awen

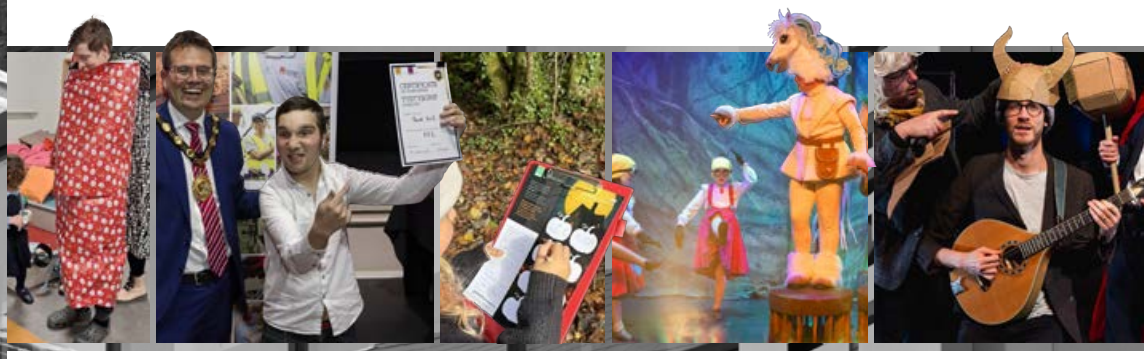
Ymddiriedolaeth
Ddiwylliannol
Cultural Trust

QUARTER 3
PERFORMANCE REPORT

for Bridgend County Borough Council

2025–26

This report summarises activities undertaken by Awen Cultural Trust during **Quarter 3** of 2025 / 2026 in support of Bridgend County Borough Council's Corporate Objectives. It includes a summary of each service area as well as some case studies and customer feedback that help illustrate impact.



Service Area Summary:

LIBRARIES

Our libraries experienced a busy October half-term. In partnership with the Egypt Centre in Swansea, we delivered a series of **Egyptian Mummy workshops** which were well attended by families. Participants explored Ancient Egypt, learned about mummification, and even discovered how to play the traditional Egyptian board game Senet. Each library showcased themed book displays to complement the workshops, and these collections proved extremely popular with borrowers.

Bridgend Library was successful in securing a partnership project with The Reading Agency called **Cosmic Explorers**. This initiative encourages school children to discover more about space and the solar system. As part of the project, the library received learning materials, books and solar system props, which have already been widely used during school visits.

Christmas remains a highlight across our libraries, with a full programme of festive Bounce & Rhyme sessions, craft activities and themed reading groups. Pyle Library hosted its community-wide **Melodies and Mince Pies** event, featuring performances from Maesteg Gleemen and stalls from local crafters. The event was well attended and included visits from the Mayor of Bridgend, Cllr. Huw David, and Chair of Pyle Community Council, Cllr. Gary Chappell.

Betws Library hosted **Cuppa with a Copper** sessions with local PCSOs, and Valleys to Coast used the library space to deliver regular community information events. Our ongoing partnerships with RNID and Employability ensure residents can access both health and employment support directly from their local library. At Aberkenfig Library, there are weekly visits from Te Teulu, a group of adults with learning disabilities, who take part in creative activities, board games, and jigsaw building. These sessions help promote inclusion, confidence and social interaction within a welcoming library environment.

EGYPTIAN MUMMY WORKSHOPS

CHRISTMAS AT AWEN LIBRARIES

MELODIES AND MINCE PIES

"These craft sessions are awesome. Thank you so much. They really help my mental health and refill my happy level."

Customer who took part in the Christmas Craft sessions in Aberkenfig Library

HELEN, PORTHCAWL

Feel Good for Life is an award-winning initiative which Awen runs in partnership with Halo Leisure in Bridgend Life Centre, Cornelly Community Centre and online. The sessions are aimed at people living with dementia and their carers. Following swimming or gentle physical activities with Halo, staff from Bridgend Library provide a range of social activities including crafts, live musicians, puzzles, bingo, sessions with emotional support animals, games and reminiscence opportunities, all designed to encourage conversation and connection.

"I am currently looking after my 89-year-old elderly mother who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. I am living with my mother in her home in Porthcawl for 5 days a week and have been caring for her over the past 2 years since the death of my father.

"It is important for me to keep my mother active both mentally and physically. I was introduced to the Feel Good for Life swimming group by the Alzheimer's Society in October 2022 and our Wednesday afternoon sessions have become a very important part of our week.

"The memory café after the swim is an added bonus and run by Bridgend Library in a caring and supportive way for both carers and sufferers. Activities vary each week. Mum enjoys jigsaws, word search and bingo. The craft sessions are good for Mum and the staff are very patient when helping to achieve a pleasing result.

"Singing is always popular and also the many visitors who are invited to the group who share information on a variety of topics to help all. The staff at Bridgend Library organise these visits with the group in mind and what would benefit us all. We are very grateful to them for arranging stimulating activities.

"The Bridgend Library staff have had such a positive impact for both Mum and myself. The encouragement, support and ideas that they give to both carers and sufferers over the past 18 months have been invaluable. They always makes time to chat and, as one member of staff has had a similar experience to me, she shares with me her ways of coping with the situation.

"Wednesday afternoons are a highlight of our week – thank you."

LEARNING DISABILITY SERVICES: B-LEAF & WOOD-B

Our trainees at B Leaf and Wood B continued to thrive this quarter, particularly during the festive season. B Leaf enjoyed another successful year of Christmas tree sales, selling out for the second year running, demonstrating the strong community support for this service. At Wood B, trainees worked hard to produce a range of high quality wooden gifts, including robins, gonks and snowmen, which were then sold at B Leaf. Their craftsmanship was recognised during a rota visit to Wood-B by Councillor Jane Gebbie, Deputy Leader of Bridgend County Borough Council, Councillor Huw David, Mayor, and Councillor Eugene Capaross.

Our **Annual Celebration Evening** took place at Maesteg Town Hall in October. This event provided a proud moment for trainees to have their achievements formally recognised as they received their certificates and awards. We were delighted to welcome the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Sarah Murphy MS, and Deputy First Minister, Huw Irranca Davies MS, both of whom spent time speaking with trainees and their families to understand first hand the positive impact the programmes have on their confidence, skills and wellbeing.

Trainees from both programmes attended the It's My Shout film screenings at Maesteg Town Hall. They viewed eight short films, including **Different Now** and **The Green Cottage**, both of which were supported by Awen. **Different Now** was filmed in Porthcawl during the summer and featured several of our trainees who took part as extras. The films were broadcast on BBC Wales and BBC iPlayer throughout the autumn, giving trainees an exciting opportunity to experience life on a professional film set and see the final results (and themselves) on screen.

Over the October half-term, several trainees took up volunteer roles supporting the **Halloween Pumpkin Trails** at Bryngarw Country Park. Working alongside park colleagues, they helped deliver the programme and engaged with members of the public. The trainees particularly enjoyed getting into character with spooky costumes, contributing to a fun and memorable experience for visitors.

1. ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR OF CHRISTMAS TREE SALES
2. THE *IT'S MY SHOUT* FILM SCREENINGS AT MAESTEG TOWN HALL
3. OUR ANNUAL CELEBRATION EVENING
4. RECOGNISING WOOD-B'S CRAFTSMANSHIP DURING A ROTA VISIT
5. SUPPORTING THE HALLOWEEN PUMPKIN TRAILS AT BRYNGARW COUNTRY PARK

IWAN, BRACKLA

Iwan has been attending B-Leaf for 18 months and always arrives smiling. He is very friendly, cheerful, and gets on well with his peers. Iwan is happy to work in any area, with all staff members, however, he particularly enjoys working in the allotment. Iwan likes being outside in any weather and getting his hands dirty! While attending Bridgend College, Iwan won awards for his hanging baskets, and he will be honing these skills at B-Leaf in the spring!

Iwan has recently joined the B-Leaf's in-house Agored Cymru-certified course on Greeting People. He is working on the essential skills of appropriate language with others and is progressing well. Iwan was asked if he wanted to help the Bryngarw rangers' team with their Halloween Trail; he jumped at the opportunity to be involved, adding a practical element to his classroom learning. Iwan was great at speaking to the customers and handing the sweets out to the children – a great help.

> "I'm so proud of how Iwan has come on since joining B-Leaf. He loves going and really classes it as a job, as he keeps telling me. Everyone is so supportive and friendly. Iwan's confidence has grown tremendously since starting and he always tells me the things he loves to do whilst there. B-Leaf has helped Iwan's independence with working hard and his confidence has developed lots, with mixing with everyone. Thank you everyone it means a lot."
>
> Alison, Iwan's mum

JACK, BRIDGEND

Jack joined B-Leaf in 2023 and was very keen to join Wood-B. An opportunity arose in Wood-B this year and, following a few taster sessions, Jack is now a valued member of the team there. Since joining Wood-B, Jack's confidence has grown exponentially, so much so, he was awarded the Most Improved Certificate at the annual celebration evening in October.

Jack has recently started attending the Mathematics course held at B-Leaf, in partnership with Bridgend College. He is enjoying the course which focuses on identifying and using money. Jack likes to visit the shop with his peers from Wood-B, so we felt that this course was very pertinent.

Jack is always very keen to be involved in projects and over the last few months he has helped with Bryngarw's Halloween Trail and attended the It's My Shout film screening in Maesteg Town Hall. Jack enjoys being active, and he is always very enthusiastic, doing Elvis Presley impersonations at every available opportunity! He has a great personality and always makes everyone laugh.

> "Wood-B and B-Leaf are both invaluable in offering an outside activity, increasing independence and confidence and also providing a social outlet for people with additional needs who might otherwise have somewhat solitary lives."
>
> Anita, Jack's mum

> "Wood-B and B-Leaf are both great and make me feel happy when I go there."
>
> Jack

Service Area Summary:

BRYNGARW COUNTRY PARK

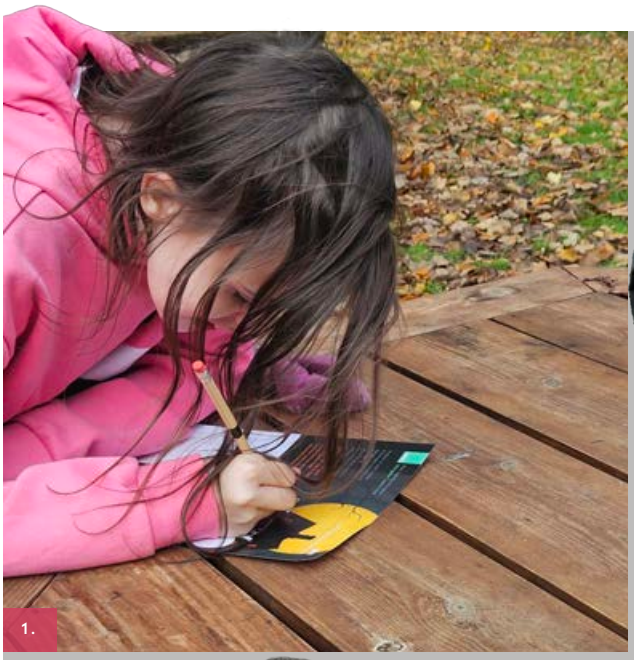
Almost 36,000 visitors enjoyed the beautiful and ever changing landscape of Bryngarw Country Park over the autumn and winter months. Visitors took part in a wide range of ranger led activities, including mushroom hunts and our popular **Halloween Pumpkin Trails**. Seasonal workshops such as **Christmas Wreath** making were well attended, and our brand new festive Christmas trails proved to be a major success, with 242 families taking part in a Christmas present hunt around the park.

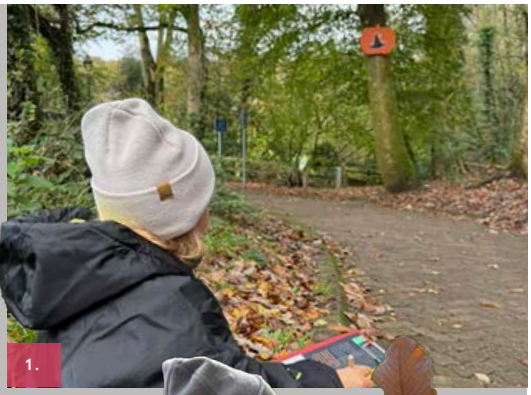
Our dedicated team of volunteers continued to make an invaluable contribution to the conservation and upkeep of Bryngarw Country Park. This quarter, they supported the rangers with essential work in the Japanese Garden, including clearing the ponds and water systems. Their efforts were vital in removing invasive debris, preventing stagnation, and protecting aquatic habitats. This specialist maintenance not only safeguards the delicate ecosystem but also preserves the garden's historic character and aesthetic appeal, key elements of Bryngarw's cultural identity.

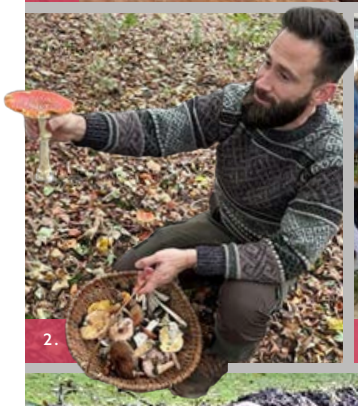
Thanks to the commitment of our volunteers, this much loved space remains accessible and safe for the community. Their work plays an important role in enhancing biodiversity and supporting the wellbeing of the many visitors who enjoy the park throughout the year.

Our B Leaf trainees have been working closely with the rangers, carrying out important maintenance and improvements throughout the park. This quarter, trainees supported critical improvements to the pathways, helping to keep the park's extensive 113 acres of woodland and trails safe and accessible for all visitors. Their contribution directly supports Bridgend County Borough Council's wellbeing priorities around empowerment, social inclusion and quality outdoor experiences.

Through these practical tasks, trainees gain valuable vocational skills in landscaping and grounds maintenance. This hands on learning improves their independence, confidence and employability. The collaboration not only helps to maintain Bryngarw's award winning standards but also creates a meaningful, community led environment where trainees play an active role in preserving local heritage and natural spaces.







1. HALLOWEEN PUMPKIN TRAILS
2. MUSHROOM HUNTS
2. CHRISTMAS WREATH MAKING
4. B LEAF TRAINEES WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE RANGERS TO CARRY OUT IMPORTANT MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS THROUGHOUT THE PARK

"Lovely morning hunting mushrooms. Enjoyed eating my hedgehog mushrooms and an amethyst deceiver."

"I walked one and half hours yesterday and it was wonderful. The acers are stunning colours now and the new repaired pathways are brilliant. I haven't been there for some time so was very happy to see all the improvements."

Visitor Quotes

CASE STUDY

Through his Welsh Baccalaureate placement at Bryngarw Country Park, Kaya transitioned from a local student to a confident community steward.

Over five intensive sessions, he learned how to safely use hand tools such as loppers, shears and a bow-saw, to restore vital habitats, including the creation of a dead hedge. Despite challenging weather, Kaya's dedication directly enhanced local biodiversity. This partnership didn't just fulfil a curriculum requirement; it fostered a deep sense of belonging and civic pride, proving that investing in our green spaces is an investment in our youth.

"At my time at Bryngarw I felt really welcomed straight away. The team made it feel extremely worthwhile and as a whole I enjoyed my experience. It helped me fulfil my ultimate goal of helping the community."

Kaya

Service Area Summary:

THEATRES & COMMUNITY CENTRES

This quarter was the busiest of the year for Maesteg Town Hall, with visitor and audience numbers increasing by more than 80%. A key highlight was the return of the venue's first pantomime since refurbishment, **Rapunzel**, supported by a Junior Ensemble of 12 local young performers selected through open auditions. Across 14 public performances, more than 6,000 people attended, with an additional 1,885 pupils from local schools enjoying festive theatre visits.

As part of our commitment to inclusive programming, we hosted our second Bridgend Deaf Theatre Club trip, welcoming 20 attendees to a BSL interpreted and captioned performance of **Rapunzel**. We also offered a range of access features including audio description, pre show touch tours and a relaxed performance, which enabled 35 members of Special Families Maesteg to attend, thanks to Carers Respite funding from the Cwm Taf Short Breaks Fund.

The ever-popular Maesteg Musical Theatre Society returned to the Town Hall in October, with a successful four night run of **Rock of Ages**. Audiences praised the production as a "brilliant night," celebrating the "amazing talent in the Llynfi Valley". This quarter also saw Christmas productions from West Park Primary in Porthcawl and Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd, further strengthening community connections with the venue.

Our **Free Music Fridays** continued from October to December, and thanks to Warm Hub funding we were able to offer free cake and hot drinks to those attending, further enhancing the welcoming experience. Also supporting older adults with social interaction opportunities, the **Tea Dances** at Awel y Môr remain valued community events.

New initiatives at Blaengarw Workmen's Hall brought fresh engagement. A newly launched **Games Night** has quickly become popular with local residents, while **Midweek Melodies** saw increased participation, with more than 70 local pupils joining regular adult attendees for a Christmas acapella performance by the SOW Trio. Blaengarw Primary School has now committed to using these monthly events as an opportunity to broaden pupils' exposure to diverse live music experiences.

1. RAPUNZEL

2. BRIDGEND DEAF THEATRE CLUB AT THE PANTO

"Just been to see the panto at Maesteg Town Hall. If you haven't had your tickets for Rapunzel yet get them now! The show is amazing; the singing, the costumes, the interaction with the children, it's just brilliant!"

"Great afternoon out. 3-year'old's first panto. She loved it. Thank you for the photos after, kids loved it and are asking about next year already."

Rapunzel

"Enjoyed the ASD friendly showing this afternoon. Thank you for offering an accessible performance!"

Rapunzel, ASD Friendly Showing

"So happy we have the Town Hall open again and for all the efforts to provide all kinds of entertainment."

"Faultless. A model for what every community of this size deserves."

About Maesteg Town Hall

HONEY, PORTHCAWL

MEMBER OF THE RAPUNZEL JUNIOR ENSEMBLE

"I really enjoy being onstage and love being part of a cast. I have performed in shows at Maesteg Town Hall before and thought that panto would be a fun opportunity to perform and work with new people.

"I loved it! The cast made me feel really relaxed and were really supportive. They gave us tips and were really warm and friendly. I particularly liked the fun comments they made when we were waiting in the wings.

"My friends were really excited to see me on stage and sent me lovely comments about how much they enjoyed the show. My teachers at school were also really excited for me and included how I was in panto in the school newsletter which made me feel really proud of my achievement. My family was so proud of me, there were plenty of tears and they came to see me multiple times. They loved it so much that I taught them the dances!

"I have learned so many skills from performing in panto. I learned new dance moves and ways to perform but also learned to take direction from a range of people, from the choreographer to the producer to the musical director. It really was an education and an extremely enjoyable one. I would love to do it again and would definitely audition for another panto.

"I have performed at Maesteg Town Hall before with Bridgend Youth Theatre and really like it there. The facilities are really good and the staff there are always really friendly and helpful. My chaperone was so lovely and really looked after us. We really enjoyed her company and had so much fun with her."

Service Area Summary:

CREATIVE WELLBEING

CREATIVE WELLBEING SITS OUTSIDE OF OUR MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT WITH BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL. IT IS FUNDED THROUGH A RANGE OF GRANTS AND OTHER SOURCES AND ADDS VALUE TO COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE AREA.

With funding from the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Carers Short Breaks Fund, we continued to deliver respite opportunities for carers this quarter. Six carers enjoyed an evening of live music at Maesteg Town Hall with **Lipstick on Your Collar**, while 35 members of Special Families Maesteg joined us for a relaxed performance of **Rapunzel**, during the pantomime run. To At Bryngarw Country Park, 72 families whose children have additional needs and disabilities created lasting memories at our third annual **Relaxed Santa** event. Held over three evenings when the park is closed to the general public, the event provides a bespoke, calm and fully accessible environment tailored to the needs of the families.

In November, we welcomed 115 pupils from local primary schools to Maesteg Town Hall for a free improvised theatre performance by the **Rubbish Shakespeare Company**. This marked the company's second visit to Awen, and both pupils and teachers were delighted by the humorous, creative and highly participatory storytelling experience. Feedback showed that every pupil felt more connected to their community after visiting the Town Hall and engaging in a high quality arts experience designed specifically to support their learning and imagination.

Our Associate Artists delivered several workshops this quarter. These included sessions with Bridgend Carers' Wildflowers group for girls who are autistic; families participating in the Invisible Walls programme at HMP Parc; and within several local care homes. These sessions provided opportunities for social connection and confidence building.

RUBBISH SHAKESPEARE COMPANY: THE STORY FORGE

"After missing out on many events due to health issues I was so pleased we could make this event. Thank you so much for organising it – the best Mr and Mrs Claus I have ever seen!"

"Thank you so much for putting on such a magical experience, we loved every second of the crafting activity, elves and meeting Mr & Mrs Claus."

Relaxed Santa, Parents

"This show made me feel excited and happy. It was one of the best experiences of my life!"

Story Forge, Pupil

"Story Forge was an enjoyable and funny experience. It showed how storytelling and writing can be done with just a few objects. The highlight for me was the exuberant performers and the way they interacted with the children, and seeing the enjoyment on the children's faces and their enthusiasm for the show. It was my first time seeing a show at Maesteg Town Hall and I believe it is a wonderful resource for the community."

Story Forge, Teacher

ANA-MARIA, BRIDGEND

"This is my third time attending Relaxed Santa at Bryngarw Country Park. The event gets better and better every year. My children can't get enough of the experience, and it is the only place where they can all enjoy it together. Santa is so chatty and kind, his helper Elves are very beautifully dressed up and all very funny. They make us feel so welcomed, entertained and connected to the Christmas spirit."

"We love the location, it is easy to access especially for a child that uses a power wheelchair and the whole process from booking through to attending makes us feel there are people in this world who care how you feel and are working to improve your life, even if it is just for a couple of hours.

"This event has helped us build important happy memories together. We feel relaxed after Christmas time, and we feel real gratitude for the things we receive. This is such a special event, every year we hope that you will continue the event again in the future."

Service Area Summary:

STRATEGIC PROGRESS

OUR STRATEGY 2025-30

Our vision is to create culturally vibrant communities where everyone feels they belong.

A healthy environment where future generations will benefit from a cleaner, more resilient and better understood planet.	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.	Everyone with the opportunity to feel engaged and a sense of purpose, with access to skills, support and help when they need it.	Healthy communities where everyone has the chance to lead healthy lives.	A sustainable organisation with Awen viewed as a responsible, fair, trusted employer and partner of choice.

The Q3 update above clearly demonstrates Awen is making significant progress towards its 2025-30 strategic aims by:

- improving lives and wellbeing;
- reducing isolation and supporting vulnerable people;
- enabling learning and creativity;
- protecting and developing valued cultural and natural spaces;
- providing inclusive, accessible experiences for all;
- strengthening community resilience through partnership working; and
- supporting employability and skills growth.

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Awen Cultural Trust is registered in Wales as a company limited by guarantee.