

Asset Development Case Study

Cwmaman Institute www.cwmamaninstitute.co.uk



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About Cwmaman Institute

Cwmaman Institute is a vibrant link with the industrial past of the South Wales Valleys. A totally new building that has been constructed on the site of the original Miners' Institute, it is now a unique venue that caters for conferences, weddings, the arts and live entertainment. It has function rooms, a cinema, cultural workspaces, 2 bars and an excellent fitness suite with trained staff, as well as acting as a focus for over 40 societies that belong to the local community.

Cwmaman Institute is one of the oldest and largest community owned social enterprises in Wales, which means that it is owned and controlled by the local community and operates for the benefit of that community and local societies.

Their aim is to provide for the cultural, educational, and leisure needs of the community of Cwmaman and its surrounding area, whilst providing employment and a sustainable future for the community owned asset. Cwmaman Institute is the trading name of Cwmaman Public Hall & Institute Social Club Ltd. As a not for profit company any operating surplus over the year is donated to their charitable arm.

Asset Base Programme

Cwmaman Institute was established in 1868 originally as a reading room, in a rent-free house donated by the Cwmaman Coal Company. In 1884, a committee of officials at Cwmaman (Shepherd's) Colliery started a scheme whereby a half penny

in each pound was deducted weekly from the wages of workmen at the colliery and the movement to establish a purpose-built Public Hall and the Institute was born.

The current building is the result of a complete capital redevelopment project, the total cost of which was £3.8m. Funding for this project came from a range of public and private sources including the Arts Council and ERDF/RECHAR, the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, a Co-operative Bank loan and £120K raised from within the community itself.

Building phase 1 ended in June 2000. Phase 2 commenced in July 2000 and was completed with the official opening by HRH The Prince of Wales on 23 July 2001.

Shepherds Arms

Cwmaman Public Hall & Institute Social Club Ltd has also established a separate trading company, Shepherds Arms Ltd, which owns and controls this adjoining building next to the Institute. Shepherds Arms is currently run as a traditional community owned pub. Proposals are in hand for the future development of the site in line with their commitment to the local community.

Benefits

Local Economy

The Institute employs 52 local people on a full or part time basis, attracts up to 5000 visitors each week and hosts 43 local societies. Annual turnover is £700K+ and the main income is generated by the bar, cinema, conference and events hire and functions and catering.

Library

Cwmaman Institute is committed to continue supporting the oldest independently run library in Wales, which was established as part of the original Miners Institute Library and Reading Rooms in 1868. Born out of the needs of the once dominant mining industry and miners' trade union movement, it has been a focus of radical thought and tradition that has been passed down through the generations to the present day. The library contains a range of educational, fictional & non-fictional reading material. The Library is housed on the ground floor of the recently redeveloped Library and Community Resource Centre, 6 Fforchaman Rd, Cwmaman, Aberdare CF44 6NS.

Healthy Living Suite

With more than 20 workstations, our state of the art resistance and cardiovascular training machines ensure that the local community can enjoy specific workouts at a fraction of the cost of a private fitness club. The suite now has 840 members including a number of disabled people.

Community

There is no doubt that the Institute and the community work hand-in-hand. Local people celebrate their weddings there, along with other important events like christenings and engagement parties. Cwmaman Institute is proud to be an integral part of the village of Cwmaman and realises it occupies a very privileged position.

Community First Partnership

In October 2001 Cwmaman Public Hall & Institute Ltd brought together individuals, voluntary groups and public and private sector organisations in the community to work together to create a better future for the area by creating the Cwmaman Communities First Partnership Board.

Since its initial creation it has gone on to successfully secure core funding through the Welsh Assembly under the Communities First Programme, which is set to continue until March 2007. Over this period of time the Institute has and will continue to be lead partner, providing fiscal and management support.

Lessons Learned

Despite high unemployment and half the population without access to a car, the community has continued to retain its commitment and enthusiasm.

Even during the site re-development the Institute has continued to offer services to the community.

Staff at the Institute are multi-skilled and able to turn their hands to anything. A central focus is customer service and quality, as well as being at the 'heart' of the community.

The 'business' of the centre is the key to its success, with clear income generating targets which staff are aware of.

The Institute has built a strong community base with 2000 registered members. Links with the education sector means that courses are held at and accessed via the Institute.

Despite difficulties with parking, the Institute has provided buses and minibuses to enable people from a 20 mile radius or more to access services and events. With strong community backing, the Institute was able to hold on to its vision over a long period of development and in difficult times.

Willing to take risks and not give up, the Institute accessed loan funding to meet the shortfall.

Contact:

Ian Roberts, Manager – ian@cwmamaninstitute.co.uk Tel 01685 876 003
or DTA Wales – info@dtawales.org.uk Tel 02920 190 260