

Blaenau Chamber of Commerce Newsletter  
May 2013.

This is a bit earlier than promised but there is so much going on, we can't leave it until mid June.

**Mystery Shopper report:**

In early April, the high Street and church Street were visited by a group of mystery shoppers and on 13<sup>th</sup> May, Pryderi ap Rhisiart from Cyngor Gwynedd presented the findings on behalf of Blaenau Ymlaen who commissioned it. Those present were given their confidential individual report and the others visited will receive theirs through the post. Although we did not see each report, we were given a general overview (already circulated) and the following points were discussed:

1) Opening hours and half day closing.

There was no obvious trend amongst those present and it was concluded that as a tourist town it was probably important for there to always be some shops open so a dedicated half day was important.

Saturday afternoons are still very quiet but it is slowly getting busier in High Street where more shops in a cluster are open. It was felt that we should have a push to try and further improve this and a 'once a month – everybody open' was suggested. How about the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month? Blaenau Bendedig already holds a table top sale and we could perhaps add more things such as guided walks around the town or special offers to make it more attractive. If you have any ideas, please contact Zoe or myself.

The important thing is to clearly display opening hours plus contact details on every business.

2) Shop Fronts.

A number of businesses were said to be in need of improvement to the outside of their premises. Pryderi reminded us that there is a 75% grant available for upgrading shop fronts with a cap of £18750.

Empty properties were also mentioned, the chamber having already written to the local empty property officer who had subsequently contacted a nearby shop. It was suggested that the chamber also write direct to the property owners.

Gwynedd Council have offered to work with the chamber to identifying some empty shops that could be included in the 'vinyl project' whereby the whole window area is covered by a vinyl with a good photo image of the local area. Members are asked to nominate any shops they want to have this treatment and let Zoe know. It is possible to do two or three shops.

3) Town Map

Everybody thought that a town map locating bike racks, toilets and other facilities should be produced. Many shops wanted to be listed but there was a

reluctance to do this as it would make the map time sensitive. I do think we should explore this though as it could be used online and downloaded.

4) Customer Service

Businesses were said to be either Welsh or English rather than bilingual. However, it was felt that we should be very proud of the Welshness and there are badges that can be obtained free of charge that Welsh speakers and Welsh learners can wear. These can be ordered from

<http://www.comisiynyddgymraeg.org/English/Assistance/Pages/ordercymrbadges.aspx>

Blaenau Ymlaen/Cyngor Gwynedd and the chamber will investigate to see what courses can be made available to help with staff training, visual merchandising etc.

It was disappointing how many people didn't know their town but awareness days have taken place so it is up to us to keep spreading the word and encourage staff to walk round and look on the website to familiarise themselves with the new Blaenau. Please also take note that there are plenty left of the Bl.Ffest town guide and Poetry Band Books at the Town Council office in the High Street – so please make use of them.

5) Doing it again

It is considered a good idea to invite the shoppers back towards the end of the year so that they could note any improvements but giving businesses ample time to react.

We hope this has been a helpful exercise and that everyone can work together to continue to lift the town.

**Dates to remember:**

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June.** Blaenau Bendigedig TableTop sales 10am – 1pm in the church hall to raise money for fireworks and Noson Goleuo.

**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June** - Tanygrisiau Carnival 23rd June. Get in touch to book a stall. £5 a table for community groups and £20 for businesses. Plenty of entertainment including the fantastic Morris Dancers and much much more.

**28<sup>th</sup> September** – Community Rail Day – more info to follow.

\*If you are aware of any other events please let us know asap so that we can spread the word\*