

Rural rebranding of blaenau ffestiniog essay sample



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The town is very small and is surrounded by mountains. So it is in a mountainous area, with lots of slate; it is also in a valley and overlooks one too. Its current population is 5000, including Llan Ffestiniog (Although the population reached a peak of 12, 000 during the height of the slate industry).

The need to rebrand

Blaenau Ffestiniog needed to be rebranded for many reasons. One reason is that when the slate mining industry has decreased dramatically since World War 1. Worker numbers have considerably shrunk, from into the 1000's, now into the 100's. It is now a material that is used less. They also don't have a 'big' chain store, such as Tesco or Morrison's; they only have a McColl's and a Euro Spar.

Blaenau Ffestiniog has recognised their weaknesses and threats from their SWOT analysis taken.

Here is a list of weaknesses and threats from the town's SWOT analysis. As you can see, there is a large list of weaknesses and also a list of threats, even though this list is smaller, each point is huge for the town. All of these weaknesses add up and follow on from each other, like a multiplying effect, such as the lack of specific shops and a fairly limited environment mean that the population is declining. Both of the lists may get bigger, especially from other towns, competing for sales and people.

A rebranding scheme

a) One of the physical changes proposed was the Diffwys Square/Train Station Area. Here, they were meant to create a wide flight of steps

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connecting the town centre to the station area and removing part of the wall, which was blocking visibility. In the square; they were meant to bring the axis to life and reveal the history of site. Also they were meant to add street furniture, a car parking layout and pedestrian routes. Also there would be tall columns of slate and a substantial sculpture incorporating water in the upper area of the car park. Also there would be a performance area, market space and a small events area.

Another physical change proposed was on Church Street. Here they were meant to use empty shops for a potential arts, crafts and niche visitor retail offer, relating to Market Hall cultural centre, the proposed bunk house in the Church Hall. It is narrow, so to create a series of small-scale artworks and street furniture that act like stepping stones, drawing the pedestrian along the street in each direction (including bands of poetry on slate for paving and seating). Boundary walls to create feel of generous space.

b) These design decisions were made through their process of visioning.

Whilst the town assessment analysis looked at quantitative data as well as how Blaenau Ffestiniog sits within the policy context, the need for honest and meaningful engagement with the local community, which is important (key) to understanding the current and future needs of residents and other users.

The design process therefore placed at the heart of its design development process a series of events that helped key stakeholders and the community engaged in the initial visioning and needs identification process.

A stakeholder event which was hosted by Ffestiniog Railway involved over 30 representatives participating in a role playing workshop on the Ffestiniog Railway line from Tan-y-bwlch station to Blaenau Ffestiniog. Participants were asked to look at the town through the eyes of visitors, local residents and investors asking about their perceptions of the town and on arrival, their first impressions. A workshop based session held at the Hen Co-op in Blaenau Ffestiniog High Street allowed the groups to share their experiences and to talk about their future aspirations for the town centre. Using slate tiles provided by Greaves Welsh Slate, representatives chalked up ideas and a gallery of key words for future action. On the same day as the stakeholder event, the wider community were invited to come along to the Hen Co-op and through plans of the town centre and facilitation by design team member's issues and opportunities were identified.

The use of slate tiles continued with an extensive list of visionary words for the town, in addition to some items for action.

c) The gatekeeper for the project is Gwynedd County Council. The objectives were to rebrand Blaenau Ffestiniog, so it can compete with other towns and bring in even more people and tourists willing to spend. The Miller report was used to see if the project was feasible or not.

The stakeholders were the people of Blaenau Ffestiniog and organisations that planned the scheme, as well as anybody that put money into the project, such as Blaenau Ymlaen, the Welsh Assembly Government, the Convergence European Regional Development Fund and people from the private sector.

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How successful has the rebranding scheme been?

From my fieldwork of Blaenau Ffestiniog, nothing has really been done.

When I walked around, I only saw one bit of the town redone (new brickwork and slate chipping as decoration on the side), but the house next to it was boarded up. Everything else had nothing done to it. So none of the proposed plans have been carried out yet, or even started.

From the data collected from questionnaires of Blaenau Ffestiniog, many people think that there has only been some change, but this wasn't on the physical redevelopment, but more about recycling and culture and leisure. For many things, mainly physical redevelopment, many people thought that there was no change at all, or just a slight amount has been done. This was done by asking random people that live there. This was fairly successful because people did give information, but there weren't a lot of older people out at that time, but a lot of school kids. From the questionnaires, on the majority of the questions, is that 50% or more said that there had only been some improvement. The exceptions were in the questions about work and business; education and lifelong skills; housing and also health and welfare. This is where the 50% or more of the people said that there had been no change, but also people said that there had been some improvement on those questions. But only a few people, highest 20% of them, said that there had been great change. It had mainly been 10% of the people and even 0% on two of the questions.

A place check was also carried out at both Blaenau Ffestiniog and Porthmadog. In Blaenau, the streets were quite narrow and only had paving

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on one side, some didn't even have a pavement. There were some shops, but there were also some derelict buildings. So there weren't that much I liked about Blaenau Ffestiniog just from site. They could have easily made some simple improvements, like road widening, making pavements and maybe giving grants to people who want to start their own businesses. Whereas in Porthmadog; it is totally different. The roads were a decent size and there were pavements on every road. This means it has easier accessibility. There were also lots of shops, with a wide variety, with 'big' chain stores and an Edinburgh Woollen Mill. So there are many good things. The only one bad thing to say is that the train tracks go on the street, causing congestion, especially at peak times. Improvements they could make are levelling out and smoothing out the roads, and to also maybe put a cafe in the train station.

Visually, Porthmadog looked better than Blaenau Ffestiniog. You could see buses passing through most of the time and also there was always a constant flow (even if slow) of vehicles passing, whereas in Blaenau Ffestiniog there were like dead spots, where no vehicles would come pass for a minute or so. The trains on the other line, the Welsh Highland Railway, had much more services compared to the Ffestiniog railway. Also Porthmadog looked bustling. There were always people on the high street. But in Blaenau Ffestiniog, there were groups of people, either from the bus or from school, and then the odd individual passed.

A Bi-Polar analysis was also carried out. This had points such as how modern the place was, if it was well maintained, etc. The higher the score, the better the place was. Blaenau Ffestiniog score 29 out of 60. This is just below <https://assignbuster.com/rural-rebranding-of-blaenau-ffestiniog-essay-sample/>

average. So Blaenau is average, but the score may lower if more places close down. So rebranding is needed fast. Also a traffic and pedestrian count was carried out. This was done for two minutes and the vehicle/pedestrian had to pass me to count. 9 cars and 3 other vehicles were seen. There were only 3 pedestrians seen as well.

As a comparison, we also went to Porthmadog. This score was higher, scoring 40 out of 60. This is telling us that Porthmadog is going in the right direction and is at a good stage. There were also more vehicles (16 cars and 6 other vehicles) and pedestrians (28), meaning that the businesses are getting people and Porthmadog is making money. It also tells us that it is being visited by people, also by having 2 train stations and by having multiple bus routes go through.

In conclusion, I think to a great extent, that Blaenau Ffestiniog's rebranding, so far, has been a failure and hasn't had any success. None of the objectives, aims, or plans have been carried out or have even started yet and the finishing date was meant to be 2013, a date that is not looking achievable. So all these years have gone by, and have seemed like time wasted. These plans should have been underway by now, and some should have been completed, or near completion. So funds may have dried up, but I'm sure that the money they already have (around 6 million), they could have put into good use by now. Even the people of Blaenau Ffestiniog think that there has only been some improvement, only a minority think that there has been great improvement and only some think there has been no change.