

HERITAGE NEWS

BLAENAVON WORLD HERITAGE SITE NEWSLETTER ISSUE 2 - January 2006

£1.7 million facelift for town centre

Seven areas of open space, including two car parks, within the town centre are to benefit from significant environmental improvements thanks to a successful funding bid by Torfaen County Borough to the Welsh Assembly Government and Welsh Development Agency.

The £1.7 million Town Centre Regeneration Scheme will be implemented over the next three years starting in April 2006 and will see a major transformation for the better in the town's physical appearance. The scheme tackles the most run-down and blighted areas of the town centre including Boot Lane, Broad Street Car Park and the area to the rear of the new public toilets on Lion Street. The proposals include providing attractive, high quality public spaces for resident and visitor enjoyment. Access to the town centre will be improved as will parking and disabled access. High quality materials including pennant sandstone paving and cast iron street furniture will be used and examples of public art incorporated into the design of some areas.



Executive Member for the Environment Councillor Neil Lewis said "This is great news for Blaenavon. This funding will enable much needed improvements in the town to be realised and will help to facilitate the continued economic and social regeneration of the town centre and wider World Heritage Site". Councillors Stuart Evans and Tom Huish were also delighted to have been awarded this funding and said 'It will make a huge difference to our town and we would like to thank the Blaenavon Regeneration Partnership, comprised of Blaenavon Town Council and Torfaen County Borough Council, who provided some of the funding to make this happen'.

Copies of the proposals can be viewed at Church View, Ivor Street.
Monday to Wednesday between 10.00a.m. and 4.00p.m.



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Win a prize
hamper
worth at
least
£100!

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Christmas in Blaenavon St. Peters School transformed!

The festive season in Blaenavon got off to a glorious start on Monday 28th November when the town was lit by the Christmas Lantern Parade. One hundred children from St. Peters and Hillside Schools carried paper lanterns made by SWICA – the South Wales Intercultural Community Arts. Hundreds of people gathered for the traditional Blessing of the Crib ceremony at Bethlehem Court and to see the Christmas lights being turned on. Mayor of Blaenavon, Councillor Brian Whitcombe said "This years event has been



wonderful and what a joy it is to see so many young people participating in this annual event". After the ceremony, Santa Claus arrived at Bethlehem Chapel with gifts for local children kindly donated by the Blaenavon Traders and Tourist Association.

Work continues on the restoration of the former St. Peters School which will be converted into the Blaenavon World Heritage Centre, the first of its kind in the UK. Work began on the exterior of the building earlier this year which is now near completion. Once this is achieved work can begin on building the café area and link building which will connect the upper and lower school buildings.

The Heritage Centre will be the focal point for the World Heritage Site and will be a fun and educational place to visit to learn more about the 33,000 hectare site.

The Centre will combine video presentations and IT with more traditional displays to explain the different features that make up the World Heritage Site and give a history of the town. The centre will also be equipped with a study room, lecture room and meeting facilities which will be available to schools and community groups.

Big Pit scoops top award

In May 2005 Big Pit: National Coal Museum beat three other short listed attractions to scoop the £100,000 Gulbenkian Prize for UK Museum of the Year, the UK's largest arts prize.

Big Pit was nominated for the Gulbenkian Prize following a £7 million refurbishment which was completed in February 2004. During that time all the colliery buildings were restored. The main exhibition which is held in the Baths tells the story not only of the coal mining industry, but also of the communities that grew as a result. On winning the prize Keeper and Mine Manager Peter Walker said "Big Pit is a special place to visit, and I'm delighted that the judges in this year's competition feel the same way as we do about the museum." Since winning the award the museum has had over 86,000 visitors, 8,000 more than during the same period last year. This year sees the museum opening throughout the winter for the first time allowing more visitors than ever to enjoy this unique attraction.



Gulbenkian Prize

It's all wrapped up!

Construction work on the first of two town centre commercial blocks has been completed. Neighbourhood Renewal Area funding from the Welsh Assembly Government has been used to carry out major renovation works to properties 32-39 Broad Street. The works, carried out by local company P & P Builders, have dramatically transformed this previously run down and derelict group of buildings.

New shop fronts based on those originally in place in the 1900's have been installed together with new roofs, windows and doors. Executive Member for the Environment Councillor Neil Lewis said "This is a tremendous achievement. The transformation in these buildings has been incredible and the improvements make a real difference to the town".



32-39 Broad Street

Work on phase two, renovating 73-86 Broad Street is already well underway and will be completed in December 2006.

Thank you for the Music!

Despite the rain, World Heritage Day 2005 was a fun packed day of family entertainment. The headline act 'ABBALIKE' dazzled the crowd with their toe tapping renditions of ABBA's greatest hits. The traditional Heritage Costume Parade proved yet another success with locals turning out in force to parade through the town. Chair of the Blaenavon World Heritage Committee, Councillor Neil Lewis said 'I would like to say a big thank you to the members of the committee who come from a variety of voluntary organisations within the town, for the enormous efforts and enthusiasm they give to this annual event'. Organisers say that next years event will be "better than ever" and will take place on Saturday 24th June. So put it in your diaries now and keep your fingers crossed for a sunny day!



World Heritage Site on the World Wide Web

A new website dedicated to the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape has been launched at www.world-heritage-blaenavon.org.uk. The web site provides information on the historical and social significance of the site together with general information on World

Heritage Sites. The site also provides visitor information on places of interest, outdoor activities and events. The site is still under development with many new features to be added in the future. So keep an eye on it for all the latest information on your World Heritage Site.

Workmen's Hall goes on-line!

Check out the new website for Blaenavon Workmen's Hall at www.blaenavonworkmenshall.org.uk. The new website provides information about the Hall and what it provides such as information on cinema screenings, forthcoming events & shows and snooker.

Blaenavon Property Improvement Grant

The Blaenavon Regeneration Partnership has launched the Blaenavon Property Improvement Grant, which will provide funding for external improvements which enhance the appearance of the facades of commercial and community buildings.

Blaenavon Project and Marketing Manager, Cath Thomas said "The purpose of the grant is to assist with the regeneration of the local economy by assisting traders and the community with the cost of carrying out improvements to their property". The grant is offered at a rate of up to 80% of eligible costs for commercial buildings up to a maximum of £1000. Community buildings will be offered up to 100% of eligible costs up to a maximum of £1000. As funds are limited, the grant will be offered on a first come first served basis. Anyone interested in applying for a grant is asked to contact Rebecca Hartley on (01633) 648293 for an application form and copy of the terms and conditions.

Garn Lakes Country Crafts & Recreation Fayre 2005

The sun shone on the annual Garn Lakes Country Crafts & Recreation Fayre which took place at the end of June. This year's event was a great success with over 2,300 visitors attending. There was a wide variety of outdoor activities at the event include a climbing wall provided by the Army; fishing tuition; canoeing on the lake and kite flying.

A Ceilidh Band performed in the marquee throughout the day, providing foot-tapping entertainment! For kids there were animals from Greenmeadow Community Farm, and storytelling on the edge of the lake. A vintage bus transported people between the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway; the Country Fayre; the Ironworks and the Big Pit. It was a fantastic day out for all of the family, with a wide variety of activities and entertainment to suit all. In 2006 the event will be taking place on Sunday 25th June, make a date in your diary!

For further information about the 2006 Fayre please ring (01633) 648066.



Garn Lakes 2005

Fancy being a Volunteer Ranger?

World Heritage Site Warden, Alvin Nicholas has established a volunteer ranger service. Twenty people now regularly act as volunteers. More are needed however to take part in practical projects to restore and protect the historic landscape. A variety of projects are arranged for all abilities on a monthly basis. These vary from dry-stone walling to visitor monitoring and surveying, so whatever your interest, there will be something for you.

Training in subjects such as nature, history and practical countryside skills is provided and the group are supported by the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Monmouthshire County Council and British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.

It is hoped that this group will grow and will have a key role to play in changing peoples perceptions, visitor management and protection of the historic landscape.

A regular volunteer work day is held on every second Thursday of every month with Alvin and a warden from the Brecon Beacons National Park. You are welcome to attend. Meet at Riflegreen Car Park, Blaenavon, at 9.30a.m.

If you are interested in joining the Blaenavon World Heritage Site Volunteer Rangers please contact Alvin Nicholas on 07980 682749 or e-mail:

Alvin.Nicholas@torfaen.gov.uk



Volunteer Rangers

Coming Events

Big Pit Children's Art Activities

11th - 19th February, 9.30a.m. - 5.00p.m.

Enjoy a host of family activities including an opportunity to be a mini-miner, and soft play for pre-school children.

Blaenavon Library Half Term Fun

23rd February, 3.15p.m. - 4.15p.m.

Stories and crafts for 5 - 10 year olds.

Blaenavon Booktown Spring Festival

31st March - 2nd April.

See below for details.

Blaenavon World Heritage Day

24th June 2006, Blaenavon Town Centre.

For further details telephone 01633 648002.

Blaenavon Booktown Spring Festival

SpringFest is coming! Join us in Blaenavon town centre for three days of book-related festivities with visiting authors, musicians, comedians and guest celebrities; a book fair; street entertainment; children's workshops and a Festival of Fools...Further details to be announced soon.

Pick up a leaflet from the Blaenavon Booktown Office, 71/72 Broad Street, Blaenavon or log on to www.booktownfestivals.com to register for festival updates.

Interested in booking a stall for the festival weekend? Or joining the 'Friends of the Festival'? Call Jo Wyborn on 08707 601 093 for more information.



Walks Leaflets

FREE walks leaflets are available ranging from easy strolls to energetic hikes. Walks start and finish at a convenient car park, village centre, pub, picnic site or a heritage attraction.



For further details visit www.world-heritage-blaenavon.org.uk the Tourist Information Centre in Blaenavon or contact Greta Guerresi-Leach on 01633 648066.