



Quarter 2, 2010

Welcome to the Business & Development Newsletter for the Swansea Bay Region. In this round-up you will find details of the wide variety of activity that has been making the news throughout our area during Quarter 2, 2010. For further information, the latest news and updates on developments around the city and region, visit our website at: www.abayoflife.com

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Business and Education

Insurance giant's admirable 300 job boost for city

Almost 300 new jobs have been created in Swansea by insurance giant Admiral in the first half of 2010. Admiral serves more than two million customers and decided to boost its staff numbers to cope with demand. The firm currently employs 1,272 staff in its Swansea office and continues to offer at least £3,000 worth of shares in the company to each member of staff every year. Admiral has also been honoured for its work with the Mumbles Mostly Jazz & Blues Festival. The firm was named business of the year and took the award for arts, business and employees at the Arts & Business Cymru Awards 2010.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/insurance-giants-admirable-300-job-boost-for-city/>

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/admiral-lands-top-prize-at-art-business-award/>

Dry docks overhaul to create 100 jobs

Harris Pye Group has signed a lease until the end of the year with Associated British Ports (ABP) to continue its ship repair and refurbishment work at Swansea Dry Docks. The global firm created 200-plus jobs when it carried out a £20million overhaul of cruise ship Saga Pearl II last year. It also worked on the new Swansea-Cork ferry and two dredgers, and wants to secure a long-term presence at the Duke of Edinburgh and Prince of Wales dry docks. Harris Pye technical director Chris David said the firm had already invested £550,000 at the docks, and had received inquiries from ship owners regarding future contracts. He said securing a longer lease was vital to winning those contracts, adding that the firm was prepared to invest in an upgrade of dock facilities. If all went to plan, he claimed Harris Pye would create around 100 skilled jobs.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/dry-docks-overhaul-to-create-100-jobs/>

Home store opens doors at former bookshop unit

Homeware chain HomeSense has created 35 new jobs in Swansea. The firm, which has 20 stores, have opened a store at Parc Fforestfach, at the site of the former Borders bookshop. HomeSense is part of TK Maxx's parent company TJX Europe.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/home-store-opens-doors-at-former-bookshop-unit/>

Swansea Building Society celebrates

Swansea Building Society celebrated a year of "excellent" results with an AGM at the Liberty Stadium. Chief Executive Alun Williams confirmed the society saw a 58.7 per cent increase in net profit before tax from £908,000 up to £1.4 million by the end of December last year. Swansea Building Society opened a new branch outside of the city centre for the first time in its 87-year history. The Society has also appointed Roger Poolman, Head of the Swansea office of commercial property consultancy, Lambert Smith Hampton as a non-executive member of their board of directors.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/swansea-building-society-celebrates/>

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/swansea-building-society-board-appoints-property-expert/>

Swansea firm goes global with 9M deal

Dr Organic – a rapidly growing Welsh business specialising in natural and organic skincare and beauty products – has signed a £9 million distribution deal for the Middle East. The business, which is headquartered in Swansea, only began trading a year ago and already has its entire range exclusively stocked in every Holland and Barrett store in the UK. Steve Quinn and Fred Whitcomb, the entrepreneurs behind Dr Organic are now targeting international markets with their export drive.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/swansea-firm-goes-global-with-9m-deal/>

Swansea-Cork ferry service passenger numbers exceed expectations

The Swansea to Cork ferry service has seen passenger numbers exceed expectations. Fastnet Line chief executive Phil Jones said that traffic tourism figures in April were 100% higher than had been expected. Mr. Jones said: "Despite seeing a significant uplift in tourism traffic as a result of grounded flights, the booking figures were already very strong. We are attracting passengers from all along the M4 corridor looking for an easy path to south-west Ireland." The firm has received booking revenues of £3m with over 15,000 passengers taking overnight sailings.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/swansea-cork-ferry-service-passenger-numbers-exceed-expectations/>

Apartment provider's success offers it more space to grow

A Luxury serviced apartment provider has celebrated five years in business. A Space in the City was launched in spring 2005 by Richard Godfrey. Mr. Godfrey said: "There was a niche in the market for a company to provide first-class accommodation for those looking for a real alternative to luxury hotels. When I launched A Space in the City, serviced apartments were growing in popularity in the UK, and something which one of Wales's major cities, Swansea, needed." The business has seen a record turnover of £1.4 million.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/apartment-providers-success-offers-it-more-space-to-grow/>

Swansea Bay inventors strike gold at Geneva

Swansea Bay inventors are amongst a number from Wales to strike gold at this year's International Exhibition of Inventions in Geneva. The Exhibition – the largest in Europe - attracted 1000 inventions from all over the world and around 70,000 visitors including industrialists, distributors and business people looking for new products and inventions to market. The Sports Injury Rehabilitation Assistant (SIRA) - the first powered stretching machine of its kind - earned Robert Clarke and John Lockwood of Gorseinon, a gold medal in the medical equipment category. It was also awarded The World Intellectual Property Organisation's Gold Medal for Best Inventors 2010 – the first time in its fifteen years history that this award has been won by the UK.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/swansea-bay-inventors-strike-gold-at-geneva/>

Life-saving iPhone application made in Swansea Bay

It costs less than £1 to buy and can be downloaded directly onto an iPhone – but this app could help save lives. The simple software, which was developed in Swansea and has been downloaded worldwide, will also help to make one of the most common healthcare procedures safer. The ivDripRate application helps nursing staff to calculate and check intravenous drips. The app provides an audio and visual guide for staff in the form of an on-screen virtual drip and is designed to be downloaded onto iPhones, iPod and iPad.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/life-saving-iphone-application-made-in-swanea-bay/>

Help shape the planning for land use in Swansea

Through its new website and an informative newsletter, the City and County of Swansea has invited everyone who is living, providing services, working and visiting Swansea to become involved in the preparation of its new Local Development Plan (LDP). The LDP will take five years to complete and will replace the Unitary Development Plan (2008). Work starts officially this August to 'set out the Council's strategic vision with aims and objectives for the use and development of land together with policies and proposals to implement them'. The LDP will reveal the wide variety of needs for land use by the County. From autumn 2010, for a six month period, submissions will be accepted for potential sites for development. These will be included in a register of locations, site size, current usage and proposed usage. The Planning Policy Team's new website: www.swansea.gov.uk/ldp explains the Plan itself and aims to communicate the preparation and development of The Register.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/help-shape-the-planning-for-land-use-in-swanea/>

Monetary Policy Committee member gets up to speed on Swansea Bay

David Miles, a member of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), met with Swansea Bay Businesses during a visit to the city. David was in Swansea to attend the Bank's briefing on the economy, which is held in the city every 6 months. David, accompanied by Neil Ashbridge, the Bank's Agent for Wales, used the opportunity to get an up to date picture of Swansea Bay and the issues facing the businesses based here. David and Neil were taken on a tour of the current and planned developments taking place in the city. This was followed by a working lunch at which business leaders set out the current economic challenges facing their businesses and had the opportunity to quiz David on the MPC and its approach to interest rates.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/monetary-policy-committee-member-gets-up-to-speed-on-swanea-bay/>

Swansea Bay Business Awards launched

The search is on for the best businesses in Neath Port Talbot, Swansea and Carmarthenshire with the launch of the Swansea Bay Regional Business Awards 2010. The prestigious award scheme is organised by Swansea Bay Partnership and sponsored by John Collins & Partners Solicitors (JCP). There are 6 different awards with International Business, Innovation and Most Promising New Business among the categories. Deadline for entries is Friday 17th September 2010. The winners will be announced at an awards ceremony at the Brangwyn Hall on 26th November 2010.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/swansea-bay-business-awards-launched/>

Awards mark achievements of businesswomen...

The South Wales Evening Post and Swansea Bay Business Life have teamed up to launch the Women in Business Awards 2010. The awards will cover six categories with an overall winner named as woman of the year. The awards will be judged by a panel including award-winning travel industry expert Jill Burgess, CBI Wales assistant director Ian Price and Swansea Bay Business Life editor Wyn Jenkins.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/awards-to-mark-achievements-of-businesswomen/>

...and reward best in vital tourism trade

June saw the launch of the third Tourism Swansea Bay awards, which celebrate the quality and diversity of the businesses bringing tourists to the area. The awards have 14 categories including those for accommodation, places to eat and drink, things to do, festivals and events, the best sustainable tourism business and best use of technology. An overall award for outstanding services to tourism will be presented when the results of the awards are announced in a ceremony at Swansea's Brangwyn Hall on 11th November. Entries for each category will be open until 24th September.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/awards-to-reward-best-in-vital-tourism-trade/>

New business website for Neath Port Talbot

Everything you need to know about doing business in Neath Port Talbot is just a click of a button away. www.npt-business.co.uk has been set up to allow businesses to access information all in one place. The dedicated business site includes advice on starting up a business as well as information on accessing support and funding. The website provides information on current developments taking place across Neath Port Talbot, including a wealth of information on the award winning Baglan Energy Park. More interactive features will be introduced to the site in 2010, including updating the on-line business directory function, providing information on vacant industrial units and offices.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/new-business-website-for-neath-port-talbot/>

Holistic is pointing the way to better management for firms

A Neath firm has won a contract to provide management training for businesses across Wales. Llandarcy-based Holistic Services has been appointed to provide fully bilingual leadership and training under the Welsh Assembly Government's Leadership and Management programme. The scheme offers companies subsidised workshops for employees from supervisory up to senior manager level. Under the scheme, SMEs will be able to benefit from 70 per cent funding while larger companies will qualify for 50 per cent funding. Charities can apply for funding through a bid process. The project has been part-funded by the European Social Fund through the Welsh Assembly Government.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/holistic-is-pointing-the-way-to-better-management-for-firms/>

Business Network focuses on promoting Swansea Bay

Representatives from businesses across Swansea Bay met on 16th June for the second Swansea Bay Futures Network meeting. Attended by around twenty businesses leaders, the event focused on determining actions that can be taken forward for the benefit of Swansea Bay - identifying ways in which Swansea Bay businesses can make a difference and discussing ideas for 'grassroots' marketing activity. The Swansea Bay Futures Network meetings will take place monthly, and are open to businesses who want to work together for the future of Swansea Bay. To find out more visit: www.sbfnetwork.co.uk

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/business-network-focuses-on-promoting-swanse-bay/>

Swansea Bay Futures sign up new Associates

A number of Swansea Bay companies have linked to Swansea Bay Futures as Associates. Professional property letting company, SA1 Executive Apartments, media production company, Vibe TV, Swansea based photographer and studio, Photographsof.com and leadership consultants, Waterside Consulting are supporting the activity of Swansea Bay Futures and will play their part in raising the profile of the region.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/our-associate-companies/>

Swansea Bay inventor designs smart mattress

A Swansea-based inventor has developed a device which could save the NHS £800 million a year by tackling bed sores. Frank Edwards, whose company Synidor is based at Swansea University's Institute of Life Science (ILS), has created an intelligent mattress which prevents patients developing bed sores or pressure ulcers. The system uses a disposable mattress cover with a sensor linked to a visual and audio alarm to alert staff if a patient is not moving regularly.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/swansea-bay-inventor-designs-smart-mattress/>

New valuation service provides major boost to IP exploitation

Inngot, the UK's first showcase for innovative businesses and their intellectual property (IP), has launched an indicative valuation model to help businesses across the UK exploit their intellectual assets. The new online tool, known as Sollomon, has been created to help businesses derive an impartial value indication for their IP and other intellectual assets, should they wish to sell them, license them or use them to raise funding. The Sollomon IP value indicator works in tandem with Inngot's registration system for intellectual assets. The Sollomon service has been built and tested at Inngot's offices at Technium Digital in Swansea University.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/new-valuation-service-provides-major-boost-to-ip-exploitation/>

Multi-million pound science academy for Wales

Swansea University will become the central hub for a multi-million pound science academy for Wales. Plans for the £2 million National Science Academy were given the green light recently by Assembly Government deputy minister for science, innovation and skills Lesley Griffiths. She said: "The importance of innovation and the role it can play in helping economic growth should not be underestimated. The National Science Academy will have a key role to play ensuring we have the appropriate skills at the appropriate level to support the development of a vibrant and sustainable knowledge-based economy." The academy will be run from a central hub at the Wales Institute of Mathematics and Computational Science in Swansea University and will focus on education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics from early years upwards.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/multi-million-pound-science-academy-for-wales/>

£1.3m for Swansea University project

Researchers at Swansea University have been given more than £1.3 million to look into the effects of ageing. The funding has been awarded under the National Institute for Social Care and Health Research, which has already carried out five years of research. The research is focused on dignity in care, mental health and social care. New areas have been planned for the next five-year phase, which include elder abuse, advice and advocacy. Professor Phillips, chair of the British Council on Ageing, said: "One of the new and distinctive areas of the network will be building links with business and industry, and addressing needs in relation to their ageing workforce and ageing consumer markets."

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/13m-for-swansea-university-project/>

New vision to transform education in South West Wales

A new vision for post-16 education in South West Wales has been unveiled. A regional group comprising the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Swansea Metropolitan University, Pembrokeshire College, Coleg Sir Gâr and Coleg Ceredigion is being established to provide meaningful educational pathways, enhanced student choice and joint educational provision which responds to the needs of employers.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/a-new-vision-to-transform-education-in-south-west-wales/>

Swansea Celebrates 75 Years at the Centre of the Glass World

Swansea Met's Welsh School of Architectural Glass is celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary as a global epicentre for glass art. Glass art was introduced to Swansea in 1935 by William Grant Murray and one of the School's first students was Swansea's Howard Martin, who went on to launch the first diploma in stained glass. Reflecting its status as the only glass school in Wales, it became the Welsh School of Architectural Glass in 2005. Students from the School have won an unprecedented number of awards and their work can be found in collections worldwide. Examples include Amber Hiscott's glass leaf that sits in Swansea's Castle Square and the unique glass blocks used in the facade walls of Cardiff's Millennium Centre, created and patented by the School's research associate Rodney Bender. The Welsh School of Architectural Glass remains as the only architecturally-based glass School in the world and its anniversary will be marked with a series of events and exhibitions throughout 2010.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/swansea-celebrates-75-years-at-the-centre-of-the-glass-world/>

Swansea students to be better prepared for a future in business

Swansea's Bishop Gore School has linked with registered charity Career Academies UK to set up its Academy of Business programme to better prepare students for a career in business. And the school is looking for local businesses to get involved. Businesses are being asked to help on an individual basis, by becoming a mentor for one of the Academy students, or to deliver a 'Guru Lecture' about their business or at company level, where businesses can open up their premises for an organised visit or can offer a paid 6 week internship.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/swansea-students-to-be-better-prepared-for-a-future-in-business/>

Development & Regeneration

Plans for Urban Village

Work has started on a £25m urban village in High Street, The Strand and Kings Lane, Swansea. It is based on a series of courtyards linking shops, offices, food and drink outlets and "affordable" apartments. Coastal Housing Group which is behind the development said it would create 320 construction jobs plus around 426 full and part-time jobs once completed. Development director Geoff Pettifor said the aim was to build a "creative cluster" designed for people involved in a wide range of creative industries. He said they also wanted to create some "destination shopping outlets."

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/plans-for-urban-village-progress/>

Housing plans 'will transform Swansea riverside area'

Plans to create a new riverside community have taken a step forward. Developer Bellway Homes has submitted plans to build 103 houses and flats between the River Tawe and New Cut Road. Another developer, Watkin Jones, said it planned to start work on a large student development at the same site this summer. The Bellway plan replaces a previous scheme by a different developer for up to 300 residential units, which had outline planning permission. Experts said demand for houses rather than flats helped prompt the fresh set of plans. If given the green light, the Bellway scheme will signal the first phase of a riverside walkway on the west bank of the River Tawe from the city centre up towards the Liberty Stadium. Council chiefs are keen to lure developers to the area, and in March the authority gave approval for a new road effectively linking the stadium and New Cut Road. It also granted permission for 52 houses and 84 flats in five-storey blocks at the Bernard Hastie site, off Morfa Road.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/housing-plans-will-transform-swansea-riverside-area/>

Developer sought for historic Copperworks site

A hotel, restaurant and residential development could soon be in the pipeline for an historic Swansea site. Swansea Council has put the Hafod Copperworks Site out to the marketplace and is seeking declarations of interest by the middle of August. The site makes up over 12 acres of land close to the River Tawe and Swansea Council is looking to bring about a vibrant development that celebrates the unique contribution the area made to the Industrial Revolution. This would include the preservation and protection of listed buildings, the interpretation of industrial history and the new use of heritage buildings. Hafod Copperworks was founded in 1810. It became the largest copper works in the world in the 19th Century and continued rolling copper until its closure in 1980.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/developer-sought-for-historic-copperworks-site/>

Cycling and walking boost for waterfront

Brand new facilities are now available for cyclists and pedestrians along Swansea's River Tawe waterside. Work on an upgrade scheme to enhance the links between the Tawe river bridge and Swansea Yacht Club in the city's maritime quarter is now complete. Surfaces have been improved and new trees, seating, bins, railings and public lighting columns have been introduced under the scheme. The project was funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, the European Regional Development Fund and Swansea Council and forms part of the Swansea City Centre Strategic Framework - a policy that guides the regeneration of Swansea, developing better links between the city centre and waterfront.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/cycling-and-walking-boost-for-waterfront/>

Multi-million pound plans to give Mumbles pier a new lease of life

Details of a multi-million pound facelift of Mumbles pier have been unveiled. The proposals are the result of five years of planning by the owners of the Victorian pier, Ameco. The plans include the creation of a hotel, restaurants and apartments, which Ameco says could bring hundreds of jobs to the area. It would also see restoration of the grade two listed pier, and the creation of boardwalks, cafes and a family entertainment centre. The upgrade of the 112-year-old pier will also accommodate RNLI proposals to build a modern lifeboat house, capable of launching their new Tamar class vessel. A public consultation exercise over the plans revealed 95% support, with support from Edwina Hart AM, Martin Caton MP, Mumbles Community Council and the local development trust.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/multi-million-pound-plans-to-give-mumbles-pier-a-new-lease-of-life/>

Watersport bid charts a course for bay success

Details of the new £4 million Swansea Bay water sports centre have been released, with plans for Swansea Marina, St Helen's waterfront and Mumbles. The plans would see a pontoon at the marina, and the refurbishment of the historic cutter Olga to enable her to provide sailing trips. The St Helen's development will see a new centre for watersports to include toilets, changing and showering facilities, car parking, and better access to the sea. Meanwhile in Mumbles, money will be spent on the slipway and visitor facilities at Knab Rock to make the area more attractive to international sailing and catamaran events. The investment package has been put together with funding from the European Regional Development Fund, the Assembly Government, Swansea Strategic Regeneration Area, Swansea Council, Mumbles Community Council, the Environment Agency and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. It is hoped all schemes will be complete by the end of 2012.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/watersport-bid-charts-a-course-for-bay-success/>

First all-3D cinema a coup for Carmarthen

Wales' oldest town has become the first place in Europe to have a purpose-built all 3D, digital multiplex cinema. The cinema forms part of the St Catherine's Walk development in Carmarthen. The new Apollo Cinema houses six screens, each capable of showing 3D. Other cinemas in Europe that are currently "all 3D" only have one screen, but Carmarthen's Apollo will be the first that can show 3D on all of its multiple screens, courtesy of a specially-installed Sony digital cinema system. The cinema is part of the wider £74m St Catherine's development where shoppers can browse high street names such as Debenhams, Next, River Island, New Look, Topshop, Topman and Miss Selfridge.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/first-all-3d-cinema-a-coup-for-carmarthen/>

Multiplex cinema and hotel in the centre of Llanelli

Plans for a multiplex cinema and hotel in the centre of Llanelli have been approved by Carmarthenshire planners. The county council planning committee discussed the application by HDD (Llanelli) Ltd for a mixed use development including a six-screen multiplex cinema, a 53-bedroom hotel, restaurants and bars, retail units including a convenience store and office accommodation. The scheme also involves relocation of the bus interchange, together with 239 car parking spaces and associated public realm enhancement works at land at Upper Park Street and Island Place.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/multiplex-cinema-and-hotel-in-the-centre-of-llanelli/>

Rugby stars cook up plans for Llanelli's Pumphouse

Rugby stars Dwayne Peel and Stephen Jones have joined with award-winning restaurateur Simon Wright and local entrepreneur Robert Williams to transform an historic waterside Llanelli landmark building into a top restaurant. The private company, Bendigo 9-10, was selected by the Llanelli Waterside joint venture partnership as the preferred developer to renovate and run The Pumphouse. Work on the project is now underway and the project will create 20 jobs and include the establishment of a 100 cover restaurant with a stylish bar area.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/rugby-starts-cook-up-plans-for-pumphouse/>

£2 million Regeneration of four rural towns

Exciting plans have been drawn up to regenerate the rural communities of Laugharne, St Clears, Newcastle Emlyn and Pendine following consultation with residents over what improvements they would most like to see. Among the proposals identified were riverside access schemes in St Clears and Newcastle Emlyn, a town environmental enhancement scheme in Laugharne and promenade improvements in Pendine. The plans have been put forward as part of a bid for £2 million funding under the Rural Development Plan for Wales, which is funded by the Welsh Assembly and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/2m-regeneration-of-four-rural-towns/>

£750m regeneration bid 'set to create thousands of jobs'

Work has started to clear the way for a £750 million regeneration of the former BP Chemicals site in Port Talbot. Leading regeneration specialist St Modwen, which acquired the site from BP last year and is also behind the £1.2 billion Coed Darcy urban village in Llandarcy, has started the programme of remediation. Neath-based contractor The Cuddy Group will carry out the work. This first phase of works will move the site forward towards becoming a major new employment park that has the potential to create thousands of new jobs."

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/750m-regeneration-bid-set-to-create-thousands-of-jobs/>

Coed Darcy homes on Sale

The first homes at the Coed Darcy development in Neath Port Talbot have gone on sale. A total of 45 houses have been built by Atlantic Property Developments and marketed by estate agent Savills. The first section of the development, known as Heritage Gate, includes properties ranging from studio apartments to four-bedroom houses. Potential buyers are now able to visit show homes and walk around the site. The £1.2 billion Coed Darcy scheme has been built on the site of a former BP oil refinery, and is due to take around 20 years to finish. It will include 4,500 homes, community and leisure features, as well as offices and 1,300 acres of open space when it is completed.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/coed-darcy-homes-on-sale/>

Next Phase of Gwyn Hall, Neath

Morgan Ashurst has been appointed as the main building contractor for the project which will see the Gwyn Hall redeveloped into a new modern arts and cultural venue, whilst retaining its original facade. The project has been designed to retain its position as a landmark building in the heart of Neath and many of its original features will be retained or restored. Works will include a major theatre on the ground floor and modern design will include retractable seating and an up-to-date stage, which will enable the venue to be used for a variety of different functions. A cinema will be included and a range of other facilities will be added, including a cafe.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/next-phase-of-gwyn-hall/>

Sports arena for college

A £6 million sports arena is set to bring big competitions to the region. It is being built next to the Neath Port Talbot College Sports Academy at Llandarcy. The academy was developed between the college, Llandarcy Park and the Ospreys, and the three partners are also behind the new, international-standard hard-court arena. The arena is expected to be completed by September 2011 — to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the college. Principal Mark Dacey said the development was not only a major boost for the college but for Wales in general. The new two-storey arena will include a multi-functioning international hard-court hall. Additional facilities will include changing rooms, classrooms and spectator seating.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/sports-arena-for-college/>

And finally.....

7 Blue Flags, 4 Green Coast Awards and 9 bays make sea bathing guide

Bracelet Bay, Caswell Bay, Langland Bay and Port Eynon are all flying the award for Swansea, Neath Port Talbot is celebrating after Aberavon Beach got its award, while Carmarthenshire can put the flags up at Cefn Sidan and Pendine. Across Wales, some 45 beaches and five marinas made the grade, including Swansea's city marina. Meanwhile, four Swansea beauty spots — Pwll Du, Mewslade, Tor Bay and Rhossili – won Green Coast Awards. Swansea Bay also made a splash in this year's good beach guide, with nine excellent places to soak up the sun. The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) carried out the survey of 769 British bathing spots, with 55 per cent being recommended by the conservation group. Of the 25 beaches in Swansea Bay, 19 were given a pass — with nine being classed as excellent.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/7-blue-flags-for-swanea-bay-beaches/>

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/swanea-beaches-feature-in-green-coast-awards/>

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/swanea-lifes-a-beach-nine-of-our-bays-make-sea-bathing-guide/>

Rhossili is voted the best in Britain and best UK picnic spot

Rhossili Bay has been voted Britain's best beach, seeing off competition from some of the UK's best-known holiday resorts and taking 47% of the vote, emerging as the clear winner ahead of Tresco in the Isles of Scilly. The poll was conducted for the Cadbury Flake 99 Great British Beach Awards 2010. Councillor Richard Lewis, Lord Mayor of Swansea, said: 'We are truly blessed in Swansea to have the Gower peninsula on our doorstep and its appeal greatly helps raise the profile of Swansea Bay, not just in the UK but across the world.' Rhossili also won itself another fan after reality star and TV presenter Jeff Brazier paid a visit. Mr. Brazier, who fronted the competition said: "It was absolutely breathtaking. I have no hesitation in saying I will be visiting the area again with my family, very soon." Rhossili Bay was also recently named the best picnic spot in the UK by the British Guild of Travel Writers.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/rhossili-is-voted-the-best-in-britain/>

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/rhossili-bay-wins-vote/>

Swansea Bay hits the headlines

Swansea Bay has featured in a Sunday Mirror article about a bike ride on the Celtic Cycle Trail. Journalist Chris Drew extolled the virtues of Swansea Bay. He said that: "Gower is the perfect place to start, serving up a feast for the eyes, as well as tickling the taste buds, when you head off from poet Dylan Thomas's "ugly, lovely town" of Swansea." The Gower peninsular also recently featured in Your Dog Magazine's 'Where to Stay' Guide 2010-2011. Reporter, Helen Taylor, visited Gower with her four dogs. She stayed in the pet friendly Oldwalls Leisure complex, which she gave a five star rating to for dog friendliness and the standard of the accommodation. Helen also rated the dog friendliness of the area as five star and said; "Dogs were born to run on this picturesque peninsular." The regions campsites and beaches have also won a number of plaudits from the Times and Essential Travel.co.uk Magazine.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/gower-praised-in-your-dog-magazine/>

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/swansea-bay-features-in-sunday-mirror-cycling-article/>

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/swansea-bay-campsites-and-beaches-hit-the-headlines/>

US writer won over by charm of Gower golfing

Matt Ginella, senior travel editor of Golf Digest, a popular American golfing magazine, has visited the golf courses of South Wales for a blog on the magazine's website. He visited Pennard Golf Course in Gower as part of the tour, enjoying stunning views over Three Cliffs Bay, the old church ruins on the seventh fairway and the interjection of a stray cow, which laid a pat on the edge of the third tee. He was quite taken with the quaint serenity of the coastal surroundings. He said: "Pennard gets real good at about the seventh hole, when you start playing out to Three Cliffs Bay. The ruins on the course are undefeated in the charm column."

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/us-writer-won-over-by-charm-of-gower-golfing/>

All aboard! Firm hoping to attract wave of new interest

Wales's newest watersport — wakeboarding — is ready for lift off. Extreme sports firm Go Wake began trading in June in SA1. Supported by the Welsh Assembly and by Associated British Ports, it will be Wales's first permanent cable-powered wakeboarding park. Co-owner Matt Barker-Smith said: "It's a growing sport and Swansea's the perfect location for it. We've got better transport links and infrastructure than Cornwall or Devon, and it's about time the city capitalised on that. Wales is a superb venue for water sports, with Swansea and Gower established centres for sailors and surfers and GoWake will hopefully become another important attraction."

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/all-aboard-firm-hoping-to-attract-wave-of-new-interest/>

Free Parking incentives for City Shoppers

Business leaders in Swansea have teamed up with parking bosses to drive more trade into the city. Motorists using all three of Swansea's NCP city centre car parks will be able to park for free for their first hour as part of a Swansea Business Improvement District (BID) initiative to bring more people into the city centre. The offer will feature a combined total of around 1,100 spaces. The deal will be subsidised by Swansea BID as part of its plans to introduce projects to help resolve issues affecting trading conditions.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/free-parking-incentives-for-city-shoppers/>

Sony UK deal helps put Dylan prize into digital age

A prestigious prize in memory of Dylan Thomas has launched a new digital category after winning the support of a major international backer. Sony UK has unveiled its sponsorship of an e-book section in this year's Dylan Thomas Prize, which will be entitled the Sony Reader Award for Unpublished Writers. The Dylan Thomas Prize is the largest literary award for young writers worldwide. The new category will recognise the work of unpublished British novelists aged under 30. The winner will be awarded £5,000 and their book will be published in an e-book format which can be downloaded from the Sony UK website in the countdown to Christmas.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/new-deal-helps-put-dylan-prize-into-digital-age/>

Swansea achieves City of Sanctuary status

Swansea has become the first place in Wales to win City of Sanctuary status. Over 100 groups have pledged to create a culture of hospitality for people fleeing violence or persecution. The movement aims to create a network of towns and cities in the UK that are proud to welcome refugees and asylum seekers and help them fully integrate. The City of Sanctuary movement began in Sheffield - the only other UK city to gain the award.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/swansea-achieves-city-of-sanctuary-status/>

The friendliest city in Wales - that's us

According to a new survey, Swansea has been named the friendliest city in Wales, and the second friendliest in Britain. The results of the first Friendly Index showed Swansea residents were among the most neighbourly and welcoming in the country. Compiled by health insurer National Friendly, the survey of 29 cities shows how 60 per cent of people in Swansea still regularly make time to speak to their local shop worker or pub owner. A further 40 per cent admit to regularly saying hello to people in the street. York topped the list of friendly cities.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/the-friendliest-city-in-wales-thats-us/>

Slice restaurant of Swansea wins award

A pint-sized city restaurant has beaten the big names in Welsh cooking to bag a prestigious culinary award. Slice, in Swansea, has been named the Welsh winner of The Good Food Guide Readers' Restaurant of the Year Award, as voted by the public. Slice was put forward by its customers for being "small but perfectly formed and a credit to the hard work of the team who run it."

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/slice-restaurant-of-swansea-wins-award/>

Boost in visitors for National Waterfront Museum

Swansea Waterfront Museum has had a bumper 12 months with 258,626 visitors. That is 20 per cent up on its target, and 4,000 more than it achieved in its first full year of operation. The Waterfront Museum celebrated the arrival of its one-millionth visitor last November, four years after opening in October 2005.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/boost-in-visitors-for-national-waterfront-museum/>

Urdd Eisteddfod in Swansea in 2011

The Urdd National Eisteddfod will come to Swansea's Felindre site in 2011. The event is one of the largest cultural festivals for young people in Europe, annually attracting more than 160,000 visitors. It is held in Welsh and encompasses all aspects of the arts in Wales. Chairman of the eisteddfod local executive committee, Dyfrig Ellis, said Swansea was excited about hosting the event. Mr. Ellis said the city's multicultural make-up would add colour to the 2011 event, which runs from May 30 until June 4.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/swansea-to-host-2011-urdd-national-eisteddfod/>

Carmarthenshire rakes in £332m from tourism industry and is showcased to the UK

Nearly three million people visited the county in 2008, according to Carmarthenshire County Council's annual STEAM report, spending £28.4m on accommodation and £62.3m on food and drink. A further £21.3m was spent on recreation and £48.9m on shopping. Transport benefited to the tune of £49.6m and there was a further £85.3m on indirect expenditure. Carmarthenshire's world class gardens have also been showcased to green fingered enthusiasts from across the UK at the BBC Gardeners World Live show at the NEC in Birmingham. Flagship attractions like Aberglasney Gardens and the National Botanic Garden of Wales, which was named the number one garden to visit in Wales in a poll conducted by the BBC's Gardeners' World magazine, were heavily promoted. Meanwhile, MP3 guided tours are to be launched in rural parts of Carmarthenshire as part of a new tourist drive. State-of-the-art technology will be used to inform visitors about sights of natural beauty, local landmarks, history and culture.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/carmarthenshire-rakes-in-332m-from-tourism-industry/>

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/carmarthenshire-showcased-to-the-uk/>

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/venue-tops-garden-poll/>

Park life gets better at the Gnoll

Neath's Gnoll Country Park has been voted the best place to picnic in Wales in this year's Warburtons Picnic Awards. Hundreds of picnic-goers cast their votes to help the Gnoll fight off stiff competition from other sites in Wales. Visitors to the park will find a greatly improved nine-hole golf course thanks to a £102,644 grant from the Ryder Cup Wales Legacy Fund. Following these changes, visitors will be able to earn their picnic by playing on the newly improved course and there are also ambitious plans in place to develop junior golf in the area thanks to the new-look facilities.

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/neaths-gnoll-country-park-voted-the-best-for-a-picnic/>

<http://www.abayoflife.com/en/news/park-life-gets-better-at-the-gnoll/>



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