

Mid Wales Tourism Awards

Showcaves win award for Best Visitor Attraction in Mid Wales

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The National Showcaves Centre for Wales at Dan-yr-Ogof, Abercraf has added another accolade to his huge collection after being judged Best Visitor Attraction at the inaugural Mid Wales Tourism Awards.

The business collected the award, sponsored by the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society, at a glittering awards ceremony held at The Hafren, Newtown which was attended by Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism, Lord Elis-Thomas. Compere was Welsh tourism personality Jonathan Jones, CBE.

The National Showcaves Centre for Wales goes forward to represent Mid Wales at the National Tourism Awards for Wales in May 2020.

Designed to celebrate and showcase the region's exceptional tourism industry, the biennial awards were organised and managed by MWT Cymru on behalf of Mid Wales Tourism Forum and supported by Visit Wales, the Welsh Government's tourism arm. A dedicated Tourism Awards Advisory Group was established specifically to assist with the awards.

Carl Shaw, a director of The National Showcaves Centre for Wales, said: "It's a fantastic achievement to be judged best visitor attraction at the first Mid Wales Tourism Awards.

"The awards are great and it's about time tourism in Mid Wales was recognised. We should be singing as loud as we can about the high quality visitor attractions, hotels and B&Bs that we have in the region."

First discovered in 1912, Dan-yr-Ogof caves are one of the oldest visitor attractions in Wales and the largest showcaves complex in Northern Europe, attracting 93,000 visitors annually. It was voted Britain's Finest Natural Wonder in 2005.

Ashford Price's family has run the attraction since the caves were discovered and many of the senior staff have worked there for three generations or more. Dan-yr-Ogof was one of the first tourist attractions to offer staff promotion to the main board, which today comprises an equal split of family and staff directors.

Three years ago, the caves became one of the first British attractions to be self-sufficient in its energy needs thanks to investment in solar and hydro power plants. A new hydro building shows visitors four different ways of producing green energy - wind, solar, hydro a waterwheel.

The site is both a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a National Nature Reserve, the highest possible conservation designations. Conservation practices have earned the business 16 environmental awards over the years.

Some of the oldest passageways in the caves are more than 500,000 years old and the oldest bone discovered in the cave dates back 6,000 years.

Other attractions at Dan-yr-Ogof include a dinosaur park, an archaeological recreation of an Iron Age farm, an interactive museum focusing on environmental issues, a Shire Horse Centre, farmyard, playgrounds, a collection of stone circles, standing stones and stone avenues, Mr Morgan's Coffee Shop and the Rock and Dinosaur Shop.

The company's self-catering arm, Brecon Beacons Resort, offers 15 cottages and recently won a Hoseasons award for quality and customer care. It also owns a caravan/tenting park.

More than 80,000 broadleaf trees have been planted within the grounds to attract birds of prey and a large lake created to encourage wetland birds to nest on an artificial breeding island in its centre.

Runners up for the award were King Arthur's Labyrinth at Corris Craft Centre, near Machynlleth and Talyllyn Railway.

Granted an Awards Trust Mark by the Independent Awards Standards Council, the awards were open to all businesses, organisations and individuals who contribute to tourism within Mid Wales.

MWT Cymru is the regional destination marketing and membership organisation for Powys, Ceredigion and Meirionnydd district of Southern Snowdonia. As a not-for-profit social enterprise company, MWT Cymru supports and represents more than 550 tourism businesses and organisations across the region.

Picture caption:

Carl Shaw from Dan yr Ogof, The National Showcaves Centre for Wales, Abercraf, receives the Best Visitor Attraction Award from Steve Hughson, managing director of sponsor Royal Welsh Agricultural Society, at the Mid Wales Tourism Awards held at The Hafren, Newtown.

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