

Welsh Government's Response to the Report and Recommendations of the National Eisteddfod Task and Finish Group

January 2014

1. Purpose

To respond to the recommendations made by the National Eisteddfod Task and Finish Group.

2. Background

At the Vale of Glamorgan National Eisteddfod 2012 the then Minister for Education and Skills, Leighton Andrews AM, raised the question of whether the Eisteddfod should modernise. A Task and Finish Group was established in October 2012 in order to present him with recommendations in relation to how this could be achieved. Members of the Task Group included; Roy Noble, Peter Florence, Dafydd Elis-Thomas AC, Eirlys Pritchard Jones, Sioned Wyn Roberts, Nia Parry, Bethan Elfyn, Aran Jones, John Pritchard, Ali Yassine and Sian Eirian.

The Group's task

The group were asked to look at the following themes;

- Location;
- Competitive events and the festival;
- Volunteers;
- The Digital Era;
- Improving the visitor experience and increasing visitor numbers;
- Collaboration between the Urdd Eisteddfod and the National Eisteddfod;
- The Eisteddfod's sources of funding.

Meetings

The work of the group commenced in November 2012. Seven Task Group meetings were held between November 2012 and September 2013, along with a visit to the Denbigh Eisteddfod Executive Committee meeting on 1 July 2013 and a visit to the Maes of the Denbigh Eisteddfod 2013 on 7 August 2013 where the Group held a public meeting to enable Eisteddfod visitors to air their views. During the Task Group meetings presentations and evidence was given by a number of interested parties and practitioners. In addition three sub-groups were established to consider specific elements of the Eisteddfod, including the Festival Sub-group, Data Sub-group and Technology Sub-group.

3. Implementing the Recommendations and the Next Steps

Recommendations 1-6 offer a clear vision on how the Eisteddfod can develop, modernise and attract further visitors, but the Eisteddfod themselves will need to decide whether or not they will adopt them. Recommendations 7-9 are directed at the Welsh Government and we therefore suggest that we:

- Establish regular meetings between the Eisteddfod, Urdd Gobaith Cymru and Welsh Local Government Association
- Continue to look at the funding for the National Eisteddfod for the future; and
- Include a note for the public bodies we fund within the terms of the framework agreement to work with the Eisteddfod in terms of their presence on the Maes, where reasonably possible.

4. Executive Summary

On October 24 2013, the Welsh Government published the report of the National Eisteddfod Task and Finish Group. The Welsh Government welcomes the report and the nine recommendations included in it.

As noted in the Welsh Government's language strategy *A Living Language: A Language for Living*, we recognise that language planning is a long term process. To succeed in our goal to see the Welsh language thrive in Wales, we need to bring together many elements of everyday life. This includes influencing services and use of Welsh across many areas - education, leisure and the private sector. One of the priority areas for us in our language strategy is the Community.

The National Eisteddfod has long since established itself as a cornerstone for Welsh language and culture. From the day that the Eisteddfod announces it will visit a certain area, there are opportunities for people of all ages to take part in a variety of activities in their local community. All of the activities that form a part in holding an Eisteddfod, be it establishing local committee's, fundraising, the week long festival itself that attracts visitors from all parts of Wales and beyond, to the positive effects it leaves behind, all contributes to the Welsh Governments aim to promote the Welsh language. The National Eisteddfod and the community development aspects of its work are very important to the Welsh Governments language Strategy *A Living Language: A Language for Living* especially following the results of the 2011 Census.

The majority of the recommendations contained in the report fit closely with our current policy direction as outlined in the Welsh Language Strategy *A Living Language: a Language for Living*. Whilst we are pleased to be able to accept the recommendations in principle, further discussions will need to be held with the Eisteddfod so that they too can respond to the recommendations and decide whether or not to accept them. A number of the recommendations require further consideration due to financial constraints, and because of this, we can not commit to offer any further funding to the Eisteddfod at present than that already agreed in the core grant funding beyond the £90k for one-off costs.

5. Detailed responses to the report's recommendations are set out below:

Recommendation 1 – Location

That the Eisteddfod continue to travel to different parts of Wales each year. That it experiment, better reflecting the area it is visiting and making use of fixed resources such as the buildings used for the Cardiff Eisteddfod in 2018. Following the Cardiff Eisteddfod 2018 that the Eisteddfod prepare a report to the Welsh Government on these two elements.

Response: Accept in principle – recommendation for the Eisteddfod.

Continuing to travel will ensure that the Eisteddfod belongs to all parts of Wales. By visiting different areas of Wales, the Eisteddfod and other partners are able to work intensively in an area to promote and facilitate the use of Welsh. The Eisteddfod themselves will need to decide whether or not they will experiment with a different kind of Eisteddfod in Cardiff 2018. We will continue to discuss the 2018 Eisteddfod and assess the need to prepare a report in due course. The Welsh Government has already identified the importance of facilitating meetings between the Eisteddfod, Urdd Gobaith Cymru and Welsh Local Government Association in order to discuss locations and these meeting are in place.

Recommendation 2 - Improving the experience

That the Eisteddfod appoint a new Artistic Director to be responsible for creating a dynamic Festival which will attract visitors from all corners of the world as outlined in this report. In order to realise this, the Eisteddfod will need to look at the format and layout of the Maes and extend its Marketing Strategy to include a greater contribution from partners who exhibit on the Maes.

Response: Accept in principle – recommendation for the Eisteddfod

The Eisteddfod has given much attention to improving the maes's appeal over the past few years. The Eisteddfod has been working with the Welsh Governments community partners in order to increase the number of activities held on their stalls but they've also received a grant from Arts Council Wales. They've extended the welcome area in order to increase the visual activities when visitors arrive and have located the café there to operate as a meeting place. Plans are also in place to increase the appeal around the stalls with various exhibitions. We would suggest that the Eisteddfod continues to increase the appeal of the maes through funding applications for 'artistic resources'.

Recommendation 3 - The Competitive Events and the Festival

That the Artistic Director, along with others, examine the current competitions and offer a development plan for the Eisteddfod to ensure a competition offer that will be appealing, contemporary and progressive, cherishing the traditional element.

Response: Accept in principle – recommendation for the Eisteddfod

The Eisteddfod has already established a group to look at the competitions which includes staff from the Eisteddfod, members of the Llys and the public. Due to the timing of publishing the competition topics, it's unlikely that any change will be implemented until the 2016 Eisteddfod.

Recommendation 4 - Increasing visitor numbers

That the Eisteddfod prepare a Marketing Strategy which includes working with the stallholders, sponsors and public bodies to promote the Eisteddfod and develop an integrated system for data collection and ticket sales as well as creating a scheme for packaging tickets in a more attractive way for families, young people and visitors in general. Also that the Eisteddfod look into the possibility of establishing a Heritage Centre and Digital Record Office

Response: Accept in principle – recommendation for the Eisteddfod

The Eisteddfod intends to publish a marketing strategy in co-operation with their main partners on the maes during 2014. The Eisteddfod are in the process of appointing an individual to have responsibility for the packaging of the tickets and to keep a data base of visitors. It would be beneficial for the Eisteddfod to undertake research into effective ticket 'packages' and to learn from other large festivals. The Eisteddfod have a digital record office in the National Library and they're keen to appoint an individual to manage and ensure consistency in terms of the rights.

Recommendation 5 - Volunteers

In light of the fact that the Eisteddfod will continue to travel, that the National Eisteddfod create a plan to attract more young volunteers. This can be done by consulting with the Urdd Youth Forum, among others, and local colleges and schools to work in a coherent manner to ensure an annual programme of community activity for young people in the area the Eisteddfod is visiting.

Response: Accept in principle – recommendation for the Eisteddfod

The Eisteddfod has had initial discussions with the Welsh Baccalaureate, Urdd and the Young Farmers. They have identified the need to ensure a new group of volunteers are taking part in all aspects of arranging and holding an Eisteddfod and they're keen to develop the 'Here to Help' scheme and to gain best practice examples from other large festivals.

Recommendation 6 - The digital era

That the Eisteddfod establish a Group of experts to create an ambitious Digital Strategy to ensure that the Festival continues to develop on a technological level.

Response: Accept in principle – recommendation for the Eisteddfod

The Welsh Government accepts that ensuring that the Eisteddfod continues to develop technologically is very important. The Eisteddfod already make full use of their website, Twitter and Facebook and they are keen to invest in technology that will enable them to ensure that visitors to the maes can connect via Wifi.

Recommendation 7 - Collaboration between the Urdd Eisteddfod and the National Eisteddfod

That Welsh Government facilitate collaboration meetings at least twice a year between the Urdd and the National Eisteddfod and encourages both institutions to make capital applications jointly.

Response: Accept

Ensuring that regular discussions between these partners take place is very important. We're aware that regular meeting do in fact take place between the Chief Executives of both organisations and a meeting to discuss working in partnership between the Eisteddfod, Urdd and Welsh Government has been arranged for January 2014.

Recommendation 8 - Funding sources

That the Welsh Government and Welsh Local Government Association increase the Eisteddfod's revenue and capital grant to enable it to:

- *Appoint an Artistic Director*
- *Develop the Eisteddfod's ability to attract funding*
- *Buy in expertise in the area of ticket packaging or offering free/reduced price tickets*
- *Invest in data collection systems*
- *Increase its marketing budget.*

Response: Accept in principle

Whilst we accept this recommendation in principle, it's difficult in the current economic climate to commit to increasing the Eisteddfod's revenue and capital grant, however we are awarding a further £90,000 to the Eisteddfod during this financial year to implement several of the recommendations. We will continue to hold discussions with the Eisteddfod to determine their response to the recommendations and identify priorities for the short, medium and long term.

Recommendation 9

That the Welsh Government influence public bodies that have a presence at the Eisteddfod by asking them, in their annual remit letters, to create a strong partnership with the Eisteddfod and invest in their presence on the Maes.

Response: Accept in principle

We will seek further guidance from the Grants Centre of Excellence into including a note for the public bodies we fund within the terms of their framework agreement to work with the Eisteddfod in terms of their presence on the Maes, where reasonably possible.