



## **New Tourism destination in Ferndale opens its doors for the first time**

***A new Sports Bar and themed Sir Stanley Baker Lounge celebrating the life of one of Ferndale's most famous sons will open tomorrow as part of The Rhondda Life project, which will soon also include a 70-cover restaurant.***

Rhondda Life Ltd, a not-for-profit social enterprise, is opening the first stage of its new £1.2 million leisure destination in Ferndale in the heart of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

On Friday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2011 Rhondda Life, located in Station Road, Ferndale, will open its doors for the first time. Visitors to the building on Friday will be able to enjoy both the 100 capacity Sports Bar and the Sir Stanley Baker Lounge, dedicated to the memory of Ferndale-born actor Sir Stanley Baker. The 70 cover Ferns restaurant will open the following Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May.

The new premises will open at 12 noon with a unique menu catering for all tastes in both the Sports Bar and the Sir Stanley Baker Lounge. Specialities on offer will include a Zulu Special Baguette and the Sir Stanley Special Cream Tea.

The project will have already created 16 new local jobs 14 of which have been filled by employees who were previously unemployed. One example of which is Rhondda Life's head chef Steve Walters from Aberdare.

Steve, a former regiment chef with the Parachute Regiment, left the Army 18 months ago and after a period of redundancy he acquired the position with Rhondda Life four weeks ago.

During his time in the Army Steve has cooked for up to 2,500 people as well as members of the Royal Family and was the personal chef to Margaret Thatcher when she was in the Falklands. He will now spend his time cooking for the three catering outlets at Rhondda Life.

John Asquith, Chairman of Rhondda Life Ltd, said: “It is fantastic that after four years of hard work we can open the doors and start using the facility as it has always been intended.

“We are expecting to reach full capacity tomorrow. It will be a great to see the first two venues open and being used by the public for the first time and seeing people’s reactions.

“Tomorrow we will see the Sports bar and the Sir Stanley Baker Lounge open but the excitement doesn’t stop there as the following week we will be able to open the doors to the much anticipated Ferns restaurant.

“Our ambition has always been to act as a catalyst for the regeneration of the whole Rhondda Cynon Taf area, as part of the wider regeneration of The Valleys [under the Heart and Soul campaign]. We feel that tomorrow highlights a fantastic milestone in achieving this.”

The multipurpose complex, built on the former Salisbury hotel site, is the first phase of the Rhondda Life project to be completed. It was constructed and designed by local companies in south Wales including CW Architects, Cardiff, TC Consult, Newport and Jehu Ltd, Bridgend.

Rhondda Life Ltd promotes the heritage and natural landscape of the Rhondda in order to build a network of tourism related businesses that provide local employment, strengthen the local economy and drive forward regeneration in the Rhondda.

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