

Interim Report on survey findings and Action Plan

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Julie masters
Amanda Brewer

Overview

In the first week in June we were awarded the contract for a Community Hub for Llanbedr DC, Feasibility Study.

During the last 6 weeks we have put in place interviews and surveys to try and establish “where we are now” – as a community and “where would we like to be” as a community.

We developed a survey that looked at the :-

- Demographics of the village including ages, length of time living here and communications
- The Griffin Pub as a potential self financing Village Hub
- The other facilities in the Village that could make it a cohesive village

350 surveys were put out to villagers and 155 were returned – representing a 42% return

After our initial Survey work we had a village review of our initial findings for people to further comment on the work that we were doing xx people attended

We have also visited and received some guidance from, a Community Pub close by in Llanarmon yn Ial, Pub is the Hub and Wales Co Operative Centre

This review looks at the raw information we have gained and makes some comments with action points

NB all % mentioned are as a % of the respondents – not a % of the total village – but figures may be extrapolated to present similar trends

Final survey information is available, as an attachment in Pdf form

1. The School

1.1 Closure

- The School has had a closure notice on it for approximately 4 years. DCC decided that it should close as it did not have sufficient pupils to make it viable.
- A campaign was launched to fight the closure, with villagers being asked to support the school. This they overwhelmingly did and closure was overturned by Welsh Government – only to have DCC close the school again. Once more villagers backed the school.
- The Welsh Government was approached more than 18 months ago for a review of the closure, but to date, no decision has been made to reprove the school.

1.2 Positives

Despite the threat of closure, there have been many positives:

- school pupil numbers are nearly at capacity

- the Education Minister is keen to support Rural Schools and their position in communities
- The school had a good Estyn Report.
- The school has a close relationship with the Church in Llanbedr DC, as it is a Church Funded school.

1.3 Survey results and Statistics

- Many children attending the school do not come from the village. Out of 48 children in main school, 12 are from village families. There are 10 children in Munchkins childcare, who should feed through into the main school next year. The results from our own survey identify 50 children aged 16 and under which includes 25 children under 5. Parents choose the school because of its village position, its small size and its good results.
- The survey shows a number of children attend Penbarras, choosing Welsh language education, with some children attending other Ruthin schools, some parents feared Llanbedr school would close when they moved to the area and did not want to disrupt their children's education. The school is a Church School with Welsh spoken as a second language.
- Survey results show that 47% of residents have lived in Llanbedr for less than 15 years (29% under 5 years). This means there has been some movement in the housing market, even though many houses in Llanbedr are very highly priced. There are several houses on the market of family size and there are plans within the UDP to build a further 60 houses – with planning for up to 11 houses on Llanbedr Hall estate. Pupil numbers are therefore likely to rise rather than fall, if the school is able to offer local parents what they are looking for.
- The school want to carve a niche for itself using its “green” facilities and credentials to attract parents who have the same ethics and prefer an intimate environment rather than a super school for their children. There is an agenda of integrating the Welsh language into the curriculum.
- The school does try as much as possible to engage with Community activities. i.e Singing at Christmas lights, Old people's supper. It also runs events to which the community are invited, however, there is often little take up other than from family or friends of pupils. In fact nearly 70% of people surveyed have had no interaction with the school at all. This may be because the school is quite remote from the village itself which does not help integration.
- As the School building itself is quite small, and because of its relationship with the Church, special events are often held at the Church, or occasionally at the Village Hall – because of the popularity of the Hall to outside groups it is not always easy to hire when required.

1.4 Considerations

- A weekly newsletter is circulated to all parents and this often mentions village news. Villagers have been very supportive of the school, so circulating the newsletter to the wider community would be a good way to show the village as a whole what the children have been doing, without compromising child safeguarding issues. It could also add to communications and make the School feel more involved in the vibrant village community, which has been difficult up to now because of its geographical remoteness to the village centre.
- The school identified that there were several events that could be held in The Griffin ie The Christmas Lights, (as it is often cut short because of further bookings) Fundraising events and PTA/Governor meetings. Having school events that were closer to the heart of the village could also encourage more interaction
- 9 respondents to the survey said that they would be willing to go into school to support the teachers to read/garden/tell of bygone times/art/sport. The school needs general maintenance community support in terms of outdoor work ie fencing/painting etc. A community action force for the pub could potentially provide support for the school as well.

2. The Church

2.1 General Observations

- Grade II Listed St Peter's church has recently been awarded a Heritage Lottery Grant for repairs to the roof, as there is great danger of water damage to the interior.
- Llanbedr is one of 13 churches in the Mission Area of Dyffryn Clwyd which includes St Peter's Church, Ruthin.
- The Church Committee is very small and is stretched with the responsibilities of trying to maintain the building, services, and other church matters.
- Recently there has been some survey work done to ask people about their attitude to plans for opening up the church to wider use, as the Hall is sometimes not available for general meetings. The plans for the church include a toilet, a small kitchen, and a meeting room at the back of the church
- Last year there were 10 funerals and 3 weddings at the church
- The Church provides "The Link" as a quarterly newsletter. 95% of the respondents to the Village survey mentioned The Link as one of the key publications for knowing what goes on in the Village.

2.2 Considerations

- The Link is a vital communication for many villagers and is delivered to almost all houses. Publishing it is an onerous task, hence the reason it only comes out quarterly, by which time news is often out of date. There is no other efficient way of contacting villagers at present, but having regard to the popularity of The Link, the Community Council may wish to consider “The Missing Link”, a small flier for intervening months, together with further support for The Link publication and central delivery points for the newsletters for some outlying homes.
- The Church is not formally included in any of the Visit Wales information or “Church Routes” for walkers. The Church Committee should be supported to put the Church on the walkers’ map. This may help fundraising and may have a spin off for accommodation providers.
- There is a practice now for funerals for the Funeral first to go to the crematorium and then come back to the church for the service – as this means that family and mourners have more time to talk and grieve without being moved on. This would be particularly important for The Griffin if it were to open again.

3. The Hall

3.1 General Observations

- The hall has been particularly successful over the past years in attracting new, mainly private, business and has many evening and daytime bookings. It is an attractive, clean and well-maintained resource. It also has a healthy bank balance.
- There are some community activities, ie Village Flower Show and the recently started monthly village coffee mornings, however on the whole the village community doesn’t interact very much with things going on in the Hall – only 17% go regularly, 27% never go and the rest of the village attend when there are special events.

3.2 Considerations

- Whether the Griffin, the Hall and the church can work together better so that if a booking is turned away from the Hall it may be accommodated in another area.

4. The AONB

4.1 General Observations

- The AONB is keen to support the village and has done so in the past with woodland work for the school, and a community miles project
- There is a dedicated Cycle Officer who is keen to ensure that cycling is supported in the area and there are some off road cycling tracks around the Clwydian range near the village, however, there is also significant competition from the Llandegla Mountain Biking Centre. There may be some local spin out opportunities if cyclists are looking for new areas and sometimes when Llandegla holds large events, there is a need for Cycle Friendly accommodation. i.e they run an event day each year – this year there were 600 visitors and accommodation had to be sought in Llangollen.
- At present the road cycling is predominantly a day visitor tourism offering, as most people come from Liverpool, the Wirral and Cheshire. This would bring in a small amount of interest/income, as cyclist want very little food and would want to travel through fairly quickly so that they don't get cold. However, there is a spin off opportunity as often cyclists bring families back to areas that they have found interesting for a later visit. There is also a market for cycling clubs who are doing group visits. The Llanbedr area is of interest as it has several of the top challenges in the country.
- The AONB would be interested in supporting cycle specific facilities i.e. a cycle washing and lock up area.

5. The Griffin

5.1 General Observations

- **Q1.** The survey shows that people rarely/occasionally visited the pub in past years, which foretells its demise – lack of trade would mean a non-viable business.
- **Q2.** Although anecdotally the pub's demise was because of ownership by Robinsons, the survey results don't necessarily bear this out. The standard of food, the atmosphere and the decor seem to be more important challenges to the success of the Pub, not exclusively the beer. The road is also a challenge but not as important as the other issues mentioned above
- **Q3.** Respondents are looking for better food that is good, wholesome and local – and consistently of good quality (not a quick microwave meal). A cafe is seen as important for daytime socialising.
- **Q4.** Responses are given extra importance in Q4. We see that many of our respondents go regularly (from 1x2 times per week to 1x per month) to other establishments in the area, for drinking and eating. In total 90/155, representing 58% of the respondents, go to places that range from Wetherspoons to 3 Pigeons (often mentioned)

- **Q5.** Many people skipped Q5 (barriers to going out). It seems generally there are few barriers with many not worried about expense per se, although those who did answer considered expense to be the main barrier. Several people mentioned that time was a barrier to getting out more.
- **Q6.** There was a good spread of people going to local hostelrys in the area, with several others mentioned. It therefore seems people are quite happy to spend on entertainment.
- **Q7.** shows that over 85% of respondents feel that The Griffin is important to Llanbedr Village
- **Q8.** showed that most people felt the Pub should become a community Hub with nearly 70% of respondents agreeing (comments were from people who felt that a Hub and a private pub were an equally good option) with 36% being happy with a private pub.
- **Q9.** shows an almost 50/50 split on whether people would use their skills to support the pub on a voluntary basis, including the initial pub set up. This is probably indicative of village demographics and an aging population who cannot see themselves helping, however, these people may well purchase from/use the hub. At the other end of the spectrum there are people with young children who are unable to find the time to volunteer at the moment. Many people seem to be interested in helping but do not want a regular long term commitment.
- In the General Survey Questions 14 people said that they would be willing to do volunteer work and 28 said that they would consider bar work in the Griffin, with many more seemingly volunteering for a programme of cleaning. These figures need to be treated with care as people will often find themselves unable to commit even though they are keen to.

5.2 Considerations

- The survey response was just over 40% of the village households – this is high in terms of normal consultation expectations, and information and trends can be extrapolated from the findings:
 - There is an overwhelming desire to have the pub as a community Hub, with several additions to normal pub activity i.e. cafe and a small shop. These will need resources and volunteers
 - The longer the Pub stays shut the more it is missed, but there is a clear desire to make it distance itself from the old fashioned look and feel of the recent past, particularly its reputation as a place with an inconsistent food menu.
 - The food offering needs to be value for money and good quality, in a nicely decorated establishment with a good atmosphere.
- The Raven in Llanarmon yn Ial suggests it has approximately 30% local support. There seems to be a larger basis of support in Llanbedr, with a greater number of people already used to spending money on hospitality, however, there is more competition in the Llanbedr area as Ruthin is only 2 miles away. On the plus side closer proximity to Ruthin means that there is a larger nearby population that may be encouraged out of the area with the right offering and atmosphere.

- People have put themselves forward to work for the community project, but there is a calculated risk to be taken. Is this enough support or not?
- There are several niche areas which could provide key markets for the Pub:
 - ❖ Cafe Culture – older and younger, with child friendly activities in the garden
 - ❖ Self Employed (small number in the village) – area to work sociably with drinks and lunch
 - ❖ School spin off events, plus regular Governors and PTA meetings
 - ❖ Funerals
 - ❖ Wedding pre drinks
 - ❖ Ruthin town families that want a child friendly and dog friendly out door area where people can drink and eat
 - ❖ Overspill accommodation for outdoor activities or visits to family and friends
- There are enough volunteers in the first instance to move the community pub forward but there will have to be a strong Executive team to manage and deliver the key issues of up-grading, fund raising, legal entity, insurances, licensing, rota, health and safety, food standards, employee rights, purchasing, customer care, accommodation, etc etc
- Attached are details of the type of ownership and management models that could be available to the community if it wanted to look at a community hub.
- It is possible that a benefactor maybe found in the village who will purchase the Pub and lease it to the community.

6. The Survey Highlights

Please find full details attached.

6.1 Points of interest in the Survey

Many people were keen to add comments to their surveys. This shows considerable enthusiasm for “having a say”.

6.2 Communications

- Q5 – It was interesting to see how many people rely on the Link for their village information. Although the comment section is largest in % this section shows people using a variety of ways to gain information a mix of mainly Link, facebook, neighbours, Free Press and the occasional School newsletter.
- Overwhelmingly The Link is where people gain information about the village. Out of 139 responses 98 people mentioned the link – (currently only quarterly publication) Out of 139 answers only 29 gain information from facebook.
- Q7 - People would like more information in the main – and chose email as the best way of contact. 138 responded, some highlighting a mixture of contacts, but in total 74 chose email as best form of contact. In total 33 chose Facebook as the best form of contact, and 47 The link.
Several people mentioned the need for a flier or a more regular newsletter.

6.3 Considerations

- The Link is a Church organised publication which has been extremely well distributed and consistently produced, but is difficult to maintain and is only produced quarterly. There is a need for more support for the Link and more regular shorter snippets of news to engage the community.
- Facebook Llanbedr DC is the social media face of the Village. People do use it but the information is limited, and administration is not shared extensively throughout the village. Information is patchy and ad hoc. Facebook has 300+ followers, but information is not necessarily inclusive. (unless there is a lost dog!) It seems a pity to split the information source by having another Facebook page for the show committee. Maybe there should be an integrated community facebook page with administrators from each of the organisations in the village.
- We will produce a database of emails and ask permission to share with the community council so that they can consider an electronic flier at regular intervals.

6.4 Interests

- Walking was by far the most popular interest...but strongly followed by reading/gardening/travelling and interestingly Theatre had a large following. There were several extra suggestions of interests and things that a Hub may involve ie Films, Opera/classical music, folk music

6.5 Considerations

- This list gives a good guidance to the type of events that may well provide a base of attraction for villager to visit the Griffin – A literary festival; A theatre experience; A re-enactment; A film night

6.6 Changes in Llanbedr

- Many people skipped this question – implying and sometimes stating nothing needed to be changed
- Several people mentioned the lack of playing area for children
- Several people mentioned and the speed /amount of traffic through the village, together with the unsafe walking area that have no public footpath.

Consideration

- The Griffin could have an accessible play area as part of the community hub
- There are discussions with Highways to try and make the changes to road scheme and make the pub more accessible to the whole of the community