

# Pride Cymru Progress Report 2023

Introduction from the Board of Trustees

After reviewing all of the feedback, Pride Cymru's trustees committed to a full, transparent review of its strategy and format for future Pride Cymru festival events. As we approach Pride Cymru's 25th anniversary in June 2024, the trustees have consulted with stakeholders and partners to inform the future direction of the event and charity.

At the outset, we'd like to thank each and every person who contributes so much to Pride Cymru and making the event possible.

Pride Cymru is the largest annual Pride event in Wales, starting in 1999 under the 'Cardiff Mardi Gras' name. Prior to then there had been parades, but no full day (eventually weekend) event. Each event is created almost entirely by community volunteers and funded from a wide variety of sources from revenues to grants.

This report is intended to inform interested parties about the costs and benefits of Pride Cymru's major weekend event in June 2023. It will outline what it takes, both financially and in human terms, to put on the event; how and why decisions are made and by whom; who is involved in providing the event and what the benefits are for the city and the community.

For further information and to volunteer for Pride, please contact [hello@pridecymru.com](mailto:hello@pridecymru.com) or contact through the website.

## **1. A brief history of how Pride Cymru has evolved** *(thanks to Norena Shopland/Draig Enfys)*

The Pride Cymru event is an annual LGBTQ+ march and festival in Cardiff, run by Cardiff-Wales LGBT Mardi Gras. Although a few Pride marches had been held in the city in the 1980s, they had died away. The first festival event, called Cardiff Mardi Gras was held in 1999 and was attended by around 5-6,000 people. For many years it took place in Bute Park and was a mixture of entertainment and speeches. Cardiff Council and the Welsh Government introduced small grants from 2005, but otherwise the event was supported by a mixture of corporate sponsorship, community fundraising, licensing of stalls and (from 2006 for some events and from 2012 for the whole festival) event ticket sales.

In 2012 the Pride Parade was revived and attached to the festival, ending at the Park. It had about 600 marchers and many organisations which have subsequently become stalwarts of the event, from Terrence Higgins Trust to Stonewall Cymru and other LGBTQ+ groups. In 2013 the festival moved to the Millenium Stadium, which proved unpopular, and so the next year the event returned to Coopers Field in Bute Park. By then, the one day event cost £280,000 to organise even without staff.

In the same year the organisation also achieved its first Big Lottery Grant of just under £190,000 over three years, enabling it to recruit paid staff and undertake community-based projects other than the festival weekend. It went on to get further grant funding in several years from the Heritage Lottery Fund for LGBTQ History Month events. In following years, the Council and Pride Cymru agreed to move the event to August Bank Holiday and make it a 3 day event in the Civic Centre. This has now become two full days and in 2023, the event moved into Cardiff Castle. The event moved sites due to costs for the City Hall lawns site becoming unaffordable. Pride now shares some core infrastructure costs with Depot and its summer concert series as an affordable way of putting on a large scale event while keeping ticket prices as low as possible. In 2022 and 2023, we were able to freeze ticket prices, despite the biting impact of inflation on our costs. This was important to us to make sure Pride Cymru remained affordable during an acute cost of living crisis.

## 2. Current shape and activities of Pride Cymru

Pride Cymru employs a 27hrs pw Charity Manager, 25% (one day) of their time is allocated to the annual event. This is the only paid time for the annual weekend event and parade. In addition to this Pride Cymru manages or participates in five grant-funded limited-time projects across Wales, some of which include staff. These are:

- Get Out Get Active, a three year North Wales LGBTQ sports project funded by a consortium of activity-related charities (ending December 2024)
- Mas ar y Maes, funded by Arts Council Wales, which commissions and promotes new Welsh language queer art. PC is a project partner alongside Stonewall Cymru, the Eisteddfodd and Glitter Cymru. (ended November 2023)
- Catalyst Cymru (diversifying heritage organisations in Wales) funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund Wales and managed by WCVA provides participant fees but no staff to PC, EYST and Disability Wales (ending June 2024)
- Fast Track Cymru, funded by the Welsh Government and Viiv Healthcare to support work across Wales to end HIV (currently funded to March 2025)
- Stronger Together, a 3 year Community Lottery Fund grant to support LGBTQ+ community cohesion across Wales (ending September 2025)
- We also secured a grant from the People's Postcode Lottery to support some of our core work, creating two part time jobs (ending December 2024).

In all these projects contributed just under £217,500 (from a couple of thousand to £116k) and created 4.8 dedicated staff posts in 2023 for Pride Cymru.

The Pride Cymru weekend event had a total income of £561,035 (including grants, ticket sales and sponsorship) of which it is currently estimated that £550,000 was spent on the event (audited accounts for 2022-3 not yet available). Any surplus will go into the following year's event and to pay core costs such as accountants fees.

As demonstrated above, only one day's paid work per week across the year (48 days with holidays factored in) is allocated to the event; everything about it, from top to bottom, is run by volunteers. Although some of the people in the posts above may help out in one way or another during the event, they are not paid to do so unless running a stall for their project. Many act as volunteers in one capacity or another in addition to their jobs.

The volunteers who make Pride Cymru happen every year are organised as follows:

- The Trustees are the legally responsible managers of the charity. It is a gender-balanced team.
- The Senior Events Team: the Trustees, the Charity Manager and three senior volunteers. This is where the top level planning takes place.
- The Core Volunteer Team of 29 team leaders, who represent every sector of the weekend's activity from Access to Youth, meets all year round with the Senior Team and staff.
- A further 98 Event Day Volunteers (in 2023) worked shifts across the weekend on gates, event management and as parade marshals and some also support the Core Volunteer Team Leaders around the year.

The value of the hours contributed by volunteers across the year, if everyone was to be paid only at the minimum wage, comes to just over £132,500. This is a substantial underestimate of the actual cost if people were to be employed as many of the roles are

skilled and time consuming. For example, event management roles, all held by volunteers in Pride Cymru's Senior Team, are paid, year-round roles in other major city Prides (in admittedly larger events, but also with many more supporting volunteers) at salaries well above £60,000 per annum.

The entire volunteer body is recruited through open advertisement, word of mouth and headhunting for targeted skills gaps. From time to time it is surveyed to check for diversity and the last volunteer survey of 152 people found that the team was 34% male, 51% female and 15% non-binary or otherwise self-defined. There does not appear to have been a question asking people if they defined as trans, so it is impossible to state a percentage, but there are certainly a number of trans volunteers at Pride Cymru from the Trustees to day volunteers. Asked to self-define their sexuality, 29% said they were bi, 23% gay, 22% straight, 16% lesbian, 5% pansexual, 3% asexual and 2% other. One in four of the volunteer force identified as disabled, in a wide variety of ways including mobility and neurodivergence. Of those who replied about their ethnicity, 92% were from a range of white ethnicities and 8% from black, brown and other ethnicities. The 2011 Census reported Cardiff's population as 20% from ethnic minorities other than white and Pride has accepted that it will need to do more to mirror the local population.

### 3. Funding the weekend event

The figures given here are estimates as final accounts are not available in-year.

In 2023 the primary sources of income for the weekend event and parade were approximately as follows:

Ticket sales	£175,000
Corporate sponsors	£151,000
Tenders (bars, etc)	£66,000
Stalls	£51,500
Cardiff Council	£35,000* (* support “in kind”, i.e. no funding but support service charges discounted)
Welsh Government	£30,00

plus many other smaller sources, donations etc.

As can be seen, the majority of funds to meet the (again approximate) £550,000 costs were generated by charges related to the event itself, followed by corporate sponsorship. Statutory support for the event is substantially lower than for many other global Prides, particularly those held in capital or otherwise major cities.

We also received further funding from the Welsh Government to fund other projects such as hosting the European Pride Organisers AGM.

We have already been informed that due to the challenges facing the Welsh Government and Cardiff Council, that funding from these public funders will likely substantially reduce in 2025.

#### 4. Paying for the event

The costs of holding a weekend festival and parade rose dramatically in 2023 due to inflation and are expected to do so again for 2024. Many costs such as insurance have risen well above the rate of inflation. In 2023, the event cost somewhere close to £550,000 (final accounts only available in following year).

Holding a major event is a significant undertaking and responsibility. Health and safety, security and many other jobs required for a major event in a capital city that cannot be covered by volunteers. These are mostly items required by the Council and Police in order to license the event. They include:

- Contractors to build the stalls, stages, lighting, sound, fencing, bars and rest of site
- Medical personnel
- Security teams
- Policing (at a reduced rate)
- Toilets
- Insurance and safety officers
- Council charges including venue hire, cleanup, road and parking closures etc
- Marketing, signage
- Access provision including a viewing platform and other access measures including BSL interpreters
- Performers

It is often assumed that many of the services are given free but none of the above are, with the exception of local community performers. Examples of costs in 2023 include:

- Security personnel £55,000
- Toilet hire £45,000 plus an accessible toilet, provided by Mobiloo at £1,500
- Insurance £21,000
- Medical support £19,500

Some local companies and individuals give their services “pro bono”, such as Golley Slater, a marketing company who advise on media and digital advertising. A number of local drag queens and other community performers and comperes also refused to accept a fee for performing.

Performers are always a sensitive area because of the need to balance “names” who will attract the crowds needed to pay for a major event versus the importance of showcasing local talent and emerging LGBTQ+ artists. An enormous amount of debate each year goes into who will be popular versus what can be afforded.

In 2023, £92,000 was paid for stage acts across the stages. Some people raised concerns about choices made and the process. Pride Cymru Trustees held a meeting after the event with local performers to listen to their concerns. Following this, we put in place a number of reforms and had an open and respectful discussion with performers which we were very grateful for. There is now a written organisational policy which gives guidelines on performer payments, so that there is clarity about what levels of payment and expenses are offered to local performers and how to claim these. From 2024, Pride is also moving to use a festivals booking agent who already support other Prides and gives better value for money than random booking of the major acts. We cannot publish the precise level of fee that acts cost as we are bound by confidentiality agreements in their contracts. Most, if not

all of our headline acts agree to perform at a much reduced fee than they usually charge due to Pride being a charity event.

## 5. Creating the event

To create a major Pride event is a year-round process for the Trustees, staff and key volunteers. A very simplified version of it would look like this:

- Agree date of event which does not clash with the least other major Prides, music festivals (which can book up equipment for years in advance, see footnote \*\*\*\*) and other local major events (which impact hotel prices and, again, equipment hire)
- Agree a route with the Council and police\* which is safe and central, learning from previous years (and sometimes, as in 2023, renegotiate it at the last minute in response to community feedback)
- Agree a theme for the event and solicit political support for LGBTQ+ rights and equality
- Create a budget and set prices for tickets, stalls etc to encourage maximum attendance at lowest cost possible to avoid going bust
- Create a tender process for most major suppliers and agree contracts for toilets, scaffolding, security staff, safety officers\*\*, bars and food
- Agree and book at best possible rates “name” stage performers, with an eye to diversity and pleasing a range of audiences
- Create a floor plan including family space, quiet space, stalls and multiple stages and bars
- Sell commercial stalls while ensuring their appropriateness
- Ensure maximum accessibility including free stalls, free tickets\*\*\* and adhering to the guidance of Access Is Everything\*\*\*\*
- Abide by all health and safety requirements
- Create and run marketing campaigns to sell tickets
- Raise funds via sponsors\*\*\*\*\*
- Run the parade, field event/s and maintain safety throughout (see also\*\*)
- Clean up after the event
- Balance the books
- Start all over again

\* Allowing police staff and some other services to march at Prides is an ongoing discussion, with Prides and members of the community across the UK taking differing positions. In 2023, after discussions with volunteers, members of the local LGBTQ+ community, UK and European Pride Networks and with the Police, Pride Cymru took the decision to allow the LGBTQ+ Police staff network to march provided that this was not in uniform, with no banners and was led by their LGBTQ+ officers. This decision, as with other requests from organisations to be included, will be regularly reviewed by the Trustees. We recognise there are strongly held views and some people may not agree. Our position is that we will call out where we believe the Police have got things wrong and need to make amends. But we believe that engaging with institutions allows us to have a dialogue and fight for positive change within the system.

\*\* Pride have for several years provided free tickets to asylum seekers via partner organisations and in 2023 they extended the offer to youth groups, people without housing and a small number of overseas student nurses. Organisations included Hoops and Loops, LGBTQ+ youth groups, Llamau and the Wallich. One other group did not respond to the offer. In all over 100 tickets were given out to people who could not otherwise easily have afforded to attend.



\*\*\* In 2023, some attendees complained about disruptions in the markets area on Sunday. This was due to an external (as required for insurance and by local authority rules) safety officer's concerns at an electrical storm which was deemed to be passing close to the event and might have travelled over it. Their concern that lightning might cause an electrical blowout and potential fatalities in the bar and stage areas led to a temporary cessation of entertainment and the moving of people in the bar areas back into the main field. With the footprint of the site and the vast amount of power being used, it takes time for this equipment to be powered down and made safe.

We followed the Met Office's live forecast and restarted the main stage entertainment as soon as possible. Pride Cymru were required to follow this advice or our volunteers would have been personally liable for any injuries or accidents which ensued. Given the tree cover in the markets area, our safety officer would not consent to reopening the markets area. All guidance as set out in our Weather Safety Management Plan was followed. Health and safety is our number one priority.

\*\*\*\* In 2023 Pride Cymru were given a new venue, Cardiff Castle, by the Council. This presented new challenges for access, most particularly the cobbled walking areas for wheelchairs and people using mobility aids. By the time the venue had been finalised, suitable coverings for these (which are hired for the weekend) had already been booked out by other major events for the same weekend and Pride had to make do with suboptimal options. Improvements are planned for 2024.

There will be an accessible route from the main gate to the accessible viewing platform. This will eliminate around 70% of the cobbled path journey for wheelchair users or those with mobility issues. Whilst we understand that the cobbles pose a significant challenge for people with mobility problems, Pride have sought to liaise with event partners and stakeholders and have obtained quotes to cover the pathway which exceed £70,000. Unfortunately this cost is not viable to us, due to the already challenging budget picture. The council nor Welsh Government have been able to assist further with this. We continue to listen to the community and welcome any feedback or ideas to support future improvements that can be made. We also provide an assistance style service and have mobility scooters, manual and power assisted chairs.

\*\*\*\*\* For 2023 we agreed a last-minute deal with Tesla to have a rainbow car on the site. While we would never shift our positions or values based on any sponsor, no matter how much money, we know we let people down by not doing our research on Tesla and its founders attitudes, and allowing them to be present. We're sorry. This should not have happened and we recognise the upset this has caused to visitors and members of our own team. It was found that any attempt to break the contract could potentially result in substantial legal fees and therefore, while the contract was honoured for 2023, mechanisms have now been put in place to increase scrutiny of potential sponsors and new due diligence procedures put in place. The entire fee from this contract was removed from the event budget and donated to another small Welsh-based charity that supports the LGBTQ+ community.

## 6. Impact and visibility

While Pride Cymru has not run a formal impact assessment for several years due to Covid and cost pressures, it is possible to evaluate impact in a variety of ways.

In terms of international visibility for Cardiff, Pride plays a major part in attracting LGBTQ+ visitors. Alongside an increasing awareness of the current Welsh Government's proclaimed aim to make Wales the most LGBTQ-friendly society in Europe, Pride Cymru is frequently mentioned as among the best of the smaller capital prides. CN Traveller named Pride in Cardiff as "one of the best Prides in the UK". In addition to its attraction for tourists, Pride Cymru is an active and key member of EuroPride and the UK Pride Organisers Network, having recently hosted the EuroPride AGM for Pride organisers from across Europe. Pride delegates regularly attend UK and European meetings to promote the event and show solidarity. In 2023 (at no cost to Pride) the unmistakable dragon flag was waved at World Pride in Sydney and EuroPride in Malta. We are currently scoping projects and partnerships where we can increase the support given to LGBTQ+ activists overseas.

Our social media channels have a wide reach and we use the channels to promote opportunities and support campaigns such as *No Pride in Detention* which calls for the UK Border Force to end the detention of LGBTQ+ asylum seekers for immigration reasons. We took the decision not to post on Twitter/X anymore following discussions with peer Prides and following the lead of the European Pride Organisers Association. Our social media volunteers told us that a lack of moderation, an increase in anti-LGBTQ hatred and a growth in rude/aggressive posts towards us was damaging their mental health. We take the duty of care we owe to everyone involved in Pride Cymru very seriously.

Political support for LGBTQ+ people in Wales is also enhanced by Pride Cymru's interactions with both local and national politicians; the event offers a platform to the First Minister and a substantial number of politicians from all parties join the parade and attend the festival (paying for their own tickets like everyone else, though in 2023 the FM, as a speaker, counted as one of the community acts and thus did not) to show their support for LGBTQ+ equality. But political engagement is not solely through the festival; through their other projects, we are able to raise the voices of LGBTQ+ people in Government matters and in 2022-3 were closely involved with both the LGBTQ+ Action Plan and the HIV Action Plan, ensuring people were informed about how to respond to consultations and sitting on a number of working groups to further specific recommendations.

Pride Cymru also raises the profile of LGBTQ+ people as part of the community in Wales through the media coverage it receives for both its project work and for the festival; the latter in particular attracts widespread print, broadcast and online coverage with this year at least 15 broadcast and print outlets covering the parade and field event, several of them (such as the BBC, ITV and Wales Online) doing so repeatedly. LGBTQ+ visibility is a key part of both educating the wider public, to reduce stigma and supporting people questioning their sexuality to understand that there is a thriving community here. Apart from the festival, Pride's ongoing projects contribute a great deal to this in sport, arts, sexual health and other arenas. We are often asked by media partners to comment on contemporary topics and ensure a message of inclusion and diversity is spread.

For the festival weekend, Pride Cymru also contributes considerably to Cardiff's economy through the thousands of tourists who attend from other parts of Wales, from the rest of the UK and the world. Metro newspaper, distributed in most major UK cities to commuters, recommended Pride Cymru to its readers, characterising it as "two days of Welsh-style shenanigans with a mile-long parade" and praising its value for money. These tourists rent hotel rooms, buy food and drink, use the city's shops, restaurants and bars, take cabs and generally spend money, notably but not exclusively on the night time economy.