

Get ready now for prison jobs boost

Ex-prison officer tells the county to get ready for a jail work bonanza

By ALEX HICKEY

A FORMER prison officer has warned Gwynedd to "get ready now" or face missing out on the jobs bonanza that the new Caernarfon jail will bring.

Mike Boardman, 41, has swapped prison life for a career behind a different kind of bar, as licensee of Felinbell's Halfway House.

And, with almost a decade's worth of experience in the prison service, working in jails such as HMP Risley, Walton and Hindley, he is urging Gwynedd County Council and the private sector to be geared-up and in a position to benefit from jobs and contracts before the jail opens at the former Fardro site in 2012.

He said: "I can't stress this strongly enough, but the powers at be in Gwynedd need to be ready for this as soon as possible because if they aren't then I know plenty of serving prison officers who would jump at the chance of moving to a place like Caernarfon."

The same applies to teachers, psychologists, probation officers and everyone else employed by a prison as the recruitment process can take up to 12 to 18 months, in some cases.

"The big advantage local people will have is the ability to speak Welsh, but that is only if they are trained up and ready to do the job. The ability to speak Welsh would be 'preferred' but not a



BEHIND BARS: Former prison officer and licensee of the Halfway House, Mike Boardman, with Felinbell councillor Siân Gwerillan.

necessity. For him, that means the council and other groups need to set up training seminars now, ahead of any recruitment process. Equally local traders and construction firms have to ensure their staff have the right security clearance to work at the site.

If not, then others will take advantage of expected £7.8m economic windfall.

"This proposed prison could create hundreds of well paid jobs that are almost recession proof for local people."

Mr Boardman said he sympathised

with the concerns of those opposed to the prison.

"I acknowledge some people have concerns but this will be very good for the area from an employment and economic point of view."

Felinbell councillor Siân Gwerillan said: "I agree completely that the council has to move now to ensure we take advantage of this locally."

The council's strategic development director Iwan Trefor Jones will be one of the key figures in a special project team set up to ensure the county benefits from the economic opportunities the prison will bring.

Mr Jones said: "The prison doors will not be open for some time but now is the time to start training and preparing the workforce for it."

"Gwynedd Council has already started its strategy to identify basic skills needed by local people to fill these posts."

The prison is expected to employ around 700 people directly and Mr Jones has promised to work with existing resources such as schools, colleges, Bangor University and Ysbyty Gwynedd, as well as the private sector to ensure local firms are in a position to pick up contracts.

Gwynedd stays out of Tŷ Mawr 'call in' move

By ELGAN HEARN

OPPOSITION in Gwynedd to the £100m Tŷ Mawr scheme earmarked for Llanfairpwll on Anglesey will be led by Bangor City Council.

Yesterday Gwynedd Council confirmed that they will not be asking the Welsh Assembly Council to call in the application.

In a statement Gwynedd Council confirmed that they still opposed the scheme and that the Welsh Assembly Government were aware of their views but they were not going down the call in route.

At the end of January, at the second time of asking, Anglesey county councillors approved the retail/office scheme which could create between 600 and 1500 jobs.

Interested parties have three weeks from the time the Assembly Government is notified of the decision, in which to state their objections and reasons for further scrutiny.

Submissions for call in have already been sent to the minister for the environment, sustainability and housing, Jane Davidson, by Bangor City Council and Cwmni Tŷ Llangedfa.

Bangor City Council clerk, Gwyn Hughes, said: "Our call in request was sent as long ago as February 6."



CALL IN: Tŷ Mawr

"The city council feels that the people of Bangor must be able to trust the integrity of the planning system where a local planning authority should stick to local and national planning policies in instances where the development concerned is likely to have devastating economic effects outside its administrative boundaries."

A spokeswoman for Gwynedd Council said: "Gwynedd Council has already opposed the application and the Welsh Assembly Government is fully aware of our position."

"As the neighbouring planning authority, we have formally objected to this application on the basis that it presents a significant departure from local and national planning policies."

"We consider the development to be a significant departure from national retail policies in terms of the location of the site, the size and scale of the proposed buildings and its adverse effect on the landscape of the Menai area, the traffic and the likely traffic jams it is likely to create in the Britannia Bridge area."

■ THE county's foster carers' "invaluable"