

Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee

CWLS(2)-04-04(p.6)

Date: 10 March 2004

Time: 9.00am – 12.00pm

Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly for Wales

Report Of The Minister For Culture, Welsh Language And Sport

1. Climbing Higher

1.1 Sporting Success

London Olympic Bid

The First Minister and I hosted the Chair of London 2012, Barbara Cassani's visit to Wales on 12 February. We all want to ensure that the benefits of a successful bid are spread across all parts of the UK, and Barbara Cassani shares our strong desire to see Wales play a full part. Ms Cassani acknowledged our concerns regarding the potential impact on Lottery funding for Wales.

Following our meeting, Barbara Cassani visited the Millennium Stadium, UWIC's Cyncoed campus and the Wales National Cycling Centre at Newport. She was able to see at first hand some of the superb facilities that Wales has to offer, both as a venue for events and as a location for training camps for visiting teams.

The announcement of which city will host the 2012 Olympics will be made next summer in Singapore. If the London bid is successful the Millennium Stadium will host part of the football tournament. The costs of putting together the bid have been met from UK budgets not from lottery funds.

2 Iaith Pawb

National Eisteddfod

I met officials from the Eisteddfod in early February, prior to the meeting of the Eisteddfod Council held in Aberystwyth on February 28. I am pleased that during the Council's meeting agreement was reached on a number of recommendations and that the Eisteddfod will continue to work with its key partners, the

Welsh Language Board, the Arts Council of Wales and the Wales Tourist Board to shape the way forward. The Assembly Government believes that eisteddfodau have an important role to play in promoting the Welsh language and culture. That is why we shall be providing £360,500 to the National Eisteddfod through the Welsh Language Board in the next financial year. This compares with £350,000 in the current financial year, and £313,000 in 02/03.

Wythnos Cymraeg yn Gyntaf

The Welsh Language Board launched ‘Wythnos Cymraeg yn Gyntaf’ on St. David’s Day. The aim of the week was to encourage the use of Welsh in everyday life, by breaking old habits and using the language at every opportunity. The campaign centred on 7 areas from Ammanford in the south to Ruthin in the north, and the Board will evaluate its effectiveness.

With an increase recorded in those able to speak Welsh at the last Census it is crucial that more and more opportunities exist for people to speak the language and that there is confidence for it to be used in all sorts of settings.

Welsh Language Board Chair

The Chair of the Welsh Language Board, Rhodri Williams, will be relinquishing the Chair following his recent appointment as Director for Wales at Ofcom. I will be launching a public appointment exercise soon for a new WLB Chair.

3. Cymru Greadigol – Creative Future

3.1 Access to Excellence

Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru

The new Welsh Language national theatre company has moved into its rehearsal and office base at Parc Arfordir in Llanelli. The Welsh Assembly Government have provided £1,470,000. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Cefin Roberts, the company will produce four shows a year, three of which will tour the six theatres that will be the regular touring homes for the company-

- Arts Centre, Aberystwyth
- Clwyd Theatr Cymru, Mold
- Sherman Theatre, Cardiff
- Taliesin Arts Centre, Swansea
- Theatr Gwynedd, Bangor
- Torch Theatre, Milford Haven

I am looking forward to attending the first night of the first production, Yn Debyg Iawn I Ti a Fi by

Meic Povey at Clwyd Theatr Cymru on 24th April. The production will tour the other five venues between April and June 2004. The company is particularly keen to ensure that its first production is an original play by a living Welsh playwright. Meic Povey will be visiting schools and running workshops and giving talks in schools and communities around Wales in conjunction with the production.

Plans are well underway for the autumn production by the company with much interest being shown by some of the big names within the film and television world to return to Wales to take part in a Theatr Genedlaethol production.

Display of Sutherland Collection

The National Museums & Galleries of Wales (NMGW) and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) are in discussion with other interested parties, including St Davids City Council and the Friends of Graham Sutherland Collection, about the development of a gallery adjacent to the Tourist Information Centre at St Davids.

PCNPA has agreed, in principle, to donate the site, to project manage the capital development and to maintain and manage the site subsequently. NMGW has agreed to work in partnership with PCNPA in providing curatorial expertise and access to collections. This will not only be through the Graham Sutherland collection in NMGW's care, but also material from other disciplines, such as archaeology and geology, which will relate to the intention of using the Centre to introduce and interpret the landscape of Pembrokeshire in a wide variety of contexts.

Consultants have drawn up a Business Plan which is under consideration by the various partners and will be discussed by the next PCNPA Board meeting. These responses will be presented to NMGW Council on 25 March and NMGW will advise me of their views subsequently. Any development will depend of course upon agreement on the proposals and the availability of capital and revenue funding.

WNO Season

I will be speaking at the performance of Eugene Onegin at Sadlers Wells on Saturday 13 March. This is the final performance of the varied Welsh week there, and is Tugan Sokhiev's first new production as Music Director and the first opera in the WNO 6-year Russian series.

As part of the Assembly Government's commitment to working towards a bilingual society, I have asked that bilingual surtitles be provided at all WNO performances.

Big Pit

The Assembly Govt has provided £900k towards the substantial improvements that have been made to Big Pit in Blaenafon. I visited the site on 12 February and saw the very impressive redevelopment work which cost a total of £7.1m.

The redevelopment means that for the first time, visitors will be able to see the underground haulage house and the fan house at the top of the mineshaft. The pit head baths have been restored, the lamp room relocated and the mining gallery expanded. Two new buildings will also be open to visitors – a Conservation Workshop and store and an Operation and Resources building, for those wishing to research the coal industry in Wales.

The site reopened to the public, after its usual winter break, on 16 February. Over 100,000 people have visited the site since 1 April 2003.

National Woollen Museum

The National Woollen Museum at Dre-fach Felindre will re-open to the public on 31 March having undergone a major redevelopment programme largely financed by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The National Woollen Museum (formerly the Museum of the Welsh Woollen Industry) is located in the Cambrian Mills, an authentic working woollen mill which had been in continuous production for a hundred years. Both the mill and the village are a heritage site of enormous significance.

As part of the redevelopment project, visitors will be able to enjoy the sympathetically restored listed mill buildings and historic working machinery as well as imaginative interpretation of the collections. A new Research and Collections centre will house the National Flat Textile Collection and a room dedicated to hands on learning opportunities. Improved visitor amenities include a new shop and café as well as access and facilities for the disabled.

The site will reopen to the public on 31 March. NMGW hope that up to 30,000 people will visit the site in the next financial year.

3.2 Wales in the World

St David's Day 2004

I was delighted to celebrate St David's Day in Paris. Included in the programme was a literary event staged by Wales Arts International and Welsh Literature Abroad. This provided the opportunity to stage a focused, quality event to talk about writing and contemporary culture in Wales. The event featured two writers, Robin Llywelyn and William Owen Roberts, both of whom have had their work published by French publishers. Guests included publishers, journalists, reviewers and the media, book distributors and representatives from cultural agencies. The event was an excellent opportunity to promote Welsh literature to a French audience, to promote links with new publishers, and to extend awareness of Welsh writing. It also enhanced the profile of Wales with a core group of publishers and consolidated distributor relationships, as well as providing media coverage for the writers.

A business dinner was hosted in the evening by the British Ambassador to France, Sir John Holmes, with representatives from the WDA, the WTB, WTI and ACW. Guests included representatives from French cultural agencies and the French business and media communities. My speech was an opportunity to promote Wales, Welsh culture and Welsh produce to an audience of over 120, with the objective of increasing opportunities for the Welsh creative industries and cultural tourism.

I was also able to meet with the Maison des Cultures du Monde, a Government sponsored organisation which has the objective of celebrating world cultures in Paris. I am keen to develop links with organisations like this who can assist us in taking Welsh performance abroad, and of developing links with other target European countries.

100 Welsh Heroes

The final results of the '100 Welsh Heroes' poll were announced on St David's Day at a special televised and radio broadcast event. The project was run by Culturenet Cymru, which has been set up by a variety of Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies involved in the Cymru'n Creu Forum and for which the Assembly Government provides funding. Culturenet Cymru is dedicated to promoting Welsh culture globally via the Internet and supporting formal and informal learning.

There were over 1.5 million hits to the 'Heroes' website during the nominations phase of the poll and over 3 million during the voting stage. This was a measure of the intense pride and interest we, and the rest of the world, take in the achievements of our fellow Welsh men and women. The final results show how Wales and its people have had a disproportionately significant influence in just about every field of human endeavour and interest.

I was personally delighted that the Welshman who created the NHS, Aneurin Bevan, won the contest. His contribution to British society was immense and he was a very worthy winner.

The 'Heroes' project has succeeded in informing and energising the public's knowledge and understanding of Welsh culture and history. The website includes detailed biographical information on each nominee and provides a valuable online resource which will continue to inform and educate, especially as it can be adapted for a variety of different curriculum needs.

Culturenet Cymru has developed many other initiatives this year. For example, it has taken over responsibility for the 'Gathering the Jewels' project, radically revamping the 'Jewels' website and bespokeing the content to support the school curriculum. It is also organising family history days to help people trace their family trees, digitising 'Welsh Books from the Past' to give access to important works which are out of print and difficult to locate, and running a seminar programme for the culture and heritage sectors in Wales to help them maximise the use of ICT in furthering their aims and objectives.

Smoking in Theatres and Arts Venues

There is a clear medical conclusion that the presence of environmental tobacco smoke is a serious health hazard to children, to employees particularly in catering areas and non-smoking patrons. I have therefore asked the Arts Council of Wales to demonstrate progress during 2004/05 in securing smoke free policies in all ACW funded venues.

S4C Review

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Tessa Jowell, has announced that, following a request from the S4C Authority, she has commissioned an independent review of S4C, to be carried out by Roger Laughton, Head of Bournemouth University media school. Mr Laughton will be assisted by Meurig Royles as Welsh language assessor to the review.

The terms of reference for the review are: 1) to assess, in light of the Communication Act's reaffirmation of S4C's status and remit, (a) the efficiency with which S4C utilises the resources made available to deliver its statutory responsibilities; (b) the extent to which other sources of funding, including efficiency savings, could make a greater contribution alongside that which S4C receives as grant-in-aid; and (c) the extent to which S4C's latest strategic plan provides an effective basis on which to plan for the future; 2) to examine the particular implications for S4C of the Government's proposal on the future of digital broadcasting.

The Secretary of State has asked Mr Laughton to report back to her at the beginning of May.

National Botanic Garden of Wales

I will give an oral report to the Committee on these items at the meeting on 10 March.

Relocation of Cadw

Members may have seen a brief article in the Western Mail business section on 3 March reporting that Cadw will be leasing premises for its headquarters at the Nantgarw business park. I will make an oral statement on Cadw's relocation at the Committee.

4. Other Visits and Meetings

February

- Artes Mundi, Unveiling Shortlist - National Museum, Cardiff
- Meet Popeth Cymraeg – Welsh Language Centre, Denbigh
- British Gas – to see Welsh Language services they provide - Churchill Way, Cardiff
- ACW award announcement to Valleys Kids - Soar Chapel, Penygraig
- Interview with BBC Radio Wales Culture Programme "1st Hand" - Rhondda

- Open Llanberis Mountain Film Festival - Llanberis

March

- Culture Minister and Lorraine Barrett AM visit to ProMo - Baltic House, Cardiff
- Met Efa Gruffudd-Jones, the Urdd's new Chief Executive, and former Chief Executive Jim O'Rourke - Cardiff
- Ysgol Gymraeg Glantaf Debating Society – Llandaff, Cardiff
- Wales v France 2004 – Six Nations, Rugby Union game, Millennium Stadium, Cardiff
- Clwyd Theatr Cymru's Production "One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest, Cardiff