

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / The Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
Cynyrchiadau Ffilm a Theledu Mawr yng Nghymru / Film and Major TV Production in Wales
CWLC(5) FILMTV06
Ymateb gan Canolfan Ffilm Cymru / Evidence from Film Hub Wales

To investigate how Ffilm Cymru Wales, the BFI and others support the sector, and how this work complements the work of the Welsh Government in this area.

1. BFI Film Hub Wales (FHW) have been tasked by the British Film Institute (BFI) to operate as a lead delivery organisation for exhibition in Wales.

Our specialism at FHW (<http://filmhubwales.org/about-us>) is audiences. Led by Chapter as the Film Hub Lead Organisation (FHLO), we believe that audiences and the cultural exhibitors who work tirelessly to reach them, require principal consideration across the film value chain, and within priorities for funding. If we do not reflect carefully on who Welsh productions will reach, and invest in ways of maximising this, how can we expect films to succeed.

FHW therefore exists to champion the innovative work of over 250 vibrant film exhibitors, in Wales, offering inspiration, support and inclusion, to bring British and international film and supporting activity to diverse audiences across Wales and the UK.

We operate audience development, research and skills support programmes, thanks to the support of the British Film Institute (BFI), awarding funds from the National Lottery to the programme since 2013, via their Film Forever and BFI2022 UK wide strategies. The BFI are our principal funders but we also work to lever in further funds for film exhibition, connecting film as an art form to wider inclusion, health and wellbeing, and cross art form agendas.

Our work enables innovative and adventurous cultural film programming in Wales and UK wide. We help exhibitors to invest regularly in bold choices, facilitating greater in-depth audience participation and overcoming potential barriers to access.

FHW is part of a UK wide network of eight hubs funded by BFI to form the BFI Film Audience Network (FAN), with Chapter, Cardiff, appointed as the FHLO in Wales. Since Film Hub Wales set up in late 2013, we have supported over 150 cinema projects (<http://filmhubwales.org/about-us/highlights>), reaching over 275,000

audience members and over 500 training beneficiaries. We have been proud to develop nationally significant projects such as:

- Roald Dahl on Film (<http://filmhubwales.org/roalddahlonfilm>),
- The Queer Film Network UK (<http://queerfilmnetwork.org/>),
- Off Y Grid (<http://filmhubwales.org/projects/y-grid>)
- The Gentle/Radical Film Club (<http://filmhubwales.org/gentleradical-film-club>).
- Anim18 (<http://filmhubwales.org/projects/anim18>). Launching on Friday 20th April 2018 and running until November, we are leading on the UK wide Anim18: A Celebration of British Animation. Working with industry partners across the sector, we will celebrate the past, present and future of British animation talent. Here at Chapter, we will champion the story of animation in Wales. With c£140,000 invested by the BFI, we levered a further £110,000 from Arts Council England and £7k from The British Council. Alongside in-kind support from creatives and participating venues, we will offer a diverse audience facing programme designed to grow the sector.

FHW will continue to offer a significant audience development programme from 2018–22 as part of the BFI 2022 strategy, bringing more films, to more people, in more places across Wales.

Made in Wales

A core element of our work, which specifically compliments that of the Welsh Government, is our FHW Made in Wales strategy (<http://filmhubwales.org/support/made-wales-2018>). The strategy works to boost the exhibition of Welsh film from heritage to new releases. We regularly liaise with filmmakers on releases and celebrate our cultural heritage through film. While we are not a distributor, we recognise the need for a formal film distribution strategy in Wales.

To this end, we called our first cross-sector meeting in January 2018 between the wider film organisations in Wales (such as Bafta Cymru, Wales Screen, NSSAW, IntoFilm, Pinewood, BBC Cymru and the Welsh Broadcasting Trust) covering areas such as training, broadcast and production, with the aim of developing central approaches to Welsh film marketing. We are currently discussing new approaches, such as:

- A potential partnership with Screen Alliance Wales, who are developing an online portal. Wales.com may also offer similar opportunities to collaborate,
- Development of a collective brand for film in Wales, such as shared hashtag #CymruarFfilm / WalesonFilm and national film reviews,
- Collaborative approaches to audience research and profile building for new talent.

We believe that clarity around partner services would address any confusion amongst wider industry around services on offer, with information on talent and new releases readily available in one location.

In terms of specific support offered to members by FHW to date, we have offered marketing and programming support to over 70 Welsh films, 24 of which would have otherwise had no theatrical release. We offer the following activities as part of the strategy:

- 10 Welsh film Preview Days in 8 different locations across Wales to date, enabling exhibitors to see films in advance, network and support programming (<http://filmhubwales.org/projects/welsh-film-preview-days>),
- Financial support for exhibitors seeking to programme Welsh film (circa £10,000 available annually),
- Collaborating both financially and creatively to Sinemaes at the National Eisteddfod, celebrating Welsh language film and talent,
- A preview room for Hub members where they can view Welsh film screeners online (<http://filmhubwales.org/previews>),
- Regular newsletters containing updates on releases,
- We talk regularly with distributors, filmmakers and agencies such as Ffilm Cymru Wales and Wales Screen on upcoming releases, passing information through to the network,
- Young FAN – a young programmers UK network with 4 venues in Wales and many more across the country. This offers opportunities for young audiences to train and feedback on Welsh films,
- A Made in Wales section on our website, where a catalogue of Welsh films are listed, included centrally curated packages for celebrations such as Santes Dwynwen (<http://filmhubwales.org/films/made-wales>),
- Curated film packages where there is thematic demand,
- National and regional promotion of Welsh film, where this activity will potentially generate additional audiences.

As specialists in audience development, we reiterate the need for a robust approach to Welsh made Film, in Wales and beyond, that values cultural presentation alongside production and development, as a driver of economic impact. We are fortunate that a wealth of experienced organisations exist in Wales to support new talent, although many work with limited funds. In order to maximise investment, avoid duplication and grow the sector, we need to collectively present a clear, central message. This need not sit within one organisation, but a range of specialist organisations.

2. The Welsh Government's policy aims for funding film and major television production in Wales, and transparency as to why and how decisions are made in this area;

- A. Additional clarity around the policy aims would be beneficial, with discussion of how the distribution and exhibition sectors can respond to and ideally benefit from Government investment, expertise and advocacy.
- B. It would be beneficial to have an exhibition representative on the Media Investment Panel, to reflect the interests and changing dynamics of the sector in Wales and beyond, considering how production and development decisions affect the audience facing elements of the film value chain.
- C. With inequality addressed in the Economic Action Plan, an absence of diverse voices means we are also lacking a sense of inclusivity and how minority audiences are considered within funding discussions.

FHW acts as the Lead Hub for Diversity and Inclusion on behalf of the UK BFI FAN network – managing the BFI FAN Access Officer and working on the delivery of the Inclusive Cinema Strategy (<http://filmhubwales.org/projects/access>). This will soon see the launch of inclusivecinema.org, which will work in collaboration with the UKCA's accessiblescreeningsuk.co.uk.

It is essential that projects are inclusive, promoting the diversity of our audience and eclectic industry. We recognise the significance of film to isolated rural communities and young audiences in Wales, in how it can generate positive partnerships, life-changing skills and celebrate the fundamental value of film as both heritage and art form, promoting Wales as a cornerstone for film culture.

We would welcome participation in the discussion around how diverse voices are nurtured in Wales and where we can find them. Representation on screen, in the crew and in the audience should form a core part of the process going forward and this is a key driver within the FHW, Chapter and BFI2022 strategy.

3. The support given by the Welsh Government to develop the film and television industries in Wales including: Economic impact, and how this is spread across Wales, Cultural impact, including the Welsh language and value for money

Investment

Support from local authority budgets for cultural presentation is dwindling with reference to the exhibition sector. Many organisations attempt to operate without this support. We are fortunate to have a rich cultural history in Wales, represented via our mixed arts centres, cinemas, film festivals, miners' halls and community spaces. Venues like the Monmouth Savoy and Theatr Colwyn have operated as cultural hubs for over 100 years. This heritage needs to be recognised and protected.

Many of these organisations operate via diverse funding streams and Welsh Government support could help to unlock other funds. With investment, we could work collectively to tell the story of Welsh film and organisations such as Chapter could develop its existing function as a national film space, growing to meet the demands of both industry and audiences.

Capital investment in screen capacity is essential to increase the economic impact of film. Many venues face challenges such as changes to digital technology, rendering screening facilities obsolete, or in need of expensive repair with extremely limited access to capital funds. Very few venues in Wales operate with more than one screen, reducing the potential economic impact of film. For instance, although we have a wealth of experience and activity in North Wales, only one two screen independent venue exists at the Scala Prestatyn. This is set to rise to two screens with the capital development at Galeri Caernarfon in 2018. With just one screen, the barriers to screening Welsh film increase. Mainstream distribution agreements can require venues to screen new releases for extended periods. With over 17 films a week released in the UK, the competition for screen space is already high. Even without this, venues are balancing programmes of theatre and community activities alongside film, all within one screen.

There is a wide demand for Welsh film and a particular demand for films made in the Welsh language and we have seen this increase over the four years that we have operated our Made in Wales strategy. According to our internal Welsh film review (Bigger Picture Research, 2017), approximately 8 Welsh films are released annually but only one (or fewer) in Welsh language. There are complexities to this of course, from the number of individuals making Welsh language content, to the limited financial support available. Welsh language film would ideally be watched regularly in Wales and recognised amongst the very best foreign language titles worldwide, including vast potential for animation and silent productions.

In terms of production, one of the valid points raised in the Film Futures workshop, was that projects are not eligible for support, unless they have a budget of over one million. This guideline will prohibit many Welsh producers and directors from engaging with the fund and it would be valuable to understand whether those individuals are accessing support elsewhere in Wales or the UK. Productions with a budget under one million could arguably have demonstrable economic and reputational impact, particularly when nurturing new talent.

Data

Robust data on the performance of Welsh film is crucial, and this is not often readily available. Data can be sourced from the BFI, Arts Council and distributors. Commercial supplier comScore does not track all theatrical releases, across all cinema sites, for their full theatrical run. Data for smaller Welsh releases, and second or third run dates of independent films, may not be captured, leaving us without full understanding of film performance and audience interest.

To our knowledge, Wales-only cinema audience figures are not routinely produced. Figures for 'Wales and West' are accounted for cumulatively by the Cinema Advertisers Association (CAA) and comScore. This data is also limited in terms of the breadth of audience information it captures, with a focus on ticket sales only.

Recognising the cultural and financial significance of a collective approach to audience development, we are liaising with Arts Council Wales, Ffilm Cymru Wales and other relevant organisations across the UK to develop a cross-sector approach to benchmarking and strategising audience development initiatives.

How we collectively measure and celebrate the impact of our screen industry needs to be explored with core metrics, agreed sector-wide. The exhibition sector is

greater than the sum of its parts, offering communities of all ages and circumstances, a cultural and social space to gather, learn, share stories and invest in the arts. Ticket sales and associated spend such as refreshments and hires are essential to the economy of our cultural sector.

4. How support for the sector may be affected by the Welsh Government's new Economic Action Plan.

Film and the wider arts do not seem to be expressly discussed in the Economic Action Plan and it is not one of the four foundation sectors, which leaves uncertainty around its perceived role. Film can address several of the calls for action: exports, skills and digitalisation are three areas where the film industry can make a real impact. In addition, film can have multiple benefits in terms of health and well-being, as we have demonstrated through our work with Inclusive Cinema.

5. The support given to develop skills and address skills shortages in the industry, whether there is sufficient data to map existing skills.

There are multiple offers available in Wales to new talent from the BFI Welsh Talent Network to TAC, It's My Shout and Cult Cymru. IntoFilm and Universities such as South Wales are also working to address the lack of film education provision in schools and higher education environments.

At FHW, we offer a training and skills programme for exhibitors, which includes bursaries to visit festivals, attend training, or participate in meetings outside of their local authority. We also develop skills directly through courses such as:

- Opening Our Doors – Inclusive Cinema training (<http://filmhubwales.org/Opening-Our-Doors-Workshops>),
- Rural Community Cinema (<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/new-date-rural-community-cinema-2018-tickets-42499938460>),
- Festival Development (<http://filmhubwales.org/whatson/film-festival-development-session>)
- Young Programming (16–30 age group) (<http://filmhubwales.org/blog/sheffield-docfest-radha>).
- Accredited placements in partnership with the University of South Wales (USW) film courses, in addition to USW Lighting Design & Live Event Technology and Cadw on off-site screenings at Caerphilly Castle and Castell Coch,

- FEDS BAME intern at Chapter as part of Anim18:
<https://www.independentcinemaoffice.org.uk/courses/feds-2018-film-exhibition-distribution-sales-trainee-scheme/>

These courses are developed in response to sector need and reviewed annually. We also develop national training schemes in participation with FAN and the Independent Cinema Office, such as cultural programming, business development and technical cinema skills. We hold data on exhibition training undertaken in the sector between 2014 and 2018.