

Cardiff Council's Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee: Culture in Cardiff

Literature Wales submission, November 2019

Further information about all of the projects mentioned in this submission is available in the Appendix and on the Literature Wales [website](#).

Existing Landscape

There are many examples of excellent partnership working in Cardiff, particularly in terms of artistic collaborations and co-productions, as well as generous venues and organisations keen to work in collaboration and present a broad range of creative output in the city. Literature Wales is pleased to have worked on many successful initiatives, including **Cardiff Children's Lit Fest**, established as the first ambitious, bilingual children's literature festival for the city. It has run annually since 2013 and has presented a varied and engaging programme of activities for children, adults and the whole family.

Literature Wales also created the **Pete Fowler mural on the water tower** next to Cardiff Central station. Working with FOR Cardiff, Network Rail and Arriva Trains Wales, Literature Wales was able to install this striking mural inspired by some of the myths and legends of Wales, especially The Mabinogion, with characters such as Blodeuwedd and Bendigeidfran depicted on the 50ft high artwork.

Literature Wales has also forged partnerships beyond the arts sector, including with Cardiff City FC Foundation. In the run up to the UEFA Women's Champions League Final in Cardiff in 2017, Literature Wales and Cardiff City FC Foundation offered **football and poetry workshops** inspired by the Champions League and female role models, working with girls from Ysgol Y Wern and Kitchener Primary Schools. The project culminated in a short film celebrating women in sport.

The **Roald Dahl 100** celebrations in 2016 was an excellent opportunity for partners across the city, and across Wales to work together to create memorable events and interventions to celebrate the Cardiff-born author. The spectacular sight of a 7-metre peach rolling through the city and a mass pyjama picnic in the park were the perfect tribute to the master of invention and mischief, and contributed to a city-wide buzz that was felt throughout the year.

Literature Wales is also pleased to work with **Cardiff Council** on its bilingual strategy, Bilingual Cardiff, and is able to support the Council's work by promoting opportunities to work with **Bardd Plant Cymru** (Welsh-language Children's Laureate) amongst schools in Cardiff and also funding opportunities for community literature events and activities through **Writers on Tour**.

Funding within the arts and culture sector has been challenging over the past five years, with public funding kept at standstill or reducing in many cases. However, Literature Wales is pleased that it has managed to sustain many of its key initiatives and develop new ones through inventive partnerships and fresh approaches. This type of approach also enriches the content and reach of activity, and can provide valuable new perspectives, helping to ensure that all citizens of Cardiff are represented.

Place-making and economic roles

Culture is vital to the way in which people live, interact and identify with a city and can also play a part in promoting health, well-being and connected communities. Spaces to meet and enjoy community

activities are an integral part of this, and it is important that indoor and outdoor community spaces are maintained in order to facilitate this.

Through its Wales-wide funding schemes and wealth of community partnership experience, Literature Wales supports and facilitates literature activity in a wide range of community locations, including schools, hospitals, youth clubs, sports clubs and libraries, and sees that these have a very positive impact on participants and the local community. Through the [Writers on Tour](#) funding scheme, for example, Literature Wales can support a writer's visit to a school, an open-mic night in a pub or a creative writing workshop in a local library branch.

The experiences of all of the residents of Cardiff should be part of its cultural life, and everyone should be able to see themselves reflected in the cultural output of the city. One of Literature Wales' three Tactical Priorities within its 2019-22 [Strategic Plan](#) is Representation & Equality, and by ensuring representative inclusion throughout our activity and internal structures, we provide platforms for, and encourage, under-represented literary voices. Our aim is to create a national literary culture which represents contemporary Wales. This should also be true of the cultural life of Cardiff.

Literature Wales' new scheme, **Platforming Under-represented Writers**, has enabled us to support and develop writers rooted in Cardiff. Laolu Alatise will use the Platforming Under-represented Writers funding to produce a chapbook, *The 1919 Race Riots Almanac*, about the history surrounding the 1919 Race Riots in South Wales and will create and deliver workshops to people in Cardiff.

As part of the same scheme, Taylor Edmonds and Nasia Sarwar-Skuse will run a series of six free creative writing workshops for individuals from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds to explore the theme of voice. They're interested in how empowerment through creative writing can be introduced to those who need it most; those who may think, for various social and economic factors, that creative writing is inaccessible for them.

Through the **Literature for Well-being Funding Scheme**, Literature Wales offers financial support and training for writers and artists to create and deliver original community-based creative writing projects. Each project is devised by a writer or artist with a specific group in mind. In 2018, Literature Wales funded two projects in Cardiff: [Footsteps to Recovery](#), led by Christina Thatcher and [creative writing workshops with young BAME women](#), led by Jaffrin Khan.

These initiatives are valuable examples of collaborative, artist-led approaches that work closely with participants from a range of backgrounds.

Sustainable Way Forward

It is essential that Cardiff has a wide range of cultural activity, from small-scale community activity to higher-profile city-wide events, which will support locally-led initiatives as well as attract visitors from the rest of Wales, the UK and beyond. It is also vital that this activity, at both ends of the scale, represents all of the citizens of Cardiff and their heritage, identities and experiences. Some steps that could help achieve this include:

- Encouraging and enabling partnership working across the city, both within the arts and culture sector as well as with the health, social, tourism, sport, entertainment and private sector. Arts & Business Cymru and Creative Cardiff may be able to contribute to this work.

- Maintaining support for community and communal spaces, where creative, participant-led activity can happen. This will ensure that everyone has access to the space to be creative and to start conversations and collaborations within their local community.
- Continuing to host large-scale sporting and cultural events, and ensuring that community and cultural organisations are engaged at an early stage in the planning in order to add value and impact to the activity and ensure that all residents are represented.
- Working with Transport for Wales to maximise the potential for the South Wales Metro network to connect communities and ensure that people from all areas within Cardiff have access to the cultural offer. Travel subsidies would also help reduce any potential barriers for people on low incomes.
- Consulting regularly and strategically with the culture sector to discuss opportunities for showcasing some of the cultural output of the city to a wider audience, particularly focusing on smaller groups or organisations.
- Working with partners to consider developing a bid for Cardiff to become Wales' first UNESCO City of Literature. A recent [British Council report](#) provides some analysis of the process, impacts and legacies of Cities of Literature.

Literature Wales, November 2019

Appendix – Further Information

Cardiff Children’s Lit Festival

Literature Wales is one of the founding partners of the Cardiff Children’s Lit Fest, an annual festival created in 2013. Literature Wales has worked with the festival partners, Cardiff Council, Cardiff University and the National Museum, to curate the programme of celebrated authors and illustrators with events for children, adults and the whole family. Literature Wales has brought its expertise in the literature scene in Wales and has helped ensure that there is a lively Welsh-language programme each year, working with the many independent publishers and authors of Wales.

<https://www.cardiffkidslitfest.com/>

Weird and Wonderful Wales: water tower mural

In autumn 2017, leading Welsh artist Pete Fowler and 30 guest writers including Patrick Jones, Emily Blewitt and Aneirin Karadog headed off on tour to explore some of Wales’ weirdest stories, with a little help from Mabinogion expert Professor Sioned Davies.

Stopping at six Cadw sites in Conwy, Gwynedd, Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire, Swansea and Torfaen, Pete and the guest writers worked with local community members to create new works of art based on wonderful tales from nearby.

Eye-catching murals by Pete and new literary retellings will be installed at each location, drawing on all things creepy, haunting, tragic and mystical.

To celebrate Weird & Wonderful Wales in the heart of our capital city, the tour culminated in the installation of a stunning 50ft high mural on the Grade II listed Water Tower at Cardiff Central Railway Station.

The mural comprises images from Welsh myths and legends, particularly inspired by The Mabinogion; the ancient oral stories of Wales which were written down in the Middle Ages. We have the giant Bendigeidfran (‘Blessed Crow’) – King of Britain – who fought the Irish and whose severed head talked to his men for eighty-seven years. We have the maiden Blodeuwedd, who was conjured from flowers by two magicians as a wife for Lleu, but was transformed again into an owl as punishment for trying to murder her husband. There is the goddess Rhiannon, whose horse-riding skills far surpasses those of the best horsemen of Pwyll, Lord of Dyfed. There is the noble stag, slain by the ghostly hounds of Arawn – Lord of Annwn (the Otherworld). And we have the crow, which features throughout the stories as a harbinger of death.

Its vivid graphics celebrate and showcase the mythical past of Wales, providing visitors and residents with an eye-catching mural asserting Wales’ contemporary creativity.

Limited edition prints of the Water Tower Mural, signed by Pete Fowler, are available [here](#). Profits will be used for creative workshops with marginalised communities.

This project is in partnership with Allotment Creative Development Services, Cadw, Network Rail, Arriva Trains Wales and Gardners. It was funded by Cadw, the Welsh Government through the Visit Wales Tourism Product Innovation Fund in support of Year of Legends 2017, the Foyle Foundation and FOR Cardiff.

<http://www.landoflegends.wales/>

<https://www.literaturewales.org/our-projects/archive/weird-wales/>

Partnership with Cardiff City FC Foundation

The City of Cardiff played host to the UEFA Women’s Champions League Final on 1 June, 2017 with the Men’s final taking place at the National Stadium of Wales on 3 June.

To celebrate this landmark event for Cardiff and Wales as a whole, we teamed up with the Cardiff City FC Foundation to offer football and poetry workshops inspired by the Champions League and female role models.

Girls from Ysgol Y Wern and Kitchener Primary Schools took part in football training sessions with the CCFC Foundation and worked with poet clare.e.potter over three days in May to create their own Champions League themed poems.

The participants also had the chance to meet and interview three inspirational women currently involved in sport. These were: Cardiff City Women’s team player Kanisha Underdown; Fan Engagement Manager at Cardiff City Football Club, Amy McNiven; and TV and radio presenter Fran Donovan who was treated to a special reading of the poem written by the female pupils from Ysgol Y Wern.

The project resulted in the creation of a short film celebrating women in sport, which was shared online across Literature Wales and Cardiff City FC’s social media channels.

“Sometimes people are nasty and rude;
Make comments about the way you look,
What skin colour you are.
Rise above it, never stop believing.”

— Pupils from Kitchener Primary School

The film, which includes the two poems created by girls from Ysgol Y Wern and Kitchener Primary Schools, can also be viewed online [here](#)

More information [here](#).

Roald Dahl 100

In 2016 Literature Wales, Welsh Government, and partners from arts and cultural organisations across Wales, marked 100 years since the birth of Roald Dahl.

A host of Roald Dahl-inspired events, exhibitions, happenings and grassroots activity took place across Wales throughout 2016, celebrating 100 years since the birth of the world’s number 1 storyteller in Cardiff. The Roald Dahl 100 Wales celebrations formed part of the Welsh Government’s Year of Adventure and were supported by the Roald Dahl Literary Estate.

It was important for all involved in the planning of the centenary that this would become a Wales-wide and bilingual celebration. To ensure this would happen, Literature Wales, with funding from the

Welsh Government, came up with Invent your Event. This new funding and outreach scheme offered financial support for organisers to celebrate Roald Dahl 100 in Wales. A complementary outreach programme with a focus on social inclusion was also delivered by Literature Wales and our partners, making sure that people of all ages and backgrounds were given the opportunity to take part in the celebrations.

Some of Wales' leading arts and cultural organisations got involved in the Wales-wide celebrations, with many receiving funding from Invent your Event to support their activity. Highlights included:

Quentin Blake: Inside Stories at National Museum Cardiff; Hay Festival; Film Hub Wales and Chapter Arts Centre's Roald Dahl on Film; The National Eisteddfod of Wales; Cardiff Children's Literature Festival; Adventure is just a Page Away at National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; Beyond the Border – Wales International Storytelling Festival; Cardiff University's Roald Dahl Centenary Conference; Swansea International Festival; Cardiff Metropolitan University's Fantastic Mr Dahl Conference; Urdd Eisteddfod; Velvet Coalmine in Blackwood; North Wales International Music Festival; and RawFfest – a new national youth arts festival, to name only a few.

Family-friendly activities inspired by Roald Dahl were also organised by Denbighshire County Council; Gwynedd Council and Palas Print Bookshop, Caernarfon; Oriol Davies, Newtown; Caerphilly Arts Development; and Techniquet in Cardiff Bay. Plus, The Llandaff Society co-ordinated the unveiling of four plaques on buildings in Llandaff that have a historic association with Roald Dahl.

Roald Dahl's City of the Unexpected, produced by Wales Millennium Centre and National Theatre Wales, was a flagship event which put Cardiff firmly on the international map. Thousands of people came to Cardiff on the 17 and 18 September 2016, to witness a 7-metre peach arriving, unannounced, in the City Centre; a mischievous fox being chased by farmers, dodging their pitchforks with parkour, acrobatics and even a nail-biting tightrope walk; and enjoy a great pyjama picnic in Bute Park.

More information on the website [here](#).

Platforming Under-represented Writers

Platforming Under-represented Writers is a pilot funding scheme offering grants of between £50-£1000 for a professional development opportunity within literature. The scheme aims to encourage writers from under-represented backgrounds to develop their professional and artistic potential and to create opportunities to kick-start or advance their career.

Laolu Alatisé - The 1919 Race Riots Almanac

Laolu Alatisé will use the Platforming Under-represented Writers funding to produce a chapbook, The 1919 Race Riots Almanac, about the history surrounding the 1919 Race Riots in South Wales. He will create and deliver workshops to people in Cardiff. He envisions this work fitting into a larger body of work done alongside other cultural practitioners in Wales.

To support this, Laolu will undertake a short course in Ethnic and Religious conflicts in Oxford which will explore concepts such as ethnicity, nationality and identity politics. As his current creative and critical work focuses on experiences of asylum, displacement, queerness and blackness, the course will be relevant to his writing, but also any training sessions and presentations that may arise from his work. He will then visit the Oxford School of African Studies to undertake research work for the anthology.

The project aims to explore the Riots of South Wales in all their complexity (first, as a series of hate crimes committed against citizens who held their own), locating empowering forms of identity and resistance in the Butetown of the past and present. The 1919 Almanac will incorporate archival information, newspaper clippings, photographs, illustrations and critical theory.

The project is influenced by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o derived notions on diaspora, the illustrated chapbooks of Djuna Barnes, and draws on the research conducted by Cardiff historians and archivists like Neil Sinclair and the Butetown History and Arts Centre.

More information [here](#).

Taylor Edmonds and Nasia Sarwar-Skuse - Voice

Taylor Edmonds and Nasia Sarwar-Skuse will run a series of six free creative writing workshops for individuals from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds to explore the theme of voice. They're interested in how empowerment through creative writing can be introduced to those who need it most; those who may think, for various social and economic factors, that creative writing is inaccessible for them.

The workshops will be designed to encourage participants to develop their creative voice and feel confident to express their thoughts whilst engaging with the work of writers of colour. Nasia and Taylor will deliver poetry and prose activities throughout the workshops in an inclusive, comfortable atmosphere open to all abilities.

At the end of the workshop sessions, they will produce a pamphlet containing the work of the participants. The audience will also have the option to attend 'Where I'm Coming From', a Cardiff-based open mic night, to perform their work.

More information [here](#).

Literature for Well-being Funding Scheme

The Literature for Well-being Funding Scheme offers financial support and training for writers and artists to create and deliver original community-based creative writing projects. Each project is devised by the writer/artist with a specific group in mind. The scheme forms part of our Lit Reach community engagement initiative.

2018 Funded projects in Cardiff: [Footsteps to Recovery](#), and [creative writing workshops with young BAME women](#).

More information [here](#).