

Asset Development Case Study

Galeri Caernarfon www.galericaernarfon.com



About Galeri Caernarfon

Galeri Caernarfon Cyf is a not for private profit community enterprise operating as a development trust in the historic town of Caernarfon in Gwynedd, North Wales. It was established in 1992 (under its previous name Cwmni Tref Caernarfon) to “pursue social, economic and environmental projects for the benefit of the community in Caernarfon and its environs” by the current Chief Executive Gwyn Roberts in partnership with colleagues from a variety of private businesses and community groups, together with the local authority.

The centre of Caernarfon is now a World Heritage Site, but in the mid 1980s over half the properties within the walled town were derelict, vacant or for sale. Cwmni Tref Caernarfon’s first brief was to buy and then completely refurbish a selection of the most important of those buildings.

Cwmni Tref Caernarfon had a clear social enterprise vision from the outset and to date has renovated and refurbished over 28 neglected and vacant properties in the town, which are now occupied by tenants, including shops, offices, flats, two cafes, a music training centre and a pub.

The development of the 'Galeri Creative Enterprise Centre' has been the largest and most ambitious of the Trust’s projects to date. It is a brand new £7.5m Creative Enterprise Centre, which opened its doors in the town's Victoria Dock on 7 March 2005. The centre houses a flexible 400 seat auditorium, which also doubles up as a cinema (the first live entertainment venue in Caernarfon in over 20 years), several rehearsal and practice studios, art space, café bar, rooms for hire, conference facilities and 27 enterprise units, which currently house 15 creative companies all engaged in artistic or creative work.

Asset Base Programme

Caernarfon Town Centre Regeneration

The company currently owns and manages 20 refurbished properties in Caernarfon which house 44 tenanted units. The company also owns an additional property in East Gate Street which is in the process of being refurbished - this will bring the portfolio to 21 properties and 45 tenanted units.

The rents generated from these formerly vacant and neglected properties are the company's main source of revenue.

Cwmni Adwy Cyf

In early 2000, the Trust tendered for, and won, a contract to set up and administer a newly formed company remitted to purchase and renovate properties in the former slate mining valleys of Ogwen, Peris, Nantlle, Ffestiniog and Corris. This company, known as Cwmni Adwy Cyf, is one of 6 projects which constitute the Slate Valleys Initiative. To date, the Trust has completed 11 property refurbishment schemes in the 5 slate valleys.

Galeri Caernarfon

The new build £7.5 million Galeri Creative Enterprise Centre project, designed by the Edinburgh architect Richard Murphy and located on a former derelict site at Caernarfon's Victoria Dock, was the culmination of a vision that had started some 10 years earlier.

Set in the old Victoria Dock with the Menai in front and Snowdonia as a background, it is difficult to imagine any building in Wales with a better location.

The Trust obtained full planning permission for this proposed development adjacent to the Goleuad building in Victoria Dock in April 2001 and it opened its doors to the public in March 2005. It houses a theatre/cinema with seating for 400 people, a café/bar, art space, two main rehearsal spaces and three smaller studios, conference facilities and room hire and 27 enterprise units, which house 15 companies who are engaged in artistic or creative work.

Gwyn Roberts points out "*Galeri is viewed by the Arts Council as a model for self sustaining arts facilities in other small and medium sized towns in that the development trust built in its income generation from the outset.*"

Benefits

Bringing people back into the town centre as residents, shoppers or tourists. Regeneration was a catalyst for the economic regeneration of Caernarfon, creating new retail and office premises and improving the built environment with high quality refurbishment and renovation of these properties.

The community is empowered and supported in becoming key stakeholders for the project.

As a social enterprise and development trust, Galeri is truly independent and driven by its social, cultural and economic mission.

20 properties have been restored since 1922, including commercial, residential buildings and a pub. Many were listed buildings within the walled town and the town has now achieved World Heritage Status.

The benefits, experience and track record in Caernarfon centre were built upon and transferred to the 5 slate mining valleys surrounding Caernarfon, which were suffering significant social, physical and economic neglect.

The success of the Caernarfon Arts Projects (SBARC) helped build the case and need for the Galeri Creative Enterprise Centre.

Rents secured on each completed property help to pay for subsequent restorations. Financial surpluses help to fund the new Galeri Creative Enterprise Centre.

Lessons Learned

Grand visions can be achieved –with a lot of motivation and determination but also flexibility.

When planning your project, build in asset development and income generation from the start of the planning process.

The increase in staff from 4 people in 2002 to 40 staff in 2006 required organisational, HR and skills development. Many staff have grown and been retained within the organisation with increased roles or responsibilities.

Ensure that your ideas are seen as carefully constructed, effective, best value and (most importantly) attractive to statutory or private sector investors.

Work with local individuals, groups and organisations so that your local community is involved in what is happening.

Never give up even if the key partners do not follow through with commitment to your vision.

Contact:

Gwyn Roberts, Chief Executive – gwyn.roberts@galericarnarfon.com Tel 01286 685 250
or DTA Wales – info@dtawales.org.uk Tel 02920 190 260