

## Additional information provided by the petitioner

### Gwybodaeth ychwanegol:

Ym mis Ionawr 2011, bydd Cyngor Sir Powys, sef prif randdeiliad arall Theatr Powys, yn pleidleisio ar y cynigion cyllido a osodwyd ger eu bron ar gyfer Theatr Powys. Mae gweithwyr Theatr Powys eu hunain wedi rhoi cynnig gerbron y cyngor, lle byddai nifer y cyflogeion yn gostwng dros 50%. Bydd hyn yn galluogi'r cwmni i barhau i gynnig Theatr Mewn Addysg "am ddim yn y man darparu" i bob ysgol gynradd ym Mhowys, a pharhau â Theatr Ieuencid Canolbarth Powys. Dyma'r unig ddewis sydd gerbron ar hyn o bryd sy'n cadw'r ddwy ddarpariaeth bwysig hyn i fynd, a gofynnwn i chi lobïo Cyngor Sir Powys ar ein rhan i'w hannog i dderbyn y dewis hwn. Os gallwn gynorthwyo'r cwmni i barhau ar lefel is drwy gyllid gan awdurdod lleol, bydd hyn yn golygu na fydd tri degawd o fuddsoddiad cyhoeddus yn cael ei daflu o'r neilltu er mwyn lleihau gwariant yn y tymor byr. Credwn fod pobl ifanc Powys yn haeddu gwell.

### Additional Information:

In January 2011, Powys County Council will vote on the funding proposals placed before them for Theatr Powys. Theatr Powys employees have themselves put forward a proposal to the council which reduces the number of employees by over 50%. This will enable the company to continue to provide Theatre-in Education " free at the point of delivery" to all the primary schools in Powys, and to continue the Mid Powys Youth Theatre. This is the only option currently on the table which retains both these important provisions, please lobby Powys County Council on our behalf to urge them to select this option.



campaign4creativity in mid-wales

The Case in Support of Theatr Powys



## The campaign4creativity case in support of Theatr Powys

It is the shared contention of the 600 strong membership of the campaign4creativity that the events that have unfolded as part of the Arts Council of Wales Investment Review represent either a litany of gross mismanagement or a wholly unethical engineered process, neither of which is acceptable from an organisation responsible for many millions of pounds of tax payers money.

We are grateful for the opportunity to present our case and wish to reiterate a number of major points previously raised when your Committee heard the issues as raised by Gwent Theatre. It is clear that the position of Theatr Powys is significantly inter-related and that many deeply shared concerns must once again be expressed.

Below is an extract from a letter from Amanda Loosemore, Regional Director (Mid & West Wales) of the Arts Council of Wales dated Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2010 received in response to a campaign member's letter of complaint following the announcements of June 20<sup>th</sup> 2010:

*An important part of my Council's consideration has been to take a careful look at the broader issues affecting the companies – like Theatr Powys – that we currently fund to provide Theatre for Young People/Theatre in Education activity. At the moment, we support 8 companies, providing funding of around £2million each year.*

*The history of our support to Theatre for Young People/Theatre in Education is a complex one. In 2004 the Arts Council published its Theatre and Young People's Strategy which included a vision for the Theatre in Education service across Wales. It was calculated at the time that to successfully deliver on the strategy, which amongst other things aimed to give every child a theatre in education experience at each of the four key stages of education, would cost an additional £3million in subsidy to the eight companies. In the event, only an additional £800,000 was provided by the government at that time, and this sowed the seeds for a strategy that was, from the outset, underfunded.*

*Back in 2004 when, on the whole, public funding was growing, we were reasonably*

*optimistic that the government might find the additional funds that everyone knew were needed. Unfortunately, they didn't. Now, we're in a completely different economic context, and it's clear that we're going to struggle to hang on to what we've already got, let alone receive more funding. Given this, my Council had little choice. It had to think very carefully about priorities. Only then would it be able to ensure that at least some organisations had the opportunity to thrive and not simply survive.*

*To continue the status quo was simply not an option – our audiences and companies deserve better. Whilst looking at current provision, Council stated that its focus would be on quality rather than quantity, and that it should look at new ways of engaging young people through the work that it funds. Critically, Council concluded that whilst we had an important role to play as an advocate for arts in education, the limitations of funding meant that we couldn't realistically be a funder of this work.*

*Instead, Council decided that we should be looking to engage young people and communities more broadly. Council therefore decided that we should take the following actions:*

- we will end our previous strategy for theatre in education – we acknowledge that the approach we've previously adopted is no longer deliverable. We'd like to see instead a 'liberalisation' of the market, with exciting, vibrant theatre for young people provided by a wider range of organisations, and happening in a variety of different settings, in and out of school, across Wales*
- we will become a stronger advocate for arts in schools – however, we propose to do this more broadly across the arts, and not to see ourselves so much as funders of direct provision into schools*
- we will focus on 'exemplar' work for young people – within the limitations of the funds available to us, our focus will be on quality rather than quantity. This inevitably means that the quantity of provision will be less universal in either its aspiration or actual delivery, unless local authorities see such provision as essential 'core' activity and resource it accordingly*
- we will be reducing the level of funding that was previously dedicated to this area of schools related activity – we'll be placing greater emphasis on creating more broadly based, higher quality work for young people. We'll be shifting our priorities towards encouraging new partnerships, collaborations and a more eclectic range of providers*
- we will consider the role that the eight currently funded TiE/TYP companies might play as part of our new approach – our intention to reduce funding doesn't mean that we should ignore exemplary work where it currently exists. We'll look to the*

*potential of each of the eight companies and the continuing role that they might play*

- we will publish a new arts for young people strategy – over recent weeks we've been consulting on a new strategy. We'll extend the period for consultation over the Autumn to provide an opportunity to work with artists, companies, producers, venues, schools and educational authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government to devise a new strategy 'owned' by the key players*

The initial questions raised by the above centre around where we have highlighted the text – when were these decisions taken and why were such important decisions taken without any period of consultation?

Below is an extract from a letter recently received by one of our members from Nick Capaldi:

*Thank you for your e-mail of 4 February on the above.*

*You talk very eloquently of Theatr Powys's activities, and we are aware of the very popular work undertaken by the company over many years. As you might imagine, therefore, this was not a decision easily or lightly taken. It comes from a fundamental re-examination of our funding policies – what we called our Investment Review.*

*The decision was based on three principal factors: the lack of available funding to meet the policy objectives; a decision to move away from theatre in education; and, my Council's decision to attach greater importance to other priorities and organisations. I will try and explain what this all means.*

*It was becoming increasingly clear to us that we couldn't go on providing revenue funding to the number of organisations that we're currently supporting. We've been spreading our funds too thinly, and organisations were finding it ever more difficult to maintain the quality and range of their activities. We couldn't go on, watching an inevitable spiral of decline.*

*Fundamental to our review was the recognition that we were never going to be able to raise the additional funds needed to properly resource the strategy that has previously supported Theatr Powys and seven other Theatre in Education (TiE) companies. Our budgets for the coming three year period are reducing, not growing.*

*Back in 2004 we published our Theatre and Young People's Strategy which included proposals for a TiE service across Wales. It was calculated then that the delivery of this service would need a minimum of an additional £3million on top of the subsidy already available to the eight companies. In the event, only an*

*additional £800,000 from the Welsh Assembly Government was achieved at that time.*

*One of the questions that we considered was whether more funding could be squeezed from public bodies. None of our consultations with local authorities has suggested any likelihood of substantially increased local authority funding in the next few years. Indeed, we were told that the opposite is more likely. In particular, Powys Council has itself invested heavily in this activity and it seemed unlikely that the Council would be able to commit additional funding.*

*You refer in your e-mail to the fact that we've taken a selective approach and decided to retain five of previously funded companies in our new 'portfolio' of revenue funded organisations. Making strategic judgements about relative priorities is what Council is there to do. It's also about an approach that doesn't "throw the baby out with the bath water". Each of the eight currently funded TiE companies have their individual qualities and strengths. But they also exist within a wider theatre 'ecology', presenting a range of other theatre activity and providing employment for artists, technicians and administrators.*

*This wider theatre ecology remains under-developed. And even in a time of reduced funding, this activity still needs to be developed. With this in mind, Council made a series of relative judgements and identified those companies who, in its view, presented the most persuasive case for future support. Having considered its options, Council concluded that faced with diminishing resources, five of the currently funded companies were the ones it wanted to back.*

*Again we have highlighted "a decision to move away from Theatre in Education."*

*It is the campaign4creativity's contention that had this decision either been made prior to, or if it had, then been made public prior to, the ACW Investment Review started in September 2009 events would not be as they are today. Had the statement we have highlighted, "Fundamental to our review was the recognition that we were never going to be able to raise the additional funds needed to properly resource the strategy" been in the public arena and open for consultation, the Theatr Powys Business Plan submission would have been offered in full consciousness of a developing situation. Given actual events – it has been entirely undermined.*

*Below is an extract from a letter to one of our members in January from Allyn Davies, WAG Arts Policy and Development Officer responding on behalf of Alun Ffred Jones:*

*In future, it will be an expectation placed on all companies that receive public funding via ACW that they will develop and deliver programmes for children and young people. No company will be funded to produce theatre in education specifically: of the eight companies who currently receive such funding, three – will no longer be revenue-funded, with the five other companies being revenue-funded*

*to produce artistically valid, challenging and exciting work in a variety of locations. In other words, their work will no longer be restricted to the school environment.*

Theatr Powys, Gwent Theatre and Spectacle have neither been given the opportunity to argue the case against the abandonment of TiE or the opportunity to make submissions based upon developing programmes for children and young people that are “artistically valid, challenging and exciting” and delivering this work “no longer restricted to the school environment”. Unfortunately, it is difficult to see how, after the event, this could be achieved impartially and objectively and judged fairly against the five companies that somehow successfully made submissions to which this new criteria was already adjudged to apply.

Had any of the criteria outlined above been made available prior to the Investment Review submissions such as, “we will become a stronger advocate for arts in schools – however, we propose to do this more broadly across the arts” then Theatr Powys would have made arguments within their submission that the TiE, youth theatre, and community touring provision as they provide it already, encompasses a very broad delivery much more than that of a ‘single’ art form and provides much inspiration for ‘follow up’ art and creativity in schools and many other community contexts. (See appendix A).

Contained in the “Investment Review Terms of Reference” (Sept ‘09) in section 4 “Principles” it says, “Having identified the need for an Investment Review, Council has agreed a set of overarching principles”. The very first of these ‘principles’ is “ensuring that a single review process applies equally to all organisations”. Surely this means that the principles in place, upon which the RFO organisations were asked to make their submissions, were those that were to be applied to make the review. It is in direct contravention of this ‘principle’ and unethical to apply change in policy decisions either not previously disclosed or indeed made retrospectively to facilitate the review process.

Nothing is included and provided as part of the specifications and framework for the preparation of the submission in either the Investment Review Planning Guide (Sept ‘09) or the “Strive to Excel...” the Arts Council’s documentation outlining ‘A Quality Framework for the art in Wales’ (Sept ‘09) or “Imagine” the Arts Council’s vision for the arts in Wales” documentation that gives any indication of a change in policy.

Theatr Powys also used supportive evidence from Quality Monitoring from the 12 months prior to the Investment Review in which the Arts Council consistently stated their belief in the value of the Company’s provision:

*“Theatr Powys is a Company that operates with a high degree of artistic and intellectual integrity. It eschews the easy option in favour of work it believes will be inspiring, insightful and challenging. Such a policy places creative burdens on the artistic team, but they rise to the challenge. Their interactions with young people in particular create an environment in which the young people can explore their own creativity.*

*The company and its work is held in high regard as an important contributor to the continuing development of theatre in education and theatre with and for young people in Wales...*

*"The value of Theatr Powys to the community at large and young people in particular is very evident and is testimony to the vision, hard work and commitment of all involved in the company."*  
*ACW July 2009 Annual Review Report*

*"This programme could have travelled far beyond the boundaries and the catchment area of Theatr Powys. It is a presentation that would benefit Welsh medium schools the length and breadth of Wales. The Company could consider this work as something perpetual that could be adapted fro generation after generation."*  
*Quality Monitoring 2009*

or

*"Once again I found the concept of participatory theatre in education quite extraordinary. This is very challenging theatre on many different levels and it was executed very well. The children suspended disbelief with ease.....at one time a child, a peer, the next a scientist....  
Their interactions with the actor/teachers offered opportunity for the young people to share and explore ideas with each other and to play their own part in the story...The pupils were engaged with the story from the beginning and remained so throughout the day."*  
*Quality Monitoring 2009*

The afore-mentioned guidance notes and the above positive feedback set the context in which Theatr Powys made its submission. The obvious support for the policy and practise of the Company's work instilled in its artistic director a natural degree of confidence in preparing the submission, seeking to maintain and develop this provision.

The loss of ACW investment has entirely compromised partnership funding through the local authority. Although the campaign4creativity has been lobbying our County Council vigorously in an attempt to maintain the provision, in the current economic climate there is no possibility whatsoever of Theatr Powys achieving the level of income required to sustain a fraction of its current contribution to our community. Despite Nick Capaldi's statements in a letter to Sandy Mewies as Chair of the Communities and Culture Committee dated 16<sup>th</sup> December 2010 in which he states that new models are being discussed "which allow Theatr Powys to continue its activities...." the entire staff of Theatr Powys have received redundancy notices and will be out of a job on April 4<sup>th</sup>.

Less than four years ago ACW lottery funding of almost £1M was invested in the Company's base in Llandrindod Wells - the decision to abandon this resource is extraordinary to comprehend. After 39 years this Company is to close. Given the enormous pressure on Powys County Council to cut costs across the board, we are to

be left with no investment in the production of theatre or drama in Powys to call our own, no Theatre in Education programme for our schools and a seriously compromised Youth Theatre.

Incredulously and conveniently post the Investment Review, the Arts Council has published for consultation a draft of its "Changing Lives" Strategy for Children, Young People and the Arts documentation. It begs the question that had this documentation been available prior to and applied to the Investment Review would the Arts Council have been able to arrive at the decision to no longer fund Theatr Powys?

"Changing Lives", contains wholly laudable ideals, however, in view of the cuts in R.F.O. funding not only to T. P. but also to Community Arts Rhayader and District (CARAD) here in mid Wales, it has to be asked how it is proposed to implement this strategy to anything like the degree to which its values were already in place! A fully inclusive group of over 50 young people with differing needs attend Mid Powys Youth Theatre and Llandrindod Drama Workshop, where, for the past 25 years in the case of MPYT, every one of the points in the 'new manifesto' was being fulfilled. It has been said by one of our membership that MPYT could have been used as an exemplary model for the "Changing Lives" document.

Over many years thousands have enjoyed the provisions and facilities of Theatr Powys, C.A.R.A.D. and the creative needs of so many young people have been superbly met here, on our very doorsteps. These young people, however, have been made to feel disenfranchised and powerless in the face of the financial decisions executed last June, even more so by those in December and are soon to be excluded from accessing provisions that delivered the very values that the Arts Council purport to uphold.

Taking the first point in the 'manifesto' contained within the document: how is it proposed that the children and young people in this particular part of Wales, are to have art and creativity at the heart of their education and learning journey, both within and outside the school gates. The Theatre In Education programme implemented throughout the county by Theatr Powys, amongst a wealth of other benefits to pupils and inspiration to teachers, has inspired many young people to pursue this interest outside the school gates, joining Mid Powys Youth Theatre, a company with a 25 year pedigree and an alumni of countless successful professionals within the arts industry. We would like to know how it is proposed to enable successive generations to undertake the fabulous learning journeys that these people have been previously inspired to embark upon?

On the second point in the 'manifesto': how can taking something away from young people, things of great quality and proven track record, be putting the arts "where they can really make a difference to a young person's life"? Mid Powys Youth Theatre, it is no exaggeration to say, has been life changing experience to many young people throughout the years; a place where they have been valued and accepted for who they are, included for their talents and, quietly supported by a range of artists to produce high quality work and a hugely rewarding artistic experience. Having ensured that this provision will be changed beyond recognition, it difficult to understand how the Arts Council can laud "new innovative ways of engaging" these young people with no mention of just what these ways might be!

Theatr Powys, through its Youth Theatres and the facilities and artists at Community Arts Rhayader and District have initiated the careers of actors, designers, musicians, photographers, sound designers and engineers, writers, musical directors, theatre and film directors, costumiers, stage managers, production managers and countless other associate professionals currently working within the arts industry – an inspirational heritage providing the aspiration and a well trodden path for our “artists of the future” to journey. Without these facilities, facilitators and mentors how can the current young people of mid Wales possibly emulate their predecessors?

The above-mentioned opportunities, up until now provided, “for children and young people to get involved with the arts” were in some cases almost next door. They could not be closer to these young people. Without these local quality provisions these young people may have to undertake journeys averaging a minimum of 35 to 40 minutes each way to an equivalent provision. Without a convenient public transport infrastructure, often without a public transport system at all, it is imperative that these provisions need to be closer to where they live! If the Arts Council want “more opportunities for children and young people to get involved with the arts closer to where they live”, why close a company that provides a centrally located and exceptionally high quality provision?

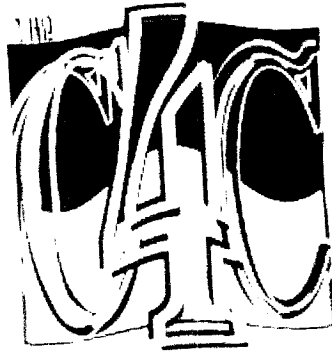
For the past 39 years the people of mid Wales have enjoyed and treasured the high quality artistic work produced by Theatr Powys; the children in schools throughout Powys and beyond have benefited immeasurably from the inspirational programmes of Theatre in Education provided by Theatr Powys and the young people of Powys have been nurtured, mentored, led and loved by theatre professionals, often without peer, to produce critically acclaimed art and inspired in so many cases to take up careers in the arts.

The young people involved in the campaign4creativity are upset and have been made to feel incredibly insecure that such a valued provision can so easily and inconsiderately be taken away, without consultation or any regard to their opinions. They have been left to feel disenfranchised, overlooked and insignificant. The blatant disregard for the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Welsh Assembly’s own “agreed children and young people’s participation standards for Wales” has left them with little faith in the empty words used by those supposedly responsible for their well-being.

When questioned by your committee in respect of the Investment Review procedure on the 25<sup>th</sup> January, Nick Capaldi was clear that Theatr Powys and other companies prepared and submitted their business plans entirely ignorant of the fact that a radical strategic shift in policy was in process or about to be implemented. A major new Strategy for Children, Young People and the Arts was released post the investment Review; a strategy which would have provided a benchmark with which to measure the submissions made by the original RFO portfolio. The Investment Review was undertaken during a period of unprecedented political and financial upheaval. No regard was paid to rights of the young people involved or any impact assessment made.

Irrespective of motive, mismanaged or engineered, the outcomes of the Arts Council for Wales Investment Review are not acceptable to the people affected and represented by this campaign. We respectfully request the situation is redressed.

For and on behalf of the campaign4creativity in mid Wales.



# APPENDIX A

# Paradise Lost



In a world rife with man-made problems we need creativity to find man-made solutions. That creativity is to the fore in early childhood. Expression through play-acting and role-play happens as part of a natural learning process – an innate and in-built preparation for life – a self-created interpretation of the outside world. As we grow, the more rigid architecture of learning is imposed upon us and we become accustomed, trained to narrow our focus, and use the ideas and ideologies of others to interpret, communicate and navigate life; our more naturally creative tendencies become suppressed and domesticated and as our focus narrows we only find solutions within a narrow bandwidth. We are taught how to be creative when in actual fact we all of us, uniquely, already are! Many artists attest to having to endure an 'unlearning' process in order to be authentically creative.

The perennial problem with Theatre in Education is that it is a defenceless art form. Much like 'the muse' or inspiration for any artist, it defies description. There is no 'product', no proof, no tangible, measurable end result. The emphasis with TIE is a beginning. That 'beginning' can be immediate, lie latent or be a long slow burn. It cannot be adequately measured using scientific methodology or effectively 'described' by any other art form because it is simply the moment of beginning; the moment of creation - it is the first thought that starts a creative process.

It is 'play acting' in its purest form. It is the catalyst for germination of the seed contained within every human being - creativity. TIE is a crucible in which the spark of creation is engendered.

Theatre In Education, as delivered by Theatre Powys, holds the children as participants at the heart of a narrative that cannot be completed without their active participation -

in, and interaction with, the story dilemma. For example in 'Arc' the children, in their own classroom, experience Billie's story, a little girl whose home is breaking up. Into this context comes the most ancient and endangered polar bear in the whole world. He needs her help, but what can an 8 year old do? Billie's individual dilemma and that of the bear both matter and become THE matter, thus creating an impelling fictive context through which to share feelings, sort, talk and do. The drama/story acts as a crucible containing the actor/practitioners and the children/participants where they are engaged, mixed together in an almost alchemical process, creating dramatic meaning and learning.

TIE works on the principle of Metaxis, or the ability to operate in two perspectives at once, the real and imaginary. We all experience 'metaxis' when we passively enjoy the creative output of others, finding ourselves totally immersed, 'lost' in a good film, whilst actually sitting in a cinema eating popcorn – however, in TIE the participant is actively engaged and *playing* naturally in a consequential process, involved in the creation of agreed outcomes both personal and shared. A dream you can control. The TIE practitioners act as a 'dream weavers' setting the scene and context and the narrative is necessarily challenging. The participants are self-spectators, contributing, sustaining and enjoying the power of making, creating and behaving in context, becoming at the same time themselves and other to themselves.

It is very different from all other art forms and should never be reductively described as a 'single art form'. It is multi-layered, multi-faceted and empowering in its use of creativity to make sense of our world. It is non reliant on any level of skill, dexterity or ability of participants. It has no finish to be adjudged to stand or fall by its artistic merits - it works by harnessing that which makes us human, our innate empathetic qualities, a simple nurturing of the very essence of creativity itself.

TIE, as delivered by Theatr Powys, has been used successfully to stimulate projects in other art forms. The 'sowing the seeds of creativity' aspect of TIE is well demonstrated by "Fragility, Interdependency, Stewardship and Future" an exhibition of visual art and written word created by young artists from Primary Schools across Powys.

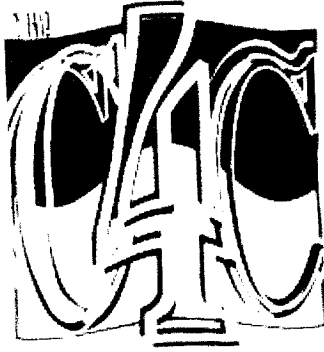
Creativity is addictive and is no bad thing to get kids hooked on and the skills of the actor/practitioners, artistic director and theatre staff of Theatr Powys have been further employed mentoring the young talents of Mid Powys Youth Theatre.

Such has been the value placed upon TIE that Powys County Council has historically supported the provision to levels unequalled by any other Local Authority in Wales.

Sadly, much like Eden, those fertile gardens that are the imaginations of the young here in Powys are soon to be abandoned – paradise and opportunity lost.



campaign4creativity in mid Wales



Prepared for and on behalf of the membership of the  
campaign4creativity in mid Wales.

For more information visit campaign4creativity on facebook.

and

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



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

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

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10th March 2011

*Dear Christine,*

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

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

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

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

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

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

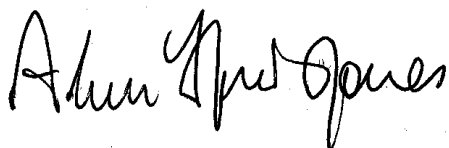
ACW did not commence the review by declaring that it was setting in stone its strategic expectations or by undertaking that no area of provision would change in any art form. Indeed, it was made abundantly clear that changes would be made. In the statement I made to the National Assembly for Wales on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

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

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

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

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alun Ffred Jones', written in a cursive style.

**Alun Ffred Jones AC/AM**

Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth/Minister for Heritage

## Open letter to Christine Chapman

Tuesday March 1<sup>st</sup> 2011

Dear Christine Chapman

The Arts Council of Wales (ACW), Investment Review is done and dusted. Nick Capaldi, Chief Executive of ACW, supported by politicians who know little of the actual practice in mid Wales, has celebrated a tough but fair approach to future investment; one which will sustain and develop the best and most “flexible” cultural provision. Even as announcements are made it is clear that UK wide, all future public provision will be subject to a dangerous and socially catastrophic gamble.

Theatr Powys, based at the Drama Centre in Llandrindod, is one casualty of the review process. Revenue funding from ACW is to cease as of March 31<sup>st</sup> 2011. The withdrawal of funding has entirely jeopardised local authority partnership funding and has dealt the Company and its practice a fatal blow. Theatr Powys has been a pioneer in its fight to sustain this progressive partnership funding between ACW and the Powys County Council for four decades. Less than four years ago, ACW lottery funds contributed towards an almost one million pound investment in the Company's base in Llandrindod, enabling a whole new development in the life of the Company and its community.

For some years now Theatr Powys has been unique in Wales. It has sustained a core company of actors and production staff alongside an endeavour led administrative department and a body of remarkable and committed freelance artists. Central to its practice has been forging of a theoretically informed, participatory theatre in education provision. This has been offered to every school, in Welsh and English and free at the point of delivery. It has managed a year round youth theatre provision and an annual new writing commission and community touring production for community centres, village halls, theatres and arts centres all over Powys and throughout Wales. No less crucial to its community is the vast and rich technical, costume and personnel resource. This combined resource is consistently called upon by schools, colleges, universities, community groups, and fellow theatre companies, both professional and amateur.

The Arts Council knew that in the current climate and particularly as an integral part of a local authority arts provision, there was no likelihood of Theatr Powys achieving through other or “transitionary” funding, the required levels of income to sustain its material and spiritual contribution to the community it serves. ACW is breaking a deep-rooted relationship, historically built, but consciously and constantly renewed, between artists and the participants in the community they inhabit.

The ACW decision represents the final liquidation in Wales and the almost final liquidation UK wide, of a tried, tested, sophisticated, successful and intensely humanising post war art form; that of Theatre in Education. This is an art form most knowable in the moment of engagement. Those who have witnessed it in Powys,

recognise the creativity, artistry and drama involved. However, Dai Smith, the Chair of the Arts Council of Wales has claimed publicly that TIE, is outmoded. Worse, an argument has been proposed, rehearsed and developed as we write, that TIE is not art at all. This is preposterous, and the formal separation of drama, theatre and social education contained in the argument is deeply damaging. And yet, as people - keen to develop a rationale for decisions, or simply relieved to still be funded - allow this argument to gain foothold, then the ACW abandonment of such an intensely valued art form can be embraced. Worse still it may for a while even be welcomed as progressive. Inevitably the drive will be to forget the art form all together.

There is a long and authentic history, a skilled current practice and a huge future aspiration on the part of many participants here in Wales and internationally, that utterly contradicts this ill informed, ignorant and reductive view.

In our view the defining qualities of the theatre and drama practice of Theatr Powys have been:

- A steadfast commitment to a theory of knowledge and to art as a mode of knowing the world and exploring the human relationship to the world.
- An insistence that those in the community who engage with the work are co-creators and co-signers in the moment (shared practice) of meaning making.
- A deeply felt and theoretically understood insistence that in meeting the fictive context engineered through theatre and drama, the capacities of young people to engage intellectually, emotionally and actively can be united in a way rarely achieved in the course of their broader educational and cultural experiences.
- An understanding that this unity of engagement can produce the most authentic and committed struggle to *image and action* our material relationship to the real world; a struggle through the art form, mediated openly and honestly.

This process requires a courageous and skilled collective of individual artists. The Arts Council of Wales, up until 2010 has consistently made clear their shared belief in the value of the Company's provision. In their own words:

*Theatr Powys is a Company that operates with a high degree of artistic and intellectual integrity.*

And further:

*The company and its work is held in high regard as an important contributor to the continuing development of theatre in education and theatre with and for young people in Wales...*

*The value of Theatr Powys to the community at large and young people in particular is very evident and is testimony to the vision, hard work and commitment of all involved in the company.*

**ACW Theatr Powys Annual Review July 2009**

A deeply rooted and integrated provision, informed by the perspectives outlined in this letter will be impossible to recreate in future. Sporadically programmed "Night Out" performances will not fill the material and spiritual void left by the disappearance of Theatr Powys and neither will the occasional live theatre event in presenting houses spaced fifty-four miles apart.

We have no illusions whatsoever. The future ACW strategy has been decreed and the rationale is in the public realm. Powys County Council will inevitably finish what the ACW has begun. More importantly, erosion of public funding to the arts will increase in momentum. There will be no re-consideration of decisions despite the future (and largely invisible to ACW) consequences.

As professionals with much direct experience of the Company's work, deeply involved in arts provision for young people and the wider community and also responsible for the practical and theoretical education of our future arts practitioners, we wish to register our profound opposition to the engineered closure of Theatr Powys. We write on behalf of thousands of voiceless children and young people and all of those in the community of Theatr Powys, whose dismay, anger and protest is being entirely frustrated by the calm and reasoned arguments of those who support this "flexible", future vision.

### **Signed**

Tyler Keevil	Novelist; Lecturer in Creative Writing University of Gloucestershire
Chris Cooper	Playwright; Artistic Director Big Brum Theatre Company
David Ian Rabey	Professor of Drama and Theatre Studies UW Aberystwyth
Charmian Savill	Tutor in Theatre Studies UW Aberystwyth
Roger Wooster	Senior Lecturer Performing Arts UW Newport
Sera Moore Williams	Playwright, Director, Teaching Fellow University of Glamorgan
Hillary Morris	Head Teacher Gladestry Primary School, Powys
Mary Compton	Teacher; Joint Divisional Secretary Powys NUT; Past National President NUT
David Saunders	Parent, Participant; Audience Member Campaign for Creativity in Mid Wales