffected young people within the Penygraig, Pengerenglyn and Rhydyfelin areas - all Communities First wards. Its youth drama group runs weekly and through school holidays with performances attached. Valleys Kids are regularly applauded as a prime example of arts being used as a tool of community regeneration. They have an exemplary record in fund raising and delivering quality activity with real outcomes. Recently, one of the former youth drama group members, Dean Wong, now 19, was selected from hundreds of young people to play the lead role in an HTV film set in the Valleys. He has said that Valleys Kids encouraged and inspired him to stay on at school to study drama at A-level, and subsequently to audition for the film.

**ACW has recently made an award of £800K to Valleys Kids for refurbishment of the Soar Ffrwdamos chapel for future use as a multi-functional community arts venue.**

## **Public art and community regeneration**

There are many levels on which public art contributes to the regeneration of communities in Wales and many levels of engaging in public art for this purpose. In Wales there are a number of schemes, programmes and initiatives that involve artists and public artworks. Some, that might be perceived as modest at the outset, can lead to long-term sustainable outcomes.

An example of this would be the three-year artist in residence project, lead by artist Nigel Talbot on the Gurnos Estates in Merthyr Tydfil, in partnership with Groundwork Merthyr & Rhondda Cynon Taff. The artist began work with the four distinct communities on the Gurnos estates in 1998 and spent six months talking to the communities and the support agencies and resident organisations (schools, health centre, youth projects, housing associations, youth offending team, skills centre etc.) to determine what people wanted/needed and how their lives could be improved. He, along with other artists that he bought in, ran regular workshops in ceramics and woodworking to establish a skills base and build confidence. He ran planning workshops and looked at various problem sites around the estate and how they could be improved. From creating simple paths to key areas (bus stops and schools) that included artistic elements (on a practical level it was discovered that paving slabs with embedded carvings or castings were less likely to be stolen than those without!), to a security grille for the health centre that



incorporated positive messages from the community, Nigel and the community groups moved on to more major works such as community gardens and new landscaped areas.

The residency finished in 2000 but the legacy continues. The skills workshops lead to a small group setting up their own business making ceramic pots to contain locally made aromatherapy products, while other participants have been able to create objects to enhance their homes. Children who had fallen through the education system began to re-engage with their community through workshops and projects, making them less likely to cause trouble for other residents and for the police.

The AiRP is often the first step towards a more ambitious project and offers communities the opportunity to work with artists and to collaborate on projects that lead to temporary or modest artworks that celebrate a sense of place. From this experience many communities go on to build on the knowledge and skills acquired to tackle larger and more complex projects.

In 1998 Artist Shaeron Averbuch worked, through the offices of New Sandfields Sustainable Regeneration Ltd (the community regeneration company for the Sandfields Estate in Port Talbot), to identify areas that could be improved to the benefit of the community. Linking in with the local authority and the (then) recently-published Aberafan Seafront Strategy, Shaeron began to develop overarching themes that would connect the seafront development and regeneration with the estate. The six-month AiRP project was so successful that it was extended for a further six months. In 2000, Brenda Oakes was appointed as lead artist to develop the work that Shaeron had undertaken and take it forward with Neath Port Talbot CBC. This was a three-year role, made possible by Arts in Targeted Communities funding from the Welsh Assembly Government, with additional funding and resources supplied by NPT CBC. For the first time a mechanism for inter-departmental and inter-agency working was established, with the artist playing a vital neutral role as broker between the local authority and the community groups on the estate. The authority is now signed up to the notion of the arts as a driver for regeneration. Cywaith Cymru manages the project.

Public Art has much to contribute to the regeneration of communities in Wales and does this on a number of levels. While the physical manifestation of the artworks can lead to environmental improvements, new visitor attractions etc., it is the collaborative process that holds the key to the long-term success of public art projects. At its best the collaborative process offers communities the opportunity to reflect on the history and environment of their area and their aspirations for the future of that area. While the artist can act as a vital yet neutral conduit between the community and the statutory and voluntary organisations that serve it, the practical planning and skills-based workshops serve to create new ways of thinking and, in some cases, new skills to feed in to the job market.

Collaborative projects between artists, planners, architects and the community also serve to reinforce the identity of a community and reflect that identity not just through landmark and/or commemorative artworks, but also through the choice of materials used for environmental improvements. The Groundwork Trusts have long been involving communities in workshops with artists and planners to help them create colour and materials palettes that are specific to their areas. These are then referred to

when choosing street furniture – either bespoke items like benches, bollards and railings, or off-the-shelf items like litter bins or lighting – that reflect the character of the area. Projects such as these also have a knock-on effect in that it is more likely that local businesses will benefit from environmental improvement work e.g. design and manufacture businesses will make site-specific railings, benches and bollards, local brick, slate and other materials will be sourced for the project and local tradesmen and craftspeople will be used to install these new features, often acquiring new skills that will strengthen their business-base for the future.

Once a community has begun to develop a sense of its identity and communal pride of place, it is ready to develop a strategy for attracting tourists. A key example of this would be activity on the National Cycle Network in Wales. This ever-expanding network criss-crosses Wales, often using disused railway beds, canal towpaths and enhanced footpaths. For this reason it is important that the cycle tourist has a means of differentiating between the towns and villages on the route, has orientation points, signage, access controls, rest areas and view points and gateway markers to signify the crossing of a border or the passing from one community to another – this is particularly important in the ribbon developments of the South Wales Valleys and has begun to be addressed by a number of markers on the Taff Trail that highlight the distinctive nature and history of the settlements along the Trail. The artworks commissions programme for the National Cycle network in Wales began in 1996 and, despite the end of the Millennium Commission funding in 2000, continues through the efforts of local planning, highways, cycling and tourism officers, the Groundwork Trusts and Sustrans Cymru.

The Heritage and environmental bodies in Wales, most notably CADW, Forest Enterprise, the National Museums & Galleries of Wales and the National Trust are increasingly commissioning artists to work with them in creating interpretation materials and visitor amenities to add value to the visitor experience. In tandem with this local authorities are increasingly recognising the added-value that involving artists in regeneration schemes can bring. For a modest addition to a budget, working with artists provides access to a raft of funding from the EU, from the WTB and the WDA and from Trust and Foundations. The latter, in particular can provide additional income to raise the level of engagement with the local communities through consultation and collaborative projects and these, in turn, create a sense of ownership of enhancement or regeneration schemes, which will reduce vandalism and subsequent maintenance and repair costs in the future.

The key to a successful public art project, which leads to significant outcomes in terms of community regeneration, lies in the partnership and commitment of all participants. It is not enough to look at projects, such as the Angel of the North, and decide that a large-scale artwork will address the symptoms of long-term economic decline. Large works of this kind are generally the final flourish to programmes of activity that begin on a modest scale and gather momentum as the partners and, in particular, the communities take ownership of the programme and the works produced.

The benefits of public art to the communities in Wales are both primary – visual and physical enhancement – and secondary – community inclusion, impact on the local economy through new skills, added tourist attractions and a reinvigoration of local businesses and services. Public art can affect the quality of experience in large hospitals and small village schools and can serve as a positive reminder of

Wales' heritage and aspirations for the future.

## **Conclusion**

Wales is recognised to be a leader in the field of community arts and regeneration, not just in the UK but also across Europe and worldwide. This has been recognised by the Rowntree Foundation (1999 and 2001) who found through case studies and conference findings that community arts in Wales can clearly:

- Build a sense of place and community; help people feel they live somewhere with a special identity and culture.
- Promote participation, boost confidence and celebrate diversity.
- Tackle social exclusion by including disaffected groups.
- Improve quality of life and employment prospects.
- Help reduce offending, increase employment and improve the health of communities.

In addition, the British Council in 2003 toured an exhibition of Wales' community artists and companies to over 20 countries across the world to demonstrate best practice in tackling issues such as poverty, social democracy and poor education. The British Council chose Wales as their research identified Wales to be the leader in this field.

There can, therefore, be no doubt that the arts have already demonstrated their vital role in helping to regenerate communities throughout every city, county, town and village in Wales.

## **Future policy and developments for arts and community regeneration**

Despite numerous successes the situation in Wales is perhaps not as rosy as it might first appear. Significant expansion of arts activities, which have enabled community regeneration, took place with the advent of Lottery funding, in particular ACW's Arts for All scheme, between 1997 and 2001. Since then continued falls in Lottery income have now led to a position where ACW cannot support new arts and community regeneration initiatives. Indeed ACW is struggling to even sustain initiatives it has previously established. Most recently the Welsh Assembly Government were unfortunately unable to provide additional funding to compensate ACW for its declining Lottery budgets (as detailed in its Corporate Plan 2004-6) and ACW is concerned this will have a disproportionate effect on community arts based activities.

However ACW is seeking to rectify this position. Nearly £500K of ACW's existing Welsh Assembly

Government funded budgets are being redirected to community arts organisations during 2004/5 and ACW is working with WEFO to identify whether this can be matched against Objective 1 and 2 programmes for the next 3 years. Nevertheless this still leaves ACW with reduced budgets, compared to its 2002/3 funding for arts and community regeneration activities.

Therefore ACW is recommending to the Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee a number of actions that could safeguard existing provision and enable further expansion:

1. Increase awareness of the contribution of arts to community regeneration: Despite extensive research and evidence to demonstrate the benefits of the arts in community regeneration many key organisations and individuals in these fields remain unaware, or unconvinced, of this important role. ACW in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government and others need to maximise awareness, publicise best practice and encourage greater investment.
2. Increase funding for community arts activities:

ACW encourages the Welsh Assembly Government, as part its Spending Review, to prioritise additional investment for community arts and regeneration programmes. ACW will continue to make the case for such increased investment.

3. Increase investment in arts and community regeneration initiatives from non-arts sources:

As already noted ACW has developed positive relationships with key partner organisations such as local authorities and Communities First partnerships – many of who fully recognise the importance of arts within community regeneration. However, a recent training programme established by ACW, and delivered by Voluntary Arts Wales, which was targeted at Communities First partnerships in order for them to better understand the role of arts within community regeneration, saw a disappointingly low take-up.

However, the majority of community and voluntary arts organisations across Wales are already engaged in arts programmes within their local Communities First areas. Surprisingly most do not receive any financial support from Communities First programmes. A telephone survey, undertaken in December 2003 by ACW, found that 84% of Wales' leading community arts organisations had worked in Communities First wards, whereas 65% of these organisations had never received any direct support from Communities First programmes. The survey also found that over 90% of community arts organisations wanted to expand their provision in Communities First areas, but were hampered by a lack of financial support and a lack of awareness within Communities First teams of the benefits of arts.

Therefore further work clearly needs to be undertaken, to ensure the benefits of arts activities in regenerating communities can be safeguarded and maximised in the future. This will mean not only increased investment from ACW but also increased investment from non-arts sources and organisations charged with regenerating Wales' most disadvantaged communities.

ENDS.

Appendices:

1. Revenue funding to ACW Community Arts Clients
2. ACW project Awards from its Taking Part and Arts in the Community scheme 2002/3 and 2003/4.