

Cyngor Sir Ceredigion

REPORT TO:	Welsh Language Committee
DATE:	22 November 2021
LOCATION:	Zoom
TITLE:	A report on the work of Theatr Felinfach
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:	To update the Committee on Theatr Felinfach's activities in 2020-21 and outline plans for the future
BACKGROUND:	2020-2021 Activities

During 2020-21 Theatr Felinfach has focused on developing creative, digital activities to ensure that there are opportunities for residents of all ages in Ceredigion and beyond to hear, use and celebrate the Welsh language and its culture.

Like everyone, we started with the familiar, building confidence and a range of opportunities during the lockdown periods.

We developed *Dychmygus*, a digital platform on our social pages primarily for children and young people; we created content and activities for adults and older people, too.

During 2020, we reached over 360,000 users through our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages through various activities such as Micro Plays, Dance and Make-up Sessions and drama sessions.

Gŵyl yr Enfys was set up by the theatre during 2020 - a digital festival bringing together over 20 diverse partners contributing themed content, *Iechyd Da Ceredigion*, *Ceredigion Greadigol*, *Cymunedau Ceredigion* and *Dathlwn*. The festival's main language was Welsh with some bilingual and English contributions. The festival reached over 80,000 people through visits to the *gwilyrenfys.cymru* website and our social media pages.

One of the greatest challenges during 2020 was creating and broadcasting a community, digital pantomime that was developed, scripted and performed by volunteers from the community. Despite the challenge of creating a digital version of a large, live show, it was an enjoyable experience for the cast and crew that attracted over 2,600 viewers/audience.

During 2021 we have developed new work digitally, for example *Bore Da Drama*, drama sessions for home educated children and young people.

A project for young people was launched which will bring together the theatre's groups of children and young people, the Drama Club, the Performance School and *Cwlltwr*, and the Youth Theatre, and they will have the opportunity to work with professional guest artists in various fields.

The *Cadw Cyswllt* project was launched with the older members of the *Hwyl a Hamdden* group and the artist, Elin Vaughan Crowley, created artwork that formed the basis of postcards that members sent to each other to keep in touch.

A package of well-being films for young people and their families was developed with the well-being practitioner, Catrin Ahmun.

Other activities

- Micro plays for children/young people to perform at home
- Dance/movement games/activities - short video sessions
- Craft Activities for children and families - video tutorials
- Storytime - a recording of a Welsh story for young children
- *Tic-toc* - singing, movement and story sessions for toddlers
- Theatrical and Creative Make-up Tutorials - film
- Performance School Project - Using Teams to develop micro play performances
- Creating an Ice Breaker Games resource for schools
- Producing a bilingual film marking the end of the war in Europe (VE Day) - a joint project with the Well-being and Behavior Service and the Youth Service
- '*Tân ar y Comin*' project, combining a new recording of the novel with film artwork interpreting each chapter of the novel. Y Lolfa has now published the recording as an audiobook on Audible

We were among 120 organisations across the UK longlisted for the Achatas Philanthropy Prize 2020 in recognition of our digital activities in response to the pandemic.

In planning our provision during 2020-21 we have sought to ensure that there are creative and social opportunities for residents of all ages in Ceredigion and beyond. Our indicators usually report on the "real" face-to-face opportunities that bring people together at the theatre or other venues. We normally develop around 40,000 "real" opportunities.

Lessons Learned from digital action:

Some of the main things we tried and learned were:

- Digital provision has value
- Digital poverty denies opportunities for some
- Developing and providing opportunities for older people has been challenging
- It will be possible to combine "real" and digital provision in future
- Digital tiredness or "losing heart" can affect users and providers
- "Reaching" people can range from full engagement to "scrolling past"

Obviously, digital reach is much broader and we know it ranges from fully engaged to "scrolling" through activities. From our experience, digital poverty and inclusion, reaching older people and "losing heart" or digital tiredness are some of the major concerns highlighted by the pandemic.

Now and the Future:

During the Autumn of 2021, we have started running and organising face-to-face sessions:

- Creative project with *Canolfan y Môr*
- Re-establishing Tic-toc sessions for children up to the age of 3 and their families
- Dance sessions in schools
- Sessions for Lampeter Family Centre
- *Hwyl a Hamdden*
- Training Theatr Felinfach's Front of House Stewards and Volunteers

We will also be staging a Christmas Pantomime at the theatre during 4-11 December; this will be the first live project since the beginning of 2020 with all possible measures in place to create a safe experience for the cast and audience.

As we look to the future, we will:

- Plan and take action to re-open and contribute to rebuilding confidence in the community through Theatr Felinfach's work programmes
- Maintain, resume and rebuild our face-to-face relationship with
 - Participants
 - Audiences
 - Volunteers
- Incorporate the principles of our Cultural Contract with the Arts Council of Wales - acting for the benefit of every one and reaching a more diverse group of participants and audiences
- Collaborate with a consortium of other theatres led by Theatr Mwldan on a live theatre streaming project for audiences across the west
- Implement *Diben*, a new scheme to work with vulnerable children and their families
- Develop a cross-service digital package to enhance the potential of our contribution to implementing the new Curriculum for Wales and work with schools to develop elements of the curriculum
- Establish a new project and partnership with the special education unit, Canolfan y Môr
- Implement the *Gorwel a Gwreiddiau* project in conjunction with *Cered*, supported by *Cynnal y Cardi*.
- Plan projects and shows to contribute to the 2022 National Eisteddfod of Wales
- Develop a show that celebrates and commemorates the music of Ail Symudiad
- Improve resources at Theatr Felinfach

Challenges

- Re-opening, re-establishing activities, attracting participants and audiences after the lockdown periods
- Build back income streams
- Condition and quality of buildings and resources
- Patterns of audience participation and attendance changing as a result of the pandemic
- There are challenges ahead and concerns about restoring the service, regaining our audiences and participants and how we can act practically and economically for the benefit and well-being of our communities.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Welsh Language Committee receives Theatr Felinfach's annual report and notes the theatre's work as a specialist community arts provider that promotes the Welsh language and bilingualism and focuses on restoring and re-establishing Welsh-medium and bilingual social activities for the residents of Ceredigion.

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Date of Report: 31/10/21