

The logo for Awen Cultural Trust, featuring the word 'awen' in white lowercase letters on a red rectangular background.

awen

Ymddiriedolaeth  
Ddiwylliannol  
Cultural Trust

The background of the entire page is a collage of various photographs showing diverse groups of people, including children, adults, and families, engaged in different activities. The images are faded and arranged in a grid-like pattern.

# **CREATING CULTURALLY VIBRANT COMMUNITIES WHERE EVERYONE FEELS THEY BELONG**

AWEN CULTURAL  
TRUST'S STRATEGY

2025-30



## CULTURE IS A POWERFUL FORCE FOR GOOD. AWEN IS A FORCE FOR GOOD.

Our goal is to create places and experiences that give people a sense of purpose, identity, expression and most of all a sense of *belonging*.

This is at the heart of this strategy. We want to make Awen an organisation that everyone feels they can be part of, aspire to work for and where people feel safe to be themselves. We want to put a sharper focus on tackling inequality, focussing more on the places, people and communities who experience the greatest challenges and feel under-represented.



Our purpose remains as relevant today as when we first launched –  
to **MAKE PEOPLE'S LIVES BETTER.**

Our vision is to:

**CREATE CULTURALLY VIBRANT  
COMMUNITIES WHERE EVERYONE  
FEELS THEY BELONG**

Over the coming years we will define our growth in terms of the *people* we engage, and equally with the *value* of those engagements.

It isn't just a numbers game but rather that of *value* – *the rate of positive change that happens because of us doing something*. That change could be as little as feeling better for your walk in Bryngarw Country Park than before you set off; leaving one of our theatres with a smile on your face; or relief at the support just received at a library. On the other hand, the change could be having a multi-million-pound impact on the local economy or launching the careers of several young people.





There was a time when we were afraid of parachuting into communities for fear of not having a sustained presence. Our philosophy is different now.

*If one experience can help inspire, open new doors or simply create happiness then it's worth doing.*

Our strategy therefore is not about working in every community and every setting all of the time, but rather focussing on co-producing activity, leaving a legacy and always ensuring that when we do something, we do it well.

Presenting a long-term strategy in an ever-changing world, may for some not make much sense. *How can we set a direction of that length of time when the world around us is changing so rapidly?* To some extent, we can't. What we can do, is set out our vision and plot a direction. We might need to re-route from time to time, even accepting a longer journey but the destination does not change.

We have listened to our partners and considered our place within the communities where we work, and those where we need to be working.

There are common priorities – **health, local economic growth** and **creating great places to live and work**. Awen alone cannot accomplish everything, *but we can make a real difference*. Our values – **creative, collaborative, empowering** and **fair** – remain as relevant now as they were ten years ago.

We will need to engage the power of all four in equal measure to help us deliver on the ambitions of this strategy.

For the early part of this strategy's life-time, the public funding landscape is set to remain challenging, other funds will be highly competitive and people are set to continue to make discerning choices as to how and where to spend their money.

Awen will however do all it can to make the most of resources and through our attitude and track record, be ready to maximise opportunities when they arise and where we think our impact will be best felt.

### Finally, we believe in making people smile.

Words like *fun, enjoyment, laughter* should carry weight and the more we see them in our feedback, the more we'll know we are on the right track.

These feelings and emotions are part of what makes us human, and everyone deserves to smile and laugh.

In a world of tension and division, Awen will do its bit to allow people to enjoy themselves, allow communities to celebrate what's good, and hope people leave their time with us that little bit *happier* than they were before.





## HOW WE WILL WORK

### - WHAT UNDERPINS THIS STRATEGY

**Awen has learnt a lot about itself over the last decade.**

This strategy is built on the lessons we've learnt from those we engage with and the experiences and voices of those who work for Awen.

- **We want more people trying out arts and culture for the first time.** That one experience can be life changing for some, and for others it may just make their day a better one. Our task is to pique curiosity, change the normal and instil a sense of purpose into our communities.
- Opening the doors is not good enough. **What we do should help nurture cohesiveness, foster tolerance and help establish a real sense of community and togetherness.** We must work hard to ensure our spaces feel 'safe' for everyone to enjoy and feel welcome.
- **We won't be afraid to try something new.** Cultural expression is and should be challenging. If it aligns with our purpose and values, then we will support, promote and produce activity that challenges our audiences and users.

We will not support activity that promotes division, racism or discrimination but we will support that which promotes inclusivity. We will listen.

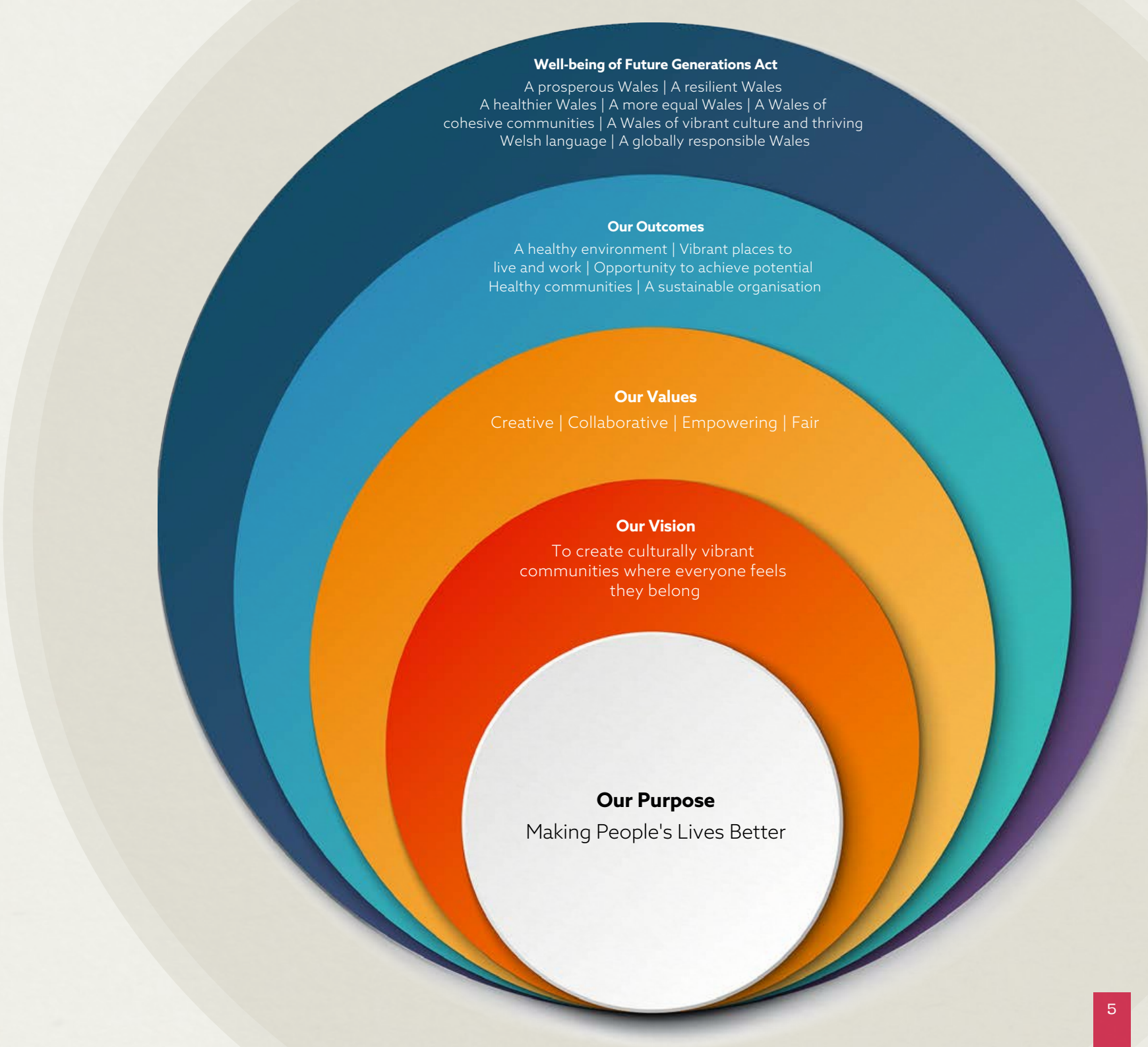
- **We have to be prepared to adapt and change.** We live in a world where, over the last few years, people have faced unprecedented changes to how we live and work. In many ways, Awen can provide a reassuring constant in a world of change, but we must also react to the world around us.
- **We can be ambitious but we must also be pragmatic.** Our strategy must inspire and provide a platform for growth but it must also have its feet on the ground. It is not always about doing more, but about doing better. We will avoid mission-drift and judge each opportunity against our to-do list set out below and of course our values.
- **We will seek new collaborations and be recognised as a can-do partner and co-producer.** We cannot go it alone and our strength has always been the strong relationships we build with communities, funders and partners. We must be a more reflective organisation in order to include, learn, build and retain. Listening and evaluating must become second nature.
- **We will always value our people and the contributions they make** – supporting, investing in and celebrating our workforce will help us achieve our vision.

# UNDERSTANDING WHAT'S IMPORTANT AND WHERE WE CAN ADD MOST VALUE

This strategy has emerged from our Theory of Change-based work, consultation with partner organisations, our understanding of our sectors and listening to those who work for and with Awen.

Awen, through its various partnerships, will always contribute to many cross-cutting themes, but the aim of the strategy is to outline those that will add greatest value to our communities over the coming years.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 outlines Welsh Government's "ambition, permission and legal obligation to improve our social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being". While Awen's strategy has obvious alignment to the Act's commitment to making 'A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language', we know our work makes a significant contribution to the vision, values and impact outlined in 'Cymru Can', the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales 2023- 2030 strategy. Through collaboration and partnership working, Awen can help "make a long-lasting, positive change to current and future generations".



# A SNAPSHOT OF OUR WORK TO DATE



OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS

2024-25

<div></div> <div><div>OVER 1 MILLION</div><div>Individuals who have engaged with our work</div></div>	<div></div> <div><div>11,992</div><div>Library staff interactions aimed at improving social, digital and economic inclusion, wellbeing and community engagement.</div><div>Key to our success is developing new ideas, being passionate about what we offer, and innovative collaborations and partnerships.</div></div>	<div></div> <div><div>456,236</div><div>Library items borrowed.</div><div>Helping people to enhance their physical and mental health by preventing cognitive decline, increasing empathy, building their vocabulary, reducing stress, aiding sleep, alleviating depression, and enjoying escapism through the pleasure and experience of reading.</div></div>	<div></div> <div><div>466,995</div><div>People who visited the library.</div><div>Ensuring everyone has equal access to the power and pleasure of reading, information and ideas, experiencing new ideas, getting lost in wonderful stories, meeting new people, while at the same time providing a sense of place.</div></div>	<div></div> <div><div>215,825</div><div>Visits to Bryngarw Country Park.</div><div>Evidence shows that enjoying the great outdoors and engaging in our natural environment has many social, physical and mental health benefits, contributing to a healthier Wales.</div></div>	<div></div> <div><div>770</div><div>School children attending our environmental education programme at Bryngarw park.</div><div>Studies show that outdoor learning has a wide-reaching positive impact on children and young people's health and wellbeing, wider achievement, attainment levels and personal development.</div></div>
<div></div> <div><div>19 (WOOD-B) 35 (B-LEAF)</div><div>Trainees at Wood-B and B-Leaf.</div><div>Our trainees are adults of all ages with learning disabilities, who are supported to achieve their full potential, and helped to lead confident, healthy and independent lives within a safe and nurturing work-based setting.</div></div>	<div></div> <div><div>72,538</div><div>Number of people who attended events or participated in activities at: Maesteg Town Hall; Blaengarw Workmen's Hall; The Met, Abertillery; Y Muni, Pontypridd; and Awel y Môr, Porthcawl.</div><div>Our venues are warm, welcoming and accessible community spaces where people of all ages and background can connect and enjoy shared social experiences.</div></div>	<div></div> <div><div>179</div><div>Hynt tickets issued.</div><div>Hynt is national access scheme that works with theatres and arts centres in Wales to make sure there is a consistent offer available for visitors with an impairment or specific access requirement, and their carers.</div></div>	<div></div> <div><div>10,904</div><div>Number of people who attended Welsh language or bilingual events at our venues and libraries.</div><div>We are committed to increasing our Welsh language programming across all venues, working in partnership with Y Mentrau Iaith, local Welsh language schools and creative partners from across Wales.</div></div>	<div></div> <div><div>OVER £35 MILLION</div><div>Since 2015, with our partners, we have overseen applications and secured multi-million-pound funding for redevelopments and significant improvements to our cultural and heritage spaces.</div><div>These include: Betws, Pencoed, Pyle and Sarn Libraries; Y Nyth Education and Wellbeing Centre at Bryngarw Country Park; Maesteg Town Hall; Y Muni in Pontypridd; and the Grand Pavilion in Porthcawl.</div></div>	<div></div> <div><div>14,506</div><div>Audience members of participants in Creative Wellbeing projects.</div><div>This work seeks to make a significant and lasting health, social and wellbeing impact on communities, groups and individuals. We do this though providing access to creative workshops, performances, outdoor arts and learning opportunities that are usually free or at a low cost.</div></div>

# WHAT DO WE WANT TO DO OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

**THIS STRATEGY SETS THE DIRECTION FOR OUR WORK.**

It is a blueprint by which the creative, passionate teams across Awen can interpret and draw inspiration.

Externally, it is a call to action for our partners and stakeholders to join us in getting things done and, no matter how incremental, celebrating success and leading change where it is needed.

We have grouped our response under outcomes i.e. what the ideal looks like, and below them set out our ambitions for the next five years.



# 1.

## WHAT WE WANT TO SEE:

A healthy environment where future generations will benefit from a cleaner, more resilient and better understood planet.



awen

## WHAT WE WILL DO:

**We will pursue our decarbonisation agenda.** Already, our purchased electricity is from renewable sources but we look to increase our percentage of self-generated renewable energy to 20% of our annual consumption by 2030.

**We will target a 30% reduction in fossil fuel reliance** by 2030 compared to our 2023 consumption figure.

By 2030 **all of our vehicles will be powered by electric or alternative non-fossil based fuels.**

As a minimum, we will retain our **Green Dragon Level 2 certification** and commit to the annual reporting of our carbon emissions.

Bryngarw Country Park will be considered an **exemplar site** for natural heritage and visitor experience, by annually retaining our Green Flag and Visit Wales VAQAS accreditation.

# WHY?

**There is no escaping the climate emergency.**

Awen must play its part and we recognise this. We have a duty to protect, enhance and celebrate the natural environment.


Over the next five years we must build on what we have done to date and further cut our carbon emissions, support the circular economy and use our platforms to encourage others to do the same. At Bryngarw Country Park we see first-hand the power of the natural environment – it sustains people and nature. Attracting others to respect and enjoy our natural heritage will promote a greater motivation to protect our planet.

*“We need everyone to act if we are going to meet our challenging emission reduction targets, build resilience to the impacts of climate change and safeguard our country and our planet for future generations.”*

(Climate Change: Welsh Government Engagement Approach 2022-26)

To meet our climate-related commitments, we will be moving towards a circular economy model, focusing on reducing, reusing and recycling our resources to minimise the impact of our activities on the environment. Furthermore, our procurement process will move beyond the traditional focus on cost to prioritise long-term value and positive community impact including social, economic and environmental outcomes.

Where we can, we will support others and take seriously our role as a sector leading organisation.

A close-up photograph of a bee on a yellow flower, with a large white curved graphic element partially obscuring it.

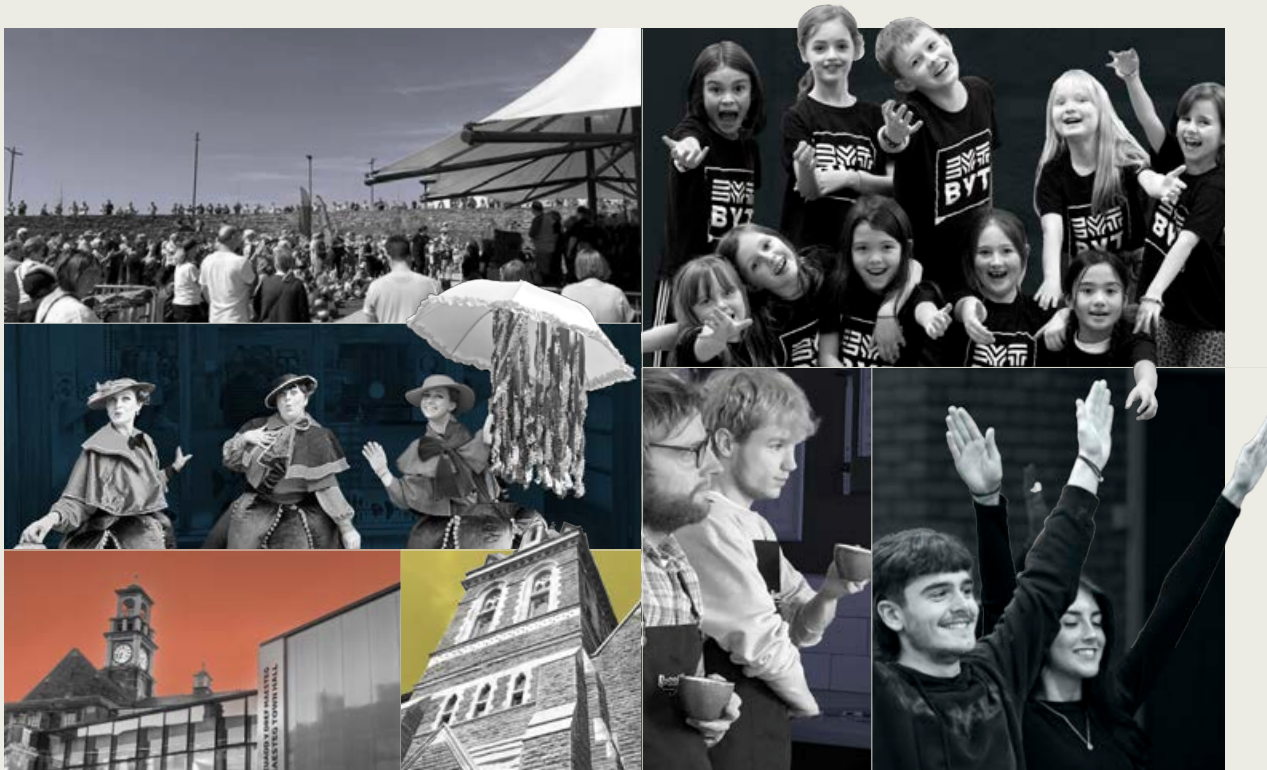
“The primary concern for us is that the trainees learn how to plant the seeds [and] how to nurture them. Then they will see the fruits of their labour later down the line, and can even take some home to try, so they’ll have the full cycle of planning, nurturing, producing, supplying and tasting. It would be great if, in future, we could produce all the vegetables for Bryngarw House; that’s our aim.”

B-Leaf  
colleague on  
proactively  
reducing our  
food miles

# 2.

## WHAT WE WANT TO SEE:

Vibrant places to live and work with growing local economies, a proud sense of identity and where everyone has the opportunity to achieve their potential.



# awen

## WHAT WE WILL DO:

**We will fully re-open the Grand Pavilion in Porthcawl by 2027** realising the £20m investment into this iconic venue. **Y Muni and The Met will be recognised as two of the Capital City Region's key music venues** and **Maesteg Town Hall will thrive as a multi-faceted cultural, heritage and community hub**. Together they will contribute over £12m to the regional economy by 2030.

**We will play a leading role in supporting local cultural economy** and where there are gaps, work with partners to establish cultural consortiums for organisations that support our diverse communities, cultural and creative enterprise, and cultural tourism.

**Awen will focus on injecting vibrancy into town centres** in support of **regenerating spaces** and **boosting trade and the local economy**. Our focus will be on Abertillery, Bridgend, Maesteg, Pontypridd and Porthcawl, using our venues as centre points for activities.

**Our Youth Theatre will thrive and expand**, reaching new communities and ensuring access to all.

**We will actively pursue opportunities to work in partnership and to facilitate cultural and creative industries career pathways**, breaking the connection between class dynamic and career chances. We will aim to support 50 individuals annually.

# WHY?

**Town centre regeneration is a key priority for us and a key priority for our partners.**

We have demonstrated what we can do to support business and the local economy by making town centres more vibrant and culturally diverse.

Our venues and libraries form key town centre anchor points but there is so much more we can do using culture as a vehicle for regeneration and economic growth. Re-opening and developing some of our cultural spaces will of course feature highly over the coming years as we welcome back our users and audiences but also look to widen participation.

Their success is essential for the economic, environmental, cultural and social wellbeing of the country and its people. We support Welsh Government's Transforming Towns programme by working with local authorities and other partner organisations on the delivery of their placemaking plans and in establishing meaningful measures to monitor and evaluate our contribution.

“It is not often we get such a great opportunity for free family fun like this in Porthcawl. I was interested to see what it was all about and was very pleasantly surprised by all that was happening. I liked that the new area that has been renovated was being used for this kind of event and bringing together all of the local businesses around it for food and drinks also. It was great! It felt safe, lots to do for the children, including that massive whale show which was fantastic and music throughout the day.”

Seascape  
attendee

# 3.

## WHAT WE WANT TO SEE:

Everyone with the opportunity to feel engaged and a sense of purpose, with access to skills, support and help when they need it.



# awen

## WHAT WE WILL DO:

With the trainees at its heart, **we will re-build B-Leaf into a modern purpose-built horticultural training centre** by 2030.

Across Awen, we will **support 50 people into employment opportunities or experiences** by 2030 and **help a further 100 people develop transferable skills that promote independence and choice**.

Through partnership, **we will offer young carers and care experienced young people the opportunity to participate and develop skills** across our sectors.

Our libraries will meet the ever changing digital and technological world by **providing digital support regardless of age and ability** supporting wellbeing, employment and skills.

Our libraries will continue to **provide modern, fit-for-purpose spaces focused on social inclusion**, where we will maintain a customer satisfaction rate of over 90%.

As **safe, inclusive and accessible spaces**, we will work with partner organisations to enhance the role of libraries as **vibrant community hubs**.

# WHY?

**We have to ensure people have the opportunity to achieve their potential and support the wellbeing of those most vulnerable in society.**

We are proud of our work in supporting adults with disabilities, which will remain one of our core charitable objectives.

There is scope to diversify our trainee base if we improve our facilities and invest in our team. We will evolve the delivery model to ensure that our commissioners, families, carers and most importantly our trainees are getting the most out of their time with us and we maximise their capabilities and support them to have control over their lives.

Young people; individuals who identify as LGBTQ+; people who live alone; individuals who are in the lowest income bracket or unemployed; and people living with a mental health condition, disability or long-term health condition, have been identified as amongst those most likely to experience loneliness.

We are, and can continue to be, part of a system that helps people to continue to enjoy life by providing essential moments of respite and escapism when life is otherwise tough.



“Jonathan has stepped out of his comfort zone since attending B-Leaf with the help from all the staff, I was incredibly surprised but pleased to find that he was using computers, he has been quite frightened of them in the past.

Jonathan is always returning and talking about the friendships he has made; he is in a routine and has structure which helps with the rest of his week, buying food, washing uniform, making lunch the night before. B-Leaf has made an incredibly positive impact to his life.”

Jonathan's  
Guardian

# 4.

## WHAT WE WANT TO SEE:

Healthy communities where everyone has the chance to lead healthy lives.



# awen

## WHAT WE WILL DO:

**We will promote and invest in our volunteer programmes** to provide people with fulfilling experience that supports their wellbeing; retaining our Investors in Volunteers accreditation and engaging with 200 volunteers annually by 2030.

With our partners **we will pursue solutions that look to improve health and wellbeing**, building upon the current services and connections we have with local people.

Awen will be recognised as a dementia friendly community and **HYNT Scheme membership activity will increase by 50%** by 2030.

**The wellbeing of our workforce will remain a focus for us all** and we will aim to be progressive in supporting work/life balance and achieve Platinum Investors in Wellbeing Accreditation by 2030.

We will seek to establish our network of spaces within a **social prescribing system** and better evaluate how our work through non-clinical interventions is **supporting better health outcomes** and a **more efficient health system**.

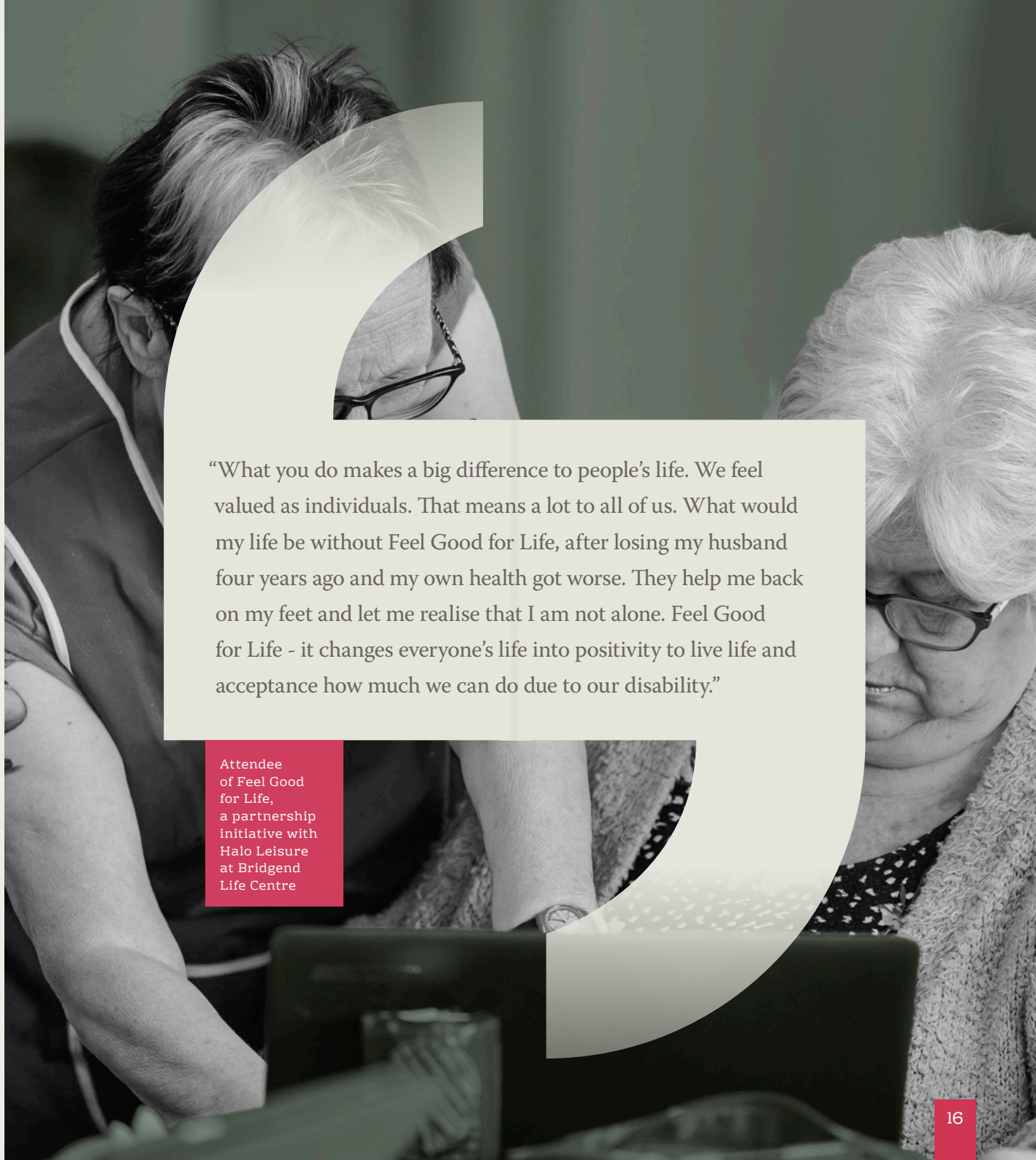
# WHY?

**Health inequality remains a stand-out priority.**

Health inequalities across the areas we work are stark. For example, in Bridgend County Borough, there is a 10 year gap between the area with the highest life expectancy (Litchard) and the village (Betws) with one of the lowest, just four miles away. There is a similar picture in Blaenau Gwent which has the lowest life expectancy rates in Wales, with its bordering county borough of Monmouthshire having the highest.

There is more we can do, in partnership, to help tackle this.

We already have our role to play in helping people access essential services and information at a local level. Over 60% of library workforce time is dedicated to the provision of information and support, our Creative Wellbeing programmes are designed to directly improve wider health determinants and in Bryngarw Country Park we have a green space that is a focal point for so many looking to improve their physical and mental wellbeing. Alongside our partners we can *better integrate services* and *realise a better system* where wellness options are more accessible for communities.



“What you do makes a big difference to people’s life. We feel valued as individuals. That means a lot to all of us. What would my life be without Feel Good for Life, after losing my husband four years ago and my own health got worse. They help me back on my feet and let me realise that I am not alone. Feel Good for Life - it changes everyone’s life into positivity to live life and acceptance how much we can do due to our disability.”

Attendee  
of Feel Good  
for Life,  
a partnership  
initiative with  
Halo Leisure  
at Bridgend  
Life Centre

# 5.

## WHAT WE WANT TO SEE:

A sustainable organisation with Awen viewed as a responsible, fair, trusted employer and a partner of choice.



# awen

## WHAT WE WILL DO:

**Our board will reflect the organisation we want to be** – values driven, diverse and engaged.

We will take forward our **equity, diversity and inclusion action plan** as a centre point of development and make it real.

**We will establish a new Awen leadership programme** to support learning and allow the next generation of leaders to grow and we will increase apprenticeships and employability opportunities across the organisation.

**Investors in People Platinum Accredited organisation by 2030** and 90% of employees will annually say that they enjoy working at Awen.

Our **Welsh language programmes and activities** will underpin our commitment to support Welsh Government's target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. We will increase the number of people who attend these events by 30% by 2030.

**We will establish a network of advisory groups** to ensure we are learning and reacting to the needs of our diverse communities.

# WHY?

Awen has and always will place an emphasis on being a healthy, well governed and **sustainable organisation**. This has stood us in good stead, and we will not rest on our laurels.

For us, sustainability does not just mean cash in the bank. It is about looking after our workforce, investing in them to be the best they can be, growing-our-own through investment in training, employability initiatives, apprenticeships and ensuring we are growing the capacity of the organisation by embracing diversity of people and ideas. This is how we will ensure we remain relevant to the needs of our communities.

Our people are the heartbeat of the organisation. We know that investing in and supporting our workforce brings a loyalty and connection, without which this strategy will not work. Wherever they work or whatever they do at Awen, it is important our people feel valued and believe they have the opportunity to express their ideas and live out the passion they have for their roles. To be a sustainable organisation, we must nurture our talent and play our part across the cultural sector in developing career pathways.

Leadership starts with our trustees. The Charity Governance Code is clear: good governance is fundamental to a charity's success. Awen has always placed emphasis on getting its governance right and looking to improve continuously. Retaining, recruiting and encouraging engaged trustees gives us the cornerstones on which the rest of the organisation can grow.

If we are serious about making people feel they belong then our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion must start with our trustees and work its way through the whole organisation. By embracing diversity, lived experiences and engaging directly at a local level, it will help us make better decisions and better serve and reflect our communities.

Awen celebrates and is proud to be a Welsh organisation – promoting our diverse culture, heritage and of course the Welsh language. We embrace Welsh Government's commitment of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. We will do all we can to offer a consistent approach to our use of the Welsh language across the organisation and our activities, to maximise the benefits and opportunities this brings to our communities.



# FUNDING THIS STRATEGY

We have set ambitious targets and we won't get there without growth – more people, more resources and more effort.

Our aim is to keep moving and together with our partners we accept that challenge.

Partnerships

Fundraising strategy

Earned income

Trading subsidiaries

Investment

SUSTAINABILITY  
AND OUTCOMES



# FINANCIAL PLANNING

There is much in our strategy that we can do within our current financial envelope but there are other ambitions that will need additional revenue and capital funding to make them a reality. Aligned with this strategy will be a financial plan that will help us grow, be sustainable and remain an organisation that people and partners want to invest in.

Priority will always be given to ensuring that our core services are delivered well, and that we meet the expectations of our key stakeholders and partners. Beyond that, we will seek the additional resources and capacity enabling us to do more and meet our aspirations. After ten years, we have a solid foundation and a good track record to spring board into the future.

The future itself is as uncertain as it's ever been, and the public funding climate is set to remain challenging for the lifetime of this strategy. We will look to work with our partners and adapt to new ways of working, adopt new technologies and make sure our assets are delivering to their optimal levels.

# FUNDRAISING

It is inevitable that fundraising will become an ever-growing part of our financial planning and as a registered charity, Awen will become a more active fundraising organisation, with a focused fundraising plan to underpin this strategy and all that we do.



# GROWTH AND SOCIAL VALUE

Awen has never been an organisation that strives for market share – that's not us and this strategy does not set us on a path to chase new things.

Any new opportunities that we come across will be considered and tested on their merits. Growth however comes in many forms and is not just judged by the balance sheet. The willingness to try new things, take a risk and learn from them will drive our growth as an organisation. Staying still is not in our DNA.

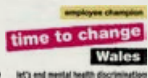
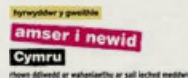
Our future also depends on the strength of our Group and our trading subsidiary and commercial activity are vital cogs in supporting the charity and its end users. Our values and commitment to social value will flow through everything we do.





**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE**  
We invest in wellbeing Gold  
Rydym yn buddsoddi mewn llesiant Aur

**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE**  
We invest in people Silver  
Rydym yn buddsoddi mewn pobl Arian



Ymddiriedolaeth Ddiwylliannol Awen  
Swyddfeydd y Stablau, Tŷ Bryngarw,  
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Rhif elusen gofrestredig / Registered charity number: 1166908  
Rhif cofrestru TAW / VAT registration number: 224 3341 44  
Rhif gofrestredig / Company number: 09610991

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Mae Ymddiriedolaeth Ddiwylliannol Awen wedi'i chofrestru yng Nghymru fel cwmni cyfyngedig drwy warant.  
Awen Cultural Trust is registered in Wales as a company limited by guarantee.

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