# Community mourns the closure of Oakwood theme park in Pembrokeshire



In Narberth, Pembrokeshire, the recent announcement that Oakwood, the largest theme park in Wales, will not reopen has left a palpable sadness in the community. The park, which first opened its gates in 1987, has been a significant tourist attraction drawing visitors from far and wide, not just to Oakwood but to the surrounding areas including Narberth itself. According to the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, the county attracted approximately 6.6 million visitors in 2022, underscoring the importance of tourism to the local economy.

The decision to close Oakwood was made by its owners, Aspro Parks, who stated that running and maintaining the facility was no longer financially viable. The park had experienced a decline in visitor numbers in recent years, leading to a general consensus among locals that its glory days were behind it. Mark Richards, co-owner of the antique shop Useful & Beautiful Things in Narberth, expressed his regret, noting, “Being a Pembrokeshire person who was born here and lives here I can remember Oakwood opening for the first time. It’s sad. I know a lot of people who have worked there and the employment side of it is really the loss.”

Another local business owner, Ivan Wilson of Fire & Ice, a craft bottle shop, voiced concerns about the impact of the closure on employment, particularly for students who relied on summer jobs. He noted that while the park's closure might not significantly impact trade in Narberth, as many of its visitors were on day trips, the broader implications for tourism in Pembrokeshire were a cause for concern. “Have the dynamics changed? What has Pembrokeshire got apart from tourism?” Wilson questioned.

Even Kevin Hart, who runs The Snooty Fox, a local pub and restaurant situated near Oakwood, acknowledged the potential negative consequences of the park’s closure. Hart noted that campers who previously enjoyed the proximity to Oakwood would now seek alternative options, although he remains optimistic about trade from nearby attractions such as the Bluestone Resort.

In contrast, Victoria James, owner of the retro clothing boutique Rock n Rolla, maintained a belief in Narberth's resilience. “Narberth draws people because it’s a bustling, vibrant market town with a lot of independent shops,” she asserted. Many residents echo this sentiment, stressing the unique character of Narberth, which comprises a mix of independent shops, cafes, and a sense of community.

Historically, Narberth has evolved from a rundown market town in the 1970s and 80s into a vibrant hub that now attracts visitors for various reasons beyond just Oakwood. Richards reflected on this transformation, crediting the establishment of local galleries and the influx of independent businesses for revitalising the town's image and culture.

The closure of Oakwood has been termed a reflection of broader challenges facing Welsh tourism, with the full ramifications of the park's exit still uncertain. Locals remain hopeful, expressing confidence in Narberth's ability to draw tourists with its unique offerings, despite the loss of one of Pembrokeshire's most iconic landmarks. As the community looks forward, the continuing evolution of Narberth's appeal to visitors will be a crucial focus for local business owners and residents alike.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://nation.cymru/news/oakwood-theme-park-announces-closure-after-38-years/> - This article confirms the closure of Oakwood Theme Park due to financial viability issues and highlights its significance as a beloved destination in Wales.
* <https://blooloop.com/theme-park/news/oakwood-theme-park-wales-closing/> - This piece supports the claim that Oakwood's closure is a result of economic challenges and notes the park's historical importance as a major theme park in Wales.
* <https://www.oakwoodthemepark.co.uk/blog/sin-categoria/oakwood-theme-park-to-close/> - This official statement from Oakwood Theme Park explains the reasons behind its closure, including financial struggles despite significant investments.
* <https://www.pembrokeshirecoast.wales/default.asp?pid=1> - This website provides information about Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, which is relevant to understanding the broader tourism context in the area.
* <https://www.visitpembrokeshire.com/> - This tourism website highlights the attractions and visitor numbers in Pembrokeshire, underscoring the importance of tourism to the local economy.
* <https://www.narberth.co.uk/> - This local website showcases Narberth's unique character and attractions, supporting the claim that Narberth remains a vibrant destination beyond Oakwood.