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26 June 2019

Arts Council of Wales
Submitted via – yourvoice@arts.wales

Re. Consultation response on the outcome of the Arts Council of Wales' consultation on future arrangements for National Lottery funding for the arts

1. General comments

- 1.1. Community Leisure UK on behalf of our members, very much welcomes the transparency and public engagement in Arts Council of Wales' process for developing their new strategy.
- 1.2. Community Leisure UK welcomes the opportunity to give a final response on how Arts Council of Wales intends to implement earlier feedback from consultation sessions.
- 1.3. Community Leisure UK recognises the importance of Arts Council of Wales' new corporate plan "For the benefit of all." and their recognition that "it can be all too easy to lose sight of the audience or participant". Our members are anchored in their local communities and are all governed by an independent board of trustees, made up of local people. Their services, programmes and projects are all designed and delivered to reflect and support local needs.
- 1.4. By way of brief introduction, Community Leisure UK is the trade association that represents trusts - the largest collective of public leisure and culture services in the UK. Trusts are key anchor institutions in their place, contributing significantly, as public service providers should, to the local strategic, economic and community needs. All members are wholly independent and are either registered charities or societies; importantly all reinvest their surpluses into their community services and facilities.
- 1.5. Our nine members in Wales collectively deliver public leisure provision to c. 43% of the Welsh population.
- 1.6. Our Welsh members are: Celtic Leisure, Halo Leisure, GLL (Cardiff), Newport Live, Torfaen Leisure Trust, Aneurin Leisure, Freedom Leisure (Wrexham and Powys), Splash Community Trust, and Aura Wales.

Specific comments

We have provided perspectives and responses to the topics that are most relevant and we are best placed to comment on.

2. Topic 1: For the benefit of all

- 2.1. We recognise and support the inclusion of diverse communities in any Arts Council of Wales' strategy, particularly the understanding that to encourage wider engagement and equality of engagement, we need to truly understand and be mindful of the unique characters of each community.
- 2.2. We raise a concern on how this is translated into concrete action points, in particular:
 - 2.2.1. "It's about reaching out to those who don't yet see themselves as traditional arts audiences" – we query whether 'new' or 'not yet reached' audiences need to start seeing themselves as *traditional* arts audiences? In our view this contradicts the earlier point that recognises the diversity of society. Arts may not mean the same to every community and therefore it's about supporting the diversity of activities, with arts as a means, to engage diverse communities in a way that they feel included, valued, and respected.

- 2.2.2. As a direct response, Arts Council of Wales intends to "Direct more funding to activities that engage people from under-represented communities". We need to understand and potentially define what we mean by under-represented communities. E.g. are they predetermined groups e.g. 'protected characteristics', or locally defined based on need e.g. rurally isolated areas.
- 2.2.3. We propose that it is important to include additional funding to be directed to activities that engages people in a way that recognises their unique *artistic and cultural* community characteristics.
- 2.3. We welcome and look forward to seeing the development of "a new community-focused change programme" – we would welcome sharing case studies from our members work to support the development of this programme.

3. Topic 4: In for the long haul

- 3.1. We recognise the value of and support the initiative to have structured multi-year investment programmes while also keeping funding available to "respond to specific circumstances and opportunities".
 - 3.1.1. Support and the increased recognition of the need to support emerging artists and companies is important. However, we feel that "funding that offers development support for emerging artists and companies" is too restrictive in that it is centred on supporting only *emerging* artists/companies. We believe that established organisations (and artists) who have strong links to their communities should have access to this as well.
For example, an existing organisation (or artist) may seek funding support for something new, scope something different, to scale, or adapt it, or research into developments in technology or operational efficiencies. Funding to support this could be equally important and valuable.

4. Topic 5: All about the artist

- 4.1. We recognise the importance of strengthening the arts ecology and support Arts Council of Wales' commitment to create a business development support service for artists. We also recognise the importance of creating "more networking opportunities for artists to meet and exchange knowledge and experience"
 - 4.1.1. A strategic objective of Community Leisure UK is to enable effective inter-trust and peer networking and knowledge sharing. Special Interest Groups are strong conduits for support and sharing, and we would welcome extending this group in Wales on cultural services to Arts Council of Wales and partner engagement.
 - 4.1.2. Locally, members have set up capacity and development support for local businesses, in the voluntary and community sectors which includes artists, and offer co-working and collaboration spaces.
- 4.2. We undoubtedly recognise and support fair remuneration for artists and their work.
 - 4.2.1. As deliverers of public services across the UK, our members exist to support their communities, which includes providing quality jobs, training, apprenticeships, project working and contracting, with ethical employment practices. However, we also see a potential risk in Arts Council of Wales' commitment to "Agree industry standard fee guidelines and make them a condition of funding". This may inadvertently increase the pressures on organisations that are being challenged to manage the legislative increases in National Living Wage, National Minimum Wage, and pension auto enrolment. Our members, all charitable organisations who reinvest their profits back into their organisation, *want* to pay and meet these wage expectations. However, these squeezes sit alongside rising costs in energy and utilities, maintenance and efficiencies etc, and reduced core funding (or no core funding). We would be nervous about establishing a 'minimum fee' type situation. We would ask that if Arts Council of Wales continue with this proposal, that organisations have the opportunity to engage further on this in greater detail.

5. Topic 6: Career development/leadership

- 5.1. We value the support given to career and leadership development within the arts sector. We recognise the importance of this development across the arts ecology, including at all stages of people's career and in all functions that the arts ecology requires, i.e. Arts Council of Wales' recognition of, among others, "curators, producers, marketers and fundraisers".
- 5.2. We welcome Arts Council of Wales' commitment to "work with like-minded Trusts and Foundations to extend the placement scheme for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds". We would welcome involvement in this and are committed to working with Arts Council of Wales, as we see this fits well with our member trusts' training, apprenticeship and employment programmes
- 5.3. We welcome Arts Council of Wales' commitment to "Help create and support networking opportunities where learning can be shared"
 - 5.3.1. As noted in 4.1, a strategic objective of Community Leisure UK is to enable effective inter-trust and peer networking and knowledge sharing. We would welcome extending our process of sharing best practice in Wales to Arts Council of Wales and other partner engagement.

6. Topic 7: Encouraging greater resilience

- 6.1. We welcome Arts Council of Wales commitment to "Develop new Resilience scheme for non APWs" and to "Share learning in a more structured way"
 - 6.1.1. As noted in 4.1 - sharing, peer supporting and shared learning has a significant role in building resilience of organisations and artists. Specifically when challenges are being faced with the examples shared in 4.2. One of Community Leisure UK's strategic objectives focuses on building the resilience of trusts. This includes supporting members with re-procurement of the services (which many cultural organisations will be or will soon be facing), social impact reporting, leadership development, service / activity diversification, business effectiveness and efficiency etc. Resilience is important and something we wholeheartedly support Arts Council of Wales focusing on. We would welcome working alongside Arts Council of Wales on this in particular.

7. Topic 10: Funding for Capital projects

- 7.1. We welcome Arts Council of Wales commitment to "Establish a modest Capital investment programme with a clear focus on environmental sustainability and efficiency, improving physical access in all areas, improving financial and operational resilience"
- 7.2. We welcome Arts Council of Wales commitment to "Work with other partners to explore how we can help increase access to workspaces for artists and smaller organisations", as expressed in 4.1. This is a commitment that could be shared across all public culture service organisations.
- 7.3. We would urge Arts Council of Wales to recognise the change in the delivery landscape which has happened at local level, particularly in terms of the development of Trusts delivering cultural services (sometimes as part of a wider portfolio) and the relationship in place with the local authority, and the value of partnerships with these organisations.

8. Topic 11: Making things easier for you

- 8.1. We welcome the decision by Arts Council of Wales to review their current funding application process, to develop "a new entry-level programme for first time applicants" and to "amend the current small grant banding 'cap' from £5,000 to 10,000". This is a significant and positive proposal.
- 8.2. We welcome Arts Council of Wales commitment to "ensure that our Officers are available to provide advice and support throughout the application process"
 - 8.2.1. We would also suggest expanding that readiness to support to *after* the application process to include giving feedback on why an applicant was not successful. This

learning would be highly valuable, and links into Arts Council of Wales' previous points on shared learning and resilience.

9. Topic 12: Over to you

- 9.1. We recognise Arts Council of Wales call for support in advocating for the important arts work in Wales – we can, will and are already supporting this. We would welcome being a more prominent and present partner.
- 9.2. We recognise the importance of partnerships for Arts Council of Wales. While we are committed to support Arts Council of Wales, we also want to suggest Arts Council of Wales to enhance their relationship with health partners. There is an increased recognition across sectors of the positive impact of arts and culture services on communities' health and wellbeing that we as Community Leisure UK welcome and support.
- 9.3. We would like to reiterate, and as noted in 4.1, that a strategic objective of Community Leisure UK is to enable effective inter-trust and peer networking and knowledge sharing. We would welcome extending our process of sharing best practice in Wales to Arts Council of Wales and other partner engagement.

10. Conclusion

Thank you for your time and consideration of our consultation response on behalf of our members. We look forward to the conclusions of the consultation and supporting as best we can. If we can provide any further information or perspectives, or if you have any questions please do contact Jennifer Huygen on the email or telephone below.



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