

Blaenau Ffestiniog Regeneration Project Social Benefits Briefing Paper

The Blaenau Ffestiniog Regeneration Scheme commenced back in 2007 with Gwynedd Council working in partnership with Blaenau Ymlaen, a local community group and the Welsh Government.

Research undertaken in the area at the time identified the following problems :-

- 71% of businesses felt that Blaenau was a poor location for retail
- High percentage of empty units
- Lack of shops on offer
- High number of young people leaving the town
- The need to make the most of tourists that visited the town, through increasing the amount of revenue brought into the town

Strong community engagement was essential, in fact the project went beyond engagement and included Blaenau Ymlaen as part of the project delivery team. Extensive local consultation took place in terms of what local people would like to see as the end result of the scheme.

The vision of the Project was *'to create an exciting, vibrant and attractive place to live, work and to visit, renowned for the culture and the arts, our strong sense of community and the stunning environment. The town will build on these unique characteristics in a sustainable manner in order to achieve economic, social and environmental regeneration'*.

To reach this vision, the scheme required collaboration between a number of stakeholders, including the Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, the Town Council, its inhabitants, and the local artist appointed to create bespoke slate artwork so as to reflect Blaenau Ffestiniog's strong connections with the slate industry.

£4.4m of funding was secured for the overall project, with £2m being allocated to the building work. The construction element commenced in October 2011 and its expected completion will be in October 2012. It was here that great strides were made in terms of the inclusion of community benefits in the tender process, with a mix of core and non-core specified.

As a result, the following benefits have been achieved :-

- Meet the Buyer event held to promote tendering opportunities with local companies.
- 'Meet the Contractor' event held to encourage opportunities for local sub-contractors.
- 2 Pathways to Apprenticeships started w/c 25th June for a 5week period from Colleg Llandrillo with another 2 placements due before the completion of the scheme.
- An unemployed person appointed on an Intermediate Labour Market scheme by the Artist appointed to the project, with the support of Gwynedd Council.
- Placement given to a local young person as part of his HND qualification
- Young person appointed by main contractor over the summer period on work experience, she'll be kept on by the company to work on other contracts.
- A number of workshops held with schools in the area to develop an understanding of careers within the construction industry.
- £200 donation towards 'Blaenau in Bloom' event in 2012.
- Materials on site re-used in community projects, including donation of dust bins and benches and plant and machinery for the Rugby Club.
- Main contractor to complete the Value Wales community benefits measurement tool to record all benefits achieved.

