



This year was the first time for the Eisteddfod to be held in the Abergavenny area for over a century, with the Maes located in Castle Meadows, which was very convenient for the town centre.

Local historian, Frank Olding, was elected as Chair of the Executive Committee, and under his quiet leadership, we had a happy and busy two years, with a small but very dedicated and hard working team at the helm.

Hundreds of activities and events were organised across the region in the Eisteddfod's name, and with the support of the county council, we raised £300,000 for the Local Fund. Many thanks to everyone for their tireless work.

Having a strong relationship with the local authority is vitally important when planning an event of this size, and Monmouthshire County Council were fantastic. They understood what hosting the Eisteddfod could mean for the local area, and they grasped the concept and ran with it, working with us throughout the project. Thank you in particular to the Chief Executive and Leader for their support.

The Proclamation Festival was held in Caldicot in June 2015, with the ceremony itself in the castle grounds and a performance stage in the town centre, giving the southern half of the county a chance to have a taste of the Eisteddfod.

This year we had a new pavilion, which offered a far better experience for competitors, performers and the audience, and was a much more flexible space for concerts, with its improved lighting and sound.

This was also the festival where we saw an important shift, when many of our young poets and writers came of age, winning major literary competitions. The poets also reigned supreme winning the prose competitions with Eurig Salisbury successful in the Prose Medal and Guto Dafydd winning the Daniel Owen Memorial Prize. We were also delighted to see winners in each of the ceremonies.

The Monmouthshire and District Eisteddfod was a happy week, and our thanks go to all those who took part in the project over the past two years to ensure its success.



The Local Fund and Sponsorship

The Local Fund reached £300,000 thanks to the hard work of local residents and the County Council's support.

The work of organising local activities is an important part of the community project, and a chance for many local people to get involved with the Eisteddfod for the first time.

More than 250 activities were held locally over a period of two years, some were small community events, and others were larger and more ambitious, with each event making a valuable contribution to the project.

The region was divided into four areas and each area was given a financial target, with Abergavenny given an ambitious target to raise £100,000. The target was reached and passed, and we are very grateful to everyone from all areas who worked so hard to raise funds and awareness over the two year period.

Again, we are grateful to our sponsors for their support throughout the project. Corporate sponsorship is critical to the success of the project and the week itself and we were delighted to have so many organisations publicly supporting the Eisteddfod and our work.

Recommendations:

- Ensure we have a Chair for the Finance Committee every year to pull every area together and act as a champion for the work
- Further develop our use of the Just Giving website and all the opportunities / ways of fundraising it offers
- Pull all our sponsorship opportunities together to be included in the sponsorship pack
- Develop a sponsorship section on our website, to include all available packages

Competing

➤ Online registration

This year we developed the online registration system for competitors. The system was launched earlier this year after discussions with competitors and some market testing.

We were aware that many people were keen to register online, but we were surprised with the numbers who immediately registered online, with 80% of competitors choosing to use the internet rather than the traditional paper system.

Some improvements will be made to the system during the winter months to develop the 'back end' of the system which will help with the administrative work. Online registration for 2017 will open in early January at www.eisteddfod.wales.

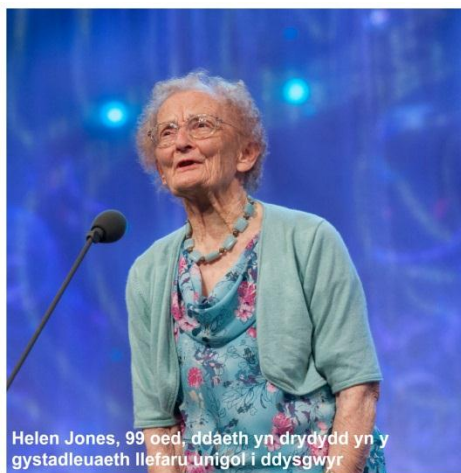
➤ Promoting competitions

We have developed how we promote competitions over recent years, and will continue to prioritise this work, targeting specific competitions, to attract and encourage competitors, using a wide range of communication tools.

2016 Competitor Figures:

- Stage competitors: 1,242
- Composition competitors: 547
- Visual Arts competitors: 286
- Total: 2,075

A full list of results available online, www.eisteddfod.wales/archive/looking-back-2016/competition-results. Each choir / party band counts as one competitor.



Helen Jones, 99 oed, ddaeth yn drydydd yn y gystadleuaeth llefaru unigol i ddysgwyr



Cordydd, enillwyr Côr yr Wyl yn Sir Fynwy

➤ Learners' Competitions

The Welsh Learner of the Year competition remains popular, with five finalists again this year, and Hannah Roberts from Brynmawr the worthy winner.

We work closely with the National Centre for Learning Welsh to develop the competition and our work with learners over the next few years, including looking at creating a 'champion' role for the winner of the Welsh Learner of the Year.

We will also be raising the status of both the winner and the competition on the Pavilion stage by providing an opportunity for one of the judges to say a few words along with the winner during the presentation.

One of the Pavilion's favourites this year was Helen Jones (above) from Brecon, who came third in the recitation competition for learners, three weeks before her 100th birthday.

➤ Competitor withdrawals

Several competitors pulled out at the last minute this year, especially those competing in the brass bands categories. This caused major problems for the stage programme, as it creates timing issues for us and the broadcasters. This has become an annual problem with choirs and bands.

➤ Competitions in different locations

Nowadays, some competitions are held in different buildings like the Tŷ Gwerin. We welcome this development not only because it makes the competitions more accessible to different audiences, but also because the atmosphere in buildings like the Tŷ Gwerin is often better suited to the style of some of the competitions.

It is important that competitions in different buildings are administered in the same way as those taking place in buildings like the Pagoda, etc., and that information about all the competitors and winners is processed centrally so that we have a full record of all competitors.

➤ Brwydr y Bandiau

This was the second time for the competition to be held in conjunction with C2 Radio Cymru and Mentrau Iaith Cymru, and it attracted over twenty competitors.

Four semi final rounds were held around Wales, and the final was held on the Open Air Stage during the Eisteddfod. This year's winners were Chroma from Pontypridd.

Recommendations:

- Continue to promote the online registration system, ensuring that the improvements are completed before January 2017
- Consider online registration for Y Lle Celf in 2017
- Allow adjudicators to include up to five on the Learner of the Year shortlist every year from 2018 onwards
- Continue to work with the National Centre for Learning Welsh to develop competitions for learners, with officers becoming part of a sub-committee of the Learners' Panel
- Target specific competitions to promote to attract competitors





Concerts

A varied programme of concerts were held in the Pavilion again this year:

- Friday 29 July: Opening concert with Only Men Aloud, Gwawr Edwards and Rebecca Trehearn
- Saturday 30 July: Big Band night with the Eisteddfod Choir
- Sunday 31 July: Cymanfa Ganu (Congregational Singing)
- Monday 1 August: Noson Lawen (Family entertainment and variety)
- Tuesday 2 August: Serenestial – An Adventure through Space and Time, with Catrin Finch
- Thursday 4 August: Huw Stephens presents Sŵnami, Yr Ods and Candelas, with the Welsh Pops Orchestra

The concerts attracted an audience of almost 7,350 during the week, and a number of them have already been shown on S4C, with more to come before the end of the year.

➤ The Pavilion

As already mentioned, this was the new Pavilion's first year. This is a far better building than the pink tent, offering much more potential with staging. Visibility is also better for the audience, thus improving the visitor experience.

The flexibility of the new Pavilion gave us the freedom to be creative in our thinking and in staging the concerts. Catrin Finch was commissioned to curate a concert of light classical music, looking at the planets and space, and for the first time, Ballet Cymru performed on the Eisteddfod stage adding a new dimension to the concert programme.

On Thursday night, the three biggest bands in the Welsh rock scene performed, combining their most iconic songs with the Welsh Pops Orchestra's accompaniment. The conductor was Owain Llwyd and the presenter was Huw Stephens.

Undoubtedly, the concerts at the Monmouthshire and District National Eisteddfod were ambitious and exciting, and we managed to attract a new and younger audience into the Pavilion, without depriving our traditional audience of evenings which also appealed to them.



Other buildings

The **Literature Village** was in a particularly attractive location this year, but it has been obvious for some time that the Pabell Lên (Literary Pavilion) is not fit for purpose at the moment. The building is too large and cold, affecting the atmosphere.

From 2017 onwards, the structure will be slightly smaller, and therefore, if the weather is poor, the Monday and Friday morning Gorsedd ceremonies will be held in the Hall (formerly the Dance building). This will allow us to create a more intimate atmosphere in the Literary Pavilion.

Again this year, the **Drama Village** worked well, and it was great to have the Sinemaes in the village for the first time, thanks to a partnership led by BAFTA Cymru. The performances by Theatr Bara Caws in the forest proved popular, and the partnership between the Eisteddfod and Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru continues to thrive.

We had more street theatre this year, with a number of companies on the Maes during the week. These attract visitors into the Drama Village and help us to take theatre out to the rest of the Maes.

This year was the first year of our partnership with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol organising the **science and technology** activities on the Maes. There was a full schedule of events, with stargazing sessions held in a planetarium within the pavilion.

'Boundaries' was the title of this year's special exhibition at **Y Lle Celf**, drawing themes from Raymond Williams' volume, 'Border Country'. There were also worthy winners for all the awards at this year's Y Lle Celf.

The **Lolfa'r Cystadleuwyr** (Competitors' Lounge) remains popular with competitors, but we do need to improve the control of access to the backstage area. This will be considered before 2017.

Maes D (Centre for Learning Welsh) was comfortably full throughout the week, with great interest from local visitors. There was a good mix of formal and informal sessions both within the pavilion and the pod, and we were pleased to be joined by Ian Gwyn Hughes and Osian Roberts from the FAW to discuss the success of the national team.



The **Societies** pavilions continue to attract a large audience, with several sessions full. We need to continue to promote their activities and explore new ways to market the sessions to those on the Maes.

The **Tŷ Gwerin** yurt worked very well again this year, and both the building and activities have become an important part of the Maes. We will need to look at the internal plan again next year, to accommodate as many people as possible. This year's programme was diverse and varied, and was very much welcomed by visitors.

The **Exhibition Hall** has not changed over the years although the rest of the Maes has evolved and developed. Organisers feel that it's time to look at the structure and consider a less formal building for the future. We also feel that the promotional stall for the following year's Eisteddfod does not work within the Hall, and this will be placed in the Visitors' Centre in the main entrance from 2017 onwards.

Caffi Maes B remains popular, and was very crowded at times during the week. Ideally, we would like to add another tipi to the structure in the future. The programme is attractive and appeals to young people in particular.

The **Visitors' Centre** and the main entrance felt rather empty this year, and we need to make sure we have a large sign outside welcoming people, and more work needs to be done to enhance the interior of the building in the future

We also need to invest in the **ticketing area** to make it more attractive. This is where visitors begin their day on the Maes, and it must be colourful and striking.

The **Open Air Stage** was one of the most popular locations on the Maes again this year. The stage was slightly smaller this time, and we need to agree on its size for the following year early in the process to ensure availability.

We must ensure that all our buildings are ready by 10.00 on Saturday morning. Some need to be completed by 18.00 on Friday evening and others earlier in the week when the rehearsals begin.



Recommendations:

- Ensure that all buildings are ready by the opening of the Eisteddfod
- Make the Pabell Lên smaller from 2017 onwards and hold the Gorsedd ceremonies in the Hall if the weather is poor
- Develop a better system to manage access backstage and to the offices
- Incorporate the stand for the following Eisteddfod as part of the information desk in the Visitors' Centre
- Consider a less formal building for the Exhibition Hall in the future
- Ensure that we have a large sign outside the Visitors' Centre
- Ensure that the ticket area is colourful and welcoming
- Continue to work with Access is Everything to ensure that the needs of disabled visitors are considered in all areas of the Maes

Maes B

Maes B remains a big draw for young people, and over the past few years we have managed to expand the appeal to include people of all ages.

Again this year, Wales' best bands and artists performed in Maes B, and the response was amazing, with many local young people attending the festival for the first time ever, making this year's Maes B one of the most popular festivals over the past few years.

The music project is held throughout the year and is an opportunity to visit schools and colleges by raising Maes B's profile and targeting young people in different parts of Wales. This is valuable outreach work helping young people to see the language's relevance beyond the school gate.

We managed to sell more Maes B period tickets beforehand than ever before this year, and much of the marketing and communications work focused on social media. We will continue with this in 2017.

It was great to see so many young people on the Maes again this year, although Maes B and the campsite were located off-site. The composite ticket which includes camping, gig tickets and access to the Maes is still very popular.

- **Wednesday 3 August:** Yr Eira, Ysgol Sul, Cpt Smith, Argrph, DJs Elan & Mari
- **Thursday 4 August:** Y Reu, HMS Morris, Alun Gaffey, Castles, Cadno, DJ Gareth Potter
- **Friday 5 August:** Y Bandana, Candelas, Mellt, Fleur de Lys, Calfari, DJ Huw Stephens
- **Saturday 6 August:** Band Pres Llaeggub, Yr Ods, Mr Phormula, Anelog, Chroma (Brwydr y Bandiau winners 2016), DJs Elan & Mari





Eisteddfod sites

➤ The Maes

Building the Maes may have proved challenging this year because the land was uneven, but the Maes was well-received by our visitors, with the fact that we were so close to the town appealing greatly. The trees allowed us to be creative with hidden locations across the Maes. Many thanks to the Friends of Castle Meadows for their co-operation throughout the process. Yet again this year, Gwyn Eiddior led the team working on enhancing the Maes, focusing on specific areas, including the Drama Village, Literature Village and the Food Village. We are grateful to the Arts Council for their grant support to enable us to do this.

➤ Caravan Site

We had to locate the caravan site a few miles from the main Maes this year, and we had an excellent site on the Llanover Estate. This was also the location of the family campsite and the 'glamping', with a shuttle bus service running regularly between the site and the Maes. We will follow the same system of managing the sites next year, and 2017 pitches will be available online from 1 February.

➤ Campsite

The young people's campsite was located Racecourse Farm near Maes B, with shuttle buses running from the Maes to the site throughout the day and until late at night, and then between Maes B and the caravan site until the early hours of the morning.

➤ Car Parks

Undoubtedly, organising the car parks was a lot of work, and we thank Monmouthshire County Council for their help and support.

The aim was to ensure that we avoided creating traffic problems in Abergavenny, so we had three car parks in Cwrt y Gollen, Penpergwm and Llanellen. The sites worked well, with colourful signs making it easy for people to remember where they'd left the car.

It was, however, difficult to find volunteers to work in the car parks during the week, and we had to pay a company to staff the sites.

➤ Shuttle Buses

Organising a shuttle bus service is a challenging process, and the negotiations were long and complex when putting the programme together this year. However, the system worked marvellously well from the beginning. In fact the bus journey became part of the eisteddfod experience, with videos of singing passengers going viral online! Thanks to Monmouthshire County Council for managing the project, and a special thanks to the team of friendly drivers, who were brilliant during the week.

Recommendations:

- Ensure we have the correct directions to the Maes on our website as soon as possible
- Continue to create colourful signs for zones within the car parks in the future
- Work to ensure we have the services of charities / local organisations to steward the car parks early in the new year

Volunteering and Stewarding

We managed to attract over 200 volunteers, but despite this, we had some difficulty in filling all the slots across the Maes at certain times.

In the past, Maes D and Y Lle Celf have been responsible for recruiting their own volunteers. We need to ensure that we have one central database of individuals, and the best way to ensure this is to encourage everyone to use the website to register.

The registration period from 1 February worked well, and we will look to see whether we can improve on this for next year, as it is clear that online registration is popular.

We are aware that the stewards' responsibilities have changed over the years, and that they have to deal with many Eisteddfod regulations (e.g. making sure no alcohol is brought onto the Maes) in the main entrance.

We feel that this is unfair, so from 2017 onwards, we intend to have staff dealing with tickets and checking for alcohol in bags as people arrive.

The important role of our volunteers as our first contact with visitors remains vitally important to our success, and we will develop a document outlining the future role and responsibilities of our stewards.

We will also look again at what opportunities are available to allow people to volunteer in areas of interest to them. We will also speak with local schools (within an hour's drive) to encourage sixth formers to volunteer as part of their BAC course or the Millennium Volunteer project, rewarding them with a certificate which can be used to testify their hours.

We worked with the Urdd again this year, and we need to develop this relationship further to have a team of supervisors across Wales.

Recommendations:

- Develop a more suitable system for online registration
- Develop a document outlining the roles and responsibilities of stewards
- Work with local schools to encourage young people to volunteer through the BAC
- Use paid staff to deal with tickets and security issues





Communications

We organised a number of communications campaigns to raise awareness and attract local residents to the Eisteddfod this year, with many being organised with Monmouthshire County Council.

It was important for us to make sure that people were aware of the Eisteddfod's visit and that our branding was seen regularly during the months up to the Eisteddfod. We were able to do this with colourful and attractive images around Abergavenny and the surrounding areas.

Our branding was developed further for the week, with the use of small pictures to represent each building. We used these materials promote the week and on maps and signs around the area, along with information on the website. We will continue to use these next year as they were popular among visitors.

Over 350 business packs were distributed across the area to raise awareness and ensure that businesses were prepared for our visit. A number of businesses in Abergavenny had a very successful period during the Eisteddfod.

We also organised a drop in session for local businesses and residents in Abergavenny before work began on the Maes, and this worked well. We will continue to organise these sessions in the future.

This was the first year that we make full use of our new website www.eisteddfod.wales, with a range of services available online, and it was good to get a positive response in the visitors' survey after the festival. The website will continue to be developed and improved continuously and we will prioritise this work again this year.

We have also focused on developing our social media audiences this year, with promotional work before the festival focused on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, and using Snapchat and Periscope during the week itself. We will continue to develop this over the next year.



The early bird bargain campaign was successful again this year, with all school pupils within the catchment area receiving a postcard about the deals before the closing date.

For the first time, we decided to market every concert individually, developing an image for each evening. This worked well and we will continue with this next year. We also produced a number of banners to promote concerts and the bargain tickets, and these were displayed around the area during the period up to the festival.

Unlike the past few years, we spent a little more on traditional advertising in local newspapers, and the impact of this was seen in the sales of tickets. This was supplemented with a series of articles in the paper, and we developed a great relationship with the Abergavenny Chronicle.

Recommendations:

- Develop our video clip library promoting elements of the Eisteddfod
- Ensure we have a schedule for every social media platform to reach as many people as possible
- Continue to offer guided tours and look at how to promote the tours to specific markets
- Continue to market the concerts individually
- Continue to develop and improve services available from the Eisteddfod website
- Continue to organise drop in sessions for local businesses and residents
- Continue to develop our use of social media as a marketing tool to reach new audiences



Tickets

Again this year, the early bird ticket campaign worked well, with awareness of the scheme better than ever. The deadline is clear, and we recommend that we stick to this plan and the reduced admission scheme for visitors during the first weekend next year.

We decided to offer the reduced rate tickets from 16.00 onwards, and this worked well, although some visitors complained that buildings were closing by about 17:30 at the beginning of the week. We do encourage buildings like Y Lle Celf to stay open until 19:30 and will be promoting evening activities taking place in the Tŷ Gwerin and Caffi Maes B.

We continue to have problems with visitors trying to gain access to the Maes free of charge. We will introduce a wristband system for children rather than tickets from 2017 onwards, and children will have to show the band to the stewards / staff in order to be allowed entry.

We have also had problems with people showing a photo of a ticket on their mobile phone in an attempt to gain access to the Maes and evening concerts. We must reinforce the message of 'no ticket, no entry' continuously.

The message that we do not allow entry or re-entry after 21:00 has not reached everyone yet, so we must do more to reiterate the message in the main entrance, online, in the ticketing area and to caravanners, so that everyone is aware of the rule.

As there are a few hundred fewer seats in the new Pavilion there was much more demand for reserved seats for the ceremonies, with a large number of visitors coming to the box office to upgrade their tickets during the day. We recommend that we release reserved seat tickets on the day, and people can pay £2 for a ticket until 12:00, so there is enough time to share information about reserved seating with the stewards in the Pavilion.

We are pleased that most of our customers buy tickets online, and we are continually working to improve the online service in order to ensure that the process of buying tickets is as easy as possible for everyone.

Anglesey Eisteddfod tickets will be on sale on 3 April, as 1 April falls on a weekend next year.

Recommendations:

- Continue to run the early bird campaign and offer cheaper tickets on the first weekend
- Continue to offer cheaper access after 16:00
- Encourage buildings / stalls to stay open later in the early part of the week and promote sessions beginning after 17:00
- Introduce a wristband system for children and reinforce the 'no ticket no entry' message
- Reinforce the message that there is no entry or re-entry to the Maes after 21:00
- Reserved seating tickets to be released on the day and sold for £2.00 on arrival at the Maes
- Continue to develop and enhance the experience of buying tickets online

