

Welcome to Oriel Eryri

It is another busy but drizzly Friday morning at yr Oriel Eryri with visitors, staff and members of the community of all ages coming and going.

In the foyer, a small group of walkers has gathered around Libby, the duty Mountain Leader for the day. She has already met with a steady stream of walkers passing through on their way to the start of their chosen Yr Wyddfa path – advising them of the weather conditions and best route for them, pointing out the Sherpa bus stop outside and sending a few to the high street for waterproofs! Some of them have taken up her offer of a guided walk to the summit- they'll be leaving at 10.30 and Libby gets their fee in return for her voluntary time advising all visitors who call in. Today she will be joined by Elin, the Oriel Eryri Apprentice who is excited to be supporting the walk.

As well as checking bus times and exploring an impressive stone 3D model of Yr Wyddfa, Elidir Fawr & Fach and the Moel Eilio horseshoe, visitors are using the toilets! There are plenty and with an overnight sponsored walk taking place this evening they will be in use for 24 hours! At least that helps to keep the mountain and the hedgerows clean and healthy!

The café is doing steady business- its focus on local produce and sustainability are making it a popular choice and it's an important small, independent local business with a voice on the Social Enterprise Management Committee for the whole site. Polite (but firm) reminders go out about bringing packaging and fruit peel back to the outdoor recycling and composting bins! Information signs tell customers what to say if they want to order (and say thank you) in Welsh. There is a 5% discount for anyone who tries! The café is just one example of how the Oriel is promoting the Welsh language and later it will host a weekly 'Siarad yn Araf' panad session where participants both Welsh speakers and other Welsh-learners simply chat, in Welsh and VERY slowly!

Local young parents mingle with visitors in the soft-play, giving children and adults a chance to hear Welsh being spoken as they play in the mountain and quarry-inspired area. The play area is likely to be busy all weekend as the weather could be a bit wet! Fortunately there is plenty for families to do with play, adventure, education and Welsh culture being key aspects of all of the Oriel! The community Library is also going well. Volunteer-led, it isn't open all the time but browsing is still possible with a range of titles both in Welsh and English and a 'library of things' where items useful to household can be

borrowed. The quiet spaces for private study are always available supported by the extended SMART Town free Wi-Fi!

The new museum area is thriving and one of the most obvious features of the Unesco world heritage status taking a great deal of the Oriel floor space. Exhibitions are fresh, accessible and interactive and the cinema which is currently showing a looped-film about the Electric Mountain will later show clips about slate quarrying before the residents and visitors come back early evening to watch a movie together! Busy but good practice for the Llanberis Film Festival later in the Autumn! The Museum staff are employed by the Slate Museum but (as with all the partners in Oriel Eryri) they regularly meet with the Centre Manager and join a weekly integrated team meeting where each partner plays their part in the Oriel Eryri Development Plan.

Unusually today there are no school parties in- most days at least one group will visit the centre either for an arts session (the Centre is a focal point for the arts for young people), a visit to the museum or simply using the facilities as part of a wilder outing in the area. This has the added benefit of bringing in families from across Gwynedd whose children want to show them this cool place in Llanberis!

Centre Manager Eleri has been busy making sure arrangements are in place for the afternoon meeting. Today it's the Youth Committee meeting giving young people in the village a voice about the centre, the programme and the facilities and as usual a Gwynedd Youth Worker will be coming along. In return for a voice comes responsibility and Eleri needs the meeting to address a complaint from Pentref Taclus about rubbish around the outdoor Pump Track. No nagging but asking them to sort it seems to work best and a few pizzas normally ensure a few participants decide to attend! Later on the pool table and table-tennis will be popular and provide a chance for local young people and visiting young people (perhaps from a city youth group) to encounter each other.

The shop is doing fairly well today (helped by the drizzle) and provides a range of local artisan goods and crafts. The staff are also young and on a rota. Their team consists mainly of the people making the goods- none of whom could sustain their own shop by themselves. This cooperative approach allows each to attend college or hold another job but their day or half-day in the shop gives them a feeling of pride in their work- it is their enterprise after all and the support of Menter Mon has given them the confidence to achieve this!

Fortunately a number of local small businesses rent office and communal meeting and training space at The Oriel which gives more experienced business people an opportunity to share advice and to learn from the young entrepreneurs- they all recognise that this is essential to the future economic prosperity of the Bro-Peris area.

Outside, the Pump Track is quiet. It will get busy later. Around the site the volunteer gardeners tend the community herb garden. The produce is sold inside in the shop and used in the café and (like the extensive wildflower areas) attracts wildlife that in turn attracts naturalists from 18 months to 80 years. The outdoor garden blends seamlessly with the multi-purpose pump track and the famous Caer Ddol beyond and is a focal point for environmental activity with clear views of the solar panels, mini wind-farm, rainwater recycling (used also for flushing the toilets) and mechanisms for the heat-pumps. There is information on panels to help visitors understand the Oriel's environmental credentials and pledges to keep its area clean, tidy, wildlife-friendly and to eliminate plastic waste. The frogs in the raised, accessible pond seem to appreciate the efforts anyway- though they are less sure about the visitors, especially the young children enjoying a safe pond-dipping session with their parents and carers!

A leading outdoor sports and endurance events company is a key partner at the Oriel and their rental of office space is an important income stream but the partnership will really come into its own next weekend with a series of races from Llanberis. They find that being able to access facilities at the Oriel is easier, more professional and environmentally-friendly than a bank of portaloos and their marshals certainly appreciate having a base for a briefing although the outdoor area will form much of the event-space.

Oriel Eryri is only possible because of commitment from the Council, Engie all of the partners on site, the Social Enterprise running the site and (most importantly) the sincere ambition of the residents of Llanberis to provide intergenerational and inclusive activities for the local community and visitors work. All of these partners recognise that a strong Welsh culture and identity and commitment to the environment reinforces and enriches provision and responds positively and equitably to the needs of residents, visitors and businesses of the wonderful village of Llanberis.