

# Preparing for capital developments

## Host and chair

**Michelle Carwardine-Palmer**

Head of Theatre Management

Theatres Trust

# Preparing for a capital redevelopment: Theatr Clwyd's pre-funding phase

**Andrew Roberts**  
Chief Operating Officer  
Theatre Clwyd

# Context

- Theatr Clwyd is largest producing theatre in Wales
- Completed its £50m capital redevelopment in October 2025
- Project began in 2017
- Construction was phased from 2021 onwards
- My role was as the Client Representative

# Why preparation was essential

- Aging building with urgent infrastructure issues
- Continued demand from audiences, artists, and partners
- Funding decision still uncertain and competitive
- Needed to prove ambition and credibility

**Key tension:** plan boldly without guarantees

# Defining the vision early

## What we did well

- Established a clear artistic and civic vision early
- Positioned the project as:
  - a cultural hub, not just a theatre
  - a resource for the whole region
- Aligned redevelopment with:
  - audience access
  - sustainability
  - future-proofed working practices

**Impact:** funders, partners, and staff could clearly articulate *why* the project mattered

# Early engagement and consultation

## Audiences, artists, and building users

- Proactive engagement before designs were final
- Conversations with:
  - audiences and community groups
  - visiting companies and freelancers
  - staff across all departments
- Feedback used to inform priorities, not just validate decisions

**Impact:** stronger buy-in and fewer surprises later

# Operating while planning

## A major challenge

- Running a busy producing and receiving theatre while:
  - hosting surveys, feasibility studies, and design work
  - supporting consultants on site
  - managing uncertainty about timelines
- Increased pressure on staff capacity

**Reality:** preparation work is invisible but resource-heavy

# Managing uncertainty

## Living without confirmed funding

- No guarantee the project would proceed
- Difficult conversations about:
  - long-term staffing
  - programming commitments
  - maintenance vs investment
- Risk of fatigue and skepticism internally

**Lesson:** transparency mattered more than reassurance

# Impact on audiences

## What audiences experienced

- Continued access to high-quality work
- Honest communication about the building's limits
- Opportunities to contribute ideas and feedback

## Challenges

- Temporary disruptions
- Managing expectations about timelines

**Net effect:** trust built through openness

# Impact on other building users

## **Staff, artists and partners**

- Increased consultation workload
- Greater awareness of building constraints
- Some anxiety around change and displacement

## **Positive outcomes**

- Users felt listened to
- Operational needs embedded into early plans
- Stronger sense of shared ownership

# What worked best overall

## Key success factors

- Investing time before money was confirmed
- Treating preparation as strategic, not administrative
- Clear narrative linking:
  - artistic ambition
  - community benefit
  - practical delivery
- Balancing optimism with realism

# Key takeaways

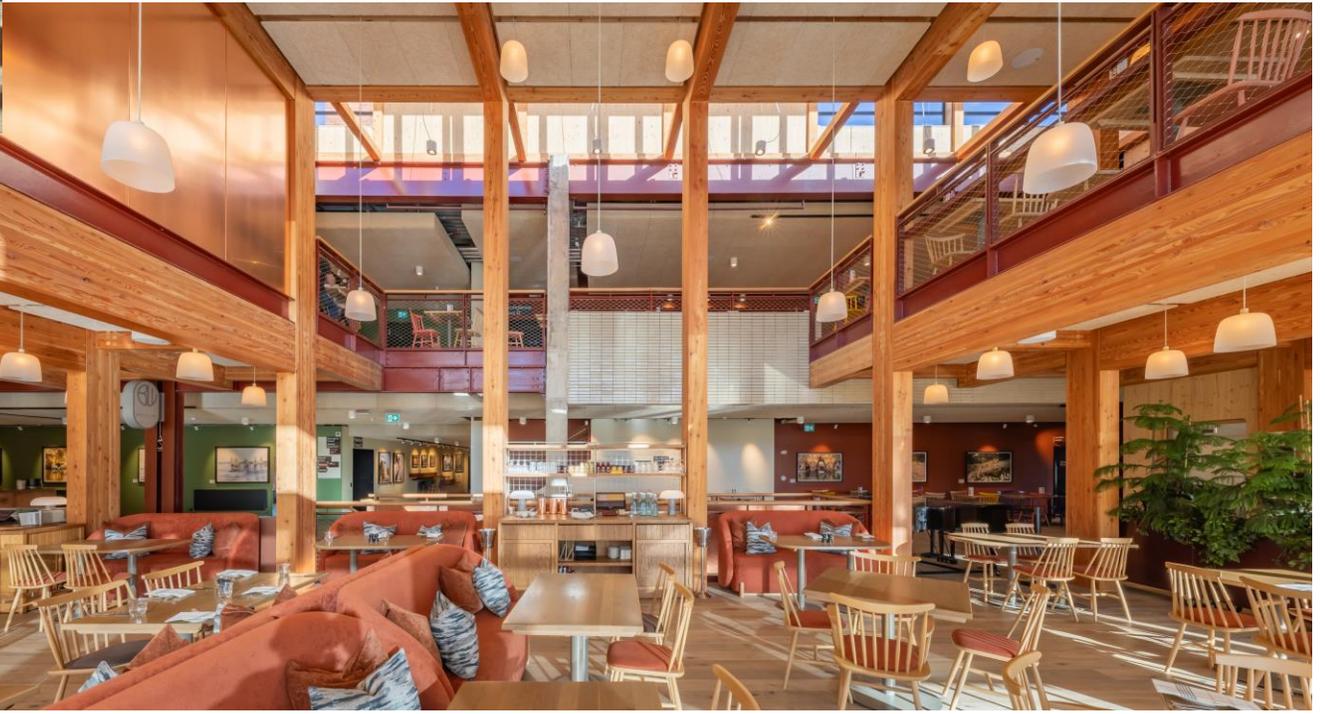
## Lessons from the pre-funding phase

- Preparation is part of the funding case, not a precursor
- Engagement builds resilience during uncertainty
- The process shapes culture, not just buildings
- How you prepare affects how people experience the change

**Final thought:** the building started changing long before construction began



THEATR  
CLWYD



# Thank you for listening

**Andrew Roberts**

Chief Operating Officer, Theatre Clwyd

[theatrclwyd.com](http://theatrclwyd.com)

Facebook & Instagram: [@theatrclwyd](https://www.facebook.com/theatrclwyd)

# Preparing to be a client

**Jack Tilbury**

Director

Plann

# Preparing to be a client

- Building record information
- Governance
- Procurement

# Thank you for listening

**Jack Tilbury**  
Director, Plann

[plann.co.uk](http://plann.co.uk)

# Arts Council England: Creative Foundations Fund

## Overview and tips for potential applicants

**Lynsey Rowe**

Senior Officer, Capital Advice and Support  
Arts Council England

# Context

**Feb 2025** - Government announces £270m Arts Everywhere Fund to boost growth in cultural and heritage sectors

**Spring 2025** - Arts Council England (ACE) launches Museum Estate & Development Fund Round 5 (MEND), Libraries Improvement Fund Round 4 (LIF) and **Creative Foundations Fund Round 1 (CFF)**

**Jan 2026** - Government pledges additional investment for Arts Everywhere Fund (£1.5 billion between 2025-2030)

**Mar 2026** - ACE announces outcomes of **CFF**, MEND and LIF and more information about new funding rounds

# Creative Foundations Fund: programme overview



**Open-access capital expenditure fund** for creative and cultural organisations in England



Revitalising, restoring, retrofitting, renewing cultural assets



Grants from **£100,000 up to £10 million**



Strand 1	£100,000 up to £1 million
Strand 2	> £1 million and up to £10 million



Capital activity delivered within **three-year period**

# Creative Foundations Fund: eligibility criteria

**Organisation type:** Not-for-profit cultural organisations based in England (but not museums or libraries)

**Expenditure:** all project costs must be able to be capitalised on balance sheet

**Partnership funding:** 5% (Strand 1) or 10% (Strand 2)

**Timetable:** activity delivered within 3 years of award

**Building projects:** additional eligibility criteria apply

# 10 top tips for potential applicants

- 1) Who is the **project owner** and which **partners** are helping?
- 2) Is your application for a **building project**?
- 3) Who is the **owner of the building (and who is the operator)** where the project is taking place?
- 4) Is your building project at the right **stage of design development**?
- 5) Do you have the right **skills and capacity**?

# 10 top tips for potential applicants

- 6) Does your **timetable** reflect all known **influencing factors**?
- 7) How will you ensure **value for money** when buying goods, works or services?
- 8) How have you calculated **costs** and do they reflect all known **influencing factors**?
- 9) How will you secure **full match funding** before project start?
- 10) What are the **key project risks** and how will you **mitigate** them?

**Thank you for listening**

**Lynsey Rowe**

Senior Officer, Capital Advice and Support  
Arts Council England

[artscouncil.org.uk](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

# Blaenoriaethau cyfalaf y dyfodol Future capital priorities

**Andrew Richards**

Head of Business Development

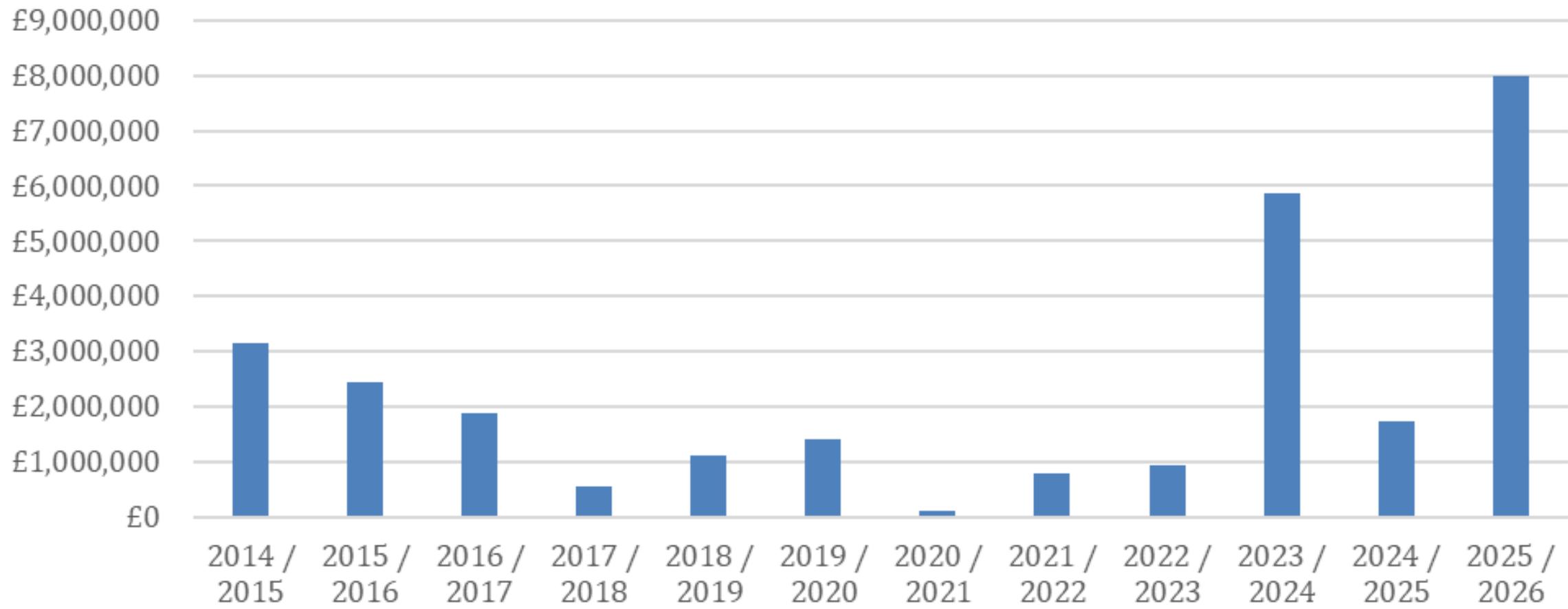
Arts Council of Wales

**Current and future capital funding: an overview**

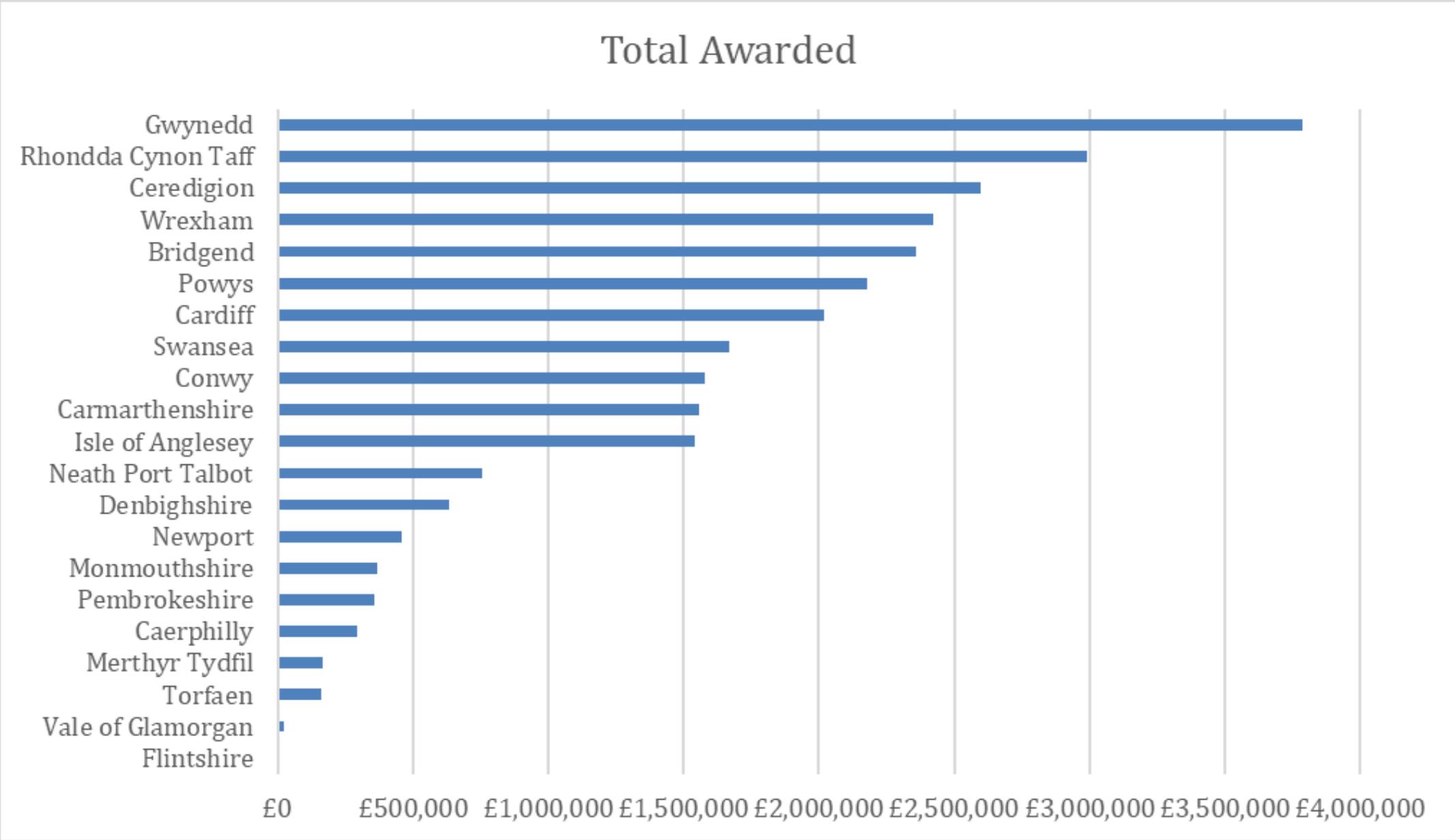
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# Cyllid Cyfalaf y celfyddydau – Arts Capital funding - 2014-2026

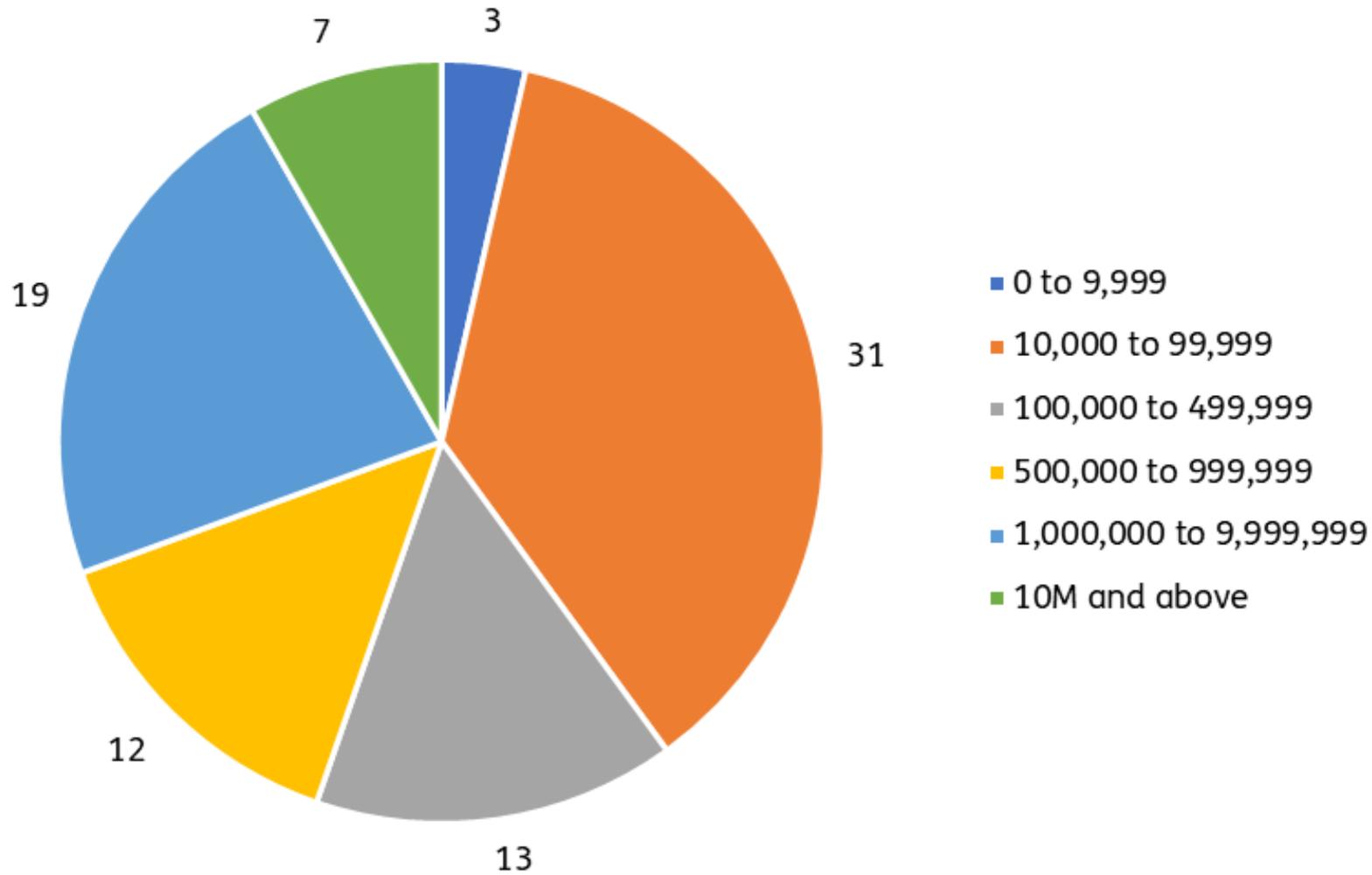
Total awarded (£)



# Dadansoddiad rhanbarthol – Regional Breakdown



# **Overview of sector engagement around capital funding priorities in Wales**



116 organisations completed the survey

95% of venue-based respondents and 65% of non-venue-based respondents anticipate needing capital investment between 2026 and 2030.

Estimated anticipated needs: £201,060,340 (£182,548,600)

The top three areas questionnaire respondents wish to see prioritised for capital investment in the Welsh arts sector were:

- Repairs and maintenance
- Environmental sustainability
- Financial sustainability

The three priorities deemed the least important were:

- Digital innovation
- Addressing regional disparity
- Change of asset/usage

## Key priorities from sector conversations:

- Repairs and maintenance
- Environmental sustainability
- Accessibility
- Digital

## Challenges:

- Internal capacity
- Technical knowledge gaps
- Requirement to spend in year
- Procurement challenges
- Complexity of application procedures
- Fundraising
- Contractor networks

# Arts Council of Wales capital funding 2026/27

- Overview of emerging priorities
- Draft timeline and budget
- Draft changes to application framework
- Non-grant support for capital programmes/ projects

**Thank you for listening**

**Andrew Richards**

Head of Business Development

Arts Council of Wales

# Audience Q&A



## Host and Chair

**Michelle Carwardine-Palmer** Head of Theatre Management, Theatres Trust

## Speakers

**Andrew Roberts** Chief Operating Officer, Theatre Clwyd

**Jack Tilbury** Director, Plann

**Lynsey Rowe** Senior Officer, Capital Advice and Support, Arts Council England

**Andrew Richards** Head of Business Development, Arts Council of Wales