

## Additional information provided by the petitioner (Welsh / English)

Cymraeg:

Ceir sôn bod llai o alw am yr hyn a gynigir gan Theatr Gwent, sef profiad o theatr byw a chyfle i gymryd rhan mewn gweithgareddau sy'n gysylltiedig â drama fel ffynhonnell o fwynhad a modd o feithrin hunan-ymwybyddiaeth. I'r gwrthwyneb, mae'r galw am waith y cwmni wedi parhau i gynyddu ar draws ystod oedran y sector addysg; nid yw'r rhai sy'n honni bod y galw wedi lleihau wedi ystyried ffactorau fel y gwahaniaethau yng nghyfradd genedigaethau, rhesymoli lleoliadau ysgolion a'r gwasgedd ar gyllidebau awdurdodau lleol. Bydd cael gwared ar gyfraniad gwerthfawr Theatr Gwent, a'i gwerth am arian, yn golled fawr i'r gymunedau y mae wedi eu gwasanaethu ers dros ddeg ar hugain o flynyddoedd.

English:

It is reported that demand has waned for provision such as Gwent Theatre offers, through experience of live theatre, and participation in activities rooted in drama, as a source of enjoyment and self-discovery. On the contrary, demand for the company's work has continued to grow across the entire age-range of education; the assertion that there has been a decline fails to take account of such factors as variation in birth-rate, the rationalisation of school locations, and the many pressures on local authority funding. The loss of Gwent Theatre's value, and its value-for-money, will be hard felt in the communities it has served for over three decades.

## E-mail from petitioners

Dear Christine

Gregg Taylor has laid out a compelling case for Theatr Gwent Theatre to be saved and provided a scathing critique of ACW's treatment of the company and its decision making process.

I should like to add the following after having been at the Senedd and the ACW offices last Tuesday.

In answer to our questions at ACW that morning we were told by Dai Smith that there was no longer any Theatre-in-Education in England and that it was time for Wales to move with the times (or words to that effect). This struck me as a remarkable comment to make for several reasons. Firstly, devolution has enabled us to follow distinct policies in Wales and fortunately we do not have to follow England's lead where matters are devolved. Why should ACW choose to do something simply to 'keep up' with England? Secondly, no evidence has been given us that the work of Theatr Gwent Theatre is in any way old fashioned or out of date.

Thirdly, there was an inherent contradiction in this statement given that simultaneously Mr Capaldi confirmed that five T-i-E companies will continue to exist in Wales continuing to provide T-i-E. If the reason for three companies being axed is that it is time to move on how come five will continue to be funded to continue providing T-i-E?

ACW are keen to assert their autonomy and the Minister wishes to distance himself from the decision making and have nothing to do with it. However there are important questions to which we have not been given answers as Gregg has outlined. If these questions remain unanswered democracy will be undermined and my faith in devolution will be sorely tested. More importantly the young people who witnessed the responses to our questions from Messrs Capaldi and Smith will be truly disillusioned with the decision making process. It is crucial for the future of our democracy that they are not left feeling cynical and powerless as a result of this experience.

With best wishes  
Jeremy

## E-mail from Chair of Gwent Theatre

Dear Ms Chapman,

Thank you very much for receiving the delegation from Gwent Theatre on the Assembly steps on a very cold November 30th.

I was sorry not to have had more time to speak with you about the 100% Arts Council of Wales funding cut that Gwent Theatre faces. I did speak later with Veronica and Bethan and said that I would send in a summary of the situation the Theatre finds itself in. Summary attached.

I hope that you will consider it along with other material that you have asked for. I have been assured that the Petitions (hard form and electronic) will also be brought to the attention of the Communities and Culture Committee Inquiry as evidence of the huge public support for Gwent Theatre.

Yours

Gregg Lynn Taylor  
Chair of Gwent Theatre

## Welsh Assembly Government Petitions Committee

### GWENT THEATRE PETITIONS 30.11.2010

1. On Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2010 a delegation from Gwent Theatre presented files containing a petition of **4,600** names and an *E* petition of **1,118** names to the chair of the committee.

**Purpose** The petitions call for the Welsh Assembly Government to continue its funding for Gwent Theatre.

**Reason** The *E* petition's wording explains that „the removal of this highly valued resource from the communities it has served for over 30 years deprives young people of a significant opportunity to engage with the arts.

Shortly afterwards, members of Gwent Young People's Theatre presented a sack containing 740 letters to Nick Capaldi and Dai Smith. The letters protest against the decision to cut Gwent Theatre's funding, which effectively puts an end to Theatre in Education in our region.

It has been suggested by the Arts Council of Wales (ACW) that any of the 32 companies that have been removed from its funding portfolio could muster a campaign of support to reverse the decision. The fact is that Gwent Theatre stands out. It has attracted (not mustered) huge support for its continued existence. The groundswell of public opinion in favour of Gwent Theatre over the past five months has been astonishing.

2. **ACW meetings** The original decision to cut Gwent Theatre's funding was taken by ACW in their meetings on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June 2010. Gwent Theatre had a follow up meeting with ACW officers on 15.7.10 when we questioned how the decision had been arrived at – what methodology, points scoring system etc that could help us understand the decision making process. We were told that the decision had been taken by council members in discussion meetings which were not minuted.

3. **The Decision** The minutes that do exist simply record the outcome of the June meetings and not the content of the members' discussions. What we can glean is that when it came to considering the provision of Theatre in Education across Wales, all eight TiE companies were discussed.

It appears from the minutes that „some concern“ was expressed at reducing provision for the arts in this area of activity. We do not know who expressed that concern or how it was dealt with.

Nevertheless, the members decided to :

- End our previous strategy for theatre in education.
- Become a stronger advocate for arts in schools.
- Focus on „exemplar work“ for young people.
- Reduce the level of funding that was previously dedicated to this area of schools related activity.
- Consider the role that the eight currently funded TiE/TYP companies might play in our „new approach.“

It was also indicated in June that the „new approach“ would be published. The „new approach“ has still not been published. We were told by ACW on 29.11.10 that it is with translators and will be out in the next two or three weeks.

The „new approach“ first became apparent when the ACW decision was announced in June. The fact that it was not produced prior to the Investment Review and has still not been published leads one to conclude that arts provision for young people is not being planned in any strategic way at all.

4. It was decided that five TiE companies would be admitted into the ACW portfolio and that as from 31.3.2011, three would be cut, namely :

**Spectacle Theatre** (serving Rhondda Cynnon Taf)

**Theatre Powys** (serving large rural areas in Central and S.E. Wales)

**Gwent Theatre** (serving the old counties of Newport, Torfaen, Caerphilly, Blaenau-Gwent and Monmouthshire ; it should be noted that the schools in the first three counties have bought into the TiE provision while the counties of Blaenau Gwent and Monmouthshire have funded Gwent Theatre directly.)

## 5. PROCEDURE

a) **Minutes** In spite of ACW's consistent claims that the procedure has been transparent, the basis for the decision to cut these three TiE companies remains a mystery. The minutes are non-existent and subsequent explanations from ACW officers have simply said that it came down to „fine judgements.“ The absence of any guide to methodology and the absence of minutes of discussions leading to strategic decisions are serious flaws in the process.

b) **The 'new approach' to TiE** This was not heralded prior to (or during) the Investment Review. If any possibility of ending its strategy for TiE had been contemplated by ACW, it was not communicated to its Revenue Funded Organisations. If it had been, it would have formed a central part of our business plan, and no doubt of the business plans of the seven other TiE companies. We regard this as a further flaw in the conduct of ACW's Investment Review.

c) **Restricted rights of Appeal** Gwent Theatre appealed against the ACW decision. It was rejected. That came as no surprise since ACW set out its own permissible grounds of appeal, confined to procedural irregularities in the decision-making process. Without minutes of the discussions held by ACW members and very limited knowledge of how the decision had been made, we were hampered.

We therefore based our submission on the outcome of the review – essentially that **no council** – having regard to the track record of Gwent Theatre and the needs of our young people to have some contact with live theatre, literature and music (which Gwent Theatre has provided to English and Welsh schools) – **could possibly have made this decision.**

d) **Explanations** On 30<sup>th</sup> November, at the ACW building, a short impromptu discussion was held between Gwent Theatre delegates and Nick Capaldi and Dai Smith. They confirmed the steps taken by ACW in their June meeting, as set out in paragraph 2 above.

The first step was to end the TiE strategy. So that meant all eight companies leaving the ACW fold.

Finally, with the „new approach“ in mind, they considered whether any of the eight might fit back in. They decided that five would be taken back into the fold and three would not.

In this extraordinary way, three TiE companies were cut. We have heard Dai Smith talk at length about the Investment Review and how it was „not

about cuts.” From our perspective it is a cut which signals the end of TiE in Gwent. That is the stark reality and it is a consequence which ACW would have foreseen.

## 5 **OUTCOME**

Putting aside the procedural inadequacies of the ACW decision, the outcome needs to be considered as a matter of urgency.

The staff of Gwent Theatre have all been made redundant as from mid February 2011. That is a personal tragedy for them of course, but they are professionals and, to their credit, they have focussed the arguments on the children and young people in the region. Gwent Theatre reaches well over 20,000 each and every year. As from February 2011 the schools in the five Gwent counties will have lost the dramatic / artistic input from this professional company. It is a massive problem because there is nothing to take its place.

On Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2010 Nick Capaldi visited Gwent Young People’s Theatre (GYPT) in rehearsal at the Drama Centre, Abergavenny. Many of the young people, aged between 14 and 19 from all parts of Gwent, told him that they had joined GYPT after being inspired by the TiE company’s visits to their schools. They questioned Mr Capaldi about arts provision for future generations of Gwent pupils. Mr Capaldi said that ACW had no plans to replace the TiE company.

The result for Wales as a whole is that five TiE companies will carry on as before, funded by the ACW as before, providing the same valuable service as before to children and young people in schools and other venues in their regions, while the children of Gwent, Rhondda Cynnon Taf and rural Powys will be left out in the cold.

## 6 **The WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT**

The WAG has a duty to act fairly and equally across Wales. We were promised “joined up government” in Wales, where there would be communication and co-operation between government departments.

### a) **Joint responsibility**

I have already made the point to the Communities and Culture Committee Inquiry that accountability is an issue here. The ACW are hedged around and protected by their officers who do the talking for them. The Heritage

Minister also recites the „arms length“ argument when trying to justify this enormously unpopular decision.

I have heard the Heritage Minister say that “you either believe in „arms length“ or you don’t.” But it is not that simple or clear cut – otherwise no quango decision would ever be open to review. In fact, it is incumbent on all Assembly Members collectively to hold quangos – and Ministers for that matter – to account.

b) **Collective Approach** I would urge Assembly Members to adopt a collective approach for what is going on here. It is a cross-party issue involving joint responsibility to see equality and fair play.

One of the arguments used by ACW is that they should not be footing the bill for TiE because it really should come out of the Education budget. That is a little surprising since the ACW has been supporting Gwent Theatre for 35 years, but divisive statements like that simply should not in any case win the argument.

Gwent Theatre does not care which budget its support comes from. Nor do the thousands of children who will no longer have the benefit of live theatre in their schools. The same would be true of the other two TiE companies who have been cut.

In a recent answer to the Communities and Culture Committee, Leighton Andrews AM said that he would be concerned if the ACW decision resulted in an unfair provision of arts across Wales. He is right to be concerned. ACW’s decision to cut Gwent Theatre is monumentally unfair to the children and young people of South East Wales. It is glaringly obvious that the human right of our young people are being forsaken.

c) **Duties** Please forgive two quotations from parts of the Government of Wales Act 2006. You probably have them well in mind. But in the light of the Inquiry presently being conducted and the petitions that are to be considered, it does no harm to remind ourselves of the guiding principles:

#### Preamble

“.....The 60 Assembly Members in the National Assembly scrutinise the Assembly Government’s decisions and policies, hold ministers to account.....”

#### Section 77 Equality of Opportunity

“The Welsh Ministers must make appropriate arrangements with a view to securing that their functions are exercised with due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people.”



d) It would not be enough, in our submission, for Ministers to say that a decision has been made „at arms length“ by a body charged to do so. That cannot begin to justify it and would simply state the *fait accompli*. When faced with such an obviously unfair outcome, surely the whole Assembly should be involved to rectify it and provide equality of opportunity to children of South East Wales.

## 7 **PRESENT STALE MATE POSITION**

Gwent Theatre has been supported by hundreds of letters from teachers, pupils past and present, and members of the public. They have all attempted to persuade ACW to change its mind. ACW has replied to all the letters but they will not budge. ACW thinks it has made the right decision.

Evidence before the Communities and Culture Committee and the petition signatures that have been gathered show that there are thousands of people in the local communities of Gwent who believe that ACW has made the wrong decision. They do not accept that the decision of the ACW cannot be reviewed and reversed.

ACW announced at their Newport Riverfront conference on 17<sup>th</sup> November that they are beginning a „fresh consultation“ to determine what the young people of Wales really want. As it was announced, there were young people looking in through the windows of the conference hall. They were holding banners “Save Gwent Theatre” and I suggested to Dianne Hebb that she should invite them in. Of course they were not asked in because they are petitioners and their views are known.

But what will happen if ACW consults the children and teachers in the schools of the Gwent valleys and are told that Gwent Theatre was a highly valued provider of the arts and they want it back. By then it will be too late. The ACW will have killed off one of the success stories of arts in South Wales – destroyed an infra structure that has taken decades to build up.

## 8. **Save us from the merry go round**

It looks as if we are embarking on another merry go round of consultations, listening to young people, drafting endless reports and so

on and so on. This is a particularly pointless exercise and the answer is staring everyone in the face -- restore Gwent Theatre.

If Wales really had joined up government, Gwent Theatre would not be closing down. It would have more staff and more resources and be able to take its work out on tour to wider venues. It has all the expertise.

It should continue its programmes of work performed in schools where teachers and visiting social workers are all involved, pupils engage in discussions „with the characters of the drama“ to tackle important contemporary issues in an inspired way. This is so highly valued, as the groundswell of public opinion in Gwent testifies.

### **Gwent Theatre**

**Fund it** from a budget made up of ACW money and/or

**Fund it** from the Education Budget and/or

**Fund it** from the „Assembly Government“s Get Things Done Budget.“

But please fund it. It is simply too important an institution to lose.

GREGG LYNN TAYLOR Q.C.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregg Lynn Taylor', written in a cursive style.

CHAIRMAN GWENT THEATRE



## JESSICA MORDEN MP

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Our Ref: LG/GWEN01006/01100918  
Your Ref:

06 December 2010

Dear Christine

### **Re: Gwent Theatre**

I am sorry I was not able to be with the Assembly Members and campaigners when they handed you the petition against the withdrawal of funding for Gwent Theatre (I had to be in the House of Commons on that day). I am writing to ensure you are aware of my views on this issue and to express my support for the petition. I hope that this issue will be 'called in' and considered in detail by your Committee.

There is huge anger in Gwent about the decision, as illustrated by the numbers signing the Assembly petition and writing to the Arts Council. I know that at a recent Culture Committee meeting, Gwent Theatre gave compelling evidence about what the loss of Theatre in Education will mean to young people in the more deprived communities.

Arts Council Wales Chief Executive, Nick Capaldi, has suggested that between 2005 and 2009 revenue support to the eight companies providing Theatre in Education had increased by 7%, whereas attendances had decreased by 17%. Yet in the case of Gwent Theatre, revenue funding was increased by 5% in 2007-08, but this followed several years of standstill funding, and between 2002 and 2009 total annual attendances for all aspects of Theatre in Education increased from 88,862 to 158,361 - impressive, when set against the context of falling school rolls.

I feel there has been a lack of transparency in the decision and this cut in funding for Gwent Theatre leaves an entire area without any provision for Theatre in Education, in stark contrast to other parts of Wales. Arts Council Wales said publicly that it would base its funding decisions on the quality of the business plans that were submitted. It should therefore have no objection to an independent assessment of the business plans by an outside body. It is my belief that in the meantime its plans to withdraw funding should be put on hold.



I told the Minister that I greatly fear for the future of Theatre in Education in Wales and urged him to step in and review the Arts Council's decision before we sleepwalk into losing a service of huge value to our young people. I stand by that view as the situation remains the same as when I last wrote to the Minister.

I would be grateful if you would make the members of your committee aware of my views and ask them to do what they can to ensure a review of the decision and how it was made. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and I look forward to hearing from you as to what steps the Petition Committee will be taking to look into the matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Morden".

Jessica Morden MP  
Newport East

## Evidence to Welsh Assembly Government Petitions Committee: Gwent Theatre

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### 1. Scope

Gwent Theatre's submission to the Petitions Committee offers opinion on the following main issues:

- the role of the Arts Council of Wales and its relationship with the Welsh Assembly Government
- the adequacy and transparency of the Investment Review process
- the Arts Council's decision
- the outcome of that decision

The notes below comment on each of these issues.

### 2. The Arts Council's role and remit

**Council members are appointed by the Welsh Assembly Government's Heritage Minister under Nolan rules governing public appointments.**

The Arts Council is an "arm's length" Assembly Government Sponsored Body. Council members are responsible for setting the strategic direction for the Arts Council within the policy framework of the Welsh Assembly Government.

The allocation of revenue funding – the point at issue here – is a matter specifically reserved to Council members. Revenue funding is not indefinitely renewable. It's not a contract for services, neither is it an open to application funding scheme. All of the currently supported revenue funded organisations (RFOs) were explicitly reminded last year that current revenue funding arrangements would end on 31 March 2011. All organisations understood that no-one was guaranteed to receive continuing support beyond that date.

**Having set its strategic direction, Council's responsibility is to offer funding to those organisations who, in its judgement, are best placed to deliver its priorities.**

Six months ago the Arts Council announced its intention to enter into new revenue funding arrangements from 1 April 2011 with a revised portfolio of funded organisations. Faced with reduced government funding, Council had to consider its relative priorities. Council decided to focus on funding fewer organisations but on a more sustainable basis. Gwent Theatre was not one of the organisations identified by Council as a priority for support.

### 3. The Arts Council's Investment Review

**Our Investment Review has been one of the most comprehensive reviews of funding that the Arts Council of Wales has ever undertaken.**

The Welsh Assembly Government endorsed the need for the Investment Review.

The 2009/10 Remit Letter from the Heritage Minister asked Council to:

“...develop a funding strategy that places the funding of the Arts Council's revenue funded organisations on a more sustainable basis. This strategy should not be dependent on current or historic funding agreements. You should take a fresh look at funding strategy and be prepared to look robustly at the effectiveness of current investment. We wish to see ambitious proposals for the future. The aim must be to secure a vibrant and dynamic arts sector, better able to bring the highest quality arts activity to audiences and participants across Wales.”

The instruction that we should not be constrained by previous custom, practice or strategy could not be clearer. Council was charged with adopting a new strategic approach and that is what it did.

### 4. The adequacy and transparency of the process

**The objectives, parameters and conduct of the Investment Review have been subject to public consultation.**

The Terms of Reference for the Review were consulted upon and published in advance of the Investment Review. In addition, there was an extensive body of information relating to all aspects of the process published on our website. This includes:

- Council's statement of its future vision – *Imagine...*
- guidance and advice on the submission of bids
- the criteria for assessment and decision-making (*Strive to Excel*)
- an explanation of the assessment and decision-making processes
- Council minutes, interim reports and papers published by Council.

We don't have the resources to be able to provide a verbatim transcript of Council meetings. However, the decisions and actions of Council are clearly recorded, and supplementary published material provides a detailed rationale for Council's decisions. In common with most public bodies, Council does not publish details of confidential or commercially sensitive.

We accept that organisations who are unsuccessful in their funding submissions will feel that they must question the integrity and transparency of our processes.

However, we feel that even though critical assertions are, at times, vigorously and repeatedly voiced, it doesn't mean that they're correct. We'd also question whether it's reasonable for an organisation – having been given the opportunity during consultation to comment on the procedure – to cry foul when the decision goes against it.

**We'd ask only that scrutiny of our actions is objective.**

Throughout the Investment Review process, Council Members have stated their willingness to be judged on what has happened during the Investment Review. However, Members would ask in return that their actions are discussed in a fair, accurate and even-handed fashion.

The Assembly's Communities and Culture Committee is currently conducting an Inquiry into Accessibility to Arts and Culture. As part of its deliberations it has been considering the potential impact of the Investment Review.

In response to criticisms raised by those campaigning against our decision, the Committee Chair noted that:

“Members are conscious that other witnesses have praised the investment review's decision making process, with Carmarthenshire County Council, for example, noting that they "appreciate the professional and skilful manner in which the review was conducted." Members are also conscious that while their inquiry will examine the "impact of the investment review," the individual decisions previously taken by the Arts Council of Wales, over which companies to fund, are rightly outside the scope of this inquiry.”

**Many of the written submissions to the Communities and Culture Committee presented a different view to that advanced by Gwent Theatre.**

For example, the Welsh Local Government Association states:

“The WLGA acknowledges that the investment review was a difficult process for the Arts Council to undertake. We feel that it was well-managed, with constant communication throughout the process and a clear rationale provided for the decisions made. Unfortunately the Arts Council of Wales had to make a number of difficult strategic decisions and prioritise resources at a time when there is less funding available.”

In written evidence, Prof Elan Clos Stephens, an individual of significant stature and reputation in Welsh public life, wrote:

“I would like to congratulate Arts Council of Wales on the thoroughness of their work whilst reviewing Welsh companies and organisations currently receiving revenue funding. I believe this is the first time that the work has been carried out in such a detailed and transparent way.”

Finally, in evidence to the Committee, Heritage Minister Alun Ffred Jones AM said:

“While respecting the “arms” length” principle on which funding for the arts in Wales is based, I have been briefed on the Review’s progress by the Chair and Chief Executive of ACW during our scheduled biannual, and other, meetings and given a broad indication of the changes they want to bring about.”

He also said:

“The investment review process has been carried out in an open and transparent manner, which I commended in my written statement to the National Assembly for Wales of 29 June. ACW consulted stakeholders fully about the review and the way it would be conducted. They have made key decisions, and the reasons behind them, public.”

Of course, it could be argued that even the statements above are matters of opinion. So we offer the following „facts” about our process:

- we consulted upon – and published – all key Investment Review documents, from the Terms of Reference at the beginning of the Review, to Council’s decision papers *Renewal and transformation* and *Delivering our vision* at the end. We’ve received widespread praise for the unprecedented level of detail provided to explain Council’s decisions.

In its editorial on 5 July 2010, the UK ArtsProfessional magazine wrote:

“Funding bodies might want to take note of the way the Arts Council of Wales has conducted its investment review. This has been a thorough process, which for the first time so far as I am aware, has shown a UK funding body lay out a bold and defined strategy and then measured organisations’ work and value against it.”

- we took the unprecedented step of commissioning an independent audit on three separate occasions throughout the Investment Review process by our (independent) internal auditors, RSM Tenon. They concluded on each occasion that:

“In our opinion the Council can take substantial assurance that the controls upon which the organisation relies to manage this area, as currently laid down and operated, are effective.”

- the process was further „tested” through the Appeals process following challenges to Council’s decisions. However, out of the 116 organisations who had made a submission, only 4 appealed

Our Appeals process is not, as has been suggested, a cursory review of procedural matters – it is a substantive and wide-ranging examination that goes right to the heart of our assessment and decision-making procedures.



Following a process of public consultation, it was agreed that there would be three Grounds for Appeal:

1. We did not follow the published procedures
2. We misunderstood a significant part of the submission
3. We did not take notice of relevant information

Appeals were scrutinised by an Independent Complaints Reviewer and an independent Appeals Panel. Both confirmed that the Investment Review process had been managed properly. All four Appeals were rejected on all three of the above grounds

- our decision-making body, Council, is independently appointed by the Minister for Heritage. It comprises individuals of integrity and standing in public life who have a specific responsibility to ensure the proper and accountable management of the Arts Council's business. It's inconceivable that they'd have accepted a flawed or inadequately delivered process
- officials of the Welsh Assembly Government's Heritage Department attend all Council meetings to monitor the effectiveness and accountability of the Council's work. They were at all Council meetings where the Investment Review was discussed

We're sorry to labour this point to such an extent. However, the integrity of the process and the reputation of Council itself has been called into question. It has been disappointing to see the checks and balances that were put in place so casually dismissed. So we'd make three points:

- we consulted extensively before and during the Investment Review about how the process should be managed
- all organisations – including Gwent Theatre – had the opportunity to make their views known to us
- the process has also been subject to a high degree of scrutiny, from a range of different independent bodies

Given this, we feel that it would be reasonable for us to argue that a process that has emerged from detailed examination from so many different quarters (and with such a unanimously clean bill of health), could legitimately claim to be fit for purpose.

## 5. The decision

### **Two principal factors informed our funding decision.**

- the lack of available funding to meet existing policy objectives
- Council's decision to attach greater importance to other priorities and organisations

Fundamental to our decision has been the lack of funds to resource the strategy that has previously supported Gwent Theatre and seven other Theatre in Education companies. Back in 2004 we published our Theatre and Young People's Strategy which included proposals for a Theatre in Education (TiE) service across Wales.

It was envisaged that it would be a service that:

- gave every child a theatre in education experience at each of the four key stages of education
- would be free at the point of delivery
- would be available in both English and Welsh

It was calculated in 2004 that the delivery of this service would need a minimum of an additional £3million on top of the subsidy already available to the eight companies. In the event, only an additional £800,000 from the Welsh Assembly Government was achieved at that time.

### **None of our consultations with local authorities has suggested any likelihood of substantially increased local authority funding in the next few years.**

Indeed, we were told that the opposite is more likely.

The particular circumstances of Gwent Theatre are not unique, but they exemplify the wider challenges that the TiE sector has faced.

Gwent Theatre provides TiE activity across five local authority areas: Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Newport, Monmouthshire and Torfaen. However, three of those authorities – Caerphilly, Newport and Torfaen – provide no funding towards the Gwent Theatre activity that takes place in their schools. Furthermore, in 2008/09, Blaenau Gwent reduced its funding and there was a consequent reduction in activity. This meant that between 2006 and 2009 there was a dip in both the number of performances, and the levels of attendance.

In 2010/11, it's estimated that local authorities will be providing around 13% of the total public subsidy for Gwent Theatre's schools-based activity, with the Arts Council providing the rest.

In written evidence to the Communities and Culture Committee, Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning Leighton Andrews AM endorsed the importance of the arts (including theatre) to the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum.

However, he also wrote:

“Meeting the requirements of the of the programme of study is a matter for schools, working with local authorities.”

And he went on to say:

“While recognising that the opportunities provided by the Theatre in Education companies in Wales are valued by many schools, decisions on working with specific partners have to be a matter for schools. This is consistent with the approach taken in all subject areas.”

At present, the Arts Council provides over 81% of the £2.5m public funding to TIE companies in Wales, compared to 19% from the country’s local authorities. Even if local government could match the level of investment currently provided by the Arts Council, there’d still be a shortfall on the sustainable package of funding identified as necessary six years ago. And since it’s clear that local government won’t be able to find an additional £2m plus, this makes a different approach inevitable.

**In the present financial climate, Council concluded that such a strategy was no longer deliverable.**

Council has published – and is currently consulting upon – a new strategy for arts and young people. It’s called *Changing Lives*. The process of consultation will involve specific consultation with young people themselves.

*Changing Lives* proposes a new type of partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government and local authorities. It also envisages a different relationship with young people themselves.

We believe that our focus in the future should be two-fold: support our young people to develop their creative talents; and, foster an environment in which that talent can be identified, inspired, nurtured and celebrated.

We want to see more attention given to young people learning through the experience of doing, inspired by the opportunity to work alongside our professional artists and arts organisations. We want as many young people as possible in Wales to believe that the opportunity is there for them to be the best they can – or want – to be, performing with their peers at the highest level, celebrating and demonstrating their creative talents. We need an approach that advocates broader provision across the arts, and not one relying on delivery through a single area of arts practice.

### **Why didn't we announce the change of strategy before we received the submissions?**

We couldn't have anticipated in advance what organisations would tell us in their submissions, or what our consultations with funding partners would reveal. However, having received the evidence and assessed its implications, we believe that it would have been irresponsible for Council to continue with a strategy that was plainly not sustainable.

### **So why has the Arts Council decided to take a selective approach and include five of previously funded companies in its new portfolio?**

Making strategic judgements about relative priorities is what Council is there to do. It's also about an approach that doesn't "throw the baby out with the bath water". Each of the eight currently funded TiE companies have their individual qualities and strengths. But they also exist within a wider theatre „ecology“, presenting a range of other theatre activity and providing employment for artists, technicians and administrators.

This wider theatre ecology remains under-developed. And even in a time of reduced funding, this activity still needs to be developed. With this in mind, Council made a series of relative judgements and identified those companies who, in its view, presented the most persuasive case for future support.

In the case of Gwent Theatre, we've complimented the company on many areas of its activity. However, we've also raised a number of areas (which the company is aware of) where we were less convinced. In summary, these are: artistic consistency; the extent to which the company adopts an innovative approach to the delivery of its work; marketing and audience development; and, an under-developed approach to fundraising and income development.

Having considered the strategic and the particular, Council concluded that faced with diminishing resources, Gwent Theatre did not represent a priority for support.

## **6. The outcome**

### **New arrangements will have to fit the new financial realities.**

There has never been universal provision of TiE in all schools across Wales. And the current financial outlook would, in any case, have made this even more difficult to achieve. So we need a new approach to arts and young people – one that recognises that there's already a large number of funded arts organisations providing arts in education activity, and that this has always extended well beyond the previously funded TiE companies. Recognising, and using, the rich diversity of this wider activity is what our new strategy is all about.

Practically all of the 70+ revenue funded organisations in our new portfolio work with young people. There's also a significant amount of additional activity which is supported by the Lottery or through the Arts Council's strategic development funds. Work happens in a variety of formal and informal settings, in and outside of schools. Gwent Theatre has been a key provider across the five local authority areas that it covers, but it would not claim to have a monopoly on work with young people. Work with, and for, young people will continue to happen.

In the last 6 months we've allocated over £500,000 of arts funding to individuals and organisations in the former county area of Gwent. In addition, there'll be another £635,000 of revenue funding next year to six organisations – Head for Arts, Independent Ballet Wales, Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre, Theatr Ffynnon and the Riverfront Theatre. All of these organisations have programmes of activity for, and with, young people.

**Where we've had to end revenue funding, most other organisations have worked with us to explore new models of operation that will allow them to continue their activities.**

We put in place a Transitional scheme designed to help organisations adjust to new ways of working. The other two TiE companies have, with our assistance, begun exploring new ways of working, and have sought other funding to support future projects designed to keep their activity alive. Gwent Theatre has chosen not to go down this route and instead announced closure and a public campaign.

Clearly this is a matter for the Board of Gwent Theatre. However, we've consistently indicated our willingness to discuss other means of support. It's very unlikely that there'd be replacement funding at the level previously enjoyed. However, substantial funding is available through Lottery schemes to fund theatre activity. On a more positive note, an application was made to us for support for the Gwent Young People's Theatre company. We've been pleased to support this application.

## **7. Concluding comments**

**The publicly funded arts in Wales have grown because the Arts Council has been bold and has made strategic choices.**

More people are enjoying and taking part in the arts in Wales. The arts in Wales are one of the country's great success stories. Arts attendances and participation over the past 5 years have grown to record levels.

The arts change and evolve, as does the world around us. Our funding has had to reflect that. We remain committed to supporting the best that the arts in Wales has to offer, small and large, local and international, community-based and professional.

Our future spending plans are more than a series of individual funding decisions – they're a holistic strategy for the arts in Wales. Our decision regarding Gwent Theatre – along with the other 116 funding decisions made by Council – forms part of that overall strategy.

It is our firm belief that the most effective way of developing audiences and increasing access to the arts is to support activity that's exciting, compelling and engaging. This means making choices, sometimes very difficult ones. This hasn't always made us popular, but it has delivered results.

Nick Capaldi  
Chief Executive  
Arts Council of Wales

18 January 2011

Old letter from Lynne Neagle

## LYNNE NEAGLE AM

Assembly Member for Torfaen

73 Upper Trosnant Street  
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Torfaen  
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Alun Ffred Jones AM  
Minister for Heritage  
Welsh Assembly Government  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

**Our Ref: LN/CT**  
Your Ref:

21<sup>st</sup> October 2010

Dear Alun Ffred,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on Tuesday to discuss the recent Arts Council's Investment Review and the impact this will have on Gwent Theatre. I am writing as you requested with the full details of my concerns.

As you know I am extremely concerned about the impact the loss of Gwent Theatre will have on children and young people in my constituency who will lose their theatre in education provision. As you know my constituency, in common with some of the other communities served by Gwent Theatre is one with high levels of deprivation.

When we met I described to you my worries regarding the process used by the Arts Council to decide on which organisations were to receive revenue funding. I'm sure that you would agree that in the current climate of significant reductions in public spending that it is vital that decisions about funding are taken in a transparent and fair way. With this in mind I wrote to Nick Capaldi on 31<sup>st</sup> August (copy enclosed) asking for a detailed response explaining the methodology behind the decision and asking for a detailed explanation as to why Gwent Theatre was not successful. I made it clear in my letter that this should be treated as a Freedom of Information Request.

I enclose for your information a copy of Nick Capaldi's reply, which at nine pages long is certainly detailed, but which did not provide the information on the decision making process I had requested.

I met with Nick Capaldi, together with Jessica Morden MP, on 22<sup>nd</sup> September when I again asked for details of the process and evidence used to decide which organisations were successful and which weren't. I was told by Nick Capaldi that the Board had met to discuss the decisions and he was not able to shed any further light on the process other than to say that it was a question of "judgement". When we queried the appropriateness of basing funding decisions on something so subjective, Mr Capaldi asked me how I would measure artistic excellence. This reinforced my view that there was not a proper process in place to do just that.

I have subsequently received copies of the board minutes which again shed no further light on the matter.

As you are aware the Communities and Culture Committee are conducting an inquiry into the accessibility of Arts and Cultural Activities in Wales. I raised the same points about process in the meeting when we took evidence from the Arts Council and received yet another answer on the process used. We were told that the Arts Council has a wide network of independent experts who go and report on work, as well as talking to local authority arts officers to seek their views and that the Arts Council monitors independent reports and newspaper reviews on activity. We were told that all this then is brought together to inform the Arts Council's judgement. I enclose a copy of the relevant evidence for your information.

You said in your previous letter that you do not wish to comment on individual cases or decisions by the Arts Council and you reiterated several times in plenary yesterday the principle of the Arts Council being an arms length public body.

While I accept that the Arts Council is arms length, I believe that there is ample reason for you as minister to intervene on this issue.

Your recent written response to me highlights that you have asked ACW, via their remit letter for 2009.-10, to focus investment on increasing access to and widening participation in high quality arts, particularly in areas of deprivation. I cannot see how removing theatre in education provision from the whole of South East Wales, including some of the most deprived communities in Europe complies with that remit letter. This is particularly the case as there appears to be no real plans to fill the gap left by the Theatre in Education organisations.

In your remit letter for you refer to the Children and Family (Wales) measure which will place a duty on the Arts Council to combat child poverty in Wales. Again, I cannot see how their decisions to end theatre in education for some of most deprived children in Wales fulfils that duty or indeed the spirit of the legislation.

I believe that the concerns that I have raised regarding the process followed by the Arts Council are themselves a reason for intervention. I simply cannot see why it is not possible for the Arts Council to give me details of the evidence on which they based their decision to remove funding from some theatre in Education groups and not others. As myself and others have asked for this information on several occasions (in my case receiving different answers each time) I can only assume that the information does not exist. This in itself is not acceptable. Everyone recognises that difficult decisions have to be made about funding but that is all the more reason for us to be assured that the decision-making process is completely fair and transparent.

In view of the above I would be grateful if you will now intervene on this matter.

Best wishes,



LYNNE NEAGLE AM  
Assembly Member for Torfaen



Cc Brian Mawby – Torfaen County Borough Council  
Gary Meredith – Artistic Director, Gwent Theatre  
Jessica Morden MP

17 Nov 10 13:09

p.1

**Alun Ffred Jones AC/AM**  
Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth  
Minister for Heritage

RECEIVED  
15 NOV 2010



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref LN/CT  
Ein cyf/Our ref AFJ/01317/10

Lynne Neagle AM  
73 Upper Trosnant Street  
Pontypool  
Torfaen  
NP4 8AU

10 November 2010

*Dear Lynne,*

Thank you for your letter of 21 October, covering correspondence to Nick Capaldi, Chief Executive of ACW, in connection with the Arts Council of Wales (ACW) Investment Review and Gwent Theatre.

I would also refer to our earlier correspondence and meeting on 12 October, to any answers to you in plenary on 13 October and to my answers to the Communities and Culture Committee Inquiry into the Accessibility of arts and cultural activities in Wales on 3 November.

As I commented in my written statement to the National Assembly for Wales of 29 June, the investment review process has been carried out in an open and transparent manner. ACW consulted stakeholders fully about the review and the way it would be conducted. They have made key decisions, and the reasons behind them, public, subject to any commercial confidentiality considerations. The four appeals lodged were considered by an independent adjudicator and where appropriate, an independent appeals panel. My officials have closely monitored the Investment Review and I have personally been briefed by ACW at key stages.

The ACW decision to cease revenue funding for Gwent Theatre does not mean the cessation of provision of arts opportunities for young people in that area. As I advised previously, ACW are developing strategies to address the question of art participation and provision for our children and young people and, while I am not commenting on individual decisions made by ACW, I will continue to take a close interest in this important service.

In response to the concerns expressed relating to the provision of information, I have written to the ACW Chief Executive requesting that he responds directly to you. Provision of information under the Freedom of Information provisions is a matter for ACW.

*Yours sincerely,*  
*Alun Ffred Jones*

**Alun Ffred Jones AC/AM**  
Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth/Minister for Heritage

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
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Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

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13 AM  
Response from Jessica Morden MP



## JESSICA MORDEN MP

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Chair of the Petitions Committee  
Christine Chapman AM  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Our Ref: LG/GWEN01006/01100918

19 January 2011

Dear Christine

**Re: Gwent Theatre, Newport**

I wanted to let you know that I tabled an Early Day Motion in Parliament about Gwent Theatre, which has been signed by all the Gwent MPs

*That this House commends the work of Gwent Theatre which has provided an excellent theatre in education experience for young people and schools in South East Wales for over 30 years and has played a hugely supportive role for Gwent Young People's theatre and led to many young people pursuing a career in the performing arts; deplores the withdrawal of their funding by Arts Council Wales and that body's lack of transparency in making this decision; is alarmed that this will lead to the company closing in February leaving South East Wales, including some of the most deprived communities in Wales, with no theatre in education provision; and calls on Arts Council Wales to reverse this decision immediately in light of the vigorous community campaign and scrutiny by the Communities and Culture and Petitions Committees in the Welsh Assembly.*

I must declare a personal interest as I am on the Theatre Board, but the key point is that there is a lack of transparency in the decisions made and it does appear no-one who has asked as been given access to the business cases.

Clearly it is a mistake to make the decision to withdraw from some of the poorest communities without coming up with a plan to continue provision. If there is a plan to cover with other Companies, how will this be achieved?

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and thank you for making time for your committee to consider this issue.

Yours sincerely

Jessica Morden MP  
Newport East

NS/AM

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Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

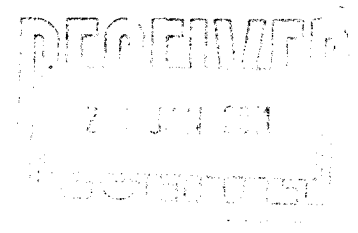
# Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

Our Ref./Ein Cyf. LP/DM  
Your Ref./Eich Cyf.  
Contact:/Cysylltwch â: Mr L. Phillips  
Assistant Director  
Leisure Services and School Transformation

21<sup>st</sup> January 2011

Christine Chapman A.M.  
Chair, Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA



Dear Christine

**RE: SAVE GWENT THEATRE – PETITION**

I refer to your correspondence dated 14<sup>th</sup> January 2011, regarding petition P-03-308 Save Gwent Theatre. The Chief Executive of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has requested that I respond to your query on how the Arts Council's decision to withdraw Revenue funding from Gwent Theatre will affect Theatre in Education Services in Blaenau Gwent.

I would, therefore, like to take this opportunity to respond accordingly;

- It is a concern, both from an Education and an Arts perspective, that there will be no dedicated Theatre in Education company delivering in the South East Wales (Gwent) region. Schools in the region will potentially lose the co-ordinated service delivered by professional practitioners on a sustainable basis in the future.
- Gwent Theatre, working closely with other partners, has produced many successful performances dealing with sensitive and topical issues in Blaenau Gwent, including domestic abuse, sexual and drug abuse, religious intolerance, bullying, citizenship and general well-being. Gwent Theatre also offers opportunities for pupils to view (and be involved) in 'live' theatre – that in itself is highly valued in Blaenau Gwent.



We welcome correspondence in the medium of Welsh or English. / Croesawn ohebiath trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.

- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Education and Leisure Directorate are, however, looking into alternative methods of service delivery and are committed to exploring all available options, including;
  - The Arts team are working with the A.C.W. on their Arts and Young People strategy and are engaging with the Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum to establish their views on provision for young people through the Arts. The outcomes may help guide the Arts Council in future decisions and priorities for funding.
  - Colleagues in Education and Leisure are also discussing new ways of delivering at least some of the component parts of the provision currently provided by Gwent Theatre, both in terms of workshops to raise confidence, self-esteem and drama skills as well as contracting external companies to deliver specific curriculum driven performances as considered appropriate. Of course, financial resources will need to be identified from the Education and Leisure budgets to realise such proposals from 2011/2012 onwards.
- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is sympathetic to the loss of Revenue funding for Gwent Theatre, indeed, one of our own Arts venues (Beaufort Theatre) has experienced a similar outcome from the A.C.W. review of revenue funded clients. Notwithstanding the financial impact of the A.C.W. decision, the Authority remains committed to the provision of quality Arts and Culture services across the County Borough.

I hope this response provides you with an overview on the way that recent funding decisions will affect Theatre in Education across Blaenau Gwent. Please don't hesitate to contact me on the above number if you require any further clarification on any matters detailed in my response.

Yours sincerely



**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**  
**LEISURE SERVICES AND SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION**

c.c. Chief Executive  
Director Education and Leisure Services

**Leighton Andrews AC/AM**  
Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg & Dysgu Gydol Oes  
Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-308  
Ein cyf/Our ref LA/00121/11

Christine Chapman AM  
Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

28 January 2011

*Dear Christine*

Thank you for your letter of 14 January asking for views on a petition raised by George Davis-Stewart, Save Gwent Theatre. In particular, you asked for views on concerns expressed by the petitioner about a reduction in arts education funding.

As underlined in my evidence to the Communities and Culture Committee Inquiry into the accessibility of arts and cultural activities, I appreciate and value the contribution that the theatre can make in the provision of a broad and balanced school curriculum. However, the issues identified in the petition relate to funding for Theatre Gwent. This is primarily a matter for the Arts Council of Wales and I note that the Heritage Minister has already provided evidence to your committee on this matter.

As you appreciate, I would be concerned if changes to the funding regime impacted adversely on the equality of access to theatre to communities in Wales, particularly in deprived areas. I, therefore, expect the Council to monitor the impact of its policies and to consider the equalities impact. I understand that the Chief Executive is also scheduled to attend the committee to give evidence. No doubt he will be in position to provide you with further details on progress and plans to meet this commitment.

*Yours sincerely*  
*Leighton Andrews*

**Leighton Andrews AM**  
Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

*Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)*

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## Response from the petitioner (George Davis-Stewart)

Response to evidence submitted by Chief Executive of Arts Council of Wales to Petitions Committee on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

Dear Ms. Chapman,

As Chief Petitioner, it is my privilege to address you, but not with the heavy weight of argument offered by Gregg Taylor Q.C., Chair of our Board; rather I am speaking from the pain of the bruising of spirit and professional dignity, blows that have been delivered with heavy hand by the manner in which ACW has gone about its euphemistic Investment Review. Lest you think you are about to hear some tale of self-pity, and well you might, I will refer you now to Michael Morpurgo's Dimpleby Lecture on the rights of young people, who are the principal losers in this matter.

The general impression of Mr. Capaldi's latest evidence is of a skilful manipulation of events, circumstances and statistics by ACW to arrive at a conclusion which appears to respond to the Heritage Minister's brief, whilst in fact serving the ambitions, pretensions and self-aggrandisement of an attempt to create high-profile prestige-seeking arts activities, hoping to induce the conferring of high status by the rest of the world.

To read the evidence, and the Chief Executive's responses to some very pointed and rigorous questioning by the Committee, it is difficult to credit his line of reasoning and the tone of his observations with anything short of ruthless arrogance; another interpretation might be one of naïve ineptitude: either of these leads to one wondering why he and his senior colleagues are still in post. Is there a middle way?

It is difficult to read Mr. Capaldi's words without being impressed by his manipulation of events, statistics and quotations to suit his purposes, apparently without anything worse troubling him than a deep sense of accomplishment in his serving the public purse. One is reminded of the careful editing that can often be found on theatre billboards, choosing the positive phrases that will persuade us to attend something that in reality fails on all levels.

### *Consultation on the investment review process,*

The investment review process: a moveable feast, with all the best dishes at the top end of the table. By my simplistic calculation, if the Council members spent (according to its Chief Executive) two whole days deliberating, that means that 116 organisations had the benefit of approximately seven minutes each under the close scrutiny of these secretive creatures, closely shielded from public interaction by their Chair and Chief Executive. ("It would not be appropriate for them to be available for discussion," said Prof. D. Smith on the day that this petition was presented.)

In a similar vein, we are told it would not be appropriate to make available sensitive papers under the terms of FOI, even if one is only asking on behalf of one's own organisation. This rebuff has been used a little too often for my liking, and suggests to me, as do the missing or non-existent minutes on the Councils decision-making, that there is something to hide.

So when we read in Mr Capaldi's evidence of 25 January, 2011, paragraphs [129] and [130], that it would simply have been too much trouble to invite Gwent Theatre to revise its business plan, we hear the shoddy truth of things. We hear it with considerable disbelief, aghast that it is somehow sufficient to offer this excuse to The Petitions Committee, The Heritage Minister and the Assembly Government. Andrew R. T. Davies' point at paragraph [151] is well made.

*The change in approach to theatre in education during the investment review process*

The same speaker, in paragraph [152], states that the world changed during the IR process, and that may be, but not so very much. Given the reported moment in the deliberations of ACW when all 8 companies were to be removed from the list of the favoured, it seems possible that the change of approach which has emerged latterly, was in fact ever in mind. If any worth is placed on theatre for young people, on TiE, (and I refer you again to Michael Morpurgo's lecture) in Wales, it is time now to defend it, nurture it.

*The appeal process*

Hardly credible that the party whose decision is challenged should be allowed to adjudicate.

*Future provision for theatre-in-education within Gwent.*

The free market is master. The ACW strategy is formless, and without clear purpose.

*What steps have been taken by Gwent Theatre to find new sources of funding?*

Mr Capaldi deftly twists insult into an air of professional concern: his "anxiety" that Gwent Theatre has been mis-using its time on protest and appeal, rather than working to "move on" serves only to emphasise his ignorance, wilful or otherwise, of the company's record, past and present, of collaborations, co-productions, and projects existing beyond the confines of its life as a revenue-funded organisation.

He even places project funding to Gwent Young People's Theatre alongside Gwent Theatre's award of transition funding, as if they are for the same purpose. Even if he intends to suggest that GYPT is part of his "way forward", it has nothing to do with the fate of the TiE service.

*What these funding streams are.*

Withdrawal of funding from The Olympic Games would be my ideal. After Lifeboats and Ambulance Helicopters, forced to rely heavily on donations, I have never understood why organisations least able to fend for themselves should experience further reduction of their source-funding to support monolithic tourist-fodder events. Arts funding represents 0.3% of the total monies managed by the Assembly Government: what is that in the scale of things,



in good times or bad, when the resultant tourism generates very clear profit? (Is that Gwent Theatre's crime – not enough tourist appeal?)

Or again, it turns out that the Assembly Government has a capital surplus of £14 million in the current financial year, which accounts for a sudden upsurge of improvements and extensions being carried out for schools, before April arrives. At its present rate of funding, Gwent Theatre could run for 56 years on that surplus. How little it costs year by year, in return for the enrichment and enchantment of tens of thousands, sadly few of them tourists.

*What further help or support you feel is needed to help you try and secure additional funding?*

I refer you to Gregg Taylor on this, but I'd imagine that European initiatives would be worth exploring.

Perhaps Gwent Theatre should seek to go travelling beyond its homelands; many Welsh arts reputations have been built on exploring Europe, and beyond, as widely as possible, whilst performing at home as seldom as possible; this is the Principle of the Self-Generating Mythology, a proven route to high standing amongst one's own kind.

*We would also appreciate your views on the point made by Mr Capaldi about the importance of on-going discussions between ACW and Gwent Theatre.*

It is very difficult to view Mr Capaldi as a dedicated fellow-professional, interested in promoting genuine arts initiatives, given his history in this and other of his posts as a destroyer of the Arts. If ACW is truly interested in the promotion of the Arts in Wales, for universal access, they have selected the wrong person to lead them. His guise as "prudent minder of the pennies" belies a subtle ruthlessness.

The organisations which were moved forward to the next round of funding eligibility were still not aware of how much they might receive, and so they were held in fear of speaking out in any signal of support for the excluded organisations; this of course was attributed to actual figures not being available, and that may be the only reason, but in the climate of ACW's determined silence, I hope you will forgive my suggesting another reading.

Yours, in the words of Mr. Capaldi, frustrated,

George Davis-Stewart

Company Stage Manager to Gwent Theatre.

Christine Chapman AM (Chair)  
The Petitions Committee

Gwent Theatre  
Drama Centre  
Pen y pound  
Abergavenny

**Your ref P – 03 – 308**

16.2.11

Dear Ms Chapman,

Thank you for your letter dated 26.1.2011 addressed to George Davis-Stewart, lead petitioner for the Save Gwent Theatre petition.

You will probably know that Mr Davis-Stewart is the stage manager of Gwent Theatre and he has asked me to respond to your letter.

In addition to this response I append two earlier submissions made on behalf of Gwent Theatre and one e mail from me.

**Appendix 1** (pages 11 – 14 below)

E mail from Chairman of Gwent Theatre dated 26.1.11

**Appendix 2** (pages 15 – 24 below)

Submissions to the Petitions Committee dated 30.11.10.

**Appendix 3** (pages 25 – 32 below)

Submissions to Communities and Culture Committee dated 28.10.10.

I append these three documents for your ease of reference so you have them all at hand. I invite you please to read them again for two reasons :

1) I believe that over the past few months the committee has built up a considerable fund of knowledge about the Investment Review, the way it was conducted and the particular problems now being faced by Wales' Theatre in Education sector. This may throw a new perspective on a reading of the submissions ;

2) Some of the points raised in your letter have been set out in the submissions and the e mail so a re-reading may again be helpful.

I was present in the public gallery when Mr Capaldi gave evidence to your Committee on 25.1.11. I have also seen the transcript of his evidence.

#### POINT 1                    ARM'S LENGTH DECISIONS

Before dealing with Mr Capaldi's evidence in general I should like to make a point about the argument that has been relied on so heavily over the last few months by the Heritage Minister. Time and again he has said that the decision to cut Gwent Theatre's funds was made at arm's length by the ACW. He has refused to comment on the decision on the basis that he cannot intervene in an arm's length decision, saying „Either you believe in it or you don't.... You can't have it both ways.”

With great respect to the minister, it is a blinkered approach and a moment's thought will show the fallacy of that approach. Reducing it logically to absurdity, suppose the ACW had decided to allocate ALL its funds to the Welsh National Opera, there would have been a huge outcry from all others. The Minister would have tried in vain to hide behind the “arm's length” principle. That is because it is not a “principle” at all; it is merely a working practice. In general it is one that I support, but it does not mean that decisions taken by a body like ACW at arm's length are beyond scrutiny.

We say that when serious and obvious misjudgements are detected, it is the duty of the elected members to hold ministers and their „arms length” bodies to account. By „holding to account” we mean putting right that which is obviously wrong.

The ACW thinks it is right. You know, as Petitions Committee members, that there are thousands of people in Gwent (and Rhondda Cynon Taf for Spectacle) who think they are wrong.

## POINT 2 THE REMOVAL OF THREE COMPANIES

Prior to the Investment Review there were eight TiE companies covering the whole of Wales. It is advanced on behalf of ACW that in fact the provision was patchy – for example, parts of Pembrokeshire, parts of Wrexham and North Wales were not covered (evidence paragraph 109).

That may be so, but at least there were eight companies in existence to do their best to cover their respective areas. The system may not have been perfect but it was integrated and attempted to cover the whole of Wales. Shortcomings were alluded to but no real study has been done. But even if shortcoming existed, that is no justification for removing TiE provision wholesale from three companies serving the South East of Wales.

Two of those companies work in Community First areas in some of the most deprived areas in the valleys. Isn't it better to have some arts provision than no arts provision? The inequalities of access to the arts are now patently obvious. This is something that has concerned the Education Minister as well as the public.

## POINT 3 PROPER CORE FUNDING

Time and again the Chairman of ACW and its CEO have said that they expect new forms of arts for young people to emerge. In spite of the fact

that ACW had 18 months to work on its Investment Review (paragraph 76 ) nothing concrete has actually emerged.

And in the meantime, the committees and the public have been misled into thinking that there is something there, waiting in the wings to replace Gwent Theatre. Staff redundancies will take effect on 31.3.11 for all Gwent Theatre employees. We are told that many of the schools in our area are willing to pay for TiE, but provision cannot be made without a properly resourced core company. It is baffling that the ACW or the Assembly Government cannot find a way of funding this company, which has spent decades building up its infrastructure and relationship with schools.

Just last week Carwyn Jones the First Minister was at a meeting with our artistic director Gary Meredith and asked him if he thought Gwent's TiE funding would be better coming from the education budget. Mr Meredith replied in much the same vein as paragraphs 7.3 and 7.4 of our submissions to the Communities and Culture Committee – namely, provide it from the arts budget or the education budget or the “Get it Done Fund” or anywhere else you can devise, but please provide it.

How is it fair that five companies are still properly funded and three are no longer funded?

#### POINT 4 PLUGGING THE GAP

Mr Capaldi's evidence at paragraph 110 claims that there is a range of arts provision for young people in Gwent. He cited the following “Valley Kids.” We have spoken to VK and they have no plans to work outside their own area, and no plans to come into Gwent.

“Head for Arts” is a commissioning agency and does not itself produce any artistic work. One would hope for commissions of artistic work in Gwent (possibly including Gwent Theatre) but at present there is nothing being done.

“Riverfront in Newport” This is a well appointed performance venue and will attract performance arts to its building. But it will not cater for young people in the valleys – unless they travel to Newport for the experience. I have made the point previously that valleys children do not travel well. That is why all those years ago Gary Meredith was asked to set up Theatre in Educations to take arts into the schools. It may be sad, but nevertheless a fact that young people still by and large do not travel out of their valleys.

“Theatre Ffynnon” The Committee knows that Theatre Ffynnon is a highly specialised Theatre catering for adults with disabilities. I was vice chair of their board at the time when Gwent Theatre took them under its wing and saved them from folding.

The five remaining TiE companies Since the Investment Review announcement, the other TiE companies have been told that they need not (not must not) continue their TiE work and that they are free to move out of their old areas. We have spoken to some of these companies and they have no plans (and no resources) to expand their activities out their catchment areas. Indeed, they are tied in many cases by local authority funding to provide TiE for their local schools.

In reality, the valleys will just be a black hole when its comes to arts provision. Isn’t the answer simple? Continue Gwent Theatre’s funding so that it can carry on doing the work that young people clearly value.

## POINT 5    SERIOUS FLAWS IN ACW DECISION MAKING

We have attempted for many months to extract the way in which the decision was reached by ACW. What were the general criteria, was there a scoring system between the bidders, what different criteria might have been used when considering the geography or the social make up of areas, was the decision reached by a show of hands, was it unanimous etc etc. Others have made unsuccessful FOI requests.

For my own part I gave up trying to wrinkle this information out of ACW. The best description was given to us on 15.7.10 when I met David Newland (the South Wales Director) and Nick Davies (our lead officer) at the ACW offices. They said that it had been “a value judgment as thin as cigarette paper.” We are grateful to the Committee for raising this aspect again (Veronica German AM at evidence paragraph 86)

I believe that a far more fundamental flaw has come to light. We had submitted from the start that the „goal-posts had been moved.“ The committee have seen the point. The ACW asked for business plans as the basis of bids for funding. Like others we approached it professionally with paid facilitators at various meetings, sifting ideas and employing an experienced professional bidder to put our business plan together. We are confident that it is as good as any other. ACW described it in their report (referred to at evidence paragraph 87) as „clear and pragmatic.“

The Committee heard from Mr Capaldi (paragraph 94) that it was only when reading the business plans that the ACW decided that the old TiE strategy was no longer viable. Bethan Jenkins AM is perfectly right to label ACW’s argument a “cop out” (paragraph 100).

When this piece of evidence emerged in solid form, it caused some of our company and staff to raise with me the question whether a new strategy

had been in embryo some time prior to the business plans being submitted and that the successful companies had been „tipped off“ or a leak had occurred. I have dismissed that sort of speculation as far fetched. The problem, however, is that when „goal posts are moved“ it allows such speculation to arise. And whichever way you look at it, it is frankly astounding that a public body can behave in such a way. Mr Capaldi sought to explain it by reference to the „ideal world“ in his evidence at paragraph 96. It was unconvincing and the Committee made an important criticism of ACW’s approach in paragraph 97.

New strategy / new ways of working (evidence paragraph 126) The five remaining TiE companies have been told to carry on their work and have been given a slightly different remit. Mr Capaldi describes in the most general terms what new things ACW decided to look for when it was assessing the business plans. We may not have addressed all these areas specifically in our business plan e.g the potential to tour, because we were meeting a TiE brief when we prepared the plan. However, we contend that Gwent Theatre does in fact have wide experience over many years in all the areas mentioned by Mr Capaldi. Indeed the concepts are nothing new and, given the opportunity, Gwent Theatre could meet those criteria as well (if not better) than any of the five funded companies.

#### POINT 6 NEW SOURCES OF FUNDING / ASSISTANCE

You ask us to give you details of what steps we are taking to find new sources of funding. It is ironic that part of our business plan was devoted to this very subject. Our long serving administrator retired and we had appointed a new general manager. One reason for her appointment was her experience in arts fund raising. When ACW’s cut our funds our new general manager resigned and that put an end to that aspiration.



In the seven months since the investment review announcement, the Board has been concerned with carrying on a vigorous campaign to have the ACW decision reversed. The company, while devoting some of its time to the campaign, has been continuing its artistic work in schools and other venues. Gwent Theatre has been and intends to be an active company. It has been looking for new opportunities and new funding :-

- It has begun a pilot project for the Aneurin Bevan Health Board for artistic pieces linked to their stop-smoking campaign. We are in negotiations for two large pieces to be commissioned in 2011.

If commissioned, we would be funded to £20,000 or possible more.

- „Forgotten Landscapes“ is a project being mounted in Blaenavon after March 2011 and will involve workshops for primary school children, culminating in performances and presentations. Funding will be granted at around £30,000 for this project. Wider plans have had to be shelved because of the ACW cut to our funds.
- We have recently had a meeting with the leader of Torfaen Council (Mr Wellington) with a view to funding a scheme with a business enterprise approach. This is being followed up, but nothing concrete to report as yet.
- A further application is being looked at in conjunction with Health Boards, the Local Authority and the Wellcome Trust. It is an exciting prospect but will take a long time to come to fruition. (Our last funding by the Wellcome Trust two years ago “Boy Genius” took about 18 months from bid to production.)

You ask what further help we need to secure additional funding. The answer is that we need some expert advice on securing European Funding. Our region, the five counties that make up old Gwent, includes many Community First areas. Even Monmouthshire, often perceived as

comprising leafy glade suburbs, has its deprived areas. This is something that we were preparing to look at with our new general manager but our plans were halted. Time and resources are too thin for us to manage applications for European funding without expert assistance.

#### POINT 7 ON GOING TALKS WITH ACW.

We are in the invidious position of having our funds totally cut by the ACW. We believe that they have done so unfairly, at the expense of the 20,000+ school children that we reach every year.

Nevertheless, we have engaged with ACW over the past months. We applied for £30,000 transition funding and were granted £20,000. We are bound to pay our staff redundancy payments and at the end of March, when they take effect, we shall pay about £55,000 in redundancy pay and have reserves of £28,000 to carry the Theatre on to the future.

We have a meeting fixed with ACW for 24.2.11 to discuss future project funding and will approach it with open minds. The questions raised by Andrew RT Davies AM on what ACW meant by „substantial funding“ (paragraph 102) and on „plugging the gap“ (paragraph 104) were well directed.

I am afraid that we will not get beyond the candid answer given by Mr Capaldi that, even if project funding were to be granted -- and there are no guarantees of that -- “I do not think... that this will plug the gap or replace revenue funding.” The consequence will be the demise of Gwent Theatre’s TiE service.

#### CONCLUSION

As before, in our earlier submissions, we say that Gwent Theatre has been one of the success stories for the arts over the last 30 or more years. Its

TiE work has been an inspiration to countless children over generations, as their letters and testimonies show.

We submit that it is not beyond the wit of our Assembly to save Gwent's Theatre in Education Company and we respectfully ask this Committee and the Assembly as a whole to find a way.

GREGG TAYLOR QC  
CHAIR OF GWENT THEATRE

16.2.11

## APPENDIX 1

E Mail to the Petitions Committee  
from Gregg Taylor, Chairman of Gwent Theatre  
Dated 26<sup>th</sup> January 2011

Wednesday, 26 January, 2011 9:40:27

Gwent Theatre

From: Gregg Taylor  
View

To: bethan jenkins ; veronica german  
andrewrt.davies; christine chapman  
; sandy mewies

Cc: Lynne Neagle ; Jessica Morden  
; Hamish Sandison  
<hamish.sandison; George Davis-Stewart  
; Gary Meredith  
; Julia Davies

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Dear Committee Members,

Please forgive an impersonal e mail.

I attended the Petitions committee yesterday when they heard evidence from Nick Capaldi. I was impressed by the questioning and the grasp of the legitimate complaint that has been made by Gwent Theatre.

I was also glad to hear that the committee is to ask Gwent Theatre to respond in writing. A considered response will be forthcoming to any questions you may ask of us. In advance of that request, may I just flag up these matters :-

1) One of our board members, Hamish Sandison (a senior solicitor) also sits on the Board of Theatre Ffynnon which yet again finds itself cited by N Capaldi as one of the arts companies that is covering huge gap left by Gwent Theatre. Part of his response is worth quoting to you

*“It’s vital that we clarify TF’s role vis a vis GT. It is LUDICROUS to suggest that TF is in any sense a replacement or substitute for GT, as TF’s remit and scope and modus operandi are entirely different. It is disingenuous of Nick Capaldi to suggest otherwise.”*

Also interesting that Capaldi, in citing TF, seems to admit that ACW **did** take geographic scope into consideration in deciding to deselect GT from the revenue-funded TIE companies in Wales. That’s the subject of one of the FOI questions I formulated for ACW.

This leaves two possibilities:

- Either ACW took geographic scope into consideration, and got it wrong because TF can in no way replace GT in SE Wales.
- Or ACW did not take geographic scope into consideration, in which case they failed to consider a relevant factor.

Either way, they are in breach of the basic test for Judicial Review, which is that you must consider what is relevant in making a decision, and disregard what is irrelevant, and in doing so you must not make an “irrational” decision, ie, a decision that no reasonable person could have made.

2) The second matter that I picked up on is the well informed question asked by Bethan Jenkins about the role of the five remaining TIE companies. The ACW has recently told them that they no longer need to provide TIE and are no longer bound by their old geographic boundaries. The implication may be that they can travel to other parts of Wales to provide arts cover to the South Wales valleys. They are to receive an additional £64,000 between the five.

This would be equally ludicrous. The five companies have developed TIE as their business model for many years so while ACW may express the wish that they work outside their boundaries, the reality is that they will continue to do their traditional work. Indeed, many of them receive local authority support (as did Gwent Theatre) on condition that they provide TIE.

Allied to that point is the question of venues -- where would dramatic arts be provided by these five companies to the young people of Gwent? If it suggested that various theatres would be used, say Cardiff, Cwmbran, Abergavenny etc, again the reality is that the majority of children in the valleys would not be able to travel to these venues. Why not? Anyone with a knowledge of the of the valleys will know the answer to that -- they don't -

which is why the ACW came to Gary Meredith 35 years ago and asked him to set up a TIE scheme to take dramatic arts into Gwent schools. Gwent Theatre was established and became the model for the other seven.

3) The point made by Andrew Davies in the end discussion is very important. Gwent Theatre spent over a year writing its business plan. We employed a consultant to assist and I can say with confidence it was as good as any other plan. The ACW (NC) has said many times that there is no issue with the quality of Gwent Theatre's work (also praised by Alun Ffred Jones who saw our Welsh language production Dan Gysgod y Rhyfel at the Eisteddfod in Ebbw Vale)

Our point is that if we had known that the ACW strategy would not continue TIE our business plan would have been entirely different. But the remedy for this situation surely is staring everyone in the face. Given the opportunity, Gwent Theatre is just as capable as any of the other companies of adapting to the new strategy and working in local theatres as well as schools, of touring around and beyond Gwent and collaborating with other companies etc. These are all things we have long experience of -- eg Dan Gyscod y Rhyfel.

4) The alternative "substantial" support offered by NC in his evidence needs to be examined. I am very willing to speak to ACW about what they have on offer. But the examples given during evidence to you are not at all encouraging. We know what they are. At present the project funding is limited to £30,000 in any one year; Reach the Heights is bigger but is a minefield for applicants and involves collaboration with local authorities (themselves strapped for cash) and would not be available in 2011. As Mr Capaldi admitted, the alternatives are no replacement for revenue funding.

5) Mr Capaldi told you that the ACW budget has been reduced by £1.75m. In that context, the decision to remove Gwent Theatre's annual funding of £250,000 cannot really be justified on financial grounds and it galls us to see a £250,000 increase being granted to WNO at the expense of true community theatre. The arguments are largely the same for Spectacle Theatre which works in Rhondda Cynon Taf. We know that Spectacle Theatre is also campaigning and we support them wholeheartedly.

6) You were rightly told that Gwent Theatre is not winding up as a company. Our staff will be made redundant by 31.3.11 and we have been working hard to get a political solution. We are there, with all the infrastructure in place (decades to develop) and what I am worried about is that without a strong recommendation from the Communities and Culture Committee and the Petitions Committee, the Minister and the Cabinet will simply rely on the spurious argument that ACW has made the decision "at arms length". I say spurious because in essence it simply allows any decision to be regarded as acceptable.

The closure of Gwent Theatre is certainly not acceptable to the people of our area who have brought their views forcible to the attention of ACW, the Minister and the Assembly. We would respectfully invite both Committees to draft strongly worded recommendations to the Minister and the Assembly Government to reverse the ACW decision on Gwent Theatre.

Yours sincerely  
Gregg Taylor QC (Chair of Gwent Theatre)

## **APPENDIX 2**

Submissions to The Welsh Assembly Government  
Petitions Committee  
from Gregg Taylor, Chairman of Gwent Theatre

Dated 30<sup>th</sup> November 2010

1. On Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2010 a delegation from Gwent Theatre presented files containing a petition of **4,600** names and an *E* petition of **1,118** names to the chair of the committee.

**Purpose** The petitions call for the Welsh Assembly Government to continue its funding for Gwent Theatre.

**Reason** The *E* petition's wording explains that „the removal of this highly valued resource from the communities it has served for over 30 years deprives young people of a significant opportunity to engage with the arts.

Shortly afterwards, members of Gwent Young People's Theatre presented a sack containing 740 letters to Nick Capaldi and Dai Smith. The letters protest against the decision to cut Gwent Theatre's funding, which effectively puts an end to Theatre in Education in our region.

It has been suggested by the Arts Council of Wales (ACW) that any of the 32 companies that have been removed from its funding portfolio could muster a campaign of support to reverse the decision. The fact is that Gwent Theatre stands out. It has attracted (not mustered) huge



support for its continued existence. The groundswell of public opinion in favour of Gwent Theatre over the past five months has been astonishing.

2. **ACW meetings** The original decision to cut Gwent Theatre's funding was taken by ACW in their meetings on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June 2010. Gwent Theatre had a follow up meeting with ACW officers on 15.7.10 when we questioned how the decision had been arrived at – what methodology, points scoring system etc that could help us understand the decision making process. We were told that the decision had been taken by council members in discussion meetings which were not minuted.

3. **The Decision** The minutes that do exist simply record the outcome of the June meetings and not the content of the members' discussions. What we can glean is that when it came to considering the provision of Theatre in Education across Wales, all eight TiE companies were discussed.

It appears from the minutes that „some concern“ was expressed at reducing provision for the arts in this area of activity. We do not know who expressed that concern or how it was dealt with.

Nevertheless, the members decided to :

- End our previous strategy for theatre in education.
- Become a stronger advocate for arts in schools.
- Focus on „exemplar work“ for young people.
- Reduce the level of funding that was previously dedicated to this area of schools related activity.

- Consider the role that the eight currently funded TiE/TYP companies might play in our „new approach.“

It was also indicated in June that the „new approach“ would be published. The „new approach“ has still not been published. We were told by ACW on 29.11.10 that it is with translators and will be out in the next two or three weeks.

The „new approach“ first became apparent when the ACW decision was announced in June. The fact that it was not produced prior to the Investment Review and has still not been published leads one to conclude that arts provision for young people is not being planned in any strategic way at all.

4. It was decided that five TiE companies would be admitted into the ACW portfolio and that as from 31.3.2011, three would be cut, namely :

**Spectacle Theatre** (serving Rhondda Cynnon Taf)

**Theatre Powys** (serving large rural areas in Central and S.E. Wales)

**Gwent Theatre** (serving the old counties of Newport, Torfaen, Caerphilly, Blaenau-Gwent and Monmouthshire ; it should be noted that the schools in the first three Gwent counties have bought into the TiE provision while the counties of Blaenau Gwent and Monmouthshire have funded Gwent Theatre directly.)

## 5. **PROCEDURE**

a) **Minutes** In spite of ACW's consistent claims that the procedure has been transparent, the basis for the decision to cut these three TiE companies remains a mystery. The minutes are non-existent and subsequent explanations from ACW officers have simply said that it came down to „fine judgements.“ The absence of any guide to methodology and the absence of minutes of discussions leading to strategic decisions are serious flaws in the process.

b) **The 'new approach' to TiE** This was not heralded prior to (or during) the Investment Review. If any possibility of ending its strategy for TiE had been contemplated by ACW, it was not communicated to its Revenue Funded Organisations. If it had been, it would have formed a central part of our business plan, and no doubt of the business plans of the seven other TiE companies. We regard this as a further flaw in the conduct of ACW's Investment Review.

c) **Restricted rights of Appeal** Gwent Theatre appealed against the ACW decision. It was rejected. That came as no surprise since ACW set out its own permissible grounds of appeal, confined to procedural irregularities in the decision making process. Without minutes of the discussions held by ACW members and very limited knowledge of how the decision had been made, we were hampered.

We therefore based our submission on the outcome of the review – essentially that **no council** – having regard to the track record of Gwent Theatre and the needs of our young people to have some contact with live

theatre, literature and music (which Gwent Theatre has provided to English and Welsh schools) – **could possibly have made this decision.**

d) **Explanations** On 30<sup>th</sup> November, at the ACW building, a short impromptu discussion was held between Gwent Theatre delegates and Nick Capaldi and Dai Smith. They confirmed the steps taken by ACW in their June meeting, as set out in paragraph 2 above.

The first step was to end the TiE strategy. So that meant all eight companies leaving the ACW fold.

Finally, with the „new approach“ in mind, they considered whether any of the eight might fit back in. They decided that five would be taken back into the fold and three would not.

In this extraordinary way, three TiE companies were cut. We have heard Dai Smith talk at length about the Investment Review and how it was „not about cuts.“ From our perspective it is a cut which signals the end of TiE in Gwent. That is the stark reality and it is a consequence which ACW would have foreseen.

## 5 **OUTCOME**

Putting aside the procedural inadequacies of the ACW decision, the outcome needs to be considered as a matter of urgency.

The staff of Gwent Theatre have all been made redundant as from mid February 2011. That is a personal tragedy for them of course, but they are professionals and, to their credit, they have focussed the arguments on the children and young people in the region. Gwent Theatre reaches well over 20,000 each and every year. As from February 2011 the schools in the five Gwent counties will have lost the dramatic / artistic input from this

professional company. It is a massive problem because there is nothing to take its place.

On Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2010 Nick Capaldi visited Gwent Young People's Theatre (GYPT) in rehearsal at the Drama Centre, Abergavenny. Many of the young people, aged between 14 and 19 from all parts of Gwent, told him that they had joined GYPT after being inspired by the TiE company's visits to their schools. They questioned Mr Capaldi about arts provision for future generations of Gwent pupils. Mr Capaldi said that ACW had no plans to replace the TiE company.

The result for Wales as a whole is that five TiE companies will carry on as before, funded by the ACW as before, providing the same valuable service as before to children and young people in schools and other venues in their regions, while the children of Gwent, Rhondda Cynnon Taf and rural Powys will be left out in the cold.

## 6 **The WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT**

The WAG has a duty to act fairly and equally across Wales. We were promised "joined up government" in Wales, where there would be communication and co-operation between government departments.

### a) **Joint responsibility**

I have already made the point to the Communities and Culture Committee Inquiry that accountability is an issue here. The ACW are hedged around and protected by their officers who do the talking for them. The Heritage

Minister also recites the „arms length“ argument when trying to justify this enormously unpopular decision.

I have heard the Heritage Minister say that “you either believe in „arms length“ or you don’t.” But it is not that simple or clear cut – otherwise no quango decision would ever be open to review. In fact, it is incumbent on all Assembly Members collectively to hold quangos – and Ministers for that matter – to account.

b) **Collective Approach** I would urge Assembly Members to adopt a collective approach for what is going on here. It is a cross-party issue involving joint responsibility to see equality and fair play.

One of the arguments used by ACW is that they should not be footing the bill for TiE because it really should come out of the Education budget. That is a little surprising since the ACW has been supporting Gwent Theatre for 35 years, but divisive statements like that simply should not in any case win the argument.

Gwent Theatre does not care which budget its support comes from. Nor do the thousands of children who will no longer have the benefit of live theatre in their schools. The same would be true of the other two TiE companies who have been cut.

In a recent answer to the Communities and Culture Committee, Leighton Andrews AM said that he would be concerned if the ACW decision resulted in an unfair provision of arts across Wales. He is right to be concerned. ACW’s decision to cut Gwent Theatre is monumentally unfair to the children and young people of South East Wales. It is glaringly obvious that the human right of our young people are being forsaken.

c) **Duties** Please forgive two quotations from parts of the Government of Wales Act 2006. You probably have them well in mind. But in the light of the Inquiry presently being conducted and the petitions that are to be considered, it does no harm to remind ourselves of the guiding principles:

Preamble

“.....The 60 Assembly Members in the National Assembly scrutinise the Assembly Government’s decisions and policies, hold ministers to account.....”

Section 77 Equality of Opportunity

“The Welsh Ministers must make appropriate arrangements with a view to securing that their functions are exercised with due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people.”

d) It would not be enough, in our submission, for Ministers to say that a decision has been made „at arms length“ by a body charged to do so. That cannot begin to justify it and would simply state the *fait accompli*. When faced with such an obviously unfair outcome, surely the whole Assembly should be involved to rectify it and provide equality of opportunity to children of South East Wales.

7 **PRESENT STALE MATE POSITION**

Gwent Theatre has been supported by hundreds of letters from teachers, pupils past and present, and members of the public. They have all

attempted to persuade ACW to change its mind. ACW has replied to all the letters but they will not budge. ACW thinks it has made the right decision.

Evidence before the Communities and Culture Committee and the petition signatures that have been gathered show that there are thousands of people in the local communities of Gwent who believe that ACW has made the wrong decision. They do not accept that the decision of the ACW cannot be reviewed and reversed.

ACW announced at their Newport Riverfront conference on 17<sup>th</sup> November that they are beginning a „fresh consultation“ to determine what the young people of Wales really want. As it was announced, there were young people looking in through the windows of the conference hall. They were holding banners “Save Gwent Theatre” and I suggested to Dianne Hebb that she should invite them in. Of course they were not asked in because they are petitioners and their views are known.

But what will happen if ACW consults the children and teachers in the schools of the Gwent valleys and are told that Gwent Theatre was a highly valued provider of the arts and they want it back. By then it will be too late. The ACW will have killed off one of the success stories of arts in South Wales – destroyed an infra structure that has taken decades to build up.

#### 8. **Save us from the merry go round**

It looks as if we are embarking on another merry go round of consultations, listening to young people, drafting endless reports and so



on and so on. This is a particularly pointless exercise and the answer is staring everyone in the face -- restore Gwent Theatre.

If Wales really had joined up government, Gwent Theatre would not be closing down. It would have more staff and more resources and be able to take its work out on tour to wider venues. It has all the expertise.

It should continue its programmes of work performed in schools where teachers and visiting social workers are all involved, pupils engage in discussions „with the characters of the drama“ to tackle important contemporary issues in an inspired way. This is so highly valued, as the groundswell of public opinion in Gwent testifies.

### **Gwent Theatre**

**Fund it** from a budget made up of ACW money and/or

**Fund it** from the Education Budget and/or

**Fund it** from the „Assembly Government“s Get Things Done Budget.“

But please fund it. It is simply too important an institution to lose.

GREGG LYNN TAYLOR Q.C.

(Chairman of Gwent Theatre) 30.11.10

### **APPENDIX 3**

#### **Submissions to The Welsh Assembly Government Communities and Culture Committee Enquiry from Gregg Taylor, Chairman of Gwent Theatre**

Dated 28<sup>th</sup> October 2010

1 I was not able to give oral evidence to the Committee. I invite the Committee to take account of this written submission. It concerns the Arts Council of Wales decision to cut revenue funding to Gwent Theatre as part of their Investment Review.

2 As Chairman of Gwent Theatre, I am in the process of consulting employees about the termination of their employments. The staff will all be made redundant and the company's provision of Theatre in Education to all the schools in Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Caerphilly and Newport will finish early in 2011.

3. The company is in the process of seeking a political solution to save Gwent Theatre. It looks to the Committee to make what recommendations it can to reverse the Arts Council of Wales' decision.

4. The terms of reference for the Committee that apply in the case of Gwent Theatre appear to be :

No 2 The impact of the Arts Council of Wales's Investment Review, published in June 2010, on all cultural activities and venues in Wales;

No 3 The possible impact of the Welsh Government's budget for 2011-2012 on all cultural activities and venues in Wales;

No4 The geographical spread of venues and activities and how access is promoted across Wales.

5. **Bullet point arguments for the Committee's consideration are :**

5.1 Existence Gwent Theatre has been providing Theatre in Education services for 35 years in South East Wales, reaching well over 20,000 young people annually. So far as Gwent Theatre is concerned, the numbers of people reached has not decreased over the years.

5.2 Funding Gwent Theatre has been funded by the Arts Council of Wales to the extent of approximately £250,000 a year. It has provided about 60% of Gwent Theatre's funding.

5.3 The theatre has also been funded over the years by Blaenau Gwent and Monmouthshire County Councils up to £20,000 each.

5.4 Monmouthshire County Council has also provided substantial buildings at the Drama Centre in Abergavenny for the Theatre's administration, rehearsal rooms and the Melville Theatre, a small 70 seat theatre where Gwent Theatre give public performances.

5.5 Gwent Young Peoples Theatre Gwent Theatre has administered the highly acclaimed Gwent Young People's Theatre. It has

provided assistance in administration and expert tutelage in performance arts for over thirty years.

5.6 Gwent Theatre's work is held in the highest esteem by pupils, parents, teachers, local authorities and the public at large. It is one of the success stories of the South Wales arts scene.

5.7 Since the announcement of the Arts Council of Wales's decision to cut funding to Gwent Theatre there has been an outcry from all quarters. I have received hundreds of letters, e mails, phone calls etc expressing anger and disbelief at the decision of the Arts Council of Wales. I am including a small selection of the communications I have received. There are also numerous petitions and an on-line petition increasing in numbers daily.

5.8 The importance of all the correspondence is that the Arts Council of Wales decision should be reviewed, not as a cold accountancy exercise, but one which takes heed of what Gwent Theatre means to the people of our area. It would be a huge blow to our community to lose such a vibrant theatre which has brought such good work to people over the years.

5.9 I invite the Committee to value (as I do) the support received from teachers and pupils as highly as that from Lord Kinnock, one of our patrons, and other luminaries.

5.10 Gwent Theatre submitted a full Business Plan for the Investment Review. It will stand against any other Business Plan received by the Arts Council of Wales as a model for future development. It

was described by the Council as “clear and pragmatic” and it is frankly astonishing that it was not accepted.

5.11 The basis of Arts Council of Wales decision, even after months of correspondence between Nick Capaldi and the company, members of the public etc. still cannot be understood. Many of these exchanges have been reported in the media. There is widespread public concern.

5.12 Prior to its decision there were eight Theatre in Education companies providing services to schools the length and breadth of Wales. The result of the Investment Review was to cut three of them – all in the South East of Wales – Gwent Theatre, Spectacle Theatre and Theatre Powys. The other five remained, to be funded by the Arts Council of Wales as before and to deliver much the same service as before.

5.13 Arts Council of Wales “Renewal and Transformation” document published in June 2010 made a number of references to the need for a single, integrated strategy for the arts. It is a theme with which Gwent Theatre would agree – and it applies particularly well in the case of Theatre in Education.

It is surely plain to see, however, that while there had been a consistent and integrated Theatre in Education strategy across Wales prior to June 2010, the decision to cut three companies has produced a fragmented, inconsistent and disintegrated strategy.

5.14 On page 2 of “Renewal and Transformation” the chairman of the Council wrote in the foreword

**“Imagine Wales – and when you have done that, pictured it, heard it, read about it, celebrated it – try to think of our country without song, the spoken word on stage and screen, without poetry and novels, and dance and sculpture ... and all the living traditions that are making our contemporary culture so dynamic, The arts matter to us and to you.”**

From the perspective of Theatre in Education in South East Wales, there are now five counties which will no longer receive the service into their schools. Imagine.

Imagine those schools without that arts provision. That will soon be the reality. A network of schools and a region-wide infrastructure that has taken years to build up will be gone.

5.15 Let us be clear what they will be losing. Theatre in Education is not a bunch of actors who turn up in schools and entertain the children and young people for half an hour a term and then leave.

The company produces well conceived pieces, dealing with subjects that would not always be appropriate for teachers to bring into class. Subjects such as divorce, physical and sexual abuse, bullying, drug taking and so on. The company’s performances are meant to stimulate debate and are always followed by discussion workshops led by one of the actors. The young people always fully engage with this style of work and find themselves talking openly about matters affecting our contemporary culture.

En route they have all experience living art in the performance of poetic and emotional drama. Many of the young people that Gwent Theatre reaches are in very deprived areas of

South East Wales. Many will never have any other experience live theatre.

6 There is no doubt that without the core funding from the Arts Council of Wales, this long standing and well respected company will fold up in early 2011. Gwent Theatre is dependent upon funding from the Welsh Assembly Government in some form or other.

6.1 It has been frustrating at times to receive replies from the Heritage Minister or the Chief Executive of the Council who say that the decision was made independently by the Arts Council of Wales. Likewise, while Gwent Theatre has always had a good working relationship with the officers of the Arts Council of Wales, they provide an effective barrier between the revenue funded organisations and the Council. Where is the accountability?

6.2 On behalf of Gwent Theatre, I simply do not accept that the decision of the Arts Council of Wales is not open to review and cannot be changed, or that some other way cannot be found to support a crucial arts provider in South East Wales.

GREGG TAYLOR QC

CHAIRMAN OF GWENT THEATRE

28.10.10

## ADDENDUM

7. On 17.11.10 I attended the ACW conference at the Riverfront in Newport along with Gary Meredith. There were many people outside the building protesting at the closure of Gwent Theatre. And closure is the reality at the moment because I have just finished a month long consultation process and issued redundancy notices to each of our staff. Only five people, but between them they have 90 years service to Gwent Theatre in Education, which is one of the success stories of providing arts to ordinary young people in Wales.

7.1 The conference was given the title “Imagine Again” and I made the point (yet again) that Dai Smith’s words (5.14 above) are ironically apposite when looking at South East Wales.

7.2 The audience was expecting Diane Hebb of the Arts Council to “unveil a new 21<sup>st</sup> century strategy for providing arts to young people.” We did not get it. In fact she said that it was only on 16.11.10 that Council had discussed „for the first time“ the provision of arts for young people. If that is true, it is astonishing that ACW has not put its mind to the subject since the Review announcement on 29.6.10 which cut Gwent Theatre’s funding.

7.2 So the arts „black hole“ is there in the five counties of South East Wales. Who will fill it? It is still puzzling that Gwent Theatre should have been cut. The Arts Council chief executive and the



Heritage Minister have both acknowledged to me personally that Gwent Theatre has done a good job over the years and there has never been a problem with the quality of its work in English and in Welsh.

7.3 Cannot a way be found to support Gwent Theatre's work – to continue as before, reaching over 20,000 pupils a year – by delving into a mixture of funds e.g the arts fund (which has not been decimated following the funding announcement on 17.11.10) and the education fund and the Welsh Assembly Government's "Get it Done Fund."

7.4 It is not naïve to think there is such a thing as a "Get it Done Fund." I am sure there is, and although it will take WAG financial experts to identify funding, with the right amount of good will for the young people of Gwent, it should be entirely possible.

GREGG TAYLOR QC

CHAIRMAN OF GWENT THEATRE

18.11.10



Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru  
Arts Council of Wales

Tuesday 15 February 2011

Christine Chapman AM  
Chair  
Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

*Jean Christie Chapman*

P-03-308 Save Gwent Theatre

Thank you for your letter of 26 January on the above.

You asked for further information on three matters:

1. levels of funding for theatre for young people in Gwent
2. the extent of theatre in education provision across Wales
3. the possibility of accessing a broad analysis of the business cases that we received

#### Funding for theatre for young people in Gwent

For the purposes of your enquiry, I'm assuming that you are principally interested in funding for activity in the 'catchment' area that forms Gwent Theatre's main area of activity. This is principally the local authority areas of Newport, Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Torfaen. However, I'm aware that you've also received representations from Spectacle Theatre, so it might be helpful if I widen the scope of the analysis to include activity in the Spectacle catchment (principally the local authority areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend).

The main funders of theatre for young people in these areas are the Arts Council of Wales, and individual local authorities. At present, funding would mostly fall into the following areas of activity:

- **revenue funded activity** – a range of Arts Council revenue funded organisations are currently providing theatre activity with, and for, young people.

Plas Bute, Caerdydd CF10 5AL  
Ffôn: 0845 8734 900  
Ffacs: 029 2044 1400  
Minicom: 029 2045 1023  
Epost: gwybodaeth@celfcymru.org.uk  
Gwefan: www.celfcymru.org.uk

Bute Place, Cardiff CF10 5AL  
Tel: 0845 8734 900  
Fax: 029 2044 1400  
Minicom: 029 2045 1023  
Email: info@artswales.org.uk  
Website: www.artswales.org.uk

#### Swyddfeydd Lleol/Local Offices:

Caerdydd/Cardiff, Bae Colwyn/Colwyn Bay, Caerfyrddin/Carmarthen  
Rhif Elusen Gofrestredig/Registered Charity Number: 1034245



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These include:

- **Gwent Theatre**, who currently receive just over £255,111 of Arts Council revenue funding. Two local authorities in Gwent Theatre’s catchment (Monmouthshire County and Blaenau Gwent) provide funding through service level agreements. In the current year this is expected to total £38,000. A similar amount is expected in other grant income
- **Spectacle Theatre**, who currently receive £254,000 of Arts Council revenue funding. In the current year the company expects to receive no direct revenue funding from local authorities, although earned income of around £22,000 is expected
- other Arts Council revenue funded organisations based in the same area as that covered by Gwent and Spectacle Theatre (and who promote theatre for young people in their programmes) include **Valleys Kids**, **RCT Community Arts**, the **RCT Theatres Consortium (Parc and Dare, Coliseum and Muni)**, **Head for Art**, **Beaufort Theatre**, **Blackwood Miners Institute**, the **Borough Theatre** and **Riverfront Theatre** in Newport.

Taken together, these organisations promote an extensive and diverse range of work:

- in Caerphilly, **Blackwood Miners Institute** has played host to 30 performances targeting young people and families since April 2009.
- the **Riverfront Theatre** has presented 18 performances aimed at young people and families over the same period
- the **Borough Theatre** in Abergavenny has played host to 24 performances aimed at young people and families since April 2009
- since April 2009, the **Coliseum**, **Muni** and **Park & Dare** have presented 17 performances specifically aimed at children, young people and family audiences
- **Head for Arts** provides a range of arts activities – including drama for young people – across the counties of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, and Torfaen. Head for Arts delivers around 830 hours of arts activity each year, and produced the very well received community play, *Valleys Girl*, involving over 1,000 participants



- in Bridgend, **Valley and Vale Community Arts'** local Arts programme offers creative activities for children and young people. This includes Community Arts projects in schools, After School Clubs in community venues, and activity at the company's base in Bettws during the school holidays.
- **Valley and Vale Community Arts Youth Theatre** for young people aged 15-25 meets weekly as well as through October half term at Bridgend YMCA. Sessions focus on performance skills, rehearsal techniques and different acting styles and involve exercises, discussions, mask work and forum theatre to explore issues and themes relevant to young people.

There are no precise funding figures for all of the above because this activity is just one part of a wider programme. However, total Arts Council revenue funding to these organisations in 2010/11 is around £600,000. These organisations also receive significant local authority support

- other revenue funded organisations based outside of the Spectacle/Gwent Theatre area provide activity. For example:
  - **Theatr Iolo** and **Theatr na N'Og** bring work for children and family audiences into the locality
  - **National Theatre Wales's** inaugural production, *A Good Night Out in the Valleys*, premiered in Blackwood Miners Institute following a period of workshop development with young people in the area
  - the **National Youth Theatre** performed its most recent production at the Riverfront Theatre and draws members from across South East Wales
- **Lottery funded activity** – through our Lottery programmes we fund a variety of activity with, and for, young people. Recent activity includes support for:
  - the development of a new production by **Gwent Young People's Theatre** company, awarded funding of £30,000
  - in Torfaen, the **Congress Youth Theatre** meets weekly and recently received a small Lottery Grant (£5,000) to employ a professional choreographer to work with the group. Demand for the Youth Theatre has been so great county-wide that the Congress recently established a new group in Blaenavon



- Theatre Ffynnon has been winning new admirers for its inspirational theatre work with young disabled performers. Lottery funding this year is £27,000. From 2011/12 they become a new Arts Council revenue funded organisation
- the Arts Council's *Night Out* scheme – *Night Out* tours high quality performances to local community venues and schools across Wales. Since April 2009, *Night Out* has delivered 138 events in the Valleys/Gwent area that were for children and family audiences.

Welsh performers included Sherman Cymru, Clwyd Theatre Cymru TYP, Theatr na N'Og, Arts Active, Arad Goch, Likely Story, Martyn Geraint and Daniel Morden. English performers included FreeHand Circus Berzercus, Fairgame Theatre, The Black Sheep, Moby Duck, Sea Legs Puppet Theatre, Indigo Moon and Pickled Image.

Much of the *Night Out* team's time is spent advising and developing the capacity of community-based promoters, transferring essential business and planning skills. However, *Night Out* also offers direct funding to make events more affordable by defraying the costs of promoting these events. In the geographical area in question, this support amounted to just over £100,000

- *Reach the Heights* – managed by the Arts Council in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government, this European funded programme is specifically designed to tackle the barriers that prevent young people aged 11 to 19 remaining in school and moving on into further education or employment. For example activity in the area includes:
  - *Act Now*, an innovative partnership between Torfaen CBC Young People's Support Service, Barclays Bank and the Legal & General Group. *Act Now* delivers arts participation and training. It includes the provision of theatre based workshops and one-to-one coaching. The young people are also be given job interview experience and money management workshops as part of the drama provision
  - Rathbone Cymru, Solas Cymru, The Strategy, and Valleys Kids are all working on projects that directly aim to engage young people through theatre activity.

The contract value of these projects is around £230,000



- **Cultural Olympiad** – funding from the Arts Council of Wales and the UK Legacy Trust is currently supporting a number of theatre projects, including **Disability Arts Cymru's *Unusual Stage School***, **Valleys Kids' *Msanzi Cymru*** and **Cadw's *Cauldrons and Furnaces*** project in Caerphilly Castle.

Again, it's difficult to disaggregate precise figures given the country-wide nature of the Cultural Olympiad programme, but we would estimate funding of around £200,000

- **other activity** – *ad hoc* local authority, sponsorship, trust funding and fees helps to support independent/commercial providers who are active in the area, for example:
  - **Bridgend Youth Theatre** has a long track-record of producing quality productions. A dedicated team of tutors, technicians, writers and designers are always at hand to build pathways for our young performers and back stage trainees
  - in **Blaenau Gwent** over the last year, the local authority has run a Youth Theatre (for those aged 14+) and a Junior Youth Theatre (for those aged 9-13). Both groups have performed in at least one showcase and one production. There are also regular drama sessions run in Beaufort by **Toppers** and **Kidz R Us** in Tredegar
  - **Merthyr Tydfil's Myfanwy Theatre**, during 2010, hosted 12 performances aimed at children, young people and families
  - **Merthyr Academy of Performing Arts** provides young people with the opportunity to learn about all aspects of the performing arts led by experienced professionals. The academy is open to young people from the ages of 7-19. They have a weekly session and also have the chance to take part in master classes with leading professionals where they will learn skills such as stage combat, dance, classical acting, and many more skills
- **Bigfoot Arts Education**, who in terms of Wales's activity only operate in the South Wales area, while **Stagecoach Theatre School** (who have bases in Merthyr Tydfil, Cwmbran, Pontypridd, Caerphilly and Newport)
- the **Savoy Theatre** in Monmouth is starting to programme theatre activity for family audiences



### Theatre in Education provision across Wales

Traditional Theatre in Education (TiE) activity – as provided by the eight companies who currently specialise in this activity – is delivered to varying different degrees across Wales. The picture varies from year to year. This makes standardised year-on-year comparisons difficult to prepare with consistent accuracy. However, our assessment of business plans as part of our Investment Review – as well as our examination of other company board papers and reports – has enabled us to look at this activity over a reasonably extended period of time.

From this, we have been able to observe a number of factors that define provision across Wales. The main ones are: the different approaches that companies use to deliver their work; the availability of funding (most particularly from local authorities); the levels of income that can be achieved through fees from schools; and, specific factors affecting companies on an individual basis.

With the *caveats* identified above, we are able to offer a number of observations:

- some companies choose to provide a significant amount of activity in established theatre venues as an alternative to peripatetic schools provision. They do this because they want to allow young people to enjoy what they believe will be a better quality, and more complete, theatre experience. (Examples of this approach would be the Young People's company at Theatr Clwyd, and Theatr N'a N'Og when they're resident in Swansea's Dylan Thomas Theatre)
- TiE companies' business plans point to very levels of activity across Wales. This includes variations even with the 'catchment' areas of individual TiE companies.

For example:

- provision across schools in North West Wales is strong, with substantial (although not complete) coverage of schools in Gwynedd, Conwy and Anglesey. In North East Wales (Denbighshire/Wrexham/Flint) coverage in schools is estimated as being between 50-60% of schools
- in Mid and West Wales Ceredigion has strong provision. The target in Powys has generally been 75% coverage (although specific circumstances have meant that provision dropped well below this level in some years)

- in good years, provision in Carmarthenshire is approaching 80%. But there's low coverage across schools in Pembrokeshire (31%)
- in Bridgend, coverage through in-school activity can sometimes be less than half (45%), while activity direct to schools in Neath Port Talbot has tended to vary year-on-year between 36% and 49%
- in Cardiff, 92% of schools booked Theatre lolo between 2006 and 2010. However, only 37% of these were regularly booking schools on Theatr lolo's Priority Bookers Scheme in 2009/10
- in Vale of Glamorgan, 74% of schools booked Theatr lolo between 2006 and 2010. 24% of these were regularly booking schools on the company's Priority Booking Scheme in 2009/10
- information provided by Gwent Theatre shows that coverage varies across their catchment: Monmouthshire is well-served. However, coverage in Newport, Caerphilly and Torfaen is much thinner with the proportion of schools covered ranging from 20%-33% of the total

A key factor in the case of Gwent Theatre has been the availability of local authority funding. For example, funding reductions from Torfaen District and Borough Council led to a reduction in activity. Gwent Theatre made 22 visits to schools in Torfaen in 2006/07 – this had reduced to 15 by 2008/09. It's not clear from the data whether these are 15 different schools – but given that there are 39 schools in Torfaen, whatever the answer a significant proportion of schools are not able to be covered by Gwent Theatre's activities

- Spectacle Theatre delivered around 200 performances to schools in its catchment area of Rhondda Cynon Tâf, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly and parts of Bridgend (in the most recent year for which complete figures were provided – 2008/09). Spectacle has 294 schools in its catchment. It is difficult to say how many of those schools were visited or served; however, if each of those 200 performances had taken place in different schools, Spectacle would have reached 68% of the schools in its catchment area. Given the extent of activity in Spectacle's principal local authority area (Rhondda Cynon Tâf), the actual figure in other local authority areas is likely to be much lower





### Analysis of business plans

The business plans that we received were submitted to us on a confidential basis by the organisations participating in our Investment Review process. At their request, we gave an undertaking that we would not publish either their plans, or our assessment of those plans.

Given this commitment, providing a broad analysis of the business plans would present some significant practical difficulties. We received 116 business plans. They took three teams of specialist officers nearly three months to read, digest and assess. Even if we were to focus only on the business plans submitted by the 8 TiE companies, we would still be looking at documents that in most cases are in excess of 100 pages long – some 1,000 pages of information in total.

You will appreciate that for us to try and undertake such a task would be a very substantial piece of work. And there would always be the risk that any summation by us – no matter how diligently attempted – would fail to capture adequately all the relevant information needed to arrive at a sufficiently detailed analysis. We could try to provide some kind of summary. However, this would be time-consuming and could not be quickly prepared. I would also be concerned that it might not easily provide you with the level of practical detail that you would want.

I am sorry that on this point I have not been able to provide readily available information. However, I hope that the other information set out above provides you with a fuller picture of theatre activity for young people across Wales.

*Yours sincerely*  
*Nick Capaldi*

Nick Capaldi  
Chief Executive



**Alun Ffred Jones AC/AM**  
Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth  
Minister for Heritage



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

Ein cyf: AFJ/00095/11

Sandy Mewies AC

[committee.business@Wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:committee.business@Wales.gsi.gov.uk)

16 Chwefror 2011

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Sandy Mewies'.

Diolch am eich llythyr dyddiedig 27 Ionawr, ynghyd â'r dogfennau a amgaewyd, ynglŷn â Theatr Gwent a Theatr mewn Addysg.

Amgaeaf, er gwybodaeth ichi, gopi o lythyr a anfonodd fy swyddogion mewn ymateb i'r e-bost oddi wrth Mr a Mrs James.

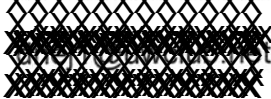
A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Alun Ffred Jones'.

**Alun Ffred Jones AC**  
Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth



Ein cyf/Our ref AT/AFJ/00037/11

Mr & Mrs D James



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

4 February 2011

Dear Mr and Mrs James

Thank you for your further e-mail of 17 January. Taking your points in turn, I will try to provide answers, where I can, to your further questions. I have numbered your questions 1-11, and I have included your text, before providing a response to each question.

1. From further reading into the background to the 8 TIE's we understand that monies from the Welsh Assembly Government have specifically been given to the Arts Council of Wales for funding them, which aims to increase access to and participation in the arts by young people across Wales and it appears that at no point has it been withdrawn. **Is that correct? Therefore are we correct in our understanding that the Arts Council of Wales will now lose all of this money as they are not now supporting all of the 8 TIE companies the money was given to who covered the whole of Wales ?**

**Response:** No, ACW will not see this money withdrawn. TIE funding has not been ring-fenced within ACW's budget for some time and while this funding is, in future, not going to be utilised specifically for TIE, it will continue to be used to help achieve the core aims of increasing access to and participation in the arts by young people across Wales

2. Basically due to the funding withdrawal to 3 of the 8 TIE's by ACW, it appears Wales will not now be fully covered at each of the four key stages in education. These 3 areas make up a large area of the nation and the young people within these areas it appears will now no longer be covered by WAG's main commitments as outlined in 'The One Wales Document'. Therefore it would appear by these actions the Arts Council of Wales will be due for more of a cut and Heritage/WAG will have more in their coffers. **Is that correct?**

**Response:** As above.

3. Regarding the point of the 4% cut being quoted, BBC NEWS politics dated 29<sup>th</sup> June 2010 states: 'The ACW currently provides just over £23.5m to revenue funded organisations, as well as distributing funds from the National Lottery.' I understand the use of the word current in this instance means financial year 2010/2011?

**Response:** Yes.

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300  
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400

[Address]

Ref

4. In the New Funding Strategy from the Arts Council of Wales it states; 'Subject to confirmation in February of the Welsh Assembly Government's draft budget a new portfolio of 71 organisations will share funding of just over £24.25 million in 2011/2012.'

Therefore looking at these two sets of figures:

Just over £23.4 million to RFO's re 2010/2011 submitted and also quoted by Alun Ffred Jones AM Minister for Heritage, re cabinet minutes.

Just over £24.25 million to 71 RFO's re 2011/2012 quoted from Arts Council of Wales site re: New Funding Strategy. **It appears that there will therefore be an increase of £750,000.00 in 2011/2012 for ACW's RFO's. Is that correct? Where therefore does the 4% decrease enter into all of this for the RFO's?**

**Response:** There appears to be some confusion surrounding this point. By reducing funding from 96 to 71 revenue funded organisations, with effect from next year, ACW is effectively making it possible to fund some organisations at a higher level than previously, in line with its investment review conclusions. I cannot confirm how much will specifically be spent on revenue funded organisations, because ACW will not be able to confirm this until the final budget figures have been announced. Provisionally, ACW has been allocated £30.612 million for all its revenue requirements in 2011-12, which include its own running costs and strategic services, as well as funding for arts organisations via revenue funding. By reorganising its priorities, ACW will be able to increase funding to its RFO's while still receiving a reduction in its overall budget. It should also be noted that the 4% reduction covers the period to 13/14; ACW's provisional allocation for 11/12 is lower than the 10/11 settlement

5. As stated and explained above, it appears there is a £750,000.00 increase for the RFO's. **Therefore what is the reasoning for withdrawing the funding to the 3 of the 8 TIE's; Gwent Theatre, Spectacle Theatre and Theatr Powys? Their joint funding at present we understand stands at just over £710,000.00. Why therefore are the ACW taking these actions? It appears there is no logical reasoning for this or can you supply one?**

**Response:** I refer you to previous correspondence from ACW, in which their Chief Executive has sought to explain to you his Council's decision to cease funding the three companies you mention.

6. One last point regarding TIE, Arts Council of Wales has submitted written evidence dated September 2010 to the Inquiry by the National Assembly for Wales Communities and Cultural Committee for the Accessibility of arts and cultural activities in Wales. On page 28 it states 'During the course of our Investment Review we became increasingly concerned about the challenges we faced around arts and young people, and especially arts in education. Initiatives that had been the cornerstone of our strategy for many years were proving increasingly difficult to sustain. A good example would be our strategy for supporting our eight revenue funded Theatre-in-Education (TiE) companies. Over a four year period 2005 to 2009 we increased our revenue support by 7% to the eight companies, but attendances for their TiE performances decreased by 17%. And they're not alone. 'From the ACW reports the overall revenue support to TIE was shown as; £1,926,524.00 in 2005/06 financial year. £1,970,950.00 in 2006/07 financial year. £2,019,398.00 in 2007/08 financial year. £2,019,398.00 in 2008/09 financial year. Therefore, the difference over the 4 year period from 2005/06 to 2008/09 =£92,874.00 which equates to we understand an increase support of just under 5% not the 7% quoted. From this how accurate are the TIE attendance figures quoted? Perhaps each TIE should be asked for their figures? A further point to be noted is that there has been no increase in

revenue support by the ACW to the TIE's since 2007/08 their funding has stayed the same for 4 years.

**Response:** The Welsh Assembly Government does not hold attendance figures for revenue funded organisations but you may wish to follow your own suggestion of contacting the companies concerned.

7. We understand that the Arts Council of Wales is an Assembly Government Sponsored Body and as such the Welsh Assembly Government is responsible to determine the level of remuneration for Chief Executives, Chairs and Board members of these bodies. Is that correct? According to WAG increase in salary, 'the Minister for Finance and Public Service delivery has agreed 'with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 the max consolidated pay award for Chief Executives of Assembly Government Sponsored Bodies (AGSB) should be 1.5% ..... There is also a paragraph in this document where it states max consolidated pay award for Chief Executives should be 2.5%, which is correct? Looking at the annual reports the previous Chief Executive for his final complete year 2007/08 received a salary of £70,422.00 + pension contribution. An increase from 2006/2007 of 2.5%. The current Chief Executive for his first complete year 2009/10 received a salary of £93,380 + pension contribution + (contribution towards accommodation (including tax and national insurance)). Could you now explain why the salary has increased by £22,958.00 + pension contribution + benefit in kind of £3,389.00? It appears that this is quite a substantial increase to his predecessor's salary 2 years prior. How is that? It would appear that the role of Chief Executive has increased by 4 emoluments bands, is that correct? This we understand is a lot more than the % increase recommended by the Welsh Assembly Government. **Are we correct in our understanding? Can you explain why this has happened?**

**Response:** The Welsh Assembly Government determines the rate of remuneration for the Chairman, together with any annual increases, and approves the initial salary of the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive's performance-related bonuses are recommended to the Council by a Remuneration Committee. The Welsh Assembly Government advises the percentage of the bonus which forms a consolidated pay increase with the remainder paid as a non-consolidated award.

The starting salary of the current Chief Executive was approved by the Welsh Assembly Government. The salary is comparable to similar organisations and reflects the market rate of the post.

8. We understand that there was an interim Chief Executive on a management fee of £69,600 For the period 21<sup>st</sup> April till 17<sup>th</sup> September 2008 (believe that those are the correct dates). However, the present Chief Executive took up his appointment we understand on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2008 his salary for financial year ending 2008/2009 being £50,089 + non-consolidated award not shown separately + pension contribution £9,317 + benefit in kind (contribution towards accommodation (including tax and national insurance)) £4,745, a total salary of £54,834 + pension contribution for just under 7 months. Again this we understand is a lot more than the % increase recommended by the Welsh Assembly Government. It appears to be a substantial increase from the previous Chief Executives salary who for the full year 2007/2008 received £70,422 + pension contribution for the full 12 months. It appears that the previous Chief Executive received £15,588 + pension contribution for working just over 5 months more. **Are we correct in our understanding? an you explain why this has happened? We understand that payment is also linked to which of the 5 bands is assigned to ACW, but has the banding dramatically increased in rate since 2007/08 or has ACW moved up in its banding? Also with the**

**proposed reduction in funding cuts for the ACW along with staff costs they have to make are we to understand that the ACW will now be moving down in its banding?**

**Response:** As above regarding the salary of the current Chief Executive. The salary of the current Chief Executive is not due to any percentage increase over his predecessor, it is a separate matter reflecting individual circumstances and the market situation at the time of the appointment. Please note that non-consolidated awards are always disclosed separately in the Arts Council's financial statements. As the current Chief Executive took up his post in September 2008, no performance award was due in 2008/09.

Reference to the AGSB banding is misleading in this instance. ACW remain a Band 3 organisation, as determined by the Welsh Assembly Government. There has been no movement up or down bandings. The position of an organisation within each banding is determined by a number of factors, staffing and funding levels are just two of these factors. I am not aware of any plans to review the position of individual AGSB's.

ACW have their own pay system and are not linked to WAG pay scales although they are required to have their pay remit approved annually by the Welsh Assembly Government.

9. It would also appear that the salary paid to the Chairman is not consistent to understand since he has received payment for his position as follows; £38,000 in 2004/05; £39,000 in 2005/06; £32,864 in 2006/07 shown in 2007/08 report (£38,000 shown in 2006/07 report); \* which one is correct? £42,120 in 2007/08 (remuneration set at £324 per day) £43,160 in 2008/09 increase of 2.47% not 1.5% as per agreement for chair of AGSB's £43,809 in 2009/10 increase of 1.5% **Are we correct on our understanding with this? Can you explain why this has happened?**

**Response:** The rate of remuneration of the Chairman reflects the number of days committed to Arts Council business. The rise in the level of the change in remuneration since 2006/07 reflects an increase in the number of days worked by the Chair on Council business from 2 to 2.5 days per week. The two figures for 2006/07 reflects a recalculation of the rates paid to Chairs, which was only finalised after the first figure was published. The Welsh Assembly Government sets the level of remuneration for all AGSB Chairs annually. Any increase is based on cost of living indexes and is not consistent year on year. It has in recent years ranged between 2.5% and zero.

10. One final point is regarding Travel and subsistence expenses incurred and defrayed whilst on Council business by the Chief Executive and Chairman of the ACW. These expenses we believe have not been shown on the reports previously for the Chief Executive and Chairman separately. It is only since the 2008/09 annual report can they be seen on page 83 under; 'The total actual emoluments of the Chairman and Chief Executive were made up of:' This shows the figures for 2008/09 and also 2007/08 but we cannot find the figures in 2007/08 report could you tell us where they are shown? In the 2007/08 report it states Chair £2,259 and Chief Executives £15,762. **Haven't they been claimed before this date? If not why are they now?**

**Response:** There is no statutory obligation to disclose the amounts reimbursed to the Chairman and Chief Executive for travel and subsistence. With effect from 2007/08 the Arts Council has voluntarily disclosed this information.

11. **Finally why does the percentage charged to general activities and the national lottery fluctuate each year for the Chairman and Chief Executives emoluments/remuneration?**

Response: The level of funding ACW receives from Grant-in-Aid and Lottery sources is not constant. Running costs, including salaries, are apportioned between the Arts Council's general and lottery distribution activities on the basis of staff time. The apportionment is reviewed annually.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Stevenson  
Arts Policy Branch





**Alun Ffred Jones AC/AM**  
Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth  
Minister for Heritage



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-308  
Ein cyf/Our ref AFJ/00104/11

Christine Chapman AM  
Chair - Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA  
committee.business@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

25 February 2011

*Dear Christine,*

Thank you for your letter of 26 January.

You have invited me to give a response on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government to your Committee's concerns about the "robustness of the investment review process, specifically in relation to the theatre-in-education process".

Arts Council for Wales (ACW) was remitted, by my predecessor, to conduct a wide-ranging review of its investments in light of what was judged to be a widely-agreed view that change was needed. In my Remit Letter of 2009/10 to ACW I re-affirmed this requirement. As you state in your letter, the design and management of the investment review and resulting decisions are the responsibility of the ACW. This is in line with the agreed approach to funding the arts in Wales, which has been debated at length by the National Assembly for Wales.

My responsibility was to ensure that the review process was fair and robust and that the strategic direction taken by ACW was in line with Welsh Assembly Government policy. In line with this, I have received regular briefings on the conduct of the review and on the action which ACW have taken subsequently. I am satisfied that the process by which these decisions were taken was rigorous and fair. It is also worth reiterating that this was also the view of the Council's independent auditors, RSM Tenon, who gave the review a "substantial" assessment on the three occasions on which they assessed the investment review. The robustness of ACW's decisions was also tested through an independent appeals process.

The Council made its decisions on which organisations should receive revenue funding on the basis that they represented the highest priority for support when assessed against the detailed criteria that ACW had developed and consulted upon with all those who would be affected.

I am aware that the decision not to fund theatre in education projects has drawn considerable criticism from some quarters. I note your particular concern that "the Arts Council for Wales approach to theatre-in-education changed in the middle of the investment

review". I do not support this view. In my remit letter of 2009-10 to ACW, I included the specific instruction that any future strategy should include "a fresh look at funding strategy and be prepared to look robustly at the effectiveness of current investment". All funded organisations will have been fully aware of this advice. I am not aware that in any of its submission guidance ACW committed to the continuation of theatre in education provision, or the procurement of a new service in this field. Instead, the potential of all organisations was considered, both on the individual merits of their case, and their wider strategic commitment to arts priorities.

It was fully in line with the remit I had issued for the Council to come to difficult but important decisions on priorities and for these decisions to be based on the evidence submitted by the companies and a thorough review of their business plans.

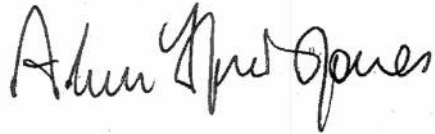
The Council could as you note have decided to halt the review process based on the evidence which the review process generated on theatre in education. Given the importance of this matter I would have been surprised if they had not considered all of the available options. Fundamentally, however, ACW has explained that decisions about theatre in education had to be considered within the wider context of theatre activity in Wales.

As it begins to implement the results of the investment review I have been determined to ensure that ACW should now bring a new focus to the wider opportunities available to children and young people to attend, and participate in, arts activities. ACW is currently consulting on proposals in a strategy paper on young people and the arts "Changing Lives"; consultation ends on 10 March. I have discussed this with ACW in some detail, including at a meeting with the Chair and Chief Executive on 1 February, given that our aim must be to maximise access to the arts in all parts of Wales including the areas served by Gwent Theatre and Spectacle Theatre. I would note that there has been a misconception among some parties that theatre in education has been universally provided across Wales. Provision in schools in NW Wales has been strong, as it has been in Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire. In Pembrokeshire, however, provision has been to 31% of schools, while it has been between 45-60% in NE Wales and Bridgend. According to ACW data, Spectacle Theatre has performed in less than half of the schools in its catchment area (RCT, Merthyr Tydfil, and parts of Caerphilly and Bridgend). Similarly, Gwent Theatre has performed in a high number of schools in Monmouthshire, but only in between 20-33% of the total number of schools in Newport, Caerphilly and Torfaen; none of these three local authorities currently funds theatre in education.

The assumption that has been made by some that activity in other parts of Wales will continue unchanged next year is wrong. We will see changes in approach consistent with the new strategy and the five companies that previously provided theatre in education and which will continue to be funded will, in future, deliver theatre more broadly and in a way that is not restricted to the school environment. There will also be greater expectations placed on a wider range of arts organisations who have a part to play in enthusing and entertaining young audiences. I have recently issued a remit letter for 2011-12 to the Chair of ACW, in which I told Professor Smith that I was concerned "that there should be exciting, high-quality and challenging opportunities for children and young people to experience, create and take part in artistic activity". I have tasked ACW with addressing the question of geographical availability and instructed them to report to me before the beginning of the next academic year.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the commitment and hard work of all those engaged in delivering the vitally important creative programmes of arts bodies in Wales, whether or not they are revenue-funded clients of ACW. The investment review process has been very challenging for some organisations. But I believe that ACW was correct to

believe that we needed to submit all arts organisations to a process of rigorous assessment and review. The consultation which ACW conducted ahead of its review suggested that there was widespread agreement on that point across the arts community. I am satisfied that the review was conducted transparently and effectively. The outcome of the review leaves us better placed to ensure that we can now maximise the public benefits associated with our investment in the arts, and I very much look forward to a reinvigorated approach to arts provision for children and young people in the near future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Alun Ffred Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

**Alun Ffred Jones AC/AM**

Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth/Minister for Heritage

## Response from the petitioner

PET(3)-04-11

02-03-2011

Dear Ms. Chapman,

For me, the most recent statement by the Heritage Minister appears to include very few words of his own. The pronouncement that bears his name carries all the turns of phrase and facts that typify the attitude and tactics of Prof. D. Smith and Mr. N. Capaldi. As such, there are no new arguments to refute.

It is clear that the Minister is eyeing the winning post, and has no wish to unsettle his horse before he reaches the elections in May. As such, I feel he is failing in his duties, and has already lost my confidence, and my vote.

Yours,

George Davis-Stewart

Alun Ffred Jones AC/AM  
Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth  
Minister for Heritage



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-314, P-03-303  
Ein cyf/Our ref SF/AJ/0033/11

Christine Chapman AM  
Chair - Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
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10th March 2011

*Dear Christine,*

Thank you for your letters to me of 1 March, and to the Deputy First Minister, of 3 March; as Minister with responsibility for arts funding, we have agreed that I will reply to both letters.

I have noted that you have now received a petition on behalf of "Save Theatre Powys" and "Mid Powys Youth Theatre", in addition to petitions already received from "Save Gwent Theatre" and "Spectacle Theatre".

Dealing first with the points raised in your letter to me, I welcome the Committee's close interest in the provision of arts opportunities for children and young people. It was my intention that the letter I sent you on 25 February should describe the position we have reached as comprehensively as possible because of the importance I attach to extending artistic opportunities for young people. I am sorry you felt my reply did not fully respond to the Committee's concerns.

In your latest letter you have quoted the evidence provided to you by ACW. You are concerned that ACW adopted a significant change of approach during its consideration of business plans submitted to the investment review. Your conclusion is that those companies whose focus was theatre in education were in some way uniquely disadvantaged by this irregularity in the Investment Review process. I would repeat my view that I do not believe this to be the case.

ACW's Council had a complex task before it, which related to all the art forms it supports, and to all the companies who submitted business cases. I am satisfied that ACW acted in line with the remit I issued in the way they conducted the investment review. My instruction to the Council was that they should undertake a root and branch review of all areas of funded activity. My expectation was that the effectiveness of all aspects of activity should be scrutinised in the same robust fashion as part of the review process. It was not my intention that any individual areas of activity should be accorded special protected status. ACW provided clear written advice in advance of the review to all those who would be

affected by it explaining the approach that it intended to follow. I have seen no evidence that this approach was not pursued consistently throughout the Investment Review process.

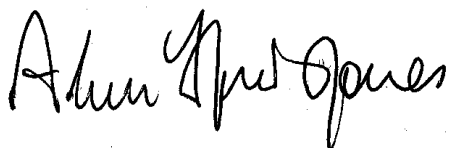
ACW did not commence the review by declaring that it was setting in stone its strategic expectations or by undertaking that no area of provision would change in any art form. Indeed, it was made abundantly clear that changes would be made. In the statement I made to the National Assembly for Wales on 29 June last year, I said that "The review requires ACW to acknowledge and address areas of weakness in our arts provision, to continue to develop the arts in Wales across all art forms, and to work with its core clientele of arts organisations to ensure that these companies are supported to give of their best." Just as some companies involved in the provision of, for example, dance, literature, and public art may have been surprised at the radical decisions ACW have taken in relation to those strategic areas, the announcements relating to theatre in education were unwelcome to some, while they have been welcomed by others. For each strategic debate, in the various art form areas, the Council had to look at all the available options, as it did in the case of theatre in education.

I have been advised that ACW is actively engaged in constructive discussions around future activity in the areas served by the three companies who are the subject of petitions to your Committee. In the case of two of those companies, the possibilities for continued funding from ACW, in the form of project support, are being explored, with some projects already agreed for the coming financial year. In the case of the third – which is in fact a local authority service, rather than an independent organisation – ACW is in dialogue with that local authority about how it wishes to support activity for young people in the future.

In terms of funding from the European Structural Funds programmes 2007–2013, from your letter, it appears that, on this occasion, the petitioning companies are looking to backfill a shortfall in funding for their 'core' activities, which is unlikely to qualify for direct Structural Funds support.

However, many organisations benefit indirectly from European funding as beneficiaries of EU projects and by tendering to deliver activities of EU projects. As an example, the *Reach the Heights* EU funded scheme, led by the Assembly Government's Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills and delivered in partnership with ACW, is aimed at people aged 11-19 who either are, or are at risk of, disengaging from mainstream education and training. This scheme may be a viable funding option for the petitioning companies and I would therefore advise them to look into this option via their contacts at ACW. I understand that one of the companies has already held discussions with ACW about engaging with the *Reach the Heights* scheme and that there may be scope for the company in question to obtain funding via this route should a second round of funding be available.

Yours Sincerely,



**Alun Iwan Jones AC AM**

Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth/Minister for Heritage

Dear Ms Chapman,

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the Heritage Minister's letter of 25<sup>th</sup> February, and to acknowledge the amalgamation of the Gwent, Spectacle and Powys Theatre causes.

We are most grateful for the Petitions Committee's determined efforts to win clarification from ACW's CEO on January 25<sup>th</sup> 2011, and for the conclusions that you drew from those proceedings for the Heritage Minister's consideration on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2011.

His reply to those enquiries was nothing new, little to his credit.

What has been more remarkable and more disappointing is the exchange between our Chair and the First Minister, which began simply with Gregg Taylor following up a conversation that had taken place between the First Minister and Gary Meredith. The Minister had asked what GM thought of the idea of TiE being funded through Education, to which the reply was that any funding source was to be welcomed, for the sake of such a valuable medium of experience being retained.

In reply to Gregg there was only another formulaic re-iteration in the manner of his Heritage minister. When challenged on this, the Minister's next response, on 10<sup>th</sup> March, still began with the same formula, before announcing abruptly that, as of April 2011, no penny or thought will be given to TiE.

We append this correspondence between our Chair, Gregg Taylor, and the First Minister as it has a direct bearing on matters; we include too our Response to the ACW paper, Changing Lives, in view of the shortness of the remaining time scale for your own business.

Yours sincerely,  
George Davis-Stewart

P.S.

- **Alun Ffred Jones denies having heard about "goalposts being moved" AFTER submission of business plans. This does not seem to tally with his ACW CEO's evidence to Petitions Committee on January 25th 2011. Either the CEO is out of his control, or....**





## **AMs slam minister over Gwent Theatre cuts**

[www.southwalesargus.co.uk](http://www.southwalesargus.co.uk)

THE minister responsible for the body which cut off the funding to Gwent Theatre was grilled by a cross-party group of Assembly members over the decision during a heated debate.

**Y Gwir Anrh/Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AC/AM**  
Prif Weinidog Cymru/First Minister of Wales



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: FM/00209/11

Gregg Taylor  
gtaylorqc@btinternet.com

10 March 2011

Dear Mr Taylor,

I am writing in response to your email of 21 February about Gwent Theatre.

I have noted your concerns about the decision arising from the Arts Council of Wales' Investment Review, to withdraw annual revenue funding from Gwent Theatre.

While the Welsh Assembly Government sets the strategic priorities for the arts in Wales, as you know, individual funding decisions are a matter for ACW who operate at arms-length from Government. As such, you will appreciate that it would not be appropriate for Ministers to intervene in individual funding decisions.

While the loss of revenue funded status for Gwent Theatre is undoubtedly a disappointment, it should not automatically lead to the end of the Theatre. I believe you are currently involved in discussions with ACW regarding alternative sources of funding for Gwent Theatre and, in particular Theatre of Young People. I would encourage you to pursue these discussions in order to secure a future for your organisation.

I would like to draw attention to one of the issues in your email which I believe needs clarification. From April 2011 no organisation will be supported for TIE work. The remaining five organisations will remain revenue clients of ACW but will only be funded for non-TIE work.

In future, arts provision for children and young people will be delivered through a wide range of artforms, including, but not exclusively, theatre. ACW have recently consulted on their strategy for arts provision for young people – Changing Lives- and the outcome of this consultation exercise will be considered by their Board shortly. Far from being a barrier to access, the goal of this new strategic approach to arts provision for young people will ensure increased opportunities for participation and access to the arts across Wales. The Heritage Minister has emphasised in the 2011-12 remit letter he has issued to ACW that ACW must oversee exciting, high-quality and challenging artistic opportunities for children and young people, with attention paid to geographical availability.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C Jones'.

**CARWYN JONES**

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

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GWENT THEATRE  
THE DRAMA CENTRE  
PEN Y POUND  
ABERGAVENNY  
NP7 5UD

11.3.11

Dear Carwyn,

Thank you for your e mail letter of yesterday. It is apparent to me that you did not write the letter yourself and, while I understand that your staff compose many letters for you, it would have been preferable in this instance to have had your personal attention. May I therefore raise these points in reply to your letter.

1. It is so disappointing to receive a reply employing the same phraseology that has been used time and again by the Arts Council of Wales (ACW) and the Heritage Minister. The “arm’s length” argument has been used as if it is something sacrosanct. It is of course a useful working practice but it is not a “principle” that precludes review by the Minister or the Welsh Assembly Government of decisions made by such bodies.

The Heritage Minister has explained that it is not for him to “intervene” in the Arts Council decision making process. He does not seem to grasp (and his misconception is repeated in your letter) that we all accept that intervention in the decision making process itself would not be right. But a later review of a decision which has attracted so much criticism is

certainly possible and, in the circumstances now prevailing, is one which should be undertaken.

To fall back on the lame “arm’s length” argument is simply to say that the decision has been made! It is no answer and no way to deal with a problem that is not going to go away. If the present Heritage Minister and the present Assembly Government does nothing, it will be taken up with the next. It is also ripe for Judicial Review.

2. I am sorry to say that the attempt in your letter to “clarify” what has happened to Theatre in Education (TiE) in Wales does not present the full picture. The full picture is that ACW decision to cut Gwent Theatre (and Spectacle and Powys) was made in June 2009 after a twelve month Investment Review during which Gwent Theatre and the other TiE companies were required to submit business plans. As Nick Capaldi recently told the Petitions Committee, the new instruction to the five funded companies that they need not (not “must not”) provide a TiE service was made after the business plans had been received and considered by ACW.

[Incidentally, the new direction is unlikely to be put into practice by the five companies who have their old TiE commitments in place and are funded to some extent by local authorities to provide it.]

3. The reason for the huge outcry is that the ACW „moved the goalposts“ during the course of the Investment Review. Had Gwent Theatre known that the ACW was minded to bring in an entirely new

working practice, its business plan would have been entirely different. Thousands of people have signed petitions in protest at the ACW decision (both its procedure and its substance).

4. Your reference to the latest remit letter from the Heritage Minister shows what short memories people have. In 2008 the Heritage Minister's remit letter presented Theatre in Education as a valuable means to bring artistic experience to young people in Wales and one which would be supported. It was on that basis that the 2009 business plans were devised and submitted by Gwent Theatre.

The Communities and Culture Committee and the Petitions Committee have devoted considerable time to this issue. They understand what has happened and are very critical that ACW had „moved the goalposts“ in the way they did. I have been informed by the Petitions Committee that they have recently written to you on this precise point.

5. Gwent Theatre has been in consultation with the ACW about alternative funding. The fact is that only limited amounts of money are available. They amount to £30,000 in any given year with the possibility of an extra £20,000 development money. As Mr Capaldi has recognised, the alternative funding will not replace the revenue funding of Gwent TiE company.

6. At the moment our perception is that of a Heritage Minister who repeats the same mantra without appearing to understand the complaints

levelled at his defence of the ACW. He undoubtedly has power to act but will not use it.

At the same time we appear to have a system in place where two Assembly Committees have looked in depth at the Investment Review. They do understand what has happened and are highly critical of it, but have no power themselves to correct an obvious injustice.

7. Gwent Theatre (and indeed Spectacle and Powys) still urge this Government to look again at the outcome of the Arts Council of Wales decision in some depth and to give some consideration to matters of principle involved.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregg Taylor'.

Gregg Taylor QC  
Chair of Gwent Theatre

15<sup>th</sup> March, 2011

Gwent Theatre regrets the Heritage Minister's inability or disinclination to make independent comment on the issue of policy-making and process in the conduct of the Investment Review. He appears to have done little more than sign his name to a statement drafted by ACW. Nothing new is said, and the same manipulation of statistics is offered up in all its selective and fallacious glory: there is emphasis placed on the lack of funding from several local authorities, as if this should be a significant factor in itself, when the logic and the statistics should actually be celebrating the uptake of the work in spite of the absence of parallel funding from local authorities – such data has been provided by the eight TiE companies. If funding from local authorities was a decisive factor, then more companies than the vanquished three should be worrying about their prospects.

Frankly, there is nothing robust to be commended in this thinking by ACW; it does tempt the thought that while RSM Tenon has commended "the process", it may be that they have been, like the rest of us, afforded a limited sight of the pertinent evidences and statistics.

We recall ACW's account of audience figures, apparently representing the decline of TiE: performances in 16 secondary schools were portrayed as representing the whole of Wales, across the entire education range, as a basis for decision making and the formation of policy. The member of staff responsible for that one is still in post, which says little for recruitment and staff appraisal. The ability to gather and/or interpret data does not appear a strong point for this organisation.

When the Heritage Minister cites his Remit Letter of 2009/10, as if to say "you were warned", it succeeds in using the word "robust" as a euphemism for "making hard decisions"; yet we find in para 3 of the same letter that he was "not proposing any radical change in policy or direction for ACW"; at 1.4 we find what seems to have become the driving ambition of ACW – promoting the international profile of the arts; at 2.1 even the instruction "to look robustly at the effectiveness of current investment" is recognised as "a long-term ambition".

This is where the goalposts were situated initially. 116 RFOs set out to formulate Business Plans, taking aim on the basis of this document, and the indicators found in 'Strive to Excel', so:

1. Prior to submission of Business Plans to their transparent Investment Review process, there was no direct indication that any TiE company need consider a new and different future.
2. TiE is beginning (or so it appears) to be questioned, but ACW CEO does not think it worth asking the 8 companies to make any adjustment to their business plans. (Evidence to Petitions Committee, Jan 25 2011)
3. Three TiE companies cut; the other five to cover the gaps by expanding their own touring - costings from these companies fail to take account of the geographical scale involved (e.g. two

schools a day in Powys?) In any case, funding withdrawn from the three companies is not offered to the other five to meet the costs.

4. Next announcement to the five companies is that they need not tour in to, or cater for schools alone.

5. Now, so the First Minister reports to our Chair: "From April 2011 no organisation will be supported for TiE work. The remaining five organisations will remain revenue clients of ACW [sic] but will only be funded for non-TiE work"

We are indebted to First Minister Carwyn Jones for clarifying the position with regard to funding for Theatre in Education [see his letter of March 10<sup>th</sup> 2011]. In view of this categorical statement, we would now ask:

- A. That the Business Plans of all eight TiE companies be made public for scrutiny, as it would appear that the terms of Business Plans have been renegotiated after the Review process had been concluded. If this is the case, how is it that only five companies can be retained, whilst three others are denied the opportunity to renegotiate their terms?
- B. We would suggest that it is a dangerous step to remove the requirement to provide TiE from companies which draw down local authority funding to do just that. Does it not jeopardise the contract of partnership between ACW and those LAs?

George Davis-Stewart

For Gwent Theatre





theatr  
gwent  
theatre

## Gwent Theatre's response to Arts Council of Wales's Strategy for Children Young People and the Arts Changing Lives

We would like to offer the following observations regarding the above consultation document.

1. The document is confusing. It is not clear whether it is a strategy or a manifesto. The new 'manifesto' first appears on page 4, but when it appears on page 22, the wording of the five statements is shortened. The ten proposals are too detailed and pre-ordained, they include decisions and assumptions that are un-tested and not strategic.

2. The executive summary makes no mention of experiencing the arts, just taking part. The focus on participation is strong but the role of the professional artist and engagement with professional arts is marginal.

Children are always engaged and never passive, whether they are experiencing a performance or actively participating in an artistic activity. The document makes the assumption that children are only engaged if they are physically active.

3. On page 12 reference is made to stating that 'the provision of schools-based activity through the curriculum is the responsibility of the Welsh Assembly Government', yet on page 14 the paper talks about Artists in Schools and the value of a visit to or from a theatre. This is a contradiction in terms and is confusing. TYP/TIE companies have never been curriculum led but it is true to say that teachers will inevitably link any artistic work to areas of the curriculum to justify giving up curriculum time for artistic activities.

4. The desire for TYP/TIE companies to perform in theatre venues rather in schools needs further consideration and will not provide equal access to the arts. There needs to be a stronger endorsement of the premise that every child in Wales should enjoy a wide range of quality arts as a consumer every year, whilst ensuring that the most disadvantaged young people can access professional art experiences. How feasible is it that there will be a strong network of theatre venues prepared to promote work that attracts school and family audiences. The document assumes that 'companies do not create innovative and challenging work because it is in schools'. It may have an effect on the type of work being created. Venues may only be interested in certain kinds of work with a certain commercial bias to 'family friendly' work being programmed over challenging new work. Taking art into theatres and out of schools will stop it reaching a wide spectrum of socio-economic groups. Work in schools is important, it transforms children's ideas of their environment and reaches a wide range of children and young people.

It is through presenting challenging professional theatre in schools that other projects and partnerships develop, work placements, workshops and residencies, youth theatre and commissioning of new writing.

5. There is an assumption that National Youth Arts Wales will nurture talent from its earliest beginnings. There is currently no evidence of NYAW offering activities at a local level, rather they select from the best. How do young people become the best? There is no mention of fostering those who help deliver young people's creative talents. NYAW doesn't nurture talent from its earliest beginnings.

6. Geographical issues are not addressed. 'Spread work across Wales from all organisations' – how will this be achieved and managed to ensure that all young people will enjoy a wide range of high quality art every year?

Gregg Taylor  
Chairman