

The Local Authority of the Town of Szécsény

Description of the town

The nicest small frontier town in Nógrád county



TOWN HISTORY FROM PREHISTORIC AGE TO PRESENT DAYS

The valley of the Ipoly and especially the area of that around Szécsény was inhabited even in the prehistoric age. Findings attest that the region was peopled from the Neolithic period. Teutons, Avars, Slavs appeared here in the first millennium B. C.

Hungarians settled down in the surrounding country in the decades following the Hungarian Conquest, which began in 895 A. D. The town itself must have originated from that era. The burial places found on the confines of the town render this pretension probable.

The first genuine written document about Szécsény dates back to 1219. In 1334, Lord Chief Justice Thomas Szécsényi induced King Charles Robert to permit the status of town, so Szécsény became a market town in the same year.

The Turkish occupied Szécsény in 1552 and after that the town became the centre of a sanjak (Turkish vilayet) for several decades. The first Turkish occupation ended in 1593, hereupon Zsigmond Forgách became the landed proprietor of the town and the captain of the fortress at the same time. The second Turkish occupation lasted 20 years. Szécsény became practically deserted by the end of the nearly 150-year Turkish rule.

One of the most glorious parts of the town history is linked with the war of independence in 1703 that was called into being against Habsburgs by Prince Ferenc Rákóczi II. The Prince convened the Diet into our town in September 1705, where he was elected the ruling Prince of Transylvania and commander-in chief of the Hungarian insurgent forces. Although the war of independence failed, the inhabitants of the town still treasure the Prince's memory. Many town institutions bear his name.

1737 is a remarkable date in the life of the town as the Forgách repurchased their property from Koháry family. The town began a slow development in the 18th century, a lot of private houses were built and the first pharmacy of the county was opened in 1741. The baroque style Forgách Castle - which is a museum nowadays - was built in that century as well.

The development of the town slowed down in the 19th century and fell behind other towns in Nógrád, such as Balassagyarmat, Losonc, Salgótarján. Szécsény lost its town status in 1886 owing to the decision of Parliament. In spite of the situation, a town hall was built in 1905 and the municipality organized a brilliant commemoration Rákóczi festival on the 200th anniversary of the 1705 Diet.

After the Trianon Treaty (1920), followed the First World War, Szécsény became a frontier town, which has hindered its development until present days.

The Second World War did not keep out Szécsény of its way either. During the fighting raged in December 1944 the inhabitants suffered war damage of the highest degree. After conclusion of the war the reorganisation of life started immediately. Nationalisation and setting up co-operative farms brought fundamental changes in everyday life.

Until the end of the 1970s Szécsény was an administrative centre, being the chief town of the district. When the public administration system was reformed the function of the seat of the district became extinct. As a result, several institutions and offices were closed down, e.g. the district law court, the registry of title deeds, the central police station and the secondary grammar school.

The economic recession in the 1990s also produced effects on our conditions. However, significant local government investments in infrastructure were carried out. Thus sewerage and gas pipe system were constructed and the town became connected into the automatic telephone network. The institutions of the town also have changed. We founded a secondary grammar school in 1994 and an ambulance station and a nursing home were established as well. The agricultural secondary vocational school and the art school have been transferred to the county self-government.

Geographical, climatic and geologic features

Geography of the town

Szécsény lies in the northern part of Nógrád county on the Slovak border, at the edge of the Ipoly valley. Its geographical position: 48° 5' northern latitude, 19° 32' eastern longitude.

Two other settlements belong to Szécsény administratively: Pösténypuszta, located right on the bank of the River Ipoly and Benczúrfalva, found 4 km from the town.

The town is situated at the intersection of Northern-, Northeast- and East-Cserhát hills, in the Ipoly valley, at the height of 155 m above sea level, in a small basin along the River Ipoly.

The major part of the town was built on a plateau extending along the southern edge of the basin. The rift valley of the Ipoly can be found to the north. The north-south flow of the river turns into east-west direction near

Szécsény. A stream called Szentlélek (Holy Spirit) runs through the town along the edge of the plateau and flows into the Ipoly.

On the confines of the settlement there is a pond originated from ballast-digging. It is the anglers' paradise. The exploitation ceased several years ago.

Climatic features

Szécsény has a continental climate of wetter type. The average number of sunny hours is 1,990 a year. The average annual mean is 9.1 Celsius, on the basis of the yearly average in the last 70 years. Annual rainfall is 610 mm - 360 mm in the grow - taking the yearly average of 50 years as a basis. The prevailing wind is westerly and northwesterly.

Geological features

The plough-lands in the Ipoly valley are of good quality, they are suitable for agricultural production. The soil of hills surrounding the valley is of poorer quality but the plateau is under crop. The major part of the soil is medium or high acidic. The most frequent type is brown alluvial forest soil. Quite a large area is covered by 'kovárvány' brown forest soil (sandy brown forest soil with thin interstratified layers of colloid and sesquioxide accumulation), chernozem-brown forest soil and brown earth. Meadow and meadow alluvial soils are typical along the Ipoly. Sporadically, loess and sand can be found. The average gold crown value of the cropland (measurement unit of the quality of arable land in Hungary) is 24.97 per hectare, which is below the national average.

Infrastructure

After the transformation of regime the town assigned a substantial sum for extension the public utility services to 100 %. Every property of the settlement has accessibility to piped water and sewage network as well as to pipeline gas.

Szécsény is the traffic junction of the neighbouring villages. Varsány, Nógrádsipek, Rimóc can be approached just via our town. Szécsény lies 30 km from the county seat Salgótarján and 105 km from Budapest. Several bus services are available to Budapest every day but there is a railway line too.

Because of the investments of the past years, the roads maintained by the local government got damaged. The municipal corporation is planning to carry out a road reconstruction and intends to finance it steadily.

On the basis of treaty between Hungarian and Slovak Government, in Postenypuszta, which belongs to Szécsény, the building of a bridge on river Ipoly will begin soon. Thus, the bordercross traffic, which has not worked since the World War II, will be reestablished.

Culture

The community centre co-ordinates and organises the cultural life of the town. We have several traditional festivals: Town Day at the end of May or at the beginning of June, Autumn Art Exhibition of Szécsény and Szécsény Vintage Festival. The cultural centre sponsors the Ferenc Erkel mixed-voice choir that has been performing for 30 years. There is a projection in the building once a week. The kindergarteners and school children regularly watch different educational and entertaining films there. The town library works within the framework of the cultural centre. Readers can choose from 44 thousand volumes. The number of the registered readers is nearly 2,000.

Education, school system

The local government maintains the following educational institutions:

- Kindergarten: The teachers do high quality pedagogic work in the three buildings of the nursery school.

- Ferenc Rákóczi II Elementary School: It has one building. Owing to the high-standard didactic and educational work, pupils won several inter-school competitions.

- Sándor Kőrösi Csoma Secondary Grammar and Vocational School: The municipal corporation founded it in 1994 as an 8-grade secondary grammar school. The vocational education of computer technology began in 1998. Teaching foreign languages and computer science have -outstanding - importance. The following institutions are maintained by the county self-government:

- The School of Arts: The music section is fairly successful. The members of the dramatic group regularly perform at the town festivities.

- Béla Liphay Agricultural Secondary Vocational School: This technical school trains agricultural skilled workers. The students come not only from Nógrád but also from other counties as well. The school also organises courses for adults and courses adjusted to the trade, too.

Social welfare, healthcare, unemployment

Three general practitioners and two paediatricians work in Szécsény as entrepreneurs. There are four dentists. The dentists also attend the

inhabitants of 12 villages in the region of Szécsény. Besides basic healthcare a small laboratory, physical therapy and therapeutic gymnastics are available as well. There is a gynaecological consultation too but it is a private practice.

More and more people appeal to holistic medicine practitioners whose work is co-ordinated by one of the paediatricians in the framework of a medical centre.

The ambulance station has been working since 1993. Its job is confined to transporting patients. The emergency service is operated by an enterprise owned by a doctor.

Social welfare

The present data of the unemployment show that approximately 1,000 inhabitants are entitled to a form of social allocations the major part of which is financed by the local authority.

Unemployment

Our figures, which were published by the Employment Centre of Nógrád County, relate to Szécsény and its region. The number of the registered unemployed: 1,625, including 896 men and 729 women. Manual workers: 1,429 people, not manual, white-collar workers: 196 people.

Professional grouping:

- Skilled worker: 425
- Semi-skilled labourer: 507
- Unskilled worker or handyman: 520

Classification according to educational level:

- fewer than 8 elementary grades: 245
- 8-grade elementary school: 688
- trade school: 392
- technical school: 24
- technical academy: 40
- vocational technical school: 130
- secondary grammar school: 86
- college, university: 20

Agriculture

As a consequence of the Act of Co-operative farms 1992 , one of the best co-operative farms of the country was liquidated in Szécsény and was succeeded by a number of collective and private farms. They work in the agricultural sector and deal with cultivation first of all. The traditionally grown plants are: potato, maize, sunflower and grain crop.

The collective farms are raising cows at present as well as sheep. Growing number of private farmers keep horses too. The majority of the landowners have a farm of 1.5 hectares each. This area supplies their household mainly. There are few private or collective farmers who run a farm bigger than 50 hectares.

Industry

The biggest employer of the town is Eurocandle Ltd., the owners of which are Danish entrepreneurs. They employ 300 people and export their products. The other important industrial company, the Tommy Invest Ltd. gives work to 280 workers.

Several building entrepreneurs work in the town. There are two important factories: furniture and packing machines ones. A lot of trading companies work in our town. The most significant of them is Palóc-Coop Ltd. The local government is revising the tax on practice of a trade, the amount of which is 2,0 %.

Religion

The majority of the inhabitants are Roman Catholic, the minority is Lutheran. The practice of the Catholic religion is helped by Franciscan friars who live in the local Franciscan monastery, founded in 1339. The Clarissa nuns (Franciscan Order of Poor Clares) undertake the task of nursing of great importance.

Ethnic minorities

The Gypsy Minority Self-government has been working in the town since 1994. Their aim is to preserve and protect the Gypsy traditions. The mayor's office supports their work and supplies the material conditions for them.

Tourism

The tourism has not made the most of the potentials of the town yet. The local authority maintains a Tourinform office, which works together with the Handicrafts' Society in the renovated building of Handicraftsman's House. All visitors get a free brochure about Szécsény and its surrounding. The town has developed the buildings of the historic part of the town turning the historical values of Szécsény to account. We used European Union resources for fulfilment of this task. The display of the unique historic relics will be advanced when we form closer co-operation with the Franciscan order.

Description of Szécsény Industrial Area

The municipal corporation marked out the area for location of industrial investment that lies within the northern border of the inner-city. In the immediate vicinity of the space there is the railway station and a slip road of main road No. 22, which is also a junction line between Szécsény and Ipolytarnóc.



The actual division into plots of the area can be seen in Fig. 2. The parts indicated by Roman numbers I and II belong to Eurocandle Ltd., where the first green-field investment, a large workshop of 11,000 m² for producing candles was realised.



The area indicated by number III was sold recently by the Municipality of Szécsény to two investors for purpose of industry setup. The area is 4,3816 m² , it has a shape almost a regular rectangle.

The area number IV is also nominated for industry setup purposes, it is owned by the Municipality of Szécsény.

By representative establishment's decision it may be sold even at present for industry setup. The area is bordering with public road, the railway station is just across the road. The area is 11 ha, 7768 m², it is almost a regular rectangle. Almost all public utilities can be lead to the area. The current capacity of electricity is 0.5 MW at 20 kV tension level. In case of setting up a claim for higher capacity - as the power supplier informed us - 20-25 MW capacity at 20 kV tension is accessible by extension of the power supply.

The available maximum gas capacity is 1,000-1,200 m³ per hour - according to the supplier's information.

The water capacity - as the pipes coming from the town wells lie along a public road - can be even 1,000 m³ per day. The sewage disposal depends on the capacity of the sewage farm. It has just been extended into 2,000 m³ per day. At present its utilisation is approximately 30 %.

The region is fully covered by wire and cellular telephone services.

