

Alun Ffred Jones, Minister for Heritage, met with representatives of third sector networks under the auspices of the National Assembly Voluntary Sector Scheme on 2 December 2008.

The Minister reported on progress made with implementing the Voluntary Sector Scheme within his department between July and December 2008. He advised that it was his intention to have full consultation on the statutory cultural duty in due course. He further advised that the development of a new Welsh Assembly Government culture strategy was under consideration but that no details were yet available.

The Minister confirmed that the Arts Strategy Board has met four times and is ensuring a joined-up approach to the development of arts policy. In these meetings, the Board has already discussed a number of cross-cutting issues such as arts and health, and international issues - with senior officials from the relevant departments attending the Board to ensure a full discussion. Third Sector representation at these meetings is provided by Voluntary Arts Wales. The Arts Strategy Board is taking forward the other recommendations in the Stephens Report in relation to National Companies and Regional Partnerships.

Third Sector representatives met with Assembly officials on the 18th November to review the Department for Heritage Third Sector Strategic Action Plan. Following this meeting a draft action plan is in the process of being agreed within the group and is planned to be with the Minister in February.

The Third Sector introduced a paper - "Treftadaeth 2: The Historic Environment in Focus October 2008" and summarising the outcomes of the very successful conference, a clear recommendation of which was the establishment of a heritage link organisation to share information and strengthen partnerships with government. Third sector representatives agreed to continue discussions with WAG to establish a link body

Third Sector representatives were pleased to hear that the Permanent Secretary was improving the Government's consultation methods under the banner of the 'Enabling Government' programme and that Assembly-wide guidance would be developed as a result to improve its consultation and engagement methods.

The Third Sector presented a paper "Cultural Activity and its Contribution to the Health Agenda", which was welcomed by the Minister. The Minister and noted the amount of third sector cultural activity that is making a contribution to the health and wellbeing agenda. Third sector representatives welcomed the opportunity to explore with the Minister how the power of the participatory arts to deliver health and wellbeing outcomes can be recognized and developed further. There followed a brief discussion on the paper where it was noted:

- That unemployment adversely affected participation in community activity
- The benefits of participatory arts is proven and undisputable
- Infrastructure funding was important but the role of the unpaid volunteer should not be underestimated in achieving community benefits.

Meeting papers can found on WCVA's website:

[http://www.wcva.org.uk/policy/dsp\\_paper\\_ministerial.cfm?0=0&display\\_sitetextid=174&sub=3](http://www.wcva.org.uk/policy/dsp_paper_ministerial.cfm?0=0&display_sitetextid=174&sub=3)