

Media Release

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For immediate release

## **“We can’t afford to lose local cinemas” A message from three South Wales Venues**

**“Cinema is for the people” say three South Wales venues who are shining a light on the social impact of cinema.**

Cinemasgoers, staff and volunteers at Gwyn Hall, Taliesin Arts Centre and Maesteg Town Hall have come together to share the places they love and they’re inviting the public to fall in love with them too.

This follows a series of reports, including [the UK Culture, Media and Sport Committee](#) and a Welsh Parliament Committee [report on A Decade of Cuts](#), which recommend increased Government funding for cinemas, to recognise the vital role they play at the heart of communities, as well as investment into wider cultural spending in Wales.

As part of a new Film Hub Wales project, funded by the BFI via the National Lottery, each venue is implementing a series of new marketing initiatives that encourage local people to make the most of these community spaces. A social media campaign has been released to give audiences a chance to hear from other cinemasgoers about how their local cinema changes their lives for the better, improving wellbeing, reducing loneliness and breathing life into their local high streets.

The BFI recently revealed each local UK cinema generates around £600,000 in added social value every year. At Neath’s Gwyn Hall, three state-of-the-art cinema screens showcase a huge range of films for the community daily — from the big screen and children’s favourites to indie gems and special events such as their renowned film quiz nights, live theatre and opera broadcasts. Its Phoenix Film Club membership offers discounts, a range of conference facilities and a much-loved café, called *The Place*. In June, there’s something for everyone, from blockbuster hits like F1, to a live performance from West End star Lee Mead and band, as well as their hugely popular Comic Book Movies quiz.

**Regular visitor Carol Powrie shares what the venue means to her:**

*“Everyone at the Gwyn Hall makes you feel so at home – even if I come here by myself, I never feel like I’m on my own. It’s such a lovely community feel. If I had to summarise The Gwyn Hall in one sentence, it’s for the people.”*

**Gwyn Hall’s Assistant Manager Lyn Lewis adds:**

*“I really think if the Gwyn Hall was to close again, I don’t know what else there would be to do around here. People come to the café, to watch a show and to talk. We wouldn’t be open without our customers and they would have nothing to do without us. It’s a partnership. We listen to them and I love hearing their stories.”*

Meanwhile, in the heart of the Llynfi Valley near Bridgend, the newly refurbished Maesteg Town Hall boasts a 74-seat cinema, ‘Y Bocs Oren,’ alongside a café, library, local history

and heritage centre, glass atrium, and theatre. Part of Awen Cultural Trust, which operates several sites across Bridgend County, the venue offers state-of-the-art facilities and has already become a vibrant hub in the community.

**Aled Williams, Marketing & Communications Assistant at Maesteg Town Hall, said:**

*“Having a purpose-built cinema in Maesteg Town Hall is a boost to community cohesion: it’s something that belongs to all of us. It’s something special that’s right on our doorstep and means we don’t have to travel to Bridgend or Cardiff to watch a film. It’s a wonderful asset to our community and I would encourage everyone to come and take a look.”*

Upcoming screenings at Y Bocs Oren Sinema in June include *The Last Showgirl*, *Conclave* and the epic 2005 love story, *Brokeback Mountain*.

**Shirley Edwards, who lives in Maesteg, adds:**

*“I visit the town hall because I have coffee most mornings. I find it really lovely and I also use the cinema. I love the cinema, it’s beautiful. I want to support the town hall in everything because I think we are so lucky to have what we have in Maesteg and I wish everybody believed that.”*

Nestled in Swansea University's Singleton Campus, the Taliesin Arts Centre is a cultural beacon that brings together students, locals, and visitors with a dynamic programme of film, live performance, and creative events. With a 366-seat auditorium, the venue hosts everything from contemporary dance and world music to independent cinema and Met Opera broadcasts. Across the coming months, audiences can catch films such as a dazzling 4K restoration of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* for its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and Oscar nominated animation *Flow’* Beyond the screen and stage, Taliesin offers welcoming spaces such as its café/bar and the *Taliesin Create* area which is designed to spark creativity and connection.

**Young Audiences and Engagement Coordinator Harvey Sayer explains:**

*“One of the best things about Taliesin is seeing people embrace culture – going to the cinema is a joyous occasion and it’s nice to see people coming out, being together. It feels like an extension of home.”*

The three venues are collaborating on the project until July 2025, which aims to strengthen ties between local cinemas and their communities.

**Hana Lewis, Head of Film Hub Wales, explains:**

*“It’s been a challenging time for cinema, with many organisations still trying to reconnect with audiences post Brexit, Covid, and then during a cost-of-living crisis. Cinema marketing teams are often under-resourced. This is why projects such as this, that promote the existence of the venue itself amongst the community, are so important. The BFI and Creative PEC’s report which measured [the economic value of cinema](#) venues, showed that each local UK cinema generates around £600,000 in added social value every year. We can’t afford to lose these vital spaces.”*

This project is supported by Film Hub Wales, part of the BFI Film Audience Network (FAN), using funds from the National Lottery to ensure the widest choice of cinema is available to everyone across the UK. In Wales, these funds are administered by Film Hub Wales via Chaper, as the Film Hub Lead Organisation.

Every week, more than £30 million is raised for good causes across the UK by National Lottery players — helping to fund vital community initiatives like this one.

**- ENDS -**

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**Notes to Editors:**

**About Film Hub Wales**

Film Hub Wales (FHW) celebrates cinema. We support organisations that screen film, from film festivals to societies and mixed arts centres. Working with over [300 Welsh exhibitors](#), we aim to bring the best UK and international film to all audiences across Wales and the UK. Since Film Hub Wales set up in 2013, we've supported over 347 exciting cinema projects, reaching over 589,000 audience members.

We're part of a UK wide network of eight hubs which forms the British Film Institute (BFI) [Film Audience Network](#) (FAN), made possible thanks to National Lottery funding. Film Hub Wales is managed by [Chapter](#). We also lead Made in Wales, a project celebrating films with Welsh connections. We were also proud to lead on the UK inclusive cinema strategy on behalf of BFI FAN 2017-23.

*Film Hub Wales:* [Website](#), [X \(Formerly Twitter\)](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#)

**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 and HOME Manchester
- 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**

We are a cultural charity, a National Lottery distributor, and the UK's lead organisation for film and the moving image. Our mission is:

- To support creativity and actively seek out the next generation of UK storytellers

- To grow and care for the BFI National Archive, the world's largest film and television archive
- To offer the widest range of UK and international moving image culture through our programmes and festivals - delivered online and in venue
- To use our knowledge to educate and deepen public appreciation and understanding
- To work with Government and industry to ensure the continued growth of the UK's screen industries

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

[Website](#), [Facebook](#), [X \(Formerly Twitter\)](#)

### **About Chapter**

Set up by artists in 1971, Chapter is an international centre for contemporary arts and culture. We are a hub for the production and presentation of world-class, inventive and compelling work. Our gallery commissions and produces exhibitions of the very best in national and international art. Our theatre spaces are a platform for experimental and thought-provoking work. Our cinemas offer independent and challenging films alongside a range of unique festivals and events, and we bring more films, to more people, in more places through Film Hub Wales.

Alongside the core programme, we are also home to 56 artists and creative companies who are based in our studios. From award-winning animators and film production companies to artists, designers and photographers, and bespoke art framers, print and recording studios, the creative community are at the heart of everything that we do.

Our programme and community collide in the award-winning Caffi Bar that seats around 120 people and is a great place to meet up with friends, find a quiet spot to work away from home, or tuck-in to a tasty plate of freshly prepared, locally sourced food and drink from our extensive menu.

[Website](#), [Facebook](#), [X \(Formerly Twitter\)](#), [Instagram](#)

### **About Gwyn Hall**

The Gwyn Hall is located in the heart of Neath Town Centre and has been an integral part of Neath's history since it was built in 1887. Re-opened in March 2012 after an extensive refurbishment, the Gwyn Hall is one of the most versatile contemporary arts and entertainment centres in the area.

Open seven days a week, the venue is fully accessible on every floor and boasts a 384-seat theatre which offers an excellent and varied programme including music to suit all tastes, theatre, children's shows, aerial theatre and dance. It is also in regular use as a first release cinema showing the latest films on its main screen as well as the hugely popular [National Theatre Live](#) and [Royal Opera House](#) screenings. The Pod offers a designated cinema screen seating 73 in luxurious and intimate surroundings. The Studio Cinema is the newest addition to the Gwyn Hall and is situated on the 3rd floor adjacent to the POD. This cinema has a maximum capacity of 90 seats including 2 wheelchair spaces. [The Place](#), a licensed café bar in the attractive glass atrium provides a welcome place to meet and relax.

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

### **About Taliesin Arts Centre**

Taliesin Arts Centre is a venue and creative organisation owned, operated and funded by Swansea University.

Situated at the heart of Swansea University's Singleton campus, we exist to empower communities through creativity, by devising, developing, and delivering opportunities to participate in, and experience, the cultural life of the university, city, region, and nation.

Taliesin Arts Centre opened its doors in 1984 and is named after the ancient Welsh bard, Taliesin. Our programming consists of a mix of contemporary performance including dance and theatre; music; film and broadcast. We present work in English and Welsh, alongside a strong international film programme presented in languages from all over the world.

The Taliesin has a 366-seat auditorium equipped with state-of-the-art audio-visual technology, accommodating live performances, film screenings, and conferences. There is a single-screen cinema with a seating capacity of 329, supporting various projection formats including DCP/digital cinema, Blu-ray/DVD, and satellite screenings. Taliesin Create is a versatile space designed for study, socialising, and creative activities, featuring amenities like projectors, a green screen for filming, and areas for exhibitions and displays. Located on the first floor, the cafe/bar area serves as a social space for visitors, students, and staff, offering refreshments and a relaxed atmosphere.

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

### **About Maesteg Town Hall**

Occupying a prominent location in the town centre, Maesteg Town Hall is a significant landmark. Its grand auditorium hosts a range of drama, dance, comedy, music performances and children's events. Since 2015, Awen Cultural Trust has proudly operated the Hall and introduced a successful professional programme, which has been welcomed and supported by the community. Maesteg Town Hall is also a popular venue for weddings, conferences and civic functions, and is regularly used by a number of local theatre groups, choirs and operatic societies. In 2018, Maesteg Town Hall held over 110 events, with a total of over 27,000 visitors.

After its transformational redevelopment, it is a fully restored multi-functional performing arts venue, complete with a stage lift, dressing rooms, and a bar. The original balcony has been retained and refurbished, maintaining the hall's historic character. The venue has a studio theatre and cinema space, which are versatile areas equipped with modern projection facilities, suitable for both live performances and film screenings. On the ground floor, the venue boasts a cafe/bar, and a modern library space that also houses a local history and heritage centre, offering resources and exhibitions that celebrate the area's rich cultural past.

[Maesteg Town Hall Website](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#)

### **About Awen Cultural Trust**

Awen Cultural Trust is a registered charity. Our purpose is to 'make people's lives better'. We do this 'by providing opportunity for people and communities to experience, enjoy and be inspired together, by culture'.

Awen currently works across three local authority areas in South Wales – Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend and Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Awen operates a range of cultural facilities and activities, which include theatres, libraries, community centres, a country house and park and two work-based projects for adults with learning disabilities. Awen attracts over one million visits to its venues and services each year.

[Awen Cultural Trust Website](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#)