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Media release

For immediate use

Recognition for Wales's hardest-working third sector groups

The work of Wales's most admired and effective charities, voluntary and community organisations has been recognised at the annual awards run by Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).

Supported by Class Networks for the tenth consecutive year, the Third Sector Awards Cymru were presented at a ceremony hosted by BBC news presenter Siân Lloyd at the St David's Hotel in Cardiff on Thursday 8 February.

WCVA Chief Executive Ruth Marks said: 'Countless third sector groups all across Wales do inspirational things every day. The Third Sector Awards Cymru give them their moment in the spotlight.'

'I am very pleased to be part of a community of individuals and organisations that show such excellence and commitment to working for others and improving the lives of the people of Wales.'

Jonathan Levy, Managing Director at Class Networks said: 'This is our 10th year supporting the Third Sector Awards Cymru. The organisations shortlisted for all categories are inspirational and deserve recognition for the work that they do in supporting their local communities.'

Third Sector Awards Cymru winners and runners-up

The Award for best communications, Supported by Creative Loop - for organisations with an effective or different way of communicating their message.

WINNER - Gŵyl Nôl a Mlan

Gŵyl Nôl a Mlan, a festival in Llangrannog, Ceredigion was established by volunteers in 2009. The increase in its popularity has been 'endless' and in 2017, it broke all records with more than 8,000 visitors during the two-day event.

'This was mainly down to the dynamic communications plan and innovative and clever use of social media,' said festival producer Carys Ifan.

'The small team was forward-thinking in setting up Facebook and Twitter accounts nearly 10 years ago. In 2016, a Snapchat profile was set up, and an Instagram profile last year, to ensure a tailored communications approach with various audiences.'

The festival has three main aims - to promote the Welsh language, contribute to the economic and cultural economy of the village and surrounding area, and offer an experience for the whole family.

'The organisation communicates in Welsh at all times using everyday language, local dialect, colloquialisms, relevant vocabulary and humour,' Carys Ifan added. 'There are translation tools on social media so this is an option for individuals who can't – yet - speak Welsh.'

'There's no doubt that the local community has benefitted greatly from the festival's confident and fun-filled communications plan, reinforcing the confidence of locals that they do live in a strong and vibrant community and avoiding a sense of rural deprivation.'

'And with so many visitors coming to the festival, and returning at other times of the year, the festival has made a substantial contribution to the local economy.'

RUNNER-UP - Chwarae Teg

The women featuring in **Chwarae Teg's** Wonderful Welsh Women initiative are from both history and the present day and include scientists, athletes, actors, business people and humanitarians.

'The only criteria are that they must have an inspiring story or have achieved something remarkable,' said the equalities charity's Strategic Communications Lead Helen Bradley.

'The initiative is helping Chwarae Teg to achieve its objectives of inspiring, leading and delivering gender equality by generating debate about the current lack of profile afforded to female role models and by showcasing inspiring women.'

The campaign was launched on 11 October, 2017 – International Day of the Girl – and utilises digital media platforms. The launch tweet has been seen over 89,000 times, earning 3,400 engagements and 250 new followers for Chwarae Teg. Similar levels of enthusiasm and success have been achieved on Facebook, with the launch graphic getting 71 shares and being viewed by 14,200 people.

‘Each week, we are showcasing a wonderful Welsh woman to raise the profile of female role models in Wales and to inspire the next generation of Welsh women, to empower them, and enable them to achieve and prosper,’ Helen Bradley added.

The campaign will culminate with a public, digital media based vote to choose the most inspiring role model who will then receive an award at the Womenspire 2018 awards.

RUNNER-UP - Valleys Gymnastics Academy

Valleys Gymnastics Academy (VGA), which is based in Crumlin, Caerphilly, has a communications strategy that focuses on providing quality experiences for its members, while also attracting new members and participants.

The organisation uses three social media platforms. Its Facebook pages are mainly used for advertisement and recruitment, with the target audience being generally parents.

The Twitter page is primarily used to communicate with current and future partners of the club, promoting good news stories and activities, as well sharing collaborative work examples. Currently, VGA’s twitter page has 3,330 followers.

The club’s Instagram page is primarily used to engage with youth members through promoting achievements, competition results and class snippets using videos and pictures. Currently, the page has 3,930 followers.

‘Valleys Gymnastics Academy is an award winning social enterprise, and recently won the Wales Social Enterprise of the Year 2017 (Customer Experience category) on the basis of its growth and sustainability,’ said Director Aled Jones.

‘Feedback from parents has revealed that continuous communication through the club’s social media platforms has enhanced their experiences. Volunteers and coaches are also able to interact and communicate with each other through the social media platforms.

‘Due its prominent social media presence, VGA is regularly referred to as a vibrant, visible, hub of the community.’

The environmental award - for organisations that have helped deliver environmental benefits for their communities.

WINNER – REFURBS Flintshire

REFURBS Flintshire, a recycled furniture charity, was founded in 2002 with one of its four charitable aims being ‘conserving and protecting the physical and natural environment by the promotion of sustainable waste management practices’.

The charity deconstructs items down to component parts to ensure they are all recyclable, and those identified for reuse are cleaned, repaired and recycled back into the community from its showrooms in Flint.

In November 2016, REFURBS began a three-month pilot project for Flintshire County Council to ensure that no item of soft furnishings - sofas, armchairs and beds, etc - ended up as landfill.

It has since deconstructed more than 6,300 items, diverted almost 270 tonnes from landfill and recycled over 6,800 items (205 tonnes) – as well as delivering a recycling awareness campaign at all of the Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) in Flintshire.

‘Since its inception, REFURBS has seen the reuse rates at some of the HRCs rise significantly, from as low as five per cent in November 2016 to 50% in October 2017,’ said REFURBS General Manager Kevin Barry.

‘Following a recent extension, the pilot continues, generating significant results whilst offering employability, training, volunteering and work placement opportunities to those in the community who are furthest away from the job market.’

RUNNER-UP - Wild Ground – Tir Gwyllt

Wrexham-based **Wild Ground – Tir Gwyllt** was set up more than 30 years ago by a group of Connah’s Quay residents concerned about the impact that large-scale development was having on the area’s environment and wildlife.

The group looks after rare habitats and species, particularly pondscapes and wetland areas for the benefit of the protected great crested newt. Many of its reserves are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), and it protects them in ways including controlling invasive and non-native species, planting trees and hedgerows, enhancing meadows, and reinstating ponds.

It promotes environmentally friendly living and respect for the natural world by running wildlife-themed events ranging from public open days, to pond dipping sessions, bird surveys, bat walks, fungi forays, creating breeding and hibernation sites for amphibians and reptiles, and putting up nest boxes.

'Wild Ground – Tir Gwyllt works with an amazing group of volunteers, numbering more than 100, who help with all sorts of activities,' said Conservation Director Leah Williams. 'It is fortunate to work with a wide variety of people from all sorts of backgrounds, many of whom have physical difficulties and/or mental health issues

'These people are able to experience their local natural environments and learn about the wildlife that can be found there and how they can help protect it. As well as that, they gain confidence, learn new skills, make a difference to their local environment, make new friends, and have fun!'

RUNNER-UP - Cardiff Rivers Group

Since 2009, **Cardiff Rivers Group** has been active in Cardiff's rivers, waterways and ponds, removing 4,225 bags of rubbish, 184 shopping trolleys, 237 tyres, 174 traffic cones, 89 bicycles, 16 motorbikes and 27 tons of waste. A further 7.5 tons of scrap metal has been recycled and is the group's principle source of income.

'This is waste and rubbish that the local authority cannot remove themselves, and so the volunteers have made a dramatic improvement to the natural environment,' said the group's Entertainment Secretary, Chris Hackett.

'This has benefitted directly the residents of and visitors to Cardiff, who undoubtedly have had greater enjoyment of our rivers as they are now clear of obvious eyesore rubbish.'

The group also carries out important habitat conservation and management. 'Given cuts to Cardiff Council's environmental budget, our assistance has been increasingly requested and appreciated by the Cardiff Park Rangers in clearing invasive reeds from ponds in Forest Farm, Whitchurch and Grangemoor Park in Grangetown,' Chris Hackett added.

'Being a volunteer with Cardiff Rivers Group gives one a sense of purpose, and improves mental wellbeing, as volunteers feel happier and more satisfied discharging their civic contribution by being a member of the group.'

The health, social care and wellbeing award - for organisations that put people at the centre and co-design and co-deliver services with them to make a real difference to their lives.

WINNERS – ABMyouth and Carmarthenshire People First

ABMyouth

Established in 2016, **ABMyouth** is a group of 20 young people from across Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend dedicated to improving health services for children and young people and the first youth action panel working within the Welsh NHS.

The volunteers represent the voice of children and young people within the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University (ABMU) Health Board area. They meet each month in hospitals across South Wales to design their own projects, meet healthcare professionals and map out future goals.

'Our team is made up of young people between the ages of 13 and 23 who all bring unique skills and qualities,' said Chair of ABMyouth Sophie Millar. 'We have members who have experience of being a patient, others volunteer with St John's Ambulance and many plan to go on to become nurses, pharmacists and doctors.'

'We project children and young people's thoughts on the health issues that matter most to them and make sure that adults listen by reporting directly to ABMU's executive board.'

'This ensures young people are involved at a decision making level. Working directly with NHS staff enables us to create positive change and have a real impact on the health services that young people use.'

ABMyouth members have formed part of the interview panels for ABMU staff. They also work with young patients to record their stories, thoughts and feelings about their journey through hospital services.

Projects include '15 Steps Challenge' - which allows NHS staff to understand what walking onto a ward for the first time is like through the eyes of a child or young person – and a patient questionnaire, currently being worked on with the aim of gathering the opinions of as many children and young people as possible.

'In 2018, we'll be working with Child and Adult Mental Health Services and creating a survey for children and young people across the health board,' Sophie added.

Carmarthenshire People First

Carmarthenshire People First is an advocacy and training organisation, run by and for members, who organise men's and women's and skills swap groups and offer formal and informal peer support on a range of issues.

This has led to the group developing training programmes including cancer screening, keeping safe online and learning disability awareness - all co-produced and delivered by people with a learning disability.

'Members have also developed and run their own healthy eating and exercise classes, building on their own life experience to help other members grow and develop,' said Mal Cansdale of training and information company Barod CIC.

'The group is a safe space for people with a learning disability in Carmarthenshire to talk to other members and paid staff. The paid advocates provide vital support to members around a wide variety of complex issues including health, housing and benefits from day to day issues to times of crisis.

'The group offers regular placements for trainee social workers giving people a real insight into person centred approaches and listening to what people really want. It is an important part of people's social lives, helping them forge friendships and peer support.'

RUNNERS-UP – Recovery Cymru, Footsteps to Recovery and The National Waterfront Museum

Recovery Cymru, Footsteps to Recovery

Footsteps to Recovery is an innovative programme providing 'throughcare', aftercare and ongoing recovery support for people who have had substance misuse problems in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

A 'unique partnership' of three very different organisations - Solas and Recovery Cymru, Newlink Wales and Recovery Cymru Community – it delivers community-based rehabilitation, volunteer training and placements and ongoing recovery support.

Solas and Recovery Cymru's rehabilitation provides psycho-social therapies while remaining at home and develops participants' strategies for dealing with issues like low mood, anxiety and loss, improving their ability to create a healthy lifestyle balance.

Specialist substance misuse training agency Newlink Wales provides voluntary opportunities. For many of the participants, volunteering is an essential recovery tool which can provide a way into employment and economic activity.

'Recovery Cymru's ad infinitum support means that community members can access peer support for as long and as often as they need to,' said Gareth Joseph of Recovery Cymru Community.

'The programme's philosophy is that without improving and maintaining their health and wellbeing, people are unable to make the changes necessary to overcome substance misuse problems.'

The National Waterfront Museum

Having always tried to ensure its visitor services cater for those with extra needs, **The National Waterfront Museum** decided to look at how to create a safe space for those with autism after being joined by teenage volunteer Rhys, who is himself autistic.

'When Rhys first started work, he was unable to make eye contact and uncomfortable with strangers,' said the museum's Marketing and Communications Officer Jenny Walford.

'Now he happily helps out with object handling sessions both in the museum and in its outreach work, and is able to engage with and hold a conversation with strangers.'

Last year, the museum appointed an autism champion, Suzanne, who has an autistic son. Suzanne now promotes changes which will benefit those with autism, across all seven Amgueddfa Cymru museums.

She was the force behind creating a new chill-out room for the Waterfront Museum, believed to be the first of its kind in a Welsh museum, which features soft flooring, beanbags to relax on, a colour-changing effect on the ceiling, natural sounds like birdsong and lapping waves, and a selection of different-textured toys to handle.

'The room gives visitors with autism, dementia and other conditions - who can be overwhelmed with the crowds, lights and sounds of the museum - a calming place to relax before returning to the museum itself,' said Jenny.

The award for good governance - to recognise those groups whose trustees ensure their organisation is well run and exemplar.

WINNER – Hope Rescue

Hope Rescue in Llanharan, Rhondda Cynon Taf, has grown from a small charity with just one paid member of operational staff to having 13 people working at the £650,000 centre.

The Trustee Board appointed four new members - a management accountant, procurement manager, HR manager and marketing manager – to draw up the business plan it needed to be able to buy the building.

'They developed a robust business model including the establishment of a trading company and social enterprise model,' said Transformation Manager Vanessa Waddon.

New sustainable income streams were identified, including commercial boarding, a local authority stray dog contract, welfare boarding contracts with other animal charities, and the grant-funded redevelopment of the charity shop to provide a dog-friendly coffee shop and craft workshop.

The Trustees were successful in putting together a £650,000 funding package through a mortgage from Charity Bank, loan funding from the Communities Investment Fund and grant/loan funding from the Social Business Growth Fund. A fundraising campaign raised a further £225,000.

'The purchase of the rescue centre has transformed the way the charity operates,' Vanessa added. 'The Trustees have provided incredible support, ensuring we meet our statutory obligations and comply with good practice and using their professional skills to provide hands on as well as strategic support.'

RUNNER-UP - The Welsh Centre for International Affairs (WCIA)

The Welsh Centre for International Affairs (WCIA) was established in 1973, and its trustees were historically people with a prior connection with its work, said Chief Executive Martin Pollard.

'In recent years, we have been through a major transformation, with a step change in standards of governance and professionalism,' he added.

A transparent and open process of recruitment was introduced, increasing diversity on the board by moving away from a 'white, elderly male' profile and allowing for fresh ideas reflecting contemporary best practice to be shared. It also became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and adopted a constitution for the first time.

In 2015, the WCIA was awarded Wales for Peace (over £900,000) and Wales for Africa (£1.8 million) project funds by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Welsh Government. The WCIA staff team increased from five to 20, with one Board strategy leading to an improved revenue stream being generated via property assets.

'Today, the trustees have limited terms - maximum three terms of three years - and there are regular rounds of open recruitment to the Board,' said Martin Pollard. 'Trustees are surveyed to establish skills, experience and knowledge, and recruit actively to fill gaps and increase diversity. The Governance Committee, chaired by the Vice-Chair, runs an annual trustee survey to look for ways of strengthening governance.'

RUNNER-UP - Headway Cardiff & South East Wales

The 10-strong Rookwood Hospital-based Board has been continually improving and growing the organisation to ensure service users, volunteers, supporters and staff received the best possible experience, said Headway Fundraising and Communications Officer Lucy Lawler.

It met Headway UK's Good Governance standards, which meant it had to prove excellence in strategic decision-making, compliance, safeguarding,

managing finance, quality assurance, engagement with service users and volunteers, and communication and management of 120 members.

One of the newest trustees was a service user - a 'fantastic' asset to the board, as it provided valuable insight into life with an acquired brain injury, as well as first-hand experience of the charity's services.

Outside scheduled meetings, the Board was involved in other activities such as risk assessments, interviews and conferences.

'Overall, our Trustees are extremely valued and respected by our staff,' Lucy Lawler added. 'Their commitment to our charity is overwhelming, and the growth of the organisation over the past few years is the result of their dedication and hard work.'

The Award for digital inclusion, supported by Digital Communities Wales - for organisations promoting basic digital skills and helping members or service users to get online.

WINNER – Innovate Trust

Cardiff-based Innovate Trust is running an 'intelligent personal assistant project' to promote digital inclusion for 'some of the most vulnerable people' in Rhonda Cynon Taff, the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff itself.

The charity is setting up voice activated Intelligent Personal Assistant Devices (IPA) - such as the Amazon Echo and Google Home – in the homes of people with learning disabilities to help them live more independently.

'Disabled individuals are often excluded from the digital world or are forced to use technology that is built especially for disabled people,' said Innovate Trust Research Officer Kieran Vass.

'This technology is often not fit for purpose, is expensive and creates a stigma. With the use of mainstream IPA technology, our beneficiaries are able to proactively engage with the digital world to improve their lives. For example, beneficiaries can now set a reminder to take their medication without staff support – giving them more freedom and control over their lives.'

The project is being run in partnership with Cardiff University, research consortium Nesta, YLab the Public Innovation Labs for Wales, Welsh Government, local authorities, housing associations, cooperative parents' groups and Amazon.

RUNNER-UP – Derwen and Solas

Older people's housing association **Derwen Cymru's** 'Learning Together' project has involved working jointly with fellow local housing providers Gwalia and Solas in promoting the project and recruiting and supporting young

volunteers with backgrounds of homelessness, living in care and substance misuse.

'We are now exploring new partnerships, ideas and various technologies to include those residents who require a bit more encouragement,' said Active Ageing Officer Harriet Bleach. 'One example is to develop the Learning Together project with Cardiff Metropolitan University to include creating digital stories and reminiscing about their education and school days'.

Positive outcomes so far include both residents and volunteers enjoying the social aspect, as well as learning new skills, saving money, building confidence and increasing independence.

Derwen Cymru has also developed a range of ways to help staff and volunteers develop their digital skills, including training courses delivered by Digital Communities Wales and TPAS, building confidence to create content for Derwen's website and social media.

Derwen staff signpost residents to Digital Fridays held at Newport libraries, while residents who need home visits are put in touch with the RNIB Online Today project and Age Cymru Gwent.

'Derwen's aim is to equip staff with the knowledge and enthusiasm to develop Derwen's overall digital approach,' Harriet Bleach added. 'We aim to provide residents with the choice to explore getting online and discover the benefits it brings in a way that suits them.'

RUNNER-UP - Clwyd Alyn Housing Association (CAHA)

Clwyd Alyn Housing Association (CAHA) has drawn-up a Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan, equipping its money advice team with Wi-Fi enabled computers.

The team then supports residents to use key online applications - such as for Universal Credit - and arranged for Digital Communities Wales to deliver Digital Champion training, boosting staff and residents' confidence and techniques in encouraging others to get online.

The action plan has also seen CAHA deliver 'job ready' sessions for unemployed residents - including assistance with searching and applying for jobs online - and raise awareness of online support tools such as benefit checkers and money comparison sites.

The housing association has liaised with Communities First in organising computer courses for people needing them and promoted Vision Support's RNIB Online Today project for people with visual impairments, arranging for them to deliver sessions for example to residents of Llys Eleanor Extra Care Home.

The plan has also involved the hosting of 'silent cinema' events, where elderly residents reminisced while watching black and white movies accompanied by live music.

'CAHA firmly contributes towards delivering a Digital Wales,' said Community Development Officer Louise Blackwell. 'Working in partnership with many agencies, we use diverse engagement methods tailored to residents' unique wants and needs to help them access the internet and develop digital skills.'

RUNNER-UP - Gwynedd Ddigidol/ Digital Gwynedd

The **Gwynedd Ddigidol/ Digital Gwynedd** project, which was set up by national charity Citizens Online, is a partnership focused on helping local people improve their internet skills and enjoy the social and economic benefits of being online.

In the past two years, it has recruited 140 digital champions through delivering training events in the workplace, forming a sub-group focused on online accessibility for disabled people, creating peer-to-peer community support and raising its profile through social media (1,000-plus twitter followers), quarterly newsletters (400-plus subscribers) and regular network meetings.

Its campaigns have been designed to appeal to people in greatest need, such as housing benefit claimants, and sessions and pop-up events have been run in the heart of communities, including supermarkets, livestock markets and doctors' surgeries.

'Our key successes include having 35 organisations as partners in Digital Gwynedd working together to increase capacity to promote initiatives by running joint marketing campaigns,' said Digital Gwynedd Co-ordinator Daniel Richards.

'We're always looking for better ways to upskill and empower staff and volunteers to become Digital Champions, who are crucial to motivate and support others in the community with technology.'

Award for innovative fundraising, for fundraising teams that were able to create a successful and innovative campaign to raise money in difficult times.

WINNER - Mudiad Meithrin

National Welsh-medium early years care and education organisation **Mudiad Meithrin** collected almost £15,000 in one day through 'The Biggest Pyjamas Party in the World' last May.

The organisation's aim was to hold a series of local and national events to raise awareness of the importance of fundraising to the Cylchoedd Meithrin

(Welsh-medium playgroups) as local charities managed by voluntary management committees.

Those attending a pyjama party would donate £1 per head, with proceeds given to the Cylch Meithrin as part of the continuous fundraising effort. There was also sponsorship and support from Bala pyjama manufacturer Aykroyds & Sons.

'After months of planning, collaboration with partners and promotional work, over 400 events were held on one day with 90% of Cylchoedd Meithrin – of which there are around 350 – taking part,' said Mudiad Meithrin Chief Executive Dr Gwenllian Lansdown Davies.

Also involved were 21 primary schools, 66 Welsh celebrities, 18 Cymraeg for Kids groups, several Merched y Wawr branches, offices and other organisations.

'Our aim was to break the world record for the number of people in one pyjama party, which was 2,004, and therefore to raise the equivalent amount of money,' Dr Lansdown Davies added. 'In the end, £14,693 was raised – over seven times the target) with 8,750 people attending over 300 pyjama parties!

'The day was such a success that we're under pressure to hold an annual event and partners such as S4C are seeking our advice on holding such a one-day celebration.'

RUNNER-UP - The Wallich

Sharing **The Wallich's** increasing concerns about and keenness to support the number of rough sleepers in Cardiff city centre, John Lewis agreed to help raise awareness of the issue while encouraging customers to also lend their support.

'We worked closely with the haberdashery department to come up with a practical and creative idea to raise money for The Wallich and show that John Lewis cares about homelessness,' said the charity's Corporate Fundraising Manager Mike Walmsley.

One Knit Wonder™ was designed as a stocking filler gift to encourage people to knit. Each pack included a ball of wool, knitting needles and a simple downloadable knitting pattern. The pack encouraged people to wear the hat, gift it to a loved one or give it to someone sleeping rough.

'The product was aimed at John Lewis customers to give the gift of knitting for Christmas and support rough sleepers at the same time,' Mike Walmsley added.

'Harlequin Printing and Packaging sponsored the pack production and John Lewis Cardiff sourced the materials required for the packs at a very significant discount. This allowed us to price the product at £12, much lower than other knit packs, and still make more than £10 profit per pack to The Wallich.

'They sold out three days before Christmas and we made £15,120 gross on the whole campaign - 1,260 units - which equates to £12,600 profit.

'The impact for The Wallich has been considerable. We have a partnership with a high-end retailer which is developing into future opportunities and income, in addition to reaching out to a new audience to promote our work. Most importantly, the money raised will be used to support vulnerable people off the streets and into safety throughout 2018.'

RUNNER-UP - Music in Hospitals & Care Cymru

Music in Hospitals & Care Cymru is based at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, which has a plentiful supply of talented student volunteers, who not only want to help the charity but are also looking for performance opportunities.

'We use professional musicians to cheer up people who are confined in healthcare venues,' said Robert Aitken, the charity's Director in Wales. 'But we also hit on a scheme to make use of volunteer musicians by asking them to perform in public spaces around Cardiff.'

The project has since expanded to include regular performances in St David's Shopping Centre and outside supermarkets throughout South Wales.

'Demand for the charity's concerts is growing each year,' said Robert Aitken. 'Last year, we needed to raise around £110,000 to meet that demand. For a small charity like Music in Hospitals & Care Cymru, that's a tall order. But the more money we can raise, the more concerts we can deliver.'

'Using students to perform fundraising concerts for us has made a small but significant dent in that total. So far this financial year, this activity has generated more than £3,500 – that's over 3% of what we need to raise each year, and a significant chunk of our annual target – and the work was all done for us by volunteers.'

'Although our charitable objectives are very clearly focused on people in healthcare, using music to raise money also allows us to spread the joy of live music far more widely – and that's got to be a good thing!'

The Class Networks award for the most admired organisation - for organisations most respected for their inspirational work and the causes they represent.

WINNER – Hope Rescue

As well as rehoming hundreds of dogs in need, **Hope Rescue** runs a ‘Hope in the Community’ scheme, providing pet food and other pet sundries to food banks and support organisations helping owners on low incomes and those living on the streets, offering volunteering and work experience opportunities, campaigning for legislative change and promoting responsible ownership through education and community projects.

The canine respite scheme supports owners in crisis – for example, those suffering domestic abuse, homelessness or hospitalisation - to keep their dogs.

Jennifer Coleman-Humphreys of Penarth has championed the charity since adopting her dog Lacey from them. ‘I’ve become a huge supporter of Hope’s work and it’s fair to say that they are so much more than “just” an animal rescue organisation,’ she said.

‘They moved in to their new rescue centre in April 2017, having previously operated through a network of foster homes and private boarding.

‘Since then, they have made a huge impact on the local community through their outreach programme, whilst having had to massively increase their fundraising activities in order to cover the costs of running premises. All of this is achieved through a very small team of paid staff, supplemented by some very dedicated volunteers.’

RUNNER-UP - Prince’s Trust Cymru

The aim of the **Prince’s Trust Cymru** is to give 11 to 30-year-olds who are unemployed or struggling at school a chance to transform their lives through free programmes giving them the practical and financial support they need while helping them develop key skills.

‘Feedback from employers is that they are extremely happy with the calibre of young people interested in taking part, which proves how popular the programme has become due to the high quality training content and excellent outcomes the programmes have achieved,’ said Yvonne Hughes of DWP – Jobcentreplus.

‘Each young person benefits from one to one support and is offered further support/mentoring for up to six months - the figures show that last year they empowered 58,000 young people to turn their lives around.

‘I believe that the Prince’s Trust is the best thing since sliced bread!’ Yvonne added. ‘They boost young people’s confidence and motivation so they can continue to dream big.’

RUNNER-UP - TAPE Community Music and Film

TAPE Community Music and Film, based in Old Colwyn, Conwy works with communities, third sector groups and public sector professionals to co-produce a wide range of creative activities, events and projects.

'In essence, they facilitate others - mostly people from the margins of society - to tell their story,' said Mark John-Williams of The Co-production Network for Wales, a Lottery-funded network of more than 1,000 co-production champions.

TAPE's work includes co-producing inclusive creative arts workshops, culminating in musical and film performances and an art exhibition; and a film about the importance of friendship and community, which had a public screening at the North Wales Coastline Festival.

'TAPE's natural ability to include all people, in particular those who are most marginalised, is outstanding,' Mark John-Williams added. 'They are brilliant change-makers and facilitators who live and breathe a culture of enabling social justice, using creativity to unleash people's assets to get across hugely important social and community issues.'

RUNNER-UP - Groundwork North Wales

Groundwork North Wales is committed to improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales and focuses its activities where it can make the most difference to communities facing disadvantage.

It tackles such issues as worklessness, and fuel, food and furniture poverty, working in partnership with organisations across North Wales to ensure a greater understanding of the natural environment and how it can be protected.

'Groundwork North Wales has helped save people in fuel poverty over £24,000 off their energy bills through supported bill switching, as well as installing almost 2,000 energy efficiency measures in over 150 homes,' said Alison Hill of the Caia Park Partnership.

'I was also impressed by their activities which support young people into work, engaging with 135 young people through their green team with a retention rate of 89%.

'The diversity of their work and the commitment to the people of Wales is incredible. My team at Caia Park Partnership have delivered projects with them and have all commented on the passion, dedication and enthusiasm the staff at Groundwork bring to their project delivery.'

RUNNER-UP - Age Connects Morgannwg

Operating throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil, Pontypridd-based **Age Connects Morgannwg** runs services including information and advice, community outreach, support at home, nail cutting - and armchair yoga and dancing.

'There is nothing that they cannot help you with - their staff are always kind and helpful and nothing is too much trouble for them,' said Rhondda 50+ Forum Secretary Lynda Corre.

'Age Connects Morgannwg is an organisation that you can feel completely safe with - you know that they are looking after your interests at all times. Whatever problem you have they are there for you, they ensure that those who are most vulnerable and at risk are kept safe.

'They also encourage older people to get involved in speaking up for what they want and influence change. I cannot think of any other organisation that goes that extra mile to ensure the lives of older people are made better in every way.'

RCT Older Persons' Advisory Group Chair Angela Tritschler said Age Connects provided a hospital discharge service which was invaluable to people returning home, helping with shopping, building up people's confidence and also helping with possible depression which can often occur after periods in hospital.

'In this time of austerity, ACM stands out as a beacon of light and hope to many older people in these valleys,' she added.

RUNNER-UP - Cwmbran Centre for Young People (CCYP)

Cwmbran Centre for Young People (CCYP) and its social enterprise company Randomz are highly respected providers of opportunities. CCYP was the first recipient of the Welsh Government's Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales Bronze Award, then the Silver, before becoming the first organisation to achieve the Gold Award.

One of its qualities is its willingness to work in partnership with the wider youth work and third sectors, the private sector and other agencies including the police, said Paul Glaze of CWVYS (the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services).

'Youth services in Wales are undergoing significant changes in terms of how they meet the needs of young people – and this has to be delivered in the context of fewer available financial resources, a need to be highly adaptable, the need for excellent change management abilities while at the same time designing and implementing innovative solutions,' he added.

'CCYP has these skills and abilities in abundance. All of its workers, volunteers and young people are real grafters; they know that huge efforts

equal rewards for all – training, volunteering, work-based learning, a job, apprenticeships and development of confidence, motivation and self-esteem in young people.

‘CWVYS is very pleased to be associated with CCYP and the incredibly positive and powerful work it delivers on behalf of the young people of Torfaen and beyond.’

RUNNER-UP - Headway Cardiff & South East Wales

Before the charity was set up by patients and their families - supported by therapists in Rookwood Hospital - those discharged from hospital were left with little or no ongoing support to cope with and adapt to the devastating consequences of brain injury.

Headway brings people together for mutual support and provides them with an holistic, personal and tailored approach. ‘It is a very responsive and agile organisation – if a gap is identified, an appropriate service is developed,’ said Cari Sowden-Taylor of Hugh James Solicitors.

The welfare benefits and counselling service provides one to one support to reduce the emotional impact, stress and financial anxiety that can come with brain injury.

‘Headway Cardiff and South East Wales are a small organisation with only 15 full and part time staff,’ Cari added. ‘However, thanks to their dedicated, determined and committed staff, they achieve a great deal.’

‘They haven’t waited for things to happen – they’ve made them happen and in doing so, have improved the lives of hundreds of people affected by acquired brain injury.’

Julie Smith, of Case Management Cymru, said that without Headway, many people would have nowhere to turn. ‘They liaise with professionals involved in people’s care to ensure there is a coordinated and consistent approach,’ she added.

‘However, for many people affected by acquired brain injury, because their disabilities are hidden, they can fall between services. Headway Cardiff & South East Wales provides a vital safety net which ensures people don’t get overlooked or forgotten.’

<p>For more information please contact Simon Dowling or Lynne Reynolds on 0800 2888 329. WCVA website www.wcva.org.uk</p>
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Notes to editors:

- WCVA is the national membership organisation for the third sector in Wales. Our vision is for the third sector and volunteering to thrive and improve well-being for all. We achieve this by influencing, connecting, and enabling.



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Swyddfa Gofrestredig - Prif Swyddfa

Tŷ Baltig, Sgwâr Mount Stuart
ffôn 0800 2888 329 ● ffacs 029 2043 1701
minicom 029 2043 1702 (defnyddiwch y cyhoeddwr)
ebost help@wcva.org.uk

Swyddfeydd hefyd yn y Rhyl ac Aberystwyth

Cadeirydd Peter Davies OBE
Is-Gadeiryddion Catriona Williams OBE
Prif Weithredwraig Ruth Marks MBE
Trysorydd Anrh Mair Gwynant ● **Ysgrifennydd** Tracey Lewis

Elusen gofrestrdig 218093
● Cwmni cyfyngedig drwy warant 425299
● Wedi ei gofrestru yng Nghymru
Rhif cofrestru TAW 736 645 09

Registered Office - Head Office

Baltic House, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff, CF10 5FH
tel 0800 2888 329 ● fax 029 2043 1701
minicom 029 2043 1702 (use announcer)
email help@wcva.org.uk

Offices also at Rhyl and Aberystwyth

Chair Peter Davies OBE
Vice-Chairs Catriona Williams OBE
Chief Executive Ruth Marks MBE
Hon Treasurer Mair Gwynant ● **Secretary** Tracey Lewis

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