



# LIBRARIES BUSINESS PLAN

[ 2025 - 2030 ]



# BACKGROUND

Awen launched its new five-year strategy on 1st October 2025, marking the tenth anniversary of the date the registered charity commenced operations. At the heart of the strategy is a goal to create places and experiences that give people a sense of purpose, identity, expression and most of all a sense of belonging. The strategy is underpinned by Awen's purpose, vision and values.

## Our Purpose

To make people's lives better.

## Our Vision

To create culturally vibrant communities where everyone feels they belong.

## Our Values

Creative; collaborative; empowering; fair.

The strategy sets the direction for Awen's work across all its services: from libraries to theatres, and from our country park to our projects for adults with learning disabilities. The strategy groups our response under five main outcomes:



### 1. A Healthy Environment

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



### 2. Vibrant Places to Live and Work

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.



### 3. Engagement and a Sense of Purpose

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



### 4. Healthy Communities

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



### 5. A Sustainable Organisation

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



Awen's library service is the largest of Awen's business areas in terms of staffing, and will have a critical role in delivering these outcomes. Our libraries' commitment to achieving these outcomes are set out below.

# OUR LIBRARY SERVICE AND THE LIBRARIES BUSINESS PLAN

Awen's library service is delivered by Awen Cultural Trust in partnership with Bridgend County Borough Council. Awen manages six full-time libraries (one of which houses the county borough's Local History Library), two part-time community libraries and the Books on Wheels delivery service. We support and stock two additional community libraries in venues staffed and managed by Halo Leisure; we also manage a large book reserve which is based at Pyle Library.

Some of the key aims of the library service are:

- To improve the literacy of people of all ages and to support reading for pleasure;
- To enhance people's wellbeing and pride in community;
- To provide unbiased access to sources of trusted information;
- To continue to position reading at the heart of what we do;
- To develop new, inspiring library spaces;
- To create spaces and opportunities that enhance children's lives; and
- To contribute to the digital skills agenda.

The Libraries Business Plan has been shaped by a series of strategic documents published by local and national partners, as well as various library user surveys and staff consultation. These include:

- Awen's 2025-30 organisational strategy;
- 'Public Libraries Supporting Sustainable and Connected Communities', Welsh Government's seventh quality framework of the Welsh Public Library Standards;
- The Well-being of Future Generations Act;
- Welsh Government. *The Programme for Government 2021-2026*
- Welsh Government. *Priorities for Culture (2025)*
- CILIP's (The Library and Information Association) Ethical Framework
- Bridgend County Borough Council. *Corporate Plan 2023-28*
- Bridgend County Borough Council. *Community Hubs Strategy (November 2025)*

## Awen Libraries in Figures

Over 382,000 visits to Awen libraries in 2024-25.	Over 327,000 books were borrowed in 2024-25.
Over 4,000 new library members in 2024-25.	Over 69,000 digital and audiobooks downloaded in 2024-25.
83% of users say the library has <i>made a difference to their life.</i> <sup>1</sup>	63% of users say the library has <i>helped them learn or develop new skills.</i> <sup>1</sup>
97% of users agree the library is <i>enjoyable, safe, and inclusive.</i> <sup>1</sup>	85% of users rate the overall service as <i>excellent</i> ; staff were frequently praised for <i>friendliness</i> and <i>helpfulness.</i> <sup>1</sup>
56.9% of users have used library computers. <sup>2</sup>	54% use the library's free Wi-Fi. <sup>2</sup>
49% have asked library staff for help with technology. <sup>2</sup>	98% of children say the library helps them <i>"learn and find things out".</i> <sup>3</sup>
97% of children say the library <i>makes their lives better.</i> <sup>3</sup>	94% of children are <i>extremely satisfied</i> with the library service. <sup>3</sup>

1. Based on 2023 Adult User Survey 2. Based on 2024 Adult IT Survey  
3. Based on 2022 Children's User Survey

# OUR LIBRARY FACILITIES

Our readers tell us that providing attractive, well-stocked libraries remains important, but the traditional library offer is no longer sufficient to generate new footfall and to deliver the outcomes that Awen is passionate about. Over recent years, it has become clear that activities, events and other services have become increasingly important in bringing people into libraries, and therefore it is critically important that our libraries can accommodate these functions. We will continue to work closely with our council partners to further develop the community hub model which will bring more valued local services into our libraries.

A key element of our previous strategic plans has been to redevelop our libraries where possible, to provide the flexible footprint that can ideally host more than one type of activity at a time. We also want to allow or create space for work-pods, informal meetings and bookable community rooms.

In November 2024, Maesteg Library and the county's local history library reopened in the redeveloped Maesteg Town Hall, which allows for more events, simultaneous activities, meetings, classes and workshops. It also offers an architect-designed children's library and houses the local and family history collection in a purpose-built Heritage Room.

Betws Library, located within Betws Life Centre, has benefitted from Welsh Government Transformation Capital Grant funding in 2025 to create a bright and welcoming library space with flexible furniture, allowing the creation of spaces needed for activities. The meeting room has also been refurbished and is a real community asset. The whole building is more environmentally sustainable through the improvements to insulation and the installation of solar PV panels and battery storage.

Also in 2025, a small-scale refurbishment at Sarn Library, which is situated within Sarn Community Centre, has provided more modern furniture and more flexible space for the community activities that bring the library alive. Another Welsh Government grant helped Awen to improve Pencoed Library in 2023. The library spaces were opened up to be less formal, a small meeting room was created which is available for hire by community groups, and the installation of solar panels supports Awen to meet its carbon-reduction ambitions.

Bridgend Library was relocated to a shared site with the local sports centre in 2013. Since that date it has

been further modernised by changing its layout to offer more space for the larger groups hosted there. During 2021 we swapped a large, fixed shelving unit for a similar unit on castors to allow more flexibility and more light through the space. We have created a space that can adapt to needs and also installed a meeting pod and workstation.

The first of Awen's major library refurbishments came in 2019 with the redevelopment of Pyle Library. This kick-started our programme of library improvements which all had the aim of creating modern, multi-use library areas with meeting-pods, bigger tables for collaborative work, and energy-efficiency interventions.

Awen has ambitions to improve its other libraries. Aberkenfig Library is a large, standalone facility that could be reconfigured to have an accessible toilet, work pods and a meeting room available for hire, potentially providing space for external partners to deliver services through Bridgend CBC's community hub vision.

Porthcawl Library is one of our busiest sites in terms of footfall and book issues, but its activities are limited more than any other by the lack of space and flexibility. A small Covid-era grant in 2021 allowed us to make essential improvements to the layout by relocating the counter from the centre of the library and expanding the children's library which wasn't even large enough to fit a class into. Despite these improvements, the library remains too small for the size of the population and access is not ideal, therefore the work carried out to date is very much a stopgap until new premises can be identified.

# ACTIONS AND MILESTONES FOR THE LIBRARY SERVICE 2025-30

The objectives for the library service for 2025-30 are:

- **Strengthening communities**
- **Celebrating culture**
- **Promoting learning**
- **Improving wellbeing**
- **Better environment**

These are aligned with Awen's five strategic outcomes.

# 1. A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

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

By 2030, we will:

- Install solar PV at Aberkenfig Library to reduce grid electricity consumption by 25%.
- Install/improve insulation at standalone libraries to reduce gas consumption by 10%.
- Replace the Books on Wheels diesel van with an electric alternative to reduce carbon emissions to zero.
- Increase purchasing of sustainable supplies whilst reducing the use of plastic book jackets and non-sustainable craft supplies.
- Compile a report and action plan outlining the library service's contribution to the environmental emergency.



## 2.

# VIBRANT PLACES TO LIVE AND WORK

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.

By 2030, we will:

- Develop the heritage offer at Maesteg Town Hall and beyond to engage more people with their local history.
- Programme library events and activities in Maesteg Town Hall beyond the library itself.
- Build on the Ogwr Heritage Network by delivering the 'Ogwr Unlocked' project.
- Deliver a programme of outdoor story walks in the three town centres in Bridgend County Borough.
- Arrange local history exhibitions in Bridgend and Maesteg.
- Offer opportunities to a diverse range of writers in partnership with Literature Wales.
- Embed Awen's Associate Artists into the library offer.
- Develop a structured work experience programme aimed at the care-experienced individuals and those from deprived communities.
- Set up a Writing Squad for young emerging writers.



# 3. ENGAGEMENT AND A SENSE OF PURPOSE

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

By 2030, we will:

- Offer volunteering opportunities to B-Leaf and Wood-B trainees and the wider learning disability community.
- Set up a reading group for people with learning disabilities.
- Develop a membership programme for young carers in partnership with Bridgend County Borough Council.
- Introduce more group ICT sessions in partnership with Employability Bridgend.
- Plan and implement the next programme of digital hardware replacement in libraries.
- Deliver a programme of coding activities for young people.
- Deliver a programme of financial/fraud awareness training.
- Deliver digital safety and AI awareness sessions.
- Implement a new Awen Libraries website.
- Increase the use of our e-resources.
- Prepare a plan for future library refurbishments and improvements that can be delivered with grant funding.
- Obtain qualitative evidence that our libraries continue to have a positive impact on people's lives.
- Evaluate our activities and events programme to ensure fit with communities' needs and expectations.
- Develop and promote a cohesive offer for schools.
- Provide a regular programme of author visits/talks for both children and adults.
- Offer universal, lifelong library membership from birth.
- Deliver the first new community hubs in partnership with Bridgend County Borough Council.



# 4. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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

By 2030, we will:

- Extend the RNID hearing aid partnership across more libraries.
- Work with CTM Health Board to present libraries as a community-based solution.
- Ensure those with health issues who need access to services at the library are aware of the offer.
- Provide more health information to our housebound customers through our Books On Wheels service.
- Embed a consistent, regular programme of wellbeing activities delivered by both partners and library staff.
- Receive formal recognition of Awen Libraries as a dementia-friendly service.
- Offer a consistent provision of activities to support those living with dementia and their families.



# 5. A SUSTAINABLE ORGANISATION

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

By 2030, we will:

- Ensure that our book-stock and reading group selections represents people from diverse communities.
- Increase library use by male readers.
- Recruit two library apprentices.
- Extend Welsh conversational sessions to all full-time libraries through partnership working.
- Deliver regular Welsh learner-level activities and events at all libraries.
- Work in partnership with Menter Iaith to embed more bilingual activities in libraries.
- Use more Welsh in a day-to-day English-medium context including social media posts.
- Programme Wales-set books for our annual schools' book quiz and reading groups.



# awen



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We invest in wellbeing Gold  
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