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# Review into Support for English Language Theatre in Wales

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**A Report for Arts Council of Wales by Dr Jon Gower**

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January 2025

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**“At its best, what can theatre do?**

**Completely revolutionise you. Theatre is about empathy. If you can get performance right, you can change people's preconceptions, those well-entrenched notions about the world and the people in it. You can actually evoke a sense of humanity and empathy. It allows you to be a skin-walker. You can walk, move through somebody else's experience, culture, perspective, and get a sense of that.**

**And I think it's utterly revolutionary what it can do. I think it humanises us. Theatre is absolutely essential.”**

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**Kaite O'Reilly, dramatist**

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# Executive Summary

This review is a consequence of the Arts Council of Wales (ACW) 2023 Investment Review and considers the current provision of English language theatre in Wales. It considers how such provision might be improved and how ambition and working at scale might be nurtured so that the nation's creative skills and talents might be fully harnessed, thus ensuring that excellent and creative work is performed throughout Wales, created by an inclusive and supported sector. Its recommendations should underpin an action plan which can best support theatre activity for the greater public benefit for audiences directing over 10 years. To foster a varied array of narratives that can be experienced and appreciated by a broader audience, all actions should open opportunities for diverse creative talent to tell their stories, while simultaneously addressing and eliminating barriers that may hinder audience engagement.

It was conducted at a significant point of transition in English language theatre in Wales following the decision to cease annual core funding for National Theatre Wales (NTW). NTW has subsequently re-presented itself as the Welsh National Theatre under its artistic director Michael Sheen and NTW TEAM has decoupled from its parent organisation to work as a stand-alone charity.

Other signal changes in the provision of English language theatre include the completion of the physical renovation of Theatr Clwyd and the attendant creation of Stiwdio Clwyd as a national resource, as well as new build and opportunities for skills development at the Wales Millennium Centre (WMC).

The review suggests ways of enhancing ACW's relationship with the sector by creating specific funding deadlines for theatre production and the creation of a theatre panel, recruited from Wales and beyond, which would bring specialist knowledge and help direct new funding. Such funds would include a new theatre development fund for larger-scale work.

ACW's role as a development agency rather than as a funding body might be strengthened by supporting various training initiatives, adding up to a year-long calendar of events, collectively designed to strengthen such activities as theatre marketing, producing, gathering and dissemination of data, mentoring, fundraising and critical writing.

Research and development (R&D) might be better directed and there is a need for such investment to

be tracked. Mentors could have a role to play in this.

The report notes concern that there might be few opportunities to realise the large-scale and/or site-specific work which Wales has a rich reputation for. It also found that provision of mid-scale touring theatre product to venues in Wales is very limited at the moment and more needs to be done in this regard. Touring is one of the aspects of theatre that has been most affected by the economic downturn.

As chill economic winds continue to blow, co-operation and partnerships have to be key: one such partnership is Craidd, which has brought together five disparate companies and bodies to work in tandem.

Currently, a range of companies are responsible for the creation, presentation and promotion of new work. The review suggests new ways of funding this route and looks at ways of creating opportunities for directors, especially mid-career directors, as well as supporting producers in the sector.

Current opportunities for international work are considered and it is suggested that the value of the Welsh presence at the Edinburgh Fringe is assessed going forward.

As a future-facing document this review considers theatre *for* young people and *made with* young people. The creation of a full youth arts strategy for Wales should be in tandem with ACW's action plan for theatre.

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# Summary of Recommendations

An action plan will detail the approach and timescale for the following recommendations.

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## Theatre Infrastructure

### Recommendation 1:

Enhance venue marketing capabilities.

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### Recommendation 2:

Improve data collection and sharing.

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### Recommendation 3:

Support opportunities for programmers to see work.

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## Production & Touring

### Recommendation 4:

Establish specific funding deadlines for theatre production.

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### Recommendation 5:

Create new theatre development fund for larger-scale work.

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### Recommendation 6:

Explore repayable grants model for touring.

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### Recommendation 7:

Support arts organisations to increase success rates with trusts and foundations.

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## Audience Development

### Recommendation 8:

Building on the work of Hynt, encourage venues to support performances adjusted for audience members who have access requirements that prevent them from attending 'usual' theatre settings.

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### Recommendation 9:

Build on current practice, including Go and See fund, to ensure young people get early experience of theatre.

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## Artists and Theatre Makers

### Recommendation 10:

Explore possibilities for directing opportunities to complement those currently available at Theatr Clwyd, the Sherman and at individual companies, with a focus on those with barriers to entry.

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### Recommendation 11:

Support producer development with an initial 2-day producers' event to address immediate training needs and create networking opportunities.

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### Recommendation 12:

Build on good practice, such as Wales Millennium Centre's creative apprenticeships and Open Book especially, to support a more diverse range of participants to enter and progress in the sector.

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### Recommendation 13:

Ensure tracking of R&D, with increased assessment, possibly through mentors, in order to fully evaluate their value.

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### Recommendation 14:

Establish network of mentors to assist individuals and companies to develop their work, including how they might play a role in R&D.

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### Recommendation 15:

Signal the route for individuals to apply for Create funding more clearly, including for training and development.

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### Recommendation 16:

Encourage development of R&D events that host a number of sharings at a time.

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## New Writing

### Recommendation 17:

Establish a small-scale version of the New Play Commission Scheme, to be administered by the Writers' Guild of Great Britain in Wales.

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### Recommendation 18:

Establish The Plays of Wales series along the lines of The Library of Wales. Additionally, explore the creation of a digital library of plays, following the model established by Theatr Cymru.

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## International Connections

### Recommendation 19:

Assess the merits of establishing more opportunities for Welsh theatre practitioners and venue organisers, such as the International Society for the Performing Arts Fellowship.

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### Recommendation 20:

Evaluate Welsh presence and showcase at Edinburgh Fringe ahead of 2026, whilst identifying and evaluating participation opportunities at other festivals.

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## Theatre Criticism

### Recommendation 21:

Support a development scheme for theatre critics.

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## Youth & Future Development

### Recommendation 22:

Develop the ACW theatre strategy in collaboration with young people and key partner organisations working with children and young people.

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### Recommendation 23:

ACW to meet WJEC to discuss mechanism for enabling Welsh plays to be considered for the syllabus.

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## Working with Arts Council of Wales

### Recommendation 24:

Nominate one member of Arts Council of Wales staff to co-ordinate work deriving from this review and subsequently help support the development of an English language theatre strategy for Wales.

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### Recommendation 25:

Establish a theatre panel, with diverse and truly representative membership drawn from both within Wales and outside, to oversee the implementations in this review, develop an English language theatre strategy as well as evaluate and advise on new funding (see recommendations 4-6).

# 1.

# Context & Approach

## i. Scope

Arts Council of Wales (ACW) currently support theatres and theatre-makers in a range of ways, including:

- Multi-year funding for organisations (see appendix 4, determined by the Investment Review in 2023)
- Create National Lottery Funding for both organisations and individuals
- International Opportunities Fund for international collaboration
- Ad hoc resilience, job protection support and capital funding
- Smaller specific/targeted funds such as Sharing Together (to support networks and peer learning).

The review brief set out questions (see Appendix 1) that would inform a set of recommendations for ACW on how it can best support and develop the English language Theatre sector. The emphasis is on an **action plan looking to longer term change over 10 years.**

## ii. Methodology

The review took place between July 2024 and January 2025. At the beginning of the review a list of key stakeholders was agreed with ACW, augmented by names gathered during the process itself. An open-door policy encouraged others to contribute.

Over 120 face-to-face meetings with a range of representatives of the theatre sector were conducted throughout Wales (see Appendix 2), in Welsh and English including meetings with ACW and Wales Arts International (WAI) staff. An online survey (Appendix B) was disseminated via the ACW newsletter, to interviewees as well as directly to all applicants to ACW Lottery with English language theatre projects in the last two years. There was a total of 30 responses to the survey.

The review combines input from direct interviews and the online survey. It also includes illustrative case examples.

## iii. The economic context

It's important to acknowledge the economic environment in which the subsidised arts exists today. In real terms, Arts Council of Wales budget has reduced by 40% since 2010. Such cuts are now compounded by the cost-of-living crisis.

In Tim Price's latest play *Odyssey'84* connections are made between support for striking coal miners and their families in 1984 and the food banks of 2024. It connects one set of historical hard times with the current cost of living crisis, which affects all walks of life, including the arts.

The cost of living crisis and repeated cuts in Arts Council funding undoubtedly places new burdens on the theatre sector, from companies through producing houses to individual makers. Many theatre makers can't afford to go to the theatre, especially if it involves travel to see work outside of Wales. Often this is detrimental to their own personal development.

**In light of the many challenges facing the sector in Wales there is a clear need for increased investment and new funding models.**

In the face of the chill economic winds that blow, the arts and the creative industries can contribute substantially to the economy. Arts Council of Wales's 2024 [Economic Impact Report](#), conducted by independent research specialists Deyton Bell, found that in 2023/24, for every £1 of public funding received by ACW, £2.51 went back into the economy. ACW funding is distributed across the country, bringing benefits to every community. The arts and culture industry in Wales had a turnover of £1.64b in 2023/24. Over the last decade, employment in the arts, culture and creative industries in Wales has increased by 19% – from 28,900 in 2014 to 36,960 in 2023.

Theatre can be an important component of that economic impact. A recent survey showed that, with its current turnover, Theatr Clwyd in Flintshire generates around £10 million for the local economy each year. This is estimated to double if not treble when the building complex opens fully in 2025:

“We have diversified our income in a way that enables us to carry on being, but the opportunities are fewer and that's just at Clwyd. If you look at all of those other venues ...they struggle for audience development. And if you want to build audiences to those venues, that is a 10-year project of quality products in those venues all the time...when you give people a place to go and make work and make their theatrical home, the talent multiplies.”

Aside from its intrinsic value and economic return, theatre and the wider arts is core to well-being and can and does play a part in our health by bringing connection, community and expression. This is set against a stark backdrop of decline. The [Senedd's Culture and Sport Committee report](#) in January 2025 shows that, after a decade of cuts, Wales ranks third from bottom of European countries in terms of spending per person on recreational and sporting services and second from bottom for cultural services.



# 2.

## Theatre Infrastructure

Wales is home to a network of theatres and arts centres as well as community settings that host theatre, often supported by [Night Out](#). Appendix 4 includes those venues that are supported by ACW multi-year funding. As recognised elsewhere in this report, these venues are facing a perfect storm of rising costs, reduced funding and audiences impacted by the cost of living crisis. There are also significant changes afoot.

### i. Infrastructure developments

The coming years will see many new infrastructural changes to the physical provision for theatre in Wales, such as those in Wales Millennium Centre (WMC). Awen Cultural Trust will complete work on a chain of venues in southeast Wales, including Maesteg Town Hall, The Muni in Pontypridd, The Grand Pavilion in Porthcawl, Blaengarw Workmen's Hall and the Metropole (Met) in Abertillery. The trust has already been commissioning new plays as well as presenting visiting theatre productions.

There are also plans for new performance spaces in some of Wales's new higher education campuses, such as Bridgend College, where a 250-seat theatre is being created.

Easily the most significant development in English language theatre infrastructure in coming years will be the completion of the redevelopment of Theatr Clwyd in Mold, Flintshire. **Taken together with WMC's future plans, these will be key components of the Welsh theatre sector, at both ends of the country.**

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Case Study:

## Wales Millennium Centre

As WMC celebrates its 20th anniversary, a new venue aims to revolutionise the digital and immersive arts landscape in Wales and beyond.

The site will include a 550-capacity space dedicated to exploring the power of immersive experiences, as well as facilities for production, rehearsal, and training. It will be the first stand-alone building that WMC has added since being opened in 2014. WMC currently generates over £70m per year for the Welsh economy, attracting 1.8 million visitors. Designed to meet the ever-changing needs of artists and creators using new tools and technologies, WMC's new venue will complement existing performance spaces including the 1900-seat Donald Gordon Theatre, the 250-seat Weston Studio, and 150-seat Cabaret venue, and will enhance the Centre's vital role in the creative industries both for Wales and for the UK.

WMC are already engaged in inclusive [training](#) and [development](#) opportunities to support immersive artists.

"We're building a new space which is a big black box with a rehearsal room and a new production studio. So, on that whole campus we'll have infrastructure that doesn't exist anywhere else in the UK. So what the sector could do with that could be extraordinary. I think there's enormous potential on the horizon if we look, with a new space in the north, Theatr Clwyd, which is going to be great."

Case Study:

## Theatr Clwyd

The £50 million capital investment project to redevelop Theatr Clwyd is estimated to create 100 new jobs, generating an annual boost of up to £30 million for the local economy, as well as making it a carbon positive building for much of the time.

It opened its main stage theatre ahead of the rest of the building in November 2024, host its annual pantomime which attracts an audience of 40,000 every season.

The redevelopment will enhance all of Theatr Clwyd's theatre-making capabilities. It is one of only four theatres in the whole of the UK that still has all the making departments in-house, the costume makers, the scenic artists, the scenic construction with the welders and carpenters, the props makers and the lighting and sound technicians. As a result, it has the specific space to train talent of the future in those departments.

Theatr Clwyd has seen considerable employment growth to match its capital expansion. In 2016, it employed a 60-strong core company of members. It currently employs 153 people across all of its workforce. It also offers opportunities for 500 freelancers such as actors, directors and musicians every year.

A key development is *Stiwdio Clwyd*, an Artists' Development Studio for Wales which will provide Wales's first dedicated year-round programme of professional development for theatre makers from all parts of the theatre world and at all stages of their careers. *Stiwdio Clwyd* is not intended to become a product line for Theatr Clwyd's in-house productions but rather as a long-term investment in the theatre makers of Wales. One component will be a writers-in-residence programme in which six to ten writers, at different stages in their careers, will visit Theatr Clwyd each year to write and be paid at a professional rate.

Theatr Clwyd will also run a 'companies in residence' scheme in fallow periods, to include mentoring, and a 2-year design traineeship will be awarded to a recent graduate of the RWCMD annually.

## ii. Venue financial challenges

Creu Cymru, the membership body for Wales' professionally-run theatres and arts centres and producing companies, freelancers, suggests that "The theatre sector faces challenges on multiple fronts. All our members are experiencing rising costs, alongside increasing pressures on public funding and sector-wide skills shortages."

One theatre director suggested that one effect of this is that "Support from other venues and theatres is all drying up because the economic lines are so hard. And I feel like the spirit of the community is to share and to be open, but economically we're being put into little boxes to fight against each other."

The lack of funding for arts development teams and the closure or redevelopment of institutions, such as Miners' Institutes and Workmens' Halls, is considered "to be further eroding young people's access to theatre in small towns and more rural locations, leaving them with limited options to engage in both watching and making theatre, beyond often prohibitively expensive commercial enterprises. This diminishing provision needs to be urgently addressed if we are to foster a healthy, socially diverse, English language theatre in Wales."

Free space for theatre-makers is increasingly harder to come by as venues struggle with reduced cash flows. For example, in 2023-24 Chapter Arts in Cardiff were able to offer 5,432 hours of subsidised R&D space and £101,000 of rent support. In 2024 those figures had been reduced to 1,500 hours and £40,000.

## iii. Venue marketing challenges

Marketing is a problem that came up repeatedly during the interviews. There is a high turnover of marketing staff. In smaller venues it might well be the case that the person in the box office might also do front-of-house as well as other duties. Companies can feel disappointed by the audience numbers, blaming the marketing department and in one recent example a company was told that no marketing had been done whatsoever.

"I feel for the marketing people. I think sometimes touring companies can get really angry at how little

has been done to market a day of two or three shows. But if you're the one marketing officer in a venue and you're doing Welsh language, English language, comedy, tribute bands, children's work, new writing. And you've only got a thousand people on your Instagram feed. Venues desperately want to programme a really varied programme of work, but haven't necessarily got the resources to do it."

But, given their resources, venues are not able to fully market everything on the programme. At Aberystwyth Arts Centre: "We have over 7,000 paid-for activities a year so you couldn't allocate a marketing resource to every single one."

### Key issues:

- **The lack of theatre criticism in Wales.**  
The positive effect of a good review can really drive audience numbers. (This is addressed later in the report).
- **The lack of data.**  
Data is essential for understanding not only how many people go to the theatre and why they go, and, conversely, why people choose to stay at home. Commercial venues and commercial producers, such as Trafalgar, have huge information around their audience and it's critical to their business model and how they perform and craft messaging. "Do we have the data to understand where our audience is across the nation, do we know what are audiences are into? I think post-pandemic the audiences aren't quite where the artists might be."
- **Programming challenges.**  
The performance calendar can be overfilled at certain times of the year. October can be full of opening nights followed by fallow periods. Plus, receiving venues – under tremendous financial pressure – are unable to see new work at festivals and showcases to consider bringing them to Wales. Whilst Wales Arts International have supported some opportunities, programmers need support to see work relevant scale work and network with other venue partners.

There was broad support for the idea of some kind of ACW-directed **arts marketing training** “where everybody could come together, meet one another, forge those relationships, and I think the Arts Marketing Association has a role to play in that as well, because they have neglected Wales for a long time.”

Over the course of the review many examples of effective marketing were presented, from the efficacy of direct leafleting by Theatr na nÓg through marketing to the third sector for Grand Ambition’s *Mumfighter* to having Welsh Water employees physically delivering leaflets on behalf of Frân Wen’s *Olion*. Such initiatives and knowledge might be gainfully disseminated in such a training event, as well as sharing knowledge about the changing landscape of social media. This might take the form of a conference, one-day event or a roadshow, visiting each and every venue in turn.

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**Recommendations:  
Theatre Infrastructure****Recommendation 1:**

Enhance venue marketing capabilities.

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**Recommendation 2:**

Improve data collection and sharing.

---

**Recommendation 3:**

Support opportunities for programmers to see work.

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**Case Study:****Aberystwyth Arts Centre**

Aberystwyth Arts Centre’s summer season – a seven week activity costing £40,000 – now attracts some 6,000 audience members. What is traditionally a quiet time is now a key feature. Their presenting year therefore has a community pantomime and summer season as book ends, both high engagement pieces with fun and popular appeal.

“We have a summer season that we want to continue here. It should be of scale and appeal like a musical. We typically employ ten professional performers, and a professional band of about 5 or 6. About 35 other professionals in costume. All from our in-house budget. In one summer, we’re employing at least 35 freelancers. That’s huge, we employ some 130 in a year so it’s a good part of the incubation of the sector around us.”

# 3a.

## Production & Touring

The realisation and presentation of work – including taking work to venues across Wales and beyond – is the lifeblood of theatre. Given the economic pressures, larger-scale touring is largely absent from Wales. Older respondents remember when Theatr Clwyd regularly visited Cardiff’s New Theatre, although there are future plans for Clwyd/Sherman co-productions.

Theatre for young people is still an important and active touring provision in Wales. The Sherman, for instance, tours its shows for under 7s as well as companies such as Theatr na nÓg and Theatr Iolo which take work to younger audiences.

Smaller scale touring of English language drama is supported by ACW’s [Night Out](#) Scheme. In 2022-23 there was a total of 489 performances of which 118 were drama shows: “Night Out works as a way for stuff to happen in communities, and it’s a beautiful model. What we are struggling with is actually the cost of everything. Fifteen years ago, a theatre company would get £700, it paid the wages and stuff. To get £900 now doesn’t really touch the sides and, like everything else, it’s shrinking.”

Integral to successful theatre in Wales is foregrounding work from a wide range of perspectives which connects with broad audiences. An inclusive approach to production and touring is vital.

### i. Barriers to touring work

Given the hikes in fuel costs coupled with the cost-of-living crisis, touring theatre is particularly hard hit by the economic downturn. It’s a dilemma right across the board.

Ben Pettitt-Wade, the artistic director of Hijinx Theatre suggests that touring is now almost impossible: “Especially now post-pandemic it’s become an absolute nightmare – fuel costs, accommodation costs and the cost of making it.”

He notes there is a notable difference in fees in the UK and in continental Europe:

“You negotiate a fee with venues here on a tour, and their expectation is it’s well below the actual cost of presenting that piece of work at their venue because they expect it to be subsidised. Whereas you take it outside the UK, they expect to not just pay the actual cost, but also pay in some way towards the creation of that piece. Where we might get £3000 from a venue in Europe, you’re looking at fighting for £1000 to take it to a theatre in the UK.”

Venues can be hesitant to book a touring product for more than one night, an issue that is amplified when touring inclusive work:

“Recently, we’ve started to challenge this idea of touring one night at a time, because it’s not sustainable for us at all because a lot of our performers have fluctuating health conditions, energy levels. And because we work more with neuro-divergent performers and creatives, it just isn’t really sustainable. And we have a big team on the road. The last tour that we did, we had a week in each place, for five weeks, really successfully. And we work across Wales now.”



Adrian Metcalfe is co-founder, with Sonia Beck, of Lighthouse Theatre, one of the few companies that embarks on one-night touring all over Wales. Lighthouse is dedicated to producing “character-driven interpretations of classic texts, screenplays and new writing for audiences not commonly associated with mainstream theatre, as well as for more traditional theatre audiences.” Their most recent production was a 21-night run of *O Little Town of Aberystwyth*, a collaboration with Welsh noir author Malcolm Pryce, which toured to 18 venues. “And because we have built an audience, we’ve got places that – I’m not saying that we could turn up and read the telephone book – but there are people who look forward to us coming.”

One producer remarked on the seeming difference between touring in Wales and across the border in England:

“I’ve been touring a show for two years in England, it’s absolutely fine. As soon as I come into Wales, it’s like, oh, it’s so difficult to get folks in. A lot of theatres in Wales don’t know how to programme new writing. It feels like a big gap for me at the moment is venues not really knowing how to talk to audiences about theatre and panicking. And you get booked for a night and then you get two people turning up and it’s like, why have I bothered?”

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**One experienced producer suggested ways of rethinking touring models:****1. More emphasis and focus on building momentum locally before work tours widely.**

This might mean one or two places first, building relationships and trust, and then scaling up when the work is ready and the audiences have found trust.

**2. Longer and more flexible grant timelines.**

If funding timelines were more flexible or extended, it would allow more time to deal with changes like venues being booked up a year in advance or sudden schedule gaps.

**3. Strengthening Venue-Producer links.**

Could Creu Cymru or a similar body play a bigger role again in connecting venues and producers? Regular conversations, shared programming plans, or some sort of collaborative planning process could make a big difference.

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**Examples might be:**

- Venues sharing what types of shows they’re prioritising (e.g., family-friendly programming, accessible work, or particular art forms). This could help producers align their work with venue strategy
- A system where venues input programming lead times, when they’re open to receiving touring work or flag specific dates, gaps in programme.

## ii. Mid-scale product

Currently there is a lack of mid-scale English language theatre touring product available to venues in Wales.

It's a situation described by one venue as "almost impossible. We're trying to continue a relationship as a steward of audiences, but in terms of English language work there's very little on offer. And we can't have a programme that will entreat an audience to discover works or continue the relationship with the established audience without the work being available."

"One weakness in Wales is not having English-language companies such as Pentabus or Farnham Maltings that are geared up to doing studio-scale work. What we haven't got is an English version of Theatr Bara Caws. Which would be ideal."

A new approach to producing touring work for venues is currently being researched and developed by the company Nearside (supported by ACW Create funding). The Nearside model is a story-driven, repertory company which would open a new work in turn in each of a network of venues each May. Venues are generally supportive of the idea, in part because it involves collaboration with each other within a touring circuit, offering the advantages of joint marketing plus the fact that every venue gets the benefit of staging its own opening night.

"In Wales it's true that some audiences have become less accustomed to coming out... take pantomimes for example: most people have yet to kick that habit. Why? Because it remains a tradition to go and see the local panto every year. It's an institution. And, in many ways, what we're proposing is to establish a new tradition, a new institution: an annual event that draws in the local audience."

### Case Study:

## Black Rat

One company which regularly tours Wales is Black Rat, which has recently taken *The Three Musketeers* around a touring circuit: "With a company such as Black Rat – you'll have a great night out, high quality, you'll have gone home having enjoyed yourself while the more challenging work, especially around themes such as post-pandemic issues such as poverty and the cost of living isn't quite where the audience is at at the moment."

"I think a mid-scale touring company that is creating interesting work is Black Rat. They make a network of venues work. They make good quality, good night out material and the audience trusts that brand and comes out to see it when it's on tour."

"The content is there to give the audience a good time, but what we do is we layer the skills so we're giving them theatrical skills. It's not just a play that they're going to enjoy, like a straightforward comedy, like a straightforward Alan Ayckbourn. We try and do it in a way that we're bringing *theatre*. What I'm chuffed about is that the venues will book us for next year without knowing what the title is, because they know we get the venues audiences. In that kind of tour, it's putting the audience right bang in the centre of it, the communities, what they need."  
(Richard Turley, Black Rat)

### iii. Inclusive production and touring

For theatre in Wales to represent its audiences and be inherently accessible, the question of who makes the work is key. Inclusive opportunities for individual theatre makers is looked at later in this report, but making and touring inclusive theatre properly requires deeper collaboration from the start and a commitment to change, as well as funding.

"I think it's really useful to put a hand on the shoulder of the venue because access is always something which is far bigger and more complicated than people realise. So I think to have that initial

conversation through a representative, through an agent for change, is really important."

"Here's one example – you've been making a show for six weeks and you go on in two weeks and you go, oh crap, we haven't thought about captioning or BSL or audio description or touch tours or relaxed performances, anything like that. So then you have such a short crunch time, probably the bare minimum. If you were to completely change the process and have this considered from day one, the creativity with audio description just becomes so much more expressive and exciting."

## Case Study: Craidd

For a collaborative art form, some of the language often used to describe theatre in Wales suggests a lack of co-operation – "silos," (rather than theatres) "gatekeepers" (of opportunities) "lack of transparency" (over casting). One of the developments that seems to have properly encouraged partnership and co-operation is Craidd, formerly known as Ramps Cymru.

Craidd is a four-year long collaboration between five Welsh organisations: Theatr Clwyd, Sherman Theatre, Pontio Arts, The Torch Theatre and the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama. Its mission is to improve mainstream representation, for and with deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people across Wales. It also aims to drive positive change in the partner organisations involved as well as within the wider theatre sector. Craidd, which can be translated from Welsh to mean 'core,' reflects the ambition of the work from the partnership to be at the heart of all theatre-making.

The first stage of the collaboration included an audit of each organisation, sector conversations, extensive training, and defining a roadmap for the next 5 years.

"Craidd is a really important initiative for us at the moment, one of those things that serves a multitude of purposes, some of them by happenstance. But one of them is the collaboration between these producing creators to make a piece of work annually and tour it."

This can be important for audience development. "Venues are reluctant to take work for a long run because they're not convinced they're going to be able to sell tickets. Is it because if a show goes one year and takes a production of something, but then doesn't go back for four years...how do you demonstrate that there's a consistency of product? Hopefully, they'll see the first Craidd show in '26, and then in '27 and we can kind of badge it – well you saw this last year, so this is the next."

"In England you've got what is sometimes referred to as the big 12 or big 13 producing theatres, they all have very similar aims and objectives and values. And then you move to Wales and recognise that the producing theatres we've got are of very different scales. As part of Craidd... there are enough similarities between us to be able to work together to recognise and try and tackle the differences in order to achieve our common aims."

#### iv. A national theatre

The question of a national theatre's role in Wales presents a complex intersection of cultural identity, artistic development, and institutional infrastructure. While Wales currently maintains various components that could constitute a national theatre framework - including physical venues, artist development programmes, and diverse performance spaces supporting both traditional and site-specific work - the absence of a dedicated and fully funded English language national theatre company raises important considerations about cultural representation and artistic vision.

As one contributor put it, "For a stateless nation such as Wales, the creation of national institutions is an almost inevitable part of the endless struggle to establish an identity, usually in the shadow of a much larger or more powerful neighbour."

Two national theatre institutions were created in Wales in the opening decade of the 21st century. Theatr Cymru (then Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru), producing Welsh language work was the first, launched in 2003. National Theatre Wales (NTW) to produce English works, was launched at the instigation of ACW in 2008. NTW had an ambitious programme, with 12 shows in its opening year, led by John McGrath:

"The invitation was to explore what an English language national theatre could mean for Wales. And I think that what we discovered was that there was a huge tradition in Wales of site-specific work and art that could really be championed as something that was unique for the country. The theoretical base was to think about nation and theatre in terms of shared place and shared space".

NTW's establishing mission statement asserted that it would be a "generous" company and it played a role in assisting scores of artists through development schemes such as Wales Lab, Summer Camp and directly funding research projects.

Changes of personnel and of the board meant new artistic directors and chairs in NTW. The company, along with the rest of the theatre sector was hit hard by the pandemic, but there had been criticism too of its [direction of travel](#), its [output](#) and, eventually, the

[lack of theatre-making](#) by a theatre company. After being in existence for fifteen years, National Theatre Wales was unsuccessful in its application to ACW's Investment Review in 2023 and lost its core funding.

As a consequence, TEAM (the community-driven element of the company, see case study) has emerged as an independent entity alongside a new, separate 'main stage' national vision. Sharon Gilburd, co-chair of NTW, explained the motivation for the latter:

"Ignoring the rights and wrongs of NTW itself, in principle, the country agreed and backed that part of a national infrastructure, and since the funding decision was made, you're left with a gap in terms of what Wales' cultural ecosystem is.

"There's a lot of sensitivity around if we have an English language national theatre, that it somehow devalues the work that other theatres are doing. That can sometimes be expressed poorly, making comparisons, but that's certainly not the intent. Wales deserves and should have a national theatre that it can be proud of and products that it can export, in the same way that England does, the same way that Scotland does.

"I recognise that we've got a challenge on our hands and we'll have an uphill struggle in terms of funding and sustainability. However, we're already in planning for our first production, and ultimately the work will speak for itself, generating ticket sales and a quality of work that can create economic benefit for Wales by being both nationally and internationally viable. If we didn't feel there was a gap for an English language national theatre in Wales, we wouldn't be doing what we're doing. Everything we do will have a distinctly Welsh flavour, including our people, who will be a mixture of Welsh, Wales-based and people committed to the arts in Wales, including going out into communities and looking for people across the whole of Wales that actually want to work within the arts, supporting that talent development for our future. It's been tough to even get to this stage, but I couldn't be more excited about the future".

The public announcement of the new [Welsh National Theatre](#) came during this review in January 2025. Founder Michael Sheen said: "This is a new

dawn for theatre in Wales. We'll be a home for our greatest talent, bringing them together to create ambitious theatre which makes our national story come alive. That's what national theatres should do."

National theatres can take many forms (see Appendix 5 for examples). Ahead of the launch of WNT, interviews revealed strong support for an integrated approach to national theatre in Wales, with most contributors advocating for a unified company that would work fluidly across both Welsh and English languages:

"If you had one single National Theatre of Wales but it had two separate public facing brands, but was the same organisation, I feel like there might be a bit more cohesion, consistency and benefit and have more people accessing and enjoying work through Welsh. And I don't personally think that would cause a threat to the wellbeing and the celebration of Welsh language that Theatr Genedlaethol (now Theatr Cymru) exists to serve."

"For me, a National Theatre for Wales is a multilingual company that operates across the country. It seems to me as if, years ago, you had Welsh writers, English

writers, now people are bilingual writers. I think for me it's also part of innovation in how we communicate and how language works and how language works in Wales. And it's something that makes Wales quite unique. A bilingual company working at that scale, I think could be globally exciting."

In the absence of a fully-funded English language national theatre company, it can be suggested that we have the *components* of a national theatre. Those components include the physical infrastructure of buildings, artist development opportunities as well as working at scale, including site-specific work.

"We have all of the things you need for a national theatre – the effort, industry or construct – under our noses. We just need to connect them and people need to try not to be too self-serving as organisations or artists. That's where it becomes really difficult when funding is scarce."

"Any company in Wales producing quality work where audiences come and see it is a national theatre, because you're touring the nation and you're representing the nation."

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Case Study:

## TEAM

One of the distinguishing components of the former National Theatre Wales was NTW TEAM, helping the core company broaden its reach, develop its audiences, engage with communities and provide pathways to the artists of the future.

TEAM is decoupling from National Theatre Wales to become a standalone charity. Its aim is to develop a model in which they can collaborate with other theatre companies (and buildings) to collaborate on local and touring productions, also creating its own productions. Working across sectors, TEAM plans to work in response to government initiatives, seeking to connect with the third sector, health care, education and the charity sector. By encouraging connection, and by sharing the wealth of the cultural sector broadly, it will work to ensure a broader subset of people can access the arts. Future ambitions also include exporting the TEAM model globally.

## v. The scale of ambition

"I think Wales is very ambitious. I just think we're fricking underfunded and I don't think we've got enough resource. I think the ambition's there."

The term "work at scale" is open to interpretation. It can mean, say a 26-week run of Hijinx Theatre/ Sherman's co-production *Housemates*, sell out shows at the WMC's 1900 seat Donald Gordon Theatre or the continuous flow of new and returning audience members to Common Wealth's Posh Club in East Cardiff.

How ACW might better support the realisation of larger scale projects was raised multiple times in the Review.

## vi. Site-specific work

One way of delivering scale is via site-specific productions. The early years of National Theatre Wales included many ambitious works such as *The Passion*, attended by 12,000 people in Port Talbot; *The Persians*, staged on a tank range on Mynydd Epynt and *Mametz*, which transformed a swathe of rural Wales into the killing fields of the First World War.

"Personally, I think when we talk about scale, if you are genuinely doing a site-specific or site-informed piece of work, you've taken the physical environment into consideration as a creator and what your audience is going to experience. You can't really get grander scale than a mountain. If you take an audience to a mountain, that is scale."

Site-specific theatre is often apposite for anniversaries and major events such as Marc Rees' Swansea production *Now the Hero/Nawr yr Arwr* which commemorated the first World War and *Patagonia*, the first co-production between NTW and Theatr Genedlaethol, which marked the anniversary of the landing of the *Mimosa* in south America. Some theatres, such as Theatr Clwyd have made site-specific, community-engaging work such as 2019's promenade-performance *Mold Riots* but are unlikely to make such work now that their indoor facilities have been renovated. More recent site-specific work has been created in response to funding opportunities exist, such as *GALWAD*, Wales' home nation project as part of the UNBOXED, the Creativity in the UK festival.

### Case Study:

## Olion

The most recent example of site-specific work was staged during the course of the review, in October 2024.

*Olion* in Bangor was a hybrid Welsh language production by Cwmni Frân Wen combining work in a conventional theatre, a site-specific component and a film element, which was funded by the UK's Levelling Up Fund.

"Storytellers worked with us for two years, then a community cast of 30 told while an ensemble of 100 young people made up an open-air finale, attended by 1000 people. It held the many elements of what I think a company like Frân Wen can do within one project of scale. And the word scale to me was really important when putting *Olion* together, because without that scale, it wasn't possible to hook all those different people to be excited by the ambition of the project."



There is concern that there will be few opportunities for large scale, site-specific work in the future:

"I think true scale site-specific work in Wales since the early 2000s has been much more difficult to make, partly because of financial fear. Venues used to be keen to co-host site-specific work. Now they're much more reluctant partly because they don't have the staff, energy and the money, but also because of the way things are funded. The world feels so competitive. The arts in general in Wales and in England has become really territorial. It's incredibly difficult to find access to scale."

There are however some opportunities on the horizon, such as Wrexham's bid for City of Culture for 2029. Should the bid be successful then ambitious, site-specific work might well be an attractive, engaging addition to the city's cultural offering. An idea for an ambitious festival of site-specific theatre in the city involving many international partnerships is currently being explored.

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# 3b.

## Funding Production & Touring

To better support the development of creative ideas into the full realisation of their potential – including those at scale – whilst addressing some of the challenges around production and touring raised, requires revisiting how ACW funding is structured. It also requires looking beyond ACW to bring in other sources of funding.

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### i. ACW Create funding

Create is the main route to support projects in the theatre sector. In the main, organisations apply for different project stages such as research & development, production and touring. Individuals can also apply (we look at support for individuals in more detail later in the report).

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#### Research & development into production: small & large grants

Currently with Create funding, a *small grant* (max £10,000) can be submitted at any time. This is often, but not exclusively, the starting point for theatre production R&D.

There are a number of deadlines across the year for *large grants* (between £10,000–£50,000), open to projects of all artform, including theatre productions.

**A more bespoke application deadline/s for theatre production large grants could mean that applications could be looked at in the round.** And there would be a clearer line for development from R&D if a project has been developed through that route.

R&D is also a key way in which theatre makers develop their creative practice. We look at this later in the Review.

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#### Larger scale funding

Currently, in exceptional circumstances, organisations can apply for up to £100,000 of Create funding from ACW by prior agreement. To do so, organisations need to demonstrate they have clear partnerships, that the proposal has national significance, involves the creation or touring of work and the potential to impact communities in an innovative and imaginative way.

During the review process it was clear that there are many ambitious theatre projects which fulfil the above criteria but are difficult to develop further because of the funding caps, restrictions and paucity of other funding.

Possible models for more ambitious theatre-making might resemble some of those in Ireland where, for the past ten years, the Arts Council has had a **tiered system of Theatre Production Awards** to encourage large scale, ambitious work: “It’s trying to emphasise that point that we give this money to artists to make art for the public benefit. So we really encourage companies and artists to think about large-scale work. Now it’s interesting that a lot of artists don’t tend to rise to that challenge. And so when we do get good applications, they are very good applications. What’s interesting is a number of them still aren’t focusing enough on why would an audience want to see this work? I think the problem is sometimes they think, if I’m only thinking about audience, then I’m selling out, I’m just kind of being commercial. But we’re always trying to educate applicants to say, no, it’s not, it can

still be art-led theatre. It can still be experimental or at least innovative as an approach but it needs to have some kind of hook for an audience.... It's also an opportunity for maybe first-time or early career applicants to get their hands-on decent production budgets and make work on scale."

An option to encourage ambition and work at scale could be **a single route for theatre productions and projects between £100,000 to £500,000**, (perhaps tiers in between), with specific criteria such as audience development to help focus the decision making, allowing ACW to bring the right people around the table to help in the process of comparing applications.

Another possible and additional funding model might be Arts Council England's new [Incentivising Touring: Repayable Grants for Theatre](#). The scheme aims to **reduce the risk of touring large-scale productions around the country** by offering repayable grants of up to 25% of a production's capitalisation costs, to a maximum of £500,000. This sort of funding arrangement has been sought in the past in Wales as in the case of Theatr Clwyd's West End-bound musical *Home, I'm Darling* where, ultimately, they had to draw on their own reserves. The ACE model might perhaps be gainfully explored in Wales and potential demand assessed.

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### Case Study:

## National Theatre, War Horse and Nye

One of the most notable examples of income generation is the National Theatre of Great Britain's production of Michael Morpurgo's *War Horse*. The production, featuring ground-breaking puppetry, ran for seven years and was a huge money spinner for the National Theatre of Great Britain, bringing in £13.5m before it ended there in 2015.

A more recent example is the Wales Millennium Centre/National Theatre of Great Britain's production of *Tim Price's Nye*, directed by Rufus Norris. *Nye* was ten years in the making and enjoyed sell-out runs, with 30% of the audience composed of people who do not ordinarily go to the theatre. This included representatives of 29 countries from around the world, not including those of the UK, suggesting both a tourism and inward investment potential. A vital element was Michael Sheen as the lead:

"My experience doing *Nye* showed that there certainly is an audience but obviously the right work has to be made available for the audiences to come. Performing on the Millennium Centre stage was a fantastic experience which made me wonder why I wasn't doing this more, why are other people not doing this more? There was a huge appetite for work of that scale with the kind of production that we were doing, that had such a connection with the Welsh audience, so as an experience it was revelatory for me.

"That made me think that it has to be part of what we do. If we want to be ambitious and want to create our own work at a world-class level, and attract actors from outside, that should be part of our armoury. It was clear that writers weren't being encouraged to write at that level."

*Nye* was also successfully screened in cinema and will be staged again at WMC in 2025.

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## ii. Other funding sources

It is clear that for a sustainable sector, a blend of funding sources needs to be in play.

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### Foundations, charities and philanthropic giving

Sources of funding outside of ACW are increasingly competitive, with many anecdotal instances of the sheer volume of demand faced by foundations such as Paul Hamlyn. But some theatre makers suggest that Wales does not submit applications sufficiently visionary to attract substantial awards from such foundations.

To address this situation there should be training for funding applications and opportunities to meet funders, along with successful applicants who can share their experiences as well as encouraging meetings with cultural philanthropists.

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### A more commercial attitude

In an opinion piece for *Nation.Cymru* in 2022, one of Wales' premier playwrights, Gary Owen, suggested an attitudinal shift that would help English language theatre in Wales sustain itself:

"The mindset of our subsidised theatre companies is that putting on a show is only ever a cost, and never an opportunity to make money and grow the sector. No successful theatre culture works this way. If you look – for example – to the National in London, to the RSC in Stratford, it is a routine part of their strategy that some shows will cost money, some shows will break even, and some shows will go on to generate income for the company, often for many years into the future."

Such a shift might be encouraged by commissioning new plays for the main stage at, say the Sherman rather than for the studio spaces, in so doing encouraging writers to dream. This is very much Grand Ambition's intention in Swansea, although the company realises that this can only be a mid-term ambition and requires both growing the audience and taking the audience with them.

There are also views that we should not be afraid of "star vehicles" as they can help pay for and sustain other work. There were also advocates for looking for touring opportunities between theatres such as the Riverfront, Sherman and Bristol Old Vic as well as opening up conversations with commercial producers.

In Wales, this essentially means the Trafalgar Group-owned New Theatre in Cardiff, the only "commercial theatre between Bath and Cork" which has "just secured group-funding to develop and run a positioning and audience development programme for drama."

The New Theatre has built up its drama audience to the point where they can stage new plays for five consecutive weeks. Historically the New Theatre has welcomed productions from Theatr Clwyd and they would welcome the opportunity to build up their slate of Welsh work by welcoming them again, although they would need a subvention of public money. There are clearly opportunities to explore here, pushing at an open stage door, as it were.

The long-lead time involved in cultivating such large-scale work underlines the need for concomitant long-term strategic thinking about theatre provision. Another example, WMC's Mabinogion-inspired musical *Branwen*, written by Seiriol Davies and co-produced with Frân Wen, sold 16,000 tickets across Wales but took five and a half years to develop. In so many formatting instances, theatre is a long game:

"Shows of that scale and that quality can happen, but I think it will only happen in collaboration. Wales Millennium Centre couldn't put on *Nye*. Not now. Not yet... what's most useful to know is how did it get there and what do you need to put into the engine, into the factor, in order to be able to make better and better work of all different types of scale. *Nye* proves that it can be done."

Looking at successful examples, there is a lack of representation to date when it comes to opportunities to realise works of ambition. Commercial or investment in scale shouldn't reinforce existing gender imbalances or other biases that we have historically seen.

Any opportunity to support work of scale and/or commercial potential should seek to positively address these barriers. This requires deliberate action at every stage – from commissioning through to marketing and touring.

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**Recommendations:  
Production & Touring****Recommendation 4:**

Establish specific funding deadlines for theatre production.

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**Recommendation 5:**

Create new theatre development fund for larger-scale work (£100k-£500k).

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**Recommendation 6:**

Explore repayable grants model for touring.

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**Recommendation 7:**

Support arts organisations to increase success rates with trusts and foundations.

# 3.

## Audience Development

The recovery of post-pandemic audiences is still underway. As well as recognising the on-going impact of cost of living, it's important not only to continue to champion the work of movements like [We Shall Not Be Removed](#) but also build back a theatre sector that connects with broad audiences, addressing barriers to access.

"Building audiences takes time, and you need regular product, and you've got to have consistency in order for people to get used to coming to drama, you need that consistency, you need enough offer for them, so having one play a season, and they can take or leave it, that's not enough, you need a broad offer."

"The whole process of creating and producing theatre in Wales needs to be much more audience-centred. The main reason we do theatre is to access those parts of the imagination, the head and the heart of people in the audience to make them think beyond, not to make them think within. And I feel this very sincerely, I believe absolutely what Peter Brook says in-that all good theatre is a journey from the ordinary to the special. And he says that if you stay in the ordinary, you have a theatre that is banal, and if you spend all your time in the special, you have a theatre that is precious and self-regarding."



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Case Study:

## Posh Club

The Posh Club is a showbiz afternoon tea & dancing for swanky senior citizens, elegant elders and glamorous golden girls, held in the heart of the community in an elegantly transformed. St. Mellons Hub Community Centre. Each is a tongue-in-cheek 'posh' 1940's afternoon tea with three live showbusiness turns, waiters in black tie, vintage crockery and cabaret.

Rhiannon White, from Common Wealth explains:

"We first did Posh Club on Christmas 2023, at our first performance two audience members Linda and Alan met for the first time, returning on the third show on a date. They're still together now.

"Across three days, we welcomed over 450 people to the transformed St.Mellons Hub to experience a high-quality, experimental cabaret. Due to popular demand from our audiences and with the support of Arts Council Wales, National Lottery and St. Mellons & Trowbridge Together Trust, we were able to do a year-long programme, Four Seasons of Posh Club, throughout 2024.

The Posh Club sells out within hours of going on sale - we sell up to 180 tickets per show. It involves a dedicated team of 25 volunteer hosts and between 5-6 performance artists and our local host, Li Harding aka Shirley Classy."

Common Wealth is a multi-year funded organisation and "The Posh Club" has been set up as an independent organisation which successfully applied for Create funding of almost £50k.

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### i. Audience patterns

The English language theatre audience in Wales has been recovering post-pandemic. Audiences are returning, but it has been slow and not in line with the increase in theatre offer. In general we're not yet at pre-Covid levels (see Appendix 6 for data from portfolio funded organisations). It's important to note that one successful theatre production at scale can skew data, but this pattern is one that was confirmed through the review for both presenting venues and touring companies.

There are success stories. One positive example is Cardiff's Sherman Theatre. It saw overall audience figures (as a percentage of capacity) rise in 2023 to higher than pre-pandemic levels. "Made-at-Sherman" productions in particular rose from 67% capacity to a 75% capacity suggesting a growth in audience confidence and that if the conditions are right, audiences are there.

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### ii. Theatre for all

Access and affordability remain key challenges for audiences and go some way to explaining their slow return.

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#### Key issues are:

#### Physical and practical access barriers.

If someone has a specific access requirement, getting to see work isn't always easy. Although many buildings are more accessible, many people need the support of someone to attend which means additional costs, or have a health and/or neurodivergent condition which mean that the usual environment of a busy theatre is too high risk or high stress an option:

"There's a huge issue, which is not just confined to Wales ... so I just wonder if there's something that can help to meet that halfway because people are sick of hybrid events or Zooming in."

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#### Case Study:

## Hynt

In order to create a consistent offer from theatres and arts centres for people who need the support of an assistant or carer to go to the theatre, the [Hynt](#) card is a national scheme in Wales. Hynt cardholders are entitled to a ticket free-of-charge for a personal assistant or carer at all the theatres and arts centres participating in the scheme.

This is now being expanded into a pan UK and Ireland scheme, [All In](#).

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## Financial Barriers

Fieldwork for the most recent National Survey for Wales, conducted between April 2022 and March 2023 showed that '64% of adults (16+) in Wales had attended an arts event in the prior 12 months.' Of these 30% were theatre events.

Analysis using the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation reveals significant disparities in arts attendance. Amongst the least deprived part of population, 70% had attended an arts event in the last 12 months, but among the most deprived fifth of the population, only 58% had done so.

Many Welsh venues offer pay-what-you-can opportunities to those for whom the ticket prices might be a barrier. However, it's often **younger audiences** who are most impacted by not having those first opportunities to experience theatre.

An interesting development in Wales in this regard is a prototype app being developed by National Youth Arts Wales (NYAW). Called the Creative Passport, a young person would be able to use it to say what they're interested in and to register – they'd be able to see which other organisations exist nearby and potentially use it to access ticket discounts or free tickets at venues.

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## Recommendations: Audience Development

### Recommendation 8:

Encourage venues to support performance adjusted for audience members who may have conditions that prevent them from attending 'usual' theatre settings.

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### Recommendation 9:

Build on current practice, including the Go and See fund, to ensure young people get early experience of theatre.

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## Case Study:

# Access for children and young people

Arts Council of Wales's Creative Learning Go and See fund offers grants to enable teachers to take their learners to high quality arts events. Elsewhere, since 2021 Wonderfund in Bath has distributed over 11,500 complimentary tickets to local schools and nurseries allowing children to experience live theatre.

In Scotland those aged 14-26 or on low income can sign up to the Theatre for a Fiver scheme to access £5 ticket deals for National Theatre of Scotland productions across Scotland.

Other European countries encourage the arts for young people in interesting ways. In 2022 Spain trialled a scheme in which Spanish citizens turning 18 years of age were given a voucher to the value of €400 to spend on anything with cultural value.

# 4.

## Artists & Theatre Makers

**A healthy theatre ecology depends on its people, of course, and, in turn, supports them by the score. Ensuring that there are entry points and development opportunities across all roles, for people from all backgrounds and lived experience is vital to having the sector that is as inclusive as it is creative.**

### i. Actors

Wales has long been renowned for the calibre of its acting talent, the list is akin to ticker tape. Port Talbot alone has generated a stream of world-class actors. West Glamorgan Youth Theatre has long been connected with developing the stars of the future, while Welsh actors train all over the UK.

Wales' only acting conservatoire is RWCMD where recruitment from Wales has seen a dip of late: "We graduated a group two years ago where five of the 22 actors were Welsh in the undergrad course, four of whom were first language Welsh speakers. That's dropped enormously, and I'm trying to get to the bottom of what's going on in terms of our Welsh recruitment. Because clearly something needs to shift. We've got maybe two Welsh students in the current first year. Not enough. We're in dialogue with a number of schools and colleges across Wales where we do workshops and so on. What I'm hoping to put in place is a foundation course, a pre-degree in acting and musical theatre to try and reignite that support for young people who are thinking about training at degree level. Which doesn't need to be Cardiff based. I think once we have the foundation

course up and running, there's no reason why we couldn't have hubs of it in West Wales or North Wales."

After graduation, the actor faces the challenge of making a living and building a sustainable career. Equity, the performing arts and entertainment union asks "How do you make a career out of it without having to rely on hospitality and retail and all those other things to sustain a career? (Former) First Minister Carwyn Jones once said that the creative sector is bigger than farming in Wales. You wouldn't think that because it's always disposable when there's a problem. And I think it should be a sustainable career. The more places that can work in collaboration to make that money go further, great, but it doesn't need the word national attached to it to be a really positive vibrant industry. It needs a strategy, it needs the buildings working with the smaller producers that can reach more places."

Part of the answer lies in funding being conditional on union rates for actors: "The conditions ACW put on funding are far more stringent than ACE, if they're funding a project, then these are the union agreements people must use. If you're employing actors, then you must use Equity rates of pay. But who is checking? How are we checking that funding is being used in the correct way and people are actually being employed on union terms and conditions?"

"Some people go towards the minimum and that is all they offer. There's no reflection then of experience...it's a greater pressure on the union in a way to make sure that the minimum is as high as possible. It's sometimes being used as a target, not as a starting point, which means you find experienced actors being put on the same wage as somebody who's recently graduated."

## ii. Directors

Opportunities for mid-career directors are few in Wales. This was highlighted in *Forever Emerging? A Report into Directing for the Stage in Wales* (2020), co-authored by Simon Harris and Bridget Keenan. It noted that many directors in Wales “feel pressurised into self-producing and launching their own companies simply to access lottery funding.” Even a cursory look at some of the 75 theatre companies currently in receipt of Lottery project funding from ACW suggests this is still the case.

One of the future developments in theatre directing will be at RWCMD. It is hoping to establish a two-year MFA in directing with an intake of four drama directors and two in opera, with a first entry in September 2025. The first year’s tuition would be in-house, the second year would be divided between a six-month work placement and six-month making their own work. The placement would be in collaboration with a number of theatres across the UK including the Sherman and Theatr Clwyd.

At the Sherman Theatre opportunities for mid-career directors are limited as their funding model requires their Artistic Director to direct main stage productions, although they do support directors through their resident companies.

At the Torch Theatre in Milford Haven, which has an alternating pattern of three main stage productions one year and two the next, there is an openness to engaging a freelance director in alternate years, subject to a suitable funding arrangement. In the relatively small theatre ecology of Wales such an opportunity might be very welcome. Over ten years this could provide five opportunities for directors to work on a main stage show.

Other companies such as Dirty Protest and The Other Room have offered a great many opportunities for both actors, writers and directors, usually in the early stages of their theatrical journeys.

The Other Room has recently lost its physical home and has successfully staged productions elsewhere in south Wales such as Dumpy Biscuit in Port Talbot. It is currently looking for a new performance space.

### Case Study:

## Trainee Directors at Theatr Clwyd

Theatr Clwyd is developing a trainee directors’ scheme which will help provide directing opportunities. Their major scheme provides an extended (currently two years) full-time paid learning programme to emerging directors and aims to address the shortage of such training opportunities in Wales. A crucial part of the programme is the guaranteed opportunity to direct a full production at the end of the placement.

Both members of the first intake of the scheme are now working professionally in UK theatre companies and have both directed their end-of-scheme full productions at Theatr Clwyd. The second iteration of the scheme began in September 2022, with the arrival of a third Trainee Director at Theatr Clwyd.

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### iii. Producers

It's not clear how many theatre producers currently work in Wales but it's in the range of thirty to forty. Financial constraints mean that many companies now do their own producing, with a concomitant loss of specialist skills.

"I think it's very true that there is a real shortage of producers (in Wales.) But obviously when you look... the ecology really is very small, so the opportunities for a director, or a show, all sorts of things are actually quite limited. You find that a lot of companies don't have a producer or don't have the funding for a producer. Having worked in England that's definitely not the case...Most of the mid-scale funded theatres in England are better provisioned."

"Companies have had to find ways of sourcing a producer and quite often they're working with someone that hasn't had a lot of experience as a producer, doesn't have a lot of know-how or the requisite skills, through no fault of their own."

One approach to support producers is to create opportunities for them to network and learn together. There are various comparable producer-development events that have worked in places such as Gloucestershire and via Theatre Bristol. Producers spoken to during the review supported a similar model in Wales.

Creative producer roles are necessary in other sectors such as TV, film and digital. This could be an opportunity to transfer knowledge and approaches across these disciplines to upskill producers whilst also enabling them to work in other areas support sustainable careers in Wales.

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### iv. Diversity and Inclusion

As with ACW's own approach to widening engagement, it's vital that the sector doesn't see diversity and inclusion as a stand-alone area, but a principle that cuts through all actions taken. All the recommendations in this report should ensure this is the case and make a difference to who makes and sees English language theatre. ACW's recent Investment Review 2023 saw "greater funding for more culturally and ethnically diverse led

organisations, including Fio and Jukebox (Cardiff), as well as an increased representation on boards of D/deaf and disabled people. However, we acknowledge that more is needed to ensure our sector is representative and diverse."

We are seeing some positive change. Initiatives like [Creative Steps](#), Open Book and other talent development pathways mentioned in this report and others led by funded organisations recognise the need to address the balance of opportunity.

"I was part of the Sherman's 'Unheard Voices' development scheme, a cohort of marginalised, aspiring or new writers. And then after that group had finished I got an email from the old literary manager, Branwen, and she just invited me in to continue the conversation. She said talk to us about any plays you are writing or want to write and I went in there with a little elevator pitch of this idea for *The Women of Llanrumney*. Now, it's got a life of its own now, so it's going to Stratford East. It's coming back to the Sherman too."

But the work is not finished. "A lot of the work that I've been doing is with historically excluded communities, with emerging artists who haven't had that chance before...I think what's being missed is that it's at least doubly harder for someone who isn't the usual artist or creative to do the application, get the budget, get the producer, get the space, get everything they need, organise everything. It's doubly harder because they're in a world that they're not used to. It's not that they have only one chance, but they kind of do because if it doesn't go well the first time, they're probably going to be discouraged from doing it again."

"Being global majority, it becomes a little bit less inviting when the productions you're actually working on are not reflective of your cultures and your surroundings and your community. You probably find it less enticing to apply for any of these roles. So I guess once the people tell them such stories and the writers change or are more diverse, then the productions become more diverse and then the people who are actually working on this production become more diverse, I think.



## v. Mentoring

Interviewees consistently mentioned the need for mentoring, for 1-2-1 guidance through the industry and their work. Such mentors might work with companies and individuals as part of the R&D process.

"You can already see in an R&D what might be necessary to bring people up. So on one entry point, that could be one way where you start introducing a form of mentoring, so that if those people then were applying and getting another piece of development money. If you're going through those different processes, you invariably do end up with something that is far more polished and is stretching everybody's practice."

Another approach would be to encourage mentoring from within portfolio companies, in part replicating the former NTW model: "There's a whole strand of portfolio organisations who can be used to help support artists making new work. What I'd say is how are you making sure those developments and those R&Ds are spread nationally? And how is the infrastructure, which we already have, supporting the growth of that work?"

Some Create applications build in mentorships as part of the costs but as these rise this might be one area that is being cut.

### Case Study:

## Open Book

*Open Book* was a partnership between Theatr Clwyd, Sherman Theatre, The Torch Theatre, Theatr Cymru and Pontio Arts in Bangor. It offered ten theatre freelancers 15 days each of fully paid shadowing and working with Executive Directors and Senior Leadership teams at Theatr Clwyd and one other partner organisation.

At the end of the project, an overall pot of £5,000 will be made available to fund pitches/projects of the participants' own design.

The aim was to allow a 'way in' for freelancers that might be excluded from a career in theatre without this route with inclusion and access at its core. It is clear that this project was as transformative for the host organisations as the participants.

*"Being in every meeting I was able to see so much, and get an idea of where my interest lies within that – even areas I didn't think I'd be interested in."*

*"I was particularly taken aback by quite how much goes into [Executive Director] Liam's diary! There weren't many moments to take a breath, with people to meet and places to go."*

*"Open Book is a real opportunity for those freelancers to be seen...It's meeting with the CEO, it's not, you know, following the box office lady around for a week. And the freelancers I've spoken to have really benefited from being taken seriously, having their eyes open to the different scale of productions across Wales and how each production differs and varies."*

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## vi. Pathways into theatre

Inclusive and differing pathways into the sector ensure the ongoing renewal of skills and voices needed for a healthy and creative sector.

WMC's new venue is expected to engage over 10,000 participants in creative training over the next five years, enabling WMC's existing youth programmes to grow, and providing greater and more inclusive opportunities for young people and artists to create, present new work, and learn new skills.

In recent years WMC developed a creative apprenticeship model with ACW funding which saw 6 creative full-time apprenticeships offered a £25K salary and support, leading to full-time work. They have looked at live events apprenticeships but are reviewing whether this is the best route or an alternative based on paid roles better.

Technicians' apprenticeships hosted by WMC, and partner organisations such as Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Theatrau Sir Gâr, New Theatre, ICC, Newport and Arad Goch in Aberystwyth might be a model for a similar all-Wales scheme for creative apprenticeships, with larger companies or venues taking one or two apprenticeships at a time.

Arts and Business also fund apprenticeships and internships in fundraising and development with theatre companies such as Theatr lolo, therefore some evaluation work on creative apprenticeships might form part of ACW's strategic research and thinking.

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## vii. Gaps in skills development

The cost-of-living crisis means that theatre-makers and writers can't afford to go and see shows which should be considered part of their professional or developmental practice. It is also a factor in limiting career development:

"It would be fantastic to have artist development opportunities and grants. I currently apply for grants for my own projects but it is so hard to find opportunities just to help develop your practise. With the lack of opportunities out there for artists it is essential to be building on your skills. I know many artists who just want to try out ideas to feed their creativity but do not have the means to do so plus the way work is now the broader the skills you have the more employable you are."

Some cited ACE's 'Developing Your Creative Practice' as a good model. This fund "supports individual cultural and creative practitioners ready to take their practice to the next stage through things such as: research, time to create new work, travel, training, developing ideas, networking or mentoring. It is open for applications four times a year."

Individuals *can* similarly apply for training and development through ACW's Create but perhaps that route is not sufficiently well marked. There is a need to make this more obvious. ACW has also increased the levels of funding for which individuals can apply as a way in which they can build in training and development alongside making work: this was based on feedback from the sector but perhaps awareness of this opportunity isn't sufficiently clear.

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### viii. Research and development

R&D is one component of both developing theatrical product and developing theatre makers and artists. Artists learn through making and the peer-feedback through R&D is core to learning about your practice as well as an opportunity to understand the practice of others.

There is currently a feeling that there is too much R&D and it isn't sufficiently focussed. Tracking of R&D isn't comprehensive, in part as a consequence of some projects being developed outside of the Arts Council and the sheer volume of R&D that is invested in means not everything is seen. One weakness in the process is ACW staffing levels are insufficient, after years of cutbacks, to attend all R&D showings. This has been a problem for some time and might be addressed by developing/recruiting a number of paid mentors or arts associates who attend theatre R&D to offer feedback and discuss developmental next steps.

One interesting idea suggested 'sharing events' bringing a number of R&D projects together to provide a more efficient way for key arts sector personnel such and artistic directors to see work and for makers to see and feedback on peers' work in progress. Potentially with low cost tickets available to the public.

"I've got a lot of younger friends and colleagues who are so much more entertained by the idea of seeing new exciting things than I am and I just believe that if there was an established platform where they could go and do new and experimental stuff those younger people would go and even if there was a club, if you paid an annual subscription via colleges and universities, they would have that subscription."

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### Recommendations: Artists and Theatre Makers

#### Recommendation 10:

Explore possibilities for directing opportunities to complement those currently available at Theatr Clwyd, the Sherman and at individual companies, with a focus on those with barriers to entry.

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#### Recommendation 11:

Support producer development with an initial a 2-day producers' event to address immediate training needs and create networking opportunities.

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#### Recommendation 12:

Build on good practise, such as Wales Millennium Centre's creative apprenticeships and Open Book especially to support a more diverse range of participants to enter and progress in the sector.

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#### Recommendation 13:

Ensure tracking of R&D, with increased assessment, possibly through mentors in order to fully evaluate their value.

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#### Recommendation 14:

Establish network of mentors to assist individuals and companies develop their work, including how they might play a role in R&D.

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#### Recommendation 15:

Signal the route for individuals to apply for Create funding more clearly including for training and development.

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#### Recommendation 16:

Encourage development of R&D events that host a number of sharings at a time.

# 5.

## New Writing

New writing is currently supported in a variety of ways in Wales, with individual companies commissioning work; companies working in tandem offering one-off commissions such as The Torch and Theatr Clwyd, development work via the Sherman's literary department as well as through dynamic companies such as Dirty Protest.

There are seemingly far more opportunities in Wales for first time writers than for mid-career and established playwrights, a situation again, comparable with the situation faced by mid-career directors.

Stories from a range of lived experiences ensures that we have a sector that represents Wales today and creates work relatable to broad audiences.

### i. Commissioning and developing writers

Opportunities for mid-career and experienced playwrights are limited in Wales. There are also barriers to seeing recent texts performed.

The RWCMD organises a new writing season every year, which always commissions a Welsh writer, usually in collaboration with the Sherman. In past years this has included work by Daf James, Gary Owen, Lisa Parry and Rhiannon Boyle while their Richard Burton company regularly sees students perform many new works as well as a slew of contemporary plays.

Theatr Clwyd's plans for plays in the coming years include four world premieres by Welsh writers in 2024-25, with seven in 2025 and eight in 2026/2027. Since March 2016 Theatr Clwyd has performed 50 new plays by Welsh and Wales-based writers.

A productive period for new writing in Wales was under the umbrella of Script Cymru, key in the development of writers such as Tim Price and Gary Owen, before it was merged with the Sherman Theatre.

The Sherman currently has its own Literary Department to find and develop new plays and new, diverse voices. It is not part of the theatre's core funding and is only funded until the end of March 2025 after which they will need to find alternative funding options. "But it has been really important for us. We've talked about being a new writing place for a long time, but to actually be able to uncover new emerging and tapped writers needs a literary department. It needs individuals who have the time to run initiatives like *Unheard Voices*."

As mentioned, Unheard Voices has supported new writers including Azuka Oforka, (*The Women of Llanrumney*) and Nerida Bradley (co-writer of *Polly & Esther* which went to the Edinburgh Fringe in 2024).

In England there are more opportunities for both first plays and for established writers and those in mid-career. "In Wales there's no clear progression. If I'm in London, I can send a play to the Royal Court, they might put me on their writing scheme, I'll then go and go to a studio play at the Bush, then I might go and work at Hampstead or the Kiln, then I might go to the National. You can kind of go, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, you can climb the tree, whereas here there's no tree."

There are opportunities and good examples to be found in such London theatres. The sharing of experience and expertise can be based on "The model of the Royal Court whereby, in the past, writers on commission or attachment run playwriting masterclasses and courses for

emerging playwrights. Commendable too is the risk-taking approach of the Royal Court and the Bush where there is a greater churn of commissions and chances are taken on new voices. Of course, finance and resources generally can be a huge obstacle but it would be possible for a new writing studio to be set up at WMC, The Torch, Theatr Clwyd and Pontio."

Whilst some advocated for a single body, other highlighted the importance of having multiple avenues, citing Dirty Protest, and Other Room as vital components in commissioning new Welsh writers in addition to the main producing houses, as well as specialists in writing theatre for young people, like Theatr lolo.

The creation of ACW's theatre strategy offers an opportunity to evaluate the best way of supporting Welsh playwrights, looking at models in other countries and at the existing provision in Wales.

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### Case Study:

## New Writing in Scotland and Ireland

In Scotland the Playwrights' Studio was established in 2004 at the behest of playwrights to provide artistically independent career support to the playwrights of Scotland. It is the only arts organisation in the UK exclusively dedicated to the artistic development of writers for live performance, through structured support programmes, open access resources, networking opportunities and events.

In Ireland many independent companies have a part-time dramaturgical or literary function, but "the problem is they're all stretched all the time, so one idea we've been talking about here is maybe trying to centralise. I know there is an organisation in Australia called Playwrights Australia and I know there is the Playwrights Studio in Scotland... We've talked about the idea of a one-stop shop because you hope it's well enough resourced to be able to give generous dramaturgical feedback and input, but also by not being a producing company, it's not selfishly guarding the scripts that it wants to produce. It's genuinely trying to help those writers get that work on a stage anywhere."

## ii. Staging work

It was noted “that the English National theatre has recently staged revivals of classic Welsh work”.

Here in Wales “There needs to be greater opportunities for writers to develop their work and get it staged and more access points for a variety of writers from a much broader range of backgrounds. It would be great to see more bursaries for playwrights and to see more venues in Wales have a playwright in residence for 3 months. This kind of initiative could join up with creative skills training in dramaturgy, direction and creative access training. It could also be a means of audience development as each bursary could involve working in a library or a school as part of the contribution made by the writer.”

There is an opportunity to work with the Writers Guild of Great Britain to commission plays. Playwrights could work with companies both in Wales and outside, thus encouraging broader co-production. Companies would benefit from the cost of the play not being included in their production budget.

## iii. Availability of Welsh plays

The canon of English language plays from Wales is largely invisible. As one dramatist succinctly put it: “You can’t go into Waterstones and find the shelf of Welsh plays.”

The plays of Wales are indeed hard to find and little celebrated: “The literary tradition, the tradition of writing for the stage in Wales has been fragmentary and seemingly under-celebrated. So, there is important work to do to look at that stuff again, at least to make it available and accessible, but certainly, you know, for any national theatre worth its salt, it should be going back over this work.”

This need to be addressed not only to elevate these works, but also to promote an income stream for the writers.

## Recommendations: New Writing

### Recommendation 17:

Establish a small-scale version of the New Play Commission Scheme, to be administered by Writers’ Guild of Great Britain in Wales.

### Recommendation 18:

Establish The Plays of Wales series along the lines of The Library of Wales. Additionally, explore the creation of a digital library of plays, following the model established by Theatr Cymru.

## Case Study:

# Writers Guild of Great Britain

A successful scheme for creating opportunities for established and mid-career playwrights in England was the landmark New Play Commission Scheme (NPCS), created by the Writers Guild of Great Britain which was partly a response to the decline in new play commissioning following the Covid-19 pandemic.

The scheme was supported using public funding by Arts Council England and by the Society of London Theatre through the Theatre Development Trust. A total of 18 plays were commissioned of which 17 have by now been staged: “We have excellent houses and companies here which commission and produce work and if ACW could partner and co-fund schemes like this we would have many writers producing exciting theatrical work to offer to audiences.”

A new iteration of the WGGB scheme is currently being developed in the English Midlands.



# 6.

## International Connections

International cultural connections through theatre serve as vital bridges, allowing societies to share their unique perspectives, traditions, and contemporary experiences in ways that transcend borders and language barriers. When theatre makers collaborate across nations, they not only reach new audiences but also enrich their storytelling through diverse creative approaches, cultural insights, and artistic traditions, though these valuable international partnerships often require dedicated funding and institutional support to overcome logistical and financial hurdles.

### Edinburgh Fringe

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe is one of the largest arts festival and marketplaces globally and attracts arts programmers, producers and companies from across the UK and the world. It is an important platform for showcasing and networking as well as opportunities for emerging Welsh talent to develop experience.

Wales-based artists, performing arts companies and creative professionals produce and present their work at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. It is delivered through Wales Arts International (WAI), the international agency of Arts Council of Wales. The curated programme offers a chance for companies and creative professionals who are showcase ready, to develop markets internationally and find ways of enhancing their touring patterns outside of Wales.

Some interviewees and survey respondents questioned the value of visiting Edinburgh given the scale and expense involved and its commercialisation: "Several things have happened to Edinburgh, it got too physically big as a festival, so it's lost a little bit of its specialness. It's become incredibly commercial. I know, I've got personal knowledge of it, I've got a great spread of knowledge of other people who have never not been financially crushed by going to Edinburgh."

To help navigate the Edinburgh Fringe, ACW/WAI's *Seeding for the Future* funding has historically supported people to "go up and just experience it, understand, go and see work, see what happens, look at the marketplace and what you need to do to stand out in that marketplace to sell your show."



Case Study:

## Sherman at the Pleasance

The Sherman is the Wales' partner for the Pleasance Edinburgh National Partnerships Programme.

2024 was the third year of its participation. In the first year the Sherman supported Francois Pandolfo to take 'An Audience with Milly-Liu,' the second year was "Choo Choo," and in 2024 they took "Polly and Esther."

Companies from across Wales submit a pitch and the Sherman and Pleasance (one of the four main venues at the Fringe) select one to be the Edinburgh National Partnership Show for Wales. The Sherman then pays the Edinburgh registration fee while The Pleasance contributes £2,500 towards their costs, also providing marketing and press support.

In 2024 the Sherman also supported Paul Jenkins and Theatr3's *Moscow Love Story* to go to Edinburgh, developed with the support of Alma Alter Theatre Laboratory in Bulgaria.

### Beyond the Fringe

There have been many recent and fruitful international exchanges, partnerships and opportunities both into and exported from Wales in recent years. For example, Ed Thomas's work has been staged in Barcelona, Bremen, Berlin, Copenhagen, Greece and Montreal. Meanwhile, a plethora of companies and individuals have benefitted from exchanges, support for performance and collaborations. There are a range of opportunities for Wales's sector, such as Festival Clin d'Oeil, the International Sign Language Arts Festival, Imagine in Scotland, Unlimited on the Southbank, Deaffest and the Dublin Fringe Festival, including WEFT, a key initiative of the Dublin Fringe, which is dedicated to nurturing emerging and early-career Black artists and artists of the global majority, which is supported by Wales Arts International.

International collaborations can be particularly fruitful when there is a specialism to the work, such as arts and health or theatre for young people. Cardiff based company Re-Live were involved in an international online life story performance with

elders across the world for the International Day of Older Persons with older people from South Africa, Lithuania, Brazil and New York, performing live: "So that's the first time we've ever done that. Usually our company of elders, who are our life story group for older people who meet online have done online life story shows. This is the first time where they're sharing the online stage with other older people. And it's exciting for them. And it's exciting for older people across the world. With the help of Wales Arts International we also went to Bealtaine, which is the older people's festival in Ireland."

Individual artists, such as early years theatre maker Sarah Argent, have similarly benefitted from and contributed to international connections such as working in South Africa which set a bilingual nation in the context of a multilingual nation.

Hijinx Theatre has many international connections, many of them deriving from their Unity Festival. It is one of Europe's largest inclusive arts festivals and the only one of its kind in Wales.

Case Study:

## Dirty Protest

Dirty Protest has long been ambassadorial in its theatre work. Its production *How to Be Brave* into was translated into French and toured France which was beginning of the company's work in France.

Internationally they have partnered with companies across the Americas, Europe, Australia and East Asia, including recent collaborative events with Fishamble, the new play company of Ireland, and People's Palace Project, a research project based in London and Rio de Janeiro.

Dirty Protest have been connecting young people in Newport and Rhondda Cynon Taf with young people in the Xingu Indigenous Territory of Central Brazil in the Amazon Basin through their Creative Climate Connections project. Throughout the project, the young people are exploring their cultural connections through stories, films and performance art, both online and in person using Welsh, English, Wauja, Portuguese, Kurdish and Turkish. Dirty Protest are also members of the Eureka Network supporting international collaboration between Europe and Latin America and IETM, the International Performing Arts Network, supporting artists to expand their own international networks and showcase work.

It was created in 2008 to provide an opportunity for disabled, learning disabled and/or autistic artists to perform on a high-profile platform. Recent collaboration grants, both from the British Council and the Cultural Bridge connected Hijinx Theatre and the German company tanzbar-bremen (Bremen) bringing together learning disabled and neurodivergent artists to develop a large-scale street theatre performance.

A Welsh festival that has long helped foster many international relationships is the Opening Doors Festival, the international theatre festival for young audiences. Organised by Cwmni Theatr Arad Goch, it "aims to give children, young people and families in Wales the chance to see some of the world's best theatre productions as well as giving international programmers and producers the chance to experience the richness of Wales' performing arts." Established in 1996, the festival had its tenth iteration in March 2024.

### Recommendations: International Connections

#### Recommendation 19:

Assess the merits of establishing more opportunities for Welsh theatre practitioners and venue organisers, such as the International Society for the Performing Arts Fellowship.

#### Recommendation 20:

Evaluate Welsh presence and showcase at Edinburgh Fringe ahead of 2026, whilst identifying and evaluating participation opportunities at other festivals.

# 7.

## Theatre Criticism

The dearth of reviewers was seen as a problem for marketing and for culture more generally. “The lack of outlets for critical discourse of a constructive nature is a real barrier. The recent closure of *Planet* and *New Welsh Review*, which cost so little is baffling.”

Companies gave examples of the effect of a positive review in a UK publication such as the *Guardian* on audience numbers. Others explained how difficult it was to attract critics, especially outside the M4 corridor.

Historically there have been various schemes to encourage and develop critics in Wales, supported by bodies such as Visiting Arts and National Theatre Wales. The latter connected emerging Welsh critics

with established arts journalists such as Lynn Barber. Such a scheme would be difficult to replicate nowadays as there are far fewer UK national theatre critics nowadays. In Wales we have Nick Davies writing for *The Stage* and Gareth Llŷr Evans reviewing for the *Guardian*, whose skills and knowledge might gainfully be tapped. Recent schemes in this regard have included a Young Critics’ Scheme organised by Venue Cymru in Llandudno, which was hosted in Tŷ Newydd in Llanystumdwy. Following the demise of *Wales Arts Review*, *New Welsh Review* and *Planet* one of the few sources of regular criticism in Wales is *Get the Chance*.

### Recommendations: Theatre Criticism

#### Recommendation 21:

Support a development scheme for theatre critics.

#### Case Study:

### Get The Chance

Get the Chance aims to create “opportunities for a diverse range of people to experience and respond to sport, arts, culture and live events” with the outputs being critical responses and reviews on its [website](#). It has three streams, namely young critics up to the age of 25, community critics aged 25 to 50, and third act critics who are 50 plus. It’s run by Guy O’Donnell on a voluntary basis: “What we’re interested in is getting a more representative voice. We’re interested in the potential of the internet and online, so have supported people who are blind or deaf, or to review in a comic, to review as a film or as songs. I’m kind of interested in the creativity in terms of the response as well. I kind of struggle to support the activity. I’m always thinking to myself, oh we could do a lot more.”

# 8.

## Youth & Future Development

Wales has a range of organisations and companies making theatre for young and very young audiences, such as Theatr na nÓg, Theatr Iolo and Arad Goch.

There are others working with young people at both a national and a local level, alongside initiatives such as Go and See. But how can theatre be accessed in the classroom?: “Considering The Future Generations Act, if the Welsh Government is investing in a new curriculum which is potentially world leading, where the expressive art is key and links everything together, you cannot not fund those organisations that are providing that work and supporting teachers to deliver that work.”

And how do we ensure that those most likely to face barriers – due to their experience of social-economic, racial and disability challenges – access what can be transformational opportunities in their early years?

### i. The audience and makers of the future

In addition to theatre made for young people there is theatre made *by and with* young people whilst offering a route to take into theatre academically and professionally (see case studies).

During the course of this review a meeting with representatives of National Youth Arts Wales, Valleys Kids and the Sherman arrived at the following conclusions:

*Any strategy for theatre in Wales needs to include as a core-component young theatre-makers, those who are making work now and those who aspire to make work in the future, in keeping with the Future Generations Act.*

*A strategy for theatre in Wales needs to include a comprehensive review of current career pathways for young people who want to develop a career in theatre, to identify gaps in provisions. To bring together the key players including higher education, universities, youth arts organisations, early career artists, freelancers and theatres with a current youth theatre provision to develop this.*

ACW had [commissioned a report into youth arts development](#). It recognised that there needs to be a full youth arts strategy for Wales inclusive of all art forms. This review could be an opportunity to further that work from a theatre point of view. This would be supported by a national youth led network supported by trained practitioners, so that young people can input and influence the direction and strategy for theatre making that includes their needs and aspirations.

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Case Study:

## National Youth Theatre of Wales

One of the key components in youth provision is National Youth Theatre of Wales (NYTW) which works with leading theatre partners to offer world-class training and performance opportunities for Wales' most talented young people.

For over 45 years NYTW has nurtured the talent and ambition of thousands of young people by delivering professional quality performance opportunities alongside skills and training programmes that build confidence and pathways into the performance and creative industries.

NYTW previous members who have gone on to excel as performers, writers, directors, stage managers and producers include Michael Sheen, Morfydd Clarke, Matthew Rhys, Ruth Jones, Rakie Ayola and Caroline Sheen, amongst many others. NYTW works with creative people between the ages of 16 and 22, regardless of background, priding themselves on delivering a bilingual membership.

NYTW has various components to its work such as professional pathways and a residential production experience during the summer which leads up to a tour. The 2023 production was a partnership between Fio, Theatr Cymru and NYTW, staging *Dal Gafael/Hold On* on tour.

There is a cost for participants in NYTW shows but fortunately there is "a pretty decent bursary fund, and we provide bursaries. In the last year it was to about 60% of the people who took part. Probably a third of all participants got a full bursary. So money shouldn't be a barrier. We've got our financial problems and we might have to cut down quite significantly on how much we can invest in the theatre production, not next year but the one after that. Theatre is so much more expensive. To put on the orchestra, for example, costs about £70,000. The theatre is more like £170,000 and there are 20 participants in the cast, as opposed to 90 in the orchestra."

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Case Study:

## Sparc

Sparc is the Valleys Kids Youth Arts Project which celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2023.

Sparc works in all art forms, with theatre making at its core, working predominantly in English. Young people from 7-25 years access weekly sessions, theatre and drama residencies, free at the point of access and in their locality.

Sparc members have performed at Tate Modern, in the townships of South Africa and in the mountains of Poland as well as creating site-specific work in forests or transforming spaces into immersive experiences. Through their Together Stronger project with Wales Millennium Centre, they were awarded the first ever youth-led commission, working through the pandemic, with lead artist Bethan Marlow.

In 2020 four former members of its youth theatre founded "Make it!" which is now a thriving network of over 70 early career artists and creatives. Through supporting others, the founding members also developed their own careers, now working full time in the arts as youth arts workers, writers, actors and creatives.

"If theatre in Wales is to have a future, to be diverse and accessible to people from disadvantaged communities like ours and to grow new audiences, then our voices need to be heard in this debate."

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Case Study:

## Fio

Next Up Academy was a collaborative project led by Fio that infused elements of *hip-hop* and *grime* with theatre.

Targeting global majority young creatives, 21 masterclasses with the different professional practitioners (including emcees, DJs, directors, breakdancers, scriptwriters) elevated skills within different art forms associated with *hip-hop* and *grime* culture culminating in a performance at Weston Studio, WMC.

Fio – with WMC and other partners including Stage Directors UK – have also supported a number of paid director and producer placements through Arise.

## ii. Not on the curriculum

Another obvious deficiency is a scarcity of English language plays from Wales on the school curriculum: “*Mametz* is published by Faber with a beautiful Welsh translation by Ceri Wyn Jones. Why? Because it's on the A-level dramas in this country. I'm always amazed at how little exchange there is between syllabus and the creative community.”

The absence of plays being studied in Welsh schools was noted by several respondents and echoes the research work currently being conducted on behalf of ACW as part of its reviews of both traditional music and dance.

## Recommendations: Youth & Future Development

### Recommendation 22:

Develops the ACW theatre strategy in collaboration with young people and key partner organisations working with children and young people.

### Recommendation 23:

ACW to meet WJEC to discuss mechanism for enabling Welsh plays to be considered for the syllabus.

## Case Study:

# Mess Up The Mess

At Mess Up The Mess Theatre Company young people aged 11-25 co-produce youth arts projects alongside professional artists. Young people collaborate develop diverse programmes including annual Winter productions, new writing, devised theatre, physical theatre, cabarets, site specific promenade work and theatre to create social change.

Young people developed the Yfory project through which they created work about what they wanted to protect and nurture for their futures. They worked with young people across South Wales including some who have long term illness, young people in the care system, young carers, young people with learning disabilities and young people seeking asylum.

A strong example is the Lost Voices project in partnership with Llamau the homelessness charity and City and County of Swansea Social Services. Over a 2- year period young people from Swansea, Cardiff and Newport who were either at risk of homelessness or had experienced it worked to create a multi-media theatre production in The Vaults in Cardiff Bay targeted at decision makers. The audience were immersed in the frustrations, bottle necks and hopelessness that young people face alongside challenging issues around housing and mental health.



# 9.

## Working with Arts Council of Wales

The relationship between the sector and ACW is perceived to have changed. Many regretted the lack of a dedicated theatre officer, the consequences of developing a system of portfolio responsibilities, redundancies and of personnel changes.

"I don't think it's been clear for years whether (ACW) is a monitor of grants or whether it's what it says it's on the tin, which is an arts development agency... It's kind of being instrumentalised and had its funding cuts at the same time."

"It felt like a few years ago, there was definitely a much more collegiate approach between the Arts Council and the sector. In the last few years it feels like that has been sliced down the middle. The relationship now feels transactional at best. It feels very much like they are only a funder."

"There is absolutely a difficulty internally. We have lots of people in the Arts Council who like theatre and go and see stuff (but) don't have an overall portfolio lead."

The review process was revealing in just how much knowledge, insight, expertise and vision is present in the theatre community in Wales. This could be harnessed more directly by ACW, especially as it sets about drawing up a theatre strategy for the future.

### Recommendations: Working with Arts Council of Wales

#### Recommendation 24:

Nominate one member of Arts Council of Wales staff to co-ordinate work deriving from this review and subsequently help support the development of an English language theatre strategy for Wales.

#### Recommendation 25:

Establish a theatre panel, with diverse and truly representative membership drawn from both within Wales and outside, to oversee the implementations in this review, develop an English language theatre strategy as well as evaluate and advise on new funding (see recommendations 4-6).

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# Appendices

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## Appendix 1: Review survey questions

What are the gaps in English language theatre provision; what are audiences missing and why? What do audiences want?

How can we deliver ambitious work at scale that harnesses the nation's creative skills and talents?

What might be the possible models for doing this?

What are the current avenues for supporting playwrights, theatre makers and associated professions and freelancers?

What successes and examples of best practice can we build on (asset-based approach)?

What work is finding and connecting with an audience as the sector builds back post pandemic?

How do we develop and scale and elevate productions to 'national level'?

What does this require? What do theatre makers need and when?

What level of Investment might be needed to support the ambition of the report?

What is the importance of an English National Theatre of Wales as an institution to the nation?

Mid-scale touring – how do we support work and models to take work to venues across Wales?

What structures are required for theatre makers and venues?

Talent and skills development – how do we build on existing good practice?

What matters to the theatre sector and the associated professions in terms of talent development & retention and opportunities for new creative partnerships?

What is the role of international partnerships and opportunities?

What role can the Arts Council play in the above while being mindful of current investment in theatres and venues and the application of Lottery funds and maximising public value? Are there better ways to award funding from the Arts Council of Wales to support touring, theatre development and ambition?

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**Appendix 2:**  
**Review Consultees**

"Anya," Frân Wen

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Gilly Adams

---

Karema Ahmed, Theatr Iolo

---

Bianca Ali

---

Nick Andrews, BBC Cymru/Wales

---

Jamie Anderson, Riverfront Theatre

---

Sarah Argent

---

Gareth Bale, actor/director

---

Miranda Ballin, Valleys Kids

---

Julia Barry, Sherman Theatre

---

Sarah Beer, Craidd

---

Tom Bevan, producer

---

David Britton, Theatr Cadair

---

Britton, Jesse, Rhondda Cynon Taff

---

Matthew Bulgo, dramatist

---

Catrin Burns, actor

---

Sharon Casey, Riverfront

---

Kath Chandler, playwright

---

Naomi Chiffi, TEAM

---

Megan Childs, NYTW

---

Simon Curtis, Equity

---

Paul Davies, Volcano

---

Richard Davies, Parthian Books

---

Seiriol Davies

---

Karin Diamond, Re-Live

---

Steve Dimmick, NTW

---

Neil Docking, Nearside

---

Steffan Donnelly, Theatr Cymru

---

Nia Dwyer

---

Manon Eames, WGGB

---

Robert Edge, NTW

---

Alice Eklund, director

---

Ceri Evans, Awen Cultural Trust

---

Daniel Evans, RSC

---

Emma Evans, WMC

---

Gethin Evans, Frân Wen

---

Nia Wyn Evans, Arad Goch

---

Rhys Evans, BBC Cymru

---

Graeme Farrow, WMC

---

Parisa Fouladi, Fio

---

Chelsea Gillard, Torch Theatre

---

Liam Evans-Ford, Theatr Clwyd

---

Phil George

---

Sharon Gilburd, NTW

---

Jacob Gough, Deryncoch

---

Osian Gwynn, Pontio

---

Rahim el Habachi

---

Bill Hamblett, Small World Theatre

---

Simon Harris, Lucid Theatre

---

Kristoffer Huball

---

Jerry Hunter, Theatr Cymru

---

Jafar Iqbal

---

Catriona James

---

Daf James

---

Dan Jones, The Other Room

---

Nia Jones, Frân Wen

---

Sarah Jones, Mess Up the Mess

---

Bridget Keenan, Paper Trail

---

Rebecca Knowles

---

Beth Lewis

---

Judith Lindwall

---

Lee Lyford, Theatr Iolo

---

Angharad Leefe, Theatr Cymru

---

Geraint Lewis

---

Leusa Llewelyn, Llenyddiaeth Cymru

---

Ben Lloyd, Torch Theatre

---

Mathilde Lopez, August 012

---

Jen Lunn, Culturcated Theatre

---

Christina McCauley, BBC Cymru

---

John McGrath, Factory International

---

Adrian Metcalfe, Lighthouse Theatre

---

Louise Miles-Payne, Creu Cymru

---

Sharon Morgan

---

Rufus Mufassa

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## Appendices

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Fahadi Mukulu

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Richard Mylan, Grand Ambition

---

Chris Morgan, Mess Up the Mess

---

Deri Morgan, Small World Theatre

---

Richard Huw Morgan, Good Cop Bad Cop

---

Joe Murphy, Sherman Theatre

---

Llinos Neale, NTW

---

Marina Newth, Awen Cultural Trust

---

Melanie Newton

---

Guy O'Donnell, RWCMD/Get the Chance

---

Azuka Oforka

---

Gary Owen

---

Llion Parry

---

Stella Patrick

---

Izzy Rabey

---

Kaite O'Reilly

---

Lisa Parry

---

David Parnell, Arts Council Ireland

---

Catherine Paskell, Dirty Protest

---

Michelle Perez, Theatr Iolo

---

Ben Pettitt-Wade, Hijinx

---

Francesca Pickard, Sherman Theatre

---

Richard Pinner, Theatre Writers Guild

---

Gavin Porter

---

Tim Price

---

Marc Rees

---

Rhuanedd Richards, BBC Cymru

---

Rachel Riordan, Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith

---

John Rowley, Good Cop Bad Cop

---

Nye Russell-Thompson, Disability Arts Cymru

---

Michael Sheen

---

Owen Sheers

---

Ann Shrosbree, Small World Theatre

---

Adam Somerset, Theatre Wales

---

Geinor Styles, Theatr na nÓg

---

Stephan Stockton, New Theatre, Cardiff

---

Ed Thomas, Fiction Factory

---

Owen Thomas, playwright

---

---

Richard Tunley, Black Rat

---

Gerald Tyler

---

Kate Wasserberg, Theatr Clwyd

---

Rhiannon White, Common Wealth

---

Ceriann Williams

---

Tumi Williams, Fio

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David Wilson, Aberystwyth Arts Centre

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### Appendix 3: Selection of review survey responses

One of the questions in the online survey was 'What might it take to boost English language theatre in Wales?' A garnering of answers might prove interesting. One response was simply the word "Excellence" whilst others suggested:

"Encouraging cross discipline performance".

"Universal Benefit Income".

"Establishing a system for twinning theatre communities or physical theatres, so they see each others' work and build new bridges."

"Minimise nationalist and focus local stories. Owain Glyndŵr or Steel works is received very differently in different parts of Wales."

"Create a National Theatre focused on creating new work in both Cymraeg and English."

"Re-imagine a bi-lingual national theatre company, probably this time with some sort of physical base."

"Don't waste all the good work that went into NTW. There have been elements of great success. Combine the two national companies and have one bilingual company. Welsh Government should find national companies directly and make decisions on their futures not Arts Council."

"Microfinance for small scale performance."

"More collaboration between Welsh venues and Welsh producing companies to prioritise the tours, developing audiences with families and schools. Better marketing support in each venue."

"I would like to see a renewed focus and visible championing of English Language work and its potential on the global stage. I don't think this is in competition with Welsh Language work but I think it has got left behind somewhat. I have only lived in Wales for 5 years but before moving here there were seminal pieces of work I was aware of and had seen – *Deep Cut*, *Iphigenia in Splott*, *My Name is Sue*, *The Bloody Ballad of Mary Maid* and of course *The Passion*. As an outsider these plays told me Wales was a cutting-edge place for theatre. Of course, we are here to serve Welsh audiences but part of that has to be about making work that transcends the nation. This requires investment

in companies and artists to take risks, to make new exciting, challenging work and it requires the development of audiences to receive it. The economy and resources have made us timid. Having said that one of the frustrations we have as a company and I as an artist is when we are making work for young audiences it often doesn't involve spoken language at all and is therefore difficult to define as such. Sometimes I wonder if our focus on what language is spoken is avoiding the glaring question of whether it is good, relevant and meaningful."

"More collaboration between Welsh venues and Welsh producing companies to prioritise the tours, developing audiences with families and schools. Better marketing support in each venue."

"Wider access to rigorous, supportive and long-term dramaturgy. Welsh writers deserve to develop their craft as exactly as any other writers."

"Put more funding into Wales based performers and find a way of giving new work a place to be put on e.g. more scratch nights or rehearsal space like Riverfront in Newport have done."

"Tour to existing theatres and spaces. It doesn't have to be in the WMC or a converted factory."

"Closer working with England if we don't have the funds to do things properly ourselves. Promote funding journeys not one offs. e.g. three plays over three years (with reviews) Reserved pot for work that has done an R&D stage. Multiple stage application process: – Idea - Partnerships and Practical Viability - Financial Viability."

"I appreciate this probably doesn't recognise the financial constraints, but I think there need to be spaces in Wales where early- and mid-career artists can go to fail. Where people can put on scratch nights, try out new material, a truly fringe venue that places artist development over everything else. Putting their work out in front of audiences, no matter how small, will build confidence and give English language theatre makers the impetus to keep making work. Right now, there are a very small number of places where artists can try things out".

"Deactivate the need to work with APW's (Arts Portfolio companies in Wales) so the grassroots can flourish and link with organisations beyond the arts, to grow audiences and demand".

"A network of theatre companies working in schools in Welsh and English. Funded by the Arts Council of Wales in partnership with local unitary authorities".

"More funding given alongside stronger strategy. Pretending that money isn't one if the issues won't help, however aware I am of current restrictions".

"For me, it's the humour point. The reason that panto is the most commonly attended form of theatre for families in the UK is not just because it tells fairy tales - it's because it makes us laugh. It's what makes us human. It's the same reason that *Gavin and Stacey* is by far and away the most successful Welsh TV series. Welsh people are amongst the most naturally funny I've ever known. So where is this on stage? If there is an answer, ironically it's probably in the Welsh language work being done by Theatr Genedlaethol such as *Rhinoseros*, *Parti Priodas* or their "Ha ha" development scheme. So, let's take a leaf out of their book! Commission Welsh comedies. Encourage cross-art form projects with stand-ups, clowning and TV comedy writers. Develop community workshops in slapstick. Allow project funding to include sketch groups performing in pubs and clubs, not just plays on stages. Humour is escapism. It's silliness. But it also has the ability to soften us, whilst highlighting the injustices and hypocrisies in our society more sharply than any straight play possibly can. If ACW can make it clear to its artists that it champions Welsh humour as highly as any other art form - then I believe we will see a seismic shift in how audiences engage with English theatre in Wales. The theatre symbol has two masks. It would be a tragedy to forget the comedy. FUND THE FUN."

"More emphasis on quality storytelling. Why not make a small percentage of the funding you give awarded randomly? We need to think out of the tiny box we have all found ourselves in. I used to be so proud of the work produced in Wales in both

languages. Now the English theatre here leaves me perpetually disappointed - as an audience member and as a performer."

"A national company that genuinely embeds in communities or offers support to communities to make work or bring work into Wales."

"The revisiting of new plays which were successful and should become part of the Welsh canon. Enough money to encourage a company to do an extensive tour and at least 3 nights in bigger venues as well and being able to do a large tour of the places outside of the cities. Enable and encourage co-productions with places outside of Wales as part of an exchange programme."

"Support for larger scale work and a multi-organisational approach to putting it on."

"I would invest in the Sherman. That is your producing house in your capital city. They should have enough money that they can make 10 shows a year. And then the responsibility to platform artists, they should be able to bang out shows in that studio the way the Other Room did. Why not? They should have a new thing there every month by an up-and-coming director. Their main stage should be full of mid-career Welsh directors doing amazing shows. That would allow them to build the audience. They're in a city, why wouldn't they be able to? You start there, then of course you need satellites, smaller venues, and I think if the Other Room doesn't make it, inevitably some other young brilliant group of people will build another fringe theatre, but not until your major producing house is truly functional. You invest in the Sherman and all the rest of it comes."

"Talking about all of those other buildings, those venues, all of whom are desperate to connect more with their communities, I think there's probably an investment program where you go, there's a different lead artist, that could be writer or a director or a different discipline, that the Arts Council funds for two years on a cycle to be embedded there, they get their salary, which isn't a huge amount you might be talking about £30,000 a year for a kind of an artist who's confident enough...Relative to funding more



companies to produce on scale, I think it's probably more cost effective, actually, over time. And that's what Sherman and the Torch don't have. They don't have the resource to invest in other parts of the sector, to be that generous. They've definitely got the leadership to be that generous. But they can't even really do enough in their own settings. That's a serious challenge. That's what major, national, confident theatre companies ought to be doing and I think it must be less expensive to have well-resourced buildings who can then support companies than have every company going from a standing start."

"If you could create and fund five new slots in the Sherman studio and one main house slot you'd change the industry. You'd begin to change the industry".

"I think you could, if you're, with the right shape of programme, you get five studio commissions and a main house...there's stuff that will then start to happen. Like one of those studio slots, maybe we jump in and we go, we'll co-piece that and we'll bring it into our studio. The Torch will probably jump in and go, do you know what, that main house show, we'd love that for our programme."

"I just think there has to be an un-embarrassment about your capital city. So then one of the things attached to the money is that you have to see the benefit across the sector. So, the directors can't all be from Cardiff, the writers can't all be from Cardiff, fine, but it's where you've got big centres of audience, you've got a concentration of artists, and also it's where we should as a country be looking to, to be the beacon, why wouldn't we? It's our capital city. I understand that people are frustrated, but people are frustrated because they're not getting opportunities. So, if you make sure they are getting opportunities, that frustration will evaporate".

**Appendix 4:**  
**List of multi-year funded organisations involved in theatre**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Multi year funding offer 2024/5 (£)</b>
Aberystwyth Arts Centre	531,012
Arad Goch	343,247
Awen Cultural Trust	243,750
Blackwood Miners Institute	128,018
Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias Cyf	79,409
Canolfan Ucheldre Centre	74,446
Chapter Cardiff Ltd.	390,000
Creu Cymru	73,125
Cwmni'r Frân Wen	341,250
Disability Arts Cymru	195,000
FIO	214,500
Galeri Caernarfon Cyf	312,918
Hijinx Theatre	390,000
National Youth Arts Wales	438,750
Pontardawe Arts Centre	62,534
Pontio Arts	277,178
Re-Live	78,000
Sherman Theatre	1,114,180
Small World Theatre Ltd	58,500
Tabernacl (Bethesda) Cyf	121,875
Taking Flight Theatre Company	287,625
The Riverfront Theatre and Arts Centre	73,125
Theatr Bara Caws	302,740
Theatr Brycheiniog	192,565
Theatr Clwyd Trust Limited	1,784,047
Theatr Felinfach	59,557
Theatr Cymru	1,018,761
Theatr Iolo	254,055
Theatr Mwldan	265,068
Theatr na nŌg	312,775
Theatrau Sir Gâr	48,750
Torch Theatre Company Ltd	633,750
Volcano Theatre Company Ltd	207,009
Wales Millennium Centre	3,500,788
Ystradgynlais Miners Welfare	92,625

## Appendix 5: National Theatre Case Studies

Case Study:

### National Theatre Models

Different countries have different models for their national theatres. Some can be buildings-based or some simply built from ideas such as **Denmark's** 'Temporary National Theatre,' an experiment in 2010 which encouraged a "national conversation that is in itself a central defining metaphor for national identity."

In **Ireland** the Abbey Theatre was founded as a national theatre for by W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory in 1904. These revolutionaries defined the ambition of the Abbey Theatre with their manifesto "to bring upon the stage the deeper emotions of Ireland". It can be said that Ireland built its national theatre from plays as much as bricks.

George Bernard Shaw once asked: "Do the English people want a national theatre? Of course, they do not. They never want anything. They got the British Museum, the National Gallery, and Westminster Abbey, but they never wanted them. But once these things stood as mysterious phenomena that had come to them, they were quite proud of them, and felt that the place would be incomplete without them."

In 1848, London publisher Effingham Wilson was the first to call for a national theatre in **England**, in a pamphlet entitled 'A House for Shakespeare'. But it would be another century before a law would be passed releasing funds for the building of a national theatre (1949), 115 years before a National Theatre company would launch (1963) and a further 13 years (1976) before the dedicated building – now so synonymous with the institution – would be opened to the public. Denys Lasdun's building on London's South Bank is one of the most famous buildings-based models for a national theatre, with individual theatre complemented by the National Studio.

National Theatre Scotland, on the other hand, came into being as a "theatre without walls" After Scottish devolution in 1997, long-discussed plans for a national theatre for **Scotland** began to come to fruition. In 2000, the Scottish Executive invited the Scottish Arts Council to conduct a feasibility study into a Scottish national theatre. The model for a National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) resolved upon was a commissioning theatre, a "theatre without walls", with no need for a new theatre building or a permanent company of actors, but making use of existing theatre buildings, actors and technical staff to create new work to be staged in venues throughout Scotland and internationally. In September 2003, the Scottish Executive announced confirmed funding of £7.5M for the establishment of the NTS. It in turn was the model for National Theatre Wales, established in 2008.

National Theatre Wales wasn't the first national theatre company in **Wales**. In 1965 the **Welsh Theatre Company** - which had two centres, one in Bangor and the other in Cardiff – came into being. With a grant awarded by what was then the Welsh Arts Council, its remit was to travel right across Wales with both Welsh language and English productions. Initially six Welsh actors were employed by the company.

## Appendix 6: Audience data from Arts Portfolio Wales

### Definitions:

#### Presenting venues:

All portfolio funded performing arts venues

#### Theatre/Drama Touring performances/audiences:

Portfolio funded organisations only

#### Theatre/Drama performances/attendances at producing venues:

All theatre product at portfolio funded producing venues

### Performances:

Presenting Venues Performances	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Trend
Welsh	42	103	110	
English	197	818	1031	
Bilingual	10	111	65	
<b>Total (all languages)</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>1061</b>	<b>1281</b>	

Theatre/Drama Touring Performances	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Trend
Welsh	169	614	332	
English	181	722	874	
Bilingual	10	27	3	
<b>Total (all languages)</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>1492</b>	<b>1451</b>	

Theatre/Drama Performances at Producing Venues	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Trend
Welsh	1	24	30	
English	74	409	651	
Bilingual	0	8	36	
<b>Total (all languages)</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>721</b>	

## Attendances:

<b>Presenting Venues Attendances</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>Trend</b>
Welsh	17078	6443	16828	
English	112872	193452	400992	
Bilingual	770	5067	7356	
<b>Total (all languages)</b>	<b>237887</b>	<b>206945</b>	<b>656792</b>	

<b>Theatre/Drama Touring Attendances</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>Trend</b>
Welsh	14979	33294	3880	
English	39815	447122	48039	
Bilingual	1140	15901	13251	
<b>Total (all languages)</b>	<b>76671</b>	<b>565375</b>	<b>442810</b>	

<b>Theatre/Drama Attendances at Producing Venues</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>Trend</b>
Welsh	76	2080	3834	
English	2517	54777	292430	
Bilingual	0	63	7840	
<b>Total (all languages)</b>	<b>2593</b>	<b>56920</b>	<b>304991</b>	

