

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Economic and Community Regeneration Board

4 December 2015

Report of the Head of Property and Regeneration - S.Brennan

Matter for Information

Wards Affected: Neath

Neath Food and Drink Festival

Purpose of Report

1. To inform members of the success of Neath Food and Drink Festival 2015.

Background

2. Neath Food and Drink Festival is an ambitious and growing festival which aims to bring families and food lovers together in the heart of Neath Town Centre.
3. The inception of the Festival came about six years ago when a strategy was identified to promote the Town Centre in order to counter the effects of the recession and to identify events that could be developed to encourage footfall into the town. A local food producer and Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council worked in collaboration to put forward a proposal to run a food festival as a mechanism for boosting the town centre generally and the local food economy in particular.
4. Neath already had a thriving Victorian Market and a good number of high quality hospitality businesses and a Food Festival linked in well with the general ethos. As well as the exhibiting stall holders, it gives the established town centre shops, restaurants and café's an

opportunity to showcase their products to a wider audience.

5. In an evaluation report of Food Festivals in Wales, exhibitors rated Neath Food and Drink Festival as one of the top five they attended along with Anglesey, Cardiff, Abergavenny and Narberth. In the research carried out on behalf of the Welsh Government exhibitors cited visitor profile and numbers and high levels of sales as reasons for rating Neath so highly.
6. With the regeneration plans for the town centre over the coming years, the festival plays an important role in portraying Neath as a progressive town and its whole essence is about community involvement and supporting local businesses.
7. The main objectives of the event are as follows:
 - To promote local food and increase demand for local produce amongst consumers and local businesses.
 - To celebrate local producers and the products that they offer and, by doing so, increase visitors coming in to Neath and improving the vitality and sustainability of the retail centre as a whole.
 - To celebrate, support and promote Neath's quality food businesses and restaurant sector
 - To develop Neath as a destination for great food and drink.
 - To make local food more widely available. The decision was taken to hold the festival in the town centre as a free event, thereby being inclusive to all.
 - To promote home cooking, healthy eating and the wider healthy living agenda
 - To encourage footfall into the town and showcase Neath as a great destination for shopping, leisure and culture at other times of the year

2015 Event

8. The decision was made to extend the 2015 event from two to three days in response to feedback from previous festivals where visitors, local businesses and exhibiting stall holders suggested a Sunday opening would benefit the town.

9. Set in the heart of the town, Neath Food and Drink Festival is truly a community event. Now in its seventh year, the festival has firmly established itself as one of the premier events held in the region annually and as well as the exhibiting stall holders, it gives the established town centre shops, restaurants and café's an opportunity to showcase their products to a wider audience. Many businesses offered special promotions and reported excellent sales over the two days.
10. Almost 80 top quality food and drink producers from across South Wales and beyond exhibited over the three days. Products featured included wines, beers, cider, cheese, cakes, meat, seafood, welsh tea, chocolates, ice cream, chutneys, homemade preserves, organic fruit & veg, olives & nuts and vegetarian & vegan options. The Festival highlighted the variety of high quality Welsh produce that is available locally and focused on the range of products currently available from award winning suppliers in the area.
11. There were more exhibitors from Neath Port Talbot than ever before with 13 of the 76 exhibitors (17%) hailing from the borough selling produce ranging from ales, gourmet pies, fish and meat to award winning desserts and even Thai and Jamaican cuisine showing that the area is developing as a top destination for food and drink.
12. As well as the exhibitors who lined the streets of the town for three days, the 2015 festival featured a Street Food Zone, Champagne Marquee and Real Ale Hall all of which proved very popular with visitors.
13. Town centre restaurants also joined in the spirit of the event with many restaurants offering themed menus, festival specials and live music to celebrate the occasion.
14. There are no footfall counters in Neath so it is not possible to gauge accurate visitor numbers, however, early feedback from exhibitors and town centre businesses has indicated that it was an exceptionally busy year and that the addition of a third day worked very well.



Officer Contact

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