

APPENDIX 2 – PROFILES OF THE SIX COMMUNITIES

MENTER LLANDUDOCH, ST. DOGMAELS, NEAR CARDIGAN, DYFED

THE COMMUNITY

St. Dogmaels is a rural village situated on the south bank of the Teifi Estuary, approximately a mile from Cardigan where most local amenities are sited. The village has a population of around 1700. This population figure represents a 4% increase on the 1981 census figure.

St. Dogmaels is served by St. Dogmaels Community Council, Preseli and Ceredigion District Councils (since the village stands on the border between Preseli and Ceredigion), and Dyfed County Council. 53.1% of expected demand for sports halls in Preseli, and 51.4% in Ceredigion, is unsatisfied by existing facilities (5). The village is included in the Menter Preseli project, which is a rural development initiative aiming to encourage schemes which improve rural amenities.

As in most rural areas, there is little public transport and consequently more households have cars, and more have two cars than the District or County averages.

Local employment is provided largely through agriculture and allied trades, although there is some work in local factories such as Tootal/Slimma in Cardigan and at the Royal Aircraft Unit at Aberporth. Unemployment in the Cardigan travel to work area (TTWA) stands at 8.3%.

The housing character of St. Dogmaels is overwhelmingly owner-occupied and there has been considerable in-migration of people to the area from the Midlands and South East of England who now account for around 30% of the population. As part of this pattern of in-migration of predominantly retired people and the out-migration of the young for employment, the village has a higher proportion of pensioners than the national average.

The village pub is the main recreational amenity apart from the Memorial Hall, which formed the centre-piece of the Menter Llandudoch development. The former Memorial Hall was built in 1948 by local subscriptions to commemorate those killed in the two World Wars. There are also some small shops and a cafe.

St. Dogmaels is historically an area with a high proportion of Welsh speakers; latest census figures indicate a rate of 55%, twice that of Preseli and nearly 12% above that in Dyfed as a whole.

THE PROJECT

The focus for the project was the renovation of the Memorial Hall to become the village community centre. This facility was to provide sports and general recreational facilities for the whole village.

The project's origins lay in a Welsh Development Agency (WDA) initiative designed to promote the rejuvenation of rural parts of Wales. The idea for setting up a local branch of the enterprise project, which covered the whole of Preseli, was first discussed at a public meeting in 1988. This was followed by another public meeting which was called specifically to discuss plans to build a new school at St. Dogmaels. The outcome of the meeting was that local residents were happy with the existing school and did not wish to see a new one built. However, the meeting had also discussed the broad issue of village amenities and, following the meeting, an action group was set up with the objective of improving facilities in the village, particularly for children. The group's focus on the renovation of the old memorial hall was widely supported by villagers, and the group proceeded with initial costings and plans. These were undertaken largely using local expertise, although the various local authorities were also involved at an early stage.

It was estimated that £212,000 was required to complete the renovation of the memorial hall into a properly-equipped community centre. When contact was made with the Welsh Office, it was discovered that only capital sums of £100,000 could be sanctioned. As a result, it was decided that the development should be in two phases; phase one would involve the building of an extension to the hall, while phase two would see the complete refurbishment of the existing building.

There was little market research undertaken other than a short questionnaire distributed by the Community Council. This was designed to gather general opinions on all aspects of village life and was not specifically concerned with the Menter Llandudoch project.

However, the newly-formed committee of Menter Llandudoch did contact all clubs in the area to request their input into the project (local sports clubs are still regularly consulted) and it was apparent that all local clubs would be interested in using the facility upon its completion. There was no obvious opposition to the plans other than the odd sceptic who felt the facility would not be fully utilised.

In terms of funding for the project, the Welsh Office provided £50,000, the SCW £30,000, while the two district authorities provided £25,000 between them, and the community council £2,100. The local community raised £56,000 itself. Much of this money was raised through personal donations or through the various clubs that now use the centre raising money. There was also a variety of fund-raising events staged by the Menter itself.

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St. Dogmaels Memorial Hall in 1994.

MANAGEMENT

Menter Llandudoch is managed by a full committee of thirteen members which is part of the wider Menter Preseli project. Within the St. Dogmaels project there is also a Hall Management Committee which has been in existence since 1951 and was responsible for the old hall. This committee is now responsible for all aspects of the new hall's management. This is a separate committee to Menter Llandudoch, although there is some cross membership, and its membership has remained fairly constant from the outset.

There continues to be a good working relationship with the local authorities, particularly St. Dogmaels Community Council. The present committee meets monthly, although at the development stage it was meeting on a weekly basis. There is no written constitution or standing orders for the local project although Menter Preseli (the parent body) does have a formal structure. However the local committee at St. Dogmaels is run effectively, with recorded minutes and agenda.

There is no dedicated manager for the facility, the Chairperson of the Hall Management Committee (who is also the village school's headteacher) is officially responsible. The Chairperson also organises the centre's programme and consults with local clubs and associations in order to avoid conflict over use of the centre's facilities. The Committee's Secretary handles all aspects of the administration of the hall.

The only paid member of staff is a part-time cleaner who is very much involved with the project. There has been some discussion regarding the appointment of a dedicated manager and an application to SCW was considered, but it was felt that, at present, usage of the hall did not merit such an appointment.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the project at Llandudoch is undoubtedly a successful one. As well as the renovation of a under-used hall into a well used and attractive village amenity, the committee has sought to broaden its scope to improve general facilities in the village. For instance, the immediate plans for the development of Menter Llandudoch centre on the creation of an amenity area in the village square. This will include moving the telephone kiosk, planting flower beds, and providing seats, a village plan for visitors and a community notice-board. In terms of improvements to the actual centre, it is hoped to equip the fitness room and to level and drain the school playing field. Following the example at St. Dogmaels, other local communities have also begun their own developments.

With hindsight, the Chairperson expressed a preference for knocking down the old building and rebuilding (to save VAT costs in particular). He also regretted not being able to complete all the plans for the initial development (due to the costs involved), such as the installation of double glazed windows, a sprung floor in the main hall and a complete refit of the fitness suite. Nonetheless, the hall is a major improvement which provides excellent local sports and community facilities for a rural population.