

# Socio-Economic Benefit Study of Pontardawe Arts Centre



Neath Port Talbot  
Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
County Borough Council Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol



Funded by  
UK Government

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*“The works here have really put Pontardawe back on the map, it’s brilliant”*

Pontardawe Arts Centre (the Centre or PAC) is a long-established cultural, social, and economic asset for Neath Port Talbot and the wider Swansea Valley. This socio-economic impact study, commissioned by Friends of Pontardawe Arts Centre (FoPAC) funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and supported by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC), provides a detailed assessment of PAC’s contribution during the 2022-23 financial year, supported by supplementary attendance data from 2023-24.

### **Key Findings**

#### **A valued community hub**

Qualitative evidence from interviews and a widely distributed online survey demonstrates that the Arts Centre is deeply valued by local residents, visitors, partner organisations, and businesses. Users consistently highlighted the importance of the Centre as a welcoming, inclusive, and accessible community space. The friendliness and commitment of the staff team were repeatedly cited as central to the Centre’s success, underpinning strong partnerships and sustained community trust.

#### **Significant economic impact**

Pontardawe Arts Centre delivers a substantial economic contribution to Neath Port Talbot. The Centre generates direct economic activity through employment, operational expenditure and income from tickets, bar sales, and venue hire. It also stimulates indirect and induced impacts via audience spending in local restaurants, transport providers, parking, and through the wider economic ripple effects of staff wages and supply chain spend.

The total quantified economic impact for 2022–23 is £771,759, against public funding of £150,000 from NPTCBC, resulting in a Return on Investment (ROI) of 5.15. This means that every £1 invested in PAC generates £5.15 in economic value for the regional economy.

#### **Growing social impact**

PAC plays a meaningful role in enhancing wellbeing, social cohesion, and cultural participation. Survey evidence shows that 85% of respondents rated the Centre’s impact on their wellbeing and social life as 4 or above on a 0–6 scale. Activities supporting children, young people, adults with additional needs, and older residents

demonstrate PAC's role in reducing social isolation and providing vital accessible services.

### **Impact of the new cinema and redevelopment**

Although the cinema opened only recently, early evidence shows strong community enthusiasm, with 92% of survey respondents stating that the new cinema would encourage them to visit more often. Local businesses reported increased footfall, and early feedback indicates a positive effect on class enrolments and Centre usage. The redevelopment has elevated the building's quality and significantly enhanced PAC's appeal as a cultural destination. We would anticipate a stronger economic impact figure if this exercise is repeated in another couple of years.

### **Strategic importance and future opportunities**

PAC supports the aims of NPTCBC's wider Culture and Tourism Strategy and has strong potential to expand its reach through targeted audience development, enhanced volunteering, refined marketing approaches, and deeper partnerships with local businesses. FoPAC provides a powerful model of community engagement that could be replicated elsewhere in the Borough.

### **Overall Summary**

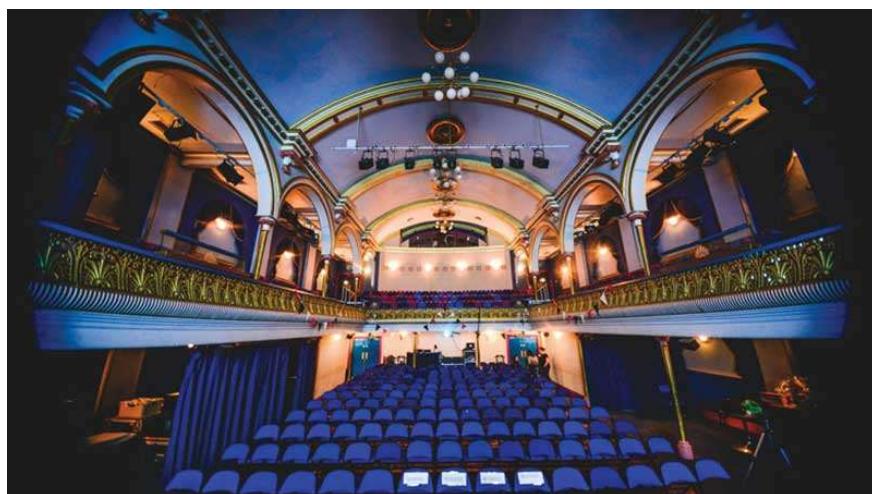
Pontardawe Arts Centre delivers strong economic value, significant social benefits, and deep community impact. Its recent redevelopment has strengthened its long-term sustainability and positioned it as a key cultural anchor in Neath Port Talbot. The findings of this assessment demonstrate that continued investment in PAC delivers high value for money and supports a thriving, inclusive, and economically resilient local community.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

“Very impressive now, so welcoming, and have a friendly staff team, they are brilliant. I have a disabled son who is a bit of a character, he loves coming here as everyone is so nice to him. I will always support local.”

Local User

This is a report by Deyton Bell and Counterculture on the socio-economic contribution of Pontardawe Arts Centre. The report assesses the socio-economic impact of the outputs of Pontardawe Arts Centre, directly, indirectly and induced, taking into consideration the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the current cost of living crisis and the Arts Centre’s recent developments including opening a new cinema on site.



The report’s objective is to identify the existing contributions and methods to enhance arts, culture, and tourism at Pontardawe Arts Centre with a view to maximising its benefits in future through the generation of a robust evidence base to:

- Support the delivery of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council’s Culture and Tourism Strategy.
- Strengthen future investment and funding applications.
- Inform business planning for the Centre.

### 3. BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF THE STUDY

“The town really regard it as a community space, even more so now, which is great to see”

Local resident

The purpose of this report is to deliver a snapshot of the socio-economic impact that the Pontardawe Arts Centre activities and delivery generates for the local area and the arts and creative sector.

Pontardawe Arts Centre is a multi-purpose cultural venue in Pontardawe, Neath Port Talbot, Wales. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council owns the Arts Centre. Having opened in 1996, the Arts Centre has served the South Wales region with wide ranging programmes including adult and young people performances in Welsh and English language, dance, comedy, live music, film and a programme of clubs, classes and educational facilities catering towards all ages and needs. It aims to enrich people's lives through engagement in the arts and provides a welcoming, inclusive space for all to use. PAC's values include being people-focused, developmental, inclusive, and innovative.

PAC is a multi-purpose arts venue. It has a 400-seat theatre/ auditorium with flexible seating arrangement, studio spaces and rehearsal/ dance studios, meeting/ conference rooms, and a bar and café. A £2 million redevelopment was completed in 2025, complete with a new 74-seat cinema with modern projection, Dolby Atmos sound and comfortable seating.



The Centre receives core funding from Neath Port Talbot Council and is supported by Arts Council of Wales. The Centre also receives one-off funding from a range of sources, including the Welsh Government, Arts Council of Wales, NPTCBC, UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Pontardawe Arts Centre is a cultural and social hub, acting as a gathering space for people of all ages. It supports social inclusion, especially through arts activities for people with additional needs. The Centre hosts significant engagement with 100 classes, productions, workshops, and meetings in a single month.

The business plan explicitly cites the new cinema on site as vital for the long-term sustainability of the Centre and for attracting new younger audiences. The redevelopment also aligns with wider town regeneration goals. The Centre acts as a cultural anchor that helps to drive local tourism, footfall, and economic activity in Pontardawe.

Friends of Pontardawe Arts Centre is a charity that supports PAC. Its 7 trustees and 120 volunteers provide practical, financial, and community support to the Centre. They raise funds through membership and lobbying to support the development of the Centre. They organise community nights and provide volunteering opportunities at the Centre and act in its best interests. This Assessment has been commissioned by FoPAC, funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and supported by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.



#### 4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

“It’s too early to say for sure, but we are hoping that the new cinema and improved centre will attract new children to ballet classes, as more families will come to the cinema and be aware of the classes.”

Ballet Class leader

This socio-economic impact assessment examines the contribution of Pontardawe Arts Centre to the community and economy of Neath Port Talbot.

##### 4.1 Areas of Analysis

“As soon as we arrived, we all commented how wonderful the place looks; the facilities are great, the AV works brilliantly, it’s great for Pontardawe – will definitely be using again.”

Staff of Child Poverty Action Group, who had hired the theatre space for a workshop for 40 children from across four Local Authority areas

The scope of the assessment covers both economic and social dimensions of impact. Specifically, the study evaluates:

- **Employment and staffing impacts**, including direct jobs supported by the Centre and associated induced economic effects.
- **Income generation**, incorporating ticket sales, programme revenues, food and beverage income, and community events.
- **Local supply chain expenditure**, analysing the extent of the Centre’s operational spend within Neath Port Talbot and beyond.
- **Indirect and induced economic impacts**, modelled using established economic multipliers.
- **Visitor and audience spending**, including estimated expenditure in local businesses such as restaurants, transport providers, and parking.
- **Social benefits and community outcomes**, including wellbeing, social inclusion, accessibility, cultural participation, and support for specific groups such as children with special educational needs.

- **Programme review**, examining the breadth and nature of classes, workshops, screenings, and community activities.
- **Stakeholder perspectives**, drawing on interviews and survey responses from a wide range of users and partners.

## 4.2 Stakeholders Included

Stakeholders engaged in the assessment include:

- Staff and management of Pontardawe Arts Centre
- Friends of Pontardawe Arts Centre
- Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
- Arts Council of Wales
- Local businesses
- Community groups and partner organisations
- Beneficiaries and service users, including families, young people, and vulnerable groups
- Audience members and local residents (via an online survey)

## 4.3 Data Sources

The study draws upon a combination of primary and secondary data sources, including financial accounts and operational data, attendance and ticketing figures, stakeholder interviews, online survey data, programme and class schedules, publicly available economic datasets, industry-standard economic multipliers for modelling indirect and induced impacts.

## 4.4 Exclusions

The scope of the study is limited to the defined socio-economic impacts occurring within Neath Port Talbot. The assessment does not include environmental impacts or carbon footprint analysis, long-term regeneration impacts or forecasting beyond 2023-2024, comparative benchmarking with other cultural venues, or in-depth analysis of regional tourism impacts outside the immediate catchment area.

## 4.5 Limitations

The findings of the study should be interpreted within the context of the following limitations:

- Some evidence, particularly from stakeholder interviews and survey responses, is self-reported and may reflect subjective perceptions.
- The economic modelling relies on industry-standard multipliers, which may not fully capture specific local economic conditions.

- Some indirect social outcomes, such as longer-term wellbeing improvements are not fully quantifiable within the scope of this study.
- The assessment is based primarily on one year of financial information, limiting the ability to identify trends or year-on-year variations.
- The timing of the UKSPF funding and the study meant that when our work started the work to create a new cinema and café space was ongoing, and that these spaces were opened to the public during the study period. As a result, there are significant numbers of comments on the new areas of the building but limited economic data to demonstrate its impact. Our suggestions for understanding this impact are covered in the sections on recommendations for the future.
- At present, there are no directly comparable socio-economic assessments of this scale or methodological depth within the Welsh arts sector or for similar regional arts centres in the UK. As such, this study represents a pioneering piece of work. It establishes a robust framework that can inform future evaluations of cultural venues and provides an emerging benchmark for assessing the combined economic and social value of arts infrastructure.



## 5. METHODOLOGY

“I have been to the café three times in the week since it’s been open - and I will keep coming back. I love the banter with the great staff.”

Café customer

This socio-economic impact assessment draws on a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative, quantitative, and economic modelling techniques. The methodology comprises two main components: social impact assessment and economic impact assessment.

### 5.1 Economic Impact Assessment

The economic assessment evaluates how PAC contributes to the local economy through its operations, visitor spending, and the wider supply chain. The analysis includes:

- **Operational Expenditure and Local Supply Chain Impacts:**  
The Centre’s annual expenditure data was analysed to assess direct spending within the local and regional supply chain. Indirect and induced impacts were estimated using standard economic multipliers to reflect the re-spending of income in the economy.
- **Employment and Salary Impacts:**  
Staff salary data was used to determine direct employment impacts and associated induced effects resulting from staff spending in the local area.
- **Income Generation:**  
Revenue from ticket sales, events, and food and drink sales at the Centre’s bar was examined to quantify the Centre’s direct contribution to the local economy.
- **Visitor Expenditure:**  
Additional indirect spend generated by theatre visits was assessed, including expenditure on nearby restaurants, taxis, car parking, and other local services. These figures were integrated into the wider economic model.
- **Public Funding and Value for Money Assessment:**  
Funding received from the local council and Arts Council Wales was included in the analysis. A Return-on-Investment (ROI) was calculated to assess the value created for every pound of public investment.

## **5.2 Social Impact Assessment**

The social analysis focuses on understanding how Pontardawe Arts Centre contributes to community wellbeing, cultural engagement, and social inclusion. This research was conducted via:

- In-person interviews with a wide range of users and stakeholder including two days of visits to the centre to meet people attending a variety of groups held at PAC, as well as users of the café, local businesses. and people passing by outside.
- Design and deliver an online survey (distributed through a range of FoPAC and NPTCBC channels) as well as during consultant visits and through Counterculture's own contact list and digital channels. This survey had a total of 186 responses.

## 6. FINDINGS

There is widespread appreciation of the Centre throughout the local community, and it is much loved, not only by audiences, but by other stakeholders who use the building:

“We have been coming here for 25 years, this year is our anniversary. We love coming here and have watched some of the group members attend every year, one from the age of 15 and they are now 40. The Centre is invaluable, and all the recent updates are brilliant. All the staff are so friendly and helpful, they made sure we could still hold the group as much as possible throughout all the works, we only missed two weeks due to electrical work. The group are really looking forward to doing their Christmas Carol show on the 24th November.”

Staff of Adult Learning Wales

The Centre is used and loved by people who live all around the local area, particularly up and down the Swansea valley, but also from further afield towards the north, west (Swansea County) and east (towards Port Talbot and Bridgend).

Users of the Centre report that it has very significant impacts on their health and wellbeing, and also believe that it is important to the wider community and economy, including the health of the local High Street:

“We have called in since the refurbishment and think the place looks great. We have had a lot of trade during the building work with many of the contractors were in our café daily, and we have noticed that it has brought more people into Pontardawe since the centre has been fully opened.”

Little Trams Café

There is particular praise from both users and other stakeholders for the staff team at the Centre, and they are clearly key to the development and sustainability of the partnerships of the centre. NPTCBC and the management team at the Centre are also to be congratulated for creating a really positive working atmosphere which contributes to great customer and partner experiences and staff retention.

“There’s a great staff team here, we all chip in with the different tasks and worked through the opening which went smoothly – I love working here.”

Staff Member

“The staff team is amazing and really helped to make sure classes could continue through all the building work.”

Pamela Miller Ballet

## **6.1 Economic Findings**

This section presents the economic contribution of Pontardawe Arts Centre. The analysis draws on the Centre's financial accounts, operational data, visitor behaviour assumptions, and standard economic multiplier effects to estimate the direct, indirect, and induced impacts generated for the local economy of Neath Port Talbot. It also includes additional expenditure associated with audience activities and provides an assessment of value for money through a Return on Investment approach.

### **6.1.1 Direct Economic Contribution- Employment and Salaries**

The Centre's staff salaries represent one of its primary direct economic contributions. These wages generate economic value not only through direct employment but also through employee spending within the local economy. An economic multiplier was applied to salary expenditure to estimate the wider economic effect, capturing indirect and induced impacts associated with employees' consumption and the Centre's upstream supply chain in the local economy.

### **6.1.2 Direct Economic Contribution- Local Supply Chain Expenditure**

The Centre's operational spending contributes directly to local businesses through procurement of goods and services. Expenditure on maintenance, equipment, cleaning, marketing, and professional services supports business viability within Neath Port Talbot. These transactions also produce secondary benefits as local suppliers re-spend revenue within the regional economy.

### **6.1.3 Direct Economic Contribution- Generated Income Streams**

Pontardawe Arts Centre generates several income streams that contribute directly to its financial sustainability and the wider economy:

- Ticket sales for performances, cinema screenings, and events
- Food and beverage income from the on-site bar
- Room hire and equipment hire fees
- Miscellaneous operational revenue

These income sources support ongoing operation and reinvestment, while generating visitor footfall that produces further economic spillovers.

### **6.1.4 Indirect Visitor Expenditure – Transportation Expenditure**

Visitors to PAC generate significant secondary economic activity in Pontardawe and surrounding areas. Based on audience behaviour assumptions, the analysis considers several categories of indirect spend:

For example, Taxi spend, this directly benefits local taxi operators and supports related employment. Core assumptions have been made on Centre attendees using this as a route to the Centre. In addition, some expenditure is attributed to private car use, including car parking fees and fuel costs, contributing further to local economic activity.

### **6.1.5 Indirect Visitor Expenditure - Hospitality and Restaurant Spending**

PAC plays a role in driving demand for nearby hospitality businesses. The assessment has made estimates based on publicly available data to establish the link between restaurant usage and Centre patronage. The Centre provides a year-round stream of income for the local restaurants. This pattern of spend highlights the Centre's role as an anchor institution that stimulates evening-time and weekend economic activity.

### **6.1.6 Induced Impacts from Classes, Sessions, and Workshops**

The Centre runs a range of classes, workshops, community arts programmes, and support sessions, including activities designed for children with special educational needs, performance groups, and creative skills sessions. These programmes not only generate social value but also create measurable economic benefits.

The induced impacts from the Classes, Sessions and Workshops reflect the broader economic contribution of cultural and community programming beyond direct financial transactions.

### **6.1.7 Economic Impact Summary Table**

Impact Stream	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total Impact
<b>Staff compensation expenditure generating local household spending impacts</b>	£250,838.00			
<b>Local supply chain expenditure</b>	£37,725.00			
<b>Ticket admission to performances/ film showings</b>	£222,034.00			
<b>Food and beverage sales within the venue</b>	£62,007.00			
<b>Operational income from venue hire and equipment rental by external users</b>	£34,327.00			
<b>Visitor expenditure on local parking associated with visits to the venue</b>		£4,961.10		
<b>Visitor expenditure related to private vehicle use</b>		£23,400.00		
<b>Off-site visitor expenditure on food and drink at local hospitality businesses</b>		£33,696.00		
<b>Social and educational programme value</b>			£102,771.00	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£606,931.00</b>	<b>£62,057.10</b>	<b>£102,771.00</b>	<b>£771,759.10</b>

### **6.1.8 Value for Money and Return on Investment**

The economic analysis includes a comparison of total economic benefits generated against funding contributions received from NPTCBC of £150,000. The resulting Return

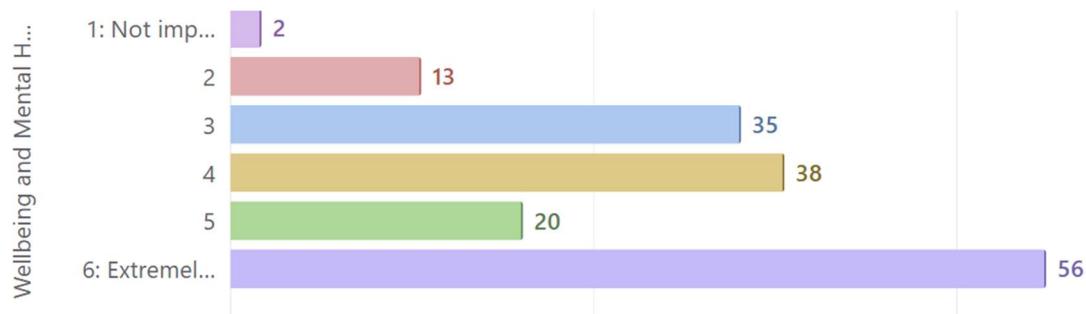
on Investment is 5.15, indicating that for every £1 of public money invested in Pontardawe Arts Centre, £5.15 of economic value is generated for the local economy. This represents a highly positive return and demonstrates the Centre's effectiveness in converting public and organisational investment into meaningful economic outcomes.

### 6.1.9 Survey Economic Data

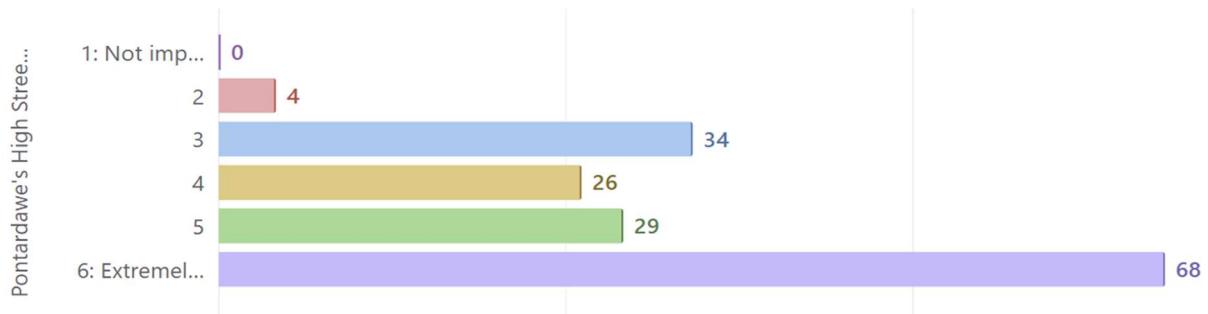
The survey data reinforces the hard economic data. Respondents were asked to assess the significance of the PAC for Pontardawe's High Street and Economy and for Bringing Visitors to Pontardawe on a scale of 1 (not important) to 6 (extremely important).

The bar charts below show that respondents think the Centre plays a major role in the town's local and visitor economy:

#### i) Pontardawe's High Street and Economy



#### ii) Bringing visitors to Pontardawe



The comments of local business owners also supported this perspective with one describing the PAC as "the anchor of the High Street" and another saying that "the Arts Centre is a major asset to the town." The Dilwyn Arms Hotel has recently started doing pre and post-show meal special offers to capitalise on the additional people that will be coming to the cinema. Other local businesses are also actively promoting the PAC:

"We come to Pontardawe, for the first time in years, to go to the opticians, and asked them for recommendations for where to go for a coffee. They suggested the Pontardawe Arts Centre as it has been newly refurbished. It is a big boost to the town – and we will come back soon to go to the cinema."

Local couple

## 6.2 Social Benefits of Pontardawe Arts Centre

### 6.2.1 Impact of New Cinema

“If I lived in Pontardawe I’d be very proud to have this in my community.”

Visiting business leader

As noted above the cinema had been opened for less than one month at the time of our visits and survey work, so it is too soon to understand the financial impact of the cinema on the Centre or the wider economic impact. However, we know from the qualitative work talking to visitors and stakeholders that the new facilities are much admired and that the quality of the finishes and overall atmosphere is highly regarded:

“The town really regard it as a community space, even more so now, which is great to see. We have been coming for years but due to the new works will definitely be coming even more. We really love the décor and cannot wait for them to show old films on the big screen – we won’t need to travel to Swansea for the cinema anymore!”

Local couple

“I think it is fabulous, a real asset to the town, they’ve done an excellent job. I came to the theatre last Saturday and I’m booked to come to the cinema next week. I come regularly anyway but will come even more now due to the café. The cinema being reasonably priced definitely makes a big difference.”

Local resident

“Wow, this looks amazing, hard to believe it’s the same place.”

Young couple walking in

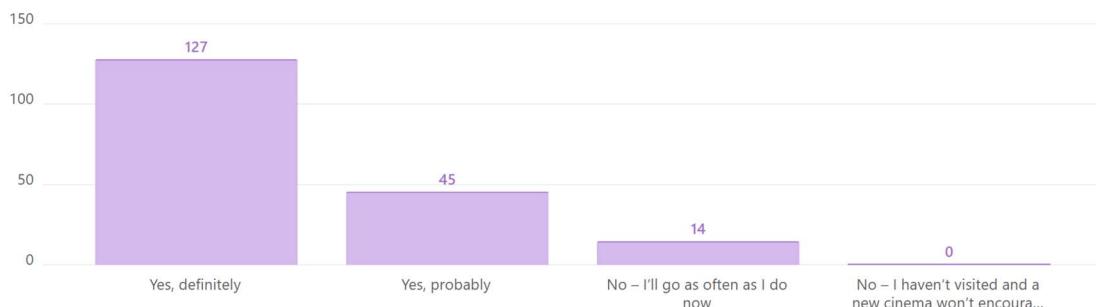
Partners delivering activities at the Centre are already seeing positive impacts from the works undertaken with one dance class leader reporting that PAC is now the business of the three sites she teaches at:

“It’s so nice to see the centre getting the love it deserves. I’m already seeing an impact on my group numbers, I’ve had my best intake ever this term, with 87 enrolled instead of the usual number around. My first class used to have 15 kids, now there’s 31 which is amazing. I’m sure this is because the centre has nicer new facilities.”

MODE Dance Group Leader

The quantitative data also suggests that the opening of the cinema will have a significant impact on footfall and income at the Centre.

The survey question “will the opening of the new cinema encourage you to visit Pontardawe Arts Centre more often?” received 186 responses with 127 (68%) saying that the new cinema will definitely make them visit more often, and 24% saying it will probably (total: 92%).



We recommend testing this over the next year, both through the financial data and a survey question that checks whether people have visited more in the last 12 months than they did previously (see Recommendations, below).

“It’s been a long time coming, but it’s a cracker.”

One of a group of friends in the café-bar

### 6.2.2 Health and Wellbeing

“My daughter loves coming here every week”

Dad at the community connect group

There is a growing volume of high-quality research evidence that shows that participating in and attending cultural activities is good for health and wellbeing, including:

- A 2019 WHO scoping review of over 3,000 studies (many from the UK) concludes that arts engagement can help *prevent* illness, *promote* good health, and *support treatment* across the life course, from perinatal mental health through to dementia care. ([ncch.org.uk](http://ncch.org.uk))
- Large UK longitudinal analyses (e.g. UCL’s Social Biobehavioural Research Group) show that frequent arts and cultural engagement is associated with higher life satisfaction and quality of life, and lower risks of depression and anxiety, even after controlling for income, education and baseline health. ([SBRG](#))
- Evidence reviews for the What Works Centre for Wellbeing and related “culture, sport and wellbeing” syntheses find consistent short- to medium-term improvements in subjective wellbeing from participation in music, visual arts, museums and heritage, with especially strong effects for people starting with poorer mental health. ([Brunel University](#))
- UK and European cohort studies indicate that regular cultural engagement is linked with better general health, lower frailty, fewer limitations in activities of daily living, reduced chronic pain and a reduced risk of developing dementia and of premature mortality in older adults. ([Arts Council England](#))

Crucially studies show that participation (and thus benefits) are uneven and that co-produced, local projects, of the kind represented by the work at Pontardawe Arts Centre, can significantly improve mental wellbeing scores and help narrow wellbeing gaps ([whatworkswellbeing.org](#)).

The nature of health benefits, which accrue measurably largely at population level, means it is impossible for a small venue like PAC to demonstrate quantitative impact on, say, life-expectancy. However, our survey asked respondents to rate their own view of the impact the centre had on their wellbeing and social life, with striking results.

On a scale of 0 to 6 (no impact to a major impact) the median score was 5 and the modal score 6 (65 of 170 – 38.2%). 85% of respondents scored the impact of PAC as 4 or above. For survey participants, PAC has a significant subjective impact on these issues and, given the strong connections between subjective wellbeing and mental and

physical health, it is likely that the savings to other parts of the public sector through wellbeing benefits are greater than the public subsidy to running the PAC.

Our in-person interviews also revealed that users feel very positive about the impact of PAC on their lives. The comments below are a small selection from the 20 attendees at the Adult Learning Wales Drama group:

- “They’ve done a good job; I like it here” - Gerald
- “The cinema is very posh” - Katy
- “It’s perfect!” - Catrin
- “I really like the building” - Adam
- “I really enjoy coming here every week on a Monday” - Matthew
- “I like doing my drama shows here, the building looks nice and the seats in the cinema are comfy” - Tim

Staff members have noticed that more people are attending since the works have been completed and commented that the alterations mean a wider range of people feel comfortable in the space.

“I just stopped for a takeaway coffee today, but I’ll be back!”

Café customer

### 6.2.3 Volunteering

The FoPAC group is entirely volunteer led and provides an excellent model for community engagement with a Local Authority run arts venue. We recommend that NPTCBC consider whether aspects of the success of FoPAC can be replicated in other parts of the Borough as part of the forthcoming Arts Strategy.

As part of the online survey a total of 24 respondents indicated that they would be interested in contributing their ideas, skills, or stories to PAC and their details were passed on to FoPAC for follow up. We believe that increased volunteering can offer opportunities to the Centre to improve services and increase income at relatively low cost, as well as providing health and wellbeing benefits to volunteers.

### 6.2.4 Income Generation and Audience Diversification Opportunities

Our research suggests that the strongest income generation opportunities come from modest expansion of the existing audience and in increasing spend per customer.

The profiles of survey respondents, which reflects the overall audience profiles, skewing towards older audiences, represents a group with reasonable levels of disposable income and time and willingness to spend it on high-quality cultural services and associated goods.

Increases to ticket prices at slightly more than the rate of inflation, especially if coupled with good offers to encourage people to spend in the café-bar will probably be well tolerated and can help the Centre.

The FoPAC group is valuable to the Centre and ways in which its membership benefits could be expanded to encourage further growth in the group should be considered. An increase in membership fees to £15 or £20, perhaps accompanied by a discount of 10% in the café-bar could raise a considerable sum. Note- FoPAC should ensure that any impact of such a benefit on the Gift Aid eligibility of membership fees is checked before proceeding.

Although the in-person and online survey work generated some negative comments related to pricing in the café-bar our research has found that prices are comparable to other high-quality cinema venues nationally, and to offerings of similar quantity in Pontardawe. As a publicly owned business it is important that the venue does not unfairly undercut the pricing of local businesses, and we believe that the current pricing strategy is correct.

Local businesses are strongly in favour of PAC's work and are a natural source of support. Most, however, are small and unlikely to be able to offer much cash support. You should consider other opportunities for business partnership therefore such as:

- Marketing opportunities for local businesses to advertise in the cinema during the trailers.
- Cross promotions with local businesses – such as encouraging them to offer a 10% discount to diners with tickets for that evening's show with cross-advertising on posters and flyers in the restaurant and cinema.
- Marketing the cinema, theatre, board room, and other spaces within the Centre to local businesses as ideal venues for meetings and conferences according to their needs.
- Hosting an annual Pontardawe Business round table event to discuss their engagement with the arts and culture offer and display some of the activities benefitting the town that take place at the Centre.

NPTCBC makes good use of opportunities to gain public sector funding for arts and culture. The existence of FoPAC creates additional opportunities for it, as a registered charity, to make applications for smaller grants to trusts and foundations that only support registered charities. We recommend that FoPAC work with the Neath Port Talbot CVS (<https://www.nptcvs.wales/>) to identify a list of such funders using the CVS's access to Funds online or similar databases of grant makers.

The Centre already serves audiences which are broadly representative of its community though, like many cultural organisations, its audiences are, on average, older and more female than the population. There is clearly scope for more targeted work with young people, building on the Centre's existing work, especially for children and young people with a variety of extra needs.

However, we see no evidence of a huge demand for a major shift in emphasis in the Centre's work and audiences and would advise focussing on audience development amongst groups 'adjacent' to existing audiences – for example given that many older women attend the Centre could film programming include classic action and adventure movies that might attract their husbands and partners? An incremental approach of this kind will build audience numbers without alienating existing customers or requiring radically new approaches and programming that would carry a higher level of artistic and financial risk.

The Centre is participating actively in the development of the new NPTCBC Arts Strategy. We believe this will help to identify underserved audiences that need increased activity and programming across the Borough, and PAC is ideally placed to take a lead on one or two aspects of this, without having to try and cover all bases on its own.

#### **6.2.5 What people say**

As well as the highlight comments sprinkled throughout this report, other feedback from staff, centre users, local people, and passers-by who we met in person across two days of visits to the Arts Centre and local businesses include:



“The centre is a real asset to the town.”

“Having the new bar has made a huge difference when the live events are on – it used to be difficult with just the one small bar that often caused a bottle neck – now it’s much easier.”

“We all work really well together; we are like a little family.”

“The place is lovely and done out nicely, and I really hope plenty of people will support it more now.”

“I have been coming to the centre for over 40 years – has been to cinema, shows, plays, craft classes, exhibitions, kids came to dance classes, snooker hall. I’m really looking forward to coming to the cinema next week, I’ll be coming on my own and know I’ll feel safe and comfortable.”

“I used to work here in the 1990s. A lot has changed since then - most of it for the better! I’m coming to the cinema with my teenage grandchildren on Friday for the first time, and I’m sure they will use the centre more now with the new cinema.”

“Wow this is amazing! I can’t wait to come to the cinema; I’ll be here next week!”

“I love the outdoor seating area. It's a really nice addition and great that I can sit here with my dog.”

“The last remaining bank in the town (Lloyds) is about to close, could the centre house a banking hub like that at the Welfare in Ystradgynlais?”

“We are very fortunate to have something like this on our doorstep.”

“It's about time this place had something, it's great for Pontardawe.”

## 7. Recommendations

“It’s lovely in here, a great place to come for a coffee and a cake now, we all need something these days and I will definitely be back.”

### **Survey**

We recommend repeating the survey after 12 months and then every 18 months to two years (to avoid survey fatigue). One of the most valuable aspects of a survey of this kind is developing longitudinal data over time, so we recommend keeping the survey questions the same, as far as possible, in order to make the responses comparable over time.

However, there is scope for some additional questions, and we would suggest that future surveys could ask:

- Compared to previous years, in the last 12 months have you visited the Centre:
  - More than previously
  - About the same as previously
  - Less than previously

A second questions could then explore any reasons for a change in visit frequency.

### **Barriers**

The single most significant barrier identified by survey respondents (see *PAC Survey Analysis Report*) was around public transport and parking. Although FoPAC and the Centre team have limited ability to impact this, it is important for NPTCBC to know that improving public transport will unlock many secondary benefits both for residents, and the Council – through increased income at Council run venues.

The only other area identified by more than 30 respondents was “not knowing what is on offer” – a reminder that even organisations such as PAC which have an effective e-mail newsletter and other comms channels need to continually reinventing their marketing and communications as the way users access information changes. As a first step we recommend a more detailed investigation with a small focus group of local residents (ideally a mixture of those who already use the centre and those who don’t) to understand what communication channels would be most likely to catch their attention and inform them about events and activities at the Centre).

### **Programme**

Both in-person conversations and the online survey results revealed few issues with the programme. In response to the question “what kinds of activities would you most like to see more of at Pontardawe Arts Centre?”, the most popular answers were theatre (48%),

film (43%) and live music (36%) – all of which already feature in the programme which suggests the audience is positive about the kind of programming they already see.

We recommend that this be taken by the NPTCBC/FoPAC teams as a clear indicator that, for the existing audience, the programme is working well and that there is scope for growth by adding ‘more of the same’ as well as occasionally and small-scale experimenting with other art forms which may bring in different audiences (recognising that this kind of work carries higher financial risk). Survey respondents provided a long list of additional activities that could be considered (see *PAC Survey Analysis Report*).

### ***Other Considerations***

“I’m looking forward to coming in for a glass of wine with friends of an evening”

Survey respondents, and people we talked to face-to-face had a range of suggestions for improvements or additional activities which the NPTCBC and FoPAC teams should consider in future planning:

- The addition of the cinema will create additional pressures on parking in the town centre which is quite limited and may need review.
- Some other parts of the building (notably the stairs and lift) now look rather dated in the light of the new investment. Priority to some light-touch redecoration and lighting improvements should be considered.

Several people we spoke to in person felt that the use of A-boards or other simple exterior signage for the café-bar would significantly increase footfall.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

Pontardawe Arts Centre is a vital cultural and community asset whose impact extends well beyond its walls. This study demonstrates that the Arts Centre contributes significantly to the economic, social, and cultural wellbeing of Neath Port Talbot, acting as both a driver of local economic activity and a cornerstone of community life.

The Centre delivers a substantial economic return, generating over £770,000 in local economic value in a single year and achieving an outstanding ROI of 5.15. This underlines the effectiveness of public investment and the essential role of PAC in supporting the local economy, high street vitality, and the wider cultural ecosystem.

Equally important are the Centre's social contributions. PAC provides inclusive, high-quality spaces where people of all ages and backgrounds can participate in meaningful cultural activities. Evidence from users, partners and local businesses shows strong improvements in wellbeing, reduced social isolation, and a deep sense of belonging linked to the Centre's work. The new cinema and refurbished facilities have been strongly welcomed and are already enhancing footfall, partnerships, and community engagement.

The Centre's success is supported by a committed staff team and the invaluable contribution of FoPAC, whose volunteer leadership and advocacy strengthen both the Centre's sustainability and its connection to the community.

Looking ahead, PAC is well positioned to continue supporting Neath Port Talbot's cultural and economic ambitions. Opportunities exist to expand volunteering, refine marketing, build business partnerships, and further develop audiences. With continued investment and strategic support, PAC can build on its strong foundations and continue to deliver exceptional social and economic value for years to come.