

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / The Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
Cyllid Celfyddydau nad yw'n Gyhoeddus / Non-public Funding of the Arts
CWLC(5) ART18
Ymateb gan Prifysgol Abertawe / Evidence from Swansea University

The consultation references "philanthropy", "earned income" and "investment" as potential ways of funding the arts outwith of public subsidy.

Realistically the only route to philanthropic giving is via charitable funds and trusts – established for the purpose of giving to "good causes" as few if any organisations have direct access to wealthy individuals. However all philanthropic giving is targeted towards specific purposes – the arts being just one. Arts organisations have generally been good at raising funds from such trusts, with the bigger organisations such as WNO having most success as they are able to employ expertise to research and access such funds – competition being extremely keen and most trusts and foundations operating across the UK.

However funding from trusts is unable to contribute either to general operating costs or even to general programmes of work. They are really only available to support specific, additional projects and initiatives and therefore inevitably will be a supplement rather than a replacement for public support.

In regards to "earned income" this is generated by sales of some kind – most usually tickets in the case of the performing arts– together with ancillary/associated trading – refreshments and merchandising. This is where it gets tricky as of course more "popular/populist" performances will generate more income in direct and indirect sales than activity of more limited appeal. So a Pink Floyd tribute band will earn more income from tickets and bar sales than a piece of new writing or contemporary dance.

Similarly, audiences for NT Live and RSC screenings tend to be much larger than for new live drama created in Wales which has neither the kudos of those brands or the star names. (Although of course both National Theatre and the RSC receive very large amounts of public funding and are able to attract philanthropic giving and sponsorship given the power, reach and quality of the brand). It would be a relatively easy step for arts centres and theatres to move away completely from programming and producing new, live theatre which is risky, (i.e quality etc are unknown until the work reaches the stage) and which requires relatively high input of technical and marketing support and generates limited box office – in favour of

live screenings from London which have no risk and require virtually no technical or marketing effort.

Whilst this would reduce the need for public support, the "cost" to creativity and to Welsh talent would be immense.

The reality is that theatres present programmes which strive to achieve a balance between product which will guarantee an audience and at least cover most of the costs with that which is new and untested but which showcases creativity, ambition and innovation – but at a financial loss.

Increasing earned income is always one of the core goals for any business and arts businesses are no exception. The question is one of where the balance lies – increase ticket prices and exclude sections of the population? Increase the number of tribute bands and impoverish the diversity of the programme? Pay artists less and increase "profit"?

Business sponsorship also has a part to play but experience suggests that the major players will always reap the biggest rewards. Business expects maximum exposure for its support and this is best guaranteed by the national organisations who in turn attract biggest audience and most media coverage. Smaller scale sponsorship is of course valuable but in reality adds a small amount at the margins.

Arts Council funding is key to ensuring that the public have access to contemporary arts and culture – not limited (or at least less limited) by postcode or class. It also recognises the need for artists to at least be paid a reasonable (if basic) rate for the job and to be able to operate in a safe and inclusive environment.

It's not clear what is meant by "investment" in the consultation but surely this is the most appropriate description for public funding. It is investment in creative talent and in opportunities for audiences to experience and participate.

Artists and arts organisations are nothing if not innovative. If there are trust funds to be applied for, sponsors to be wooed and new platforms to market work and sell tickets then we can be certain that there will be creative people trying to exploit them.

We also understand that public budgets are under great stress and it is right that the basis for, and extent of, public funding of the arts should be scrutinised and the potential for other sources of funding explored.

However Wales is a small and essentially rural, post-industrial nation with a scattered population and a limited number of national or multinational businesses or high net worth individuals.

As a nation there is also the expectation for our own national cultural organisations as well as activity across the country – at regional and local level and in both languages. Limited budgets are therefore stretched even tighter than say in an English region with a similar population level.

I have 40 years+ experience of working in the cultural field – as art teacher; Regional Arts Association officer; presenter; producer and Chair of ACW. Investment of public funds (from taxation and Lottery) has been and remains a crucial element in securing a vibrant arts ecology – one which supports the creative voice and strives to make that voice available to all.