

PET(4)-01-12 p12b

P-03-311 Spectacle Theatre

Petition wording

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that funding continues for the award winning, Rhondda Valley-based, Spectacle Theatre Company. The Company has served schools and communities for over thirty years, and its loss will deprive people of a long-established, invaluable resource and, therefore, future opportunities to engage with local theatre and drama.

Petition raised by: Friends of Spectacle Theatre

Petition first considered by Committee: January 2011

Number of signatures: 2158

Supporting information:

The Spectacle Theatre company was established in 1979. The Arts Council of Wales has recently decided to cease its funding for the company, starting from the next financial year (April 2011).

Throughout decades of engagement with schools and diverse community projects in Rhondda Cynon Taf and other local authorities, Spectacle Theatre continues to produce high-quality theatrical work that addresses challenging social and other important issues. The company seeks to promote and enhance equality and a sense of citizenship, hence contributing to community cohesion. It seems clear that the ethos and work of the company has already internalised the spirit and practice of many, relevant elements of the *One Wales* document.

In a Cabinet statement on *One Wales Commitments to the Arts*, earlier in 2010, the Heritage Minister, Alun Ffred Jones stated that *Local communities matter, and providing arts for the people of Wales, wherever they live, to watch or participate in, is essential.*

Spectacle Theatre continues to achieve this aim in reality. For example, over the past twelve months, the company has engaged in a total of 385 performance and workshop sessions, reaching a total of 14,329 participants, of which over 12,000 were schoolchildren.

The Minister added,

By laying firm foundations at home, we also ensure that we have high-quality arts to take abroad as part of our work to secure the reputation of Wales overseas.

Spectacle Theatre's international credentials have already been recognised when, in 2007, they achieved a double-award from the Shanghai International Childrens' Theatre Festival. The entry, *The Lazy Ant*, won both the best production and script prizes. The play was later toured within Wales. Additionally, the loss of future funding for Spectacle Theatre will not only threaten the jobs of its six core staff, but also the potential employment and broad experience offered to many theatre workers (fifty over the past year).

Crucially, the Rhondda Valleys, already designated an area of 'need', together with other areas that the company embraces, will lose their English and Welsh language theatre provision for schools. Communities, too, will become all the more culturally impoverished if this extremely dedicated, professional, skilled and experienced company disbands.