

## What did What Next? Cardiff ever do for Cardiff? (June 2016)

### What Next?

**Broad aim:** to find new ways of engaging with our audience and visitors: the ever-expanding millions who value and take part in the cultural work that happens day-in, day-out up and down this country.

**Guiding star:** to encourage the people of this country, as individuals and as communities, to see connections between the many different ways art and culture affect and enhance our lives; to urge everyone to register their endorsement of - and pleasure in - their art and culture, especially where these are under threat.

What Next? Cardiff was set up in Feb 2014 by Yvonne Murphy and Laura Drane. The meetings are open to all and we meet every week on a Wed morning 8.30am for 1hr. It is hosted on six weekly rotation by organisations including Cardiff University, Wales Millennium Centre, Arts Council of Wales, British Council, Arts&Business Cymru, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Cardiff Met, Chapter, National Theatre Wales, and more.

In two years What Next? Cardiff has established itself as one of the key arts, cultural and creative industries groupings in Wales. It brings together the communities and sectors to speak with a united voice on policy and now provides a key channel through which to speak to politicians and the funding bodies. It has begun the difficult task of communicating the real value of the arts and culture to the wider public and aims to extend that work. Its membership is its main strength and gratifyingly this is expanding and diversifying all the time.

We've done all sorts over the last two year including:

- Being key partner in BBC Get Creative with ACW - which we supported greatly with a whole weekend of 115 events at start of April this year
- Responding to BBC charter renewal to consider issues for broadcasting in Wales inc S4C
- Engaging with Welsh Government over the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act Public Service Boards and indicators
- Supporting the start of a new chapter, WN?Valleys, and will continue to explore potential for others in mid and north Wales
- Welcoming speakers including Graham Sheffield/ British Council, Matthew Taylor/ The RSA, Robin Simpson/ Voluntary Arts, Adam Price/ nesta, and more
- Joining up the sectors for more open and inclusive networking and dialogue
- Running Wales' first culture hustings with the main parties in the National Museum, with over 200 people attending <https://storify.com/CreativeCardiff/culturehustings>

And instigating Cardiff Without Culture? campaign between December and February, protesting Cardiff Council's planned cuts, on top of their own cuts in previous years, and a 5% reduction from Welsh Government to Arts Council of Wales. This was a campaign coming out of WhatNext? Cardiff, working in a loose alliance with organisations, individuals, and networks across the city and beyond. It cut across artforms, organisations and freelancers, and networks to bring people in the arts and culture together.

Since the cuts were announced in early December 2015 we:

- had three open meetings of more than 150 people
- created a one page briefing doc which gave oversight of council process and nine key messages to share with councillors, press, etc
- put up a 38degrees petition which topped 6000 signatures
- had press reports in The Stage, BBC online, Arts Professional, Western Mail, South Wales Echo, a-n news, etc and done radio/ TV for ITV, BBC, S4C, Radio Wales and Radio Cymru
- presented as "witnesses" to the culture and economy scrutiny committee of the council
- had a meeting with the leader, CEO of the council and Director of economic development
- printed a joint open letter from 28 leading organisations and networks
- launched a facebook page which now has more than 2200 likes
- made and encouraged others to make submissions as part of the official council consultation via their online survey
- encouraged people to write to/ talk to MPs, AMs, MEPs, councillors, council officers etc
- asked a public question at the full council mtg in January
- and planned the March for Culture

Just focussing on the march itself, there was an amazing turnout for a New-Orleans-style mock funeral procession, with hundreds of people marching (despite the weather). The costumes and placards alone were staggeringly creative! We had more than two and a half million impressions on the hashtag #cardiffwithoutculture and were trending on twitter on the weekend.

<http://www.artplayer.tv/video/1357/march-for-culture>

<https://storify.com/whatnextcardiff/marchforculture>

On 25 Feb we presented the petition of more than 6000 signatures and the council voted not to make those planned cuts. And in the medium to longer-term, we are using this as a platform to have better, more productive engagement with the council about a culture strategy and how to harness us as a force for good. This is currently taking the shape of thinking around a proto-cultural consortium, and writing an action plan and cultural strategy for the city region's vision for arts and culture.

Future plans?

- Further engagement with Welsh Government, ACW, City Council, Cardiff Capital Region
- 24 hour culture survey in autumn 2106
- Consider recruiting for a part-time paid post to support core activity

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