



CANOLFAN Y CELFYDDYDAU ABERYSTWYTH ARTS CENTRE

BUSINESS PLAN 2023 - 2027



01970 62 32 32
ABERYSTWYTH
ARTS
aberystwythartscentre.co.uk



ABOUT US

Our Vision

**A socially connected and creatively enriched
Wales**

Our Mission

**For Aberystwyth Arts Centre to be a creative
home for all**

- Developing a Strong Sense of Identity, Belonging and Connection with our Diverse Communities
- Showcasing Welsh Language, Creativity and Culture
- Empowering and Enriching our Communities, Participants and Practitioners from Aberystwyth, Mid Wales and Beyond
- Collaborating with, Hosting and Presenting Regional, National and International Artists
- Delivering Socially and Environmentally Sustainable Practice



OUR VALUES ARE:



Creative

Ambitious

Collaborative

Welcoming

People Centred

Socially Responsible



Our Values provide the fundamental principles to our beliefs in:

- The power of the arts to transform society and to change and enrich lives
- The arts being a social glue for communities, to connect and empower individuals and engender a sense of belonging and identity
- The arts being for everyone



OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our Strategic Aims are underpinned by the same values identified in **Aberystwyth University's Strategic Plan**, **Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015**, and **Arts Council Wales corporate plan 'For the Benefit of All'** and the **Cultural Contract**, enabling us to make an important and valued contribution to a vibrant culture for the town, the region, Wales, the UK and internationally.

Strategic Aim 1: Create, Curate and Connect

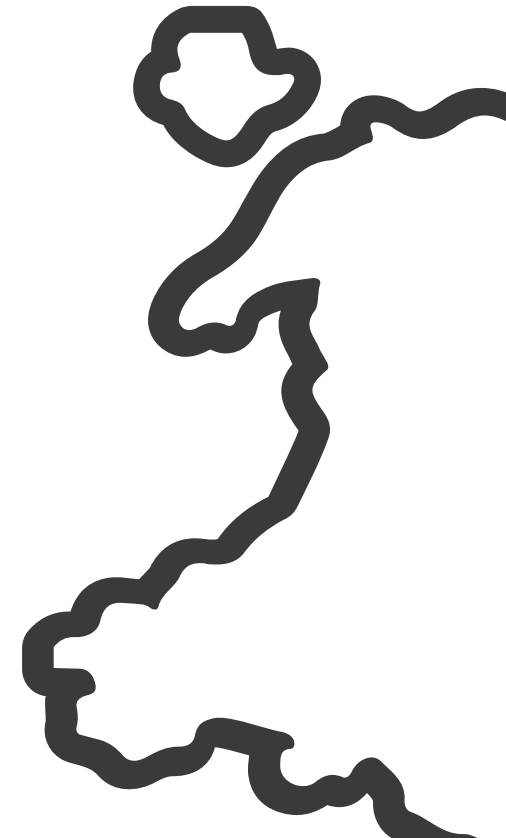
Strategic Aim 2: Widening Engagement

Strategic Aim 3: Creative Development

Strategic Aim 4: Caru Cymru

Strategic Aim 5: People and Place

Strategic Aim 6: Resilience and Responsibility



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aberystwyth Arts Centre is one of Wales' largest and best-known venues, presenting a broad multi-disciplinary arts and engagement programme throughout the year. It is a national hub and of key strategic importance for Mid Wales and the large rural communities that it serves. As an integral part of Aberystwyth University, the Arts Centre has built a reputation for creative excellence, providing unique and rewarding opportunities for the people of Aberystwyth, Mid Wales and beyond. The Centre is a vital and energetic contributor to Welsh artistic life and cultural identity in both Welsh and English languages.

Over the next four years we have ambitious plans for the development of the physical building, looking to become the first Carbon Neutral Arts Centre in Wales, and to future-proof the facilities for the next 50 years. We will be developing our exciting and inclusive artistic programme to ensure audiences in Mid Wales can experience the very best access to the arts despite our rural location.

Our distinct contributions to the arts in Wales include:

- Five decades of excellence in regional and national arts provision
- University located, providing a key bridging link between students and community
- Inter-departmental collaboration as part of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University
- Central ethos of widening public engagement with the arts in partnership with key national initiatives
- Home to the largest community engagement programme in Wales
- Enrichment of the arts in a positive bilingual environment
- Leading the way in arts provision in Wales and beyond



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTD...

We will be extending and building on our comprehensive and ambitious community engagement, which is the largest provider of participatory arts activity in Wales.

We will be supporting artists and creative people of all ages and backgrounds – both those who make their living from their creativity and those who don't – to have access to professional facilities, work and engagement, and support to develop their own creative skills.

We will celebrate Wales, it's people, language and culture, being proud of our location in one of the nation's strongest Welsh language speaking regions.

And, vitally, we will use our platform to promote a sustainable and socially responsible way of working, realising the potential of the arts to communicate the need to engage in the climate emergency. We will provide a safe home for any groups marginalised by society, and promote tolerance, equity and inclusion.

The future is what we make it. We have a responsibility to bring people together and take a shared approach to shape it for the better.

Our Facilities Include:

- **Performing Arts:** Concert Hall (1250 max capacity), Theatre (294 capacity), Studio (100 capacity), Cinema (110 capacity), Rehearsal Studios
- **Exhibitions:** Gallery 1, Gallery 2, Ceramics Gallery, Café Gallery, EYE digital viewing space
- **Community Arts:** Ceramics Studio, 3D & 2D Studios, Photographic Darkroom, 4 Dance Studios, 2 Rehearsal Rooms, Music Room
- **Creative Studios:** 18 Studios for artists and creative businesses
- **Commercial:** Craft & Design shop, Cafés, Bars, Conference and Meeting facilities



INTRODUCTION

Aberystwyth Arts Centre has over fifty years of excellence in showcasing all major art-forms. Recognised as a home for creative development, it has cemented its position as a 'national flagship' across the UK and internationally.

As an integral part of Aberystwyth University, the Arts Centre has built a reputation for creative excellence, providing unique and rewarding opportunities for the people of Aberystwyth, Mid Wales and beyond. The Centre is a vital and energetic leader in the promotion of Welsh artistic life and cultural identity in both the Welsh and English languages, with one of the UK's most comprehensive and ambitious community engagement programmes.

Situated at the heart of the University's main campus, with stunning views across Cardigan Bay, the Arts Centre plays a key role in cross-departmental collaboration and connects the many communities it serves from students, academics, audiences, communities, participants, and creative practitioners to come together, engage, and enjoy high quality, eclectic arts experiences.

A £4.3 million redevelopment was completed in April 2000 supported by Arts Council of Wales (ACW) and Aberystwyth University. In 2009, an award-winning complex of 18 creative studios designed by Thomas Heatherwick was developed to offer spaces for artists, craftworkers and creative arts businesses.

Aberystwyth University built the Arts Centre with the ambition to serve not just the College but also the town and the surrounding counties and to act as a bridge between 'town and gown'. The University's long-term commitment to the Arts Centre and to the community in which we are based is something to be celebrated, and it is thanks to that initial vision that the Arts Centre, 50 years on, is able to ensure that the communities of Mid Wales have access to the very best regional, national, and international arts experiences, here in their own locale. Being based on a university campus also opens up pathways to engage with the very best of academic learning and research, to partner on new ideas, cross disciplinary projects, and to engage with students, staff and visiting academics.

**Over 650,000 annual visitors from the full community of Mid Wales and beyond
enjoy the Arts Centre**

Headline ACW statistics include*

259,732 attendances
(12.95% of ACW's National Portfolio Client total)

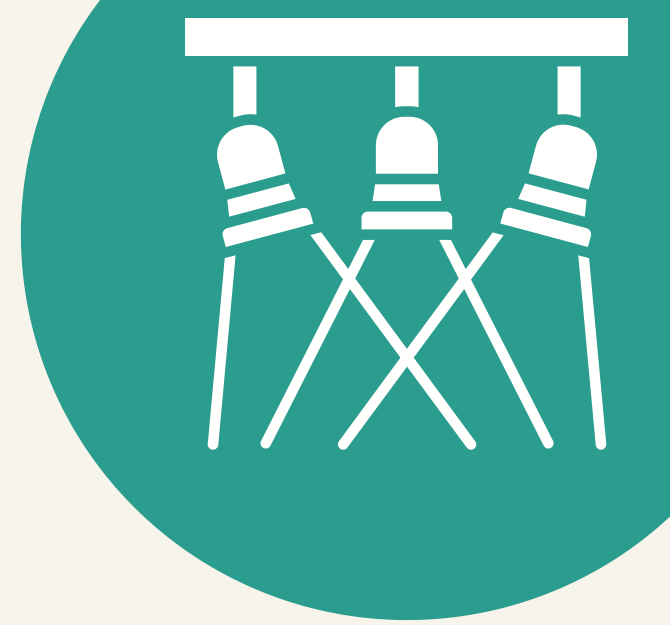
1,156 events
(8.4% of ACW's National Portfolio Client total)

6,672 participatory sessions / 70,918 attendances
(52.97% (sessions) and 37.37% (attendances) of ACW's National Portfolio Client total
sessions)

Over the past 4 years we have enabled 607 contemporary artists to showcase their
work professionally in over 70 exhibitions

(*comparisons from 2018/19 figures, the last full year pre-pandemic)





Key Achievements



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - PERFORMING ARTS

Our performance programme provides inspiration and enjoyment for the wider bilingual communities of Mid and West Wales and beyond. Our activities include professional and community work across theatre, dance, music, classical music, comedy and light entertainment, literature, family work and cross-artform activity. The communities of Mid and West Wales deserve the same opportunities as those in urban settings to experience the very best work from leading companies from Wales, the UK and Internationally. We strive to ensure that we do this, through a substantial mixed programme of touring work, festivals, and our own professional in-house productions.

As one of the largest venues in Wales and one of the busiest in the UK, we are fortunate to have a range of professional spaces in which to present work including a 900-seater concert hall, 300-seater theatre, and 100-seater studio. This enables us to provide not only a positive experience for visiting companies and artists, but also vitally important opportunities for community groups to present their work in a professional environment in which to learn and be supported by experienced staff.

A programme of engagement activity is linked around the performing arts programme including workshops, Q&As and talks.

We support all the main established Wales based companies across all art forms and in both languages including, but not limited to, BBC NOW, Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru, National Dance Company Wales, Cwmni Arad Goch, Focus Wales, National Theatre Wales, Opra Cymru, Mid Wales Opera, as well as offering support, encouragement and R&D opportunities for new and emerging companies and artists.

Partnerships are key to support the development of work and provide additional expertise to support our core team. This has particularly been the case for festivals, such as Musicfest International Music Festival and Summer School which has recently appointed Catrin Finch as their Artistic Director. This has enabled us to present concerts from Shekou Kanneh-Mason, and to support new and emerging

'Aberystwyth Arts Centre has a tradition of getting tours that nowhere else in Wales gets to see'

ADAM SOMERSET, THEATRE IN WALES"



SPOTLIGHT:
Producing and Collaboration with Theatr Na'Nog, 'Operation Julie'

23 performances in Aberystwyth, Carmarthen and Brecon
6792 audiences *93% capacity across the run
51% first time bookers

Wales Arts Review, Theatre Wales and The Stage Best of Year Lists 2022, full page 3 feature in The Guardian

The Arts Centre joined in a partnership with Theatr Na'Nog to co-produce a new rock-musical, Operation Julie, based on the infamous drugs bust in the Tregaron area in the 1970s. With support from ACW's 'Create' fund, the project began pre-pandemic, and when original plans had to be postponed it was moved to an online R&D programme with sharing of work in progress delivered virtually during lock-down. In 2022 the full production was realised with 17 performances in Aberystwyth to coincide with the National Eisteddfod in Tregaron and toured to Carmarthen and Brecon to huge acclaim. Plans are in place to re-stage the piece in 2024 and tour again to a larger number of venues in Wales and England, raising awareness of the Welsh language beyond the border.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS- PERFORMING ARTS CONTD...



musicians at the start of their careers, including the Solem and Sacconi quartets, Tom Poster, and Guy Johnston. Exciting new partnerships include Sinfonia Cymru, the University Music Centre, Ceredigion Music Service, and the town/gown orchestra Philomusica, helping us to develop opportunities to support the commissioning and testing of new music and to build new audiences for classical music.

Representation on national bodies is key to influencing decision making and ensuring voices are heard from across the whole of Wales. We are members of Creu Cymru, with the Deputy Director currently serving on the Board as Trustee; we are part of a new Mid-Scale Theatre Touring partnership with venues and producing companies from across Wales to develop audience focused work for touring.

Key Achievements

- Long-term history of producing and partnering on work in-house and on tour (Wales and UK wide), including our annual professional large-scale Summer Season musical productions.
- A recognised location for commercial touring circuit work, particularly in comedy and live music which helps contribute to our financial resilience.
- Important support for community and amateur productions in a professional environment including the Wardens annual pantomime (for nearly 40 years), our own Youth Theatre, Dance School, and Stage school; Castaway Community Theatre; Philomusica of Aberystwyth; Aberystwyth Choral Society; Aberystwyth Silver Band and numerous charity events
- Key contributor to sector skills development, for example Theatre Technician Apprenticeships and career progression

SPOTLIGHT: Co-creation and Arts & Health: AberGêm

AberGêm was an ACW Connect and Flourish project between Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Articulture and Boomtown Festival, designed to engage with young people aged 16-25 who were struggling with mental health post pandemic.

Over a two-year period, the project engaged with MIND Aberystwyth, Ceredigion County Council and meddwl.com and worked with a group of young people and freelance artists to devise interventions, workshops, and arts activity.

In the first year an intervention was held at the annual Fair in Aberystwyth to engage with young people in activities linked to games.

The second intervention event took place on the Promenade in November 2022, the culmination of workshops and training sessions. Participants developed an amazing event to mark the Winter Equinox, involving a digital game hidden throughout the town, processions, dance, live music, and fireworks which was truly amazing.

35 freelancers were engaged, with 77% of them from or based in the Ceredigion /Mid Wales area. 26 young people were part of the co-creation core project with 6 of them going on to have paid work at Boomtown Festival as artists/performers as a result.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - VISUAL ARTS

Our visual arts programme presents a wide-ranging programme of exhibitions with a focus on contemporary practise. Over the past 4 years we have enabled 607 contemporary artists to showcase their work professionally in over 70 exhibitions, giving visitors the chance to engage with high quality art and participate in creativity. 14 of these exhibitions included work by international artists, 16 were touring and co-curated from national collections, 11 solo shows by established Welsh artists showing new work, 29 by mid-career emerging artists, 5 offsite/online exhibitions and 15 community exhibitions.

We support artists practising in Wales, emerging artists, and the very best of UK and International work. We offer an exceptionally high-quality environment to display work, with purpose-built Gallery 1 for high-profile large-scale exhibitions, Gallery 2 for emerging work, the café gallery and Piazza window for more community focused work. We offer Artist Residency support in our Creative Units, giving artists opportunities to develop their own practise in a safe and supportive environment.

We have been selected to be part of the network of galleries that will form the National Contemporary Art Gallery for Wales. A major capital investment will enable us to share Wales' national collection of contemporary art with the Mid Wales audience and beyond, develop new opportunities for co-curation, and commission new work by emerging artists.

We understand the importance of reaching out to our communities to support their creative development. In 2021 we re-launched the biennial open call exhibition with Oriel Lockdown, which celebrated the value that the arts played over the period of the pandemic. Over 1,000 artists submitted work, and we exhibited nearly 400 pieces of work by 160 professional and amateur artists. Our next major open call exhibition will ask people to create works that show action for Climate Justice. In 2023 an ACW audience development grant will enable us to work with families from deprived areas to curate an exhibition from the collections of National Library Wales and Amgueddfa Cymru. This project is supported by the charities Families First, Flying Start and Plant Dewi.

'Gwireddu'r cysyniad yw rhagoriaeth arddangosfa
'Oriel Lockdown' yng Nghanolfan y Celfyddydau,
Aberystwyth. Mae'r arddangosfa yn gofnod
gweledol gwerthfawr o'r dyddiau blin cyn canfod y
brechlynnau - cyfnod sydd er gwaetha'r gofid wedi
rhyddhau grymoedd creadigol, dyfeisgar er gwell.'

'Realising the concept is the excellence of the Oriel
Lockdown exhibition at Aberystwyth Arts Centre. The
exhibition is a valuable visual record of the angry days
before the discovery of vaccines - a period which
despite the sadness has released creative, inventive
forces for the better'

CYLCHGRAWN BARN MAGAZINE



SPOTLIGHT: Welsh Language and Culture: Salon des Refusés

In 2022 the National Eisteddfod took place in Tregaron after two years of delay due to the pandemic. We were pleased to partner on several projects with the Eisteddfod, one of the most significant being the Salon des Refusés. The idea originated as a reaction to works rejected by the jury of the official Paris Salon in the 1800s. Famously Manet, Pissaro, Courbet, Whistler and many impressionists were rejected in the Salon of 1863, but the critical attention from their exhibition of 'the refused' ultimately legitimized the emerging avant-garde in painting. We worked in partnership with the National Eisteddfod to create our own Salon des Refusés which invited all artists not selected for the visual arts pavilion 'Y Lle Celf' to display their work in the Arts Centre, with work from over 100 artists. Artists could submit if they were born in Wales, are of Welsh descent, lived/ worked in Wales for at least 3 years, or speak/write Welsh. A special event was held for the Eisteddfod audience opened by artist Angharad Pearce-Jones.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - VISUAL ARTS CONTD...

We aim to give a platform and voice to Welsh artists that discuss the Welsh language and culture within a contemporary context, giving solo exhibitions to important artists such as Bedwyr Williams, Mary Lloyd Jones, Ogwyn Davies and Paul Jones with each discussing language and contemporary Welsh identity in their work to provoke an important discussion around what it means to be part of a diverse Welsh community. These artists have commented on how valuable it was for them to be able to work with a gallery through the medium of Welsh. Our Visual Arts Manager and curator was chair of the local Visual Arts committee for the National Eisteddfod in 2022 which was held in Tregaron, and this enabled us to work in partnership to deliver a comprehensive programme of exhibitions, creative workshops and talks at the Arts Centre and at the arts pavilion, Y Lle Celf, at the Eisteddfod. We curated our own Salon Des Refusés exhibiting over 100 artists that didn't make it into the main Eisteddfod Arts pavilion.

During lockdown we realised the importance of continuing to engage with our audience online. We developed 'Art at Home' with over 1,000 artists and families engaged in our series of 10 online creative workshops taking inspiration from our past exhibition programme and themes relevant to lockdown and making art at home. Over 600 people came to our weekly live online art quizzes creating a new community and opportunities for learning through art. We worked in partnership with the University's Diversity and Inclusion Manager on an online project for International Women's Day, focusing on the role women play in the visual arts and those of Black and Global Majority backgrounds. We gave three diverse artists the chance to take over our Instagram platform and the University Microsoft Teams backgrounds, profiling their work and promoting equality and diversity. Instagram analytics show that we reached over 7,000 people during this day.

Key Achievements

- Support for emerging artists: Over the last 4 years we have provided one-to-one online tutorials in Welsh and English for 12 emerging artists with well-known established contemporary artists; supported 4 local artists with studio residencies; hosted 4 Aberystwyth University School of Art 'takeovers' working with fine art students; hosted 4 Coleg Ceredigion exhibitions to showcase Foundation and HND diploma students; worked with our Creative Learning department to facilitate four Criw Celf programmes giving 63 young people between 8-16 artist master classes, gallery visits and an exhibition.
- International and national artist-in-residency programme: The Magnetic project (a new network of eight artists' residencies in France and in the UK), worked with ACW, British Council and Fluxus Arts London to realise a two-month residency for French artist Eleonore False in 2022.
- Development of spaces to offer the very best environment for artists and visitors: In Gallery 1 new air handling units, and creation of gallery learning area and interactive activities; in Gallery 2 a refurbishment to open up the area to support engagement with visitors.
- Partnership Development: part of a steering group with Amgueddfa Cymru to realise the Instagram born project during lockdown, Celf ar y Cyd, that presented 100 artworks online from the national collection with a public vote for their favourite 30. The chosen artworks then formed an exhibition that toured to Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Oriel Ynys Môn and Y Gaer, Brecon; partnership with Southwark Park Galleries London and Tŷ Pawb Wrescam to realise a Bedwyr Williams solo show of new work that toured the country.
- Representation on national bodies: We are members of Visual Arts Group Wales (VAGW), International Ceramics Festival and Touring Exhibition Group, and our Visual Arts Manager sits on the board of Engage Cymru.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - CREATIVE LEARNING

The Arts Centre offers one of the UK's most comprehensive and ambitious community engagement programmes. We reach out to positively impact on our communities through a programme of outreach, engagement, and inclusion in both English and Welsh.

We have built and developed a highly valued community engagement programme, working in partnership with local authorities, ACW, and other organisations to deliver inspiring community projects and building connections locally, nationally, and internationally. We offer weekly courses across all artforms, for all age groups and experience levels from beginners to professionals. Our Dance School, Stage School and Youth Theatre deliver an excellent standard of training for young people leading to accreditation from London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA), Imperial Society of Teachers of Dance (ISTD) and Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) examination levels. We also offer the Arts Award scheme across all our creative learning provision.

We regularly showcase the work created in our creative learning programme through performances and exhibitions, noting the importance of giving our communities opportunity to show their creativity within a professional environment.

Our partnership projects enable us to deliver work that supports engagement with specific groups of individuals and communities, providing access to the arts to those who might not otherwise be able to engage, welcoming diversity, and addressing Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 objectives, the Cultural Contract and ACW's Investment Principles. An example of this is our established partnership with Hijinx Academy that offers opportunities for artists with disabilities and learning difficulties to develop their skills as performers and directors.



'So many young performers over the years have had early opportunities at Aberystwyth Arts Centre'

ADAM SOMERSET, THEATRE IN WALES



SPOTLIGHT:

Nurturing Talent, recent success stories from our Creative Learning programme include:

Gwyneth Keyworth: What's on Stage Award for Best Supporting Actress as Scout in the West End production of To Kill a Mockingbird (AAC Youth Theatre, Dance School member)

Izzy Rabey: directing productions for Royal Court, recently 'Graceland' (directed in the AAC studio whilst still at school)

Taron Egerton: starring in Hollywood films such as The Kingsman and Rocket Man, as well as National Theatre (AAC Youth Theatre member)

Osian Meilir: professional dance performer (AAC Dance School)

Erin Gruffydd: Dance Ambassador for NDCW (AAC Dance School)

Maeve Lilley: film and TV work (AAC Dance School, Stage School, and Youth Theatre)

Cerys Hafana (folk harpist): past winner of our Ian McKellen Award, which is given annually to support young artists/performers in their training

Sam Ebenezer: touring in Choir of Men, and in the Mousetrap in the West End (AAC Youth Theatre)

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - CREATIVE LEARNING CONTD...

We have strong relationships with local schools, colleges, and home education networks across the region, helping to create opportunities for young people to access pathways to higher education in the creative arts. We are particularly mindful that working with schools is a significant way in which we can provide equal opportunity to all to access the arts. Collaborating with our University Faculty partners enables us to support 'Year in Business' placements from the University's Theatre, Film and TV department, and a regular programme of short-term Creative Internships.

Throughout lockdown we maintained a significant range of delivery online, and now we feel it is important to return to in-person activity to support our participants and in particular their mental health and wellbeing. Some elements will retain a hybrid online/in-person programme where it is beneficial or widens access.

Key Achievements

- The largest Creative Learning programme in Wales
- Proven track record in delivering public engagement projects to widen access: AberGêm project with Articulture and Boomtown working with young people aged 16-25 with mental health issues post pandemic; Penparcau Takeover Project working with Penparcau Hwb (former Communities First area); Home and Hinterland project with Pontio (Bangor University) and Taliesin Arts Centre (Swansea University) to work with community groups who were historically less likely to engage with the arts
- Criw Celf project, providing visual arts masterclasses for MAT (More Able and Talented) secondary school children and those with a keen interest in the visual arts. Since 2020 a further provision to young pupils (ages 7-9), Criw Celf Primary, has proven to engage children in a positive way, increasing the numbers coming through into the Secondary group



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - FILM

Our Film programme has always been at the forefront of developing and exploring new technologies, supporting independent film production and offering a wide and inclusive range of screenings. With a 110-seater auditorium we were the first independent cinema in Wales to offer live satellite broadcasts of opera, theatre and dance, which now forms a substantial part of our programme. We are committed to continuing to offer a wide variety of specialist and non-specialist films and events with a programme that demonstrates our diversity and popularity.

Our support for festivals is core to our development work. We run Abertoir Wales International Horror Festival annually, which is firmly established as a leader in its field. We also partner on the delivery of the WOW (Wales One World) Film Festival, which showcases the latest eye-opening, engaging stories made by powerful women, indigenous filmmakers, and the most compelling storytellers from around the world; the Kotatsu Japanese anime festival; the IRIS prize films showcasing work from LGBTQI+ filmmakers and other important specialist work.

Widening access is also an important part of our programme, with digital developments supporting regular provision of Audio Described and Subtitled films. We offer screenings for Families, Relaxed Screenings and a programme of daytime and afternoon screenings as well as evenings. We are the only cinema provider of accessible film content (Hard of Hearing and Audio Description) within an hour's drive of Aberystwyth, and the only venue within this catchment area committed to year-round provision of diversity and inclusivity in our film programme.

'It encourages me to bolster my skills and build a cinematheque in my mind, where I can refer to a screening and apply theories to my film studies - something I would have never imagined accomplishing before stepping foot here as an international student from Lebanon.'

ABDALLAH DANNAOUI, THIRD
YEAR FILM STUDENT AND
CINEMA VOLUNTEER



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - FILM CONTD...

Key Achievements

- The adoption of digital technology to expand and develop a wider programme of work in the cinema that encompasses work from all artforms
- The programming of festival activity as a key strategy for audience development
- Installation of a second projector in the theatre during the pandemic to support socially distanced screenings
- Developing online/hybrid delivery of film screenings and festivals during lockdown, which has continued post pandemic as a means of widening access



SPOTLIGHT:

Abertoir Wales International Horror Festival Blackula Programme 2022

Abertoir uses its reputation as one of the UK's premier horror festivals to profile diversity and inclusion in film. A blaxploitation horror strand in the 2022 iteration saw screenings, special guests, and as a centrepiece, a simultaneous 50th anniversary screening of Blacula together with a panel discussion with director William Crain, broadcast live from the festival in Aberystwyth across the UK. This was the result of a collaboration with Bristol Black Horror Club, and formed part of the BFI's In Dreams Are Monsters season, supported by National Lottery, BFI Film Audience Network and the ICO. In addition, the Blacula programme went out on tour across the UK: in Wales to Pontio, Chapter, Yr Egin and Neuadd Dwyfor; in England to Exeter Phoenix, Oswestry KinoKulture, Nottingham Broadway (part of Mayhem Film Festival), Bristol Watershed (in association with Bristol Black Horror Club), and Derby Quad; in Scotland to Glasgow Film Theatre; and in Northern Ireland to Belfast Queen's Film Theatre. We also worked with a young black artist on the artwork for the Blacula poster and commissioned a new article on the significance of the film by one of the world's leading experts on Black cinema, which formed part of a booklet sent out to all the participating venues.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - TRADING AND COMMERCIAL

The Arts Centre has long understood the importance of developing trading and commercial activity as a means of providing not just a service for our visitors but also a source of income to support our artistic endeavours. From the development of hospitality outlets to the use of the venue's spaces for conferences and meetings, we have delivered a service that is both commercially valuable but also remains firmly embedded within our overall mission and vision for the venue as a whole.

The Arts Centre's trading operations consist of a food & drink and retail offer through cafés, bars, event catering and shops, providing the ability to align the commercial offer with the vision and aspirations of an ambitious and innovative Arts Centre rooted in its cultural environment. We have developed a cornerstone policy with three guiding principles of Provenance, Sustainability, and People Centred to help underpin all our decision making, applying them to the food we make, the products we sell, and the service we deliver. Initial developments pre-pandemic resulted in a 15% uplift in trade.

Emerging from the pandemic, and out of necessity in the first instance, we had to adapt quickly, and implemented a completely new way of working to comply with government regulations. This demonstrated the flexibility of our staff team, rising to new challenges and commitment to the customer experience. National Museums Wales representatives visited us to learn from our experience. The pandemic also presented opportunities to help us achieve ongoing strategic goals.

Parts of the Arts Centre were reconfigured during the closed period, which allowed us to completely refresh and renew our retail offer. With a shop refit and new team in place, the space was totally transformed. We now have a curated retail offer in place, better aligned with the aspirations of the Arts Centre, and clearer in its outlook.

'Just wanted to extend a warm thank you for all your hospitality on behalf of the IUCN team and the conference delegates. Your organisation as a venue was superb. The food was also excellent, a huge variety of incredibly tasty options and catered to dietary requirements fantastically.'

PEATLANDS CONFERENCE, INTERNATIONAL
UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - TRADING AND COMMERCIAL CONTD...



As part of the University, we continue to be a fair employer, paying the real living wage and provide employment for many people from the local community.

We work responsibly and look to support our community, working with local partners to establish beneficial relationships that strengthen ties to the Arts Centre. We donate our un-sold sandwiches to the Wallich homeless shelter as part of our social action programme and are part of the 'Too Good To Go' scheme which is an app that offers unsold food for sale at reduced prices to avoid waste.

Key Achievements

- Supporting local crafts people in our retail spaces: in November/December 2022 our annual Winter Craft Fair returned following a two-year hiatus during the pandemic with a refreshed outlook and a strong emphasis on local suppliers and sustainability
- Minimising our impact on the planet, by delivering our products and services responsibly to protect the environment. We catered for our first fully vegan conference, working with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments Wales
- To improve customer service and drive efficiencies we have introduced 'Theatre Vine', an online ordering service for drinks and snacks. This has enabled us to radically look at the way we deliver our services in the future
- In February 2023, a full time Head of Business Management & Development was appointed. This is a key strategic appointment to help deliver commercial and financial goals, providing more in-depth analysis, support, and guidance for decision makers

SPOTLIGHT: Transformation, Resilience and the Pandemic

The Covid pandemic hit many businesses hard, and the Arts Centre was obviously not immune to its impact. We were completely closed for 15 months, during which time much of our activity moved online. We developed and delivered projects to maintain engagement and to support our staff and local freelance artists. Once re-opened we had to do so within the context of significant restrictions – to the way we could present work and engage with audiences, and to practical issues such as running a commercial trading activity, which had pre-pandemic contributed significantly towards the overall budget of the Arts Centre. The trading team proved resilient and flexible, developing table service and processes to keep staff and customers safe. An app was developed for pre-ordering drinks – a model which proved so successful that it is now a regular part of our provision. Now, three years on from that original lock-down, we operate in a different environment, with many of once regular daytime visitors working to a mixture of home and in person, and with the additional pressures of a cost-of-living crisis to factor in. Our trading and commercial income streams are now back up to 80% of the pre-pandemic levels, which is tantamount to the hard work and commitment of the team.

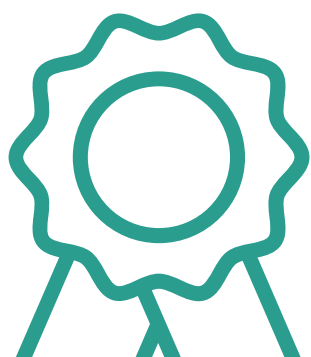


KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - CREATIVE UNITS

The Arts Centre's Creative Units, designed by multi-award-winning UK designer Thomas Heatherwick CBE, provide 18 business units/studios for a wide range of creative arts businesses, artists, and craft workers, as well as a location for our animation workshops, and visual arts residencies. Recognising that the creative arts make a significant contribution to the regional economy, the units further underline the Arts Centre's important role as a major regional arts centre, leader, and supporter of our creative sector.

Our current residents are:

- AMP Media - digital /film
- Cwmni Awakennyn Productions - theatre
- HAUL Arts in Health
- Karen Pearce - landscape artist
- University Music Centre
- Musicfest International Music Festival & Summer School
- Tom Parry Clocks – crafts
- Trioni Architects
- Urien Morgan Photography
- Wardens Dramatic Company – theatre
- Yvonne Gordon Textiles



Received the only Civic Trust Award for Wales in 2010 and RIBA Award 2010



SPOTLIGHT: International Collaboration and Artist Residency: Magnetic Project

As part of a new project with ACW, Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, Arts Council Northern Ireland, and Fluxus French Institute, we were the chosen venue in Wales to partner on an exciting residency project across the four nations of the UK and four regions of France. Following an Open Call for artists, a French Artist was in residency across November and December 2022, based in one of our Creative Units. She was able to live here with her partner and daughter, who attended a local school during the residency. Her work focused on climate issues, and we were able to connect her with the Centre for Alternative Technology, Natural Resources Wales, Elan Valley Trust, and University climate specialists. She gave a talk as part of the project in London, as well as an Open Studio here in Aberystwyth. There are plans in place to maintain the project and for it to become a regular part of our programme.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - CREATIVE UNITS CONTD...



The Creative Units were made possible with the funding from ACW, the National Assembly of Wales and Aberystwyth University.

Key Achievements:

- Opened 18 Creative Units in 2009
- All units fully let, with a long waiting list
- Received the only Civic Trust Award for Wales in 2010
- Received the RIBA Award in 2010
- Hosted multiple International, UK and Wales residencies

SPOTLIGHT: Creative Units: Climate Justice and Creative Learning - Wales India Projects

In 2019 we were part of a major international residency project supported by ACW and Wales Arts International which brought a group of young people from Bangalore to Aberystwyth to work and learn with young people from Cardiff, Lampeter and Aberystwyth. A life-changing project for all involved, it created a deep friendship and connection with the Dream a Dream organisation in Bangalore. Thanks to project funding from the British Council in 2021/22 and again in 2022/23 we have been able to continue that relationship and to work on a new hybrid digital project with Dream a Dream using animation and storytelling to help young people from both countries explore their views on Climate Change. The video work created was showcased at the WOW Wales One World Festival in March 2023 and will be shown as part of the Arts Centre's 50th anniversary celebration project Aberetwm in May 2023, as well as through Dream a Dream's far-reaching digital networks.



MARKETING ANALYSIS

Our Audiences

Our audiences come from a total of 271 different local authorities. In terms of our household reach, our top three local authorities are Ceredigion, Powys, and Gwynedd. Within our catchment area, 26.2% of our bookers live in areas that have been ranked as being in the more deprived half of all areas in Wales. Our dominant audience segment in the 2022-2023 Audience Agency report, is Dormitory Dependables, accounting for around 30% of our audiences, followed by Home and Heritage at 18%, and Experience Seekers and Trips and Treats both 15%. Our Audience Finder results show that we attract a lower proportion of Supported Communities as compared to the household catchment area.

Our MOSAIC groups are largely made up of three sectors – Rural Isolation (46%), Grey Perspectives (14%) and Urban Intelligence (4%). Our MOSAIC types are all subcategories of Rural Isolation – Pastoral Symphony, Parochial Villages, Upland Hill Farmers. Although breakdowns of catchment and audiences into these categories is always helpful, we know from meeting and speaking to our audiences that they don't necessarily fit neatly into categories. Anecdotal evidence over the years demonstrates how the presence of the University, the Arts Centre's facilities and programme and the beautiful location means that many qualified individuals choose to take jobs on lower salaries than they could achieve elsewhere in order to stay in the area, or to bring their families up here. The location is a plus point for many, who like the relative isolation and the 'space to breath' that it offers – but despite their economic position still have an interest and propensity to attend the arts, and to involve their families in the arts from an early age. Audience reports also indicate that household penetration in postcode districts at SY23, SY24 and SY25 are reaching saturation, and in order to grow our audiences we will need to look further afield.



Audience Finder:

Our top postcodes are SY23, SY24, SY20, SY25, SA43. Figures accumulated from our Box Office system show our main postcode catchments are SY23 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5, SY20 8 and SY25 6.

However, 40% of our customers live outside the 30 min drive-time area. For specific events (such as our summer season production or high-profile performance events) we have a strong reach into Mid Wales, North Wales, West Wales, South Wales and the borders.

For our festivals and residential courses, we also attract customers from across the UK and, for specific events such as the Ceramics Festival, from across Europe and internationally.

MARKETING ANALYSIS CONTD...

Marketing Approach

Our marketing approach is about audience, always wanting to involve and include more people rather than just targeting 'mainstream arts attendees'. We accept we need to generate more income from our core audience / those who can afford it in future, in tandem with reaching and engaging a new audience, making access to the arts as affordable as possible to those on low incomes. We deliver fully bilingual marketing activity.

Strategic Marketing Priorities

With a major capital redevelopment project in view, and ambitious plans for increasing income and attendance post-pandemic, we are committed to increasing our investment and focus on marketing. Our priorities will be:

- Retain our existing audience and increase levels of repeat booking
- Identify and target new audiences from catchment area
- Generate more income from audiences and visitors (inc. secondary spend)
- Raise our profile and visibility both publicly and with stakeholders
- Launch new website and increase digital output
- Improve data capture from audiences and visitors
- Replace our box office system and integrate Audience Finder
- Increase marketing activity spend and staff resource

Website

Our website currently acts as a source of information and is currently being redesigned, ready to launch in autumn 2023. The website is a 'shop window' and represents us in the virtual world. For a lot of people, it will give them their first impression of the building and the visitor experience they can expect.

The events and news sections of the website are updated regularly, and the site is fully bilingual. AAC can link via the website to our social media accounts, email signup functionality and online ticketing. As well as the new website and Box Office system we also have an ambition to create more original digital content for use across our digital channels and for use by our partners.



Box office system

A new box office system will be Integrated into the new website by the autumn of 2023, providing greater and more reliable functionality for our customers and staff.

Social media

Our primary social media platform is Facebook – we use this for posting new events and making announcements when activity is happening. We also use Twitter and Instagram. We constantly review our use of social media to ensure we can make the biggest impact with our limited resources.



MARKETING ANALYSIS CONTD...

E-marketing

We usually send a weekly email to the database with detail of events happening in the next week, and a listing of all other future events. We will find ways of proactively growing this database as it is such a cost-effective way of direct communication with audiences and supporters.

Word of mouth

We hope to increase the number of people becoming Friends of AAC – these are key advocates for us, and we will seek to harness their combined resource more effectively. We will also hope to be able to appoint new team members over the next four years working on community engagement, to further develop our reach into the communities we serve.

Print and distribution

With support from the University's Print room, we are able to design and print all our physical material in-house and reduce our out-sourcing costs. Whilst we would like to improve the quality of print produced, and also to widen print distribution, we are mindful both of cost and environmental impact, and we see digital as the greater priority.

Advertising and editorial

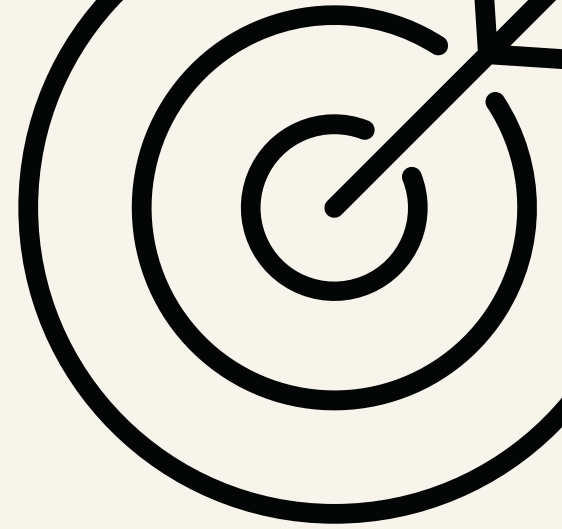
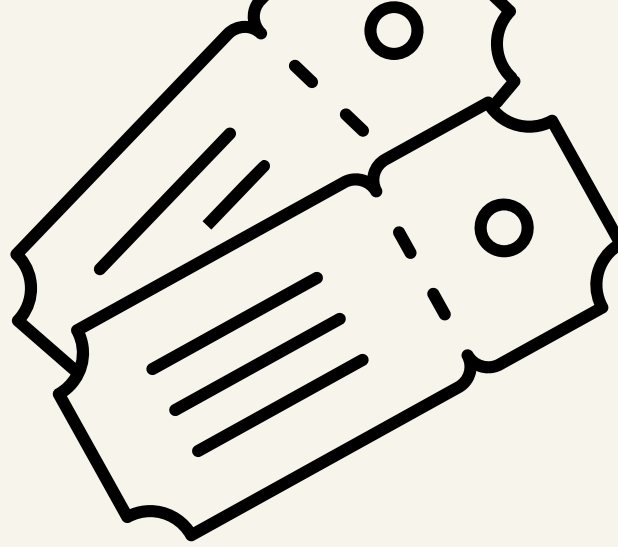
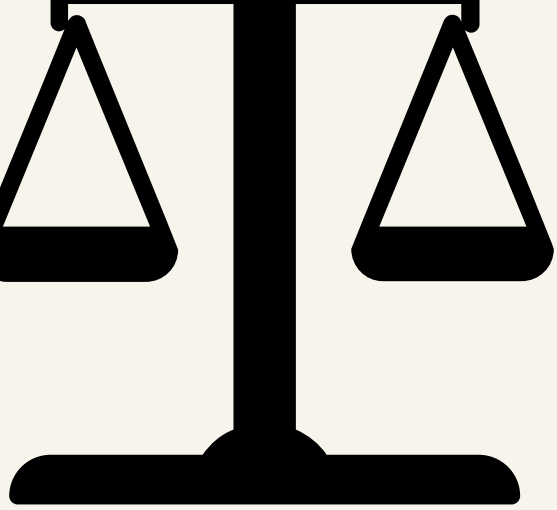
We currently advertise in a couple of key local publications. On the editorial side, we are successful in securing space in local and regional newspapers and online. However, as elsewhere, the number of journalists covering arts is reducing all the time, and there is a reliance on the good-will of key contacts in maintaining profile.

Marketing resources

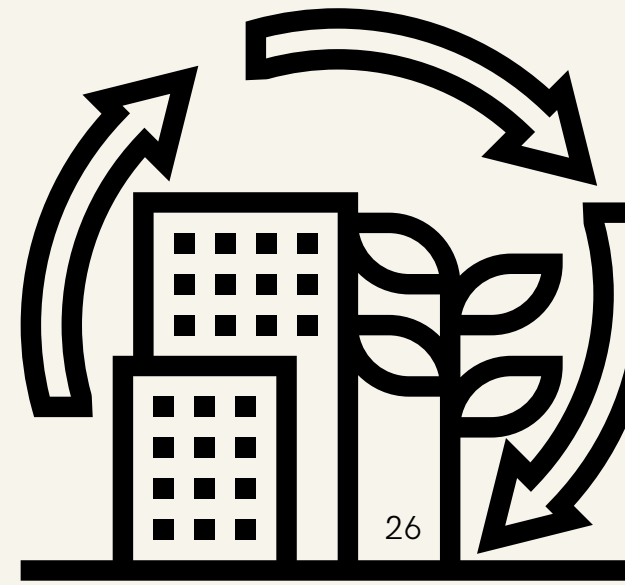
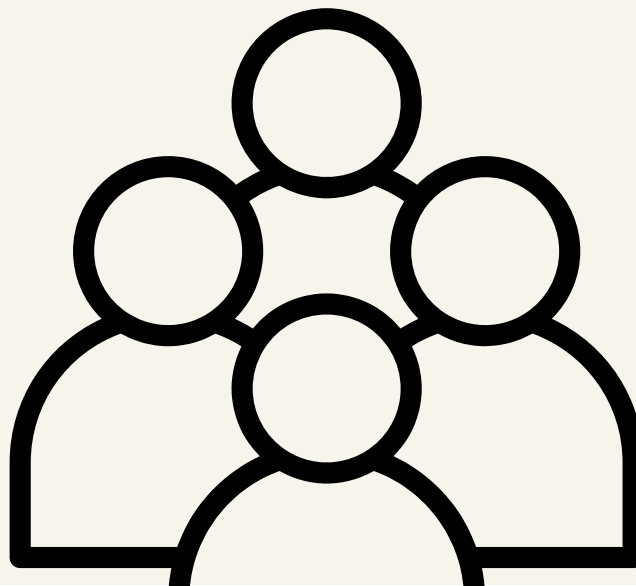
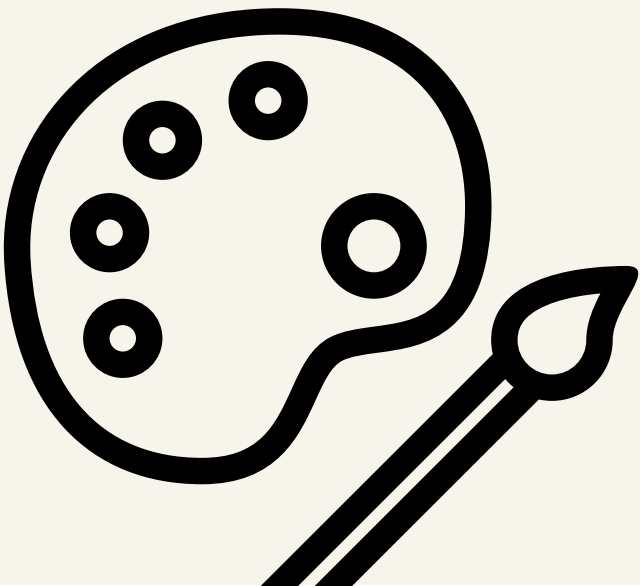
We are committed to increasing our marketing resource, but we appreciate that we need to work in different ways, taking a digital first approach.

For full details of our marketing activity and future plans, please refer to the Marketing and Communications Plan in Appendix 1 of this Business Plan





Strategic Aims



Our Six Strategic Aims

Aberystwyth Arts Centre plays a leading role in Welsh cultural life, for the region, for Wales and beyond. Over the next four years we will be working to achieve our core strategic aims which also contribute to those of **Aberystwyth University, Arts Council of Wales, Welsh Government's Wellbeing of Future Generations Goals and Five Ways of Working, and Ceredigion County Council** by continuing to deliver excellence through the following strategic aims:



- **Strategic Aim 1: Create, Curate and Connect**
- **Strategic Aim 2: Widening Engagement**
- **Strategic Aim 3: Creative Development**
- **Strategic Aim 4: Caru Cymru**
- **Strategic Aim 5: People and Place**
- **Strategic Aim 6: Resilience and Responsibility**



STRATEGIC AIM 1: CREATE, CURATE AND CONNECT

As Wales' largest arts centre and recognised as a 'national flagship for the arts', we will:

Innovate and inspire through the creation, curation, and presentation of an ambitious, exciting, and inclusive artistic programme for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES:

1. Deliver an ambitious, exciting, and inclusive programme across all art forms
2. Collaborate with the creative sector, arts professionals and organisations in Wales, the UK and internationally, developing our artistic programme through leadership, partnerships and informed decision making
3. Work with our communities and stakeholders on advancing our Audience and Communications Strategy, identifying programme development and diversification opportunities



Meeting Stakeholder Aims:

Arts Council Wales Principles:
Creativity, Widening Engagement, Welsh Language

Aberystwyth University Strategic Aims:
Education and Student Experience, Contribution to Society, International Engagement, Welsh Language and Culture

Welsh Government Wellbeing of Future Generations Goals:
A Vibrant Wales, A More Equal Wales, A Healthier Wales, A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Language

Ceredigion County Council Mission 'Something for Everyone' and Corporate Well-Being Objectives: Creating Caring and Healthy Communities, Creating Sustainable, Green and Well-connected Communities



STRATEGIC AIM 2: WIDENING ENGAGEMENT

As the home to one of the UK's most comprehensive and ambitious community engagement programmes:

We will reach out and positively impact on our communities through active participation in the arts, extending and strengthening community involvement through a programme of outreach, engagement, and inclusion



STRATEGIC OUTCOMES:

1. Create and deliver work that is rooted in and meets the needs of the communities we serve in both Welsh and English
2. Generation Next: being distinctively positioned within the University, we will create a programme of work that engages with, inspires, and informs students and young people to connect with professional arts practice and presentation
3. Embed Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion across all areas of the artistic programme, collaborating and listening to underrepresented groups to ensure development and delivery of a programme of work that is relevant, engaging and empowering

Arts Council Wales Principles:
Widening Engagement, Nurturing Talent, Welsh Language

Aberystwyth University Strategic Aims:
Education and Student Experience, Research and Innovation with Impact, Contribution to Society, Welsh Language and Culture

Welsh Government Wellbeing of Future Generations Goals:
A Vibrant Wales, A More Equal Wales, A Healthier Wales, A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Language

Ceredigion County Council Mission 'Something for Everyone' and Corporate Well-Being Objectives: Creating Caring and Healthy Communities, Providing the Best Start in Life and Enabling Learning at All Ages



STRATEGIC AIM 3: CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

As one of the longest running professional arts development providers, with over 50 years of experience, we will:

Deliver a creative, inspiring, and supportive environment, promoting the development of freelance artists, performers, and practitioners

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES:

1. Produce a new Creative Development Programme that advances the skills of our established arts practitioners and professionals
2. Generation Next: To deliver a programme of sector and workforce professional development for emerging arts practitioners and professionals, including university students and young people, as our future leaders
3. Nurture artistic talent and support the development of exciting and ambitious work through a programme of Research & Development and residencies

Meeting Stakeholder Aims:

Arts Council Wales Principles:

Creativity, Widening Engagement, Nurturing Talent, Welsh Language

Aberystwyth University Strategic Aims:

Education and Student Experience, Research and innovation with Impact, Contribution to Society, International Engagement, Welsh Language and Culture

Welsh Government Wellbeing of Future Generations Goals:

A Resilient Wales, A More Equal Wales, a Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language

Ceredigion County Council Mission 'Something for Everyone' and Corporate Well-Being Objectives: Providing the Best Start in Life and Enabling Learning at All Ages



STRATEGIC AIM 4: CARU CYMRU

As a sector leader in the promotion of Wales and located in one of the nation's strongest Welsh language speaking regions, we will:

Celebrate Wales, its people, language, and culture by promoting our nation's rich history and heritage through innovative and creative storytelling across all artforms. Nurturing our national identity, we will contribute to a thriving Welsh language and vibrant culture, developing a nation that is healthier, more equal and socially responsible in our actions



STRATEGIC OUTCOMES:

1. Continue to build on our strengths, embedding the Welsh Language and Welsh Culture into our artistic provision, our public engagement, and our service delivery
2. Deliver a career development and training programme of work that supports Welsh speakers and Welsh learners
3. Maximise on our relationship with the University, providing a valuable contribution to national strategic aims, goals and objectives

Meeting Stakeholder Aims:

Arts Council Wales Principles:

Creativity, Widening Engagement, Nurturing Talent, Welsh Language

Aberystwyth University Strategic Aims:

Education and Student Experience, Contribution to Society, Welsh Language and Culture

Welsh Government Wellbeing of Future Generations Goals:

A Wales of Cohesive Communities, A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language

Ceredigion County Council Mission 'Something for Everyone' and Corporate Well-Being Objectives: Providing the Best Start in Life and Enabling Learning at All Ages

STRATEGIC AIM 5: PEOPLE AND PLACE



As an architecturally multi award-winning building and national beacon, we will:

Manage our resources through responsible decision making to be an ambitious, confident and dynamic organisation, with a healthy working culture open to collaboration and challenge

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES:

1. Create the best possible sustainable physical environment for the creation, presentation, participation, and enjoyment of the arts, one that is accessible, sustainable and at the heart of our communities
2. Embed a values-focussed working practice and culture that supports the individual to thrive and move forward together
3. Ensure the diversification of our workforce, leadership, and governance represents the many communities we serve

Meeting Stakeholder Aims:

Arts Council Wales Principles:
Nurturing Talent, Transformation

Aberystwyth University Strategic Aims:
Education and Student Experience, Contribution to Society

Welsh Government Wellbeing of Future Generations Goals:
A Prosperous Wales, A Resilient Wales, A Globally Responsible Wales

Ceredigion County Council Mission 'Something for Everyone' and Corporate Well-Being Objectives: Boosting the Economy, Supporting Businesses and Enabling Employment, Creating Caring and Healthy Communities



STRATEGIC AIM 6: RESILIENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY



As part of one of the UK's leading universities and a principal leader in the arts, we will:

Manage our assets in a socially responsible and sustainable way. Our people will be encouraged and empowered to make ethical choices, driving real change and impact, realising the potential of the arts to imagine, connect and communicate the need to engage in the climate emergency



STRATEGIC OUTCOMES:

1. Contribute towards the University's stated aim of being Carbon Neutral by 2030 through a strategic programme of capital development, ethical operation, training, and adoption of the guiding principles of the Theatre Green Book
2. Embed financial resilience into our programme of commercial and trading activity, fully integrated with our Mission and Vision
3. Use our public platform to convey the importance of confronting the environmental crisis through what we present in our artistic programme, how we conduct ourselves, and how we support our communities to engage

Meeting Stakeholder Aims:

Arts Council Wales Principles:
Climate Justice, Transformation

Aberystwyth University Strategic Aims:
Education and Student Experience, Contribution to Society

Welsh Government Wellbeing of Future Generations Goals:
A Resilient Wales, A Healthier Wales, A Globally Responsible Wales

Ceredigion County Council Mission 'Something for Everyone' and [M(1)] Corporate Well-Being Objectives: Boosting the Economy, Supporting Businesses and Enabling Employment, Creating Sustainable, Green and Well-connected Communities