

BANGOR BUSINESS FORUM

Report on the inaugural meeting of the Bangor Business Forum held in the Penrhyn Hall, Bangor on 14th. August 2007 at 6pm.

The meeting was opened by the Chairman of the Bangor Business Forum, Douglas Madge, who welcomed the audience and introduced the speaker, Mr Dafydd Hughes, Director of the Mon Menai scheme.

In the course of his presentation Mr Hughes presented a vision of Bangor as the leading urban area in the "Menai Hub", an area described by the triangle formed by Bangor, Caernarfon and Llangefni. Investment in this region, it is hoped, will radiate lasting economic benefits across the region. At the heart of the plan is the development of indigenous high tech industries, high quality sustainable tourism and the potential of the transport corridor to Ireland.

There are to be better rail links to London and improvements to the A55 and the Britannia Bridge. There is to be investment in a new "Firespeed" fibre optic Internet connection. Plans are being developed for Hirael Bay, including the pier, and Bangor High Street will have a face lift. Work is ongoing to develop strategic sites such as Parc Menai and Bryn Cegin. A new South Anglesey industrial park is proposed.

The scheme is working closely with the University, Coleg Menai and Gwynedd and Anglesey Councils. Both the University and Coleg Menai have a strategic role in providing a highly trained work force to take advantage of the new opportunities.

The scheme proposes to support the marine industrial sector and attractions which will bring year round high spending tourists to the area. This includes improving the access for cruise ships on Anglesey.

The scheme would like to attract investment for a large hotel with conference facilities in Bangor but has been unable to persuade consultants that there is a business case for this.

Dafydd Hughes responded to questions and comments following the presentation. Although the scheme was welcomed, there were some reservations expressed. When questioned, Mr Hughes was unable to indicate the level of investment which will come to Bangor. Nor could he give an assurance that local businesses would be given preferential access to tendering opportunities. Those present were concerned about the implications of the proposals and there is undoubtedly a need for more discussions and consultation if Bangor is to gain full benefit from this scheme.

June Marshall
Secretary
Bangor Business Forum