A Response to the Cultural Contract

(June 2021)

Film Hub Wales / Inclusive Cinema

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Introduction

This report outlines the Welsh film exhibition sector's response to the creation of a 'Cultural Contract', which Welsh arts organisations in receipt of funding from Welsh Government or Arts Council of Wales will commit to, with the aim of revolutionising the arts and culture in Wales and making them more equitable. This work was made possible thanks to funding from the Wales Cultural Alliance.

Why this was important to us

At least 65 FHW members (the exhibitors we support), have received recovery funding from ACW or Welsh Government, meaning that they will be leading delivery providers of the cultural contract and can support effective delivery in partnership with communities Wales wide. Therefore, the voices of cinema programmers, marketeers and festival directors need to be recognised within the contract and wider Welsh creative policy.

Who we are:

Film Hub Wales (FHW) celebrates cinema. We support organisations that screen film, from film festivals, to societies and mixed arts centres. Working with over 315 Welsh exhibitors, we aim to bring the best British and international film to all audiences across Wales and the UK. We're part of a UK wide network of eight hubs funded by the British Film Institute (BFI) which form the Film Audience Network (FAN), with Chapter appointed as the 'Film Hub Lead Organisation' (FHLO) in Wales.

We are also proud to lead the UK Inclusive Cinema strategy on behalf of BFI FAN. Inclusive Cinema is a UK-wide project at the heart of BFI FAN's strategy, developing a skilled, confident exhibition sector and inclusive film culture which supports the needs of diverse audiences accessing British, international and independent film.

Our approach:

Film Hub Wales commissioned:

- Toki Allison (curator, consultant, P/T Inclusive Cinema project manager),
- Radha Patel (artist, curator, P/T FHW Made in Wales officer).

Sixteen FHW members attended an online workshop in May 2021, where they were asked to consult on the contract's core principles. All Film Hub Wales members were encouraged to give feedback in a format of their choosing if they were unable to attend.

In particular, we wanted to know what practical actions they viewed as beneficial to breaking down power structures that exclude marginalised communities - were there any case studies they thought suitable to replicate - and how could they commit to practising these in their workplaces and across their sector?

To do this, we allocated a question to each principle of the cultural contract and paired together organisations working to similar remits. Each group was tasked with discussing two of the core principles, and all members were then brought back together to discuss their feedback, and given the opportunity to expand on the principles they weren't originally assigned.

We have outlined the collective response below.

Fair Work

"Think briefly about a time when you or a colleague were not supported in experiencing fair work. What could have been done differently? What kind of support could have made the situation better?"

All participants agreed that more equitable conditions must emphasise the toll of self-exploitation, organisational expectations and funders expectations on workers, in particular on freelancers. A 'cultural shift' is needed in order to prevent burn out and neutralise pressures to get the job done quickly, resulting in tokenism and 'ticking boxes', instead of having time / making space to work collaboratively with audiences to address their needs and create things they want to engage with.

One participant stated, *'There is a lot of expectation to work yourself to the bone, especially when you are a freelancer. The industry itself is not secure for freelancers.'*

Another stated, *'For freelancers, unlike salaried employees, it might be that you are being paid for a couple of days work a week and you need those two days to get everything done, but zooms/meetings are scheduled and so you end up completing work during time when you aren't being paid'.*

Therefore, there is a sense that burn out conditions are being exacerbated even when one is working from home or working remotely. A cultural contract

should take into account that organisational structures and inequitable conditions move with employees, and are not subject to being in a physical space. It should also recognise that delivering against a set of further objectives within the contract itself may be difficult given organisations are already stretched and working with smaller teams, often teams of volunteers.

In addition to this challenge, the nature of exhibition is complex and demanding, with precarious financial models at play, including private spaces being run out of the pockets of keen, but often unseen individuals, supported by teams of volunteers. This puts the pressure on exhibition staff to deliver against wide job specifications. Key roles that add value for communities such as learning and marketing have been cut both as local funding declines and now as a result of the pandemic.

Wages for salaried staff are often determined by limited project funding and / or set against internal pay scales, which struggle to support growth and fail to reward professional development. There is a constant expectation to do more and more to chase the project awards on offer.

In response to these concerns, one exhibitor put forward this potential solution;

'We might need to look to counselling, therapy, peer - peer support to create a cultural shift around self-exploitation.'

Although, it is worth noting that this may only provide a solution 'after the fact' and to create real change we must develop preventative measures to stop burn out from occurring in the first instance.

After the session had ended, one exhibitor followed up via email with this example;

'...in France, they have just made it illegal to email employees after typical work hours - in recognition of the fact that it's increasingly more difficult for people to distance themselves from the workplace whilst working from home. I also heard that some companies are advising against meetings being scheduled during half terms as many employees book this time off to be with their children, and again, need to re-charge and get away from all work things.'

In addition to this, issues around 'fair pay' were also highlighted, once again concerning freelancers and the lack of regulation and uncertainty around industry pay rates and budgets. This was also emphasised as barrier towards employing young people. Involving them early on was seen as a vital step

towards building skills and knowledge, and training them in different capacities to ensure the longevity of the exhibition sector.

One participant who works alongside young people, training them to be film programmers for a large festival stated;

'We've just this week been interviewing for part time posts in the holidays. And we were stunned by the quality of the interviewees that we had, and eventually ended up employing all of them.... I don't understand, if a young person is doing the same job as somebody else next to them, why they shouldn't be paid the same. And what does that tell us about how we value young people...?'

Another member of the group considered the mix and changing balance of freelancers and furloughed staff workers carrying out work over the past year, and how, while the sector recovers from Covid, these alterations could prove complex.

'You want to create an environment where for the volunteers through to the very top of the board, everyone's got that voice and has a fair chance to speak about the situation, have an input into the environment they're working in... there's been a big shift to support freelancers within the projects, but it's got to be integrated.'

A further impact of Covid was referenced, given exhibitors are under huge pressure to open their doors, working with limited capacities. This group member questioned how this would balance with policies that require further engagement work, *'it's just going to take a lot of time to implement that and sort of work.'*

In summary:
- Exhibition employees and freelancers must be given more flexibility to meet deadlines, and the freedom to explore, test and trial how they work with audiences.
- Funders should recognise the value of exhibition and promote its benefits as part of Welsh cultural conversation. They need also to consider the impact of a set of further requirements on the teams working to deliver in the current environment under burgeoning restrictions (physical, mental, cultural) and apply appropriate resource to support this work, safeguarding workers and volunteers.
- Internally - working practises and rates of pay, particularly for freelancers and young people, need to be regularly evaluated so that

they are inclusive of parental / carers needs, as well as those from working class backgrounds

- Externally – working practises and rates of pay need to be regulated by a higher authority so that employers are held accountable, and employees and freelancers do not burn out. In particular, equitable treatment of young people needs to be given focus.
- Consultation with junior staff, volunteers and freelancers, as well as wider stakeholders, is essential in supporting a healthy and integrated future work environment.
- Employees experiencing burn out should be supported through counselling, therapy or regular peer-peer support.

Diversity

"When have you or someone you know actively included the needs of underrepresented communities in your cinema work? What didn't work? What worked?"

In regards to diversity, exhibitors noted the provision of accessible screenings, catering to different needs at their venues including relaxed screenings, films for parents and babies, dementia friendly screenings as well as providing audio described and subtitled films. However, they also emphasised that inclusivity is not only how people access a screening in person or online but also the accessibility of materials that were supplied to audiences beforehand (messaging, marketing, reviews, synopsis, copy). For example, exhibitors touched on 'diverse marketing' and the importance of taking things offline, reaching more isolated communities, as well as younger audiences through grassroots outreach and emphasised *'going to them instead of expecting them to come to you'*.

The participants were in agreement that these methods should also be applied to their workforce, and developing *'representation behind the scenes to make it work better for audiences'* i.e. a diverse workforce (from catering staff, to ushers and programmers, but specifically senior roles which are lacking in Welsh organisations) would understand and implement the needs of diverse audiences in a more fluid and genuine way. For example, two exhibitors noted using *'open wording'* in job advertisements targeting disabled people.

Many organisations stated that they used the COVID-19 lockdown as an opportunity to re-organise, re-train staff and invest in training (BSL, Makaton). To some exhibitors, this has felt like 'starting from scratch' and for others this

sentiment has been positive because they are learning to do things in a new / better way.

For example, one venue mentioned that they began to pay a lot more attention to the mental health of staff.

'During covid - because people were isolated at home, we actually started checking in with staff a lot more. We also introduced a system to talk to staff one-one to check in on staff and ask how they are doing more regularly (previously we did this once a year)'

Another participant stated that, in their opinion, diversity meant,

'Making a commitment to inclusion. It doesn't mean that we have to do all things for all people every time but what we do needs to be essentially inclusive.'

In this sense, as with the issue of 'fair work', exhibitors also noted the importance of a larger cultural shift - particularly from larger funders - in order to bring about long-term diversity and inclusivity strategies that were not tokenistic, short term and underfunded. *i.e.* not feeling as if every box had to be ticked in order to meet funding requirements, but working within capacity to develop skills and fluencies, so venues had *'time to do things properly'*, and access needs were embedded into the cultural framework of an organisation over time.

This links into experiences from exhibition of struggles to get funding from trusts and foundations, due to film not often being recognised as an art, or having its social inclusion benefits under-appreciated, resulting in funders pushing applicants back to BFI for film funding, which is insufficient to meet sector demands.

In summary:
- Accessibility should be considered in a wider context than physical needs, and should take into account the materials supplied to audiences, and how they are supplied going beyond digital media.
- Diverse audiences must be supported by a diverse workforce 'behind the scenes'
- Funders must relax directives to 'tick diversity boxes' so that exhibitors can develop long-term, deeply embedded strategies - which represent the needs of their local communities – working towards five-year funding and monitoring of progress.

- There must be an emphasis on training, investing in staff and building practical skills that serve the needs of audiences, with a recognition of intersectionality in approaches.
- Funders must understand that these processes take time, and need adequate resources in order to be implemented properly. A cultural shift is needed from above, giving more control to exhibitors who understand the needs of their communities, in order to ensure that diversity strategies are not tokenistic or applied without care.

Health and Wellbeing

"Think briefly about a time when you, a colleague or an audience member, were not supported in their health or wellbeing. What could have been done differently? What kind of support could have made the situation better?"

Many participants discussed their hesitancies around re-opening their venues, how they could keep their staff and audiences safe, and how they could bring together older and more vulnerable audiences who have been shielding for the past year. In particular, emphasising the health and wellbeing of audiences and community members who want to return to the cinema and feel a sense of normality.

One such example was an exhibitor who stated that there was a demotivating sentiment of **'having to start from scratch'** after the pandemic. They continued;

'...It's almost as if with lots of things you're back to square one. … reorganisation from the top kind of changes priorities, long term aims and goals, things you've been building up, and ideas that you've got off the ground. Those are things that can affect staff morale, I suppose, and how they feel about their jobs and how they feel about what they're doing and the value of what they're doing.'

In this regard, another exhibitor noted;

'I think it's really important to consider how your staff and team feel about reopening not just about how difficult it might be to get the audiences back, but it's come up a couple of times with us about people's anxiety about reopening and suddenly being around groups, and getting it wrong and maybe not wiping down the surfaces like they should. So, part of our training session that we're doing on Thursday is about staff, how they're going to look after and protect themselves and each other, as well as the audiences...'

In a more positive light - connected to 'diversity' and 'fair work' - others stated that the encouraged re-structuring from Welsh Government and funders, has helped to set organisations on a better path, where they are building on and improving on previous work. Namely that they have used the time and recovery funding to increase investment in staff training (BSL, Makaton) which has led to more confident employees and volunteers, who can competently address the needs of different audiences.

However, this also raised the issue of 'fair work', over working and the expectations of re-organising;

'...It's just there's only so much that we can do. But, you know, if you don't push yourself to the limit, then how do you stand out above everyone else? It's a tough, tough position to be in...'

It's important to note the point of view of those who didn't receive recovery funding, or don't necessarily have the resources to re-structure or train staff. Once again, flexible working conditions - which take into account the varying economic situations and capacities of exhibitors, must be emphasised from the top down.

When asked to provide examples of how they ensured the wellbeing of staff members during the pandemic, many organisations stated that they began to increase the number of check-ins from monthly to weekly, and developed better relationships with their employees. For example, opening up conversations and learning directly from disabled staff about their access needs, how to recognise neurodivergence and the use of new technology such as STT (speech to text).

In turn, exhibitors noted how addressing the well-being needs of staff and audiences, would have a positive impact on programming, and how an accessible programme of events and activities could support the well-being of local communities as they recovered from the economic and socio-political effects of the pandemic.

In summary:
- There must be regular check ins with staff, to ensure the communication and resolution of any health and well-being issues they are facing. Organisations should report commitments they've made and actions they've taken to funders and the wider community to remain accountable.

- Staff should be actively included in measures that address issues of well-being within the organisation (for employees and audiences) so that their needs are voiced and their expertise can be involved in solutions
- More resources need to be invested in staff training, particularly for smaller organisations, and the challenges of bullying and harassment should be openly discussed with training and guidance provided (eg. BFI's bullying, harassment and racism prevention guide), processes for managing complaints, whether whistleblowing procedures or otherwise.
- Funders expectations around the delivery of programmes and activities should be flexible and take into account the diverse make up of organisations (their financial and staffing situations as well as resources, and access to resources)
- Content considerations should be made around how programming can support wellbeing, and platform flexibility is needed to widen access.

Co-Creation

"What are some positive ways that we can collaborate together? What are some of the practical steps that can be taken? Consider communication, opportunities to collaborate, and existing examples of successful co-creation."

The topic of co-creation brought up conversations surrounding the autonomy of young people, and opportunities for marginalised groups who many not necessarily be *'as well connected'* as others. Many exhibitors expressed concern, relating to 'fair work', about the health, physical and financial well-being of these groups, and raised questions about their career progression, in the face of institutional bias. In particular, stating that young people are offered either entry level or volunteer positions, but aren't given training or resources to guide them further afield. They stated, that this needed to be addressed so that young people could better ***'understand the variety of different jobs that exist with the wider film industry'*** beyond the more commonly known production roles.

'We provide opportunities for them to volunteer, but what are the next steps? How do we support them to move past entry level positions? We need to trust them and then go that extra step.'

One exhibitor stated,

'We were horrified by how little young people would be paid - so we took the decision to pay them the same as the adults.'

In this way, all employees are not only treated the same financially but are given the same platform to voice their opinions about how an organisation is run, leading to the break-down of hierarchies and a more equitable approach to co-collaboration. Furthermore, exhibitors mentioned that there needed to be more opportunities and resources available to *'...upskill the people who are already working with you and familiar with the organisation',* so that young people could grow within their roles.

When asked to explain further about the barriers to these processes, exhibitors pointed to the use of 'jargon' in job adverts as well as the lack of connections to the wider film industry, for many people

As a potential solution, exhibitors discussed the importance of collaborating with their audiences - local communities, schools and specialist groups – emphasising the need *'to go out and look for people, rather than expecting them to come to you'.* In particular, one exhibitor mentioned wanting to work with their target audiences to develop a cinema programme, where the expertise of the local groups meets the expertise of established programmers in an exchange of skills. In this way, the collaboration develops fluidly over a longer period of time, where both the communities and the organisation become tied together by a mutual investment, rather than working on a short-term basis to 'tick boxes'.

One participant stated,

'Unconscious bias training is really important to start the process of people thinking about the communities around them. This will make people more aware of their own prejudices'.

Another exhibitor discussed how, after renovating their cinema into an eco-friendly, self-generating venue, they were working with local environmental groups to develop film programmes, workshops, activities and events to continue dialogues about climate change and environmental justice.

In general, there is a need for co-creation across the screen industries, with better collaboration between production, distribution and exhibition to ensure economic, creative and diversity benefits.

Sometimes competition for funding can block collaborative thinking, where historically there has been nervousness about sharing support. With partnership being essential to the development of audiences, co-creation between the networks of exhibitors, advocacy organisations and wider partners will lead to more equitable experiences for all involved.

In Summary:

- Polices from the top-down need to emphasise and advocate for young people to receive equal wages to their adult peers
- More resources and funds need to be invested in organisations, so they can up-skill the young people who work or volunteer for them and help them move past entry level positions. This will also help to secure the future of the exhibition sector.
- More resources and funds need to be invested in training organisations want to work with local communities, so they are not harmed or exploited by biases or abuses of power
- Community engagement is key for co-creation, to bring in those who are not already connected and engaging in exhibition. The contract needs to evolve as new partnerships are formed and new voices emerge.
- Funders need to re-assess the way they give grants to organisations, so that any collaborations with communities are invested in over a long period of time, rather than encouraging short-term projects which often result in parachuting in and out of marginalised groups to 'tick boxes'
- Examples of successful collaboration should be promoted to show the positive impacts on creative diversity, the economy and skills development of working in more joined-up and less competitive ways.

Inclusive Leadership

"What ideas do you have to hire more inclusive leaders for your organisation and / or to train current staff members to become leaders? What steps can you take / what can you commit to in making more inclusive decisions for the benefit of audiences and staff?"

The conversation around inclusive leadership touched on bias, fair pay, representation, recruitment and retention, skills shortages, and practical policies. Initially, an exhibitor stated the need for leadership to be '***more equitable and relatable.'***

'***It's about creating atmosphere, a good, non-toxic atmosphere, and, you know, removing judging where possible. And I think we need confidence. I certainly personally need more confidence in working with different groups, and to push myself out of my comfort zone. It's so easy just to hire people that look like you and understand you, but you have to stretch yourself.'***

The group also recognised the importance of diversity of insight in decision-making positions, highlighting how bias can affect outcomes. One example highlighted the wealth of film festivals across Wales, and how this was an opportunity to increase representation. Another spoke of senior management

level staff being made more aware of their own prejudices. One point considered what leaders look like - who is representing different lived experiences in leadership, and who's allowed to lead?

The group also considered workplace culture and set up, and how institutionalised staff could be, unable to see the problems in a space, or the barriers to people unlike them: *'you get entrenched in this idea of the sort of organisation it is - "but I like my colleagues, everybody's a nice person here" and it's not about that...'*

Recruitment was discussed and the requirement to go outside of the organisation's usual methods to reach diverse talent, not just to recruit, but also to retain. Doing the introspective work to improve an organisation, as well as being honest, were deemed essential to ensuring that recruitment is meaningful and will result in onboarding staff who will want to stay.

'Be honest about who your organisation is and what it isn't. Be really open about yourselves.'

The group also discussed the benefits and pitfalls of blind interview and applications processes, and how applications could be made more accessible if they were easy-read and avoided use of jargon.

Considering policy and action, the group referenced the need for effective, functional policies that were carried out in practice, and the need for organisations to be made accountable, to avoid the risk of giving a *'false sense of security with policies that can end up being useless in protecting and safeguarding workers and audiences.'*

On the point of representation, considering practicalities such as accessibility in cinemas, one exhibitor raised an example of a stage with no level/wheelchair access, meaning no wheelchair users could take the stage as leaders. This illustrates a lack of physical access in spaces but is figurative when looking at cultural barriers for leaders from diverse backgrounds trying to operate in spaces not created for them.

The conversation moved onto equity of pay, and one exhibitor, who feels that CEO culture is damaging the arts, said: 'I'm going to bang the drum again. I don't think anybody in any organisation should be paid any more than anybody else - that's just my personal point of view.'

Skills shortages were considered by one exhibitor, who raised that often leaders in the arts may be more creatively minded and have had unusual pathways into their senior positions, meaning further support for developing

leadership skills would be beneficial.

In summary:

- Leadership needs to be more equitable and relatable, whether in the context of funders or organisations delivering a programme. Leaders need to be uncomfortable enough to become more comfortable around different people. There should be means for anonymous feedback to be supplied around leadership, from audiences, co-workers, and collaborators.
- Unconscious bias training should be rolled out to begin the process of people learning about how their biases impact their decision making. Leadership skills and people management training should be provided to those working in creative leadership roles. Organisations should be encouraged to commit to action, referring to resources such as Inclusive Cinema's Dismantling Structural Inequality guide, and IncArts' Unlock framework.
- Organisations must do meaningful recruitment, interrogate their practices and update them and go out and look for people, rather than expecting them to come to them
- Organisations should be transparent and honest, avoiding statements like 'our doors are open to everyone' which can never be true. Safeguarding and equality policies should be activated and reported on publicly with enforcement expected, not just lip service.
- Organisations should audit their spaces to work out how culturally and physically accessible they are for leaders to thrive, and make the necessary changes to address these.
- Fair pay should be prioritised across the screen sectors, including the addressing of CEO culture, working towards everyone in an organisation being paid the same.

Environmental Justice

"Are there any practical examples of positive environmental action that you have seen / heard that you think could be implemented in the exhibition sector in Wales and / or your organisation?"

On the topic of environmental justice, the group discussed practicalities, working with their communities and the potential impact of a kitemark/similar incentive.

One exhibitor gave examples of comprehensive work they have done in their venue to support environmentalism: *'we've managed to put 54 solar panels on the roof with a coastal path grant so we're now self-sufficient in electricity.'*

The exhibitor went on to share some of the organisation's other sustainability considerations including: types of cleaning fluid, how they recycle cups, utility suppliers and more. They take seriously their role in setting an example for the community and other organisations, and have highlighted environmental topics in their programme, supporting a more eco-conscious sensibility.

However, many exhibitors are working with historical buildings, with limitations around the work that can be done to better work with carbon reduction targets. Capital support is needed to support change.

The group also considered the relevance of connecting with community groups, local activists and environmentally-aware partners to grow understanding, impact and to develop project ideas. Examples included rewilding projects, working with eco-friendly suppliers, hydro-powered hospitality services, bee-keeping on site, and having a community garden where spoils are shared out locally.

They also considered whose responsibility environmental justice is, whether the cultural sector should take ownership, or if a model of shared collaboration, using examples from other national and global movements, could offer greater insight, moving '*away from one idea of leadership.'*

Finally, there was discussion around the benefit of incentives and kitemarks to improve green behaviour.

'You could set goals, then be judged by some external body, have some sort of symbol represented in your marketing, which demonstrates to people your serious intent in this direction that you weren't just giving it lip service, that you are actually achieving certain milestones. A kite mark if you like something of that nature... There are things going on but there's a lot more that can be done and it'd be really great to put this higher on the agenda that perhaps it is, and do it in a very structured way.'

One exhibitor referenced the existing [Green Dragon Environmental Standard](#), which could be promoted to organisations to provide a framework for developing greener practice.

As well as considering how organisations could respond to targets, the group also considered how organisations could incentivise their audiences to behave

in greener ways, including promoting the use of public transport.

In summary:

- Organisations should set an example to the community through providing environmental themed programming, and making venue changes to support sustainability.
- Funders should financially support and advocate for capital expenditure to get spaces to meet environmental targets.
- Partnerships with local environmental organisations to collaborate on initiatives, projects and reaching audiences should be prioritised.
- Organisations should be encouraged to participate in a kitemark scheme to help set a standard and promote their environmental successes - ideally, a set of standards (e.g. Green Destinations) can be provided with resources so small teams can avoid being overwhelmed. Exhibitors should also incentivise audiences to consider environmentally-friendly options.

Social Justice

"Are there any practical examples of positive social justice action that you have seen / heard that you think could be implemented in the exhibition sector in Wales and / or your organisation?"

The value of local and rural knowledge became evident in the conversation around social action, when considering the specificities of the different regions in Wales.

'There's no straight out of the box formula to go, "right, we are going to make a big difference or socially change things," and we're working on very different audiences in very different environments - you know, what works in Pembrokeshire is not going to work in Cardiff.'

This exhibitor referenced the difficulty in achieving targets, without this more specific approach.

'Here's a criteria, you've got to meet this when realistically you haven't got percentage of audiences or population this area that you are going to meet. So it's just changing the thinking and mentality towards that.'

However, there is a clear responsibility and opportunity for exhibition to widen perspectives and understanding through the use of film, and targets for

representation should remain more ambitious. Balancing this work with reasonable, but earnest, efforts to increase audience diversity is a way to respond appropriately to the culture change needed.

Locality was again referenced as regards collaborators, whether *'people, staff, freelancers, creatives,'* with an understanding that it was the responsibility of organisations to *'make sure that you can encourage that growth within your environment.'*

The group also spoke about the importance of connection with creative leaders and communities, with one exhibitor recommending consultation with communities, finding out *'What do they actually want from the programme?'* and how ego-driven programming fails to deliver in this area. '*It's actually what do you want, what can we do, how can we work with you to actually create something you want to engage with and be part of?'*

Another exhibitor mentioned the need for support to respond and deliver on the Cultural Contract, taking in development time, including toolkits and resources that are being requested, while another commented on the need for long-term thinking and planning to cohesively progress social justice.

Alongside this, the group also discussed the benefit of being able to use the shutdown period to *'review, discuss and plan new ways of working.'*

In summary:

- Funders should set targets that recognise regional specificity for audiences – that said, representation on screen has a place everywhere and does require commitment and ambitious targets.
- Local skills should be used effectively, with the growth of collaboration and community networks
- Consultation with communities is essential to ensure what is provided is what they want and these dialogues should be recorded and evidenced to stakeholders, with outcomes measured.
- Funders need to support the sector to deliver toolkits and resources
- Long-term thinking and planning needs to be the norm to embed meaningful and positive change
- Organisations should use the internalising time created by lockdown to explore, share and develop new ways of working

Conclusion

Several preoccupations emerged through this discussion around the Cultural Contract, none should be particularly surprising. They fit into several central pervading themes.

Responsibility & Commitment

Funders and their recipients need to take ownership of their responsibility to communities, audiences, talent and collaborators, leading by example, thinking long-term and working towards sustainable outcomes that will support a healthier, more inclusive sector.

There is a need for leading organisations to commit to equitable recruitment and working practices, with an aim to deliver fairness across the strata of organisational structures, particularly when considering fair rates of pay.

These accountability requirements also stretch to the targets, policies and processes devised and delivered by funders and exhibitors.

And this work must be transparent and monitored, to be impactful and to bring a heightened standard across the provision of Welsh cinema exhibition.

Collaboration

The importance of listening, learning and responding has proven essential throughout all the key areas couched in the Cultural Contract. Whether in acknowledgement of the burgeoning pressure on staff and freelancers' mental wellbeing, or on a community's disconnection from the organisation they don't feel is for them, to the lack of power given to young and diverse people to activate the change they best understand is needed, collaboration is an over-riding principle in the conversations that were had.

The group recognised the need for meaningful connection with communities and audiences, consultation that goes beyond lip service, and, not just awareness, but autonomy for those working at the grassroots with vital understandings about the spaces they occupy.

Flexibility became key throughout, whether in the context of health, accessibility, or cultural inclusion, with a requirement for funders and delivery organisations to respond to the gamut of insight from those with lived experience, who are best qualified to lead the change, and best placed to

rebuild structures that have consistently failed to meet the efficacy and pace needed to achieve true equity.

The appetite in exhibition is clear, for a fresh, co-created system for funding and delivering in a way that is considerate of audience and communities' needs. There is a desire for an ambitious and long overdue commitment to equity across all the sector's interactions - to respond with intent and meaning to each of the key areas within the Cultural Contract.

To do this work, cinema exhibition needs to be recognised for what it is by the funders and leading arts organisations across Wales – as an essential part of a local community, a portal to a transformative cultural experience, and a window into and way to empathise with a life otherwise unseen. It's valuable contribution to the wider creative sector is too often overlooked.

'Now, all of us are talking about needing investment, needing more time, needing more profile but actually if you look at this sector compared to other sectors - and I've been in industry for many years as an economist - this is an undervalued sector. And what it does for the community, what it does for well-being, what it does for employment is tremendous, but it's not getting its full shout. And I think if we could all put some effort in, with this cultural contract, to try and emphasize that with policymakers, that would be something worth doing.'

Thanks to Film Hub Wales members who contributed their energy and expertise to this discussion.

Contact hana@filmhubwales.org for further details.