

Tom Owen grew up in the West Midlands before moving to Swansea to study Art and Photography at university. After graduating, he spent many years working in the Creative IP department at CIRIC Based in the university, supporting small businesses to develop their creativity and reach wider audiences. Alongside this, Tom built up experience in events planning and worked as a CAD designer, producing technical drawings for both business and civil engineering projects.

In 2021 Tom and his husband moved from South Wales to Hereford to be closer to family, and soon after he realised a long-held dream of opening *Gay on Wye* Hay-on-Wye's first LGBTQIA+ bookshop. Since opening in August 2023, the shop has welcomed over 35,000 visitors and has grown into a vibrant platform for community support, inclusion, and creativity, serving not only the LGBTQIA+ community but the wider public.

Tom is deeply involved in the life of the town. He is Chair of Hay-on-Wye's Chamber of Commerce, representing and working with over 80 local businesses to navigate the challenges of an evolving high street and to develop strategies to ensure the town continues to thrive. He is also a director of **Hay Pride**, helping to deliver the town's annual Pride celebration each July—a joyful event bringing together residents and visitors to celebrate both individuality and common ground.

Alongside these roles, Tom supports a range of organisations in Hay and the surrounding area, offering practical help, business strategy planning, and creative development. He joined Hay Town Council to help bridge the work of the Chamber and the Council, ensuring unified efforts that maximise impact and support both residents and businesses in this wonderful town.