6 THE HERALD FRIDAY DECEMBER 16 2016
News
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The Cletwr Big Build
The back of Cletwr:
«itchen and storage
Postcard:
The old Cletwr in the 1960s
AN EXCITING new change
is well underway for the people of
Machynlleth and the wider area,
which will guarantee to brings smiles
all round.
After establishing in 2011 Ma,y
2013 saw the new Cletwr in Tre'r
Ddôl spring back to life, with the Siop
Cynfelyn and Caffi Cletwr opening
their doors to the public and becoming
more popular than ever.
Taking into consideratio thne
building errors of the rent-free property,
a small group of volunteers at Cletwr
then set a targe tto raise enough money
throiigh local funds and applications
to create a sustainabl buildineg as an
altemative.
With the brand new building set to
open by summe 2017r th,e community
will be able to look forward to a modern
and environmentally sound building
which will hold a larger shop and cafe,
a meeting room and offices to support
community activities.
In addition to that, the building will
even have solar panels to further reduce
energy.
Cletwr has been very fortunate
to have a wide range of funding from
various sources includin,g £497,000
from the Big Lottery Fund (o,f which
abou £300,00t0 went to buy the site),
£172,000 íìrom a Welsh Government
grant and £88,000 from an EU grant.
There have also been smaller grants
given to them by Ceredigion County
Council, Trusthous aned donations
from locals.
Novembe broughr evetn better
news for Cletwr as they received a
letter from the EU Rural Communities
Developmen Fundt statin,g that all
of the funding for the new build was
officially in place.
North Ceredigion is known for
being a relatively poor area and wit,h
that in mind, one of the main aims
of Cletwr is to tackle various issues
affecting our community such as
isolation, lack of services and poverty.
The Herald was able to interview
the newly appointed Chair of Cwni
Cymunedo Cletwrl, Nigel Callaghan,
where he was able to explain about
the on-going developmen itn greater
detail: "Cwmni Cletwr was originally
establishe idn 2011 wit,h the simple aim
of re-opening the old Cletwr Services in
Tre'r Ddôl as a village shop and cafe.
"The shop and cafe duly re-opened
in Spring 2013 staffe,d mainly by
volunteers Th.e owners of the site let us
have the property rent-free for over 18
Rhian Boyt
Ceredigion Reporter
rhian.boyt@herald.email
months t,o help us get established Bu.t
then it got complicated - we became
very popular!
"At that point, we decided to aim
a bit higher an,d seek funds to buy the
site for the community and to build
a replacemen buildingt; the existing
one has a numbe orf structura anld
environmenta problemsl an,d a new
building could be an example of
sustainabl building.e"
He continued "W:e considered
renovation of the presen buildintg as a
cheape alternativer bu,t it would have
mean closintg for many months."
Describing the inspirations behind
the project Nige,l said that it was to
'build a stronge anrd better community'.
"When we started th,e community had
lost virtually all its services shops:,
cafe, Pos Officte and petrol station all
closed.
"Since then we'v,e also lost the
schoo anld the church Al.l that was left
was a pub, a chapel an,d a village hall.
People had few or no opportunities to
mee theitr neighboürs Th.e community
was in dange orf becoming a dormitory.
"Initially, we aimed for the shop
and cafe bu,t the scope of the project
has now grown. We became aware that
we could and should aim to provide far
more than a shop and cafe s,o instead
we aimed to provide a wider range of
services and facilities to tackle many
of the problems associate witdh life in
a rural area.
"Recen studiets show that over
20% of the children in the community
live in poverty W.e do not think that is
acceptabl aned through Cletwr we, as a
community ca,n start to do something
abou that.t"
We went on to talk abou onte of
Nigel's blog entries wher,e he said that
'there should be some nice landscaping
too, making the whole place a worthy
'Gateway to North Ceredigion" Fro.m
that, Nigel described to us in detail
abou whatt people are ablë to look
forward to with the new building:
"The new building will be a mode olf
sustainabl buildinge: highly energy-efficient, generating (hopefully) more
electricity than it consumes.
"Our architect Arwy,n George of
George a Tomos Machynlleth, ha,s
ensured that it will be an attractive and
interesting building.
"The old Cletwr services were a
•HH
familiar and popular stop for travellers
on the A487 for decades an,d the new
Cletwr is no different. It's a convenient
stop for coffee a, bacon sarnie and
clean toilets, and a chance to buy a last
minute presen fotr Auntie May.
"We will also be extending the
facilities for tourists wit,h more
information abou thte immediate area,
but also Ceredigion as a whole, and
encouragin visitorgs to stop and spend
money in the county!."
"In your blog, you say that the
Big Lottery, Welsh Governmen antd
the EU, plus Cyngor Ceredigion
and Trusthouse hav,e all contributed
costs towards the development Wha.t
were the procedure behinsd this
and how would you encourag thee
public to continuously suppor thte
development? w"e asked Nigel. He
answered "Non:e of this would have
been possible without considerable
suppor frotm many organisation -s
public and private larg,e and small. One
lesson that we have learned is that there
are a lot of source oust there for funds
for worthwhile projects provide,d the
aims of your project match theirs.
"People have questione whethedr
what we are doing is the bes uste of
half a million pounds and whethe irt
could be better spen otn Bronglais.
Undoubtedly w,e all want more money
spen otn Bronglais bu,t it's the Welsh
Governmen thatt decides how to spend
the money.
"They earmarke ad fund for
addressin povertgy and deprivation
and that's what we received money for.
Rural poverty is just as real as urban
poverty, even if it is more subtle."
"The funding wouldn't have been
possible without incredible work by
severa olf our volunteers wh,o have
invested weeks eve,n months o,f their
time, unpaid identifyin,g source osf
funding, preparing the applications an,d
responding to questions."
Nigel further added "Som:e
applications failed. Many involved very
detailed written plans runnin,g to dozens
of pages An.d once the money has been
allocated considerabl, timee is spent
doing the paperwork afterwards Th.e
money is there but don't underestimate
the effort required to get it."
Nigel then went to talk abou onte
of his blog entries wher,e he said that
one of the aims of the building is to
tackle a numbe orf issues affecting the
community Regardin.g this, we asked
him what ways he believes the building
will benefit in bringing the community
together "Th:e impact of Cletwr, as
a shop caf,e and community hub, is
already being felt. We have over 50
regular volunteers o,f all ages helpin,g
with a wide range of activities fro,m
serving in the shop and cafe t,o baking
award-winning welsh-cakes cuttin,g
the grass and sorting out the WiFi.
"It's already a place where people
in the community mee utp for coffee
or attend one of our frequen eventts -
the walks are very popular A. common
commen frotm people is that there is
a 'buzz abou' thte place Peopl.e stop
to actually talk to their friends and
neighbours.
"We organise activities that support
Welsh in the community includin,g
regular session fosr learners to mix
with fluent speaker ansd develop their
language skills. We also offer a free
library of Welsh books for people to
borrow."
Nigel further explained "Parent:s
of young children like to mee utp there
as they can have a coffee and some
homemad cakee in a child-friendly
space wit,h a proper play-area wel,l
equipped with toys and books Th.e
new building will allow us to offer a
wider range of services activitie,s and
products in the shop providin,g even
more reason fosr people to call in and
get involved.
"The shop unde,r the skillful
managemen otf Karen Evans i,s already
attracting customer whso specifically
call in becaus oef the range of products,
including many local and Welsh items.
"One of the most importan aspectts
of Cletwr is that in involves all parts of
the community youn:g and old, working
and retired incomer,s and people who
have lived here all their lives, Welsh-speaker ansd non-Welsh speakers.
"Before we had Cletwr, there were
few opportunities for people to mix.
People talked abou 'communityt bu't
that was just a geographica ideal Wit.h
Cletwr, the idea is becoming a reality."
Continuing his emphasi osn how
the building will benefit the community,
Nigel added "Cwmn:i Cletwr has been
set up as a non-profit group An.y
surplus we make will be invested back
in the community helpin,g other groups
ttò.
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Revamped:
The Cletwr sign
(Pic. Suzanne Davìes)
within Taliesin and Tre'r Ddôl and
the surrounding area no,t just kept for
Cletwr activities.
"With never-endin cutgs in
funding for local services i,t is clear
that communities wil.l need to become
more and more self-sufficient A. local
community company can be a good
starting point for this, but it requires
dedication and effort from many people
in the community.
"Of course it',s not compulsory for
people to voluntee irn the shop to be a
supporter peopl;e have many demands
on their time - work, family, health
- and simply coming in from time to
time to use the shop and cafe is just as
importan ats helping with the washing
up.
"Too many villages in Ceredigion,
and throughou Walets and the UK, have
turned into ghos townts as their shops
and services have closed Man.y are
now starting to fight back.
"We've had a lot of help and advice
from the Plunket Foundationt wh,o
advise community groups on running
businesses Man.y already exist in
Wales fro,m groups running a shop for
a few hours a day to others who have
taken over the village pub and Post
Office.
"With services available again,
it become worthwhilse for people
to think abou leavintg their homes
during the day to use them N.o need to
take an expensive bus into.town to go
shopping."
Nigel concluded the interview by
telling The Herald:
"Our long-term aim is to ensure
that there is a long-term future for
our community Throug.h Cletwr and
other activities w,e want to make
Llangynfelyn somewher thaet people
will want to live, somewher wheree
they can work, raise a family, and
eventually live out a comfortable
retirement surrounde, bdy a supportive
community of friends and family."