

**David Drake, Director of Ffotogallery
Festival Director, Diffusion**

Existing Landscape

Through the biennial Diffusion: Cardiff International Festival of Photography we have built up a strong network of partners and collaborators in the city including all three universities, the National Museum, WMC, Chapter, RWCMD, BayArt, 4Pi Productions, BAFTA, Buzz magazine, Gorilla TV, Sustainable Studios and a range of private and public sector organisations. Now Ffotogallery is based in Cathays, we are seeking to strengthen those relationships on a year round basis, and the outlook is very promising in this regard.

For many years, the budget for Culture in Cardiff has been very precarious, and we have received very low levels of cash. We have only been able to keep up our high level of delivery through inward investment from international sources, including Creative Europe, the British Council and the City of Stuttgart. And, of course, the Welsh Government's Major Events funding of Diffusion.

Place-Making and Economic roles

The quality and dynamism of the city's cultural scene doesn't just contribute to place-making, it defines it. The particular diversity of people, place, language and cultural heritage is what sets Cardiff apart from other UK cities, and makes it shine as the Welsh capital city. It's not about attracting businesses and major infrastructure projects such as arenas, other cities have done that and in many cases have exceeded Cardiff's ability to do this. The cultural scene in Cardiff is distinctive, arguably unique, and we are on our way to being an international quality city in terms of its offer to residents and visitors alike. At this moment, for example, we have a major photography exhibition of Middle Eastern work at Ffotogallery, and August Sander, Martin Parr and the Bechers at the National Museum. We need to create more opportunities like this to showcase Cardiff's international outlook.

Now in its fifth edition, each biennial Diffusion Festival generates on average £1.8 million additional spend in the local economy, and attracts around 80,000 visitors (30% from outside Wales). These figures can be evidenced through our post-events reporting.

Inclusivity and accessibility should be touchstones for all cultural organisations in the city. Now that Ffotogallery has established its new HQ in Cathays, we are combining international standard exhibitions with engagement projects working with all sections of the community, including disabled, LGBT+ and culturally diverse communities. It's about throwing our doors open to new opportunities and new partnership working, for everyone who is interested in working with us.

Good Practice examples

Liverpool has always impressed me, and the city invested in its visual and performing arts infrastructure, including building new civic museums and galleries, long before it was European Capital of Culture in 2008. Likewise, Glasgow, which was European Capital of Culture in 1990 and in the intervening years has become a vibrant, diverse, future facing city.

I'm also impressed by how Hull and Coventry have used the UK City of Culture accolade to re-position their city's reputation internationally, whilst instilling pride in local achievements and traditions and engaging residents across the city in the process.

In Europe, the most successful cities in terms of culture and economic development have constructed a new narrative which respects their history and cultural specificity. Bilbao, Marseille and Porto would be three good examples that come to mind. It is important that the economic benefits of regenerating areas, and progressive gentrification of some cities, are felt by the people who live in these cities. The danger is that the resident population feels displaced or left behind by developers and betrayed by the local authority. In Cardiff, this feeling is evident in Butetown and Grangetown, where the Cardiff Bay re-development destroyed much of the historic fabric and 'grit and grain' of the Docks, with little benefit to their resident communities.

Sustainable Way Forward

For those of us who live and work in Cardiff, giving visibility to and valuing the cultural contribution of many existing organisations - from small grassroots ones to national institutions - is the most important starting point. Too much emphasis is placed on one-off events - sporting or spectacle entertainment - rather than the year round offer of the city. It's great that music has been given special emphasis through the Music City initiative, but Cardiff delivers so much more in terms of visual arts, film, performance, design, architecture and literature and that needs to be foregrounded.

There is very little print or online material that lets people know all the exciting things going on in the city. Tourist information centres carry leaflets, but there should be more proactive promotion of the whole Cardiff cultural offer. Perhaps three seasonal promotions would work - aimed at residents, cultural visitors, people on weekend breaks etc.

Less advertorial and more quality editorial. A stronger brand identity for the cultural offer of the city - less red dragons and rugby balls, and more celebration of the existing contemporary visual and performing arts to be found in the city. And focal moments such as the Autumn season of festivals and events.

Additional funding can be secured - from national and international sources, private and public. Ffotogallery can evidence that from our many achievements of the last ten years. However, to secure funding, the projects and programmes of work should involve innovative partnerships, creative ambition and international reach. None of this is incongruous with a commitment to local involvement and inclusion. In fact, many international programmes emphasise that.

The Council should play a facilitating role, but does not have to lead on all high profile initiatives and projects. Consortia can be formed around specific projects or opportunities, with the Council as a fully active participant in planning and decision-making. The Council's role should not be focused on funding - we know there is limited resource for this - but the Council can add weight and political support for large-scale cultural programmes, and leverage funds through other mechanisms such as discretionary rates relief and making Council property available for cultural use.

I hope these comments are useful for the consultation.