

£300,000 to drive up participation in culture and the arts

Speaking at this year's Heritage Volunteering UK Conference the Economy Secretary, Ken Skates announced that the Welsh Government's successful [Fusion programme](#), which engaged nearly 5000 people in culture and the arts in its pilot phase, would continue for another year as a result of £280,000 of Welsh Government funding.

Since its inception in 2015 the Fusion programme has delivered a huge range of projects to young people and adults that have enabled them to widen their horizons and increase their confidence, skills and qualifications by taking part in cultural activities. It has seen young people taking over the running of museums and castles, famous artworks being taken into primary schools, and opera being performed on school buses.

And a range of adult volunteering opportunities in museums and arts bodies have helped adults to gain new skills and qualifications that in some cases have been a stepping stone into work.

The latest round of Fusion funding will support a new phase of the programme focused on partnership working in some of Wales' most disadvantaged areas and concentrated on the priority areas of early years, employability and skills, learning and health and well being.

It will also work to increase opportunities for people to volunteer with cultural and arts bodies.

Speaking about the extension of the Fusion programme, Ken Skates said:

"We know that culture and the arts can make a real difference to people's lives and can help to drive confidence, open up interests that can last a life time, increase skills levels and help people into employment and training.

"The pilot phase of our Fusion programme was a real success, engaging nearly 5000 people in culture and the arts and enabling them to get involved in a huge range of projects.

"I am therefore delighted that we have been able to extend the programme for a further year and will be able to provide £280,000 to local authorities, housing associations and charities to increase opportunities for people through culture.

"I am also pleased to announce partnership between the Welsh Government and the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) who will work to develop and support cultural volunteering and the Kids is Museums charity who will continue their innovative, empowering work with young people. Both will be focussing on those who are

hardest to reach and stand to gain the most.”

Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales has been leading the research and practice on addressing poverty and exclusion through cultural participation on the pioneering Fusion programme. Nia Williams, the Museum 's Director of Learning and Engagement said:

“We very much welcome this funding announcement by the Cabinet Secretary, for a programme which has proven its success in engaging people with their heritage and culture and has also enabled organisations from different sectors to tackle the impact of poverty in Wales together.

“At Amgueddfa Cymru for example, our Volunteer Co-ordinator has conducted workshops for partners involved in the Pioneer Areas across Wales in volunteer management and partnership working. Five pioneer areas have received this training with over 50 attendees so far.

“Thanks to continued funding our work in supporting projects all over Wales will continue.”