



## **CABINET AS TRUSTEES OF BLACKWOOD MINERS' INSTITUTE – 28<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2023**

**SUBJECT: BLACKWOOD MINERS' INSTITUTE UPDATE REPORT**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND  
ENVIRONMENT**



### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet as Trustees a progress report on the artistic and operational activity at Blackwood Miners' Institute.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Blackwood Miners' Institute (BMI) had its first full year of operating in 2022/23 following the Covid-19 pandemic. Audience figures and ticket sales were higher than projected despite the venue being in a recovery phase.
- 2.2 The annual report and statement of accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 were presented in a report to Cabinet as Trustees of Blackwood Miners' Institute on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet as Trustees consider, note, and endorse the contents of this report.

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 This report is intended to keep Cabinet as Trustees aware of artistic activity and operations at Blackwood Miners' Institute.

### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1 Blackwood Miners' Institute delivered 3 successful seasons of work in 2022/23. The average audience capacity for Spring 2022 was 70%. In Autumn 2022, the average capacity increased to 82%. These figures are higher than projected and an encouraging sign that we are recovering strongly after the pandemic. We exceeded

our income generation target for ticket sales by £52,000.

- 5.2 Classes and other engagement work are also recovering since groups restarted in February 2022. BMI experienced a significant decline in the number of participants following the pandemic and officers are dedicating time, energy, and resources to promoting the classes programme in order to increase numbers and connect with new people.
- 5.3 BMI has secured Arts Council Wales funding until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. In 2023/24, we have been awarded a grant of £131,300. We have applied for ongoing investment from April 2024 until March 2027. We have asked for an uplift to £180,000 per year. Decisions will be announced in September 2023.
- 5.4 The Theatre and Arts Service Manager is working with a fundraising consultant to deliver a fundraising strategy and explore other funding streams for BMI. Blackwood Miners' Advisory Group will support us to deliver any outcomes agreed with the fundraising consultant and CCBC.

### **Financial Summary 2022/23**

- 5.5 Table 1 compares the actual income for 2022-23 with the original budget forecast at the start of the financial year.

Table 1: income 2022-23

	Original budget forecast (£)	Out-turn for 2022-23 (£)	Difference (£)
Income (ticket sales)	221,728.00	273,827.90	£52,099.90
Income (bar sales)	34,320.00	40,206.27	5,886.27
Income (hires)	38,366.00	28,689.20	-9,676.80

Several rooms in BMI are not available to hire currently due to urgent maintenance work. This has impacted BMI's ability to generate hire income.

### **Staffing changes**

- 5.6 CW has been appointed as Business & Operations Manager. She started in February 2023 replacing Craig Doidge who left in October 2022. Carys is settling in well and is reviewing BMI's operations procedures.
- 5.7 LM joined BMI as our third Technician in May 2023. This means our Technical team are at full capacity after several years of being understaffed.
- 5.8 JF has been recruited as Arts Development Officer thanks to Shared Prosperity Funding. His remit is to establish creative community hubs across the County Borough.
- 5.9 We are currently recruiting more casual Front of House Assistants in preparation for a busy Autumn 2023 season.

### **Artistic Activity and Programme**

- 5.10 BMI has continued to deliver high quality performances, projects and support to artists and companies during this challenging period as follows:
- **Autumn 2022 Season** – 35 different shows delivered ranging from dance to pantomime. The average audience capacity was 82%.
  - **Spring 2023 Season** – 35 scheduled performances running until the end of July. So far, attendance figures have been encouraging and audience feedback has been positive with an average rating of 4.8 out of 5.
  - **Supported Artists & Co-Productions:**
    - **The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes** – an original adaptation based on Conan Doyle's The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes and co-produced by BMI and Black Rat Productions. The cast have been selected and publicly announced. Following a successful tour of The Invisible Man last year, the performance is due to premiere at BMI in October 2023 and will then tour to 16 locations across Wales.
    - **Trwbwl Mawr yn Tremyglyd** – following a successful research and development phase, BMI supported a second R&D in September 2022 which culminated in a sharing to an invited audience. The play is an original Welsh language script written by Chris Harris with original music from Mari Mathias. BMI are planning to apply for additional funds from Arts Council Wales to rehearse and perform the show at BMI and embark on a Wales-wide tour.
    - **Tommy Cooper The Musical** – we funded a 2-week residency for an original musical celebrating the life and legacy of Tommy Cooper. The piece was written by Stefan Pejic, music and lyrics by Dai Smith and Allyson Summerhayes. We delivered a sharing to an invited audience and received outstanding feedback. The Tommy Cooper society have been involved throughout the process and are supportive. We will be applying for further funding to develop the show as co-producer and plan to premiere it at Blackwood Miners' in May 2024.
  - **Summer 2023** – BMI is delivering 6 offsite performances in Summer 2023. Fabulous Animals at Parc Cwm Darran, Frogs in Bogs at Pen y Fan Pond, The Tortoise and the Hare at Caerphilly Library and the Great Big Story Mix Up at Risca Library. Through the Wales outdoor arts consortium, we have supported the creation of 3 outdoor shows. 2 of these will be programmed in Caerphilly County Borough in August – these will likely take place at Cwmcarn Forest and Parc Penallta.
  - **Autumn 2023** – there are 41 performances planned for Autumn 2023 ranging from classical music to the annual pantomime. The BMI comedy nights are continuing once a month in the lower bar. The full programme will launch in July 2023.
  - **Classes** – in partnership with Arts Development, BMI have relaunched the classes programme to provide dance and drama classes for all ages plus Crochet Club.

## Arts Development Priorities 2023-24

### Wellbeing

- 5.11 Arts Development work with the integrated wellbeing networks used Arts Council Wales funding for community-led projects that tackle local wellbeing issues in New Tredegar, Bargoed, Risca and Rhymney. This work has been codeveloped with communities to meet specific wellbeing needs. Intergenerational work with care homes and schools in partnership with Arts Care in Carmarthen has been developed. This ends in a performance with potential follow-on partnerships with New South

Wales in Australia. Outdoor projects such as 'blue health', which took people to the sea for movement and music for mental health and also outdoor moving in nature and journaling for a menopause project has been a huge success. A new part time Arts Officer has been recruited using SPF to address wellbeing needs in areas with little access to creativity, and also to develop a wellbeing network that leads to Social prescribing for the arts as an extra tool for the NHS & GPs that saves time and resources.

### **Regeneration**

- 5.12 The Arts Development team worked with the Aber Valley using creativity to engage with the community for projects that bring people together and address local issues. This work has seen a team of writers, photographers and environmental artists talk to the community to look at every aspect of their lives to recommend change. There is the potential to draw in other support from funders and agencies to carry on some of the work longer term and officers are actively talking to them. The outcomes for the communities is dictated by the people themselves.

### **Creating opportunities**

- 5.13 The theatre provision has been expanded to take in all ages so there are progression routes. Links and opportunities have been created with The National Theatre, and Caerphilly Youth Theatre performed as part of their recent Connections project where young people performed at Blackwood Miners' and Theatr Brycheiniog. A National Arts & Education Network is being established as an independent charity which is delivering high quality training for teachers in the new curriculum, with courses developed according to need. Opportunities for local people to become involved with professional film making through the production of a short film have been created. This involved partnerships with screen skills and professional actors that delivered high quality training for those involved.

### **Advisory Group**

- 5.14 The next Advisory Group meeting will focus on widening engagement and consider how we work with audiences, participants, artists and key stakeholders. These ideas will feed into our work for the next 12 months and beyond.
- 5.15 Over the next year, the Advisory Group will address Blackwood Miners' 6 key aims to examine how we are achieving them and share new ideas.

### **Operations**

- 5.16 Carys Wehden and Eloise Tong have met with Mel Hunt and AMS Ventilation to discuss the ventilation works in the first-floor lounge and second-floor meeting room at BMI. These works will begin in Summer 2023 and will reduce ongoing condensation and damp issues. Work is expected to take no longer than six weeks and is not expected to impact the scheduled performance programme.

### **Conclusion**

- 5.17 Despite the severe impact of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, BMI have continued to deliver high quality projects, performances and support. BMI's recovery will inevitably take time. The team remain committed to diversifying BMI's income streams to reduce the subsidy.

- 5.18 The introduction of an Advisory Group will help the team tackle some of these key issues and ensure that the BMI becomes a more sustainable and resilient charitable organisation.

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 It is assumed that financial pressure as a result of the pandemic, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis will continue to impact on audiences' disposable income as well as local authority budgets. Therefore, BMI will need to focus on increasing earned income, fundraising, and reducing running costs where possible.

## **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 This report is for **Information Only** so a completed IIA is not required.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The final out-turn for 2022-23 shows an underspend of £5,458.13.
- 8.2 In 2023-24, savings of £50,000 have been agreed to reduce the level of Council subsidy. This is reflected in the 2023-24 budget. The majority of these savings are coming from our programming and marketing budget. Our workshops budget has also been reduced.
- 8.3 As outlined in 'Assumptions', financial pressure due to the pandemic, Brexit and cost-of-living crisis continues to impact CCBC and Blackwood Miners' Institute budgets. To mitigate these risks, we have been working alongside a fundraising consultant to research potential funding streams through Trusts and Foundations and develop a comprehensive fundraising strategy. We have developed our understanding of audience behaviour by implementing an online feedback survey and running audience focus groups. This learning has enabled us to adapt our offer accordingly and ensure repeat business by increasing audience satisfaction. We are also investing in our facilities to encourage more customers to hire the building and grow this income stream.
- 8.4 The Theatre and Arts Service Manager is developing a case for support and our improved website will feature a 'Support Us' page where we will share stories of how our work has had a positive impact and encourage people to donate. We aim to increase income through individual giving by 10% this financial year.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There is now a full team at Blackwood Miners' Institute that will ensure it operates smoothly and efficiently.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

- 10.1 The comments from consultees are included in this report.

## 11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Charities Act 2011, Local Government Act 1972 and the Trustees Act 1925.

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