# Porth’s fourteenth barber shop sparks fears of overcompetition and crime links



In the small Welsh town of Porth, which is home to just 5,970 residents, the recent decision to open a fourteenth barber shop has stirred significant debate among locals. The new establishment, spearheaded by a Kurdish businessman, will occupy a space in a former amusement arcade on Hannah Street. While the venture is set to proceed following a green light from Rhondda Cynon Taf's planning committee, many residents argue that the town is already oversaturated with hair salons, raising concerns over competition and sustainability in a struggling retail environment.

The planning committee's approval came despite 34 letters of objection, which articulated worries over what many see as an excessive number of barber shops in the town. With this addition, there will now be one barber for every 426 residents, according to the latest figures from the 2021 census. Critics, including local business owners and residents, voice fears that an influx of similar businesses could undermine existing salons, making it difficult for them to remain profitable in an increasingly crowded market.

Snur Abdulhmid, an 18-year-old barber at Porth Barbers, expressed his concern, stating, "There are too many, we don't need another one. If there are too many, no-one can make money." This sentiment mirrors the findings of a survey conducted by the Porth and District Chamber of Trade, which revealed that locals felt an overabundance of certain businesses, especially barber shops and fast-food outlets, detracted from the town's appeal.

The issue extends beyond mere economics; community safety and crime have also been brought into the conversation. Recent reports have highlighted instances of violence and criminal activity associated with barber shops in nearby areas, a concerning trend in a region already grappling with issues of organised crime. In Blackwood, a brawl erupted over competition related to barber shops earlier this year, reflecting how aggressive business rivalries can escalate into violence.

Concerns have also been raised at legislative levels. Gareth Davies, a Conservative member of the Senedd, suggested during a debate that the thriving business of barber shops in Wales, particularly those run by foreign nationals, may be linked to illicit activities such as money laundering. His claims, while controversial, have ignited discussions about the legitimacy of many businesses in the sector and whether they might serve as fronts for criminal enterprises, an assertion that was critiqued for lacking substantiated evidence.

While many barber shops operate legitimately and adhere to regulations, there remains an undercurrent of suspicion regarding some establishments, particularly those linked to certain immigrant communities. In Porth and surrounding areas, the perception persists that some barber shops could potentially serve as conduits for criminal activities, reflecting broader trends where small businesses are exploited by criminal enterprises.

The socio-economic landscape of Porth tells a larger story of a town struggling to reinvent itself against the backdrop of changing consumer habits and economic challenges. Historic retailers, such as a recently shuttered New Look store and a series of once-thriving fashion outlets, have vanished from the streets, leaving a vacuum that many worry will not be filled by more barber shops. Over the years, locals have lamented the decline of diverse retail options and expressed apprehension over the impact of such over-specialisation on the town's vitality.

As Porth prepares for yet another barber shop to open its doors, the community stands divided. While some see potential in revitalising an empty venue, others fear that the decision only underscores broader issues—competition and crime—that could jeopardise the town's future. The ultimate question remains: can Porth sustain such a proliferation of similar businesses, or are its streets destined to become increasingly homogeneous in their offerings?

### Reference Map

1. Information on the number of barber shops and community opinions.
2. Parallel issues faced by small businesses in the region.
3. Comments from Gareth Davies regarding barber shops and criminal activities.
4. General implications of similar allegations in political discussions.
5. Concerns from security experts regarding organised crime and barber shops.
6. Legislative discussions on the implications of such businesses.
7. Broader context of crime syndicates using local businesses as fronts.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14703587/Welsh-town-5-970-inhabitants-gets-FOURTEENTH-barber-shop.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/popular-barbers-forced-close-after-25416451> - A popular barber shop in Pontypridd, Lost Boys, was forced to close after repeated flooding caused by a blocked drain. The owner, Josh Downes, spent months trying to resolve the issue, incurring significant losses. The flooding was attributed to grease and fat being poured down the drains, leading to investigations by Welsh Water and local authorities. The incident highlights the challenges faced by small businesses due to infrastructure issues and the impact of such problems on local economies.
3. <https://news.sky.com/story/senedd-welsh-conservative-suggests-some-barber-shops-may-be-money-laundering-front-13066808> - Gareth Davies, a Conservative member of the Senedd representing the Vale of Clwyd, suggested that some barber shops in Wales could be fronts for money laundering. During a debate on the Welsh government's draft budget, Davies criticized the thriving of certain businesses, including barber shops, which he implied might be involved in illicit activities. This statement sparked controversy and was criticized by other political figures, emphasizing the need for evidence before making such claims.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-68227005> - In a debate on the Welsh government's draft budget, Gareth Davies, a Conservative member of the Senedd, suggested that numerous barber shops in Prestatyn could be fronts for criminal enterprises. He highlighted the success of these businesses amidst economic challenges, implying potential involvement in illicit activities. This assertion was met with criticism from Labour members, who argued that such sweeping statements were harmful and lacked evidence, underscoring the importance of substantiated claims in political discourse.
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/03/19/barber-shops-increasingly-front-crime-security-sources-warn//> - Security experts have raised concerns that the proliferation of barber shops in major UK cities may be linked to organized crime activities, including human trafficking and drug distribution. The surge in barber shops, particularly those owned by Albanian, Turkish, and Kurdish groups, has prompted investigations into their potential use as fronts for illicit operations. Experts suggest that while many barber shops are legitimate, the rapid expansion warrants scrutiny to prevent exploitation and criminal activities.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-politics-68227005> - Gareth Davies, a Conservative member of the Senedd representing the Vale of Clwyd, suggested that numerous barber shops in Prestatyn could be fronts for criminal enterprises. He highlighted the success of these businesses amidst economic challenges, implying potential involvement in illicit activities. This assertion was met with criticism from Labour members, who argued that such sweeping statements were harmful and lacked evidence, underscoring the importance of substantiated claims in political discourse.
7. <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/%27Sophisticated%27%2Bgang%2Bflooded%2BWelsh%2Btown%2Bwith%2Bdrugs%2Bworth%2Bmore%2Bthan...-a0808620799> - A sophisticated gang flooded a Welsh town with drugs worth over £400,000, using local businesses such as car washes and barber shops as fronts for illegal activities. The operation involved recruiting local women to transport drugs and utilized various means, including private cars and taxis, to distribute illicit substances. The gang's activities were uncovered through a series of police interceptions, leading to significant drug seizures and highlighting the challenges posed by organized crime infiltrating legitimate businesses.