

SIAMBR FASNACH A THWRISTIATH BRO FFESTINIOG

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND TOURISM

MINUTES 7TH SEPTEMBER 2015 HELD AT THE BRIDGE CAFÉ , BLAENAU FFESTINIOG

Present: Clare Britton – Rheillfordd Ffestiniog ac Eryri (Cadeirydd/Chairman); Diane Lea (Ysgrifenyddes/Secretary) – Plas Blaenddol; Alister Haveron – Dolawel Guest House; Rhian Williams – Teithiau Cerdded/Blaenau Active; Kevin Baldwin – De Niro’s Café; Meirion Ellis – Cambrian News; Chris Fosbury – Eifion Stores; John Whitehead – Bryn Eltyd Eco Guest House; Jon March – Jon March Photographics; Gail Jordan – Harlequin Jewellery; Owain Williams – NatWest Bank; Sue Roberts – Sue’s Book Shop.

Guests: Mandy Williams-Davies – Cynghorydd Sir Gwynedd; Bedwyr Gwilym – Town Council; David Aylward – PhD Student.

Before the meeting started, a minute’s silence was held in memory of Bob Cole who died recently and also in memory of his wife who died 18 months ago, both of whom had worked very hard on behalf of the Chamber and the town of Blaenau Ffestiniog.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Steve Cunliffe – The Pengwern; Michael Bewick – Llechwedd Slate; Johara Sykes Davies – Zipworld (during Laura Jones’ maternity leave); Jodie Catlin – Trawsfynydd Holidays; Iris Fosbury – Treasurer/Eifion Stores.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 8th June 2015 were approved.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 RAWSON TWINNING (Item 3.1)

Bedwyr informed members of the plan for the Patagonia Day celebrations to be held in the square in Blaenau Ffestiniog on Saturday 12th September to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the establishment of Rawson on 15th September 1865. As well as the square being renamed Rawson Square, Elvey Macdonald, who was born in Trelew and raised in Gaiman Patagonia, would unveil a commemorative plaque to celebrate the recent twinning of the town of Rawson with Blaenau Ffestiniog. After the unveiling, Elvey Macdonald would hold a talk and discussion in the council chambers on Rawson and Patagonia’s unique link with Wales and the Welsh Language. Bedwyr said that the Town Council had been working with local businesses to encourage them to participate in the theme of the event and throughout the day there would be stalls and other activities in the square.

Bedwyr also announced that the Town Council was launching a Scholarship this year for 16-30 year olds in connection with the twinning.

3.2 CIST GRANT APPLICATION (Item 3.3)

Clare stated that the CIST grant had not been the appropriate route to seek funds for the work of the Chamber so she and Gail Jordan would look at developing a bid so that when an opportunity presented itself, the Chamber would be ready to submit a bid. Mandy Williams-Davies pointed out that there was now more of an emphasis on “loans” rather than “grants” and this was noted by the members. She also highlighted the fact that the LEADER projects focussed on ideas from businesses working together on new aims, e.g. some businesses in Pwllheli had joined together

with £1k to help new businesses in the town. Other suggestions included: considering the possibility of the Chamber joining with another Chamber to bid for funds for a leaflet; or considering a link with the Gwynedd Slate Industry World Heritage Site application currently being pursued by Gwynedd Council; or a technology link. It was noted that “partnership” would be an important part of any bid.

3.3 DHFFEST 25TH & 26TH JULY 2015 (Item 4)

Clare and other members of the Chamber had spent the day at Llechwedd talking to bikers and handing out the leaflet about Blaenau Ffestiniog and encouraging people to visit the town. It would be useful to find additional ways of linking with the competition entrants, their supporters and spectators. It was noted that Ceri Cunningham had recently changed jobs although he remained on the Board of Antur Stiniog. It was agreed to contact Antur Stiniog to enquire who would be the contact with the Chamber in future. ACTION: DIANE LEA

It was mentioned that there had been limited benefit to local businesses from the Festival Number 6 but the organisers were considering developing a “wind-down package” for next year to encourage people to stay in the area after the end of the festival.

3.4 WORLD HERITAGE SITE APPLICATION (Item 4.7)

Mandy reported that the next stage of the bid process was to be submitted this month by Gwynedd Council in the hope of reaching the next stage.

3.5 CAR PARKING IN BLAENAU FFESTINIOG (Item 4.6)

Congratulations to Mandy and Clare for achieving a change by Gwynedd Council of the status of the car park behind Ty Gorsaf from Long Stay to Short Stay. The car park would also be free from 6pm (4pm in the winter) until 10am the next morning.

3.6 NATWEST BANK CLOSURE IN BLAENAU FFESTINIOG (Item 5.5)

Clare had written to Natwest Bank but had not received a reply. The bank was due to close on 23rd September 2015. There would be a facility to pay money in at the Post Office in Blaenau Ffestiniog. The mobile Natwest Bank would also visit every Monday between 9.30am and 10.30am. The existing cash dispenser outside the bank would be removed at some stage.

3.7 HISTORY SOCIETY (Item 4.5)

Rhian reported that the History Society museum had been visited during the summer of 2015 by approximately 4,800 people. Members congratulated the Society on this impressive achievement.

4. NOSON GOLEUO AND FIREWORKS NIGHTS

Fireworks Night would be on 5th November 2015 at Cae Peips. Kevin stated that he could purchase a 15-20 minute display package for between £1,000 and £1,200 and that Eurwen could run the display. It was noted that Blaenau Bendigedig had enough funds to purchase the display but members would need to find ways to recoup that amount and a number of methods were proposed:

- Charge an entrance fee at the sole entrance point.
- Bucket collection.
- Kevin would run a hot dog stall with the profit going to Blaenau Bendigedig. It was agreed that another meeting of Blaenau Bendigedig was needed in the near future.

ACTION: CLARE BRITTON.

- Craft stalls could be invited and asked to make a donation.
- Mandy agreed to find out more details about a mobile bar. ACTION: MANDY WILLIAMS-DAVIES
- Volunteers were needed to run stalls and stewards were also required. ACTION: ALL
- It was suggested that there would be a named Organiser for the event to aid planning and operation on the night.
- A flyer was needed for the Chamber's Facebook page and Alister agreed to contact Nia for this. ACTION: ALISTER

Noson Goleuo:

A lantern parade as part of the Illuminations evening was in the process of being discussed with schools who had been asked to consider having a parade with led tealights although funding for this would be needed. The Grotto would be behind Antur Stiniog again and the Church Hall would also be needed again so there would be no worry about marquees and the weather. Chris agreed to book the Church Hall for 3rd December 2015. ACTION: CHRIS FOSBURY

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 5.1 Siop Jeff: It was noted that the vinyls had been removed from the shop leaving the frontage looking very unsightly. However, as the owner had no plans to improve this aspect it was agreed that the Chairman would write and express disappointment at the removal of the vinyls. ACTION: CLARE BRITTON
- 5.2 Appointment of Deputy Chairman to the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism: Clare announced that Gail Jordan had offered her services as Deputy Chairman to the Chamber. She had experience in the charity sector so could work on funding bids as well as help Alister with the website. The Chairman proposed the appointment which was agreed unanimously by the members present.
- 5.3 Go Below: Clare stated that Miles Moulding of Go Below and the Ffestiniog Railway had agreed a trial to be run by Go Below using part of the railway's car park at Tanygrisiau as their base so that it could be moved from Betws y Coed so encouraging more people to the area. Go Below is keen to work with accommodation providers in the area and members agreed that this move could be very good for the town.

Sue Roberts arrived at the meeting.

- 5.4 Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Website: Alister reported that there had been good numbers visiting the website. He confirmed that Paypal had been removed. In response to a question, members agreed that there did not need to be on the website a list of members and their contact details. Clare and Alister agreed to visit Delwedd to discuss improvements to the website. ACTION: CLARE AND ALISTER

Some information had recently been updated on the website by Alister who asked for members to contact him whenever they notice any items which are out of date. He also asked members to be proactive in ensuring that their own information on the website was up-to-date as this was individual's responsibility and to send him the exact text etc. for adding to the website. ACTION: ALL MEMBERS TO CHECK THEIR DETAILS ON THE WEBSITE BEFORE THE NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the Chamber's Facebook page had 8,784 visit in August 2015 and members were asked to keep submitting their events for addition to the Facebook page which was becoming a useful resource for the local community.

5.5 Bryn Elltyd & National Ecohomes: John Whitehead reported that Bryn Elltyd would be closed on Saturday 12th September 2015 as it was to be visited by people from National Eco Homes to see what eco-friendly work had been undertaken at Bryn Elltyd. Information can be seen on the Superhomes website www.superhomes.org.uk

5.6 National Downhill Mountain Biking event 19th September 2015 at Llechwedd: it was noted that around 3,000 people were expected to attend this nationally organised event. Leanne Wood would also be here on that date and Mandy agreed to send information to Alister for the Facebook page. ACTION: MANDY AND ALISTER

Members considered whether or not to have a stall to encourage visitors to go into Blaenau Ffestiniog as well as visiting the event. It was agreed that handing out leaflets would be a good idea as it had encouraged people into the town at the last event. Gail agreed to contact Antur Stiniog to enquire about a space. ACTION: GAIL JORDAN

5.7 Celebration of the Life of Bob Cole: Meirion informed members of a gathering to celebrate the Life of Bob Cole to be held on 3rd October 2015 at the Lakeside Café in Tanygrisiau. If you would like to attend please contact in advance carolandmick@gmail.com or text them on 0777 608 8706 as they will need to know numbers. There will be a collection at the gathering for Dignity in Dying.

6. RESEARCH BY DAVID AYLWARD Post Graduate Researcher, Waterford Institute of Technology

Clare invited David to inform members of his research work in Blaenau Ffestiniog and why he was attending the meeting. David said that he was researching small tourism providers and how they work together in their rural community. He was studying Blaenau Ffestiniog and Elora and Fergus, Ontario, Canada. A similar study had been done in the past in Ireland and this study would also be compared to that earlier work. He would be meeting as many people as possible during his visit. The study should be completed by the end of 2016. The Chairman said that the Chamber would be interested in linking with counterparts in Canada. A suggestion that a grant based on such a new partnership link could be something for the Chamber to consider. Members wished David well in his research.

Owain Williams joined the meeting.

7. NATWEST BANK

In response to a question, Owain agreed to find out from Worldpay whether contactless payments were a lower cost than taking debit and credit cards with a PIN. Owain said that he would also invite the Worldpay contact to the next meeting. It was also noted that contactless payments now had a £30.00 limit but they can only be used 2 or 3 times a day. ACTION: OWAIN WILLIAMS

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on 19th October 2015 at De Niro's Café in Blaenau Ffestiniog.

Clare thanked Gaile Weir for hosting this evening's meeting at the Bridge Café.