

# Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee

## CWLS(2) 02-06 (p1)

**Meeting date: 1 February 2006**

**Meeting time: 9.00am – 12.00pm**

**Meeting venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly for Wales**

### **Culture Policy Review – Overview /Paper**

#### **The Strategic Context**

1. The current culture strategy Creative Future has a key first principle: "culture is not a luxury in our lives, nor a mere embellishment of the material tasks of daily existence. It is the texture of our living". Creative Future embeds culture in all of the Government's policies and plans. Since it was written, however, there have been detailed strategies for the Welsh language 'Iaith Pawb' and Sport and Physical Activity 'Climbing Higher.' It is timely now to develop a focussed culture strategy to complement these two and build on the foundation of Creative Future

2. The first chapter in Creative Future is 'Creating evidence based policies.' Since it was published in 2002 the evidence base has improved considerably. Recent reports that build our knowledge base include the major arts participation survey 'Arts in Wales 2005', the University of Glamorgan 'Cultural Knowledge Index', and the Assembly Government 'Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.' We know from these that access and participation are not equal across Wales. There are substantive inequalities across socio-economic groups. There is in my view a compelling social justice argument to address these.

#### **The Culture Board for Wales/ Diwylliant Cymru**

3. The creation of the Culture Board /Diwylliant Cymru provides opportunities to develop better and more integrated cultural policies, greater efficiency through shared services and greater synergies with local government support for the cultural sector. These are the key themes of Making the Connections - the Government's agenda for reforming the whole of the public sector in Wales. The Culture Board for Wales /Diwylliant Cymru is chaired by me and comprises the Chairs and Chief Executives of the Arts Council for Wales, National Library of Wales and Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales. It also includes representation from the WLGA and Welsh Books Council. Its remit is to set the overall strategic direction for the cultural agenda in Wales, including oversight of the preparation of the new Culture Strategy.

4. The Board has met twice, on 7th July and 24th November 2005. The minutes of each meeting of the Culture Board are published on the National Assembly website when they are agreed. The next meeting of the Culture Board is scheduled for March 2006.

5. Since July 2005 the Board has agreed its terms of reference, confirmed its membership and working methods, considered the existing evidence base, and agreed a framework for the new Culture Strategy for Wales. The Culture Committee is a key stakeholder in the development of the new Culture Strategy and will be involved fully in the process.

## **Towards a new Culture Strategy**

6. The evidence base for the new Strategy includes, as well as the reports mentioned above:

- The University of Glamorgan's "Changing Spaces" report on policies and practices designed to facilitate and encourage multi – disciplinary work in community based creative and cultural activity.
- Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum of Wales' audience development action plan
- Culture Committee Reports

7. The Government's agenda for cultural development in Wales is explicitly focussed on tackling social inequalities in access to culture and the arts. Access, participation and inclusion are implicit in Creative Future, but not spelled out. The chapter on Culture and Communities, for instance, concentrated on the role of local authorities and the National Remit companies in supporting grass roots arts activity, and in touring product as widely as possible.

8. The new Strategy offers an opportunity to make the connections explicit, and to link cultural outcomes to the stated priorities of the Assembly Government:

- Strengthening Wales' cultural identity
- Helping more people into jobs
- Improving health
- Developing strong and safe communities
- Creating better jobs and skills

To make the connections explicit the strategy will need to be themed on these lines.

9. The Strategy will also seek to explore the role of the historic environment in the wider agenda and its contribution to priorities such as regeneration, social inclusion, sustainability and education and life long learning. It will also consider areas such as interpretation and community involvement, to ensure that our heritage is valued and fully accessible.

## **The National Arts Organisations**

10. On the six national arts organisations that are to be directly funded by the Assembly Government, discussions are currently going on with the Arts Council of Wales and the companies concerned about the funding arrangements. On policy and strategy too, the dialogue between us is developing. The Culture Committee will be consulted on the arrangements. A key issue is the "arms length" principle, namely the principle that the Assembly Government will not interfere in the programme choice of the six companies that will receive Assembly Government funding. I want to make clear that there is a complete agreement on this. In relation to the Arts Council's work, and that of the six national arts organisations, the principle is, and remains intact. I intend to put in place Memoranda of Understanding between the Assembly Government and the companies to ensure the principle is enshrined in written form. I would be happy to receive the views of the Culture Committee as to the structure and content of these memoranda. On policy and strategy too, the dialogue between is developing. The Culture Committee will be consulted on this too.

### **Investment in the Arts**

11. This Government has prioritised substantial extra money for the arts. A total of £181 million has been invested since 1999/ 2000. The Arts Council have benefited greatly – their budget was £15 million in 1999/ 2000. This year it is £27 million, an increase of 56%. By any standards that is a remarkable increase and an enviable situation for any public body. I was disappointed that this year's budget process resulted in funding to the Culture portfolio being reduced below the Government's proposals as a result of opposition amendments.

### **Publishing and Film**

12. The Assembly Government is providing £250,000 of extra funding per year for the Welsh Books Council to implement a number of recommendations from the Culture Committee's Review of Welsh Writing in English. An important development since the Review has been the establishment of the Library of Wales series, which aims to make Wales' English-language literary heritage accessible to everyone by re-publishing important titles that are out-of-print or have become difficult to find. The first five titles were published in January 2006.

13. The Arts Council of Wales review of cultural film, produced in conjunction with the WDA and the Creative Industries team, will be published soon and will be circulated to Members when available.

### **The National Collections**

14. Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales will shortly be making public its Vision Statement and Development Plan, setting out the Museum's direction for its operations over the next 10-15 years. The Museum will continue to work to improve the equality of physical and intellectual access to its collections at all its sites. It will also continue to make the collections widely accessible throughout Wales via its partnership activities, including "Cyfoeth Cymru Gyfan - Sharing Treasures" and "Celf

Cymru Gyfan – ArtShare Wales".

15. Public access to knowledge and culture in Wales will be improved by the implementation of the National Library's new computer system - to integrate the ways in which the Library's collections are managed by the Library and accessed by its users; and, in collaboration with CyMAL, to specify and develop an all-Wales library resource discovery and delivery system.

**Alun Pugh**