

## **WGIR15 Wales Arts International**

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Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

[Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol](#) | [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee](#)

[Strategaeth Ryngwladol Llywodraeth Cymru](#) | [Welsh Government's International Strategy](#)

Ymateb gan: Celfyddydau Rhyngwladol Cymru | Evidence from: Wales Arts International

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### **1. What is your relationship, if any, to the International Strategy?**

As the in-house international agency of Arts Council of Wales (ACW), Wales Arts International (WAI) is a strategic partner supporting Welsh Government to deliver arts and cultural aspects of the International Strategy. Our programme of work and our staff are co-funded by Arts Council of Wales and Welsh Government International Relations. We also work in partnership with British Council and co-fund strategic country focused programmes such as Wales in France 2023; Wales in India 2024 and Wales and Japan 2025. We support national presence at certain showcasing events like WOMEX, Edinburgh Fringe, Tanzmesse and the Venice Biennale.

ACW also critically co-funds the development of work before it becomes of international interest through its investments that enables internationally relevant work by the Multi Year Funded Organisations – from BBC National Orchestra of Wales' work with Brittany and National Dance Company of Wales' tour of Germany; or Focus Wales as both a showcase of Welsh and international talent in Wrexham as well as their showcase events across the world, and many more. ACW's investment in the arts in Wales also enables festivals and venues to book leading international artists to perform in Wales, for example at festivals like Green Man or Llais or at venues such as Pontio, Neuadd Ogwen and Mwldan.

ACW co-funds with Welsh Government cultural activities with the 4 Nations of the UK and hosts the Arts Infopoint UK desk which is receives joint strategic investment from Arts Council of England, Arts Council Northern Ireland and Scottish Government.

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Importantly, ACW and WAI staff sit on Strategic Stakeholder Groups that are set up to deliver the International Strategy such as the Wales and Japan Stakeholder Group. We bring our expertise to the discussions, and we meet monthly with the International Relations team.

We use our funds to:

- Support artists to work internationally through a mixture of open calls, International Opportunities Fund and strategic interventions aligned to Welsh Government international strategy
- Co-invest with others in the UK and internationally to deliver international context to the arts in Wales – eg in autumn 2024 our UN Decade of Indigenous Languages programme Gwranddo was co-funded by Canada Council for the Arts

## **2. What are your views on the Welsh Government's International Strategy – what's worked well and any areas for improvement?**

Welsh Government's first International Strategy has been a significant development for our work in WAI and helped to develop strategic collaboration between Arts Council of Wales and International Relations to develop opportunities for artists and cultural relations for Wales. Combining investments is essential at times like these.

The last 5 years has seen the profile of Wales rise beyond belief on the international level. The cultural programme that WAI led for Cymru's participation at the Men's FIFA World Cup in 2022 had a reach of 864 million globally, a reach unheard of before, and unlikely to be repeated. Many lessons were gleaned from the opportunity including the importance of Values-led approach for our international work supported by the Team Cymru partnership and a strong creative nation brand. Team Cymru offers a unique, bold and creative approach to cultural diplomacy, is effective and replicable. Engaging young people through the Urdd as well as inter-generational initiatives creates lifelong impact and relationships. Athletes and artists as proven powerful allies, combined with a collaborative creative digital content that offers great experience to discover and engage with Wales, marketing activity and commissioned PR, Wales reaches globally.

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Being in demand is a good and rather new problem for Wales, a challenge that needs to be addressed nonetheless as more VIP delegates visit Wales and more opportunities to present Wales' culture on key stages and showcases internationally.

#### Developing the Team Cymru model

There is a great opportunity in 2025 to turn the Team Cymru approach into a strategic model beyond the brand (as important as that has been to its creation) to ensure that the team is firmly rooted in the key sectors and lead by the First Minister's team, not a marketing exercise alone. This is important to develop a Team Cymru collaboration to grow the economy, especially the creative economy where there is a great opportunity for the arts, creative and trade to work much closer together with the international strategy.

We think that the three pillars of Profile raising, Growing the economy and Wales as a Globally responsible nation are the right overall focus, and maintaining these into 2025 is key, especially around marking 10 years of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

The specific action plans have been useful, especially where there is a geographic focus too, eg Ireland. We feel an action plan if adopted early enough would be useful for Wales and Years too. It would also help to ensure that key agencies and companies are engaged in the work of developing (not just delivering) the plan.

We feel that a cultural diplomacy and cultural relations action plan that draws on the learning of the past 5 years where significant steps forward have been taken on the back of major events such as the FIFA Mens' World Cup 2022, despite the challenges least of all the Covid pandemic.

We feel that grasping the synergy between cultural diplomacy (the work of government that we support) and cultural relations (instigated by artists, companies and cultural organisations) is key.

From a Culture and the Arts perspective, we also would welcome greater collaboration with trade missions and creative economy again. There are good examples of where this has happened such as in Japan in 2019 and around supporting key music initiatives eg Focus Wales.

#### Developing our partnerships across the UK and Europe beyond Brexit

The international strategy has also been beneficial to support our work in partnership with the 4 nations of the UK and lead to the co-funding of Arts

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InfoPoint UK. However, the strategy we feel hasn't fully grasped the major impact Brexit has had on the Creative and Cultural sectors and the costs of not being part of the Creative Europe programme.

### **3. What are your views on the Welsh Government's priority international relationships for 2022-25?**

We have found it helpful to have a focus on priority relationships for our work with Welsh Government and partners, although they don't necessarily match our sector's priorities and we believe that a mixture of sector lead / government lead is the right approach.

For our cultural and creative sector to get the benefit from a nation approach, greater work is needed to develop the sub-government relationships and to nurture them with the suitable long-term partners. Partners need to be included early enough to take advantage of the opportunities. Government can open doors but cannot always walk through the doors that have opened.

For the government's priority relationships in years like Wales in France to offer real opportunities for the arts and culture to nurture their own long term relations, there needs to be a transparent and timely open call for funding with enough lead in time for delivery of the projects within a reasonable timeframe. The annual funding cycle makes this virtually impossible and a multi-year approach is urgently required.

Also, for a relationship to be meaningful it needs to be reciprocal. As Wales's profile is raised in places where we were previously unknown, so must Wales make space for new cultures in Wales. We welcome the recent shift in approach from "Wales in Japan" to "Wales and Japan" which encourages reciprocity and activities in Wales as well as in Japan. This could be factored into the planning of the Years of Wales and to invite that nation /region to present at key events in Wales as a legacy. However more lead in time and space in between these years is needed.

It's useful to have both a relationship that is with a nation state (France) but also to have a regional dimension (Brittany).

There is a need to refresh how priority relationships are nurtured and developed. There is a danger in jumping from one relationship to another by having too many years of "Wales and" to lose altogether. We would encourage Government to have

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a “Year of” every other year. In the in between, support could be given to sector lead priority events internationally, whether that is in music or sports.

There is an opportunity to sharpen this focus too and to really understand where there are key opportunities to have a return in terms of profile, the economy and sustainability.

**4. What are your views on the availability of information on the Welsh Government’s international activities and delivery of the strategy?**

There have been significant advancements done in terms of using the Cymru brand to gain traction and recognition internationally.

There is an opportunity however to sharpen the communications and to work with strategic agencies who understand the cultural landscape of Wales and to prioritise communications (and in-country communications in the language of the country in question).

Prioritising the use of many languages is important. Wales has an USP on languages and it needs to play to its strength including in employing staff and mission leaders who are multilingual where possible.

**5. In your view, what information on the Welsh Government’s international activities should be in the public domain?**

There should be more planning and information shared with the public on international activities ahead of time. For this to happen there is an urgent need for a new cultural communications action plan that is updated monthly.

Engaging partners in helping to share information on platforms would be useful and where possible using sector leaders such as Wales Arts International to lead on specific initiatives where that is beneficial. Agreement around the roles of leading sector bodies like ourselves and how we can work meaningfully internationally with other agencies in similar sectors such as Creative Wales would be useful, supporting the most relevant body to lead on certain Team Cymru programmes. Learning from the approach and achievements of the FIFA men’s world cup would be helpful as well as other initiative where new audiences have been reached eg by the Urdd and the Peace message.

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Information should also be two way and the government could start with gathering as much information as possible at the outset from people and sectors in Wales who are engaged internationally.

For the Year of Wales in Japan, a launch should be 6 months before the year starts with a call for people to submit their information about the work and relations they have in Japan that could be included in the planning as well as to work with investors and bookers in Country.

**6. What are your views on how the Welsh Government's international activity is resourced?**

More focus could be placed on co-investments (from within Wales and internationally) as well as growing and changing the business models. To do so Welsh Government is well placed to pool resources by enabling sector leaders in Wales to co-invest and develop new models for attracting international investments. This may take time and space to re-model. For example, Arts Council of Wales is well placed as a sector leader to co-invest in the arts to work internationally and is able through our international agency Wales Arts international to target investments at companies developing work in priority areas such as Arts and Health in Japan.

The power of what Wales has developed in terms of Arts and Health could attract international investment and work opportunities - but to do so the model in development in Wales needs to accommodate for the international growth whilst also sustaining practice in Wales.

Working internationally is often misunderstood in terms of the work (and associated costs) needed to nurture relations, develop agreements or grow trade links.

International work is under-resourced in terms of budgets and human resources.

It is important to have teams working on international who are willing to host outside office hours, or meet online at awkward times.

Welsh Government's International Relations team are often hosting delegations 3 or 4 nights a week which is on top of the day job. They go over and above to accommodate for the demands internationally. There is a need to share the opportunities of hosting international guests in Wales by other expert teams who often do not consider international their responsibilities.

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It is important that staff are recompensed for additional hours or for costs that may not be covered such as caring responsibilities. It is also important to keep staff safe when working internationally.

More work could also be done to match culture with trade and use the Asian model of a cultural wrap around which benefits artist as well as trade.

**7. What priorities and priority relationships would you like to see included in the Welsh Government's approach to international relations beyond 2025?**

A 3-year joint action plan on Cultural Diplomacy and Cultural relations through the strategic agreement with Arts Council of Wales specifying areas of responsibility recognising that cultural relations are nurtured by artists and cultural operators. These relationships can be lent to government to develop a Cultural Diplomacy initiative.

It would be good to develop a named "team Cymru captain" on different initiative to enable the relations to be nurtured in a way that has synergies for government. Captaincy could change depending on the focus. For example, on a Cultural Programme for Wales in France, WAI may play that role. In a nation-wide Year in, the captain would be Welsh Government itself. In a youth initiative it could be the Urdd leading.

There is a need to have greater sectoral synergy between sub teams – eg a subgroup to include creative, culture and trade in the Year of Japan. Again, this would be best led by a key player in the sector itself who knows the players, the way of operating as well as what the key opportunities may be and how to approach and fund them.

**8. Are there any other matters you would like to draw to the Committee's attention regarding the Welsh Government's international relations?**

I. Wellbeing of Future Generations Act

The interest in the Wellbeing of Future Generations act internationally is really notable. There is great interest in this work from UNESCO, the United Nations and many nations internationally – especially the culture and language goal.

Wales is recognised as the First nation to make culture fourth pillar of sustainable development. There is a current campaign for the recognition of Culture as the

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fourth pillar of sustainable development (Culture 2030 goal) by global cultural networks united to advocate for the role of culture in sustainable developments.

Wales is also nurturing a new approach to cultural wellbeing within the framework of the act, which includes pioneering "cultural well-being" approach gaining international attention and embedded into Arts Council's new International Ten-Year Strategy.

Wales is a global player in terms of how we work with Indigenous Languages and culture.

## II. Recognition of Arts Council as a Major Strategic Co-investor

Arts Council of Wales (ACW) through its international agency Wales Arts International is a strategic partner supporting Welsh Government to deliver arts and cultural aspects of the international Strategy. WAI also leads on Arts Council of Wales' imminent Ten-Year International Strategy, which will be live in Spring 2025.

WAI is co-funded by Arts Council of Wales and Welsh Government International Relations to deliver on agreed annual activity (2024/25 is detailed below), which is delivered also in partnership with British Council and other strategic partners such as PRS Foundation who are also important co-investors on certain programmes and projects such as joint funding for grants for artists through Wales In-years such as Wales in France 2023; Wales in India 2024; and Wales in Japan 2025.

Arts Council of Wales also continues to invest in Wales presence at certain showcasing events like WOMEX, Edinburgh Festival, Tanzmesse and the Venice Biennale.

We want to re-iterate how important it is for Welsh Government to continue their co-investment with Arts Council of Wales in the strategic overview and leadership role played by WAI. This not only allows strategic investment but could enable us collectively to move to a multi-year funding arrangement that would enable earlier engagement with partners in planning which is critical for impactful international working.

There is a significant resource challenge associated with delivering this work, as international work is currently under-resourced (budget and staffing). There is also a need for better support for out-of-hours hosting and international engagement and an opportunity to better integrate culture with trade missions.

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As well as delivering the Arts Council's International Strategy, the agreed joint initiatives are designed to contribute to the core ambitions of the Welsh Government's International Strategy that are:

- To raise Wales' profile internationally
- To establish Wales as a globally responsible nation

The projects also contribute to the following international action plans:

- Diaspora engagement 2020 to 2025
- Priority Regional Relationships and Networks 2020 to 2025
- International relations through public diplomacy and soft power 2020 to 2025
- As well as specific agreements:
- Wales Ireland Shared statement of Intent
- Quebec Declaration of Intent
- MOU Brittany - Wales
- MOU Flanders - Wales
- MOU Basque Country - Wales
- MOU Baden-Wurttemberg - Wales
- MOU Oita Prefecture - Wales

The projects also support the work of the Welsh Government in other areas eg:  
Miliwn o Siaradwyr

Welsh Government Cultural Strategy

UNESCO Intangible Heritage

UN Decade of Indigenous Languages

Cultural Diplomacy Working Group

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