

Senedd Cymru

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol

Ymchwiliad: Deddf Llesiant Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol (Cymru) 2015

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru a'i asiantaeth Celfyddydau
Rhyngwladol Cymru

Welsh Parliament

Equality and Social Justice Committee

Inquiry: Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Evidence from: Arts Council of Wales and its agency Wales Arts
International



Well-being of Future Generations Act Post-Legislative Scrutiny

A response by Arts Council of Wales and its agency Wales Arts International

Summary

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 has transformed how public bodies in all sectors, including Arts Council of Wales, approaches cultural policy and investment. As the first nation to have a Culture and Language goal to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, our experience shows that the Act is a key framework that enables innovative, long-term thinking and that positions Wales as a global leader in sustainable cultural practice.

This brief response focuses on Wales' pioneering work in three key area of work which exemplify how the arts sector enlivens the Act's seven well-being goals and five ways of working. Arts, Health and Wellbeing in Wales (a partnership between Arts Council of Wales and NHS Confederation) is world leading and holds immense potential to the preventative health care agenda. [Wales Arts International Strategy Framework 2024-2034](#) offers a new definition of cultural well-being will be measured against the seven well-being goals and [Plan for Climate Justice and the Arts](#) was developed through a collaborative process as part of our Creative Nature Programme and in partnership with Natural Resources Wales. The culture sector holds the key to a national culture change.

However lack of strategic cross-departmental investment and the continuation of annual funding cycles, undermines the delivery of the Wellbeing Act and is holding back the immense potential of the arts in this critical agenda. Additional strategic multi-year funding and a greater drive by government is needed.

The Arts as Enablers of Well-being Goals

A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language

The Act's recognition of culture as a pillar of sustainability alongside environmental, social and economic factors has been transformative. Our Wales Arts International Strategy demonstrates how cultural well-being connects Wales globally while strengthening local identity. Through programmes like [Llais y Lle](#) and [Gwranddo](#) (listening), we support Indigenous language communities worldwide while nurturing Cymraeg, contributing to the Welsh Government's goal of one million Welsh speakers by 2050.

Evidence of Impact:

- Cultural mobility programmes such as [the International Opportunities Fund](#) that showcase Welsh bilingual practice internationally including artists Gareth Bonello's collaboration with the Kasi community in north East India.
- Exchange programmes connecting Welsh artists with Indigenous artists at [Gwyl Mawr y Rhai Bychain](#) in Neuadd Ogwen Bethesda, communities and languages with the [International Indigenous Music Summit](#) in Toronto and through the Pan Indigenous Music Network.

- Investment in multilingual artistic practice such as the recent EUNIC residency by Literature Wales strengthens cultural identity

Climate Justice and Global Responsibility

Our Plan for Climate Justice and the Arts directly implements the "Globally Responsible Wales" goal. Developed through collaborative co-design with 93 stakeholders, this plan demonstrates the Act's power to drive sector-wide transformation. The arts sector is now actively working towards Wales' net zero by 2050 commitment while also addressing climate justice issues affecting marginalised communities globally through investing in projects by Size of Wales for example.

Climate justice is embedded as one of six strategic principles in our 2024-34 plan. Creative Nature Programme supports artists to address climate and nature emergencies.

Demonstrating the Five Ways of Working

Long-term Thinking

Whilst we are ambitious about our long term goals, we urge the Welsh and UK Governments to move to a multi-year budget planning. Our 10-year Wales Arts International Strategy exemplifies our own long-term strategic planning. We're building sustainable international relationships based on shared values of fairness to people and planet. As part of a focus year on Wales and Japan, we are building on 50 years of growing cultural and economic engagement with Japan, a country that is future focused.

Prevention

The arts prevent social isolation, mental health challenges, and community fragmentation. Our Arts and Health programme is focused on health prevention with a vision of a Wales that embraces and promotes access to the arts and creativity as essential pillars of good health and care for all and includes measures through social prescribing. Arts on prescription schemes are also estimated to give a return on investment of £2.30 for every £1 spent. This pioneering work is highly regarded internationally. International work also prevents cultural insularity while our climate justice programme prevents further environmental damage. By supporting artists from diverse communities, we prevent marginalisation and ensure representative cultural narratives.

Integration

Our Corporate Strategy demonstrates deep integration across well-being goals through Arts Council of Wales' six well-being principles: creativity, equalities and engagement, Welsh language, climate justice, nurturing talent, and transformation. Our international work demonstrates how these principles function as an integrated system rather than separate objectives. When we support a Welsh artist to collaborate internationally, we simultaneously advance creativity through artistic exchange, promote equalities by prioritising underrepresented voices, strengthen the Welsh language through bilingual practice, embed climate justice through sustainable working

methods, nurture talent through skill development, and enable transformation through new networks and approaches.

Our Climate Justice Action Plan further illustrates this integration - its co-designed approach advances equalities, supports Welsh language communities affected by climate change, nurtures artists working on environmental themes, and transforms how the sector operates sustainably. This interconnected approach reflects the Act's fundamental principle that well-being goals cannot be achieved in isolation but require integrated thinking and action across all areas of our work.

Collaboration

We have cultivated innovative and meaningful partnerships with leading health and social care organisations in Wales and beyond. Our approach is one of collaboration, co-production and co-ownership. Together, we share a belief in the power of the arts to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Wales.

Our co-design approach to climate justice planning involved arts organisations, environmental groups, communities, and land managers. Wales Arts International works in partnership with British Council, sister Arts Councils across the UK and the world and is an active member of networks such as On The Move. This collaborative approach reflects the Act's emphasis on working across sectors.

Involvement

Young people and diverse communities are central to our approach. Our climate justice plan specifically involves Focus groups of artists with diverse lived experiences; Community conversations about climate impacts on Welsh language communities and an International programmes such as the WOMEN's Euro's amplify underrepresented voices such as through the work of UNIFY collective and their One Jess a Thousand Dreams Pitch Mural in Splott.

Barriers and Opportunities

The Act provides clear mandate and a **Legislative Framework** for culture as core to sustainable development, but with the heavy cuts experienced over a decade by Arts Council of Wales further resources and cultural leadership on this matter is needed by Welsh Government. Whilst Team Cymru's values-based approach influences international cultural relations, it is yet to be fully supported and promoted by the UK government, which could lead to significant benefits for soft power as a model for the international calls for a UN Sustainable Global Goal for Culture by 2030. Collaborative development of climate justice plan created sector-wide ownership ready for more investment and a new model for the cultural and environmental sectors to work collaboratively. Limited funding restricts ability to fully implement ambitious climate justice actions. Climate emergency requires faster transformation than current resources allow. Developing meaningful indicators for cultural well-being impact remains complex but WAI's new strategic framework is testing new indicators.

Recommendations for Strengthening the Act

Sustainable Funding Models and longer-term funding settlements are essential to enable true long-term planning and prevent short-term reactive approaches. The current annual funding cycle is currently undermining any efforts made to strengthen the Act.

Cross-Sector Integration lead to win-win situation such as in Arts and health. We recommend also strengthen mechanisms for cultural sector involvement in transport, energy, and food policy development as well as an increase in investment in creative education **and health**.

Expand understanding of culture's role in addressing all well-being goals, not just the cultural goal.

Use Wales' international cultural relations to share the Act's approach globally and learn from other progressive models

Strengthen future generations' involvement in decision-making processes through formal consultation mechanisms

Future Vision

The Act has enabled the arts sector to think transformatively about our role in society. Looking ahead to 2030, with the right additional resources, we envision:

- A sector that is on its way to be fully decarbonised that models sustainable practice internationally
- Cultural programmes that strengthen community resilience to climate change
- International cultural relations that advance global justice and understanding
- Arts practice that consistently demonstrates the interconnection of environmental, social, economic and cultural well-being

Conclusion

Whilst the Well-being of Future Generations Act provides ACW with a clear direction for working together with public bodies, partners across all sectors, and communities, without greater cross-departmental strategic leadership and investment, we will fall short on our ambitions of putting climate, nature, and justice at the centre of all our decisions as an organisation.

Whilst the Well-being of Future Generations Act has enabled the collaboration between arts and health, the depleting budgets of the arts in Wales alone cannot sustain the investment needed for the benefits to be reaped.

With some strategic cross-departmental leadership, adjustments and investments, the arts sector's contribution could be transformative and our experience offers a model for how other sectors can use the Act's framework to drive transformative change while contributing to Wales' global leadership in sustainable development.

Our experience demonstrates that the Act works best when combined with:

- Adequate resources for implementation
- Collaborative cross-departmental and sectoral development processes
- Long-term strategic planning combined with multi-year funding
- Clear measurement frameworks
- Strong leadership commitment and delivery from government