



Media Release

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For immediate release

## **Film Hub Wales award £100,000 of emergency funding to support Welsh cinemas in critical need during Covid-19**

*Learn how the people behind Welsh cinemas are surviving lockdown*

Film Hub Wales (FHW) has awarded National Lottery funding totalling £100,000 to 16 Welsh independent cinemas and film festivals that have been severely impacted by Covid-19. Forced to close their doors at the start of UK lockdown, these venues will potentially be some of the last organisations able to reopen as the pandemic eases.

With months of potential closure and uncertainty ahead as a result of the pandemic, these funds will help cinemas in urgent financial need.

To maintain vital income in the short term and keep in contact with audiences, some venues are developing online activities. In Tywyn, the Magic Lantern will run a bilingual digital memory project to explore the cinema's role in the community. In Barry, the Memo Arts Centre is planning a visceral multi-media project working with vulnerable groups to identify the complexities of re-engaging audiences during and post Covid-19.

They are also seeking further funding to explore business survival plans for the future. Including ideas for socially distanced events, which will be essential in order to avoid permanent closure. From Cell B's idea of 'Mwoo' outdoor cinema, where audiences would social distance at a cow's length; to Neuadd Ogwen's 'Ein Dalgylch' platform, which aims to take artists of all disciplines out of the venue to perform in the valleys, forests and mountains.

Cinemas and festivals are being driven during this difficult time by dedicated people working behind the scenes, striving to bring communities back together through film. FHW is working closely with the 16 partners to understand how Covid-19 has impacted them, so that the greatest choice of cinema can be brought back to audiences across Wales.

### **Hana Lewis, Strategic Manager of Film Hub Wales, explains:**

*"Cinemas do so much for us; they're there when we want to escape, they bring us together and connect us to the world. We've been amazed by the capacity of cinema staff to care for their audiences, from delivering local supplies, to meeting their financial commitments. We wanted to take the opportunity to share their stories."*

*"As a result of lockdown, income from ticket sales and concessions stopped overnight, putting many independent organisations and their teams at immediate risk. There's a long journey ahead and cinemas will need ongoing support. We hope that the BFI FAN resilience fund can start the journey to reopening."*

**Ben Luxford, Head of UK Audiences, BFI,** said: "Redirecting National Lottery and Mayor of London funding to make emergency grants to our independent exhibitors has proved to be a lifeline, enabling our fantastic venues, cinemas and festivals across the UK to remain in business in the immediate term. However, it is clear that these vital and unique organisations, which are crucial to the rich cultural fabric of

their local communities, are still in crisis. When allowed to reopen, safely implementing social distancing guidance will not only be logistically impossible for some, but many are also unlikely to cover their costs when operating at reduced capacity. Losing these exhibitors would be a huge cultural loss for UK audiences, so I am pleased FAN has been able to help them keep the lights on while we all face the oncoming challenges.”

**Rhys Roberts, Cinema Coordinator at CellB, adds:**

*“Past events at Blaenau Ffestiniog’s CellB cinema have at times rivalled the drama usually seen on our cinema screen. We’ve seen our community and Hollywood stars lining up to support a bright future for this most precious of our shared community assets.*

*“Recently, we’ve faced the surreal threat of the Covid-19 pandemic, and thanks to Film Hub Wales and BFI FAN support, we see this plucky independent cinema fighting back once more, stepping into a new and different world driven by our young creatives, who we call ‘The Quaran-teens’. We are ready for the next chapter in our drama.”*

**Lauren Orme, Director of Cardiff Animation Festival adds:**

*“Covid-19 has had a massive impact on Cardiff Animation Festival, as it has on so many arts organisations. Having to make the decision to postpone our festival just three weeks from our scheduled dates could have meant the end for us as an organisation.*

*“Film Hub Wales have been massively supportive throughout this time. This new relief funding is a lifeline that will enable us to support freelancers and contractors, to develop new and exciting work to serve the community that has built around our activity over the past five and a half years, and to help our audiences feel connected through independent animation while we’re all apart.”*

The resilience fund is made possible thanks to National Lottery funding, repurposed by the British Film Institute (BFI) via its Film Audience Network (FAN). The fund offers critical relief and business continuity to exhibitors across the whole of the UK.

Funds in Wales are administered by FHW via Chapter as the Film Hub Lead Organisation. They will be used towards irrecoverable costs, to deliver creative online activities during closure, and staff time to plan towards safe reopening.

**Ends**

For images please copy and paste the following link into your browser:

**<https://bit.ly/BFIResFund>**

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**Projects Supported**

**Region: North West Wales**

**Gwallgofiaid, CellB (Blaenau Ffestiniog)**

Gwallgofiaid is a not for profit social enterprise run from the old Blaenau police station. Proceeds from the cinema go towards training in creative arts and media for local young people.

After recovering from a burst pipe at the cinema in the winter of 2017, with the support of Rhys Ifans and their successful crowd funder, Cell B were hit hard by the closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic. FHW funding will support core staffing and operational costs that cannot be covered without ticket income.

During lockdown, Gwallgofiad continue to talk to their young creatives and local pensioners about resilience scenarios, film reviews and programming. They have all sorts of creative ideas in development for the future, including "Mwoo" pop-up outdoor cinema screenings where audiences would social distance at a cow's length

[Meet Rhys Robert's – CellB's Coordinator and young volunteers Aron and Owen.](#)  
[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

### **Dragon Theatre (Barmouth):**

Situated on the west coast of Snowdonia, this imposing, converted Victorian chapel houses a 186-seat traditional theatre auditorium offering a year-round programme of activities. The building is lovingly run and maintained by a small team and many hard-working volunteers.

With all events cancelled by mid-March and plans to address flood damage postponed, the theatre's annual insurance costs will be supported through the FHW grant.

[Meet Alan – Vice-Chair, Board of Trustees](#)  
[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

### **Neuadd Ogwen (Bethesda):**

Neuadd Ogwen is a community arts centre based in the old village hall in Bethesda, Gwynedd. With 354 seats and a creative schedule including film, productions by local and national touring companies, ballet, opera, plays, pantomimes and concerts.

With all events cancelled from mid-March, core staffing and organisational costs will be supported by the FHW grant. Neuadd Ogwen also plan to create an online platform called 'Ein Dalgylch' that will take artists of all disciplines out of the venue and into the valley, forests and mountains near Bethesda for digital performances.

[Meet Dilwyn – Manager of Neuadd Ogwen](#)  
[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

## **Region: North East Wales**

### **73 Degree Community (Wrexham):**

Sinema 73 is a new community-led accessible cinema club hosted in partnership with Ty Pawb in Wrexham. The programme is curated by a committee of dedicated film experts and members of diverse community groups.

They will be supported by FHW funding to create social media 'story stacks' with different film-related themes designed to inspire audiences to discover new content and stories online.

[Meet Rob Corcoran – 73 Degrees](#)  
[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#)

### **Wicked Cinema (Rhyl):**

Wicked Wales offer year-round training and activity programmes for young people, including a community pop-up cinema run by young people for young people and an international annual youth film festival, which accepts entries from young filmmakers worldwide.

Wicked were about to reach their third anniversary celebrations when they had to close, with their planning for the September festival also affected. FHW support will be used to help with irrecoverable costs and maintain connections with their growing team of young volunteers who continue to work on their Stand Against Violence initiative, which recently won UK Games Award of the Year.

[Meet Festival Director and Cinema Coordinator Rhiannon Wyn Hughes](#)  
[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

## **Region: South East Wales**

### **Savoy Theatre, (Monmouth):**

The Savoy stands on the oldest known theatre site in Wales, boasting a beautiful art deco interior. The Grade 2\* listed building is currently managed by the Monmouth Savoy Trust. The programme offers a mixture of feature films, live entertainment and special cinema events.

The cinema has been closed since mid-March with all but one member of staff furloughed. FHW support will enable the projector and other essential technical equipment to be maintained alongside irrecoverable staffing and operational costs. Staff have been working hard on the history of the cinema and plan to reopen with new displays in place.

[Meet Director Chris Ryde](#)  
[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

### **Cardiff Animation Festival / CAF (Cardiff):**

CAF is a year-round programme and biennial four-day celebration of animation for everyone, with a high calibre program of screenings, masterclasses, Q+As, workshops, networking, accessible events and an inclusive community atmosphere.

The March 2020 festival and it's creative practitioners were severely affected by lockdown resulting in the postponement of their entire event. In response, CAF have been developing a host of exciting online activities which will be supported by FHW. Events include monthly online Cardiff Animation Night screenings, online animation workshops and subtitled events with British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation.

[Meet Lauren Orme – Festival director](#)  
[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

### **Snowcat Cinema (Penarth):**

Snowcat is an independent pop-up cinema based in South Wales with a permanent residency at Penarth Pier Pavilion. They screen a broad range of films from repertory to cult and they work with other venues to organise events from simple screenings to immersive event-cinema!

FHW support will enable Snowcat to maintain cinema equipment loans. Look out for their daily YouTube videos, Freeview recommendations, watch-alongs and online quizzes.

[Meet Ben Rive – Director](#)  
[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

### **Memo Arts Centre (Barry):**

The Memo Arts Centre is an independent charity situated in the heart of Barry. As the largest multi-arts venue in the Vale of Glamorgan, they welcome over 100,000 visitors to the building every year including over 20,000 young people. With theatre and 4K digital cinema, they are a crucial hub for their local community and beyond.

With nearly 65% of income generated through box office, bar sales and facility hires and all earned income used to support the venue and its extensive programme, the team have been working tirelessly to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 and plan for the future.

FHW support will be used for irrecoverable costs along with an inclusive digital well-being participation project 'The Space Between our Thoughts'. This visceral multi-media project will work with vulnerable adults and groups to identify the complexities of re-engaging audiences during and post Covid-19.

[Meet Kate Long – CEO / Director](#)  
[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

## **Region: West Wales**

### **Commodore Cinema (Aberystwyth):**

A purpose built independent family owned and run cinema. The award winning Commodore first opened its doors in 1976 and seats over 400 with one of the largest cinema screens in Wales.

FHW are excited to welcome the Commodore to the Hub as a new member this year. Funds will support irrecoverable organisational costs. Keep an eye on their Facebook page for regular interactive posts.

[Meet Michael Davies – Proprietor](#)  
[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

### **Magic Lantern (Tywyn):**

Magic Lantern Cinema are a one-screen independent cinema in rural Wales with state of the art Sony 4k digital projection and Dolby 7.1 surround sound. They open to the public 363 days a year. The nearest cinema to them is over 30 miles away, so for many people they are a crucial community resource.

With plans to screen new titles like *Bond* and *Parasite* impacted by unforeseen closure, the Magic Lantern have seen a huge financial impact to their business. Along with irrecoverable costs, FHW will support an online community memory project which explores the social history of the Magic Lantern and its importance to the community.

[Meet Co-Director Sara Waddington & Annie Grundy](#)  
[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

## **Region: South West Wales**

### **Torch Theatre (Milford Haven):**

Established in 1977, The Torch Theatre in Pembrokeshire consists of a 300 seat main house, a 102 seat studio theatre, a bespoke art gallery, bar facilities and Café Torch. The venue has been transformed to create an accessible, comfortable and attractive place to enjoy entertainment and the arts, complete with state of the art digital cinema technology with 3D capabilities.

With all plans on hold, including their exciting outdoor summer screening events, the Torch team will be supported with planning time to understand the landscape of future film releases alongside irrecoverable costs.

[Meet Ben Lloyd - Executive Director](#)  
[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

### **Theatr Gwaun (Fishguard):**

Theatr Gwaun is an independent theatre, cinema, bar and cafe run by a passionate friendly team in north Pembrokeshire. It's been a place for entertainment since 1885 when it was built as a temperance hall, becoming one of the first cinema's in Wales in the early 1920's. They bring a broad range of specialised and mainstream films to all sections of their rural community. They also host Fishguard Film Society.

With income ceased and various grants on hold, FHW will support the venue with essential maintenance and irrecoverable costs that will enable them to plan for reopening.

Their 'The Rainbow – If You Need Us Call Us' campaign sees their volunteers undertaking non-medical errands for those who need help and 'The Stage is Yours' local fund-raiser with new short film in production, will tell the story of the theatre.

[Meet Sue Whitbread - Trustee, Chief Executive Officer \(Volunteer\)](#)  
[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

## **Region: South Wales / Valleys**

### **The Phoenix (Ton Pentre):**

The Phoenix is a Grade 2\* community performance arts theatre and cinema located in Ton Pentre in the Rhondda Valley. The front of the building started life as the Ocean Collieries, Maindy and Eastern Workman's Library and Institute in 1895. Over a century later they are still running strong, screening films six days a week with a comprehensive programme of unusual, modern and challenging films, catering to all ages.

Closure has had a large impact on the charity's plans for grant applications and impacted the team of volunteers who work with vulnerable communities across Rhondda Cynon Taff. The FHW grant will support the Phoenix with irrecoverable maintenance and film transport costs.

[Meet Gerda Beckers – Volunteer Director](#)  
[Facebook](#)

## **Region: Wales - Wide**

### **Kotatsu Japanese Animation Festival (venues Wales - wide):**

Kotatsu is film festival specialising in Japanese animation, which takes place at Chapter in Cardiff and Aberystwyth Arts Centre in Aberystwyth.

The festival generally takes place each September, so fundraising and planning for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary event has been hugely affected. FHW support will enable Kotatsu to offer a day of online Independent Japanese short films screenings during closure.

[Meet Director Eiko Ishii Meredith](#)  
[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

### **WOW Film Festival (venues Wales wide):**

WOW has been celebrating the riches of world cinema since 2001, bringing an eclectic, intriguing, and moving selection of films from around the globe to cinemas across Wales. WOW presents a selection of the very best in world cinema including films from Wales.

This year's festival opened with a sell-out screening on International Women's Day and was due to run until April 8 at Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Kinokulture Oswestry, Pontio Bangor, Theatr Mwdan Cardigan and Taliesin Swansea but was postponed just days into delivery. FHW support will help with irrecoverable costs as well as business planning for the future.

[Meet David Gillam – Festival Director](#)  
[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

**Film Hub Wales have also invested a further £17,000 into regional networks to protect strategic regional support services during Covid-19 that offer support to cinemas and festivals:**

- **Wales Youth Film Festival Network:** A Welsh film festival network initiative, developed by Film Hub Wales, Wicked Wales (Rhyl) and key festivals within the region which works to increase British independent and international film programmes available for and made by young audiences. For more information, please contact the network coordinator [Lorraine Mahoney](#).
- **Vale Venues**  
A rural, county-wide project led by the Memo Arts Centre in Barry on behalf of 11 mixed arts venues and community cinemas across the Vale of Glamorgan. They will support collaboration between partners during closure and generate greater public awareness of local ongoing activities.  
<https://www.memoartscentre.co.uk/vale-venues/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/ValeVenuesCinema>
- **Off Y Grid**  
Established in 2016, Off Y Grid (OYG) is a partnership between seven cinemas in North Wales who are working collectively to promote British independent and international film, including home-grown Welsh content. The project is designed to reduce rural isolation

through affordable, connected events, generating anticipation around film releases in North Wales.

[Off Y Grid](#) venues include [Galerj](#), Caernarfon; [Pontio](#), Bangor; [CELLB](#), Blaenau Ffestiniog, [Neuadd Dwyfor](#) in Pwllheli, [Dragon Theatre](#) in Barmouth, [TAPE](#) in Old Colwyn and [Neuadd Ogwen](#), Bethesda.

[Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

## Notes to Editors:

### About Film Hub Wales

Film Hub Wales aims to bring more films, to more people, in more places around Wales. Part of the BFI Film Audience Network and supported by National Lottery funding, FHW regularly develops inventive ways for people in Wales to go to the cinema with its independent member venues.

Film Hub Wales (FHW) is one of eight UK wide 'hubs' part of the BFI Film Audience Network (FAN) and supported with National Lottery funding, with Chapter appointed as the Film Hub Lead Organisation (FHLO) in Wales. We aim to develop the exhibition sector through dedicated research, training and audience development project support. Since Film Hub Wales set up in 2013, we've supported over 225 exciting cinema projects, reaching over 465,000 audience members.

We are also proud to lead on the UK inclusive cinema strategy on behalf of BFI FAN.

[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

### About the BFI Film Audience Network

Supported by National Lottery funding, the BFI Film Audience Network (FAN), is central to the BFI's aim to ensure the greatest choice of film is available for everyone. Established in 2012 to build wider and more diverse UK cinema audiences for British and international film, FAN is a unique, UK-wide collaboration made up of eight Hubs managed by leading film organisations and venues strategically placed around the country. FAN also supports talent development with BFI NETWORK Talent Executives in each of the English Hubs, with a mission to discover and support talented writers, directors and producers at the start of their careers.

BFI FAN Film Hubs are:

- Film Hub Midlands is led by Broadway, Nottingham working in partnership with the Birmingham-based Flatpack
- Film Hub North is led collectively by Showroom Workstation, Sheffield, HOME Manchester and Tyneside Cinema, Newcastle
- Film Hub South East is led by the Independent Cinema Office
- Film Hub South West is led by Watershed in Bristol



- Film Hub Scotland is led by Glasgow Film Theatre
- Film Hub Northern Ireland is led by Queen's University Belfast
- Film Hub Wales is led by Chapter in Cardiff
- Film Hub London is led by Film London

[Website](#)

### **About the BFI**

The BFI is the UK's lead organisation for film, television and the moving image. It is a cultural charity that:

- Curates and presents the greatest international public programme of world cinema for audiences; in cinemas, at festivals and online,
- Cares for the BFI National Archive – the most significant film and television archive in the world,
- Actively seeks out and supports the next generation of filmmakers,
- Works with Government and industry to make the UK the most creatively exciting and prosperous place to make film internationally.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.

[Website](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#)

### **About Chapter**

Chapter is one of Europe's largest and most dynamic arts centres with cinemas, theatres, exhibition spaces, studios, a café, award-winning bars, over 60 cultural workspaces and more.

Chapter has an international reputation for excellence, innovation and collaboration. It offers an ever-changing programme of the best performance, films and exhibitions from Wales and from around the world.

[Website](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#)