

Blaenau Ffestiniog guesthouse gets national eco award that the Savoy Hotel won last year.

Blaenau Ffestiniog's Green Town status was again proved at the Considerate Hotelier Green Team UK awards.

This national UK competition examines the sustainability and green ethos of, usually much larger hotels. Bryn Eltyd eco guesthouse is zero carbon for all energy inputs and is run by Ceilia and John Whitehead. It is tiny 3 star, 6 bedroom, guesthouse that was pitted against big multi nationals such as the Best Western Hotel chain's hotel in Suffolk. Competition does not worry them, 2013 they competed in the awards in the, 20 bed hotels category against all UK incl 5 star hotels, 3 times their size. They won 2013. This year success was the whole UK, any size hotels and they won 2014.

Green does not mean compromise as Bryn Eltyd shows. Wi fi, sauna, 3 electric car charge points etc. It is all carbon zero for energy inputs, all energy comes from renewables. Having had solar panels since 1983 John and Ceilia like to think they tread lightly on the land for their grandchildren. Many organizations discuss climate change and carbon footprint, at Blaenau Ffestiniog they have acted and run only on renewable energy.

Heating uses a local wood by product that is turned to gas and burnt at 900c. Amazingly for a house up a Welsh mountain it has computer inter-grated solar panels that work to make hot water. Other solar arrays make 240v electric. All the work has been done by John or by employing local engineers.

Rain can be a welcome resource here. It is harvested to flush loos and water the garden and there are also two commercial hydro plants within 200m. Sewerage goes through 3 natural biological chambers then a small reed bed and into a duck pond, with ducks. John says " Don't panic the system is smell free and the loo flushing is normal. Bryn Eltyd was built in 1883, had an out side tap in 1983 and has now evolved into carbon neutral. It has been a long adventure using my 25 years experience of teaching technology and engineering. High tech solar integration works, as does low tech conservatories, soaking up the heat into 39inch thick walls and vents to put this warm air into the house. Together with my wife Ceilia we did what most parents dream about. The children went off to uni so we put the house on the market, sold up and moved to this stunning area where we used to holiday. Take care in the Hobbit room, lined with cozy sheep's wool, turf roofed and dug into the mountain. It has had two marriage proposals in it so far.....''

Blaenau Ffestiniog is a dream for Heritage, Eco, Welsh culture and Thrill seekers.

HERITAGE. It boasts the Ffestiniog Railway, a 13 mile long steam railway. It is so old, it was running by rolling downhill, 13miles under gravity in the 1830's. The modern inventions called steam engines, came 30 years later. Some of the original steam trains are still chuffing up the line today. Links with mainline trains mean London Euston is one change away.

ECO Bryn Eltyd get it electric from its own solar panels or from renewable such as hydro power. There are 5 of these in Blaenau. No wonder it was the first town in Wales with electric street lighting. One of these hydro even pumps a 2 mile long lake UP a mountain to use its energy like a battery. Open the taps and you get power for a small city in 6 seconds. Blaenau celebrates the resource of water and rain with a rain festival.

WELSH CULTURE. This town is in the very heart of Welsh speaking Wales. Look on the pavements and you see Welsh stories and Poetry trails. Come to the Male voice choir on a Thursday evening for a proper taste of real Wales. Welsh is the first language but everyone

can speak English. A quick Welsh DIOCH for thank - you is appreciated by all. Llechwedd slate caverns will take you back in time underground and entertain you, how Blaenau is the town that roofed the world with its slate.

THRILL SEEKERS. We have our own mountain range the Moelwyns. Because of the slate mining heritage access is often very easy up old tramways. It is a mecca for Climbing, Mountaineering, Nature, Mine exploration, Down hill bike trails and the new world beating Zip world Titan. This huge attraction opened in June and exploits the heritage of the quarries and the modern thrills of Europes biggest zip line complex.

John Whitehead, Bryn Ellyd Guest House