

MELVILLE CENTRE FOR THE ARTS COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY

(hereinafter MCA CIC)

Update Report to Abergavenny Town Councillors March 2024

This report is to update Councillors as they consider entering a new Partnering Agreement between Abergavenny Town Council and MCA CIC 2024 - 2027.

In Autumn 2023 exchange of information and meetings took place between the ATC's Principal Officer, the Chair of Policy & Resources Committee and MCA CIC's Directors. These established that MCA CIC is providing the agreed deliverables in support of shared ATC / MCA CIC's objectives for 2023 - 2024. In anticipation that such 'deliverables' will continue to be provided in 2024 - 2025 and beyond, extension of the ATC/ MCA CIC partnership agreement for a further 3 years: 2024 – 2027 may reasonably be considered to be in the best interest of both parties.

A further collaboration agreement, for 2024 – 2025, has been prepared by Abergavenny Town Council Principal Officer, its Chair of Policy and Resources Committee and the Melville Centre Directors. This proposes continuation of a third period of the Town Council's financial support of the Melville Centre to enable provision of deliverables reflecting the revised (2023) Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 objectives and in support of Abergavenny Town Council's anticipated Action Plan for 2024 – 2025 and beyond. A statement re the 'deliverables' to be provided 2024 onwards is included in the final annex of the draft Partnering Agreement 2024 - 2027

The MCA CIC Board includes Peter Evans, Chair and Director for Research and Strategy, Penny Simcock Director, Business Development, Martin Wells Director of Finance, David Williams Commercial Director.

Advisers to the Board include Allison Neal, academic, writer and artist, Stan Pochron Civic Society, David Price, Chair Abergavenny Film Society, Ian Smith previously Director of Finance and Company Secretary.

The Abergavenny Town Council representative attending MCA CIC quarterly Performance Report meetings: Cllr.Maurice Barnes, Deputy: Cllr.Kyle Eldridge.

Liaison with Monmouthshire County Council re key matters related to MCA CIC's current Licence to Occupy the Melville Centre, proposed long leasehold/freehold community asset transfer, and current developments re the impending accommodation on site of MCC's MDML service, is conducted via Nick Keyse, M.C.C. Landlord Services.

Revenue Income

Extrapolating from MCA CIC's revenue in its first two quarters (July - December 2023). MCA CIC's revenue: room rental, bar, ticket sales (excluding grants) is set to increase by 40% in its current financial year (July 2023 – June 2024). Our events programme is burgeoning - the value of ticket sales is projected to increase by 488% in this financial year!

Grants awarded:

- by the Arts Council for Wales for the continuation of Blodeuo diverse ability drama project for adults 2023 – 2024: £42k
- by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2022 – 2025 (c.£20k in 2023 – 2024), for i) a collaboration with Dance Blast and the Borough Theatre to set up Monmouthshire Youth Theatre, and ii) part funding for LED conversion of the Melville Theatre's stage lighting in 2024,
- by the Architectural Heritage Fund £10k, for site surveys 2023 – 2024 and production of a Project Viability Report (by September 2024), re site development,
- from GAVO and Abergavenny Rotary Club £3,500 for the 5 day 2023 Summer Holiday Film School for Kids – and by popular demand there's a follow up grant to be sought for Summer 2024.

Further grant applications are in prospect for 2024

Straplines from our Business Plan 2024 – 2027

1. Complete AHF funded surveys, identify need for further surveys and (as agreed with AHF) apply to AHF as necessary for funding for additional surveys prior to completion of the Project Viability report.
2. Agree with MCC the conditions for taking on Community Asset Transfer: either freehold or on a long lease (25 yrs)
3. Consultation with the community via social media re the level of engagement, satisfaction re our offer, access arrangements, future programming, site development proposals.
4. Review and update of our Environment and Sustainability Policy (and identify in house action required re recycling and new arrangements for business
5. Recruit Directors to take forward our *Website and Social Media development; *Arts Programme, Projects and Arts Education offer; *Volunteer recruitment and management; *Environmental and Sustainability Action Plan; *Site Development Projects: i) buildings, ii) external site, iii) growing spaces; *Fundraising; * Heritage Project.
6. Increase revenue from collaborative projects, hires, events, the café bar, fundraising and grants.
7. Consult the community re the contents and construction of the site development plan
8. Apply for grant/s for major repairs as required.

Companies and community groups we host

Abergavenny Film Society

Black Mountain Jazz and Black Mountain Katz – their new youth project

Suitcase Theatre Company

Poetry Upstairs with Ric Hool - monthly readings by published poets

Lipreading with Chris Coventry – a weekly class

Coleg Gwent's Dysgu Cymraeg: several Welsh classes weekly in term time and Lolfa Gymraeg - an opportunity for Welsh speakers incl. learners to come together monthly in the Café (no charges applied for Lolfa* and 'at cost' refreshments)

Stitch Together - weekly - an 'open' craft group

Story telling group – monthly for story tellers

Blodeuo – weekly - an inclusive diverse ability drama project funded by the Arts Council for Wales since 2018

Music and Song – weekly, an inclusive music and movement group

Writing 4 Fun – an 'open' group for writers meeting monthly or more

*Other Lolfa include self-organised, eg monthly meetings, in the Café Bar, of an 'open' Book Club, Volunteers, Poets, people interested in the heritage of the Melville site and the development of education in Abergavenny.

Hosting Festival events

The Melville Centre will host a full day of **Abergavenny Writing Festival** events on April 20th 2024, special arts events over several days around the **Abergavenny Arts Festival** on June 15th, plus **Black Mountain Jazz Festival** events 27 – 29th September and... tbc late summer events to celebrate **Abergavenny Food Festival** on September 21st and 22nd.

Our Programme of events 2024 – 2025

Our Events Organiser Nicky Hassett who came into post in November 2023 is providing and promoting an interestingly diverse programme of eight to ten events per month - and we are already diarying events for 2025.

MELVILLE CENTRE FOR THE ARTS CIC DELIVERABLES 2023 – 2024

1. A PROSPEROUS WALES - skills training for improved employment prospects

Activities in which volunteers are currently involved: costume wardrobe management, exhibition management, café bar service including bar work induction and support, room management, social media and website, events ticketing management, library cataloguing and management, repairs and maintenance. The Blodeuo drama project volunteer team has been operational since 2018. Volunteer gardening activities are being planned for mid--2024.

2. A RESILIENT WALES - a programme of low cost, low barrier events and activities to support mental health and community engagement

Weekly and monthly classes/workshops/group meetings including self-organised free 'lolfa' around shared pursuits eg poetry writing, Gymraeg Lolfa supported by tutor Josh, in the café bar plus Writing for Fun, Stitch Together, Music and Song, Blodeuo Drama Project, monthly painting workshop for all, monthly Book Club, Story tellers group, Poetry Upstairs, with monthly volunteer exchange meetings and heritage project meetings resuming in Spring 2024 .

3. A HEALTHIER WALES - increased wellbeing through additions to the Centre's activities programme

Weekly Sessions in Tai Chi, Qi Gong, Yoga, Mindfulness, Breast Cancer Moving Forward and occasional 'specials' run by Li Family Martial Arts have been held throughout 2023 -2024. The first session of the inclusive monthly Art Workshop initiative run by experienced tutor Louise Seabourne in March 2024 was welcomed as 'no pressure' by participants.

4. A MORE EQUAL WALES - inclusivity central to our management of the site, our programme of events and activities, and our access arrangements

Enabled inclusive activities include the weekly ACW funded Blodeuo Project (theatre skills), weekly Music and Song sessions, monthly Art workshop, and until December 2023 a craft group now relocated to the TIC: all events are experienced tutor and support worker facilitated. The five-day August 2023 Film School for Kids was delivered at the Melville free of charge incl refreshments by professional tutors and support workers in late August 2023 for 21 young people

5. A WALES OF COHESIVE COMMUNITIES – outreach initiatives and onsite volunteering opportunities

Creative Futures Project (Borough Theatre, Dance Blast, Melville collaboration) with UK Shared Prosperity funding until April 2025 is driving the new Youth Theatre for Monmouthshire initiative and at this time bringing young people from several local communities to the Melville for full day holiday and Saturday morning termtime workshops – free sessions, with future outreach sessions in planning to provide young people with limited access to transport

6. A WALES OF VIBRANT CULTURE AND THRIVING WELSH LANGUAGE

Throughout 2023 – 2024 there continue to be low cost, low barrier opportunities to engage in Abergavenny's festivals on site: the Writing Festival, Arts Festival, Food Festival and BMJ Jazz Festival and now for young people BMJ Katz at least monthly workshops. There's also a sparkling programme of Melville commissioned events and v. reasonably priced tickets, in addition to the opportunities to participate in youth and adult theatre, in open 'community lounge' sessions with at cost refreshments: for Welsh speakers and Welsh learners, for sharing poetry; for exploring our local heritage; for North Monmouthshire volunteers to get together and to learn Welsh happily in three Dysgu Cymraeg classes a week through termtime : two for beginners, and one for the rather advanced.

7. A GLOBALLY RESPONSIBLE WALES:

We promote the benefits of active travel to the site, and work to our Environmental and Sustainability Policy, striving for the efficient use of energy, purchasing locally when possible, recycling responsibly, re-using when we can. We are glad of MCC's policy of No Mow May and we now have several volunteers ready to start work on the Centre's green spaces in 2024. MCA CIC has the commitment to increase awareness of global issues, and ways to address them at a local level, by example and through our programme of events and activities.

March 2024

Comment from the Chair

In the six months, since I became a member, and shortly after the chair, of the board of directors of the Melville centre, I have had the good fortune to experience the quality and range of the work on offer here on behalf of the people of Abergavenny.

This could not have happened without the hard work of the many volunteers that support us, grants which we have sought and very importantly the continued support of Abergavenny Town Council.

More recently, I've been able to be part of the important, detailed discussions examining our present activities and what might be the developments for the future.

I sincerely believe that there is the potential for us to maintain the present range of activities as well as develop significantly more reaching a wider range of the community in the future.

We have met and discussed opportunities with ACE and the work of our new Events Manager has produced a range of exciting productions.

However, this will not be without careful and detailed planning and we are already in negotiations with MCC about our future relationship with the buildings and site

Some forensic accountancy work has taken place where we've tried to measure, not only present but also future needs and how we might meet them.

We have been approached to suggest how we might see the development of the green spaces on the site.

A detailed building survey is underway and we are preparing for the alterations for the MDML provision.

You will note below in detail current and future planned activities.

Peter from the Chair