



# **Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru** **The National Assembly for Wales**

## **Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol: Grŵp Gorchwyl a Gorffen ar Gyfranogiad yn y Celfyddydau yng Nghymru** **The Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee: Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts in Wales**

**Dydd Iau, 15 Mawrth 2012**  
**Thursday, 15 March 2012**

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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,  
cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.  
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

**Aelodau'r grŵp gorchwyl a gorffen yn bresennol**  
**Task and finish group members in attendance**

Ann Jones

Llafur (Cadeirydd y grŵp gorchwyl a gorffen)  
Labour (Task and finish group Chair)

|                    |                                   |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Rhodri Glyn Thomas | Plaid Cymru<br>The Party of Wales |
| Joyce Watson       | Llafur<br>Labour                  |

**Eraill yn bresennol  
Others in attendance**

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Mike Clark       | Cadeirydd yr Ymddiriedolwyr, Cwmni Theatr Hijinx<br>Chair of Trustees, Hijinx Theatre Company   |
| Hilary Evans     | Cyfiethydd IAP<br>BSL Interpreter   |
| Maggie Hampton   | Prif Weithredwr, Celfyddydau Anabledd Cymru<br>Chief Executive, Disability Arts Wales   |
| Val Hill         | Cyfarwyddwr Gweinyddol, Cwmni Theatr Hijinx<br>Administrative Director, Hijinx Theatre Company  |
| Patricia Rafique | Cyfiethydd IAP<br>BSL Interpreter   |
| Leanne Rahman    | Uwch Swyddog Datblygu'r Celfyddydau, Rhwydwaith Sector<br>Gwirfoddol i Bobl Croenddu Cymru<br>Senior Development Officer, Black Voluntary Sector Network<br>Wales |
| Chris Ryde       | Cadeirydd, Cymdeithas Celfyddydau Perfformio Cymru<br>Chair, Wales Association for the Performing Arts  |
| Robin Simpson    | Prif Weithredwr, Celfyddydau Gwirfoddol<br>Chief Executive, Voluntary Arts  |
| Stephan Stockton | Cymdeithas Celfyddydau Perfformio Cymru<br>Wales Association for the Performing Arts  |

**Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol  
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance**

|                |                               |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Sarah Bartlett | Dirprwy Glerc<br>Deputy Clerk |
| Hannah Johnson | Ymchwilydd<br>Researcher      |
| Marc Wyn Jones | Clerc<br>Clerk                |

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 1.33 p.m.*

*The meeting began at 1.33 p.m.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon  
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **Ann Jones:** I open this meeting of this Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee task and finish group. We are holding a brief inquiry into access for all to the arts. There are three Members present. I take it that we have all switched off our mobile phones. We do not expect a fire drill, so should the fire alarm go off, we will take instructions from the usher. The assembly point is by the Pierhead building. You do not have to play with the microphones; they will come on as you speak. It is very clever. There are technical people behind us who keep the ship afloat and keep us going.

**Ymchwiliad i Gyfranogiad yn y Celfyddydau**  
**Inquiry into Participation in the Arts**

[2] **Ann Jones:** I formally welcome Val Hill, administrative director, and Mike Clark, chair of trustees, of Hijinx Theatre. I do not know whether you have any brief opening comments or whether we can go straight into questions.

[3] **Ms Hill:** I would like to say thank you for inviting us. It is brilliant that we are here.

[4] **Ann Jones:** Can you tell us briefly how budget reductions and reallocations will affect the arts sector in Wales in the long term?

[5] **Ms Hill:** First, if I may, I would like to put in context the detail of Hijinx rather than discuss the overall picture. I know that you are also taking evidence from the Wales Association for the Performing Arts—I am on its executive committee—so I could talk about that, but, if I could talk about Hijinx, which is why we are here—

[6] **Ann Jones:** That is absolutely fine.

[7] **Ms Hill:** There is no doubt from the written submission that I have sent you, in which you can see already that budget reductions have started to have quite a large impact on what we do and on what we can deliver to people throughout Wales. We have interpreted participation, as I have said in our paper, as anyone who experiences an arts event, whether they are actively taking part or sitting in a room watching a piece of theatre and engaging their brain, being in the space and having something to think about and take away with them afterwards. That is an important part of participation. It is to do with changing hearts and minds, engaging people in citizenship and caring and so on. Budget cuts are having a massive impact; there is no doubt about that.

[8] **Ann Jones:** There is always an attempt made to ensure geographical coverage. Funding bodies will always look at how many projects are operating in a certain area and ask whether they should give funding to someone else, operating in another area. Does that dilute the experience for people, or is it better to continue to support those offering access to the arts?

[9] **Ms Hill:** That is a tricky question, and there are two answers to it. One answer is to do with what Hijinx offers. We clearly are Cardiff based, although our professional touring work goes right across Wales and goes to small constituencies, rural and urban, all over Wales. Part of that has been cut away anyway—you have seen that in the paper that I have written. Our IT manager at Wales Millennium Centre told me the other day that the first time that he saw Hijinx was when the company went to his community centre at Penygraig in 1993. He asked, with tears in his eyes, ‘Who will come to perform for my children now?’ That is an example. So, it is a rural and urban issue. Rhodri will know about the performances that we have done in his constituency in rural west Wales. Joyce, I hope, will know about the ones in the north as well. It has an impact on that. With regard to our participatory projects, we do that more and more in the area in which we are based, which is south-east Wales. It is difficult at times to run participatory projects away from our base in Cardiff. It will have a big geographical effect.

[10] The second answer, which my colleagues from WAPA will probably answer more fully, is the effect not just on Hijinx, but on the whole of Wales, of the investment review and the cuts in the arts to whole swathes of Wales, which are now devoid of any kind of arts activity.

[11] **Mr Clark:** It is a good question. It is a question that is linked to the budget. We still mourn the loss of one of our tours, which we can no longer fund, because of the investment review. That tour used to go all over Wales and England. It is so sad, from our point of view, that we can no longer do that. We know that that tour was well respected and well established. It happened every year; it was not something that happened once and did not happen again. It was a regular event and people were expecting it every year. It was in people's diary and, unfortunately, it will not now happen. As the evidence that we have submitted shows, there has already been a substantial reduction in touring activity.

[12] **Ms Hill:** You can see that in our evidence, with 72 performances in 2010 and 24 performances in 2011. Admittedly, not all of those were in Wales: there were 38 performances in Wales in 2010 and 14 performances in Wales last year.

[13] **Mr Clark:** I do not want to make a crude point, but we have not had what we consider to be a satisfactory explanation for why our tour funding has been reduced. The Arts Council of Wales's letter to us at the time said that the community tour, as it was called, did not meet its expectations of transformational theatre. I have a son, who is 30 years old now, with Down's syndrome, and I know that his life has been transformed. So, I do not know what the definition of transformational is, but I know what his is and I know what mine is. It is sad that we have lost that funding.

[14] **Ann Jones:** We will come on to funding shortly.

[15] **Ms Hill:** Sorry to interrupt, but I would just like to mention something about transformational quality and things like that. We received a letter from a woman called Alison, a journalist, who has a son with Down's syndrome. Her son, up to the age of 11, was quite pleased with the fact that he had Down's syndrome, but when he got to the age of 11 he started to worry about it quite significantly and said, 'I don't want Down's syndrome anymore; I want "up" syndrome'. However, he went to see Mike's son, Gareth, in a professional touring production, and Alison wrote to us saying that that single performance changed everything for Tom; he now celebrates his Down's syndrome, and is upbeat and articulate about this strengths. She said that what Hijinx has done for her son is to provide role models of young adults with Down's syndrome who are confident and cool, and who are living a life that Tom can aspire to. That says it all really.

[16] **Ann Jones:** That is transformational, is it not?

[17] **Mr Clark:** I would say so, yes.

[18] **Ms Hill:** I would define that as transformational.

[19] **Ann Jones:** We now move onto funding sources. Rhodri Glyn?

[20] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Hoffwn wneud pwynt yn dilyn sylwadau Val a Mike. Mae'n rhaid inni edrych ar gyfranogiad yn y celfyddydau yn y cyd-destun ehangaf. Ni ddylid sôn yn unig am y bobl sy'n perfformio, ond hefyd am leoliadau'r perfformiadau ac i ba raddau y maent ar gael i gynulleidfaoedd ledled Cymru. Ni chredaf fod cyngor y celfyddydau wedi ystyried hynny'n llawn yn ei benderfyniad i ddod â'r perfformiadau teithiol i ben, neu i'w cwtdogi.

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I would like to make a point following comments from Val and Mike. We need to look at participation in the arts in the broadest context possible. We should not just talk about those who perform, but also about the location of those performances and to what extent they are available to audiences the length and breadth of Wales. I do not think that the arts council has considered that fully in its decision to end or reduce the touring performances.

[21] O ran cyllid, a ydych chi'n credu bod defnyddio cyllid sydd wedi'i dargedu yn ffordd effeithiol o gynyddu cyfranogiad yn y celfyddydau ymysg pobl anabl yn arbennig? On funding, do you think that using targeted funding is an effective way of raising the level of participation in the arts among disabled people in particular?

[22] **Ms Hill:** That is also a difficult question, Rhodri. There is no doubt that project funding helps projects to happen. However, project funding does not allow for a consistent strategic approach to building things and enabling growth. You kind of lurch from one activity to another. We will not know whether our much heralded Unity festival, which is getting an increasingly higher status internationally and is putting Cardiff and Wales on the map of arts festivals—it is sometimes forgotten that it is a pioneering festival for inclusive arts festivals—will be funded next year until just before Christmas, even though it is to be held in the following summer, and when you are booking the best in the world, that does not really allow time for sustained planning.

[23] So, project grants are brilliant—they of course help—but they do not replace revenue funding in any shape or form. You do not have the staff available to do the groundwork and to make things happen, and you have no real ability to plan in a strategic, forward-planning way. It is a bit like lurching from one instance of crisis management to another. Does that answer your question?

[24] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Ydy. Gan edrych y tu hwnt i gyngor y celfyddydau, a oes ffynonellau ariannol eraill? A oes digonedd o ffynonellau eraill, neu a yw cwmnïau fel Hijinx bron yn gwbl ddibynnol ar gyngor y celfyddydau ar gyfer eu harian craidd? **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yes. Looking beyond the arts council, are there alternative sources of funding? Are there enough alternative sources, or are companies such as Hijinx almost completely dependent on the arts council for its core funding?

[25] **Ms Hill:** Alternative sources of funding are very hard to find. So, the short answer is 'No, there aren't other alternative sources'. However, at this point in time, one inventive way of looking at other sources of funding—not necessarily by individual organisations, but with the help of the arts council and perhaps being led by the Welsh Government—could be to create a position, perhaps in the arts council, to help find alternative sources of funding for small organisations.

1.45 p.m.

[26] Larger organisations, such as National Theatre Wales and the Welsh National Opera, have funding teams of three or four people, but we have an entire team of three or four people to deliver everything. We have nobody with the specific job of fundraising. It is tagged on to the end of my job, and I might be able to spend an hour a week on it, or something like that. There could be a lot more cross-portfolio working from Government level down. We now offer drama training for adults with learning disabilities, which I mentioned in my paper. Should that be funded? It is funded, to an extent, because fees for participants with learning disabilities are partially covered by social services' daily payments for activities for people with learning difficulties. However, it is not a funding source, because it depends on the number of students we have, and so on. It is not a regular funding source that we can rely on. It has been a tremendous minefield to find each person that wants to sign up and each social worker and work out how they are going to get there. There have probably been 10, 15 or 20 conversations about each of our 11 students. So, it is a tricky question. It would be fantastic to have more help.

[27] In terms of corporate funding, we mentioned that Wales and West Utilities enabled us to undertake a project with Meadowbank school, but, that is getting harder and harder. I went

to an Arts and Business presentation yesterday, at which there was a presentation by the Principality Building Society, which was excellent. It is a well-respected brand in Wales, which does tremendous work in the field of sport in particular, featuring Only Boys Aloud, and so on. However, the amount of work that is needed to put in a proposal and then to service it is unbelievable. It is huge and would take up my entire time. I would not be able to do other things like contract actors and the other 60 million things I need to do. So, help with that would be very welcome.

[28] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Gallwn edrych ar yr awgrym hwnnw yn y sesiynau yma. Petai swydd â chyfrifoldeb am ganfod cyllid y tu hwnt i gyllid y cyngor celfyddydau ar gyfer cwmnïau llai, gallem feddwl am argymhell penodi rhywun â sgiliau arbenigol. Mae problemau pan fydd cwmni bach yn gorfod gwneud y gwaith gweinyddol sy'n gysylltiedig â cheisio cael nawdd, gan fod hynny'n golygu bod rhywun yn gorfod gwneud gwaith sydd y tu hwnt i'w cyfrifoldebau arferol, ac, yn aml, nid y nhw yw'r person gorau i wneud y gwaith. Mae hynny'n un awgrym. Rydym wedi ateb y cwestiynau eraill ynglŷn â sut gallai'r Llywodraeth helpu o ran edrych i adrannau eraill y tu hwnt i'r adran treftadaeth. Rwy'n hapus gyda'r awgrym hwnnw.

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** We can look at that suggestion in these sessions. If there was a job with responsibility for sourcing alternative funding to the arts council funding for smaller companies, we could consider recommending the appointment of someone with specialist skills. There are problems when a small company has to do the administrative work associated with trying to attract funding, which means that someone has to work beyond their normal responsibilities. It is quite often the case that they are not the best person for the job. That is one suggestion. We have answered the other questions about how the Government could help by looking to other departments beyond the heritage department. I am happy with that suggestion.

[29] **Ann Jones:** That is a good suggestion. I wrote the words 'funding officer' when you were talking. We could go that way and see where we get to. That could be a recommendation.

[30] **Joyce Watson:** I want to talk about the Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales. Respondents to the written consultation raised the following issues, which I will outline. Overall, the arts council received praise from respondents for its priorities and its processes. Some thought that too much strategic intervention in the arts would stifle creativity, some agreed with the Government's arm's-length distance from the arts council, and some thought that the Welsh Government should take responsibility for funding decisions made by the Arts Council of Wales. In your evidence, you suggest that the Assembly should hold an annual Plenary debate on arts priorities and that this committee should monitor the progress of the arts council throughout the year. I have a few questions following on from that. Does the Welsh Government consult sufficiently with arts organisations when formulating the annual remit letter to the Arts Council of Wales?

[31] **Ms Hill:** The short answer is 'no', Joyce. We touched on that in the Petitions Committee, in terms of whether there was much consultation with Assembly Members other than the Minister for heritage before the remit letter went out. To widen that debate to include the arts organisations would be fantastic. I do not quite know how that would be enabled, but it would be wonderful. For me, a first step would be to widen it so that more Members were involved, and not just the Minister for heritage—and I am not in any way casting any doubt on the integrity of the current Minister for heritage, or any of the previous ones, especially as I know that we have one present in the room. However, I just think that there should be something—and this is what Bethan alluded to in our Petitions Committee session—structurally built in to the way that the Welsh Government works to allow Members to have more input into the strategic priorities that are set for the Arts Council of Wales to deliver through the year. Then, there should be a little more scrutiny about whether it is delivering on

them or not.

[32] **Mr Clark:** Our petition was quite an interesting exercise. We had never done one before, and during the process of petitioning, which was only for a limited time—probably less than two months, actually—we involved a range of Assembly Members, and not just those based in Cardiff. Without exception, every Assembly Member was totally supportive of our position and undertook to do whatever they could to reverse the decision. However, without having some sort of arrangement, as Val has described, it is very difficult. All that they can do is write to the Minister for heritage, which they did, and they probably got a similar response each time. That is quite frustrating, actually.

[33] The situation that Hijinx was in after the investment review did not apply to any other organisation that was retained, so you could argue that Hijinx was a special case. I suppose that you will say, ‘Well, he’s bound to say that, because he’s chairman of the trustees’, but I think that we were a special case. The situation was that the arts council had a 4% reduction in its grant budget, and the vast majority of retained organisations had an increase in their budgets. That is fine; I have no issues with that at all. A smaller number had a standstill budget, and five organisations had a reduction. Of those five organisations, four were theatres, which left just one performing company, and that was Hijinx, and our reduction was the biggest of all—a 32.5% reduction. That is what really got under the skin of the people who know and love Hijinx, particularly as there did not seem to be any reason for this, as I said earlier. There was no explanation given, and there did not seem to be any mechanism to question the decision, other than by writing to the Minister.

[34] **Joyce Watson:** That leads me on nicely to the next question: is the current strategic framework for the Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales effective? If not, could you briefly state what could improve the relationship between the Government and the arts council?

[35] **Ms Hill:** This is tied up with what I have said about a widening, if you like, of the relationship, so that it is not just a relationship between the Minister and the chair and the chief executive of the arts council. It should be wider. Something else occurred to me while Mike was speaking: when we are talking about transparency and consultation, you asked if we, as arts organisations, felt that we had enough input, but among all of this, who is asking the audiences? I am not sure that it is necessarily in the Welsh Government’s remit, or in that of the arts council, but who is asking the audiences? It brings us back to Rhodri’s question about audiences in rural areas, urban areas, and Valleys areas—who is asking them what they want? Where is the consultation with them? It is very easy to put a line through people’s funding or through the level of somebody’s activity and not ask the audience. It is very easy for people who sit in offices to do that. Sorry.

[36] **Ann Jones:** No, you are right. We are trying to draw from you whether there is anything that should be done to change that relationship so that audiences feel part of it. You have just asked whose responsibility it is. The arts council as a body is at arm’s length from the Government, and that is the idea. So, either you have micromanaging by the Government, or you have an arm’s-length body with strategic functions.

[37] **Mr Clark:** Absolutely. I am not advocating micromanagement at all. I understand completely the arm’s-length principle, I really do. It is just that, when you have a situation that appears to be so far out of kilter with the Minister’s strategic approach, surely there must be some way by which, if not the arts organisation itself, then perhaps elected Assembly Members can say, ‘Hey, what’s the reason for this? What’s going on? I’m not satisfied with this’, other than writing to the Minister and getting the standard reply of ‘It’s at arm’s length; I’m not going to get involved.’

[38] I do not want to sound critical, and I can understand that, in a great many situations, that is the right answer to give, but, in a few cases, it is not. So, I just think that the arts council should be able to demonstrate slightly more than it does at the moment that it is actually following the Government's strategic approach. That is all.

[39] **Joyce Watson:** On that point, do you think that decisions made by the Arts Council of Wales are adequately scrutinised?

[40] **Mr Clark:** In terms of the Hijinx experience, if I am honest, no, I do not, and I suspect that a lot of other theatre companies would probably agree with that statement.

[41] **Ms Hill:** I think it is part of this widening out. Going right back to the first administration, I was surprised that the Minister for culture wrote the letter—I think that I have said this before, and I am sorry if I have—without any reference to the Culture Committee. It seems that there is a group of people who debate culture regularly as part of their remit and as part of their portfolio, and yet it is left to the Minister's discretion as to whether he or she consults with the committee. It is not built in; it is not a structural process that has to be taken forward. I think that it should be. I was very shocked by that; it was one of the things that shocked me.

[42] **Ann Jones:** Have I heard this right? I tend to think that I have heard things I have not. Are you saying that the arts council would not tell you, could not give you sufficient reasons for, or would enter into dialogue about why it has cut your funding? Has it just done it automatically?

[43] **Ms Hill:** It was kind of woolly. If we roll it back to the investment review—and we have moved on a long way since then, as that was in June 2010—the reason it gave for cutting our community touring was twofold. First, it did not think that we were bringing about any transformational change, and we have just rebutted that as a statement, if you like. Secondly, it said that there was less demonstrable quality in the work. Now, we have always been the first to say that if our work is not of sufficient quality, we do not receive public funding as of right. That sent us back to look at the arts council assessments of our shows, particularly our community shows for the past three years, if not further back. The only lack of consistency was that they were sometimes marked as 'excellent' and sometimes as 'good'. There were not any that were marked 'satisfactory'. There was no ability to demonstrate, and so we never got real answers. Yes, we had dialogue; of course we did, Ann—it was sometimes very cross dialogue, as you can imagine, and then more professional and all the rest of it.

[44] I suppose that the bottom line is that the representatives of the arts council with whom we have dialogue are not from the top layer of people who make the decisions. We have always had a fantastically good relationship with our own lead officer, who comes to see all of the work and knows what he is talking about. He comes to workshops occasionally—at least he did before he had a young family—and even participates in inclusive workshops, working alongside people with learning disabilities. However, he is at the lowest level of arts officer, so he is not in the council meetings where the decisions are made.

[45] **Ann Jones:** Okay. I am sorry, Joyce, for cutting across all of your questions.

[46] **Joyce Watson:** I think that Hijinx answered the question fairly and squarely from its point of view. Apart from providing additional funding, what more could the Welsh Government and the arts council do to encourage participation in the arts?

[47] **Ms Hill:** This is one that we have often struggled with. However, I have always felt that it would be very good for the Welsh Government and the arts council—and almost anyone—to be aware of how it is possible to use any arts organisations, but let us stick with



Hijinx as an example, if there are trade delegations coming over or high-profile events. The Bevan Foundation, for example, has just launched its equalities report, and we did a short performance at the launch. It has now asked us to go in twice to attend different launch events. So, people should be alert to opportunities where not just a choir—and I am not denigrating the choirs or harpists or any of the rest—but any of us can come along, even small organisations like us, and give credibility to Wales as a nation that really cares about equality.

[48] **Joyce Watson:** I am going to move on, because—

[49] **Ms Hill:** Time is running out; I am sorry.

[50] **Joyce Watson:** Do you think that the arts council's participation strategy and the Welsh Government's strategic policy plan are enough to mitigate the significant gaps in the provision of participatory arts?

[51] **Ms Hill:** Once again, the short answer would be 'probably not'. They are steps in the right direction, but my experience over the years—and I am now becoming a very old person—is that strategies are only a start, and to really change the hearts and minds of people, you have to engage them—not in words, but in seeing things. You have to engage their emotions and send them out from whatever event they have been to feeling touched: thinking about what they are doing, having a laugh or maybe having a cry, but really caring and engaging and perhaps thinking 'I had not thought about that before'. Sometimes words on the page do not do that. They can give a framework within which people can operate, and that is certainly a very good start, but I do not think that it is enough.

[52] **Ann Jones:** I think that we will have to draw this session to a close. We could go on forever and a day about this, but I think that we have had a flavour of where you are coming from, and your paper was very comprehensive. I thank you both for coming in to give evidence today. You will get a copy of the transcript of what was said to check it for accuracy, just in case we have missed anything or there is something that we have not heard. So, you will get a copy of that to check, and we will let you know what our deliberations come out with.

[53] **Ms Hill:** Okay. May I just say one thing, Ann, before we go? I will not say a lot, because I know that time is short. I did the little calculation of our budget for the coming year and, as it stands at the moment, we are looking at trying to generate 40% of our income from sources other than the arts council. That is quite a challenge for a little organisation. So, we are not just relying on public funding. Thank you all very much for listening to us and engaging with us.

[54] **Ann Jones:** Thank you for your evidence and your paper. We will now move on, but you are welcome to listen in the public gallery. I am sure that there is a cup of tea for you somewhere.

[55] I invite the next set of witnesses to sit at the table. I welcome Chris Ryde, the organiser for Wales and the south west; and Stephan Stockton, who is joining him today. Chris is the chair of the Wales Association for the Performing Arts. I thank you both for coming today. You have had a flavour of where we are going from our session with the previous witnesses. Do you have a brief opening statement to make? We are very constrained by time.

[56] **Mr Ryde:** No, please carry on with the questions.

[57] **Ann Jones:** I have a similar opening question to the one I asked our previous witnesses. What will be the long-term effect of budget reductions and reallocations on the arts

sector in Wales?

[58] **Mr Ryde:** It will have a long-term effect on participation. If people get out of the habit of participating in arts activities, it will be very difficult to get them back. Stephan is the manager of Earthfall Dance, and he can give you some examples of the way in which the company has turned participation into audience development quite effectively. If the participatory element falls away, it is difficult to get participants back. One of the aims and objectives of the professional organisations is to make sure that that participation turns into people going to see work in theatres, village halls, arts centres or whatever it may be, but it is getting more difficult to do that if you are trying to do it from scratch with someone who has not been previously involved in some shape or form.

[59] **Mr Stockton:** I am Stephan Stockton, and I am on the executive board of the Wales Association for the Performing Arts, but I am also the general manager of Earthfall Dance. This year, we will deliver to over 6,000 participants across the UK. In Wales, we deliver to about 2,200 participants. It is about budget cuts not just in the arts, but in education, because we do a lot of work through schools and we are finding that more and more schools are saying, 'As much as we want you back, we just don't have the money'. For us, schools and venues are the gatekeepers to participation, and if they are running out of money or they are suffering huge budget cuts, that severely impacts upon the way in which we can access those groups.

[60] **Ann Jones:** Okay, thanks. We will move on to questions on funding from Rhodri Glyn.

[61] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Heblaw am ddarparu cyllid ychwanegol, beth allai Llywodraeth Cymru a Chyngor Celfyddydau Cymru ei wneud i gefnogi sector y celfyddydau gwirfoddol? Rwy'n credu ichi glywed Val Hill o Gwmni Theatr Hijinx yn awgrymu mai un o'r pethau y gellid ei wneud fyddai penodi swyddog yng nghyngor y celfyddydau â rôl arbenigol i geisio helpu rhai o'r cwmnïau llai i ganfod arian o'r tu hwnt i gyngor y celfyddydau. Beth yw eich barn am y syniad hwnnw?

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Apart from providing extra funding, what could the Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales do to support the voluntary arts sector? I believe that you heard Val Hill of Hijinx Theatre Company suggest that one of the things that could be done is appoint an officer within the arts council that would have the specialist role of trying to assist smaller companies find funding beyond that of the arts council. What are your views on that?

[62] **Mr Ryde:** As far as I understand, the arts council appointed someone to do that not that long ago. I remember a reorganisation of senior management within the arts council in about 2005 or 2006, at which time a post was created to provide assistance on sourcing money from Europe and any other trusts and foundations, or anywhere like that, in order to increase the amount of income available to not just small organisations, but to small, medium-sized and large organisations. I do not know whether that proved to be an unsuccessful development, or whether the cuts in the establishment of the arts council has meant that it has had to compromise on that.

[63] I would not be against that idea being reconsidered, but there are other initiatives. You mentioned voluntary arts, Rhodri; we do not have a brief for the voluntary arts because we are professional, but we do work alongside them. We have come together recently to think, for example, about collectively applying for a fundraising officer or for fundraising posts in Wales, because the individual companies cannot afford to take on someone who can fundraise for them and pay a salary to that person. One way in which that might be done, with the companies putting in a little each, is to find a trust or foundation that is sympathetic to that idea to provide core money so that someone can work for a number of companies. I am

talking about a fairly basic level. You might be working with people with learning disabilities; I was privileged for eight years to be on the board of Theatre Fun, a company in Wales that deals with adults with learning disabilities. You need to know from the outset which of the trusts and foundations to approach to access money that is appropriate to that type of company. You can spend an awful lot of time wading through books trying to find them, only to discover, when it is too late, that your application is going to an organisation that does not have that on its current priority list.

[64] Professional fundraisers will cut through all that very quickly, and we have sort of decided that that is one way that we would like to develop this. We will try to do that, if we can, outside the Arts Council of Wales, so that we can—I do not want to sound overdramatic about this—keep control of what is done and how it is done within the companies. Collaborative organisational work carried out through the umbrella groups can help in that way. However, you cannot get away from the fact that some of the umbrella groups that had that expertise have found themselves in difficulty. Audiences Wales was one organisation that had an overview of audience development and was going on to do a number of things in most local authority areas in south and mid Wales. It was one of the companies that was cut by the arts council a year and half ago. It still exists—it has still managed to maintain its local authority base, and it is doing that on a project-by-project basis—but it cannot now give the sort of help that it used to provide on a strategic level to a lot of the companies, mainly the smaller ones. So, there is that sort of targeted help.

[65] Also, in the submission that we made a year or so ago, we raised the question of specific business help from the Assembly to this sector. I know that the Assembly provides general business help to small businesses, but we have found that, in relation to a lot of the stuff that was available in the arts sector, the people involved with it do not know enough about the arts sector to provide that information very effectively. I would reiterate that we would like that sort of thing to be considered.

[66] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Beth yw eich barn am arian sydd wedi'i dargedu'n arbennig ar gyfer cynyrchiadau? Yn gynharach, clywsom fod yr arfer hwnnw efallai'n creu sefyllfa lle nad oes dilyniant o fewn cwmni o ran datblygu syniadau, a bod yn rhaid i gwmni fynd o un cynhyrchiad i'r llall er mwyn sicrhau bod digon o arian yn dod i mewn. A oes gennych farn ar hynny? **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** What is your opinion on targeted funding for productions? Earlier, we heard that that might create situations where there is no continuity within a company, in terms of developing ideas, and that a company has to go from one production to the next to ensure that enough money is coming in. Do you have a view on that?

[67] **Mr Ryde:** Yes. What you described as targeted funding is project funding, is it not? Val gave a very good description of the effects of project funding. There is other targeted funding as well. I was looking at the arts council's young people policy. It is suggesting, for example, that it wants to develop ways of ensuring free and discounted access to cultural activities for low-income families. Therefore, it could well be that there is targeted funding for certain organisations that enable them to do that. That would be no bad idea. Let us consider a company that has a certain income-generating target but wants to make work available to low-income families, which would presumably be one arm of any policy on the child poverty agenda, for example. I do not think that that company should be penalised because it cannot achieve some of its income targets as a result of that effort. Therefore, targeted funding might provide a bridge to enable it to do that, so that the work is seen more widely, and that would be an effective way to do that sort of thing. Stephan might have some thoughts on this.

[68] **Mr Stockton:** We received what could be called targeted project funding in order to run our participation and outreach projects in England and Wales. We have seen this from

both sides. We have had cases where a venue or a school has been given funding, and others where we have been given funding. We have found that, from our perspective, it is easier to deliver for all parties if we receive the funding, because we can take care of all of the organisation and other stuff that goes on behind a project. In schools, in particular, teachers are so hard-pressed that they find it easier if we can help to organise all of that.

[69] **Joyce Watson:** Good afternoon. I am going to ask some questions about the Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales. Do you feel that the Welsh Government consults sufficiently with arts organisations in formulating its annual remit letter to the Arts Council of Wales?

2.15 p.m.

[70] **Mr Ryde:** To the best of my knowledge, it does not consult with them at all before formulating the remit letter. So, the answer to that is 'no'. We, as an organisation, have pressed, since its inception, for the professional arts to be represented on the arts strategy panel, which was set up in 2005, or whenever, as an organisation for local government, the Welsh Government, the arts council and one or two other interested parties to come together in order to have a strategic overview of arts development in Wales. However, we have not been successful. We do not have a seat at that table, so we cannot have an input. I do not suppose for a moment that that body necessarily draws up the remit letter, as such, but I think that some long-term planning of strategic objectives for the arts in Wales must be developed around that table, and it would be important for the professional arts to be involved.

[71] **Joyce Watson:** Okay. Do you think that the current strategic framework between the Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales is effective? If not, what changes would you like to see?

[72] **Mr Ryde:** We said in our paper that we would like to see more input from various organisations, including Assembly Members, prior to the remit letter being issued, so that it is reflective of concerns about the arts. We would like some sort of mechanism whereby the arts council is occasionally held to account for decisions that are made.

[73] It is nonsense that the Welsh Government should sign up to a commitment, for example, that every child in Wales should have a quality theatre experience at every key stage and that the arts council then cuts the very companies that provide that service, and that have done so for many years. That, to me, is the opposite of joined-up thinking. It was disappointing that there was no discussion on a wider basis when that decision was made, because it has fundamentally affected the ability of children to have the sort of educational theatre drama experience that they were used to. The education sector in Wales has suffered as a result. That is a classic example of where the thinking does not fit.

[74] **Joyce Watson:** How would you change it?

[75] **Mr Ryde:** By having scrutiny of the arts council from time to time, making it democratically accountable to a committee of this sort, and making sure that it can defend its decisions. In that way, organisations like ours, when there are any areas of concern, could air those concerns and the arts council could be asked to explain its decisions.

[76] **Joyce Watson:** That seems to answer my next question.

[77] **Ann Jones:** I was interested in what Mr Stockton was saying earlier about preferring to have the funding and then go into various organisations, such as schools. On the comment about expecting every child to have some arts experience, it is not necessarily about experiencing the performing arts, is it? Are you saying that part of the education budget

should be handed over to the arts? Even in the health service, arts are a therapeutic tool. Is that the approach that you want to see?

[78] **Mr Stockton:** Absolutely. That would enable us to set up a longer-term relationship with an education establishment, a youth group or a community group, because we would be able to plan a three-year programme. The only way that we are able to do that at the moment is by fundraising through external foundations and trusts. Interestingly, all the foundations and trusts that we get educational funding from are based in England.

[79] We run our participation programme in such a way that we are able to link it directly to attendance, which means that young people will experience the participatory element of the work in their own school or youth club. So, it is in a safe environment, in which they are used to working, but they see the performance in the same place as everyone else. With some schools, in particular, we have been able to build a three to five year programme of young people participating and experiencing as attenders. We are only able to do that if we get the funding directly, because we are then able to maintain those relationships.

[80] **Ann Jones:** You are saying that we should be putting more into an arts budget, and taking an overall approach. You would take out the health money that was put into therapeutic arts and put that into other arts areas. That would have to be scrutinised fully, would it not?

[81] **Mr Stockton:** Yes, absolutely.

[82] **Ann Jones:** You would not want that to happen in the current delivery format, would you?

[83] **Mr Stockton:** No; in some ways it is working and in other ways it is not. All of our education and participation work is scrutinised anyway; we agree targets with the funder and we have to deliver to those targets.

[84] **Ann Jones:** That is interesting. In a question to the previous witnesses, Joyce touched on the arts council's participation strategy and the Government's strategic equality plan. Do they run side by side and are they aware of each other? Do the arts council participation strategy and the Welsh Government's strategic equality plan run together? Do we ensure that everyone gets a chance to participate in the arts?

[85] **Mr Stockton:** The wish is certainly there, as well as the strategies. However, as Val said, it looks great on paper but it is about actually delivering it. You must see whether it works. So, after a year or so of delivery, it would be worth reviewing delivery against strategy.

[86] **Ann Jones:** Who would review that delivery? Would it be the Government or the arts council?

[87] **Mr Stockton:** At the moment, I would have thought that it would be the arts council.

[88] **Ann Jones:** Do Members have any other questions? I see not. Is there anything that you think that we should consider in our short inquiry?

[89] **Mr Stockton:** I would like to make a point about fundraising from external sources, which is interesting. Val also raised this from the point of view of being a small company, and we are a company of a similar size and scale. The National Arts Fundraising School estimates that only one in 10 targeted applications for funding is successful. I am not talking about sending out a blind letter; you will have done your research and know who you are applying

to, but only one in 10 will be successful. That is what the National Arts Fundraising School says, based on research from arts fundraising professionals. I, like Val, have to balance about eight or nine hats, and we probably spend about the same amount of time fundraising. Indeed, for our participation and outreach work in particular, we spend as much time doing that as we do delivering it. In Wales, we now have to be on an approved tender list in some authorities in order to deliver work in schools. We have had to do that once already, and we now have to repeat the process with another authority. We could have to repeat that with up to 22 authorities. A bit of joined-up thinking is needed there—if one large local authority has accepted us as a provider, why cannot the other 21 do the same? That kind of thing would save us a massive amount of time.

[90] **Ann Jones:** Do you have anything to add, Mr Ryde?

[91] **Mr Ryde:** No; thank you.

[92] **Ann Jones:** I would like to thank you for coming this afternoon to give us your evidence, which has been helpful. You will receive a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy, and you will also receive a copy of the committee's short inquiry report. Thank you.

[93] We will now break for a couple of minutes so that Members can get a cup of coffee.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 2.24 p.m. a 2.27 p.m.  
The meeting adjourned between 2.24 p.m. and 2.27 p.m.*

[94] **Ann Jones:** I welcome the witnesses for the next session: Robin Simpson, chief executive of Voluntary Arts; Maggie Hampton, chief executive of Disability Arts Cymru; and Leanne Rahman, senior arts development officer of the Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales. Do any of you wish to make brief opening statements, or are you happy to go to questions?

[95] **Mr Simpson:** We are happy to go straight to questions.

[96] **Ann Jones:** What more could the Welsh Government, the Arts Council of Wales, and other bodies do to address gaps in the arts provision?

[97] **Ms Hampton:** It would be invaluable to have a greater recognition of what the arts can do to strengthen communities and create a better quality of life for everybody. My particular interest is in opportunities for disabled people to have a level playing field, but we all know the effect that the arts have on people's lives and the benefits they can bring. That needs to have greater recognition throughout. It relates to all services that people are in receipt of; it is not just about arts funding. It would be good to see a real recognition of what the arts can do and to have more joined-up thinking on it, so that more people have opportunities to participate.

[98] As to the gaps, with the current economic situation, there are difficulties with people's benefits. People could have issues with transport and cannot get the care and support they need to get out. People may be experiencing unemployment or difficulties getting childcare. All those things make a huge difference to people's ability to participate. A bit of a change of culture is needed and recognition that the arts are for everyone, and are not just a luxury, but essential to our wellbeing and our mental and physical health and to how we participate in our communities.

2.30 p.m.

[99] **Ms Rahman:** I would like to add to what Maggie has just said. Sometimes, the things that happen in our society are seen as tokenistic, especially when we are talking about black and ethnic minority people. I predominantly work with black and ethnic minority artists. Again, a lot of the work that we do looks at people's culture, and how they can celebrate it and feel that it is respected in Wales. That recognition of their culture would feel good to the people of Wales who are from black and ethnic minority communities and for them to feel safe and comfortable in celebrating their culture in Wales, with a space for that to happen. Likewise with funding organisations and other services in Wales—if they could embrace that cultural difference, our members would like to see that.

[100] **Mr Simpson:** It is interesting that both my colleagues started with the word 'recognition'. They both talked about funding as well, but there is something about recognising what is going on and valuing that which we do not do enough of. We represent the amateur arts—those hundreds of thousands of people doing things in their own communities under their own steam, largely without public funding. Before we can address the gaps in provision, we must have a better grasp of what those gaps are. We would say that there is a need for better mapping of existing activity, but we would also echo that word 'recognition' in that we need better understanding of arts participation and the types of creative activity taking place in communities around Wales, which do not always show up on standard surveys of the standard art forms. So, often, people are doing creative things in their communities that are not counted or seen, because they are not part of the arts funding sector.

[101] **Ann Jones:** Is it an umbrella body's job to state what is already out there through its networking and umbrella body status? If not, whose job is it to ensure that people are not affected disproportionately by budget cuts?

[102] **Mr Simpson:** There is a collective task there. I do not think that things have happened in that way before. I am not sure whether it is a job that a single organisation or network can take on alone. The umbrella bodies and network organisations, such as those represented here today, have a key role to play in that, but what is needed is—several people have used the phrase 'joined-up' already—a much more joined-up approach to the ecology of the arts, from the amateur and community ends to the subsidised and commercial ends of the spectrum, looking at it as a whole. The arts council has a clear lead role to play in this, but it needs help, because it works directly only with a small proportion of the arts sector, and there are big chunks with which it does not have a direct connection. So, yes, umbrella and network organisations are essential in helping to do that.

[103] **Ms Hampton:** I agree with what has just been said. The arts are widely spread and a lot goes on beyond the organisations funded by the arts council. Our organisation, Disability Arts Cymru, works in the wider voluntary sector with disability organisations and other charities, and with people, artists and small groups who are not revenue funded, or perhaps not project funded, and who work on a small scale. Such a lot is happening. I want something to happen so that all those people are supported and that there is recognition of what is happening. Support is needed for people working on a small scale, sometimes completely voluntarily, in their communities, where they may be quite isolated. It is also about making sure that individual artists get the support they need and access to information, and so on. It is a big job, but it is really worth doing it and doing it properly by thinking of a much wider picture beyond those organisations funded by the arts council. That is important too, and, of course, it is very important to us. The enhanced funding that we have had from the arts council as a result of the investment review has enabled us to spread our work much more widely across Wales. We are already seeing the benefits of that. It is about that kind of bigger thinking.

[104] **Ann Jones:** Rhodri Glyn, do you want to take the voluntary arts sector question and then the funding question?

[105] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yes. I would like to ask Robin what the long-term impact of the reduction in the funding of Voluntary Arts Wales will be.

[106] **Mr Simpson:** It is a complicated answer, but I will be as brief as I can. Listening to some of your previous witnesses today, I feel the need to contradict some of the evidence given, in that my feeling is that arts participation will probably survive quite well despite funding cuts. I hope that that is not too controversial a thing to say. To some extent, people have always participated in the arts. It is very hard to stop someone singing if they want to sing. There will be choirs, bands, folk dance groups and amateur theatre groups in five or 10 years' time whatever happens with public funding. Most of these groups do not rely on public funding and will still be here; they are very resilient. That sector will survive and the scale of it is so large that the overall statistics will not vary very much. It is interesting to look at the omnibus survey statistics covering the past 10 years, which, although they are varied, are very similar when you compare the 2000 figures with the 2010 figures. There has not been a massive change because the scale is so big. However, with reductions in funding, the people who traditionally do not take part as much as others will find it more difficult. These are people from certain sectors of society who find it more difficult to participate in the arts for socio-economic reasons, or because they are presented with barriers, such as coming from black and minority ethnic communities, or because they are disabled. So, the overall statistics will hold up, but the people who need more support and help to get involved with arts participation will suffer.

[107] With regard to my organisation, which you asked about, we lost our core funding from the arts council in the investment review. We must be realistic and say that the sector we support will probably survive quite nicely despite that. There will be quite a subtle change in the sort of support we were able to provide previously, particularly in relation to issues of inclusivity and diversity and helping groups to become more open and welcoming. This will have a slow and gradual long-term impact on the diversity within the sector, which is quite worrying. It is a tricky argument because, in the short term, there are not things that we can immediately hold up and say, 'Look at this terrible thing that has happened because we are not funded anymore', but, in the long term, there will be some inherent damage, I suspect. The reason that the voluntary arts sector bred this network of umbrella bodies in particular art forms, and then had Voluntary Arts Wales as its single voice, was because it needed that voice to represent it to policy makers and funders and to support the sector in terms of the things it needs help with, specifically in the context of inclusivity as well as issues to do with compliance and regulation and how local groups cope with those demands.

[108] Sorry, that was a slightly longer answer than I had anticipated. We are proud of the fact that our sector is resilient and will survive, and there is little anyone can do to damage that, but there are more subtle changes to do with more disadvantaged groups in particular and people from certain sectors of society, which are quite worrying and which we need to address.

[109] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Thank you; that is a useful answer and puts it within the general context. I do not know whether Maggie or Leanne has concerns about the effect on the areas in the sectors they represent.

[110] **Ms Rahman:** Thank you, Robin, for mentioning the sectors that we both work in. This is not a concern that has come through our network, because the arts development project came about exactly for that reason—the need was presented. The arts council came to us with that need and people that we worked with who reside in Communities First areas across Wales came to us because there was that need, and they saw the Black Voluntary Sector Network as an umbrella body that they could approach, where they felt welcomed, and which could be the best advocate for them in their careers and in their roles. So, over the last



five years, that is the work that we have been doing, and we have been doing it in partnership with the voluntary arts sector across Wales, and with organisations that are revenue-funded by the Arts Council of Wales.

[111] It has been a huge challenge. The will has always been there, and the expertise, but you can only do so much with will. It will take a certain amount of funding to be able to do things. Maggie has mentioned that support from the arts council has already yielded results, and we would really like to see something like that in the future, but our sector is a minority within a minority—it is such a small sector, and there are not many other organisations that do what we do across Wales. We find that our resources are very stretched. I know a lot of artists based in north Wales, Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire who struggle because they feel that there is no-one there to support them. It is difficult. They feel that all the resources and support are here in Cardiff, and without organisations to give them the level of service that they need, they feel isolated and rejected. It is a difficult issue. It is something that we keep working towards.

[112] **Ms Hampton:** There are concerns that, when money is tight, or perceived to be tight, arts organisations and events organisers will make cuts to accessibility. Perhaps they will go for a cheaper venue where the access is not so good for disabled people, or worry less about whether there is enough parking, or access to the stage, or whether they can get sign language interpreters, or whatever the access issue is. That is quite a concern. There is also the concern that perhaps arts organisations will take fewer risks with their programming. We have talked about changing culture, and I think that we have all said that there is a need for greater recognition of diversity, and enabling that to happen. However, if there is this fear that things are tight and that fewer risks should be taken, that will have an impact on our artists. If disabled artists or artists from black and ethnic minority communities come up with something new that might seem a bit risky, we have heard that they have been turned away because ‘This is not what our public want—we don’t have an audience for this’.

[113] So, taking fewer risks also has an impact on our artists, and if people get too many knock-backs, they will lose confidence, and that is quite a big backward step for people. When artists have lost confidence like that it is quite hard to know how to support them and how to give people hope. There are organisations doing specific work that have equalities at heart, and know what they are doing, and some are doing splendid work, but it needs to be bigger than that; there needs to be a concerted effort to make this happen. It has to be recognised in the level of funding. We all have to put an emphasis on the necessity for good accessibility. That relates to any group—socioeconomic or ethnic. We all have to have access, whatever that means—whether that is thinking about the nuts and bolts of how we get there, or get into a venue, or what we are actually producing on the stage or in the gallery. We need to unpick it a bit when we are thinking about what this means to the wider community, but it is a concern that we will fall down on those issues.

[114] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Thank you; that is very useful. It shows where the pressure is going to be in terms of the reduction in funding. As you say, there would be certain sectors that would be able to withstand that and be robust enough to do it, but there will be other sectors that really need that support. Other than financial support, is there anything that the arts council or the Welsh Government could do?

2.45 p.m.

[115] **Mr Simpson:** We have already used the term ‘joined up’, but I think that there is potential for a much more holistic approach to the whole area of participation in the arts. It feels as though there is a general pattern, not just in Wales, that very good work that is done in professional, participatory and community arts has for a long time been separate to and disconnected from the local, self-organised, self-sustaining amateur groups that we represent.

There are all sorts of reasons for that, which we could go into, and there is fault on both sides, so this is not a matter of casting aspersions on anybody in particular.

[116] It is a shame that where we are missing the potential of investment in community arts activity is in not making a link between the great work done to get people who have not otherwise done so to participate and to interest people in the arts for the first time and a long-term sustainable place for them to engage in that arts participation once that investment has moved on somewhere else. So, better continuity between the professional participatory arts world and the self-organised amateur groups is not just about money; it is about getting people to work together and getting us to see ourselves as part of that continuum. The sheer scale of the amateur sector—we think that there are about 4,000 amateur arts groups in Wales, most of which get no public funding and are perfectly sustainable and self-reliant—provides massive potential, if we can make more use of those groups as places where people can do their participation and as models for people to then develop their own similar groups. The learning and experience of people who have run a choir for 20 years could be really useful in helping a group of young people to set up their own group in that self-sustaining model.

[117] So, I think that a trick is being missed there, and it is not just about money. It is very easy for us to come here to say, ‘If you give us money, it will all be perfect’. We would all like some money—that would be great—but if you really want to attack the issue of participation in the arts and make a significant difference in the overall statistic as well as in the statistics for particular priority groups, such as BME, disabled people and people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, there will have to be more of a collective effort. That has never happened before, and we somehow need to bring together those different parts in a sector where that has not happened before. That could be really exciting, and it is a challenge that we need to rise to. As I say, there is fault on every side. Everybody needs to come some way towards the centre where we can work together, but that would be the thing that would make a real difference.

[118] Even if there was substantial money to throw at certain things, there is a danger in throwing money at more of the same, because although it would do great things while it lasted, it would probably not make a lasting difference in the way that we would really like to see.

[119] **Joyce Watson:** I am going to talk about relationships, now—the one between the Welsh Government and the arts council, and the framework. Is the current strategic framework between the Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales an effective one? Some have said different things. If it is not, what would be the recommended improvement?

[120] **Ms Rahman:** That is quite an interesting one, really, because that relationship has only become apparent to me over the last 12 months, so I am still trying to get my head around how it works, to get the explanation of the arm’s-length policy. Hopefully, I can have some more light shed on it.

[121] The message coming from the members in our arts network is that they seem to be a bit baffled by the relationship, what it means and what powers the Assembly has to challenge certain decisions or to address some of the issues that some of the artists may bring to the table. I suppose that it is about clarifying that, and being able to filter it down to the grass roots, so that I can explain it to the artists and to the community groups that I work with. Then, if they expect a certain role of me, I can act on that a little better. So, it is an interesting area, especially if I do not understand much about that relationship myself, to be able to go back to the artists and the community groups that I work with in the different Communities First areas across Wales, and be able to explain what that means to them and how it translates to them. Robin knows a bit more about it than I do.

[122] **Mr Simpson:** We believe strongly in the arm's-length principle. We think that it is important and right that the arts council is given the freedom to make the decisions, particularly the artistic decisions, about what is funded and what is not. Despite the fact that we lost our funding, we would defend that principle to the hilt, because we think that it is right. In relation to our funding, we think that the arts council was perfectly within its rights to withdraw our funding. Clearly, we are not happy about it and we would like to be funded, but we are still getting some funding from the arts council; we are just not getting regular core funding now. So, I suppose, to answer your question, I do not think that there is a huge amount wrong with that relationship at the moment. There is a danger of it becoming a red herring if what we are talking about is arts participation, because the majority of arts participation is not funded by the arts council.

[123] It is not something that is under the control of the arts council and, frankly, if there was no arts council, there would still be loads of arts participation. That is not a reason to get rid of the arts council, but the two things are not interdependent. Some 650,000 people take part in the arts through amateur arts groups in Wales every week with no funding from the arts council. They will still do it, regardless of the relationship between the arts council and the Government. So, while I do not want to belittle your question, as it is an important issue, in the context of arts participation, I worry that it is a slight side-tracking. Many of us who work in the arts get terribly obsessed with talking about the Arts Council of Wales all the time, rather than talking about the issues and about how we get people involved in the arts, which is a slightly different thing.

[124] **Ms Hampton:** I agree, really, with the arm's-length principle and the arts council being able to make its own decisions about what happens with the organisations that it funds. That is right. I do not know what to say really, because it feels okay. I do not know whether this is correct or not, it is just a feeling that I have, but it would be good if those of us who are not involved in that strategic relationship could see what value the Welsh Government places on the arts and see the recognition, perhaps. I do not know how that would work. It may mean easier channels of communication between arts organisations and members of the Welsh Government. I am not sure. It may just be that I have not done my homework on this and I need to do more. Perhaps it is a little distant. I am sorry if I am being confusing here, it is just a feeling that I have. It feels fine. However, for us, it is about recognising all that the arts do and seeing how that feeds into other decisions that are made by the Welsh Government, not just about funding for the arts council, but for those other pots of funding that the Welsh Government distributes—just seeing the recognition of the arts and culture within that.

[125] **Joyce Watson:** I believe that I have only five minutes left, so I am going to ask one question on the idea of scrutiny. Do you all think that the decisions made by the Arts Council of Wales are adequately scrutinised, or do you not have a view on that?

[126] **Mr Simpson:** I think that they are adequately scrutinised. We need to separate that from the fact that we might disagree with the decisions. I do not feel that the problem is in the degree of scrutiny. We may have some strategic differences of opinion with the arts council about what it has set as its priorities or what it has chosen to fund. There is a danger, therefore, of leaping to the conclusion that there is a need for greater to scrutiny as the answer to that. I do not perceive there to be a problem with scrutiny.

[127] **Joyce Watson:** Moving on, because of what you have said, and because we have only four minutes left to do it, do you think that the arts council's participation strategy and the Welsh Government's strategic equality plan are enough to mitigate against sufficient gaps in the provision of participatory arts? You have talked a lot about that, so I will choose that as the last question.

[128] **Ms Rahman:** I am probably someone who has a bit of a bee in their bonnet about

policies and paperwork, because they do not mean anything for the people I work with. It is very important to have these policies in place, and it will be quite interesting to see what happens post April when all organisations must abide by the new equalities plans. It is something that the Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales delivers to organisations in terms of equalities and diversity training, so it is something that we are very keen to see being mainstreamed across organisations, and it is something that we have been working on for the past 13 years. So, we value it and it is very important, but it is almost a worry that once the policy is in place—we have had policies for an awfully long time—that there are still gaps in the levels of participation and in the level of employment for people from black and ethnic minorities across the board. My concern is that people will put these policies in place and feel that they have done everything they need to, and leave the policies on the shelf, which is what we have seen for many years. They will roll out a tokenistic project once in a while that will tick all the boxes but not really make a difference.

[129] We have researched statistics on university leavers and graduates from black and ethnic minorities, looking at where they are six months, 12 months and 18 months down the line in terms of employment across the sector. We are not finding a huge amount of positivity in terms of those statistics, and we want to know why that is. We want to know why we are not seeing more diverse people working in the arts across Wales, and why many of the revenue-funded clients of the arts council do not employ more people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds. We are a very proud nation that has been culturally diverse for hundreds of years. That diversity has helped to shape this country, so why are we not seeing a reflection of that in our work? This is an area that I am quite passionate about, and I am wondering if a new policy will answer all of those questions and produce all of that work.

[130] That is the first step. The next step will be about putting those policies into practice. The only way in which I can see that happening is by having the right people with the knowledge, passion and rapport with the community and artists, and who will act as the gatekeepers to open up opportunities to make Wales a more culturally diverse and artistic country. So, it is about more than just policy.

[131] **Mr Simpson:** I will be very brief. I would echo much of what Leanne has just said. Both of the things that you refer to are good and we welcome them, but, by themselves, they will not make the difference we are looking for. If we are talking about arts participation, as I said before, we need a much more radical approach in order to do something different and new. These requirements are good, are definitely worth having and will do some good, but they will not address that big issue about gaps in arts participation. We need to work much more holistically together and involve the full spectrum of the arts in that project if we really are to make a difference.

[132] **Ms Hampton:** I do not have a lot to add to that, because you have both said it. A good plan of action with lots of practical, well thought-out things actually happening is what is needed. It will be a long-term thing; it is not going to happen overnight. We need that good, solid plan of action to go with the policies, and to look, as Leanne said, at employment and who we are involving. It is going to make a huge difference. We want to see involvement at the top level, where there are gaps among some of the decision makers and the movers and shakers. We want to see representation throughout, but it will take time.

3.00 p.m.

[133] **Ann Jones:** Thank you; that is not bad timing. Thank you for your evidence this afternoon and for coming along. You will get a copy of the transcript of the session to check for accuracy.

[134] That is the end of our meeting this afternoon. I remind Members that we meet next on

29 March, when we will take evidence from the Arts Council of Wales and the Welsh Local Government Association.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 3.00 p.m.*  
*The meeting ended at 3.00 p.m.*