

**The Drama Centre**

Pen-y-Pound  
Abergavenny  
Monmouthshire  
NP7 5UD

**Y Ganolfan Drama**

Pen-y-Pound  
Y Fenni  
Sir Fynwy  
NP7 5UD

Tel 01873 853167 Fax 01873 853910  
Email [gwenttie@uwclub.net](mailto:gwenttie@uwclub.net) [www.gwenttheatre.com](http://www.gwenttheatre.com)



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gwent  
theatre**

7<sup>th</sup> March, 2012-03-07

For the attention of The Committee Clerk.

Please find enclosed Gwent Theatre's submission also a short film made by a student made at the time of ACW's cuts. I hope the committee will find these a useful aid to their inquiry.

Gwent Theatre would also welcome the opportunity to give oral evidence to the committee.

Gary Meredith

On behalf of the board of Gwent Theatre

## **Inquiry into Participation in the Arts.**

### **Submission on behalf of the board of The Gwent Theatre Company.**

#### **Gwent Theatre.**

The Gwent Theatre Company was formerly a revenue funded client of ACW whose funding was cut in March 2011 as a result of ACW's funding review.

The company provided a theatre in education service for the schools in the greater Gwent area presenting four productions per year and giving hundreds of participative performing arts workshops. In a typical year 22,000 children and young people would take part in these activities.

The company no longer operates the TIE service for schools but continues to manage The Gwent Young people's Theatre which is not dependent on ACW funding.

It is clear that the loss of revenue funding for GTIE has resulted in a huge net loss of opportunities for young people in Gwent to experience professional theatre productions and take part in creative theatre arts workshops.

In addition to the cut in Gwent's grant both Spectacle Theatre in Rhondda Cynon Taf and Theatr Powys were also cut. During a year the total output of the three companies would involve 23 productions giving 564 performances, 586 workshops to 51,323 participants in schools, communities and youth theatre.

The impact of ACW's funding decisions leaves this large area of south east and mid Wales without a Theatre in Education service for young people in some of the most disadvantaged areas in Wales, whereas it has been retained in other areas.

There seems to be a serious lack of understanding between the aims of WAG and ACW's funding decisions. In his remit letter to ACW the then Minister for Heritage Alun Ffred Jones asked the Council to **'focus investment on increasing access to and widening participation in, high-quality arts, particularly in areas of deprivation'**. This has clearly failed to happen.

The Minister was taken to task on this issue by Lynne Neagle AM for Torfaen when he effectively washed his hands of the issue. It seems strange that the elected representatives of the people are unable to pursue policies of fairness and equality in the face of decisions made by an arts funding body that is seemingly unaccountable. Policy framework between Welsh Government and the bodies that distribute arts funding certainly needs a long hard look if distribution of arts funding is to be equitable and not effectively disenfranchise large sections of the population.

The prospect for finding alternative funding for Theatre in Education is bleak it's simply not sexy or high profile enough to attract sponsorship. If TIE is to be retained as an important art form and educational tool it will need to be financed by public money.