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MAE HWN YN GYFARFOD Y MAE GAN Y CYHOEDD HAWL EI FYNYCHU

Dydd Gwener, 3 Rhagfyr 2021

Annwyl Syr/Madam

PWLLGOR CRAFFU ADFYWIO

Cynhelir cyfarfod o'r Pwllgor Craffu Adfywio yn Siambr y Cyngor, Canolfan Ddinesig on Dydd Mercher, 8fed Rhagfyr, 2021 am 10.00 am.

Yn gywir

Michelle Morris
Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr

AGENDA

1. CYFIEITHU AR Y PRYD

Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, ond mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o hysbysiad ymlaen llaw os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais.

2. YMDDIHEURIADAU

Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

3. DATGANIADAU BUDDIANT A GODDEFEBAU

We welcome correspondence in the medium of Welsh or English. / Croesawn ohebiaith trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.

Derbyn datganiadau buddiant a goddefebau.

4. **PWYLLGOR CRAFFU ADFYWIO** 5 - 14
- Derbyn cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Adfywio a gynhaliwyd ar 3 Tachwedd 2021.
- (Dylid nodi y cyflwynir y cofnodion ar gyfer pwyntiau cywirdeb yn unig).
5. **DALEN WEITHREDU – 3 TACHWEDD 2021** 15 - 16
- Derbyn y Ddalen Weithredu..
6. **ADRODDIADAU SERO NET, YMATEB CYNULLIAD HINSAWDD A SYMUD YMLAEN GYDA PHONTIO** 17 - 74
- Ystyried adroddiad y Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr.
7. **ADOLYGIAD BLYNYDDOL PROSPECTWS YNNI** 75 - 100
- Ystyried adroddiad y Rheolwr Tîm Cyfleoedd Adfywio.
8. **YMAGWEDD RANBARTHOL AT GYFLOGADWYEDD** 101 - 122
- Ystyried adroddiad y Rheolwr Tîm Cymunedau Cysylltiedig.
9. **CYNLLUN CREU LLEOEDD GLYNEBWY** 123 - 164
- Ystyried adroddiad y Rheolwr Tîm Cyfleoedd Adfywio.
10. **ADOLYGIAD PERFFORMIAD BARGEN DDINESIG PRIFDDINAS RANBARTH CAERDYDD 2020/21 CH2** 165 - 172
- Ystyried adroddiad y Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr.
11. **BLAENRAGLEN GWAITH: 9 CHWEFROR 2022** 173 - 176
- Derbyn yr adroddiad.

At: Cynghorwyr J. Hill (Cadeirydd)
G. A. Davies (Is-gadeirydd)
M. Cross
M. Cook
G. L. Davies
P. Edwards

H. McCarthy
K. Hayden
S. Healy
W. Hodgins
J. C. Morgan
L. Parsons
G. Paulsen
K. Rowson
B. Willis

Pob Aelod arall (er gwybodaeth)
Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr
Prif Swyddogion

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 3RD NOVEMBER, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HILL (CHAIR)

Councillors G.A. Davies
 G.L. Davies
 M. Cross
 P. Edwards
 K. Hayden
 S. Healy
 W. Hodgins
 J.C. Morgan
 H. McCarthy
 L. Parsons
 G. Paulsen
 C. Meredith (*substituting for K. Rowson*)
 B. Summers (*substituting for M. Cook*)
 B. Willis

AND: Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
 Head of Regeneration
 Service Manager Business & Regeneration
 Service Manager Development Services
 Team Manager, Regeneration Opportunities
 Team Manager, Connected Communities
 Employment Liaison Officer
 Team Leader STEM Facilitation Project
 Marketing & Communications Officer
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u>	

	<p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were reported for Councillors K. Rowson and M. Cook, substitutes attended for both.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 15th September, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>A Member referred to the penultimate paragraph on page 13 of the minutes and asked that the request for information in relation to the costs of the Trinity Chapel project be added as an action point.</p> <p>The Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities confirmed that a meeting was scheduled with Coalfields Regeneration Trust next week, and following this meeting an update would be provided via the action sheet for the next meeting.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 15th SEPTEMBER, 2021</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 15th September, 2021 was submitted, whereupon:</p> <p><u>Capital Budget Monitoring Forecast – Appendix 1</u> <u>328340 - Detail to be provided in relation to the Metro Plus funding and the Abertillery Spur and acquisition of land</u></p> <p>A Member said he could not recall the acquisition of land being reported to full Council for decision, as stated in the minutes of the Cardiff Capital City Region meeting held in</p>	

September 2020. He also asked why the Council had borrowed £70m for the railway improvements when it was stated in the minutes of the Cardiff City Region meeting in February 2021 that £50m was needed.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services explained that these were separate issues. The Cardiff City Region looked at how it could fund a series of actions on the core Valley line network, and funding was secured from the Metroplus programme to develop the Abertillery spur.

The Council also submitted a bid to UK Government's 'Restoring your Railway' programme, to include the Abertillery spur. In the interim the Council secured £75m from WG to undertake improvements to the railway corridor. He confirmed that Cardiff City Region was aware of the Council's bid to UK Government.

He said the Council made a decision to work with Welsh Government to develop the railway infrastructure necessary to increase the frequency of trains to 4 trains an hour, as part of the Council's long standing policy for the railway corridor.

In response to a further question raised by a Member regarding the land acquisition, the Corporate Director explained that the railway infrastructure was generally owned by Network Rail. Acquisition of the land would enable the Council to facilitate the scheme, however, when completed Network Rail would operate the railway in line with their policy across the Country. He pointed out that this was the approach taken for the extension of the line from Ebbw Vale Parkway to the Ebbw Vale Town.

A discussion ensued when the Corporate Director said the £70m included enhancement of the signalling system; upgrading of various bridges and structures along the route; and track enhancements from Crosskeys to the south of Blaenau Gwent.

A Member suggested that the Quadripartite Agreement be recirculated to Members. The Corporate Director confirmed that the Agreement formed part of the papers submitted to

	<p>Council in July, however, he agreed to recirculate the information.</p> <p>A Member asked whether any plans were in place should the funding from UK Government for the Abertillery spur not come through.</p> <p>The Corporate Director confirmed that in the event of the bid not being successful, the Council would continue to work with Welsh Government on the overall objective of increasing the frequency of trains to Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p><u>Regeneration and Development Performance - A Member requested that the Welsh Audit of Commemoration be reported to the appropriate committee for discussion</u></p> <p>The Corporate Director confirmed that a report would be submitted to Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee in due course.</p> <p><u>Actions Referred from the Joint Budget Scrutiny Committee – 27th September 2021 Update on the Tredegar Company Shop to be provided</u></p> <p>The Service Manager Development Services explained that as the building was listed and in Council ownership, the application would be decided by CADW and Welsh Ministers. As soon as consultations were completed the application would be forwarded to CADW for decision.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Action Sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>HYBRID UNITS AND HWB BOCS– PERFORMANCE MONITORING</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Service Manager Business & Regeneration.</p> <p>The Service Manager Business & Regeneration presented the report which provided Members with an update on the Hybrid Units and the Hwb Bocs developments at the Works Site, Ebbw Vale. The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.</p>	

A Member asked when the final accounts for the project could be expected.

The Service Manager Business & Regeneration confirmed that the accounts were currently being finalised, and whilst there was a slight overspend due to the Covid pandemic, it was not as substantial as anticipated.

A Member asked regarding the criteria for occupying the Hwb units, and whether they would be available to existing businesses.

In response the Officer reported that they would be available for existing business, however, the Council was keen to promote start-up businesses. He said they provided a flexible space for any businesses, but would appeal to tech based businesses. Officers were working closely with interested companies to see if the units were suitable or whether there were more appropriate premises in the Borough.

A Member asked for an update on the number of units that had been let, and the Officer confirmed that of the 3 hybrid unit buildings, 2 had been let and Officers were working closely with another company interested in the third building. In relation to the Hwb Bocs units, the internal fit was nearing completion and he was confident that with the level of interest they would also be let.

Another Member said this was a very worthwhile project, and asked that an update on future lettings be provided.

A brief discussion ensued when a Member asked whether signs promoting the units could be erected along the Heads of the Valleys road.

The Officer said marketing was being considered and signage along the Heads of the Valleys was an opportunity that could be explored. He said the investment in the Hov would hopefully have a positive impact in attracting investors to Blaenau Gwent.

	<p>The Head of Regeneration reported that the Council received a large number of enquiries for units of different size, and unfortunately we were unable to accede to some of those requests. More industrial space was needed in the Borough, and the Officer confirmed that this was being pursued with Welsh Government and Cardiff City Region.</p> <p>A discussion ensued when the Chair suggested that arrangements be made for Members to visit the units prior to them being occupied.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>STEM FACILITATION PROJECT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services.</p> <p>The Team Leader STEM Facilitation Project presented the report which provided information on the performance of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Facilitation Project.</p> <p>The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member enquired as to funding opportunities beyond March 2023.</p> <p>In response the Team Manager Connected Communities explained that the initial discussions with Tech Valleys was around a pilot scheme covering Blaenau Gwent to determine the effectiveness of the delivery model and the level of resources required. The outcomes of the pilot scheme would be considered towards the middle of next year.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorsed the project progress made to date (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>KICKSTART SCHEME</u></p>	

Consideration was given to report of the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services.

The Employment Liaison Officer presented the report which provided an update on the progress of the DWP Kickstart Scheme and Blaenau Gwent CBC role as a gateway organisation for local businesses seeking to access the programme.

The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.

A Member asked who was responsible for providing ongoing support for the young people in placements to ensure a positive experience; and also support for the employers in managing the process, thus providing a good experience for young people.

The Employment Liaison Officer explained that during the initial application employers were required to provide an Employability Plan highlighting what they intended to provide during the placement, and this was monitored by DWP. In terms of the individuals on the placements, they would be supported by the Job Centre and Work Coaches, and we would also keep in touch to ensure they are receiving that support.

A discussion ensued when the Officer clarified points raised by a Member regarding the scheme.

A Member asked whether it was the role of DWP to look for longer term employment for these young people after the placement to prevent them going back into the benefits system; and also what was being done to ensure that the process was not being exploited.

The Officer explained that the Kickstart Scheme was marketed as a 6 month placement. There was nothing to state that an employer had to provide employment following this period. She confirmed that DWP did undertake checks to ensure businesses were able to sustain the number of placements provided.

	<p>The Member said the most important thing was to ensure that young people coming to the end of their placements was to get them into programmes to help them into further work.</p> <p>The Team Manager Connected Communities pointed out that the Council's influence was limited as this was a DWP programme, but the fact that local companies were getting involved was positive and they were more likely to offer sustained employment. She said the Team's engagement with businesses was intensive to ensure the application was developed in a thorough way to ensure employment was sustained at the end of the process. She also pointed out that this was one of many programmes in place in Blaenau Gwent seeking long term sustained employment.</p> <p>A discussion ensued when a Member asked that an update be provided to a future meeting, and the Employment Liaison Officer undertook to provide this information.</p> <p>In response to a question raised by a Member the Officer explained that employers would receive £1,500 for each person to provide relevant training, and uniforms etc.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and noted the contents of the report and outcomes to date (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 8TH DECEMBER, 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Forward Work Programme for the meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 8th December, 2021.</p> <p>A Member referred to the recent announcement that Henley's Buses would be ceasing service, and suggested that a special meeting be convened to look at the implications of this on the Ebbw Fach Valley and Town Centres within the Borough.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed that this would be considered.</p>	

A Member also suggested that this could be considered by the Transport Task & Finish Group.

In response to a question raised regarding the Town Centre Task & Finish Group, the Service Manager Regeneration Opportunities confirmed that meetings of the Task & Finish Group would resume later in the month.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the Forward Work Programme for 8th December, 2021 be approved.

A Member reported that the Team Leader Connected Communities would be leaving Blaenau Gwent Council shortly. Members thanked her for her excellent service to the Council and the support provided to Members during her employment, and wished her every success for the future.

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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Action Sheet - Regeneration Scrutiny Committee – 3rd November 2021

Item	Action to be Taken	By Whom	Action Taken
	<p><u>Minutes – 15th September 2021</u></p> <p>Trinity Chapel Full costs for the refurbishment of Trinity Chapel to be provided.</p>	Amy Taylor	Total costs for internal refurbishment of Trinity Chapel and existing library are £1.58m. Funding has been secured under Welsh Government Transforming Towns and the match funding shall be met by Coalfields Regeneration Trust. Costs are higher than originally anticipated and this is a pattern we have seen in the construction sector as a consequence of the Coronavirus pandemic.
5	<p><u>Action Sheet – 15th September 2021</u></p> <p>Metro Plus Funding / Abertillery Spur The Quadripartite Agreement to be provided for Members information.</p>	Richard Crook	The Quadripartite Agreement was part of an Exempt report. This document can be accessed by Members via the Council meeting on 29 th July 2021.
6	<p><u>Hybrid Units and Hwb Bocs – Performance Monitoring</u></p> <p>A Member requested an update on the number of lettings to be provided early in the New Year.</p> <p>Arrangements to be made for Members to visit the Units.</p>	<p>Owen Ashton</p> <p>Owen Ashton / Chair</p>	<p>Update to be provided at the meeting on 9th February 2022.</p> <p>Visits to be arranged.</p>
8	<p><u>KickStart Scheme</u></p> <p>Update report to be included on the FWP for 2022/23, to include how many young people were taken on full-time, etc. Case studies to also be included.</p>	Ellie Fry	Report to be included on the FWP for 2022/23.

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Agenda Item 6

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **8th December 2021**
Report Subject: **Net Zero Reporting, Climate Assembly Response and Progressing Transitions**
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor David Davies, Deputy Leader / Executive Member Regeneration and Economic Development**
Report Submitted by: **Michelle Morris, Managing Director**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
Nov 21	25 Nov 21	27.11.21			8 Dec	15 Dec		Decarb Programme Board

1. Purpose of the Report

To present the response to Welsh Government's Net Zero reporting requirements, seek comment on an initial response to the Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly report, and update on the action plan development for the Decarbonisation Plan transitions.

2. Scope and Background

Welsh Government Net Zero Reporting

- 2.1 As reported in the September 2021 meeting, Welsh Government have outlined their expectations in terms of content and data requirements for Net Zero Reporting for local authorities in Wales by 31 October 2021.
- 2.2 A sub group of the Decarbonisation Board (the Board hereafter) was called to consider the expectation and prepare the appropriate response following the internationally recognised carbon footprint format. This included data for greenhouse gas emissions for council's baseline year of 2019/20 and the subsequent year of 2020/21.
- 2.3 The data, which is summarised in the performance data and information section of this report (section 6.1), is divided into three scopes. Our organisational boundaries include all emissions from assets, such as buildings and vehicles that we have day-to-day operational control of, whether we own or lease them (Scope 1 and 2 emissions). Our wider operational boundaries include emissions both up and downstream, which are the result of our procurement and other organisations delivering services on our behalf (Scope 3 emissions). Sequestration represents the annual change in the net amount of carbon stored in the different land-use types.
- 2.4 The council has previously calculated a carbon footprint for the baseline year of 2019/20 utilising a method based on the Carbon Positive approach developed by Natural Resources Wales. The revised calculation using the Welsh Government Net Zero method reflects some fairly small variations in the organisational boundaries and emissions factors used, but are broadly similar.

- 2.5 The data shows that 2020-21 has seen a fall of 3,292 tonnes CO2e in our carbon footprint, which equates to 6%. COVID 19 has likely contributed to this fall in some areas such as staff commute.
- 2.6 Furthermore, on responding to Welsh Government, commentary of progress made against our Decarbonisation Plan 2020 to 2030 was included to show our progress as we aim to make our full contribution to the ambition of a Net Zero Public Sector in Wales by 2030.
- 2.7 The report submitted to Welsh Government is provided at Appendix 1.

Responding as a Council to the Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly

- 2.8 As reported earlier in the year, the Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly was the very first of its kind in Wales to meet in March 2021 and made a number of recommendations for consideration.
- 2.9 The council continues to take an active role in responding with our partner organisations from the Public Services Board, and work continues to develop on the collective response provided to assembly members earlier in the year, with a focus on action this Autumn around the main five recommendations.
- 2.10 Furthermore, as a key local public service provider, it is important that the Council as an organisation consider the recommendations in relation to our own organisation. To take this forward, on 8 October 2021, the Managing Director hosted a specific session with members of Wider Corporate Leadership Team and the Board to consider the recommendations and to begin developing our first organisational response.
- 2.11 The sessions proved valuable in engaging key officers from across the council, and in particular gleaned some useful insight into work already being carried out on some of the issues raised by the Climate Assembly. It also provided a useful forum for initial discussions on what more could be done to respond to the Climate Assembly recommendations.
- 2.12 Feedback from the session has been used to develop our first organisational response, which is provided at Appendix 2. The response, focusing on providing an overview of the Council's position with climate change e.g. the declaration of a climate emergency, our decarbonisation plan and partnership work through the PSB mitigation group, and provides a high level response on the areas where we as the council can have the greatest direct influence.
- 2.13 The response notes our broad support the five main Assembly recommendations as outlined in the previous collective partnership response, but also notes the remaining 19 recommendations many of which received the support of a substantial majority, and cover a range of other issues that are very important for residents. Therefore, they represent an important basis for developing future climate actions, which should not be lost.
- 2.14 The response concludes by noting that the council is keen that Assembly members and wider residents continue to be engaged in developing these actions and response to climate change, by looking to seek participation of assembly members into the future.

Further Progress on Decarbonisation Plan Transitions

- 2.15 The [Decarbonisation Plan](#) set out how we would deliver our commitment to the ambition of the Welsh Public Sector to achieve net Zero by 2030. It outlined how we could reduce our organisational emissions across nine transitions.
- 2.16 Since the plan was adopted a Decarbonisation Board (the Board) was set up and has agreed to carry out readiness assessments for each transitions to understand what was already being done, and to identify the key actions we need to take to progress. This process is being based on good practice from the Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN) at Leeds University.
- 2.17 As reported in September 21 to the Committee, the Board agreed that the first readiness assessment to be examined would be 'Transport Direct' making up 8% of our carbon emissions, and was moving forward with a piece of work one 3 transitions related to 'buildings' covering three transitions: Electricity, Heating and Procurement (Works). These collectively make up 22 % of our gross carbon emissions.
- 2.18 Emissions from buildings can be divided into two main types:
- Operational energy use (heating, lighting, computers etc.)
 - Life-cycle embodied emissions (construction, (non-energy) use and maintenance, and demolition or disassembly etc.)

Both these types of emissions will ultimately be eliminated through the use of zero carbon energy. The difference is that the choice to use zero carbon energy is in our direct control for operational energy emissions, but is outside our direct organisational control for life-cycle emissions. However, we can address these life-cycle emissions by (i) using our (and collective public sector) purchasing power to encourage the market to move towards zero carbon energy based products and (ii) where possible by reducing are total consumption (e.g. product miles, material throughput (the total volume of materials used)).

- 2.19 Transition 6 Procurement Works (10% of carbon footprint) is the life-cycle embodied emissions from our buildings. Transition 8 Heat (6%) and Transition 7 Electricity (5%) include our operational energy use from our buildings. Electricity also includes some non-buildings emissions, mainly street lighting which is about third of our electricity emissions, which have also been included in this readiness assessment.
- 2.20 The Buildings Readiness Assessment was considered by the Board and CLT in October 2021 with a number of high level actions agreed. These are outlined below with organisational leads identified:

Energy Use

1. Strategic Heating Decarbonisation Plan. Develop a plan for replacement of existing heating systems and associated retrofitting of buildings with zero carbon alternatives by 2030 (in line with Welsh Government policy), including the investment required. **(Lead: Property Services)**
2. Energy Policy- Review the existing policy to ensure energy demand reduction is aligned to the Council's Zero Carbon commitment. **(Lead: Property Services)**
3. Procurement (Energy-Use). Commit to using carbon data (energy standards and life-cycle costs) to inform procurement decisions. Review

Procurement Strategy and arrangements to align to the Council's Zero Carbon commitment. **(Lead: Commercial Services)**

4. Street Lighting Strategy – Develop a plan and targets for future energy reductions including reaching 100% LED lighting no later than 2030. **(Lead Neighbourhood Services)**
5. Zero Carbon Electricity. Develop a plan and targets for ensuring the Council maximises its use of renewable energy, through installing renewables and through procurement. **(Lead: Regeneration)**
6. District Heating Networks. Set date for future review of whether developments in technology allow for additional networks in Blaenau Gwent. **(Lead: Regeneration)**

Construction

1. Commit that all new builds will be built to Net Zero Standards. How this will be achieved, and any barriers to delivery, will be set out in detail in the Strategic Outline Case and only in exceptional circumstances will projects proceed without these being fully addressed. **(Lead: Property Services / Commissioning Departments)**
 2. Procurement (Works). Commit to take into account carbon costs (the emissions associated with undertaking works) in procurement of building and maintenance works, including setting appropriate carbon standards. Integrated into decision making as part of procurement review. **(Lead: Property Services /Procurement)**
- 2.21 This list summarises these actions, with more detailed description of these transitions and the rationales for the actions provided in Appendix 3.
- 2.22 It is anticipated that all of the transitions will have been subject to a readiness assessment with high level actions identified for each during this financial year 21/22. The Board signed off the next transition to be Waste, followed by Sequestration in the new year and will be brought to the Committee as part of its forward work programme.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 Option One
That the Committee considers and scrutinises the progress made and supports the response to the Climate Assembly and submission of report to the Executive Committee.
- Option Two
That the Committee considers the progress made and provides specific comments on the response to the Climate Assembly and submission of report to the Executive Committee.
4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
Welsh Government published their 2nd delivery plan [Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2](#) in October 2021 which sets out the ambition for the Welsh public sector to be carbon neutral.

In September 2020, Council has approved an evidence based Decarbonisation Plan for the organisation. The Decarbonisation Plan is an important element of

the Council providing public leadership on climate change. The long-term implications of climate change mean that is also central to the PSB's responsibilities under the Well-being of Future Generations Act. In particular, that in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

At this moment in time the Council has taken a business as usual approach to resourcing the Decarbonisation Plan. That said, as each transition is progressed and high level action agreed, costs will be identified to make this work happen and will, moving forward, form separate reports from business leads for consideration of any investment required. It is anticipated that investment decisions will need to be taken by the Council, Welsh Government and wider partners to enable local action.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Having declared a climate emergency reputational damage is a risk if we do not respond to the challenges facing us as we implement our agreed Decarbonisation Plan. The systematic way in which we are approaching the transition work should enable us to arrive at well informed proposals on the actions we need to take to move towards Net Zero. These actions will though need to be fully integrated into our business planning processes and closely monitored to ensure progress is maintained.

5.3 ***Legal***

The legislative context around climate change is evolving with both UK and Welsh Government announcing new, more ambitious emissions reductions targets.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

The full human resources implications in implementing the plan are not yet fully known. These will become clearer as leads take forward actions that emerge from the readiness assessments. These might include the need for officers with specialist skills and knowledge to deliver key elements. It is also highly likely that staff engagement will be a key enabler in what is really a programme of transformational change.

6. **Supporting Evidence**
 6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

The Welsh Government Net Zero Carbon Reporting is using 2019-20 as baseline year for monitoring progress towards ambition of Net Zero Public Sector by 2030. We had already calculated our 2019-20 carbon footprint using a broadly similar method but this recalculation led to a significantly lower figure:

BGCBC Base Year Greenhouse Gas Emissions (2019/20)	BGCBC Old Method 19-20	WG Net Zero 19-20	Difference
Carbon Footprint Total (tCO₂e)	71,346	53,526	-17,820

Although there were some differences due to the inclusion of elements of our footprint that we had not previously includes, most notably the energy usage of the Aneurin Leisure Trust and a larger proportion of our land holdings, the large majority of this difference was due to the use of slightly more recent (2012 rather than 2009) carbon factors to calculate our emissions from procurement.

	BGCBC Old Method 19-20	WG Net Zero 19-20	Difference
Purchased Goods and Services	60,921	40,992	-19,929

This decline reflects the limitations of calculations of procurement emissions, as even small changes in emissions factors, which are based on national averages for product categories, will have large effects when applied to large amounts of organisational spend, regardless of whether or not the organisation has taken action. The downward change in this figure reflects that the ongoing decarbonisation of the national grid is reducing the carbon intensity of activity across most sectors. (If more up to date emission factors were available our procurement emissions figure would almost certainly be significantly lower again). This highlights that while procurement footprint figures can give a reasonable idea of the scale of procurement emissions, relative to other elements of our footprint. However, unlike other elements such as energy or transport, they are no suitable for monitoring progress.

Emissions Trends

The Council's Base Year Greenhouse Gas Emissions (2019/20) and current year (2020/21) are provided in detail in Appendix 1. The table below summarises:

	19-20	20-21	Difference	Difference %
Carbon Footprint Total	53,655	50,359	-3,297	-6%

The table above shows overall there is a small fall in our carbon footprint from 2019-20 to 2020-21, but further analysis shows a more complicated picture.

Firstly, for the reasons outlined above, any changes in figures for procurement reflect our level of spend, rather than carbon performance, and as a result this figure is essentially unchanged. Removing purchased goods and services, which make up well over half of our footprint, reveals a much larger fall in our carbon footprint in the other areas where the figures do reflect year-on-year changes in carbon emissions.

	19-20	20-21	Difference	Difference %
Total Excluding Purchased Goods and Services	12,663	9,788	-2,875	-23%

There is also substantial variation within these non-procurement emissions, largely due to the extent to which COVID has impacted our operations. For example, in electricity there has been a 9% fall in the carbon intensity of the grid, so we would expect our emissions to fall by this amount even if we used the same amount of electricity in the previous year. This is largely the case for street lighting which has not been effected by COVID, however, our emissions from electricity use in buildings has fallen by significantly more, while the fall for Aneurin Leisure buildings has been even greater, likely due to more of their estate being shut during lockdown.

	19-20	20-21	Difference	Difference %
Grid Carbon Intensity				-9%
Unmetered - Street Lighting	968	870	-98	-10%
Metered - Buildings	1,792	1,272	-520	-29%
<i>Metered - Buildings Aneurin Leisure</i>	<i>572</i>	<i>279</i>	<i>-293</i>	<i>-51%</i>

Similar trends occurred across a number of areas with falls in emissions from heating not being as large (possibly due to increased heat use where windows were kept open for increased ventilation), while falls in staff travel were even larger.

	19-20	20-21	Difference	Difference %
Natural Gas Heating	3,942	3,725	-217	-5%
<i>Natural Gas Heating Aneurin Leisure</i>	<i>1,152</i>	<i>798</i>	<i>-354</i>	<i>-31%</i>
Water	46	42	-4	-9%
<i>Water Aneurin Leisure</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>-10</i>	<i>-47%</i>
Staff Commute	1,733	1,039	-694	-40%
Business Travel	279	118	-161	-58%
<i>Business Travel Aneurin Leisure</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>-9</i>	<i>-82%</i>

Waste related transport saw only small falls in emissions, again reflecting that this service continued during COVID.

	19-20	20-21	Difference	Difference %
Fleet Total	964	945	-19	-2%
Downstream Transportation and Distribution - Silent Valley	216	209	-7	-3%

Looking at 4 year trends, up to 2019-20, prior to COVID there has been a large fall in our emissions from electricity, whereas there has been no change in emissions from heating, reflecting that this is a more challenging transition.

	Difference
Electricity Buildings (Carbon)	-44%
Electricity Buildings (Energy Demand)	-9%
Fleet	-9%
Heating (Excluding Energy Centre)	0%

One area, which is not part of our carbon footprint, but where we have had a very large impact is the very substantial increase in carbon emissions that have been avoided due to the increase in recycling and reduction in waste going to landfill.

Waste	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	Difference
Tonnes	45,119.01	45,038.22	42,136.79	42,297.53	-6%
Carbon Impact	-4,076.93	-4,847.34	-7,421.34	-8,215.79	-102%

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The Climate Assembly provided an excellent representative opportunity for the members of the public to help shape recommendations set around the key topic:

“What should we do in Blaenau Gwent to tackle the climate crisis in a way that is fair and improves living standards for everyone?”

The findings will play a crucial role in shaping action from partner organisations collectively and responding locally to the climate change emergency.

Furthermore, the Decarbonisation Plan helps to reduce the risks from climate change to service delivery, as well as identifying opportunities to develop a more resilient council for the public.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The development of the readiness assessments has its core the involvement of key stakeholders from the relevant service areas. The Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly built on our existing public engagement with environmental issues, including recycling, nature areas and eco councils in schools.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The Decarbonisation Plan and the readiness assessment approach fully recognises the long term nature of some of the high level actions that will emerge from this process.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Addressing increasing revenue costs from rising energy prices and a reliance on fossil fuels. It is important that decarbonisation and whole life cycle costs (both financial and carbon) are considered in all capital spending decisions, so that the Council is not locked into new carbon intensive infrastructure with high long-term running costs.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working.***

We are working with partners on climate change in Blaenau Gwent through the PSB Climate Mitigation Steering Group and Well-being Plan and at the regional level through Climate Ready Gwent. Work on regional projects is already underway, where public bodies in Gwent face similar challenges and can pool resources, such as EV charging and Fleet Review. Procurement is a major element of our carbon impact and many of our suppliers also supply other local public sector organisations, so collaboration will be key to engaging them with cutting their carbon emissions.

We successfully worked with Aneurin Leisure Trust to identify those emissions we needed to include within carbon footprint in-line with recent Welsh Government reporting.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

Integration remains a key element of the Decarbonisation Plan and our plans in tracking agreed actions through service area business plans demonstrates this.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

The Decarbonisation plan is central to the Council's contribution to the Welsh Government ambition of a carbon neutral public sector by 2030, and responding to the Climate Assembly, and considering on-going involvement will be crucial.

6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

Not required as this is a progress report and does not relate to strategic decisions.

6.9b. ***Equality Impact Assessment***

An EQIA was carried out for the Decarbonisation Plan and separate EQIA's will be carried out for major decarbonisation actions by relevant business leads as part of usual reporting arrangements.

7. ***Monitoring Arrangements***

The Board will oversee progress against the transitions, and reporting accordingly through the Managing Director to CLT.

Key actions agreed by the Board will be built into the service area business plans. This will ensure Decarbonisation actions are integrated into the Council usual performance management arrangements.

The Council reported appropriately to Welsh Government at the end of October in-line with their Net Zero Reporting arrangements.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 – Net Zero Report 2020/21

Appendix 2 – BGCBC Response to Climate Assembly

Appendix 3 – Building Readiness Assessment

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Net Zero Report 20/21



Decarbonisation Plan 2020 to 2030

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Net Zero Report

2020/21

This document is produced in-line with the requirements of the Welsh Public Sector Net Zero Reporting Guide published by Welsh Government in May 2021.

The 2021/22 report includes Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's 19/20 (baseline), and 20/21 data, alongside supporting commentary of progress made against our Decarbonisation Plan 2020 to 2030.

If you have any queries or questions in relation to this plan, please contact:

Policy and Partnerships

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

This document is available in Welsh



Introduction

The Council's Decarbonisation Plan was adopted in September 2020 at the same time as we declared a Climate Change Emergency. The plan addresses our organisational emissions with the aim of making our full contribution to the ambition of a Net Zero Public Sector in Wales by 2030.

The plan provides a strategic overview of how we can achieve this ambition. It adopts a data driven approach, based on our carbon footprint, identifying from this data nine transitions we have to undertake to reach Net Zero.

The plan recognised that considerable further work would need to be undertaken to develop the full detail of the actions needed to deliver these transitions. The plan established a Decarbonisation Board which has been developing this detail, including integrating the significant actions we are already taking into an overarching corporate framework.

The approach in our plan was based on 6 core elements, this report provides an update on progress under each of these elements, with a particular focus on the data element.

Data Overview

The tables below present the data submitted to Welsh Government in the internationally recognised carbon footprint format divided in to three scopes. Our organisational boundaries include all emissions from assets, such as buildings and vehicles that we have day-to day operational control of, whether we own or lease them (Scope 1 and 2 emissions). Our wider operational boundaries include emissions both up and downstream, which are the result of our procurement and other organisations delivering services on our behalf (Scope 3 emissions). Sequestration represents the annual change in the net amount of carbon stored in the different land-use types.

The council has previously calculated our carbon footprint for the baseline year of 2019/20 utilising a method based on the Carbon Positive approach developed by Natural Resources Wales. The revised calculation below using the Welsh Government Net Zero method reflects some fairly small variations in the organisational boundaries and emissions factors used, but are broadly similar. The rest of this report analyses the implications of this data for the council and how we aim to address these emissions.

The tables show that 2020-21 has seen a fall of 3,292 tonnes CO₂e (6%) in our carbon footprint. COVID 19 has likely contributed to this fall in some areas such as staff commute. The Decarbonisation Board will be using this data to look in more detail at the reasons for this decrease.

Table 1: BGCBC Base Year Greenhouse Gas Emissions (2019/20)

Scope 1 - Direct Emissions	tonnes CO₂e/year
Natural Gas Heating	3,942
<i>Natural Gas Heating Aneurin Leisure</i>	1,152
Biomass Heating	60
Diesel Fleet	911
Petrol Fleet	18
Liquid Natural Gas Fleet	35
Scope 1 Total	6,119
Scope 2 - Electricity Indirect Emissions	
Metered - Buildings	1,792
<i>Metered - Buildings Aneurin Leisure</i>	572
Unmetered - Street Lighting	968
Scope 2 Total	3,332
Scope 3 - Other Indirect Emissions	
Purchased Goods and Services	40,992
Extraction, Production & Transportation of Fuel & Energy Used	2,104
<i>Extraction, Production & Transportation of Fuel & Energy Used Aneurin Leisure</i>	288
Water	46
<i>Water Aneurin Leisure</i>	22
Waste Landfill	0.3
Business Travel	278
<i>Business Travel Aneurin Leisure</i>	11
Staff Commute	1,733
Downstream Transportation and Distribution - Silent Valley	216
Scope 3 Total	45,691
Sequestration	
Forest land	-2,350
Grass land	-55
Settlements	919
Sequestration Total	-1,486
Carbon Footprint Total	53,656

Table 2: BGCBC Greenhouse Gas Emissions (2020/21)

Scope 1 - Direct Emissions	tonnes CO₂e/year
Natural Gas Heating	3,725
<i>Natural Gas Heating Aneurin Leisure</i>	798
Biomass Heating	67
Diesel Fleet	905
Petrol Fleet	9
Liquid Natural Gas Fleet	31
Scope 1 Total	5,535
Scope 2 - Electricity Indirect Emissions	
Metered - Buildings	1,272
<i>Metered - Buildings Aneurin Leisure</i>	279
Unmetered - Street Lighting	870
Scope 2 Total	2,420
Scope 3 - Other Indirect Emissions	
Purchased Goods and Services	40,570
Extraction, Production & Transportation of Fuel & Energy Used	1,727
<i>Extraction, Production & Transportation of Fuel & Energy Used Aneurin Leisure</i>	170
Water	42
<i>Water Aneurin Leisure</i>	12
Waste Landfill	0.1
Business Travel	118
<i>Business Travel Aneurin Leisure</i>	2
Staff Commute	1,039
Downstream Transportation and Distribution - Silent Valley	209
Scope 3 Total	43,889
Sequestration	
Forest land	-2,350
Grass land	-55
Settlements	919
Sequestration Total	-1,486
Carbon Footprint Total	50,359

Taking Action in 2020/21

1. Public Leadership

“We are committed to leading decarbonisation across Blaenau Gwent. We believe that this leadership starts with addressing the climate impact of our own operations. We are already taking a number of positive actions, but we recognise the need to increase our efforts through a systematic corporate approach to decarbonising the authority.”

Our approach to providing leadership on the climate emergency starts with addressing our own organisational emissions, actions that we are taking to do this include:

Investing in Energy Saving and Renewables across our Estate

We have invested £4 million, supported by Welsh Government Energy Service, from Wales Funding Programme in lighting, heating, controls and building integrated renewables across 20 properties saving 26,500 tonnes of CO² and reducing the council’s energy bills by £9 million over the project’s lifetime.

Developing a New Depot

An outline business case for a New Depot drafted by the Waste Resource Action Programme (WRAP) was presented through the council’s governance and political process in July 2021. This included plans to co-locate renewable energy infrastructure. The design will include solar panels on the main buildings, rainwater capture for use in vehicle washing, and charging points enabling the move to an electric collections fleet and electric support vehicles.

We will also be planning to be feed renewable energy into the grid from the wind turbine currently being considered for Silent Valley in Ebbw Vale, which will facilitate Blaenau Gwent purchasing lower cost energy for the new centre of operations.

The New Depot will facilitate the decarbonisation of our fleet, including the recent purchase of our first electric vehicles, four small electric vans for £95,000 (supported by Welsh and UK government grants).

Decarbonising Business Parks

As part of Whole System Business Research Innovation for Decarbonisation (WBRID) we are developing a Smart Industrial and Commercial Energy Platform Model Solutions to achieve Net Zero outcomes. Working with two suppliers to demonstrate

solutions on council owned business parks, which will include creating an energy trading platform utilising existing renewable energy generation and installing new equipment including battery storage, solar PV, heat pump and Artificial Intelligence (AI) controls. This will optimise performance and energy utilisation with a view to decarbonising business parks.

New Operating Model

Since March 2020 the council has operated agile working arrangements, initially in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. During this period staff and elected members, where they can, have been working remotely and the organisation has shifted to new working arrangements based on digital platforms.

A survey conducted in late 2020 indicated that staff have responded positively to agile working and supported the continuation of working in a more agile and flexible way. The move to the new operating model is having a significant positive impact on our carbon footprint: reduced commuting to and from work; less business travel; the closure of the Civic Centre (an old energy inefficient building), plus a more efficient digital way of working.

2. Collaboration

“We will work with our partners to develop joint projects to address common sources of carbon emissions and will be developing a plan for decarbonisation of Blaenau Gwent as a whole, through the Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board. This collaborative approach is informed by the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.”

Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) have established a Climate Mitigation Steering Group to address territorial emissions, chaired by our Managing Director. The first major piece of work the group has been involved in is the Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly, the first climate assembly in Wales, which took place online in March 2021. 44 demographically representative Blaenau Gwent residents, heard from over 20 expert speakers and deliberated for 23 hours about the question *‘what should we do in Blaenau Gwent to tackle the climate crisis in a way that is fair and improves living standards for everyone?’*. The Assembly produced five official recommendations, drafted by Assembly participants that received 80% support.

Theme	Recommendation	% Support
Transport	Establish an affordable, integrated road & rail transport system accessible throughout BG. A one ticket system that links to bus, rail & cycle schemes - inclusivity for purchasing of tickets (digital or paper). Accessible all hours with safety via lighting, CCTV and to keep maintained.	91
Transport	Establish & improve a safe, easily maintainable infrastructure for walkers & cyclists, for either recreational or work purposes, with access to the public transport network. Including lighting & CCTV & storage for bikes.	88
House retrofit	Train local tradespeople, create qualifications and upskill local businesses, involve FE colleges and local Universities, future proof it and provide the right courses to enable them to do the work in all green construction.	86
Green space and nature	Implement a programme of woodland preservation and reforestation of BG, using the right tree in the right place for the right reason, increasing opportunities for jobs, biodiversity and connecting woodlands. Making sure the skills are available so we can create green jobs, e.g. saw milling and timber framed housing.	86
Housing new build	Ensure that all new build properties are built using the latest sustainable technologies (E.g. Glanffrd development as a template), employing local builders and providing a variety of accommodation types appropriate for all inc. homeless/single occupancy up to large families.	81

These recommendations are supported by a detailed report covering the eight themes deliberated on by the Assembly. Assembly members have presented their recommendations to a range of local decision makers, including elected members and senior management at the council. The PSB has issued an initial response supporting the recommendations, and is currently holding workshops to develop more detail about how they can be delivered. The Climate Assembly will inform the development of a plan to address territorial emissions in Blaenau Gwent. Continuing this public engagement is a priority for both the council and the PSB.

We have also been involved in a range of collaborative regional projects including:

- Electric Vehicle Charging Point Project. 62 new dual electric vehicle 22kw fast charging units have been installed at 34 sites across Gwent. A grant of £465,000 was provided for the project from the UK Government's Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV), with match funding provided by each local authority. Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales both contributed funding towards a feasibility study to support development of the project.

- Gwent Green Grid Partnership. Significant funding has been secured by Gwent partners for a three year programme that will facilitate better woodland management and creation and take action to protect and enhance vital habitats for pollinators and make improvements to green spaces, urban and country parks, cycleways and public rights of way.
- Climate Ready Gwent. Climate change was identified by the five Gwent PSBs as a shared priority. A Gwent specific Carbon Literacy training course has been co-developed and rolled out across the public sector, with senior managers and Elected Members among those who received training.
- Contributed to the development of Cardiff Capital Region Energy Strategy.

3. Data Driven

“The basis of our plan is a comprehensive assessment of the carbon impact of our operations, including calculating our carbon footprint. Using this data to identify, and target for action, the highest impact areas of our operations.”

The transitions identified in our Decarbonisation Plan are driven by our carbon footprint data. Each transition represents a coherent area of action with its own distinct low carbon technologies, business models and infrastructure.

The scopes and categories used in calculating our carbon footprint were developed to provide a standardised way of measuring organisations carbon impact. In contrast, the transitions are organised around the actions needed to reduce these emissions, which leads to different groupings. For example, emissions from our fleet sit in scope 1 of our footprint alongside gas because both of these emissions are released directly by the council. However, decarbonising our fleet will require completely different actions to decarbonising our gas heating, therefore, fleet sits within the ‘direct transport’ transition with business travel and commuting, which are part of scope 3 in our footprint, but require similar decarbonisation actions. The transitions also include data about avoided emissions, calculating carbon savings generated by delivering services, for example, diverting municipal waste from landfill. Carbon footprint calculations only report emissions, so developing data about these avoided emissions is an important part of our data driven approach to carbon neutrality.

This approach enables us to break decarbonisation down into manageable parts, and working back from the final destination of carbon neutrality to identify the key actions required in each transition pathway.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council: Transitions Summary 2019/20



Note: Graphic figures based on 2019/20 method based on the Carbon Positive approach developed by Natural Resources Wales.

Overview of our 9 Transitions

1. Transport Direct travel by our staff in corporate or their own vehicles, includes fleet, commuting and staff travel within work.
2. Transport Commissioned travel and transport by non- council staff delivering goods and services on our behalf, such as school transport, subsidised bus provision and onward transport for waste.
3. Sequestration absorption of carbon on land we own and manage, largely associated with woodland, urban trees and peatland.
4. Procurement: Goods which covers what we purchase as an organisation and includes key items such as clothing, food, IT, machinery, equipment and furniture.
5. Procurement: Services which covers the services we procure to deliver our functions such as schools and social services. This also includes investments such as pension schemes.

6. Procurement: Works which includes all construction and maintenance of our buildings and infrastructure.
7. Electricity which covers the electricity we purchase to run all our services. It includes key things such as street lighting, running our corporate buildings and schools. It also includes our use of renewable technologies.
8. Heat which includes our heating (and cooling) of our buildings.
9. Waste which covers the carbon impacts of our treatment of municipal waste, whether recycling, landfill or incineration.

4. Our Transition Pathways

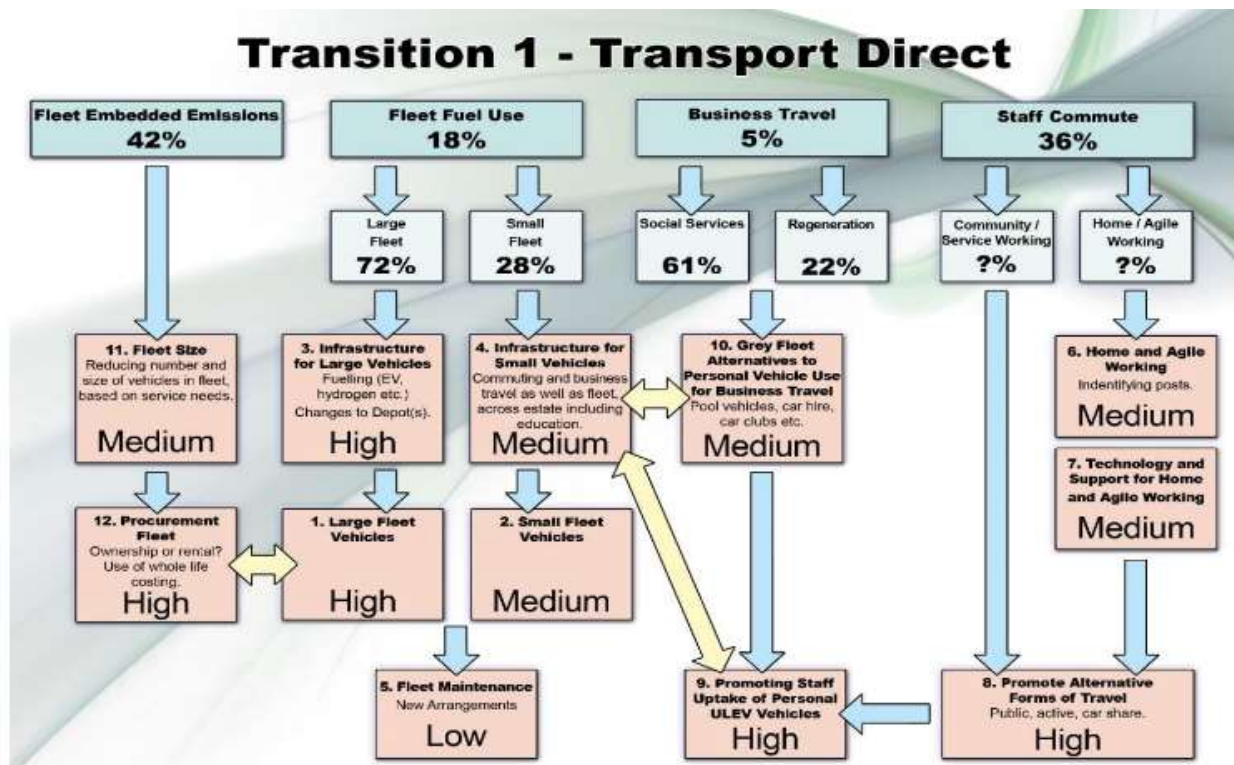
“Decarbonising the council will involve a number of different transitions in each of these high impact areas (e.g. travel, electricity). The plan includes transition summaries which identify key challenges in achieving carbon neutrality in each of these areas.”

Since the Decarbonisation Plan was adopted we have been developing the detail of how these transitions are going to be delivered using a readiness assessment method. Workshops involving officers from relevant service areas from across the authority are taking place to develop detailed pathways for the transitions. The workshops assessed our readiness to take action in that transitions across five categories: (i) technical, (ii) policy, (iii) financial, (iv) workforce and (v) delivery readiness.

For each transition the assessment is based on discussion of the key action areas identified as being necessary to reach net zero in that transition. These actions are based on the data from our carbon footprint, to ensure that they cover the entire transition. Each is given a difficulty level based on the scoring system below:

- **Low Difficulty** Actions that are technically feasible and could be undertaken using existing, or limited additional, resources.
- **Medium Difficulty** Actions that are technically feasible but will require significant additional resources.
- **High Difficulty** Actions where best alternative is not yet known and/or not yet technically possible.

As an example, the diagram below for Transition 1 - Transport Direct, summarises both the distribution of carbon emissions (blue boxes) and the difficulty levels of the 12 key actions identified to address these emissions (pink boxes).



5. Low Carbon Framework

“Although each transition will require its own distinct actions, we will also need a low carbon framework to provide a common strategic direction across these transitions.”

The next step in the readiness assessments is to identify high-level actions, the immediate next steps needed to move the transition forward. For each of these high-level actions a lead service area is identified and the action is built into the service areas business plan and can be monitored through our corporate performance management system. This reflects that we are committed to making decarbonisation an integral part of mainstream corporate business planning rather than an add-on programme to business as usual. It also provides the framework for the Decarbonisation Board to monitor decarbonisation actions across the authority. The Decarbonisation Board will also continue to report regularly to elected members through the democratic process.

Progress on agreed actions will be monitored via the council's existing business planning process on an ongoing basis with updates provided by the identified leads on a quarterly basis. Developing this range of measures to monitor progress is also important because reductions in carbon emissions are often lagging indicators, because in many cases actions only start to produce emissions reductions once they are completed (e.g. when new low carbon heating system is installed and operational).

Example of high-level actions identified in for Transition 1 - Transport Direct:

Fleet

- *Develop a fleet plan and resource its implementation by building costs into Corporate Medium Term Financial Plan. (Lead: Community Services)*
- *Develop and resource a low carbon depot. (Lead: Community Services)*
- *Ensure procurement arrangements are in place to support the plan. This needs to recognise the inter-dependant work on the new depot and collaborative opportunities at a regional and national level. (Lead: Commercial Services)*
- *Replace small fleet ULEV in phased way in line with available space, grid capacity and infrastructure. (Lead: Community Services)*

Travel

- *Embed the new operating model and assess its impact in terms of decarbonisation. (Lead: Commercial Services)*
- *Consider how to further reduce commute / travel impact in wider areas of the business e.g. Schools and Social Services. (Lead: Commercial Services)*
- *Investigate and identify staff demand to travel more actively and consider business case to meet this demand e.g. showers at main sites, secure shower facilities, safe storage and e-charging for cycles. (Lead: Community Services – Active Travel)*
- *Develop a plan for non-depot charging infrastructure for fleet and personal ULEV vehicles at key staff sites in the new operating model. (Lead: Regeneration)*
- *Explore how staff can be encouraged to switch to ULEV. (Lead: Commercial Services)*

6. Next Steps

“A Delivery Board will be established to take decarbonisation forward.”

The Decarbonisation Board chaired by our Managing Director has been meeting on a regular (6 weekly) basis, and made its first annual report on progress through the democratic process in September 2021. Over the next 12 months the Board aims to:

- Complete the readiness assessment process for all transitions.
- As a result, the Decarbonisation Plan will have been developed into a full action plan and key actions and timelines will have been agreed by the council and incorporated into the corporate performance management system.
- Developed council response to the Climate Assembly recommendations.

Blaenau Gwent Council Response to Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly Recommendations

Since the Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly took place in March the assembly recommendations and report have been considered through the democratic process by councillors, and assembly members have also presented the recommendations to a special information session for all councillors. The Assembly report has also recently been discussed in length at a special meeting of our senior leadership team, with these discussions informing this response.

Blaenau Gwent Council has already been part of the initial response to the Climate Assembly recommendations as a member of the Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board (PSB). We will not repeat the full detail of the PSB response ([link](#)), but will briefly recap, and state our support for, the main points of that response:

- We support the five Assembly recommendations, thank the participants in the Assembly for their time and effort, and we commit to continuing and accelerating meaningful action on climate change in response.
- The work of the Assembly makes clear that Climate action is not just a narrow technical fix to reduce emissions, it is about actions that will improve wider well-being by ensuring people in Blaenau Gwent have more ownership of the changes needed and by creating new opportunities.
- Implementing the assembly recommendations is part of a larger ongoing process to tackle the Climate Emergency. We can't solve everything locally, but working together we can make a meaningful difference.
- We are playing an active role in PSB Workshops taking place in November to develop detailed responses and actions to the five official recommendations of the Assembly.
- The PSB committed to report on progress on the recommendations on a regular and ongoing basis, we will do so as a council as well.

Format of this response

The main focus of this response is on the areas where we as the council can have the greatest direct influence, while the PSB considers the wider picture of Blaenau Gwent as a whole. Therefore, the focus of this response is on the wider set of 24 recommendations, and in particular on those where the council is either itself one of the lead delivery organisations, and/or where we have a significant role to play in providing support to residents taking action themselves. With our partner organisations from the PSB, we are currently developing more detail for the five official recommendations, which will also feed into our future actions.

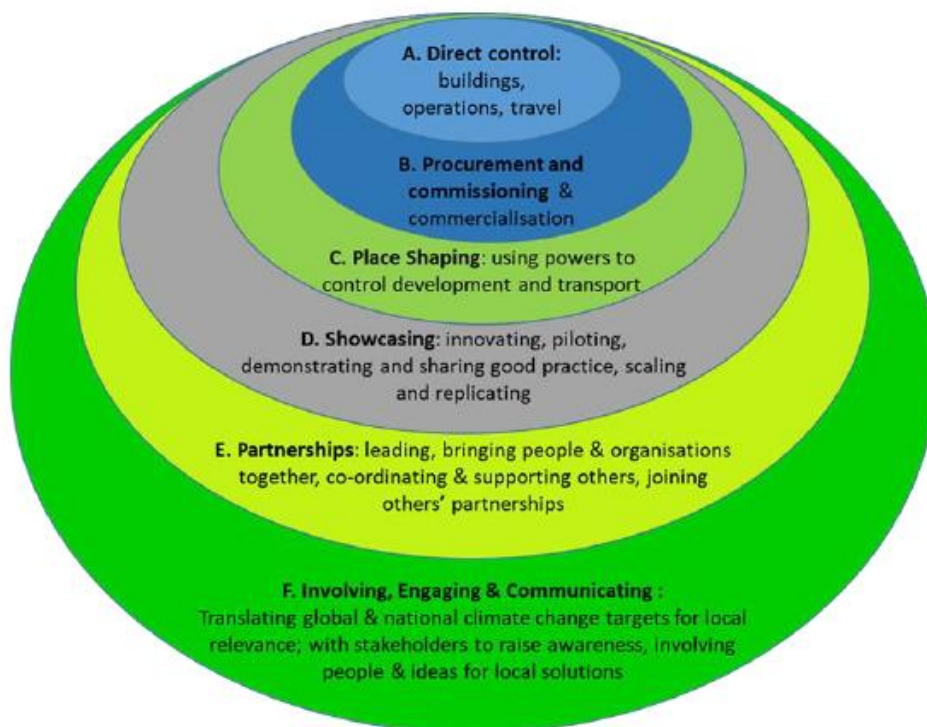
Another reason for the wider scope of our response is that we feel that it is important to recognise that the Climate Assembly did a large amount of important work and thinking beyond the five recommendations that achieved 80% support during the Assembly. Achieving 80% support for the type of detailed recommendations that the Assembly produced, particularly within the limited time available, is challenging. The final voting scores reflect the level of consensus that Assembly members were able to achieve within the time available, they are not a ranking of the relative importance of the issues they considered. We believe that these other 19 recommendations, many of which received the

support of a substantial majority, cover a range of other issues that are very important for residents. Therefore, they represent an important basis for developing future climate actions, which should not be lost. We are keen that Assembly members and wider residents continue to be engaged in developing these actions (see below).

How is the council responding to climate change?

Last September we declared a Climate Emergency at the same time as adopting our Decarbonisation Plan 2020-2030 (link). The Decarbonisation Plan is about our organisational emissions, the carbon we release from our own operations (heating our buildings, our fleet, staff travel etc.) The plan sets out how we intend to play our part in the ambition for a Net-Zero Public Sector in Wales by 2030.

There is another Net Zero target for Wales as a whole by 2050. This 2050 target relates to territorial emissions, which means all the emissions released in an area (housing, transport, business etc.) It is these territorial emissions that were the main focus of the Climate Assembly. We have an important role to play in tackling these emissions in Blaenau Gwent, the diagram below shows some of the ways we can influence them, but these emissions are not something that we, or anyone else, can solve on their own.



Last year a Climate Mitigation Steering Group was established by the PSB, chaired by our Managing Director, bringing together local partners to develop a plan to address territorial emissions in Blaenau Gwent. The Assembly recommendations are helping to drive development of this plan.

More generally our approach to climate action recognises the scope of the challenge we face and how far reaching the actions required, something reflected in the range of the assembly recommendations. We do not think that, in most cases, these actions can be

delivered by separate stand-alone climate projects. Rather our approach is about mainstreaming zero carbon into all our activities, a process that is already underway. For example, we do not have a separate low carbon vehicle budget, our aim is all our fleet budget will be low carbon.

We also recognise that some of the things we need to do to achieve zero carbon will be more expensive (at least in the short-term), and many individuals and organisations, including the council, will need support and additional resources to deliver them. The appointment of the new Climate and Deputy Climate Ministers in Wales (Julie James and Lee Waters), who both spoke to the Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly, indicates Welsh Government are taking this need for investment seriously, and we will be continuing to work with partners to push for further support for climate action in Blaenau Gwent.

Responding to the Recommendations

The table below shows the Climate Assembly recommendations where we have a role as a lead local delivery organisation and/or in supporting people to take action. This response does not attempt to go through each of these recommendations one by one, but instead identifies some key themes that cut across multiple recommendations.

Develop a local Climate Change Communications Strategy for promoting climate change action within the community at all levels by 2022 to be reviewed annually.	67	Develop a community owned/part-owned green energy programme e.g. solar farms, wind farms, or hydro electric. Supported by community green bonds. Making sure bonds are accessible and provide beneficial return.	74
Employ dedicated local Communication Officer(s) to lead on the Climate Change Communication Strategy.	53	Set a goal and support schools to source Welsh/British, sustainable produce and increase the use of these products over time, to include more vegetarian options.	74
Set up a Climate Change Communications Network that oversee the evolving Strategy (to be cross sector including citizens and youth representatives) sharing best practice, information and knowledge.	63	Establish an affordable, integrated road & rail transport system accessible throughout BG. A one ticket system that links to bus, rail & cycle schemes - inclusivity for purchasing of tickets (digital or paper). Accessible all hours with safety via lighting, CCTV and to keep maintained.	91
Make climate change and its impacts mandatory, interactive (e.g. competitions, prizes, rewards), relevant to the local area in the school curriculum. The council should assist schools with projects relevant to the age and practical involvement by the young people with the wider community.	62	Set up an enhanced information website, newsletter & community boards to promote transparency and sharing of information about recycling and how to access these services - this would improve awareness for future consultation on these issues.	63
Blaenau Gwent must create an accessible, practical, well publicised information platform for all (an upgraded website, an app, information lines and local one stop 'retrofitted shops/hubs' for advice and demonstrations on all things green throughout the area.	70	Reinstate community skips - to robustly address fly-tipping & litter - siting of more litter bins that are emptied more often. Install & monitor more CCTV/enhanced measures at known fly-tipping spots. Re-direct fly-tipping & CCTV costs to community skips and in time it would pay for itself.	65
Providing centralised grants to improve energy performance of all homes and reduce fuel poverty and energy usage by 2027.	70	Establish local Repair hubs to Re-use/re-purpose/upcycle items.	79
Providing advice, space and funding for communities to create their own local hub with a network of Outreach Officers.	58	Implement a programme of woodland preservation and reforestation of BG, using the right tree in the right place for the right reason, increasing opportunities for jobs, biodiversity and connecting woodlands. Making sure the skills are available so we can create green jobs, e.g saw milling and timber framed housing.	86
Prioritize brown field sites over green belt for new builds and ensure green space created within new developments	79	Create roles for coordination, cultivation and support of the use of green spaces (allotments, woodlands and urban green spaces) by the community to benefit all generations and create a sense of community ownership. Supporting communities in activities including food growing, recreation, bio-diversity, green prescribing, green space planning and aesthetics (e.g Blaenau Gwent in Bloom).	77
Establish & improve a safe, easily maintainable infrastructure for walkers & cyclists, for either recreational or work purposes, with access to the public transport network. Including lighting & CCTV & storage for bikes.	88		

We are already taking significant action across many of these recommendations. Examples include, the proportion of waste recycled in Blaenau Gwent have increased to 62%, thanks

to the efforts of residents, leading to the amount of CO₂ being saved increasing by over 3,500 tonnes CO₂, in the last 4 years. Further actions to reduce waste are being taken including the opening of the new Den Reuse Shop at Roseheyworth ([link](#)). The latest round of Arbed warm homes scheme completed this year saw £2.7 million spent on improvements to the energy efficiency of 577 homes within the Lower Ebbw Fach area. In recent years our valleys have become far greener, with the active involvement of community groups in many of these green spaces, including three Green Flag community awards this year. A process that is ongoing, for example, with the recent creation of the Ebbw Fawr trail, improving active travel links for walking and cycling, and consultation on a 10 year Active Travel Strategy having just been completed.

A range of pilot projects and plans are already being developed or already underway. This year the council launched a pilot community green bond scheme to support our Energy Prospectus ([link](#)). A pilot Fflecsi bus scheme was launched this year, operating Monday to Saturday between 5:15am and 10:35pm, to improve links to work and services. £70 million has been made available to us to reopen the link between Newport and Ebbw Vale, to secure four trains per hour and a new station in Abertillery. Climate action will also be a central consideration in informing development decisions, including through the new Local Development Plan and the placemaking approach to develop Town Centre Strategies.

£30,000 a year over a three-year period has been secured to support the appointment of a Local Environmental Quality Officer to work with existing Litter champions and groups along with engaging with schools and community groups to deliver the new Blaenau Gwent Litter and Fly-Tipping Strategy for 2021-2026 ([link](#)). £2.7 million has been secured for a Gwent wide project Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing (ENRaW), to facilitate better woodland management and creation and take action to protect and enhance vital habitats for pollinators and make improvements to green spaces, urban and country parks, cycleways and public rights of way.

In addition to these actions relating to the Assembly recommendations highlighted in the table above, we are also taking action across a range of other areas of climate change. 62 new dual fast charging public Electric Vehicle Charging Points have been installed at 34 sites across Gwent, supported by a grant of £465,000. Cardiff Capital Region City Deal have secured £1.3million for the delivery of infrastructure to support taxis in the transition to low emission vehicles.

Work is ongoing on the Blaenau Gwent Energy Prospectus ([link](#)) to promote opportunities for renewable energy, including the recent expansion of The Works District Heating Network in Ebbw Vale to additional business units. We have also been involved in the development of the Cardiff Capital Region Energy Strategy ([link](#)), which aims to reduce emissions from our regional energy system by 55% by 2035. We are developing a pilot project to demonstrate solutions to decarbonising business parks, including renewable energy generation and installing new equipment including battery storage, solar PV, heat pump and Artificial Intelligence (AI) controls.

We are also taking action to address our own carbon footprint. We have invested over £4 million, supported by Welsh Government Energy Service, in lighting, heating, controls and building integrated renewables across 20 properties saving 26,500 tonnes of CO₂ and reducing the council's energy bills by £9 million over the project's lifetime. An outline business case for a New Depot was presented in July. The design will include solar panels on the main buildings, rainwater capture for use in vehicle washing, and charging points to facilitate the decarbonisation of our fleet, including the recent purchase of our first electric vehicles, four small electric vans for £95,000. Since March 2020 the council has operated agile working arrangements based on digital platforms, initially in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. Staff and members have responded positively and supported the move to a new operating model, which is having a significant positive impact on our carbon footprint: reduced commuting to and from work; less business travel; the closure of the Civic Centre (an old energy inefficient building), plus a more efficient digital way of working. We are also currently reviewing our Procurement Strategy to address our climate impact and strengthen our existing commitment to buying local.

However, we also recognise that we do not currently have a complete overview of how these actions fit together, and most importantly we can't say how the total impact of these actions compares to the total action needed to reach net zero. We are committed through the PSB mitigation steering group to producing a data driven plan for reducing territorial emissions in Blaenau Gwent. This will allow us to produce clear pathways from the actions we are already taking, to delivering on the recommendations of the Climate Assembly and achieving Net Zero.

Similarly, it can be difficult for residents to get a clear picture of what is going on across all these areas and what they can do themselves to take action on climate change. Communication is a common theme across many of the recommendations, and we recognise this is not just about telling residents about the things we are doing already, or reproducing generic information about climate actions that is already available from a number of other sources. Keeping accessible Blaenau Gwent specific information up to date and providing opportunities for two-way communication are important elements of responding to these recommendations that will require consistent resourcing to make a climate communication strategy meaningful.

Building on the Success of the Climate Assembly

The Climate Assembly demonstrated both the widespread support for climate action in Blaenau Gwent and the potential for in-depth input from the public. While it is not possible, or necessary, for this level of engagement to be maintained at all times, we are keen to continue this process. A standing group and/or process for public input into decision making about climate change, will require clearly defined purpose and support, to ensure that, like the Climate Assembly, it has meaningful outcomes. We are keen to work with residents and partners to create a permanent successor to the Climate Assembly. Accompanying this document is a brief questionnaire ([link](#)) through which both Assembly

members and other residents can give us feedback about both this response and possible options for continuing the work of the Climate Assembly on an ongoing basis.

Buildings Readiness Assessment

Context of Readiness Assessment

The Decarbonisation Plan sets out our commitment to the ambition of the Welsh Public Sector achieving Net Zero organisational emissions by 2030. The plan identifies nine transitions: 1. Transport Direct; 2. Transport Commissioned; 3. Sequestration; 4. Procurement Goods; 5. Procurement Services; 6. Procurement Works; 7. Electricity; 8. Heat and 9. Waste. To progress the nine transitions, the Decarbonisation Board agreed to carry out readiness assessments to understand what is already being done and identify the key actions we need to take for each transition.

This report covers three transitions: Procurement Works, Electricity and Heat, which the Decarbonisation Board decided to combine into a single “buildings” readiness assessment. These three transitions collectively represent 21% of our gross emissions, a figure which is in line with Welsh Government’s Public Sector Net Zero Route map that identifies that buildings typically represent 20% of the public sector carbon footprint.

Emissions from buildings can be divided into two main types:

- Operational energy use (heating, lighting, computers etc.)
- Life-cycle embodied emissions (construction, (non-energy) use and maintenance, and demolition or disassembly etc.)

Both these types of emissions will ultimately be eliminated through the use of zero carbon energy. The difference is that the choice to use zero carbon energy is in our direct control for operational energy emissions, but is outside our direct organisational control for life-cycle emissions. However, we can address these life-cycle emissions by (i) using our (and collective public sector) purchasing power to encourage the market to move towards zero carbon energy based products and (ii) where possible by reducing our total consumption (e.g. product miles, material throughput (the total volume of materials used)).

Transition 6 Procurement Works (10% of carbon footprint) is the life-cycle embodied emissions from our buildings. Transition 8 Heat (6%) and Transition 7 Electricity (5%) include our operational energy use from our buildings. Electricity also includes some non-buildings emissions, mainly street lighting which is about a third of our electricity emissions, which have also been included in this readiness assessment.

Recent Trends

- Over the last four years’ total carbon emissions from our electricity consumption have fallen by 39%. However, the majority of this reduction has been due to a fall in the carbon intensity (the amount of carbon produced per unit of energy) of the electricity grid. Our electric energy consumption has only fallen by 6.5% over the same period.
- Unlike the electricity grid there has been no real change in the carbon intensity of the gas grid, so our carbon emissions directly reflect our energy usage, which has risen 12% over last 4 years. Largely due to The Energy Centre at The Works, which makes up 35% of our total gas consumption.
- The 10 highest energy consuming buildings make up around half of total energy use by buildings for both electricity and gas. Six buildings appear in the top 10 for both electricity and gas: Energy Centre, Civic Centre, Ebbw Fawr Primary Campus, Abertillery Comprehensive, Tredegar Comprehensive and Central Depot.

- The majority of procurement works emissions are associated with capital expenditure with external contractors.

Heating accounts for the majority of our buildings emissions and represents a distinct transition with its own technologies and solutions. It is probably the most challenging element of our energy use to decarbonise as it is not currently possible to decarbonise the gas grid in the same way as the electricity grid is currently being decarbonised. Using zero carbon, rather than fossil fuel based, electricity has little, if any, direct impact on the operation of existing electrically powered council infrastructure such as lighting, computers etc. Whereas the most plausible alternative heating technology, heat pumps, in order to operate efficiently will also require significant changes to wider buildings infrastructure (insulation, radiators etc.), in addition to replacing existing gas boilers, in itself a substantial investment.

Summary of Next Steps

The Buildings Readiness Assessment identified a number of high-level actions which represent the next steps in our transition to net zero in this transition. This list summarises these actions, the rest of the document provides a more detailed description of these transitions and the rationales for these proposed actions. For each action a service area(s) is identified so the action can be built into their business planning. The actions identified here will be developed with service areas into performance measures/targets, informed by both by the detailed information about specific actions in the readiness assessments and more good practise.

Energy Use -

1. Strategic Heating Decarbonisation Plan. Develop a plan for replacement of existing heating systems and associated retrofitting of buildings with zero carbon alternatives by 2030 (in line with Welsh Government policy), including the investment required. (Property Services)
2. Energy Policy- Review the existing policy to ensure energy demand reduction is aligned to the Council's Zero Carbon commitment. (Property Services)
3. Procurement (Energy-Use). Commit to using carbon data (energy standards and life-cycle costs) to inform procurement decisions. Review Procurement Strategy and arrangements to align to the Council's Zero Carbon commitment. (Commercial Services)
4. Street Lighting Strategy – Develop a plan and targets for future energy reductions including reaching 100% LED lighting no later than 2030. (Neighbourhood Services)
5. Zero Carbon Electricity. Develop a plan and targets for ensuring the Council maximises its use of renewable energy, through installing renewables and through procurement. (Regeneration)
6. District Heating Networks. Set date for future review of whether developments in technology allow for additional networks in Blaenau Gwent. (Regeneration)

Construction:

1. Commit that all new builds will be built to Net Zero Standards. How this will be achieved, and any barriers to delivery, will be set out in detail in the Strategic Outline Case and only in exceptional circumstances will projects proceed without these being fully addressed. (Property Services / Commissioning Departments)
2. Procurement (Works). Commit to take into account carbon costs (the emissions associated with undertaking works) in procurement of building and maintenance works, including setting appropriate carbon standards. Integrated into decision making as part of procurement review. (Property Services /Procurement)

Overview of Transition

Energy Use

The most visible element of buildings carbon impact is their operational energy use. These emissions are the result of energy consumption, both electricity and gas (and biomass in heating network). There are some similarities in how Net Zero will be achieved in both forms of energy use. Ultimately achieving Net Zero will be reliant on using zero emission energy source(s) for all our energy use. Also crucial will be reducing our total energy demand, the lower energy use is the easier it will be to secure sufficient Net Zero energy, as well as providing additional benefits in terms of both environmental impacts and reducing costs. Demand reduction requires long-term planning, using new technology and staff engagement.

There are, however, also very significant differences between electricity and gas in relation to Net Zero. Recent years have seen very substantial reductions in the carbon intensity (the amount of carbon emitted per unit of energy generated) of the electricity grid, leading to substantial reductions in the carbon footprint of our buildings. This trend is likely to continue, with a clear path towards total decarbonisation of the grid through renewables (largely solar and wind) being visible. In contrast there has been very little change in the carbon intensity of the gas grid and there is little prospect of that changing in at least the short to medium term. Biomass can play a role in replacing gas, as it does in The Works heating network, but it does not have the capacity to replace more than a small part of the total energy provided by the gas grid. There are some suggestions that hydrogen could be used as an alternative fuel in the existing national gas grid, however, there are substantial doubts about the viability of this even in the long-term. Although sufficient volume of hydrogen could be produced for the entire grid, producing Net Zero hydrogen is significantly more expensive currently (there are less expensive non-zero carbon ways of producing hydrogen). The extent to which the existing gas grid would have to be modified to run on hydrogen is not clear, but it would certainly require significant changes to both the network and boilers. There are also serious doubts that powering the existing gas grid would be the most efficient and climate friendly use of hydrogen. The recent advice of the Committee on Climate Change to Local Authorities was that they should not wait for a hydrogen grid, but treat hydrogen like district heating networks, as something that may have a part to play through specific local schemes with high heating loads (e.g. business parks and major public buildings) as one element of a wider local energy plan. It currently appears that the role of gas in heating our buildings is likely to be mainly filled by heat pumps. Heat pumps use electrical energy to redistribute heat from the environment (either the air or ground), meaning they require less energy than gas boilers, and can be net zero if run on zero carbon electricity. However, in order to operate efficiently they heat the water used in heating systems to a lower temperature than gas boilers, meaning they may well require improvements to buildings such as larger radiators and a higher standard of insulation to heat them effectively.

The large majority of our gas use is associated with heating our buildings, making heating our buildings a distinct net zero transition. Around two thirds of our current electricity use is associated with our buildings, with the main uses being lighting and powering appliances, most notably Information Technology. The other third of our current electricity use is for street lighting. In contrast to the changes required to heating infrastructure changing to Zero Carbon electricity will be far less disruptive. We are in an ongoing process of installing lower energy consumption lights, computers etc., which connect to the existing grid, usually with no need for any further changes. However, there are wider changes associated with the transition to zero carbon electricity. Heating

is just one example of how reaching zero carbon will require electrification of a major energy use that previously used a different fuel. Another example being our fleet transition from diesel and petrol to electric vehicles. This trend towards electrification may well require changes on a larger organisational scale. For example, the greater overall levels of electricity demand will place additional requirements on the grid, and require more load management by the Council including generating electricity on site, particularly where there is high demand, use of batteries and more automation to balance demand. This represents a switch from the current situation where the biggest challenge is ensuring peak demand for electricity is met, to balancing supply and demand 24/7/365. So although this assessment identifies a number of specific transitions relating to our existing electricity use: lighting and computing/appliances, electrification is a much larger theme that cuts across multiple transitions.

Embodied Emissions

In addition to operational energy use buildings also produce life-cycle embodied emissions, which include the carbon used throughout each stage of a building's life: construction, (non-energy) use and maintenance, and demolition or disassembly. The life-time embodied energy in complex commercial buildings may be equivalent to 30 times their annual operational energy use. There are several different elements to these emissions including: embodied emissions (the emissions associated with the energy used in the manufacture of products), product miles and material throughput (total volume of material used). Actions which reduce emissions related to one element do not automatically reduce other elements or buildings direct energy use, in fact they may even increase emissions from another element. Which is why a whole life-cycle understanding of carbon impacts is important. However, from a wider point of view these emissions are not fundamentally different from the emissions associated with our direct energy use and will ultimately be eliminated in a similar way, by utilising zero carbon energy. The emissions appear more complex from an organisational point of view because the choice to use zero carbon energy for these activities is not within our direct operational control, unlike our energy use. There are two main ways we can address these life-cycle emissions. Firstly, we can use our (and collective public sector) purchasing power to encourage the market to move towards low carbon options (including as a first step making information about life-cycle emissions available to purchasers). Secondly, where possible to reduce our total consumption, this could be total material throughput or product miles.

Next Steps in More Detail

(See Appendix for Full Details of Readiness Assessments)

1. Heating Decarbonisation Plan

The development of the plan should be based on an understanding of our full estate in terms of building type, technology required and buildings (future) usage. Welsh Government Net Zero Wales suggests that local authorities should develop a strategic plan for decarbonising buildings by the end of 2023. This Heating Decarbonisation Plan will bring together a number of interlinked elements identified in the readiness assessment. Central to this plan is switching our estate from current gas boiler based heating infrastructure, to zero carbon energy alternatives, most likely predominantly heat pumps. Just developing this plan will require significant additional capacity, and delivering it will require a step change in resources as the 2030 target requires a rate of replacement of heating systems that far exceeds current rates of boiler replacement. The plan will also need to cover a

range of other actions to lower the total energy demand from heating (and cooling) our buildings, which are necessary to make zero carbon heating systems operate efficiently:

- Retrofitting to improve building energy efficiency as heat pumps operate at lower temperatures than gas boilers so require well insulated high-performing buildings.
- Optimise the use of buildings and space in them to reduce demand by integrating decarbonisation into estate strategy, agile working etc.
- Heating (and cooling) demand reduction. Technology/automation supported by staff engagement, including setting corporate standards for temperatures across estate.

Developing this plan will require additional resources, and significant corporate commitment/investment will be necessary, but likely not sufficient, to deliver it. A plan of this type may well not be deliverable within existing council resources, Welsh Government, or other external, investment is also likely to be needed. The next step for developing this plan is to develop detailed project scope for development of plan perhaps through a working group led by Property Services.

The plan should include the existing District Heating Network at The Works, but with the intention of decarbonising by 2035 rather than 2030. The network is one of our most significant emissions sources and provides energy to a number of our largest buildings. In this context, it is important to note that District Heating Networks are not strictly a distinct form of heating technology like heat pumps, gas or biomass boilers. Rather they are a way of delivering both heat and electricity (using 'waste' heat), potentially from any of these technologies, to a large number of buildings simultaneously, achieving increased efficiency and reduced carbon emissions via the resulting economies of scale. The rapid improvements to the carbon intensity of the national electricity grid in recent years means that the previously significant carbon emission benefits of common hybrid biomass/gas Combined Heat and Power (CHP) (as used at The Works) compared to standard grid based heat and power alternatives have largely disappeared. Welsh Government guidance has suggested a 2035 target, recognising the need to decarbonise existing heating networks, but also that changing the heating technology used in an existing heating network is a very significant challenge.

Reducing existing electricity demand:

2. **Energy Policy**, previous energy policies have set paper targets and policy statements that had little impact. Any new Energy Policy needs to be based on delivery mechanisms informed by data, automation and staff engagement.
3. **Procurement (Energy-use)**. Set energy efficiency and life-cycle standards for IT/appliances and lighting and incorporate carbon considerations and data into procurement processes, which are key moments in determining future energy demand.
4. **Street lighting**, around 8k out of 13k lights been converted to LED, leading to significant carbon and cost savings, replacement of remaining 5k is part of forthcoming Street Lighting Strategy. This needs to include actions and targets that achieve 100% LED lighting no later than 2030.
5. **Zero Carbon Electricity**. A plan will need to be developed with targets to ensure the council maximises its use of renewable energy through installing renewables and through procurement. Currently all the electricity we procure is certified as 100% through REGO (Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin) scheme. However, the REGO scheme is based on purchasing certificates for renewable electricity that has already been generated, as a result our share of the grid average non-renewable electricity is effectively redistributed to other

electricity users who do not choose to purchase REGO certificates. As a result, there is no real mechanism in REGO schemes to generate a net increase in the total amount of zero carbon electricity generated.

There are two potential mechanisms for the council to create additional zero carbon capacity. Firstly, through generating our own renewable electricity, which has substantial benefits where supply and demand are well matched (e.g. generating electricity for fleet at Depot). Other organisations have found the carbon benefits of renewables projects have been disappointing where new capacity has not been well matched to demand. The total amount we can generate as an organisation is, therefore, limited by the physical constraints of our sites, local demand and grid capacity. Secondly, through procurement that ensures new renewable generation capacity is created (known as additionality). A PPA (Power Purchase Agreement) for a long term supply of a set amount of electricity, with the supplier committing to build new renewable capacity linked to the national grid equivalent to the contracted amount of energy. PPAs are an increasingly common way for large organisations to help to finance additional zero carbon electricity capacity while ensuring a stable long-term price for energy.

We also have a crucial role to play in setting ambitious borough wide territorial renewable generation targets through the LDP and Energy Prospectus as well as future local energy planning. Our total organisational electricity demand is a small fraction of these targets for territorial renewable capacity.

6. **District Heating Networks.** Set date for a review of effect of new technology on viability of additional networks in Blaenau Gwent.

Construction (Embodied Emissions):

7. **Net Zero New Build.** Council should make commitment to all new buildings to be net zero (including their operational energy use, a key consideration as this is the element that can lead to future retrofit requirements). This will require additional resources and a clearly defined standard.
8. **Procurement Works.** Considerable life-cycle emissions will be associated with continuing maintenance and improvement of our existing buildings, which will continue to make up the majority of our estate. Corporate commitment required to incorporate these carbon considerations into decision making in procurement process targeted at highest emitted areas. Again requires move away from cost being determining factor in these decisions.

Emerging Cross-Cutting Themes

During Readiness Assessments several themes cutting across transitions have emerged:

- **Staff Engagement.** There are a number of areas where staff have role to play in reducing carbon emissions and/or incentives and support may be offered to staff. It does not make sense for different parts of council to run a number of different engagement or communication efforts. There was view in workshops that there should be a single point of contact for staff engagement across all the transitions. It was also identified the need to agree a corporate position on the limits of where council will attempt to monitor and/or influence staff actions, particularly with home working transferring a number of emissions from workplace into home.

- **Schools Engagement.** It is clear from assessments so far that schools are a major emissions source in many elements of our footprint. However, they have a high degree of decision making independence. As with staff engagement there was a feeling that we need to develop a single point of contact for decarbonisation, rather than having uncoordinated efforts to engage schools across different transitions. In this context, ideally schools would adopt same corporate standards for decarbonisation as rest of council (e.g. energy policy).
- **Electrification.** Solutions across several transitions involve increased electricity consumption. It is also clear that issues of grid capacity at both a borough wide and local level are going to be important, informed by an overview of total electricity demand across organisation. This may include other issues such as need for batteries for load management. This is a strategic issue that does not sit in any single transition.
- **What does achieving Net Zero mean?** With Scope 1 and 2 emissions it is clear what net zero would look like and how it could be achieved i.e. all energy used is zero carbon. But with Scope 3 emissions we will need common set of measures and agreed standards/targets to have a meaningful way of measuring progress. Something that will need to be done at WG level. It is not possible to reach zero energy use or material throughput, so aim is to reduce energy use and embodied emissions as far as possible and use zero carbon energy/electricity.
- **Territorial Emissions.** Readiness assessments only consider our organisational emissions, but it is clear from discussions that several of elements considered will also have wider impact on BG territorial emissions. Need to start considering corporate approach to territorial emissions as well and how it relates to Decarbonisation Plan and Board. The public may not be that clear on difference and without clear communication could cause confusion and or public dissatisfaction later if they are also not 'Net Zero' by 2030. Territorial emissions will also need own metrics and targets eventually, although again likely to be driven at WG level.
- **Regional Collaboration.** Already identified a number of areas where we are already, or it would make sense to collaborate regionally on actions. It might be beneficial to have greater corporate overview of what these collaborations are and how they contribute to overall decarbonisation goal.
- **Local Zero Carbon Capacity.** Identified that reducing product miles requires local suppliers. This is likely to be relevant across a range of our transitions and building capacity to deliver decarbonisation in local business is also relevant to reducing territorial emissions for Blaenau Gwent as well.

Building Readiness Assessment Appendix

1. Next Steps

This section provides full details of the readiness assessment and the 13 potential next steps identified.

1. Heating Systems

Net Zero: All public buildings supplied with low carbon heat by 2030

Readiness: This is a very challenging ambition which will require major investment replacing gas boilers as the method of heating space (and water) in our buildings, with no guarantee that the financial rate of return will be positive. For example, the payback on a conventional gas boiler is around 40 years. The currently leading alternative technology are heat pumps. Currently the upfront costs of heat pumps are several times those of an equivalent gas boiler (400k compared to 50-60k for typical primary school). There are also other significant costs associated with heat pumps. Heat pumps are most efficient (and therefore deliver carbon benefit) when heating the water in the heating system to lower temperatures (55 rather than 80), which may often require changes to the heating system and building fabric to deliver the same performance, in some existing buildings these changes may be prohibitively expensive or even physically impossible (asbestos a common issue). Currently the cost of energy per kwh from electricity is around 4.4 times higher than gas (because heat pumps are more efficient breakeven point around 3.2 times higher cost), meaning ongoing energy costs will be higher (issue WG recognised in recent announcement). The ongoing maintenance costs of heat pumps are also typically higher than gas boilers at the moment.

Timing of schemes has to be considered. As we have seen technology will improve and lower costs. There is also issue about whether we want to be the guinea pig for these types of systems changes? They need to be fitted to the specific buildings. Costs will be higher and greater potential for systems to not work as well as planned. Conversely, also still a space where limited number of experienced suppliers, and demand is likely to be high.

The main alternative heating technology appears to be hydrogen boilers, but the technological viability of converting the gas grid to hydrogen is not yet demonstrated, hydrogen is also not automatically a zero carbon fuel depending on how it is produced, there are also strong arguments that even if hydrogen is produced in a zero carbon way that using it in the heating grid is not the most efficient use of it due to energy loss. Even if all these problems can be overcome we are a number of years away from grid hydrogen being available, the Climate Change Committee Advice Report: The path to a Net Zero Wales is that LAs cannot wait for grid hydrogen to decarbonise heating.

District Heating Networks may provide a solution in some areas (see below)

The cost of these works will likely far exceed what LAs own budgets, a significant intervention rate from WG (or other funders) to close viability gap, of type provided in other areas such as solar PV, will be needed to deliver.

Currently gas boilers are run past their recommended working life (many are 30, 40 plus years old) to the point of failure, and the cost of replacement gas boiler(s) in a one of our big energy using building exceeds annual maintenance budgets. Acting at the point of failure also makes it very difficult to make the significant changes required by heat pumps. The implementation of this type of strategic plan will require corporate commitment to the investment levels required, including across the school estate (see schools cross-cutting theme).

Difficulty Level: Medium to High difficulty. The technology exists, but the costs are far beyond existing budgets and may not be compatible with some of our buildings.

Next Steps: Corporate commitment to strategic Heating Decarbonisation Plan. WG Net Zero Wales suggests that LAs should develop a strategic plan for decarbonising building by the end of 2023. A plan of this type will only be meaningful with corporate commitment including a

step change in resources in this area as the rate of replacement of heating systems required far exceeds current rates.

Reduce heating energy use by raising performance.

Net Zero: Achieving Net Zero will be driven by using low carbon heating sources, but less energy need to heat buildings easier this will be to achieve. Several elements to this:

- **2. Existing Building Performance DEC/Retrofit**

Readiness: Retrofit is particularly important as outline above, heat pumps are more efficient at low temperatures in well insulated high-performing buildings. Our 68 eligible buildings have recently been assessed for Display Energy Certificates (DECs), 85% reached D or above.

Workshop suggested all buildings achieving C would be a good minimum starting point. In the context of resources available, we need to seriously ask, what level of performance are we ultimately aiming for.

There is no one size fits all solution to this area, each building is unique and comes with its own challenges, with limits to the level of performance that existing buildings can achieve given their basic design. Even seemingly obvious improvement such as insulation may be challenging because of a combination of the additional costs of changes needed to the fabric of the building, and the long payback period of works. Currently 8-year payback is requirement of many funders, alternative funding arrangements needed to close this viability gap. The buildings that most need this work and also the most challenging for same reasons: age and size.

Programme of retrofits needs to be informed by understanding of estate as whole. Makes sense to start with the highest energy using buildings. Any strategy should look at building type first, then look at technology type, finally look at usage.

Difficulty Level: High difficulty because of the specific nature of retrofits requires bespoke solutions for individual buildings

Next Steps: Set corporate ambitions for building performance standards. Identify priorities for achieving these standards based on understanding of building types and current performance/energy use.

- **3. Building Usage/Estate Strategy**

Readiness: The financial viability of retrofits can only be assessed in the context of understanding future usage and life-span of building. There may be cases where it does not make sense to undertake works given the remaining life span of the building (both for financial and carbon reasons), but this can only be determined if this life span is known. We have substantially reduced number of buildings, with closure of Civic Centre feel getting close to minimum space needed to deliver services.

Beyond number of buildings also have to consider how they are used, our core buildings are open 7-7. More people are working from home since lockdown and this is going to continue. Therefore, lots of energy is potentially being used even though the building is not being utilised. A booking system where staff can book day slots only is being put in place. There will be peak occupancy times. Heating (and lighting) can be potentially targeted at specific areas and times to reduce energy use, although this may require retrofitting system with controls and valves. But only if these times and places are known, and staff are made aware of them and systems facilitates them following them, and more fundamentally if it is physically possible to create separately heated spaces, e.g. Anvil Court does not lend itself to this without construction of new dividing walls.

Sharing space with other (public sector) organisations is another potential method of optimising space use and therefore reducing energy.

Next Step: Carbon implications need to be integral part of relevant strategies/documents such as Estates Strategy, Agile Working Systems and Public Sector Facility Sharing.

- **4. Heating Demand Reduction**

Readiness: Building design determines maximum not actual performance. Just a couple of staff members can be enough to significantly decrease performance through their behaviour. The effectiveness of heating improvements also depends on a good control system. Otherwise people will find they are getting hot and open the windows for example. Increasing automation of control systems reduces reliance on staff to manage use.

A consistent corporate approach to what temperature work environments should be would reduce energy use across the estate, it was highlighted that some schools choose to heat to higher temperatures. There also needs to be a recognition that people do have different preferences about the temperature of work environment, and this also touches on office dress as well.

Think that significant savings could be realised via better use of existing BMS (Building Management System) control to optimise actual performance of heating systems, but this requires sufficient staff time from staff with the correct skills.

Staff engagement via Energy Champions took place prior to COVID, potential to return to this, as part of wider staff engagement (see cross-cutting theme). Staff engagement of this type does have potential for real impact, but requires consistent resourcing, energy is very small team covering a large organisation.

Difficulty Level: Medium, technically possible, but significant costs.

Next Steps: Set corporate standards for temperature in different work spaces. Scope programme to optimise use of automation and BMS and identify potential savings/business case for investment (potentially as part of larger strategy)

- **5. Space Cooling**

Readiness: We know this is likely to be increasing issue in future as hot days get more frequent, although starting from a low base. In terms of understanding impact on future demand will affect lots of organisations in Gwent, does not make sense for BGCB to investigate on own. Currently if temperature reach 27 then system brings it down to 24. New ventilation is currently being installed at Anvil Court. You can have an A/C system without it being on, but of course there are the embodied emissions associated with installation.

Staff can play in keeping self at comfortable temperature in ways that not wasteful of energy. Desk Fans are emblematic in this issue, COVID has impact in leading to successful ban in Anvil Court and Schools. This felt to be something that should be continued, noted that previous attempts to ban fans at Civic Centre failed.

Difficulty Level: Medium, cost implications

Next Steps: Include considerations in corporate standards for temperature in work space (see above) and staff engagement work. Keep future demand under active review to inform planning (possible regional collaboration).

Building Embodied Emissions

This involves consideration of the Scope 3 carbon impact of our buildings, beyond scope 1 and 2 direct energy use associated with heating, cooling, lighting and power of any appliances. Life-cycle embodied emissions include the carbon used throughout each stage of a building's life: construction, use and maintenance, and demolition or disassembly. The life-time embodied energy in complex commercial buildings may be equivalent to 30 times annual operational energy use.

More complex what net zero means in this context as these elements can't be decarbonised in the same straight forward way as direct energy use. There are several different elements including embodied emissions, product miles and material throughput, which, along with

direct energy use, do not automatically reduce together. In fact, actions which reduce emissions related to one element may well increase emissions from another. So complex balancing act to work out lowest life-cycle impact. Also more complex to measure than direct energy-use. BGCBC will not resolve these questions our self, national guidance will lead. (see cross-cutting theme.)

- **6. Existing Buildings**

Net Zero: Reduce Life-Cycle Emissions

Readiness Assessment:

Life cycle costing is important. There are several elements to this, all of which represent measurement challenges to inform decision making as new areas for all organisations, not just BGCBC. Will require corporate commitment to incorporating these life-cycle factors into decision making as will have financial implications. There is a strong downward pressure on costs, and would require a culture change, especially after 10 years of austerity. Improving any of these elements will cost significant money, even when there are long-term savings.

Life-cycle elements:

- Material Throughput. Product durability plays a big role. But reality is that the shorter lasting option is often cheaper and that is the default choice. Another element is the waste outcome of works. How much results and what do with it?
- Product Miles. This is area that are making significant effort to procure locally, including using local engineers etc. to service buildings. But this is reliant on products being available locally. The more we move towards specialist low carbon products the more challenging it will be as local skills and supply chains are limited at the moment. Currently no doubt Germany and Scandinavia are dominant in this space. There are some Welsh companies in this space, for example, get building block from Newbridge company. But we have to accept that risks in working with companies with limited delivery history. There are also issues that these new/local companies not confident in tendering, may have issues with cost of achieving certification (Example that BG LED companies have not bid for work).
- Embodied Emissions. There is data out there about embodied emissions from products associated with production of used in fabric of building, but it is not perfect, and the extent to which this information has been integrated into the market and product information is even more limited.

Difficulty Level: High difficulty due to number of elements where solutions not clear and are outside of our direct control.

Next Steps: Create corporate procurement priorities based on identifying high carbon impact elements of procurement for existing building (likely using existing national data).

- **7. New Buildings**

Net Zero: WG 'All new buildings to be built to net zero standard (build and use)'

Readiness: Feel doing good work in this area. BREAM Excellent can give false idea. Does contain carbon elements but it is possible to get excellent without reducing carbon at all by scoring other points. Some of these are important to other environmental issues such as ecology which key elements. But feel that criteria could be streamlined. Also raise issue of how cost effective BREAM is, the costs of certification can run to five figures, money that could be spent on other ways of reducing carbon.

Funding requirements have impact. Funders have negative reactions about higher costs of zero carbon build. Tight deadlines significantly constrain innovation. Both short lead in and tight spend profiles mean that often condensing design processes more than would like at moment. Also speculated that WG and other funders may make these considerations a requirement in the future, if do so this needs to be recognised in funding levels.

Key stat is only 20% of life cycle carbon emissions from new building are the construction phase. Need to look at life time use of building. There are also potential costs to occupiers in long term. New tech requires maintenance, especially as these are often also new systems. Design and build contracts for new building make it difficult to specify local product, as contractor can select lower cost equivalent performance alternative, perhaps this will change post Brexit?

Making new buildings Zero Carbon easier than existing buildings, but only make up small element of total estate.

As with several of these building related actions there is a concern about the number of companies and people with the skills to carry out this work. If large number of organisations start to carry out similar decarbonisation work at the same time, then costs will rise and capacity may not meet demand. May not just be other public sector organisations who are decarbonising, private sector already pays higher and could outbid public for limited supply of skilled engineers etc.

Difficulty Level: High, solutions not yet fully clear, particularly for full life zero carbon.

Next Steps: Corporate commitment to defined net zero standard for new build. WG and UK government definitions will play a big role here. Also could be that BGCBC does not want to wait/wants to go further, but if this is the case needs to have clear definition of ambitions.

8. District Heating Network(s)

Net Zero: WG 'Existing district heating networks will switch to low-carbon sources (electric heat pumps/hydrogen) in the 2030s. Heat networks will be developed in areas of dense heat demand, cities and towns.' Large Public Sector buildings are potential anchor loads for heating networks.

Readiness: Existing Works Network has 990kwh biomass capacity. Biomass comes from Carmarthen firm woodchip, no information of what original source(s) is. CHP runs 24/7. Able to heat site for 8 months of a year. Gas boilers kick in the winter when demand is higher. As more buildings link into network inevitable they will need to run more. Not just replacing the biomass system but all the buildings are designed to work with 90o heat so no way heat pumps could take over currently unless very significant investment.

We are looking at Rassau network but would have little impact on council footprint as have few, if any, buildings on potential network.

Past investigations showed Abertillery topography prevented a network, while in Brynmawr was not enough load to make workable. In both cases this was with technology available at time so worth keeping under review.

Difficulty Level: High, technology not yet available.

Next Steps: Limited actions that can take now, but important to keep technology under review both for existing network and potential additional networks. Could identify formal review dates/periods?

Electricity

9. Renewable Generation

Decarbonisation Plan only covers renewable generation that would be directly operated by BGCBC, council has important role in wider renewable capacity in BG via LDP and Energy Prospectus.

Net Zero: Own generation can contribute to larger target of using zero carbon electricity

Readiness: Currently have around 350kwh of installed capacity, plus work with Leisure Trust including Sports Centre. Building mounted renewables can play a role, good for demonstrating public leadership, Phase 1 Re: Fit has shown the potential viability issues, as have to deliver 8-year return. Things like asbestos and roof strength add costs apply to a

significant number of our buildings, we have absorbed them in some cases in Estates budget. Can also be more fundamental issues where roof alignment not suitable.

We are also working on industrial stock and business units. This work is not directly impacting on our footprint much at the moment because we do not have operations control, although they might potentially come back into our ownership. This may also be relevant consideration for Community Asset Transfer buildings also.

Potentially large amounts could be generated from non-building mounted renewables.

However, grid capacity means until Western Power upgrade that limited what can put in grid, but anyway we would ideally want to generate power where it will be consumed. Silent Valley good example of where this possible. The council owns limited land suitable for wind farms, lot of our land is urban so free standing solar would be very vulnerable to vandalism.

Difficulty Level: Medium (Some sites high)

Next Steps: BGCBC could set target for own renewable generation, based on assessment of potential capacity. Important that this target should be informed by larger context of total electricity needs and relative carbon benefit compared to other forms of decarbonisation investment.

10. Electricity Procurement

Net Zero: WG currently requires use renewable supply. However, Climate Change Committee notes that most forms of procurement do not actually lead to increased renewable electricity generation within the wider UK system (considered as 'additionality'), as the majority of renewable electricity being purchased either already exists or is being supported through Government mechanisms including Contracts for Difference. Suggest move towards Power Purchase Agreements (PPA) which are long-term contracts creating specific renewable capacity rather than a green tariff. As building renewable infrastructure is very capital intensive, a long-term contract will give developers long-term revenue certainty to create additional renewable capacity.

Readiness: Electricity procurement done not just on all Wales but all UK basis. Smooths costs over 18 months, have to wait for contracts to end. Can choose from range of options. Have split to individual contracts for different buildings. Difficulty of procurement contracts not high if know what we want.

Data is available. Upload to Team Sigma. Not using the full capability of system, similar issues to gas data above that need suitable staff time and skills. But are assessing impact of schemes such as Re:Fit.

Making use of right data in timely way when decisions being made is the challenge. For example, investigating system that will allow schools greater access to their data.

Difficulty Level:

Next Steps: Investigate and set corporate position on additionality of electricity procurement (unlikely to be area where BGCBC acts alone).

Electricity Demand

Decarbonising heating like decarbonising transport is likely to increase demand for electricity. Electrification has been identified as a cross-cutting theme that needs to be considered separately, rather than potentially merging multiple transitions into electricity.

The readiness assessment considered the areas that are already being powered by electricity.

- **11. Demand Reduction from Buildings**

Net Zero:

Readiness: Big problem here is making policy meaningful. We have had Energy Policy covering this area before, but it just sat on the shelf having little or no impact on demand. Need to make sure that any new policy is meaningful, key to this is corporate culture change. It is not a

policy that single person or small team can roll out on own, 1.1k staff involved in this demand. Also need to recognise that not just on staff, automation big part of this and trying to roll out across estate.

Also need to be supported by increased visibility of data, want all buildings to be on performance system. Big issue across all these areas is use of data and performance. Aware that can potentially do a lot more, but need to make associated with impact. Also need to understand how to evaluate against relevant benchmarks such as past performance and other organisations.

Difficulty Level: Medium, the technology exists, challenges around rolling out across all buildings and staff.

Next Steps: Any new Energy Policy need to have basis in delivery mechanisms around data, automation and staff engagement, not just paper targets and policy statements. Also understand place in larger context of electrification.

- **12. Information Technology (Appliances)**

Net Zero: Reducing energy use and embodied emissions.

Readiness: Legacy laptops have been replaced. Likely that this had beneficial carbon impact, it would be possible to go back and calculate the carbon impact, but wasn't considered at the time. Highlights that need to bring these considerations upstream to point of procurement, this is the point where big impact can be made. Not just energy efficiency standards, but whole life costings etc. There is larger issue that we have tended to just go with what SRS recommend, starting to be more proactive in recognizing that we make decisions and taking lead as client on procurement.

Similar situation with end of life disposal, tendency for equipment to mothball on 2nd floor at Civic. Bridging the Gap has looked to take more proactive approach, should have financial benefits, worst case people will strip for metal.

This is another area which highlights that we hold performance data that has carbon implications that we are not considering. We need to make these carbon calculations routine practise, and most importantly insert the data into decision making processes at right moment.

Software change programme will also have impact. Firstly, moving to avoid systems that rely on printing, access work orders etc. via smart device (already highlighted for transport will reduce travel). Secondly move to cloud and servers in Newport Data Centre. Economies of scale not just about cost, will save carbon by not having separate cooling etc.

Apart from IT suspect biggest use is kitchen appliances, mainly in schools. Most if not all have these school kitchens have transitioned from gas to electric.

Difficulty Level: Medium

Next Steps: Set standards and incorporate carbon considerations and data into procurement processes.

13. Street Lighting

- **Net Zero:** Reduce Energy Demand
- **Readiness:** 1.5k LED lights installed through first Salix. Another 6-6.5k being converted at moment. In total we have around 13k columns. Selection was based on E. ON report about where biggest (financial) savings would be made. Have also made savings because able to dim bulbs, this was initially in response to public feedback that much brighter than old bulbs. Similarly timing and alternate lights being on has reduced energy consumption, seeing savings. Question of length of time that remaining 5k will take and if need further funding will be addressed through assessment of existing programme and development of operational policy for street lighting which not something had previously. Replacement costs roughly £150 each. At moment use any spare maintenance budget to continue making replacement, some money is available because less replacement need to be made with so many LEDs now in operation.

The main challenge is now town centre ornamental lighting, often installed as part of improvement projects, so in most cases straight replacement with LED bulb will not be possible, more expensive replacement of entire lighting fixture will be needed.

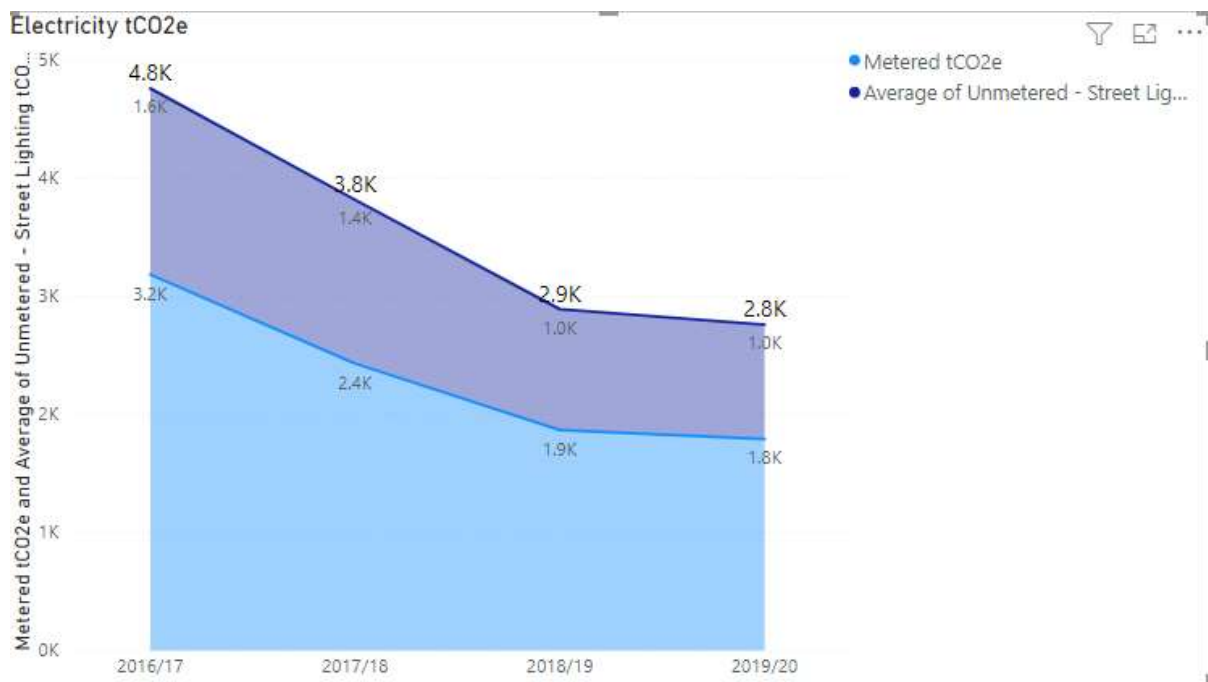
Difficulty Level: Medium (due to town centre lighting)

Next Steps: Carbon implications part of new Street Lighting Policy, possibly including target(s) for replacements.

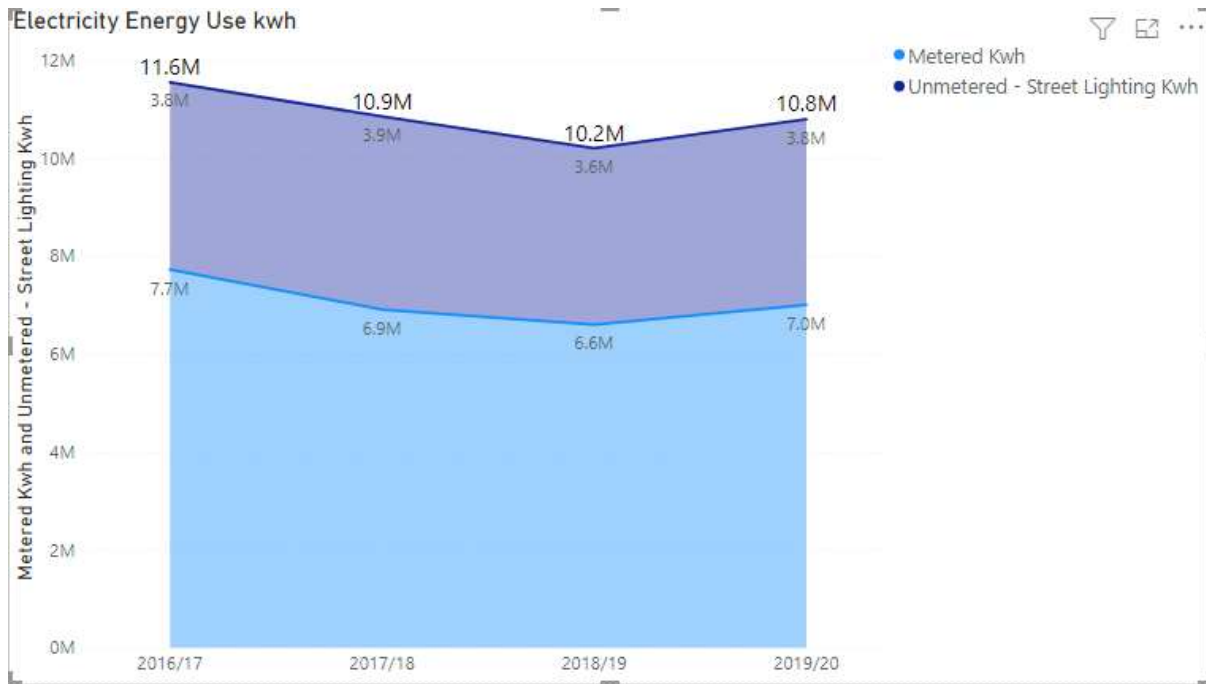
2. Footprint Data

Transition 7 Electricity

Over the last four years' total carbon emissions from our electricity consumption have fallen 39%, with similar falls for both our metered (buildings) and unmetered (street lighting) emissions.

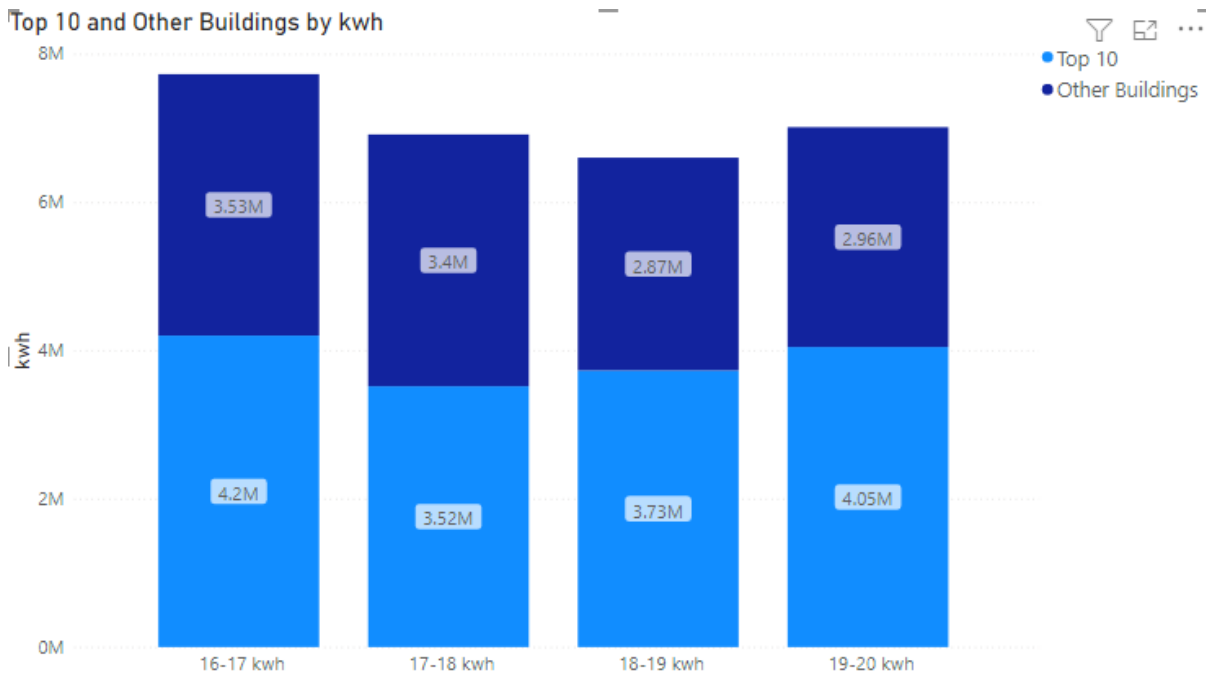


However, the majority of this reduction has been due to a fall in the carbon intensity of the electricity grid, our electric energy consumption has only fallen by 6.5% over the same period.

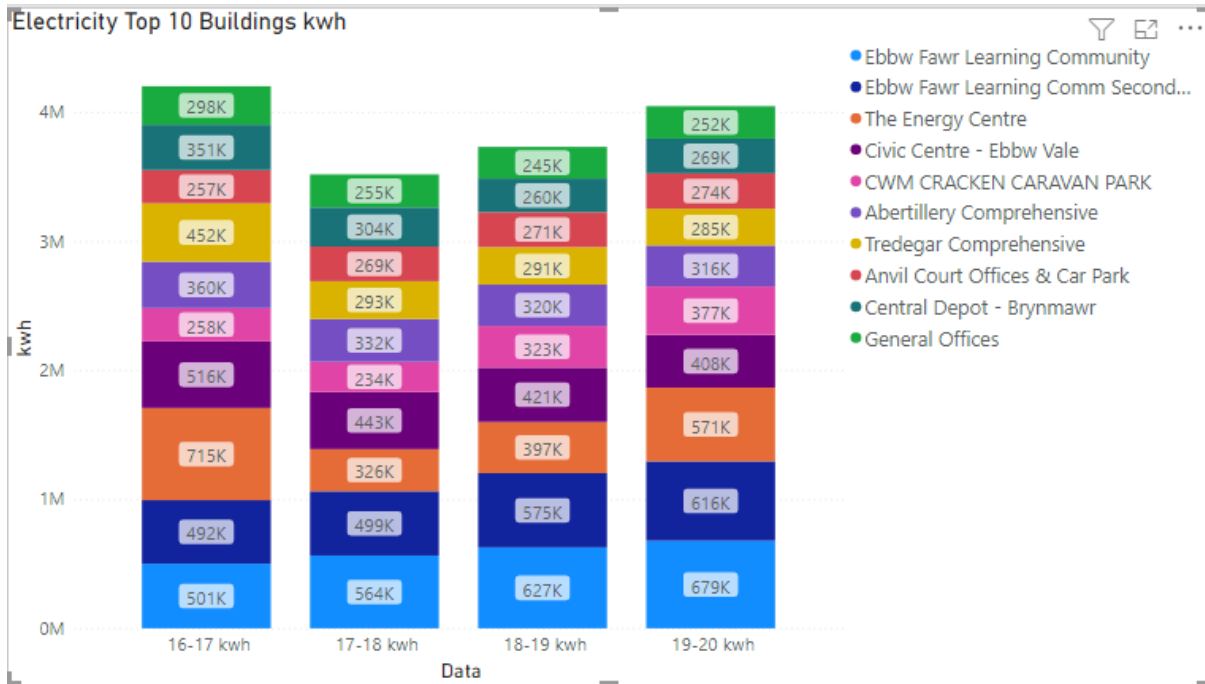


Our buildings make up two thirds of our electricity consumption, with unmetered supply to street lighting making up the other third. Over half of our electricity use in buildings takes place in our top 10 electricity consuming buildings

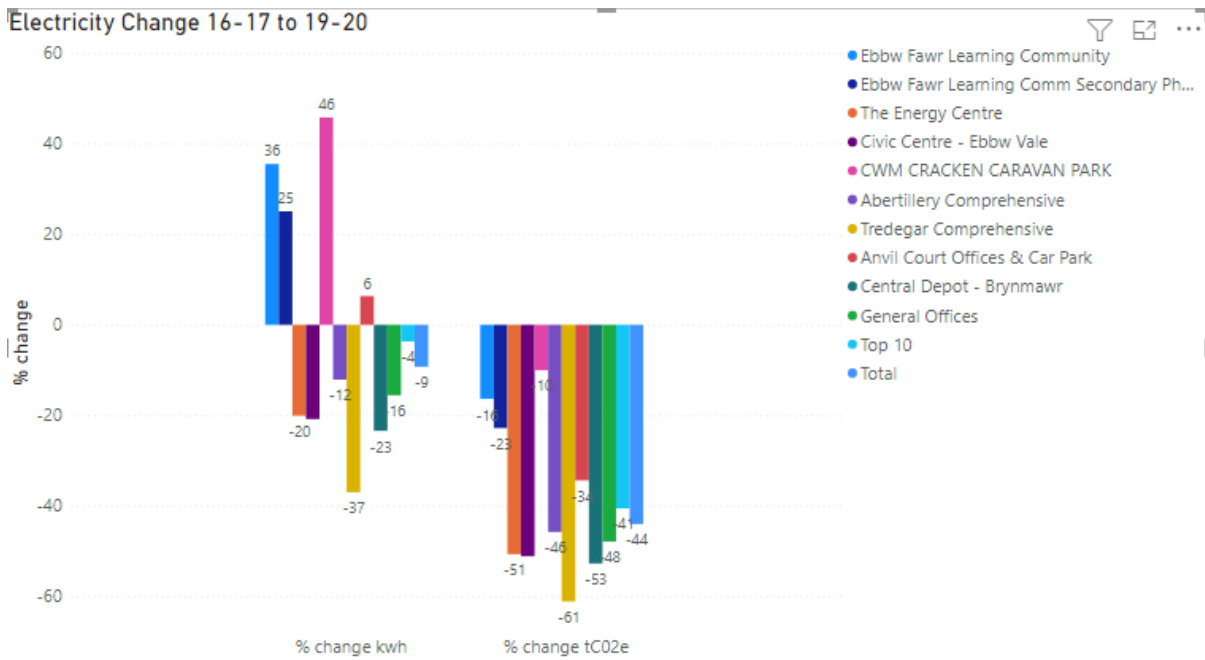
(Figures for buildings are kwh to reflect our energy usage rather than grid decarbonisation.)



The top ten buildings for electricity consumption are shown below

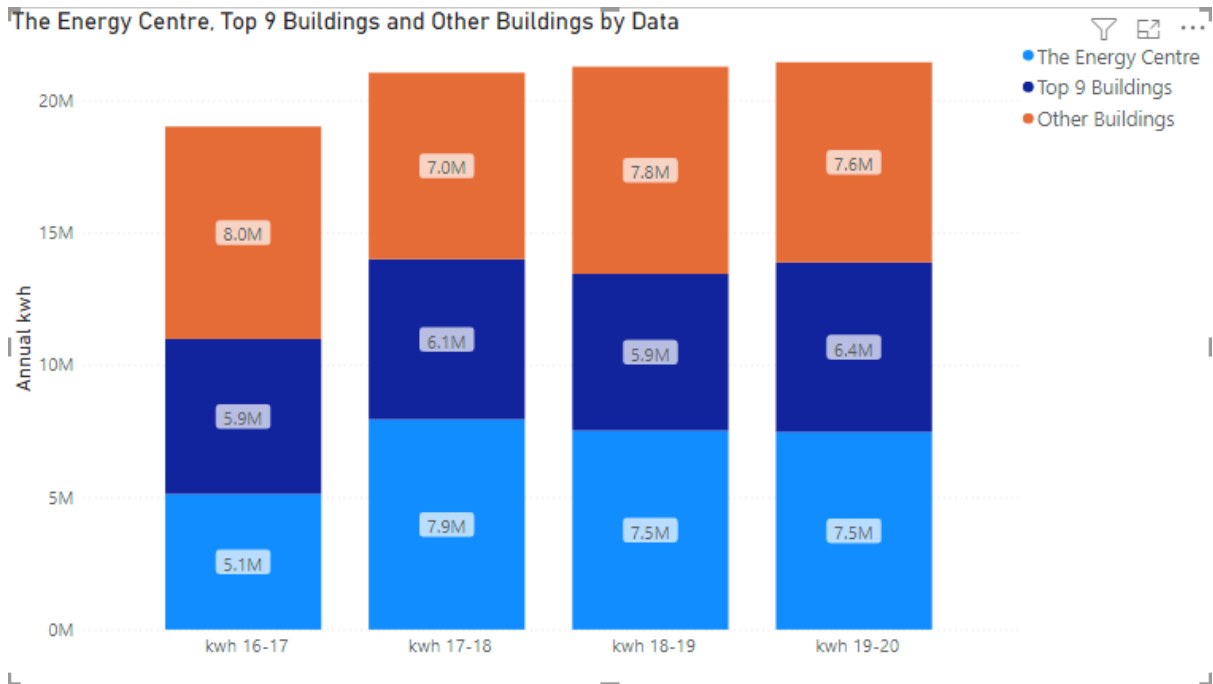


There is considerable variation in the trends of electricity consumption across these top 10 sites over the last four years. Although once grid decarbonisation is taken into account the carbon impact of all these buildings has fallen.



Transition 8 Heating

The Energy Centre at The Works makes up 35% of our gas consumption, the next 9 largest consuming buildings make up another 30% of gas use, and all other buildings the remaining 35%. Unlike the electricity grid there has been no real change in the carbon intensity of the gas grid, so our carbon emissions directly reflect our energy usage. Which has risen 12% over last 4 years.

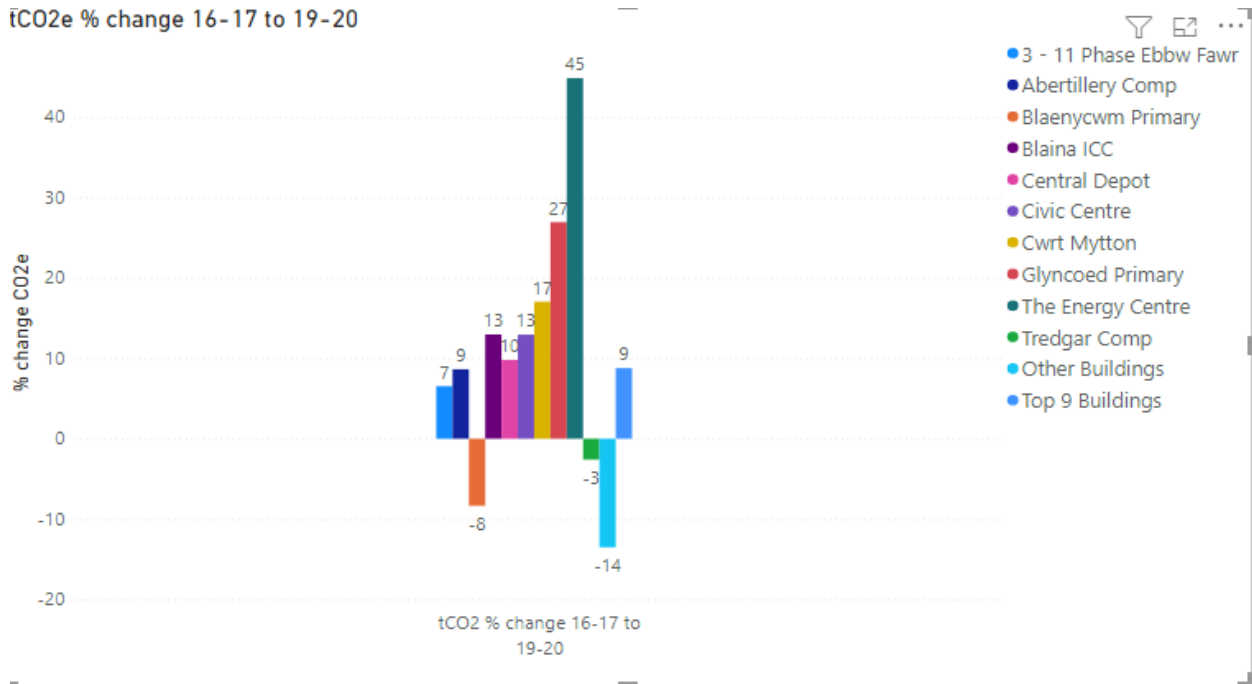


Six buildings appear in the top 10 for both electricity and gas: Energy Centre, Civic Centre, Ebbw Fawr Primary Campus, Abertillery Comprehensive, Tredegar Comprehensive and Central Depot.



There is considerable variation in change in energy use over last four years, the Energy Centre has driven much of the rise.

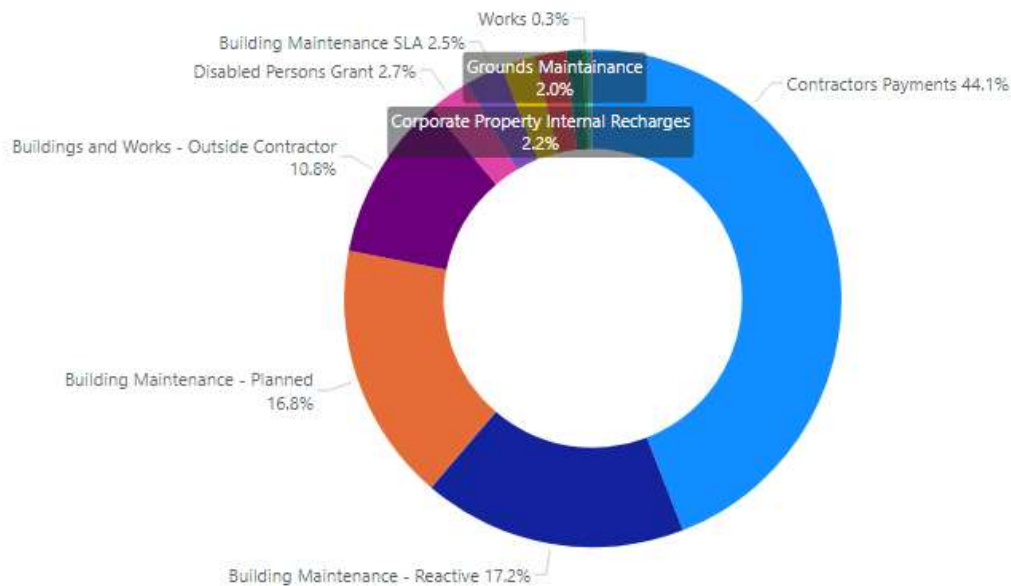
tCO2e % change 16-17 to 19-20



Transition 6 Procurement Works

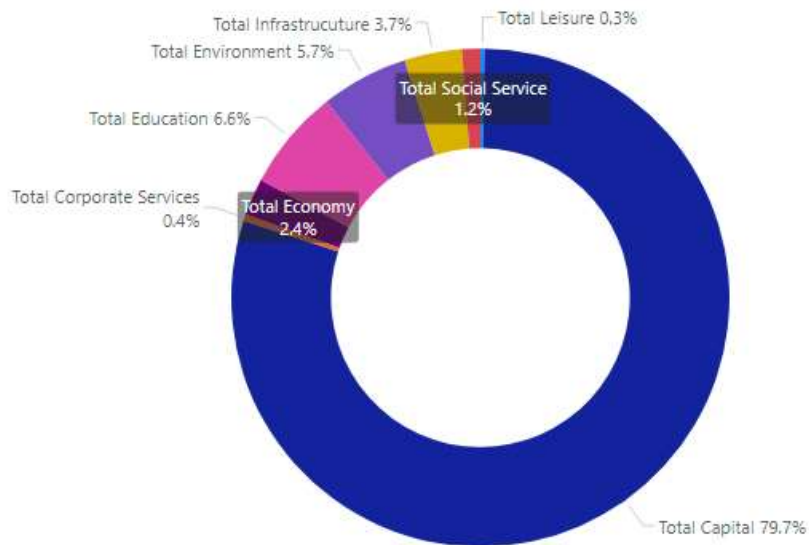
Breakdown of procurement works spending by detail code

Procurement Works by Category



Breakdown of spending by department

Procurement Works By Department



3. Policy Context

Welsh Government Buildings Route map to 2030

Moving up a gear – 2021-2022

- ***Our construction programmes include mandatory net zero objectives.***
- ***Develop plan for hard to decarbonise building types***
- ***Scoping for Low Carbon Heat pilot projects and significant progress on remaining energy efficiency opportunities.***

Well on our way – 2022 – 2026

- ***Transition to all new schools, colleges and offices built to net zero (and associated reduction in supply chain impacts).***
- ***All remaining existing buildings will be highly energy efficient OR scheduled for replacement & renewable heat schemes will be rolled out.***
 - Develop and deliver a strategic plan for the **local authority estate** decarbonising existing (retained) buildings, moving to renewable energy sources for electricity and heating, and ensuring any new build is to net zero standards (in construction and operation)
- Ystadau Cymru as strategic lead for the public sector will work with LA estate managers to identify and shape what the estate will look like longer term (following recovery from the pandemic) ensuring decarbonisation is at the forefront of this agenda, and help drive the next three commitments:
- Develop a strategic plan for **hard to decarbonise building** types within 18 months
- All public buildings are supplied with **low carbon heat** by 2030 and generate their own electricity where feasible.

- All **new** [*new build and new acquisitions, e.g. hubs and lease arrangements*] public sector buildings are **built to net zero standard**, including supply chain impacts. (net zero build and net zero operation)
- Work with the 21st Century schools programme to establish and address cost differential and barriers to building net zero/carbon positive schools [note there will be a separate 21st Century Schools programme contribution in the NZW]
- Plan ahead for a coordinated programme of boiler replacement in council-owned properties
- Work with colleges to develop a ‘pipeline’ of skilled workers, through apprenticeships and training, to support LA retrofit work.

‘Achieving our goal’ 2026-2030

- ***All new public sector buildings are built to net zero standard, including supply chain impacts***
- ***All public buildings are supplied with low carbon heat by 2030 and generate their own electricity where feasible***
- ***The focus is no longer on buildings but healthy environments to live, work and visit.***

Heating

- Welsh Government Targets
 - No new fossil-fuel boilers: No new gas boilers installed in public buildings from 2030. No new oil boilers in 2025/26. From 2028 onwards, no new fossil-fuel boilers should be installed in off-gas grid areas.
 - Existing district heating networks will switch to low-carbon sources (electric heat pumps/hydrogen) in the 2030s. Heat networks will be developed in areas of dense heat demand, cities and towns.
 - A significant increase in installed energy efficiency measures: By 2028 public buildings and social rented homes need to achieve EPC C rating where practical and affordable.
 - Specify high standards for new buildings on the council’s own land. Local authorities can require that new homes or commercial buildings are built to Passivhaus or equivalent low emissions standards, or BREEAM Excellent.
- UK Climate Change Commission Advice
 - Waiting for hydrogen / gas grid decarbonisation is not acceptable in the context of a net zero public sector by 2030. Renewable energy is more efficiently used to generate heat by a heat pump than through hydrogen generation and there is uncertainty if existing gas grid infrastructure could be used for hydrogen distribution.
 - Fossil fuel CHP – no new units, no replacement of failed, and no major maintenance spend. Fossil fuel CHP plants are shown to increase emissions as the electricity grid decarbonises, and even now more carbon intensive than a gas boiler.
 - Whole System Optimised Retrofit. Although higher temperature heat pumps and hybrid solutions are available; the operational costs, electrical requirements, and carbon emissions will be reduced by lowering building temperature and heat demand first. This can be achieved by first considering fabric upgrades which also provide the benefits of building comfort improvements.

Electricity

- UK Climate Change Commission Advice
 - Most forms of procurement do not actually lead to increased renewable electricity generation within the wider UK system (considered as 'additionality'), as the majority of renewable electricity being purchased either already exists or is being supported through Government mechanisms including Contracts for Difference. Alternative is the long-term contractual nature of the PPA compared to green tariffs. As building renewable infrastructure is very capital intensive, a long-term contract will give developers long-term revenue certainty which in turn provides them with bankability.

WG Net Zero Wales Proposed LA Commitments

Buildings
<p>Commitment # - Develop and deliver a strategic plan for the local authority estate decarbonising existing (retained) buildings including retained council housing, moving to renewable energy sources for electricity and heating, and ensuring any new build is to net zero standards (in construction and operation)</p>
<p>Commitment # - Ystadau Cymru as strategic lead for the public sector will work with LA estate managers to identify and shape what the estate will look like longer term (following recovery from the pandemic) ensuring decarbonisation is at the forefront of this agenda, and help drive the next three commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strategic plan for decarbonising buildings by the end of 2023 • All public buildings are supplied with low carbon heat by 2030 and generate their own electricity where feasible. • All new [<i>new build and new acquisitions, e.g. hubs and lease arrangements</i>] public sector buildings are built to net zero standard, including supply chain impacts as soon as practicable/dates to be confirmed as part of strategic plan. (net zero build and net zero operation)
<p>Commitment # - Work with the 21st Century schools programme to establish and address cost differential and barriers to building net zero/carbon positive schools [note assuming a a separate 21st C Schools programme contribution in the NZW – this could come out?]</p>
<p>Commitment # - Plan ahead for a coordinated programme of boiler replacement in council-owned properties</p>
<p>Commitment # - Work with colleges to develop a 'pipeline' of skilled workers, through apprenticeships and training, to support LA retrofit work.</p>

LG Decarbonisation Strategy Panel (DSP)

Proposed actions/commitments from DSP Buildings deep dive -

Note this is a working living document. Allocated leads and dates are indicative only and are being discussed and developed with the relevant networks as well as feeding into planning for the WLGA support programme and with the DSP.

No.	Proposed Action/Commitment	Lead?	E V
	TIERS - not yet determined		

1	Help and support LAs, collaboratively and with the wider Welsh Public Sector review their current office estate from a staff point of view (given the majority are still working remotely)	Ystadau Cymru / LAs
2	Identify and shape what the estate will look like longer term (following recovery from the Pandemic) - ensure decarbonisation is at the forefront of this agenda	Ystadau Cymru / LAs
3	Recommend that if a building is still in place by 2025 and therefore secure for the short-term, that activity such as PV / LED lighting should progress and meet any target (e.g. all sites held in 2025 will be fully LED lit).	Ystadau Cymru / LAs
4	Share knowledge between estate managers on decarbonisation	Ystadau Cymru / LAs
5	Develop a decarb skills and training framework for estate managers.	Ystadau Cymru / LAs
6	Build up a bank of decarb estate case studies (change of use etc.)	Ystadau Cymru / LAs
7	Identify and gain a strong LA Chief Exec mandate for the described YC work to be undertaken.	Everyone
8	Provide a template report and guidance for LAs to map their current estates and enable them to have a good understanding of the climate impacts of their built estate by the end of the year.	WG / WLGA
9	Identify and align with an industry best practice standard and update and communicate this as it evolves. Communicate to LAs what "good" looks like – what is the standard LAs should be aiming for?	WG
10	Communicate a proposed Net Zero definition for buildings.	WG / WLGA
11	Create one demonstrator Project in each Region. These can be learned from. Risks can be taken. Engage with CLAW group - try and identify what the cost of change is going to be.	Everyone
12	A joint approach is needed on the grid capacity and distribution issues for the whole of the Welsh Public Sector.	WG / UKG
13	Investigate the merits of and potential ways an aggregated net zero building target could be identified and implemented across Regions as opposed to an individual buildings net zero target.	WG / UKG
14	Consider ways to build on the Refit programme and make an offer of energy service expertise to LAs.	WG
15	Brief Ministers' of carbon emission effects of office buildings and the wider estate to highlight its importance.	WG
16	Support Ystadau Cymru to coordinate review of current estate.	WG
17	Highlight Ystadau Cymru work; effective joint working between LAs and an effective delivery mechanism such as the WG Energy Service in a business case to ministers requesting funding for energy changes of offices.	WG
18	Continue to undertake formal review of the grid with operators.	WG
19	Set up a 21st schools LA decarb group? Or LAs engage in one of Neal O'Leary's current working groups. - A net zero school group.	Everyone

20	Build net zero construction objectives into construction programmes.	LAs
21	Provide guidance on appropriate and achievable net zero objectives for LAs to build into construction programmes.	WG / WLGA
22	Identify 5 big things in this area that we could be procuring together as a LA - or as a public sector	WLGA / LAs
23	Develop a plan for hard to decarbonise buildings within their estate, using advice and support from WGES or similar services.	LAs
24	Provide a list of 'easy wins' what should be achieved quickly by the end of the year.	WG / WLGA / WGES
25	Scope potential regional and possible collaborative low carbon heat projects.	WLGA / LAs
26	Organise an extraordinary Strategy Panel to focus on housing and decarbonisation.	WG / WLGA
27	Share research and knowledge on decarbonising listed or historic buildings e.g. work being done by CADW and the National Trust.	WG / WLGA

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Agenda Item 7

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **8th December 2021**
Report Subject: **Energy Prospectus Annual Review**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr D Davies, Executive Member Regeneration and Economic Development**
Report Submitted by: **Amy Taylor, Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
16.11.21	18.11.21	26.11.21			8.12.21	15.12.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. To present members with an update on progress for the last 12 months on the Energy Prospectus and emerging opportunities for the future.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1. In December 2019, Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee were asked to consider the draft Energy Prospectus. Both Committees agreed to approve the document and to move forward with a proactive approach to projects that will help meet our future energy challenges.
- 2.2. The prospectus document provides a mechanism through which, a range of available development opportunities within Blaenau Gwent can be promoted; and as a means of engaging proactively with potential investors, scheme developers, other Local Authorities and community groups in an effort to stimulate local energy development and supply. This will in turn address the fuel poverty challenges and carbon reduction targets we currently face.
- 2.3. The first annual review for 2019 – 2020 was presented to Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee in December 2020.

Review of Activity 2020-21

- 2.4. An annual review report containing highlights for each of the Projects identified within the Energy Prospectus has been included as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.5. Since its approval we have utilised the Energy Prospectus in a number of ways. We have utilised the document to set out our aspirations of taking a pro-active approach to addressing future energy challenges. This has enabled us to build further collaborations, take forward existing opportunities and identify future opportunities for the Council to consider.

- 2.6. One of the key areas which will directly impact on our work around future energy requirements is the understanding of energy infrastructure across the Borough. In some parts of Blaenau Gwent there are constraints within existing grid infrastructure that will impact upon the deliverability of projects. Over the past 12 months we have worked with Western Power Distribution to better understand the current position and to seek further opportunities to work with them to strengthen the grid through innovation and reduce demand on the grid through alternative sources of energy.
- 2.7. During 2021, some of the highlighted activities that were completed include:
- Completion of the works phase of the Re:FIT Programme. Work is ongoing around monitoring and evaluation of the project.
 - The Works District Heating Expansion. Lime Avenue Business Park Units have been connected to the District Heating Network.
 - Wind Generation – Progress has been made with one site to reach full business case development stage.
 - Hydro Generation – Funding was secured for feasibility studies. Phase 1 of a 2 Phase process has now been completed.
 - EV Charging Infrastructure – Completion of the Gwent Regional Project and all sites are now live
- 2.8. More detail on the projects above is contained within Appendix 1 – Energy Prospectus Annual Review 2020-21.

Emerging Opportunities

- 2.9. Alongside delivery of existing projects within the Prospectus several new opportunities have emerged which would add value to work already being undertaken and create a pipeline of further opportunities for us to take forward.
- 2.10. Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD) through Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council have secured £1.3million from the Welsh Government Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) fund to install rapid chargepoints for taxi ranks across the region, purchase electric taxis for deployment across the City Region and install chargepoints for general public use. Rapid chargepoints have been installed in four taxi ranks within Blaenau Gwent and a rapid charge point will also be installed at the Depot as part of the project.
- 2.11. Welsh Government has awarded all Local Authorities in Wales a £300k EV charging infrastructure grant to provide infrastructure for Council fleet and staff as part of the transition to low emission vehicles. This is to support Councils in reaching ambitious targets that all new cars and light goods vehicles in the Public Sector fleet are ultra-low emission by 2025 and where practically possible, all heavy goods vehicles are ultra-low emission by 2030.
- 2.12. We have continued to work with the Welsh Government on the Smart Living Programme. Through this work, we have been able to apply for further funding to run a Small Business Research Initiative. SBRI is a mechanism which enables public sector bodies to connect with innovative ideas and technology

businesses to provide innovative solutions to specific Public Sector challenges and needs. Therefore, the Council launched the Whole Systems Business Research Innovation for Decarbonisation Challenge (WBRID) “Developing Smart Industrial and Commercial Energy Platform Solutions to Achieve Net Zero Outcomes” in December 2020.

2.13. We are continuing to explore the opportunity to launch Council Community Municipal Investments in partnership with an investment finance platform. We are in the process of carrying out due diligence financial and legal checks with a view to developing a full investment issue during 2022. The intention of this project is to engage the public and in particular the local community to invest in renewable energy generation within Blaenau Gwent.

2.14. Other projects and funding opportunities continue to become available e.g. Horizon Europe, SBRI etc. and these will be pursued for each of the projects as we become aware of them.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

Option 1 – Do Nothing

3.1. To not undertake any further work to promote the energy prospectus and the projects within it.

Option 2 – Continue to support the Blaenau Gwent Energy Prospectus

3.2. To continue to support and promote and develop the projects within the energy prospectus and to ensure that the document is updated to reflect any additional projects that have emerged. To also continue to identify future projects that will also meet the vision and objectives of the Council with respect to energy and decarbonisation.

Preferred Option

3.3. Option two is the preferred option as this provides us with basis to engage with potential project partners and investors to deliver some of the opportunities we have already identified. The prospectus demonstrates our ambition and commitment provides assurance that we are taking steps to contribute more positively to the environment and decarbonisation.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1. This topic supports the achievement of the Council’s Corporate Plan Refresh 2020-2022 in the following areas:

- To create strong and environmentally smart communities we are taking a strategic approach to the management of buildings;
- To be a carbon neutral Council by 2030;

- To develop a portfolio of potential energy opportunities to deliver economic, business and community benefits; and to develop a more commercial organisation to generate income and deliver cost reductions to make local services sustainable and raise money to re-invest in our priorities.
- 4.2. It will also work towards addressing some of the key challenges identified within the Council's Decarbonisation Plan 2020-2030. For the Council to become Carbon Neutral by 2030 we will have to exploit local opportunities for renewable generation and using energy differently.

5. Implications Against Each Option
Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)

- 5.1. Background research and initial feasibility work is carried out within existing staff resources. Further work to determine feasibility of projects has been completed with either external funding or support from the Welsh Government Smart Living Programme and Welsh Government Energy Service.
- 5.2. Works carried out through the Re:FIT programme were funded through a Salix interest free loan. The overall programme had a total cost of £4.1 million with the portfolio expected to achieve savings that enable payback within 8 years (or less).
- 5.3. In September 2020 an application was submitted to the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme under the LEADER scheme for funding to undertake a Community Hydro Study of potential opportunities within the electoral wards of Llanhilleth and Cwm. The Council were awarded £20,000 to conduct the study within the total contract value of £29,600.
- 5.4. The Gwent EV Charging Infrastructure Network received circa. £450,000 of funding through the UK Government funded Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV). This was matched with funding from the five Local Authorities to deliver a Gwent EV Charging network.
- 5.5. Cenex were appointed to provide a Low Emission Fleet Review and Depot Power Supply Assessment. Total cost of the Fleet Review was £17,052.62 which was funded jointly by Regeneration and Community Services Departments. and included a review of the Gwent Public Body Fleet Review (2019) to provide a basis for a more in-depth assessment of low emission vehicle suitability under the current fleet operating conditions within Blaenau Gwent.
- 5.6. The Whole System Business Research Innovation for Decarbonisation (WBRID) scheme, Phase 1 gave funding of £25k to each competitor to conduct feasibility studies with the aim of decarbonising Blaenau Gwent Business Parks. Two successful suppliers from the first phase were invited to demonstrate their solutions on Blaenau Gwent business parks with a total of

£500k funding split between the suppliers to deploy solutions in Phase 2. This project is 100% funded through Welsh Government.

- 5.7. Within the energy prospectus we also provided a snapshot of the level of investment required to deliver each of the projects together with some high level projections of the level of return per annum that could be achieved once completed. Further financial modelling has been carried out for the projects and this will be built into business cases for investment over the coming months.
- 5.8. There are also modern forms of generating funding which offer the local community a chance to become involved in creating a better future for Blaenau Gwent. Such forms of investment could include Green Energy Investments (Bonds). In July 2021 the Council's Executive Committee approved a proposal to proceed with a Community Municipal Investment.

Risk including Mitigating Actions

- 5.9. The risks associated with option 1 outlined within the report is that energy development within Blaenau Gwent remains low, especially relating to private open market development.
- 5.10. The risks associated with option 2 outlined within the report are minimal. There is a risk that the prospectus fails to stimulate interest; utilising the prospectus as a method through which relationships with a range of interested parties within the Welsh energy sector would reduce this risk.

Legal

- 5.11. There are no direct legal implications associated with this report. The projects identified within the prospectus are located on sites within the ownership of Blaenau Gwent.
- 5.12. Some of the Projects within the prospectus will look at different business models for delivery. As part of the Phase 2 work for the Blaenau Gwent Energy Catalyst project funded through Welsh Government, legal advice was commissioned to consider potential business models that could be used to deliver the project.

Human Resources

- 5.13. Energy projects outlined within the Prospectus are not delivered by one single department. Staff from a number of departments are involved in project development and implementation.
- 5.14. Regeneration Services continue to manage any enquiries for potential projects, with input from relevant departments as necessary, not least planning policy and Estates, Legal Services and Asset Management.

6. Supporting Evidence

Performance Information and Data

- 6.1. Approving the continuation of the annual review of the energy prospectus will demonstrate the Council's commitment towards achieving the Welsh Government target of generating 70% of energy from renewable sources by 2030 and 1GW of renewable electricity capacity to be locally owned in Wales by 2030.
- 6.2. For each of our projects we will continue to look at overall impact upon carbon footprint and this will be included in future annual reviews. To demonstrate the impact these projects, have on our carbon footprint we can use the REFIT project. It is expected that through installing the energy conservation measures across the portfolio we can save circa. 880 tonnes of carbon per annum.

Expected outcome for the public

- 6.3.
 - Increased energy choices (private/social rented/business/industrial)
 - More efficient homes and communities
 - Reduction in carbon emissions and improved air quality
 - Stimulation of other related benefits including green transport

Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)

- 6.4. Officers from across Regeneration and Community Services were involved in the development of the prospectus. They have continued to be involved in its development and delivery over the past 12 months. Project development support has continued to be received from the Welsh Government Energy Service.
- 6.5. To understand our local grid infrastructure availability and constraints we have established good working relationships with representatives of Western Power Distribution and we are continuing to explore opportunities with Western Power Distribution and Wales and West Utilities across a number of areas.

Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)

- 6.6. The prospectus has been designed to stimulate interest in energy development within Blaenau Gwent that will facilitate a supply of renewable energy that will meet the changing and future energy needs of Blaenau Gwent.
- 6.7. It will also contribute towards our target of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

Collaboration / partnership working

- 6.8. Continuing to maximise the impact of the prospectus will be dependent on strong collaboration and partnership working with communities, the public and

private sector and businesses. Progressing opportunities from the prospectus would require partnership working across the Council.

- 6.9. Although the prospectus is presented by Regeneration to the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee it is important to note that the projects are developed and delivered alongside many sections within the Council. These include Community Services, Education and Social Services. This ensures that we align with the one Council approach being taken for decarbonisation.
- 6.10. Members of the team have been asked on a number of occasions to present and share our model for partnership working and collaboration to deliver projects such as the Gwent Electric Vehicle Charging Network. We continue to share and develop knowledge and strengthen local and regional partnerships through our Smart Living and WBRID projects as we are working collaboratively with other WBRID Challenge Owners including Bridgend Council, North Wales Consortium of Councils and Rhondda Cynon Taff Council who are also individual project managers for other decarbonisation trials through Welsh Government.

Integration (across service areas)

- 6.11. Stimulating interest in available energy project sites, especially BG owned land would potentially have an impact on the planning division, technical services, estates and assets management and legal.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

- 7.1. Annual reports to update on progress of projects within the energy prospectus sit on the forward work programme for the Council's Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Energy Prospectus Annual Review

Previous Reports

Energy Prospectus, Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Report and Appendix – December 2019

Energy Prospectus Annual Review, Regeneration Scrutiny Report and Appendix – December 2020

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Blaenau Gwent Energy Prospectus

Annual Review 2020 -2021

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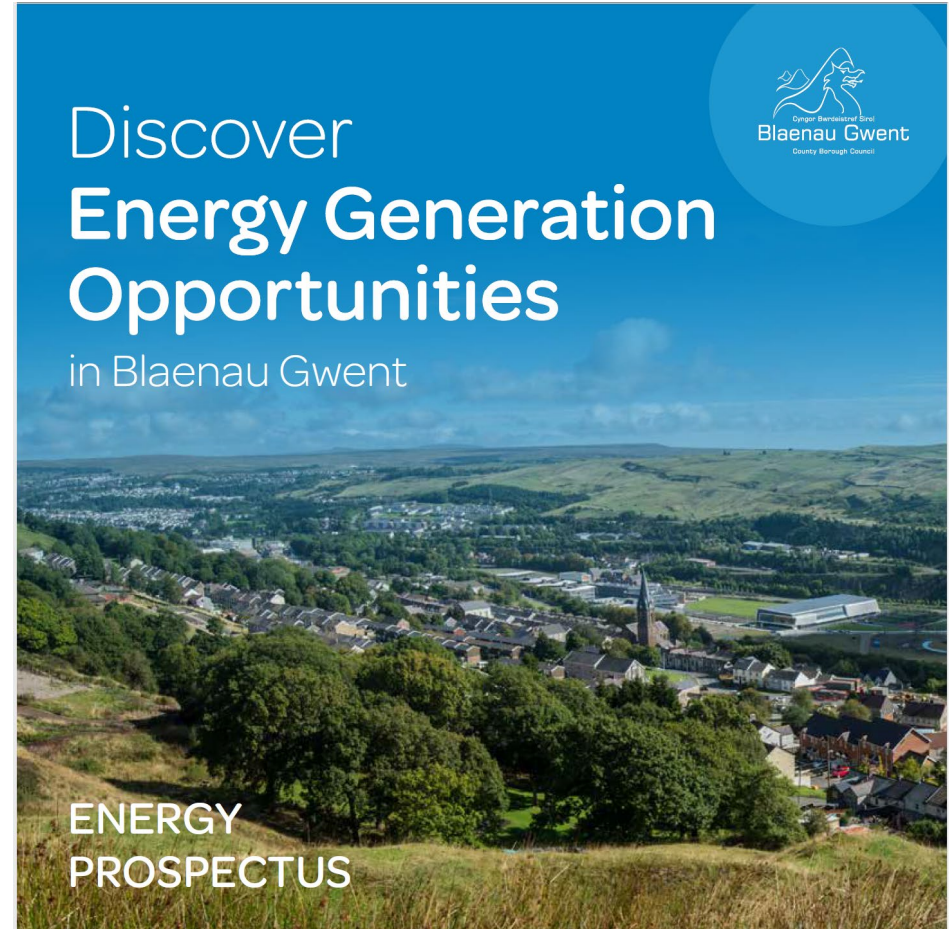
1. Introduction

The Blaenau Gwent Energy Prospectus was approved by Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee in December 2019.

The first Annual Review for 2019/20 was presented to the Regeneration Scrutiny and Executive Committees in December 2020.

This Annual Review seeks to provide a progress update on projects for the last 12 months and emerging opportunities for the future.

The work and projects carried out to develop and deliver upon the Energy Prospectus will support the work needed as a result of the Council's decision to adopt a Decarbonisation Plan and to become net zero by 2030 alongside the declaration of a climate emergency.



1. Introduction

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Decarbonisation Plan



2020 to 2030



Transition Pathway

Challenges in reaching Carbon Neutrality

The Council approved the Decarbonisation Plan in September 2020 and declared a Climate Emergency.

The Decarbonisation Plan looks at our current Carbon Impact as an organization and sets out the key challenge areas that would support us in becoming Carbon Neutral by 2030.

The Projects within the Energy Prospectus will help us on the journey to Carbon Neutrality through identifying opportunities for renewable energy generation and ways that we can use energy more efficiently in the future.

Collaboration across the organization and with stakeholders will be key in delivering upon the work challenges identified within the Decarbonisation Plan and achieving our net zero target.

2. Existing Projects Overview

The table below provides a quick reference to the status of current projects. Further detail for each of the projects is included throughout this document.

Project Name	Total Cost / Capex	Funding Source	BRAG Status	Comments
Re:FIT	£4.1 million	Salix Loan		Works completed. Work is ongoing around monitoring and evaluation.
The Works District Heating Expansion	£1.2 million	Private & Public Sector		Lime Avenue Business Park units have been connected to the District Heating Network. Further expansion is possible within the site.
District Energy Network Development	£9 million	Private & Public Sector		Opportunities identified but dependent upon future development across the sites.
Wind Generation	£4.6 million	Private & Public Sector		Progress has been made with one site to reach full business case development stage.
Hydro Generation	£500k	Private & Public Sector		Funding secured for feasibility studies. Phase 1 of a 2 Phase process completed.
EV Charging Infrastructure	£465k	OLEV & Public Sector		Gwent Regional Project. Installations completed. Final draw down of OLEV money to be undertaken.

3. New and Emerging Projects

The table below provides a quick reference to new and emerging projects

Project Name	Total Cost / Capex	Funding Source	BRAG Status	Comments
CCRCD Taxi ULEV Infrastructure	£1.82m (for the region)	Cardiff Capital Region City Deal		Rapid Charge points for taxi drivers in four BG Town Centres
CCRCD Public Charge Points Fund	£2.87m (for the region)	Cardiff Capital Region City Deal		Fast charge points in 12 locations with further sites to follow
EV Infrastructure Fund	£300k	WLGA		Fast Charge points for BG Schools, Social Services Buildings and Anvil Court.
Low Emission Fleet		Welsh Government		Fleet review completed. Procurement of first ULEV fleet completed.
Whole Systems Business Research Innovation for Decarbonisation Challenge (WBRID)	Ph1 £100k Ph2 £500k	Welsh Government		Phase 1 completed. Phase 2 started July 2021 and covers deployment of R&D innovative solutions from phase 1.
Community Municipal Investment Bonds	£400k	Community / Private Investment		Launch of BGCBC Green Bonds to raise public finance for investment into green projects and raise awareness of climate change.

3. New and Emerging Projects

Project Name	Total Cost / Capex	Funding Source	BRAG Status	Comments
LoRAWAN Digital Technology for Energy Consumption Monitoring	£30K	Welsh Government		Digital infrastructure monitoring of solar pv with a view to reducing energy consumption. This relates to solar installations via the RE:FIT programme.
Tech Valleys Business Improvement Grant	£500k	Tech Valleys		Application for funding to decarbonise Crown Industrial Estate as deployment of Smart Living Programme R&D.
HyBRID Hydrogen Feasibility Studies.	Tbc	Welsh Government	n/a	Exploring partner opportunities to act as a test site for hydrogen feasibility and deployment under the Welsh Government HyBRID SBRI Fund 2021.
Horizon Europe	Tbc	European Union	n/a	Monitoring forthcoming funding calls with a view to entering R&D partner trials.

4. RE:FIT – Energy Efficiency

Street Lighting

Around 6,000 of the Council's street lighting stock was non-LED and therefore not the most energy efficient. The Council also operated multiple management systems some of which were obsolete and no longer supported.

We looked at the Council's street lighting inventory and identified that there were 6,099 lights suitable for replacement with LED.

A initial phase of the programme to replace the lanterns started in 2020 and this together with an additional phase was completed in April 2021.

To ensure that the expected savings achieved are in line with those guaranteed through the Contract, Measurement and Verification will be put in place and reviewed for up to 8 years after the installation.



Street Lighting Installation Before and After

5. Renewable Energy Generation – Wind Power

Within the Energy Prospectus approved in 2019 we identified two opportunities for Wind Generation within Blaenau Gwent.

Within Future Wales 2040 the National Development Framework for Wales published by Welsh Government includes a number of pre-assessed areas for wind turbine development.

Discussions are ongoing with Western Power to understand import/export capacity within the current network to accommodate proposed projects.

Local generation that is used locally onsite would reduce energy being directly exported to the grid. This may have financial benefits and play a key role in our ongoing journey to carbon neutrality.

One of the proposed sites shall be developed to business case stage and seek Council approval in 2022. The second site has identified grid export capacity constraints. Options to mitigate this and maintain financial viability will be investigated.



6. Renewable Energy Generation – Hydro power

In 2020, the Council was awarded £20,000 from the Rural Development Fund LEADER programme to support the Council in appointing consultants to assist with exploring the potential for hydro power generation across Blaenau Gwent.

After completing a tender process to find technical consultants to help us explore potential hydro power opportunities, Dulas Ltd were commissioned to undertake a technical modelling and feasibility of sites across Blaenau Gwent for hydro power

Using the LEADER funding, consultants Dulas identified two sites in the Cwm and Llanhilleth Wards alongside the river Ebbw with potential to carry out feasibility studies.

The findings of the feasibility study suggested that whilst the development of hydro generation would support local energy demand, the level of generation is extremely low when compared to the level of investment required. For this reason we have determined it is not financially viable to take either of the two schemes forward at the current time.

Dulas are currently working on feasibility of further sites across the rest of Blaenau Gwent which will be reported on in due course.



7. Collaborative Project – EV Charging Infrastructure

The Gwent Regional Local Authorities EV project was a collaboration between:

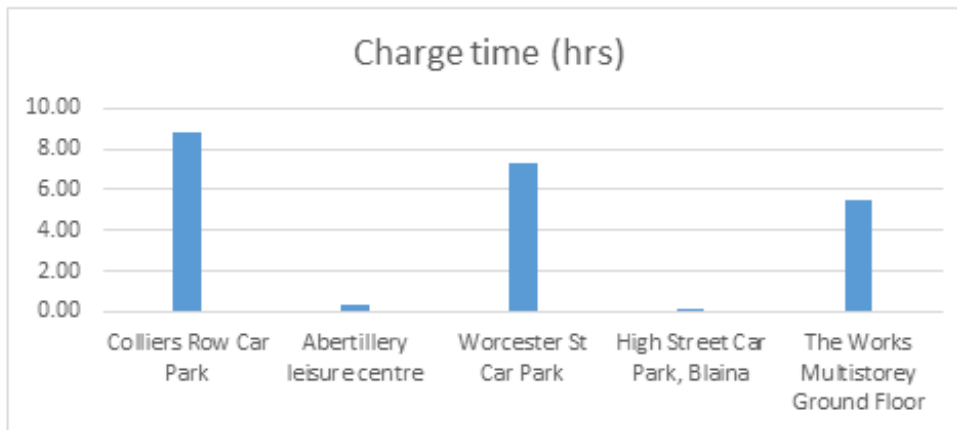
- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
- Caerphilly County Borough Council
- Monmouthshire County Council
- Newport City Council
- Torfaen County Borough Council

Under this project we have installed 63 charge points across 34 sites. Blaenau Gwent took the role as the Lead Partner for the Procurement and Project Management of the charge point Installation.

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All charge points across Gwent are now operational. Since being launched all charge points have seen usage (see graph for September 2021 below). In some cases this has been regular usage and less frequent for others. Whilst usage at some sites is lower than others having the infrastructure in place enables residents and visitors to Blaenau Gwent to charge their vehicles.



September 2021 usage data



9. CCRC D Taxi Charging Infrastructure

Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRC D) has secured funding from Welsh Government to install rapid charge points for taxi ranks across the region and purchase electric taxis for deployment across the City Region and offered under a 30-day 'try before you buy' free trial for taxi drivers.

CCRC D has purchased 44 wheelchair accessible electric taxis that will be available for trial across the region. The trial is expected to operate for two years and Blaenau Gwent has taken delivery of two of the electric taxis which will be available for trial by Taxi Drivers.

Day to day management of the taxi trials will be undertaken by a management company that will be appointed by CCRC D. A tender process has been undertaken to appoint a management company and it is hoped this will be in place by the end of 2021.

Commissioning of the rapid charge points throughout the City Region area is underway.

Once the charge points are operational we will work with CCRC D to develop communications that will raise awareness and promotion of the scheme.



10. CCRC – Public Use Charging Infrastructure

Within the Region 159 public use charging sites have been identified for on street, car parks and transport hubs.

The Council has put forward 12 sites to be included as part of this contract. The contract has just been awarded with an expected completion date of March 2022. This may be subject to change as a result of current global supply chain issues which are affecting the market.

The contract for the region will be awarded under a concession arrangement identical to that of the taxi infrastructure and will include a share in profit.

An All Wales Framework has been included within the tender to enable other public bodies (other regions within Wales, TFW and WG) to deliver future EV infrastructure under this framework.



11. EV Infrastructure Fund

Within Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales, Welsh Government has set ambitious targets for the decarbonisation of the public fleet. One of the key targets and ambitions is that all new cars and light goods vehicles in the Public Sector fleet are ultra-low emission by 2025 and where practicably possible, all heavy goods vehicles are ultra-low emission by 2030.

Welsh Government has awarded a £300k EV Charging Infrastructure grant to each Local Authority to provide infrastructure for Council fleet and staff. Local Authorities have been encouraged to develop a ULEV (Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles) Transition Plan to detail the plan to transition Council fleet to a ULEV fleet and also provide infrastructure across the borough for employees, residents and businesses.

Officers have been working alongside the Community Services, Education and Social Services Departments to identify suitable sites and have determined charging infrastructure can be provided at:

- 9 schools
- Community Meals Service, Pond Road
- Anvil Court
- Bert Denning Centre
- Augusta House

The next step will be to agree the location of the charge points with our EV Contractor and it is the intention that the sites will be added into the Concession Agreement already in place.



Community Meals Service, Pond Road



Bert Denning Centre, Brynmawr



Augusta House, Ebbw Vale

8. Low Emission Fleet

The Council is currently preparing a 10 - 15 year Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) Transition Plan. In November 2020 the Council completed a Low Emission Vehicle Fleet Review with Consultants Cenex. The fleet review has considered our current fleet, low emission vehicle technology options, performance reviews and infrastructure review.

Within the Fleet Review Cenex have identified vehicles that could be replaced by low emission technologies with minimal change to operating patterns and ownership periods. It also presents a set of recommended next steps to implement replacement vehicles.

At the time of the review our fleet consisted of 97 vehicles and included passenger cars, light commercial vehicles, large minibuses and a range of trucks. Our fleet contributes 800 tonnes of CO2 annually and 63% of these emissions come from rigid trucks (12-18t).

The review found that battery electric vehicles within the light commercial segment represent the best opportunity for Blaenau Gwent CBC to introduce low emission vehicles into the fleet in the short term.

A order has been placed for the first of these vehicles and they are expected to arrive in November/December 2021.



City of London 26t electric RCV supplied by NRG Fleet Services



12. Research and Innovation – Smart Living

The Welsh Government Smart Living Initiative has been supporting the Council on its ambition to catalyse local energy through the building of separate but then integrated energy platforms across commercial/business-public-social/domestic assets.

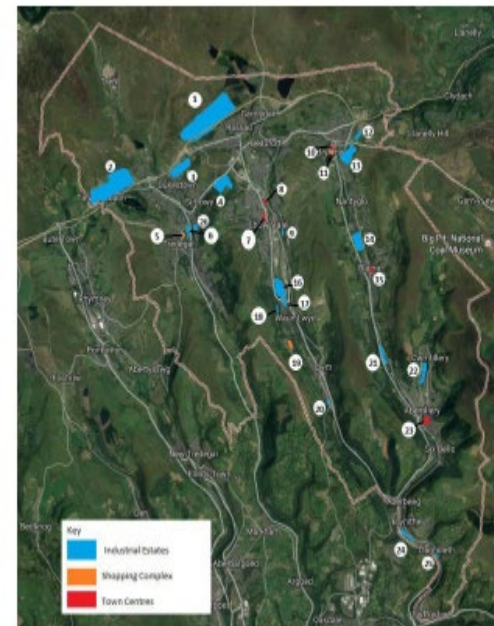
In 2020, Welsh Government invited the Council to apply for funding to run a Small Business Research Initiative type project. This type of project enables public sector bodies to connect with innovative ideas and technology businesses to provide innovative solutions to specific Public Sector challenges and needs. The Whole System Business Research Innovation for Decarbonisation (WBRID) challenge is a two phase pilot to evaluate and demonstrate solutions for Decarbonisation.

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BGCBC are looking for innovative solutions which will support energy generation, supply, demand and storage for commercial end users (and in the future domestic end users) across Blaenau Gwent and to work towards creating zero energy parks as a USP for Blaenau Gwent.

The challenge will be split into two phases:

- Phase 1 Initial concept design and feasibility
- Phase 2 Detailed design and demonstration



Industrial Estates Across BG

The Challenge

Developing Smart Industrial and Commercial Energy Platform Solutions to Achieve Net-Zero Outcomes



12. Research and Innovation - WBRID

Phase 1 – Four Suppliers developed feasibility studies to meet the challenge of zero energy business parks:

In Phase One, we wanted explore how we create a local energy system that would meet industrial and commercial energy requirements and work alongside domestic energy requirements to help alleviate fuel poverty.

Our contract notice was issued on 23rd December 2020. To brief potential suppliers we held a Virtual Briefing Event on 19th January 2021. The deadline for submission of applications was Wednesday 27th January 2021.

A total of 11 submissions were received – mixture of single suppliers and consortia. Of these four Companies were selected to go forward into Phase One. The four suppliers undertook initial research and desktop analysis to prepare feasibility studies for their concepts.

Concepts considered included renewable generation, energy storage, energy trading and demand-side management.

A panel of experts including representatives from Welsh Government and Blaenau Gwent Council assessed the outcomes of the four project studies in Phase 1 of the competition and two companies were invited to participate in Phase 2 to run a demonstration across Blaenau Gwent Business Parks.



Supplier One - Aquatera



Supplier Two - IBECCS



Supplier Three - Stortera



Supplier Four – Urban Chain

12. Research and Innovation - WBRID

Phase 2 – Live demonstration of solutions.

Phase 2 will be a demonstration phase with two shortlisted suppliers. Stortera and BankEnergi have each been given a share of the funding to carry out demonstration of their solutions over the next year.

StorTera are an Edinburgh based energy storage solution provider working to revolutionise the energy storage industry. BankEnergi is a consortium consisting of Consortio, Carbon Track, Wales and West Utilities and BankEnergi. The consortium has worked together on a number of previous projects from whole systems thinking to Prospering From the Energy Revolution (PFER) projects related to energy and flexibility trading.

The companies will be demonstrating their solutions which includes creating an energy trading platform utilising existing renewable energy generation and installing new equipment including battery storage, solar PV, heat pump and Artificial Intelligence (AI) controls. This will optimise performance and energy utilisation with a view to decarbonising business parks.



13. Community Municipal Investments



Blaenau Gwent Community Municipal Investment with Abundance Investment and the Green Finance Institute

Blaenau Gwent Council are exploring opportunities to launch Community Energy Bonds as a way for the local community to play a part in raising the funds to support the development of low carbon energy generation infrastructure and technology.

As one of a number of UK pilot areas, the Council has the opportunity to use Community Municipal Investment (CMI) to fund low carbon infrastructure for the Council.

In September 2021, the Council's Executive Committee agreed to move forward with due diligence to consider the risks / issues associated with this route of investment.

As a result this approval, the Council have signed the Local Climate Bond pledge with the UK Government Green Finance Institute. The Blaenau Gwent Climate Bond will support us in raising the funds to make investment in low carbon infrastructure and help us on our journey to become net zero by 2030.

We pledge to:

1. Explore the launch of a Local Climate Bond within 18 months of COP26, aiming to raise funding for a specific local net zero project(s)
2. Set and share publicly the target dates for completion of the project(s)
3. Provide public updates on the measurable positive impacts – eg. environmental, financial, economic and social – of our funded project(s), including any learnings for the future.

Agenda Item 8

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **9th December 2021**
Report Subject: **Regional Approach to Employability**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr D Davies, Deputy Leader / Executive Member
Regeneration and Economic Development**
Report Submitted by: **Bethan McPherson, Team Manager Connected
Communities**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
19.10.21	21.10.21	26.11.21			08.12.21	15.12.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to seek BGCBC endorsement of the regional paper and the principles of a locally delivered, regionally co-ordinated approach to employability (appendix 1).

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The paper presented in appendix 1 has been developed with contributions from each of the 10 Local Authority areas within the Cardiff Capital Region. This report is specific to the regional paper; however, consideration to the “Blaenau Gwent Employability Provision – Position Statement” report, presented separately, should be made.
- 2.2 All 10 local authorities in the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) currently deliver employability activity to support our residents into employment or to help them progress to more sustainable or better paid employment.
- 2.3 At its core, employability is about removing or minimising an individual’s barriers to finding, maintaining or progressing in sustainable employment whatever that barrier may be. Depending on the individual, this could be any combination of **skills** (general or occupationally specific), it could be job **readiness/awareness**, or it could be the availability of **support**.
- 2.4 Since 2014, across the CCR, employability provision has supported over 50,000 residents to secure a qualification and has helped almost 15,000 long-term unemployed into employment. An indication of the residents supported within Blaenau Gwent are incorporated within the performance section of this report.
- 2.5 The complex geographical and delivery arrangements have led to over 15 separate projects operating concurrently in different areas within the CCR.
- 2.6 Employability provision since 2007 has largely been funded from the European Social Fund (ESF); having now left the European Union this

funding stream will no longer be available; and ESF programme delivery will cease 2023 at the latest. It is not yet known whether the UK Government's replacement for EU funds (Shared Prosperity Fund) will support employability activity or whether this will continue to be separated into objective-led projects. Nor is the amount or delivery mechanism known at this stage.

- 2.7 Therefore, in advance of any funding bids to Shared Prosperity Fund, the 10 CCR Local Authorities have sought to create a single, clear, consistent framework for future employability projects in the region based on a shared vision, shared principles, and common tools.
- 2.8 In 2019, the CCR Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) adopted an Employment and Skills Plan. This sets a clear vision of the future skills needs of the City Region and the activities that regional partners need to deliver to achieve this, with employability featuring strongly.
- 2.9 With the impact of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic now being felt in the economy and labour market, employability is more important than ever.
- 2.10 To build on this, the employability leads from the 10 local authorities have produced a *Framework for Future Employability in the CCR* to shape a shared vision for an employability service which is:
- Responsive enough to rapidly changing employability trends / priorities;
 - Flexible enough to still address individual barriers;
 - Still aligned to local circumstances and still delivered by local teams;
 - Engaged with industry to support people into more sustainable roles;
 - With a particular focus on the following challenges:
 - Poverty arising from unemployment, under employment and unsustainable employment
 - Early Interventions for young people at risk of NEET
 - Barriers to high quality sustainable employment faced by adults
 - Priority Industry Engagement
- 2.11 The proposed employability framework is based on the following shared principles (defined fully within the main report), which reflect on the lessons learnt from 20 years of employability projects:
- Subsidiarity works (LA/trusted delivery bodies are well embedded)
 - Trusted bond (delivery leads, businesses and participants)
 - Prevention over profitability
 - Continuity of provision is valuable and cost-effective
 - Shared learning adds value
 - Decades of progress towards real change
 - Simplified costs have reduced bureaucracy
 - Assess participants for their “employability” journey, not their “project” journey
 - Flexible outcomes

- One framework, but not necessarily one project
 - Not just a job, but a *sustainable* job: closer alignment with industry
- 2.12 Delivery of the *Framework for Future Employability in the CCR* relies on the use of common tools / approaches, particularly at 5 key transition points:
1. The interface with Pre-16 NEET prevention activity
 2. Recruitment & engagement of participants
 3. Triage and caseworker allocation: *understanding the goal and the support available.*
 4. Client assessment process: *assessing barriers & what a participant can do*
 5. The menu of support & intervention: *co-designing and delivering the interventions*
- 2.13 Having a common approach and toolkit is designed to simplify the experience for both residents and employers.
- 2.14 To test this new approach, all 10 Local Authorities have submitted a bid jointly, led by Torfaen, to the UK Government Community Renewal Fund. This will test key aspects including:
- Mobile & digital outreach (recruitment & engagement)
 - Shared Triage trial (understanding the goal)
 - Aligning employability to the CCR's priority industries (assessing the barriers)
 - Try before you qualify (co-designing and delivering the interventions)
- 2.15 Concurrently, further work will be undertaken in autumn 2021 to co-produce the detail of each shared tool / approach through a series of workshops led by LA Employability leads and inviting NEETs leads and other employability partners from the Regional Skills Partnership (Working Wales, third sector groups, Department for Work and Pensions, TUC and WG Skills and Employability team).
- 2.16 Moving forward any regional funding bid to support future employability services would be reported locally for endorsement and approval as appropriate.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 Option 1 Endorsement of the regional paper and the principle of a locally delivered, regionally co-ordinated approach to employability
- Option 2 To note the contents of the report only
4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan – Pathway to Prosperity

- Blaenau Gwent Employment and Skills Plan – Blaenau Gwent Prospers
- WG Employability Plan
- CCR Regional Skills Strategy
- Youth Engagement and Progression Framework

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

ESF programmes are externally funded and therefore there are no/limited immediate financial implications or pressures. In the medium term programmes will end which presents a redundancy risk associated with staff employed to deliver the programme. A proportion of the redundancy costs will be met through the funding mechanism though there will be proportion for which the respective department/organisation will need to identify a budget for. The risk would be mitigated through successful redeployment to a new employment programme or alternative employment within the organisation, as appropriate. Relevant service areas are aware of the risk and associated cost implications.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

- 5.2.1 As the priorities for the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) have not yet been announced, there is a risk that the proposed Framework for Future Employability in the CCR will not align to these priorities.

To mitigate this risk, officers have carefully reviewed the priorities within the Community Renewal Fund (CRF) which is seen as a precursor to SPF

- 5.2.2 Other regional / national entities deliver employability activity and there is a risk for mis-alignment / duplication. This includes the recent procurement by the Department of Work and Pensions of providers to deliver the Restart project.

To mitigate this risk, officers have started engagement with other employability agencies operating in the region, including Welsh Government (Skills & Employability), DWP, Working Wales and the third sector. All are supportive of the concepts set out in the proposed.

- 5.2.3 It is not yet clear whether the same level of financial resource as is currently available from the ESF will be made available from the SPF.

At this stage, the proposed Framework for Future Employability in the CCR is not a funding application – it is a strategic document setting out the principles of how employability activity should be delivered within the region and what it should seek to achieve. Any funding application/s will need to be scaled to the resources available.

- 5.2.4 Without certainty on the timescales for a funding decision from the SPF, there is a risk that funding from the ESF may end before replacement funding is in place. This will have implications for staffing levels.

At this stage, the proposed Framework for Future Employability in the CCR is seeking to agree the principles of how employability activity should be delivered. The implications for any gaps in provision would be considered as part of any subsequent applications for funding once more detail is released on post-EU funding streams.

5.3 **Legal**

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no direct staffing implications associated with this paper specifically.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

An example of the successful outcomes associated with ESF programme delivery across the CCR to date are captured within the main report (Page 2/3)

In respect of ESF programme delivery within Blaenau Gwent an outline of the performance data available at the time of the report is presented below:

Bridges into Work (unemployed and economically inactive) has engaged 540 participants, with a 27% job entry rate. 56% have gained a level 3 or below qualification: 48% have participated in meaningful voluntary placements.

Working Skills for Adults² (employed with under a level 2 qualification) 72% have achieved a level 2 or below qualification.

Nurture, Equip, Thrive 152 Under-employed participants 44% have an improved labour market situation i.e. promotion, more hours, new job, 38 Underemployed participants with a work limiting health condition 23% have an improved labour market situation. 25 participants who were long term absence due to illness, 56% have to a substantive role.

Inspire 2 Work (16-24 year olds): 314 young people enrolled so far, with 71 (23%) supported into employment, 57 (18%) gaining qualifications and 71 (23%) supported into education and training.

Inspire 2 Achieve (11-16 year olds): 910 enrolled so far and of the 431 closed, 195 (45%) have reduced their risk of becoming NEET, 118 (27%) have been supported back into full time Education, 38 (9%) into work based training and 83 (19%) gained additional qualifications.

(* Communities for Work figures to be supplied)

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

There are a range of employment and skills related outcomes for participants as outlined in the diagram below:



6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The proposed Framework for Future Employability in the CCR has been presented to both the Regional Skills Partnership and Regional Business Council.

The proposed Framework for Future Employability in the CCR has been endorsed by the 10 Local Authority Directors with responsibility for Economy / Skills / Regeneration.

Initial discussions have been held with DWP, Working Wales and Welsh Government (Skills & Employability). In addition, Local Authority officers have supported the development of the paper.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The paper presented outlines a regional strategic framework, with local delivery; based on the lessons learnt and best practice from previous programmes. In addition, it makes consideration to future business needs in respect of skills and employment opportunities of the future.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The paper presents a proactive approach to develop key guiding principles to inform future delivery; early consideration has been made to best realise continuity of service in the medium to long term, ensuring those requiring access to support and services are able to do so.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The proposed Framework for Future Employability in the CCR has been presented to both the Regional Skills Partnership and Regional Business Council.

The proposed Framework for Future Employability in the CCR has been endorsed by the 10 Local Authority Directors with responsibility for Economy / Skills / Regeneration.

Initial discussions have been held with DWP, Working Wales and Welsh Government (Skills & Employability). In addition, Local Authority officers have supported the development of the paper.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

This is a regional paper, discussions are being replicated locally with a close working relationship between Regeneration and Education to ensure locally delivered services, aligned to regional principles are aligned to local need.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

The report contents to not relate specifically to this agenda; indirectly a regional approach to employability will make consideration to:

- People having the opportunity to work close to home
- How public and integrated transport can support access to employment
- Employment and skills requirements relating specifically to the decarbonisation agenda

6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

The report relates to employability provision and ensuring all residents requiring support at any stage of their employment journey have appropriate access.

6.9b. ***Equality Impact Assessment***
N/A

7. ***Monitoring Arrangements***

7.1 Monitoring arrangements will be put in place relating to any future funding opportunity.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 – Regional Paper*

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Shaping Employability to Achieve the Vision of the CCR Employment & Skills Plan

A Discussion Paper from the RSP Cluster Group

In 2019 the Cardiff Capital Regional Skills Partnership adopted its **Employment and Skills Plan**. This sets a clear vision of the future skills needs of the City Region and the activities that regional partners need to deliver to achieve this.

Employability features strongly. The value and importance that employers place on 'employability' skills is clearly reflected. So too is the need to help individuals address their personal barriers to employment to avoid communities being "left behind" in a very competitive labour market. With the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic now being felt in the economy and labour market, employability is more important now than ever.

There is recognition too of the important role and impact of Local Authority employability projects. With expertise built up over 20 years, the projects epitomise the benefits of subsidiarity and devolution. They are delivered as close as possible to the citizen. They are flexible making them highly responsive to local labour market changes. They are focussed on the personal needs of the client and not the need to generate profit. They create a long-term relationship with thousands of clients, helping people into work, to remain in work, and to progress into better paid work at various stages in their lives. They work together, solving problems in partnership with each other and with other early intervention and prevention services. They are respected and trusted by residents.

The end of EU funding is an opportunity to learn lessons: to remove some of the artificial barriers, constraints and bureaucracy. It is an opportunity to shape a new long-term local authority-led employability programme. But with EU funding ending in 2022, there is a need to do so quickly.

In this context, this discussion paper considers:

- The lessons learnt from employability delivery during the EU programmes
- The achievements and impact of locally-led employability programmes
- CCR labour market challenges and the "new context" for future employability

And concludes with the principles of a future employability approach:

- Local Authority-led delivery using...
- ... a common approach to "**pre-assessment & engagement**" and...
- ... a common "**Triage system**" and...
- ... a common "**Assessment Toolkit**" and ...
- ... a common but flexible "**menu of support & interventions**"

What is Employability?

At its core, employability is about removing an individual's barriers to finding, maintaining or progressing in sustainable employment whatever that barrier may be. This could be **skills** (general or occupationally specific), it could be **job readiness/awareness**, or it could be the availability of **support**.

Employability programmes *target* the individual but they *impact* on families, communities, employers and the economy too. From an employer's perspective, staff with the right skills, knowledge and attitude can "hit the ground running" and can introduce new thinking on products and processes adding significant value for the company. At a macro-economic scale, employability programmes can help prepare the workforce to move from lower demand to higher demand (or higher value) occupations.

Consequently, employability programmes have a positive impact on various economic policy objectives including:

- Early intervention & prevention
- Child poverty
- Young people at risk of becoming NEET
- Preparation for work and long-term unemployment
- Youth unemployment
- Short-term unemployment
- Economic integration of refugees (e.g. REACH)
- Under-employment and work-limiting health conditions
- Maximising income, in-work poverty & progression
- Workforce development and employee retention
- Preparation for entry into RSP priority sectors



With such wide impacts, employability is well-reflected in several national strategies and policy documents:

- **CCR Industrial and Economic Growth Plan:** *"We must... target our most deprived and isolated communities and support regenerative growth... GVA per capita remains low, like other regions in the UK. Participation rates - the proportion of the population that is economically-active - could be higher"*
- **UK Industrial Strategy:** *"We need to narrow disparities between communities in skills and education and remove barriers faced by workers from underrepresented groups in realising their potential."*
- **WG Employability Plan:** *"It is one of the prime responsibilities of Government to educate, train and prepare people for the world of work and to remove barriers which prevent people from accessing work so that they can make a contribution to society."*

"We are creating a new service, the Employment Advice Gateway, to provide employment-related advice and guidance to people in Wales... Careers Wales will be given an enhanced role to operate the Employment Advice Gateway"

- **WG Programme for Government:** *“Low skill levels are the single biggest barrier to building the Welsh economy we want, and often the biggest barrier for individuals in securing meaningful work. It is critical we tailor skills support to individuals’ needs, while addressing other barriers such as poor health, transport and caring responsibilities to drive up prosperity levels for all.”*

We will deliver the Young Persons Guarantee, giving everyone under 25 the offer of work, education, training, or self-employment.”

- **WG: Regional Framework in Wales After Brexit:** *[What works] “Unemployed participants on EU-funded employability projects are 46 per cent more likely to find work over twelve months than non-participants. Economically inactive participants are 84 per cent more likely to find work than similar economically inactive people who have not benefited from this support”*
- **WG: A More Equal Wales: Preparing for the commencement of the Socio-economic duty.** *Socio-economic disadvantage leads to inequality of outcome including lower paid work and poorer skills and attainment.*
- **WG: Wellbeing of Future Generations Act:** *“Applying the well-being goals can help tackle poverty as it helps you identify where the main determinants of poverty exist, how they work together and what opportunities there might be.”*
- **One Million Welsh Speakers:** *“The evidence received suggests that there is a demand for a bilingual workforce to meet business and customer needs; this can be addressed by developing the linguistic skills and confidence to meet the requirements of businesses.” “Employers in the Childcare sector were the most likely of all sectors to consider Welsh language skills important. 84 per cent considered such skills important, and 42 per cent ‘very important’.*
- **Youth Engagement and Progression Framework:** *“The recently published Tackling Poverty plan clearly identifies that reducing the number of young people who are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET) will have a long-term impact on the lives of not just today’s young people, but generations to come. The cost of not addressing this issue is not just economic, but impacts on levels of unemployment, under employment, crime, well-being, substance misuse, premature death and early motherhood.”*

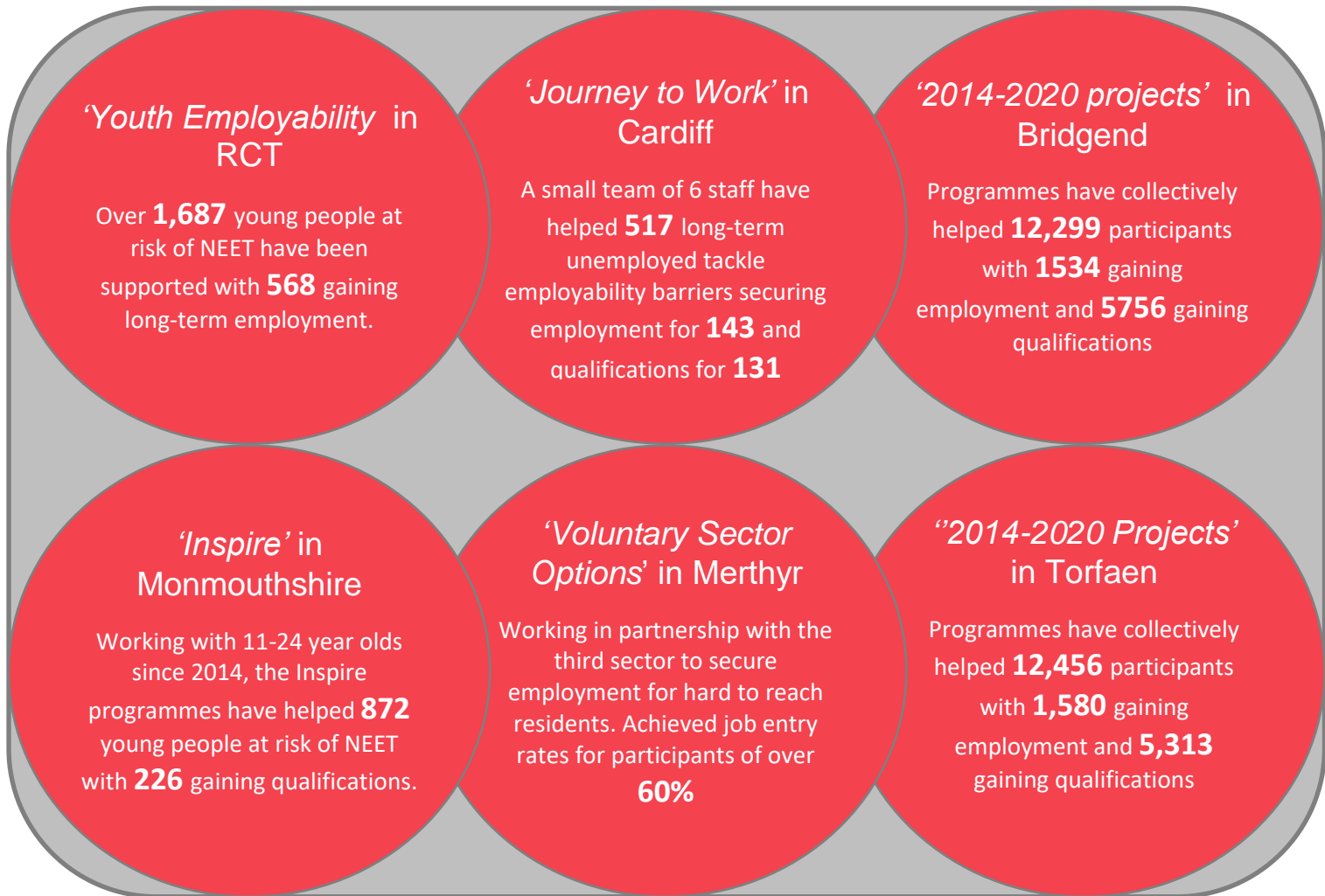
What have Employability Programmes Achieved?

It is well-established that reducing unemployment and economic inactivity, improving skills levels and equipping workers with the ambition to progress in their careers is one of the principal drivers of regional productivity growth. Employability programmes in the Cardiff City Region have helped thousands of people to improve their skills, gain new qualifications and enter / progress in employment.

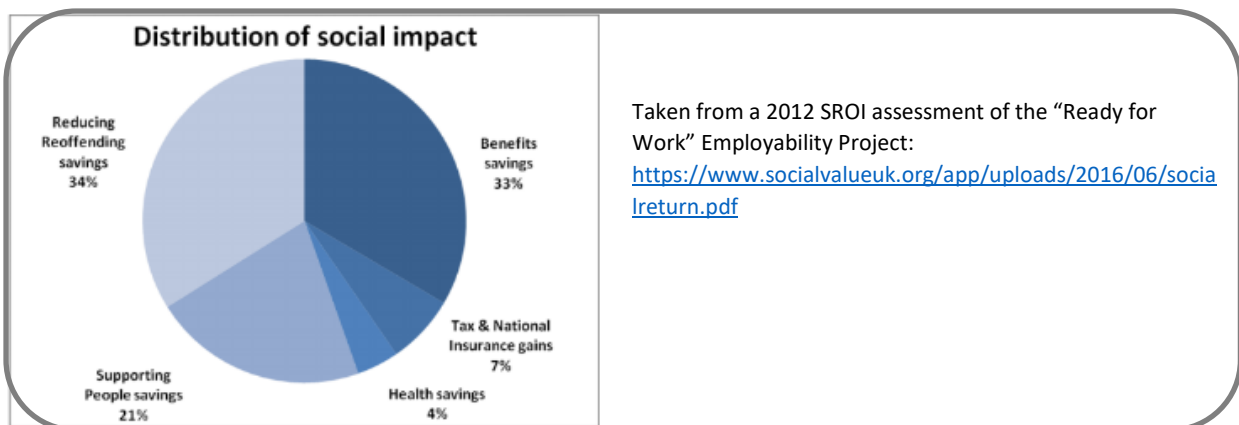
‘2014-2020 Structural Funds’ in the CCR

The projects supported **14,522** long-term unemployed into employment and **51,127** to gain qualifications

For over 20 years local authority led programmes have had success in deprived communities; success working in partnership with the third and private sectors; success working with young people and with vulnerable adults. Highlights include



But the statistics do not show the full impact of these interventions. It is well-established that employability programmes have a high social return on investment. A 2012 evaluation of employability programmes showed cashable impacts across various government departments:



Closer to home, a 2019 **social return on investment** study for RCT showed a net social impact of £2,080,078 on the £405,000 Inspire to Work project alone. A social return on investment of £5.10 for every £1 spent.

“RCT I2W: A social return on investment of £5.10 for every £1.00 spent”

Nor do they show the impact on individuals:

Monmouthshire Inspires to Achieve

In Spring 2016, Monmouthshire Inspire to Achieve (I2A) was asked to intervene to support a year 9 boy (“X”) who was not attending school. He had a turbulent family background, no contact with his dad and had recently seen his older sister sectioned under the Mental Health Act leading a severe decline in his own mental health. “X” withdrew from all facets of life and was becoming increasingly violent. His school attendance fell to 30% with 56% unauthorised absence. At this point I2A was asked to intervene.

“X” continued to work towards core subjects in school whilst receiving pastoral support for his emotional needs and employability skills support from I2A. Through intense 1:1 support, “X” and his case worker have developed a trusting and effective relationship which has identified his barriers to employment and has significantly reduced his anxiety and improved his confidence. He is now close to completing a BTEC L2 Qualification in Work Skills (ahead of his peers) and his attendance has increased to almost 90% (a 200% increase). He now has the ambition to progress into a career in advertising and design.

Torfaen Bridges into Work helps land Dream Job

In Winter 2020, Torfaen Bridges into Work (BiW2) supported Andrew Wilkinson into his dream job. Andrew was paralysed from the chest down following a road traffic accident 18 years ago. Prior to his accident he worked as a full-time scaffolder. Considered as long term unemployed and having no formal qualifications, he contacted BiW2, where he received support from Employment Mentors who helped him to build his confidence, develop his CV, complete online qualification and ultimately to secure a job as an assistive technologist at Rookwood Hospital – the hospital that provided him with treatment following his accident.

How employability has been delivered in CCR

The project-based nature of EU structural funding led to a plethora of employability programmes, each based on the principles above, but targeting a different **clientele**, **geography**, or **employability outcome** and using slightly different models, assessment tools and interventions.

To add to the complexity, there are many wider programmes that have an employability component, including: DWP Restart, DWP Kickstart, and Communities 4 Work+. This is alongside the Working Wales service that provides an independent careers information, advice, coaching and signposting service that incorporates referrals to the full breadth of employability and other provision

Summary of Recent EU-Funded Employability Programmes

	Clientele	Geography	Outcome
Bridges into Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployed • Age 25+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BGCBC, TCBC, CCBC, BCBC, MTCBC • Non-CF* areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Economic Inactivity
Working Skills for Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Employment • Age 16+ • QCF2 or lower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BGCBC, TCBC, CCBC, BCBC, MTCBC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In work poverty / career progression
Nurture, Equip, Thrive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Employment • Age 16+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BGCBC, TCBC, CCBC, BCBC, MTCBC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underemployment & Work limiting health conditions • Workforce development
Journey 2 Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployed • Age 25+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCC, NCC, MCC • Non-CF areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Economic Inactivity
Skills @ Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Employment • Age 16+ • QCF2 or lower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCC, NCC, MCC • Non-CF areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In work poverty / career progression
Building Resilience, Prosperity & Wellbeing (SWAW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Employment • Returning to Work • WLHC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCTCBC • Non-CF* & CF areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Underemployment & Work limiting health conditions
Communities 4 Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 16+ • AND QCF2 or lower; OR • WLHC; OR • BME; OR • Jobless Household 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR • CF areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Economic Inactivity
PACE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economically Inactive • Parents • AND NEET 16-24 OR 25+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-CF • Whole CCR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Economic Inactivity
ReAct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redundant less than 3 months • <16+ hours /week since redundancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term unemployment • Careers advisory role
Traineeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 16-17 • NEET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Unemployment • Careers advisory role
Active Inclusion Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 25+ AND • 54+ econ. inactive; • OR BAME & long-term unemployed; OR • Carer & econ. inactive; • OR QCF2 or lower; • OR WLHC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Economic Inactivity • Underemployment & Work limiting health conditions
Upskilling at Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees QCF2 or lower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing priority sectors • Career progression
Inspire to Achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 11-16 • At risk of NEET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR (East & West projects) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At risk of NEET • Careers advisory role
Inspire to Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 16-24 • NEET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR (East & West projects) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Unemployment

*CF – Communities First

Each employability project relies on staff resource to deliver or procure the appropriate mix of interventions that address their participants' barriers and achieve the project outcome. In some cases this involves specialist referrals to other programmes. These staffing roles / interventions / specialist referrals are summarised below:

Staff Resource	Interventions /	Specialist Referrals
Design & Deliver Qualifications (e.g. Agored)		Specialist referral: Prison leavers
Employer Liaison Officers	Delivery of courses via accredited centres (e.g. Pearsons, Highfields)	Specialist referral: Learning difficulties
Financial Inclusion Officers		Specialist referral: LAC
Counsellors	Volunteering	Specialist referral: work limiting health condition
Health & Wellbeing Support	Work Placements	
Post-16 Youth Worker Support	Job Prep / Employment Support	
Pre-16 Youth Support Workers	FE Referrals	
	Barriers Fund	

Lessons Learnt from the EU Programmes

What has Worked Well?

- **Subsidiarity works:** Local Authority delivered projects have great penetration into their target communities. LA employability teams have been embedded in communities for over 20 years and so have a strong understanding of residents' barriers, good networks with local support organisations, and are delivered by well-established (and well-known) practitioners.
- **Local knowledge is crucial:** Local Authority delivered projects have developed good knowledge of local labour markets, and good relations with local and regional employers built over many years. Collectively we have networks of thousands of employers who engage employability as part of their recruitment. Importantly, Local Authorities also have a strong understanding of the emerging employment opportunities in their local area.
- **A trusted brand:** Local authority delivered projects are trusted by participants. Without trust, it is impossible to engage those furthest from the labour market.
- **Prevention over profitability:** Local Authority led delivery has been motivated by tackling the root causes of participants barriers, however complex and however long that intervention takes. They have been successful at working as part of a wider Early Intervention & Prevention coalition of support agencies, employer networks and early intervention teams (e.g. money advice, benefits, foodbanks, ESOL provision, volunteering agencies, adult learning, children's services, education welfare, housing and health & wellbeing advisory services) to help participants.

- **Continuity of provision is valuable *and* cost-effective:** Under current EU programmes Local Authority employability teams employ 100s of support workers, counsellors and employment liaison officers. Many have developed networks in their local area over 20 years. Collectively there are hundreds of years of experience and local knowledge that would be lost if employability programmes were to end. In a profession that relies on building long-term 1:1 relationships with clients, the loss of this expertise could take decades to recover. Add to this the financial cost of decommissioning existing services (office costs, redundancy costs, re-branding) and it is clear that continuity between programmes significantly improves the short and long-term cost-effectiveness for the region
- **Shared learning adds value:** Over the past two decades strong networks have emerged between employability programmes, training providers, higher and further education institutions, the voluntary sector and the business community. Local Authority led provision is effective at working in partnership to deliver in areas where partners' have greater expertise, experience of knowledge.
- **Decades of progress towards real change:** Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, regional qualifications levels were rising, unemployment was low. Youth employability teams were able to implement a 10-year preventative approach (through successive programmes like Prevent, Lift and Inspire) which is benefitting a generation of young people. As a result of intervention, NEET figures were amongst their lowest ever.
- **Simplified Costs has reduced bureaucracy:** The FR40 simplified costs model used during the 2014-2020 programmes has had a significant impact on efficiency. This essentially creates a barriers and training fund for project participants. Local Authorities can now design interventions around a participant's needs and not around a pre-conceived list of compliant purchases.

What could be improved?

- **Assess participants for their "employability" journey, not their "project" journey:** Currently a participant is assessed when they enter each project. Each uses a different approach to determine eligibility and to assess what support to provide to a participant. To some extent this is necessary – the questions asked of an 11 or 16 year-old will be different from those asked of a 30 or 50 year old. But there should be more commonality between and coordination of assessment tools so that a client can move seamlessly in and out of support at key stages in their employability journey.
- **Flexible outcomes:** Whilst FR40 has made project delivery more flexible, the current ESF-funded programmes are still rigid in their outcomes. The Covid-19 pandemic has again highlighted the need for employability to adapt quickly to changing labour market conditions and priorities (e.g. the flexibility to switch from economic inactivity to unemployment; from long-term unemployment to short-term unemployment; or from unemployment to under-employment). The end of EU funding requirements means that apprenticeships, further learning and volunteering could all become more acceptable progression outcomes.
- **One Framework, but not necessarily one Programme:** Some programmes (particularly C4W/+) are wider than just employability. Others (particularly the Inspire 2 Achieve reduction of risk of NEET programme) require specialist interventions. Whilst these interact with an employability programme, they may also sit alongside rather than within it.

- **Hide ‘even more’ of the wiring:** Each project currently has strong brand identity amongst their clients, but the sheer number of brands can create confusion. There are examples of good practice in “hiding the wiring” (creating a seamless experience for a participant) within individual local authorities, but as a region there are still too many brands for employability alone (let alone complementary national programmes like Communities 4 Work/+, Jobs Growth Wales or Restart). There should be a clearer brand hierarchy, fewer brands, and a more consistent and universally accepted approach to triage across all employability interventions in the CCR.
- **Closer alignment with industry:** We want to move from projects which focus on ‘how do I support an individual into a job’ to ‘how do I support an individual into a *sustainable* job’ There is substantial change taking place in the economic base of the CCR, accelerated by Covid-19. The employability ‘skills’ needed to work in this emerging economy are also likely to evolve. With the adoption of a regional Employment and Skills Plan, and cluster groups in priority sectors, we face a unique opportunity to improve the alignment between our programme design and the demands of industry. There are some good innovative ideas:
 - E-learning modules for employability staff so that they are better placed to understand and therefore direct support towards priority sectors.
 - “Try before you qualify” model, supporting employability candidates into the workplace in priority sector roles before they make a decision on which qualification route to pursue.

The Future Context for Employability

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus the scale of the employability challenge. Structural changes are taking place in the economy at a rate not seen for decades with some well-established sectors declining rapidly.

The following represent opportunities / threats to the delivery of employability support:

- **Brexit:** The impact of Brexit on the industrial base of the CCR remains uncertain. Pre-departure assessments highlighted a high risk to the South Wales economy with its relatively high proportions of manufacturing employment and personal/financial services. Brexit impacts do not yet appear to be impacting on the labour market, but any decline in manufacturing employment will impact on the number of opportunities for employability clients.
- **Retail & Customer Service:** Even before Covid-19 restrictions the retail sector was transitioning away from bricks and mortar premises in town and city centres. Retail is one of the most popular and accessible routes from our employability programmes and any decline in retail employment will impact on opportunities for employability clients. The shift online (accelerated by Covid-19) will create other opportunities – in delivery and warehousing occupations in particular – but the propensity of these workplaces to cluster near to major transport routes will impact on the accessibility of any vacancies to employability clients. This is a particularly acute risk for young people at risk of becoming NEET.
- **Automation and Industry 4.0:** The CCR Industrial Strategy recognises a regional strength in advanced manufacturing and seeks to promote growth and innovation within key manufacturing sub-sectors (including medical devices and diagnostics, compound semi-conductors and transport engineering). The extent to which automation will reduce employment in South Wales’ largely SME manufacturers is unclear, but there is clearly a need to prepare employability programmes for the impact of a reduced number of lower-skilled occupations within these sectors. This will require better employability pathways, improved perceptions of the sector amongst clients and a stronger link between employability and technical skills.

- **Human Foundational Economy:** The Human Foundational Economy includes several priority sectors for the CCR RSP and has continued potential as a strong source of vacancies for employability clients. But there is a risk that these roles may perpetuate a low-wage economy and a need for employability programmes to engage with the sector to promote fair work, improve job security, improve the reputation of the sector and stimulate progression opportunities.
- **Covid-19: labour market tightening:** The Covid-19 pandemic has forced many businesses to either cease trading temporarily or adjust their business model. Schemes like the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough) and relief funds have to date limited the number of redundancies, but there remain risks to the labour market as this support is gradually withdrawn. At the peak of the pandemic, the ratio between claimants and vacancies rose substantially, and further such peaks may be seen. Any tightening of the labour market is likely to reduce opportunities for employability clients. In addition, employability teams are likely to be working with a more diverse range of clients, many of whom may not have previously been unemployed and may need to reskill / upskill. The extent to which demand on employability services will increase post Covid is, as yet, unknown
- **Covid-19: The psychological barriers:** Research conducted with children and young people by the Children’s Commissioners Office shows that young people’s emotional and psychological wellbeing has been severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. This is highly likely to ‘present’ as an additional barrier to employment amongst the most vulnerable and may affect their ability to achieve their potential in education and/or to sustain employment.

An Employability Framework Fit for the Future

The priorities for future delivery

Reflecting on the context, on what has worked well, and on the lessons from earlier programmes, any future employability approach for the CCR should:

- Use a single long-term employability “model” which can rapidly respond to changeable policy priorities, but is flexible enough to cater to individual barriers and needs.....
- as the basis for designing common programmes together and with our partners across the region which address our three principal employability themes: “flexible employability support”; “anti-poverty interventions” and “early intervention for young people at risk of becoming NEET”
- which would include a common triage process, a “single front door” that ‘hides the wiring’, and common participant assessment tools
- and which would be delivered by teams in each of the 10 LAs with the flexibility to directly deliver, procure or refer participants onto a range of approved interventions
- funded through the Levelling Up Programme or other similar funds.....
- alongside activity to work with the RSP cluster groups to design pre-employment pathways for priority sectors.
-with the aim to give the region the direction, stability and maturity to collectively engage with or bid for other emerging contracts (e.g. Kickstart, CAEHRs, Jobs Growth Wales+, apprenticeship programmes)

The Pre-Assessment Process

The pre assessment engagement process is about reaching out to individuals, supporting them into regular activity and positive routines, and helping them to connect with others.

Many economically inactive and unemployed individuals are not actively engaged with employability services. This may be because they are not interested in working, have had poor experiences of employability services in the past, or are unaware of the range of services available.

To overcome this lack of engagement, a number of mechanisms will be used to reach out to individuals and engage them in employability services. These include:

- Pro-active marketing.
- Effective location of services
- Community outreach workers
- Partnership working with community organisations.
- Co-location of services.
- Adopting area-based approach and client group-based approach

Upon engagement, Triage officers will begin the Triage process to identify the most suitable provision for the client.

The Triage Process

A triage process is an integral feature of employability programmes to successfully refer a client to the project which can best support the skills, needs and circumstances of the client and for which the client is eligible. Under the proposed framework, all 10 authorities, and partner organisations, will design a common, collective, consistent approach to triage.

In practice the client or referral body completes, with the client's agreement, an expression of interest which is sent to a Triage Officer. The Triage Officer must fully understand all the provision in the area, what that provision can achieve for the client and then assesses the details of the client that have been provided. If there are areas which need further clarification the Triage Officer would contact the client to ask for more details. When the Triage Officer is confident they have that level of detail which allows them to make a sound judgment they refer to the most suitable provision for the client in that locality.

The Triage Officer would notify the referrer that the client had been triaged to the particular project. The receiving agency would be asked to notify Triage when the client is successfully enrolled on the provision. Should the Mentor on that project undertake assessment with that client and determine that the provision is unsuitable for that clients needs they would refer back to the Triage Officer with any new information which would able the Triage Officer to make a new provision.

When clients complete their time on a particular project, for example they get a job, and would leave that project a judgment must be made if there is other provision which could continue to meet the clients needs, for example in work support, a referral back to Triage or at least informing Triage that a referral is made to another project is key so the clients employability journey can be tracked.

Many clients are re-referred to provision and seeing what schemes they have successfully or unsuccessfully completed helps inform Triage Officers when making the next referral and ensures that the client is eligible for that provision.

The Client Assessment Process

The model below provides a comprehensive and complete range of employment and skills interventions coordinated by the RSP. The ability to seamlessly link the client's journey, whatever their age, from their first engagement with employment and skills provision, demonstrates a model of local integration and delivery of services, which maximises benefits for clients. The various stages of the model below allow a client to re-engage at various stages of their employability journey. This section provides further information about the pipeline, and the different stages and interventions within it.



Alignment to Other Provision

An employability programme should not be developed in isolation from the wider skills provision in the CCR to ensure that participants can readily and seamlessly access specialist support, and, importantly, to provide opportunities for participants to progress into more technical skills development activities in priority sectors.

The following conversations should be prioritised during programme design:

- **Communities 4 Work(+):** National anti-poverty programmes have wider objectives which can complement the employability proposals in this discussion paper. In some LAs the projects may be delivered under the same management structures. Discussions should focus on a shared/consistent approach to branding, triage, and assessment.
- **NEET prevention:** Any successor programme to Inspire 2 Achieve will be an important feeder into the employability programme. Discussions should focus on the referral process from Inspire 2 Achieve into the employability programme.
- **RSP Priority Sector Cluster Groups:** Learning the lessons from previous EU programmes, the successor employability framework will need to establish a clear pathway into each sector for employability clients. This will need to consider the requirements of entry level job roles as well as technical skills requirements. This work – looking at starter roles – is now underway jointly between the local authorities and the RSP team.
- **Working Wales & School's Employer Engagement:** The creation of Working Wales and the launch of Jobs Growth Wales+ creates an opportunity to join up “careers & aspirations” workstreams with employability programmes. There are already pockets of good practice focussed on STEM in schools (BGCBC) and coordination of opportunities for young people (Cardiff Commitment).
- **Further Education Provision & Technical Skills:** Upskilling / reskilling is likely to remain an important part of the employability offer and technical skills will play an increasing role in that. Discussions with FE should focus on the assessment/intervention model and how it can act as a seamless feeder into existing/proposed FE provision.
- **Work-based Learning & Specialist Apprenticeship Provision:** The end of EU funding restrictions provides an opportunity to embrace apprenticeships as a progression route from employability programmes. There are opportunities for joint promotion, and the co-design of the assessment/referral process. There are also opportunities to align to local-authority / third-sector led specialist apprenticeship provision like Y Prentis and Aspire. This collaborative programmes brings together education, industry and the local authority to provide skilled opportunities in the advanced manufacturing sector. With its strong industry links and track record of supporting industry with recruitment, training & work placements, the Aspire programme could represent a link from employability provision into technical skills development. Y Prentis can do likewise into construction routes.
- **Public Sector Shared Apprenticeships and InFuSe:** A public sector testbed is likely to stimulate new service provision and new occupational routes in the public sector. This could be a strong source of future opportunities for employability clients and should be considered at an early stage of InFuSe's development.
- **CCR Investment Pipeline:** The CCR City Deal is developing a strong pipeline of upcoming investments in infrastructure (creating opportunities for construction vacancies) and innovation

(creating opportunities for technological vacancies). If a clear “early warning” system could be created to notify employability programmes when an investment proposition looks likely to receive support, it will help the employability teams to begin to prepare the workforce to reskill for these opportunities.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The adoption of a new framework for employability and a commitment from the RSP to seek funding to sustain the teams required to deliver this framework would usher in an exciting new era for employability in the CCR.

Learning lessons from the EU programmes, our proposed framework would create a system based on coordination not competition; a system based on flexibility and responsiveness to structural changes in the regional labour market; a system aligned to the priority sectors with distinct employability pathways into each one.

The case is strong for locally delivered employability. It provides excellent value for money and social return on investment. It is based on over 20 years of experience, and relationships with local communities that would take years to recover if that expertise was lost.

Adopting the proposed framework for employability would give the Regional Skills Partnership a mechanism to:

- Rapidly adapt to changing regional employability priorities in response to structural changes in the economy and labour market (i.e. getting the right mix between short-term unemployed, long-term unemployed, NEETs, under-employment etc).
- Improve the integration of employability with the other elements of the Regional Employment and Skills Plan, like careers and aspiration, technical education and cluster development.

And it would provide direction to local authorities (working with the Cardiff City Deal) to seek funding from the Levelling Up fund to establish a long-term, regionally-minded, locally-delivered employability approach. It would provide a launchpad for further collaboration with other emerging contracts like Kickstart, Jobs Growth Wales+ or other programmes coming from the CAEHRS.

Immediate Next Step

Subject to approval on the principles within this paper from the RSP, the LA cluster group will commence work with partners on an employability project proposal for submission to Shared Prosperity Fund.

Agenda Item 9

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **8th December 2021**
Report Subject: **Ebbw Vale Placemaking Plan**
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor D Davies, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development**
Report Submitted by: **Amy Taylor, Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
16.11.21	18.11.21	26.11.21			8.12.21	15.12.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. To present and seek endorsement of the Ebbw Vale Placemaking Plan from the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1. As one of five towns across Blaenau Gwent, Ebbw Vale like all towns faces significant challenges as a result of a shift to online retailing and the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Many of our regeneration focus on the town in the past has looked at how the town could be refurbished and updated.
- 2.2. Whilst we will still seek to carry out refurbishment of properties in need of attention we must also take a step back and reconsider the spaces and properties in and around our town centre. In Wales placemaking is a statutory requirement of the planning system. We will therefore take a placemaking approach to deliver sustainable development and provide solutions and investment that addresses the needs of Ebbw Vale.
- 2.3. To provide a background to our current work we will first consider historic regeneration projects. In 2002, the multi-storey car park was renovated and a steel and glass canopy was installed along the southern end of one side of Bethcar Street.
- 2.4. In recent years, the town benefitted from EU convergence funding and under the 2010-2015 programme works included streetscape works, new bus and taxi rank, community space and sculpture at Bank Square and refurbishment of 29 properties throughout the town.
- 2.5. In 2020, the Council were awarded funding by Welsh Government from the Transforming Towns programme for development studies towards the costs of

commissioning consultants The Urbanists to develop a Placemaking Plan for Ebbw Vale.

- 2.6. After a competitive tendering exercise the Contract to deliver the placemaking plan was awarded to The Urbanists.
- 2.7. The work undertaken by the Urbanists has been delivered in two parts:
 - i. **Deliverable 1: Placemaking Plan**
A public facing, overarching strategic vision that identifies priority areas for action within the study area.
 - ii. **Deliverable 2: Delivery Plan**
An internally focused, 'detailed delivery plan' that utilises an appropriate methodology for the detailed analysis of the study area sites and puts forward 'evidenced based' recommendations on preferred development/redevelopment options for the Council to take forward.
- 2.8. This report presents the first of their deliverables the Placemaking Plan and overall strategic vision that identifies our core ambitions for the Town. This will then be followed in early 2022 with the proposed Delivery Plan.
- 2.9. The aims of placemaking are outlined within the Placemaking Guide (Placemaking Wales, 2020). The way places are planned, designed, developed and managed has the potential to positively shape where and how people will live, work, socialise move about and engage. Placemaking is ensuring that each new development or intervention contributes positively to creating or enhancing environments. It places people at the heart of the process and results in places that are vibrant, have a clear identity and where people can develop a sense of belonging.
- 2.10. The primary purpose of the Placemaking Plan for Ebbw Vale is to inform and influence future strategic decision making for regeneration activity within the town and act as an evidence base to support the Council with future external funding options and support development of the replacement Local Development Plan (LDP).
- 2.11. The placemaking plan study area includes the town centre, the northern area of The Works, the Civic Centre and Eugene Cross Park. The plan aims to provide a new vision for Ebbw Vale and identifies the type of projects and investment that we want to attract to the town. All the proposals within the plan are 'people centred' with each focussed on improving experiences of the town.
- 2.12. Like many towns across the UK, Ebbw Vale in recent years has faced extremely challenging times. Along with the continued increase in online shopping, the town has faced one of the most significant and challenging periods for our economy during the Covid-19 pandemic. It has exacerbated challenges already being faced as a result of town centre decline and we need to look at how we can refocus and reinvent the town centre spaces.

2.13. The overall vision of the Ebbw Vale Placemaking Plan is:

“We want Ebbw Vale to be a smart, resilient and sustainable town that is a great place to work, have a business, live and visit.”

2.14. Delivery of our vision shall be done by exploiting three opportunity areas for Ebbw Vale Town:

- i. Connect the town with the locality and destinations
- ii. Build on the area’s green legacy
- iii. Exploit tech and digital investment opportunities

2.15. Within the draft Ebbw Vale Placemaking Plan six core ambitions have been identified to support us in transforming the town and delivering upon our vision. these are:

1. Establish the high street as a ‘test-bed’ for new business and entrepreneurs, but also cultivate an environment of growth for existing businesses.
2. Create a series of new entrance spaces into the town centre that open up the high street, enhance the retail environment, green the centre and create new space for homes, work spaces and leisure uses.
3. Revitalise connections between the town centre and The Works to give pedestrians greater choice, reliability and quality.
4. Transform The Works into a vibrant and active destination; a place of arrival, culture, learning, working and living.
5. Establish Eugene Cross Park as a regionally renowned sporting destination that caters for specialist, elite and community teams and improve its connections to the town centre and The Works.
6. Transform the Civic Centre into an exemplary neighbourhood of modern homes in a green sustainable setting.

2.16. Taking forward these ambitions, the plan identifies a series of intervention areas and high level actions including:

1. **Northern Gateway** – new entrance space from the north prioritising pedestrians, new green space and redevelopment of key buildings to create an attractive and engaging townscape.
2. **Eastern Gateway** – new entrance from the south with an improved pedestrian environment, better public realm which opens the entrance to the town and connects the centre to The Works. Redevelopment of key blocks to offer a greater mix of viable uses in the centre.
3. **Town Centre Core** – restored buildings and shopfronts that include a diverse mix of uses that include retail businesses, workspaces, incubator and tester units for ‘start-ups’, leisure uses, homes and live/work spaces.
4. **The Works** – new landmark entrance to Ebbw Vale by rail with new terminus building and station square development to provide new civic

and cultural and outdoor event spaces. Enhanced pedestrian connections to the town centre.

5. **A4046 Corridor** – an enhanced active travel environment with space for cycle lanes, planting and priority pedestrian crossings to connect the town centre and The Works. Improved integration of the bus station and taxi rank into Bethcar Street and treatment of rear properties.
 6. **Civic Centre** – new green neighbourhood with energy efficient homes and new active travel corridors that provide access to the town centre, The Works and Eugene Cross Park.
 7. **Eugene Cross Park** – to create a modern sports and community destination with training and all weather facilities, enhanced active travel and vehicle connections.
- 2.17. The projects listed above are predominantly physical regeneration projects. Non-physical projects are not included in the intervention areas, but they are pivotal for the success of the town centre and are also included within the Placemaking Plan.
- 2.18. Each of the interventions are discussed in sections 2.19 to 2.34 of this report. They consider the issues for each of the intervention areas and then potential opportunities/projects to address these issues. More detailed information is contained within the Placemaking document that has been included as background paper to this report (**Appendix One**).

Town Centre Core

- 2.19. Main issues within the Town Centre Core are discussed on page 30 of the Placemaking Plan (**Appendix One**).
- 2.20. Projects that could be delivered within the overall town centre core include:
- Creation of flexible commercial units that can be used for ‘test trading’.
 - Restoration and refurbishment of building facades and shop fronts to enhance town centre character.
 - Rationalise street furniture and ensure maintenance measures are in place to maintain retained furniture.
 - Establishment of a Local Development Order to provide greater flexibility for changes of use that complement the town centre and will help increase activity and footfall.
 - Promote the town centre as a ‘pilot project’ to test the benefits of freezing or reducing business rates for town centre businesses.
 - Develop an online digital presence for the town centre that promotes the town and its businesses and provides a means for retailers to trade online.

- 2.21. Greening town spaces have well documented benefits on peoples physical and mental well-being as well as environmental benefits. Urban green spaces can provide:
- greater levels of social activity,
 - improved health and well-being,
 - decarbonisation and tackling climate change
 - improved air quality
 - reduce flood risk and better manage water quality
- 2.22. Whilst it will be important to include more green space, it will also be essential that this is designed in ways that require low levels of management and maintenance (see examples on page 12 of **Appendix One**). It will also be necessary to ensure that suitable resourcing from a people and financial perspective are put in place by the Council to ensure that these areas are maintained and not allowed to become overgrown or fall into disrepair.

Northern Gateway

- 2.23. Main issues within the northern gateway are discussed on page 32 of the Placemaking Plan (**Appendix One**).
- 2.24. Projects that could be delivered within the Northern Gateway of the town include:
- Creation of an improved pedestrian entrance into the town centre by simplifying the A4046 junctions serving Market Street, Libanus Road, Market Square and James Street to prioritise pedestrian movement.
 - Redevelop key development plots to create a landmark visual entrance into the town centre, deliver a greater mix of uses and revitalise the street scene.
 - Creation of a green public open space on Market Square to provide a green core that softens the town centre street scene.
 - Integrate new commercial development into the town centre.

Eastern Gateway

- 2.25. Main issues within the eastern gateway are discussed on page 34 of the Placemaking Plan (**Appendix One**).
- 2.26. Potential projects that could be delivered within the Eastern Gateway of the town include:
- Future redevelopment of the police station to include green space and improve west/east pedestrian movement and enhance views of the town centre from the A4046.
 - Open the southern façade of the old bank building so commercial activity could spill out onto Old Bank Square.
 - Repurpose “The Walk” shopping centre to include a mix of uses and spaces that prioritise pedestrians and open up access to the high street from the east of the centre and The Works.

- Redevelopment of vacant development plots to create a southern landmark for the town centre and diversify uses in the town.
- Reduce the vehicle dominated design of the walk by improving pedestrian connections.
- Consider the requirement for signalisation of the junction connecting The Walk and A4046.

A4046 Corridor

2.27. Main issues within the A4046 Corridor are discussed on page 36 of the Placemaking Plan (**Appendix One**).

2.28. Potential projects that could be delivered on the A4046 corridor include:

- Reduce the design speed of the A4046 as it passes through the Town Centre and prioritise movement of pedestrians, including wider west /east movement between the town centre and The Works.
- Targeted treatment of the rear of properties on Bethcar Street and Market Street to reduce the viability of poor quality backs.
- Include wider pavement, enhanced pedestrian crossing, removal of barriers and street clutter.
- Integrate the bus station into Bethcar Street via targeted removal of poor quality structures and infrastructure to improve pedestrian connections and create views to the high street and new northern gateway.

The Works

2.29. Main issues within The Works are discussed on page 38 of the Placemaking Plan (**Appendix One**). These include poor wayfinding and sense of arrival, lack of pedestrian access to the town centre through ramp/stairs and a lack of activities and footfall away from the education and public sector buildings.

2.30. Potential projects that could be delivered at The Works include:

- New development on Station Square to include floor space for new uses such as a multi-functional cultural venue, café/restaurants and active frontages onto the public spaces.
- Upgrading the existing train station terminal building to create more of an experience when approaching Ebbw Vale by train.
- General Offices extension would build upon the modern extension constructed in 2010 to accommodate Gwent Archives.
- Regeneration of the public space to create safe, attractive and active spaces through integration of green infrastructure, wayfinding system and signature lighting.

Eugene Cross Park

- 2.31. Main issues within Eugene Cross Park are discussed on page 42 of the Placemaking Plan (**Appendix One**).
- 2.32. Potential projects that could be delivered within the Eugene Cross Park site include:
- Provision of dynamic multi-purpose sports and community facility that provides a new entrance to the park and integrates the River Centre.
 - Enhance existing vehicle access into the middle of the Park from Newchurch Road to improve access to the facilities.
 - Create a 4G training facility with parking and indoor changing facilities.

Civic Centre

- 2.33. Main issues within Civic Centre are discussed on page 49 of the Placemaking Plan (Appendix One).
- 2.34. Potential projects that could be delivered within the Civic Centre site include:
- Residential development of the Civic Centre site and adjacent land to create a vibrant green neighbourhood with a mix of modern energy efficient homes.
 - Integrate the existing health centre and residential development to create a wellness village.
 - Establish an active travel corridor that connects the Civic Centre site and the town centre to enable residents to move easily and quickly to the town centre.
 - Enhance pedestrian connections from the Civic Centre to Eugene Cross Park and The Works.
- 2.35. In addition to the above, the Civic Centre site presents an opportunity to develop a net zero carbon homes site and this would mirror Council aspirations for decarbonisation.

Town Centre Wide Projects and Digital Interventions

- 2.36. Town centre wide projects that apply to the whole study area could include:
- Consolidated town centre signage to reduce clutter while clearly signposting attractions, parking and highway requirements.
 - Expand on the existing programme of events to develop a consistent calendar of activity that includes heritage, food, music and recreation.
 - Work with existing businesses to improve diversity of retail and hospitality offer within the town centre.
 - 5G connectivity throughout the town centre with 5G classroom at The Works site.

- Create a digital high street through development of an app that allows interaction with Ebbw Vale and provides access to local businesses.

Transport and Movement Strategy

- 2.37. An appraisal of current transport options and the development of additional or alternative proposals was included within the commission and have followed the WELTAG process.
- 2.38. One of the key areas around transport and movement would be to remove redundant road infrastructure along the A4046 and to provide a safe and attractive active travel corridor for pedestrians and cyclists. Connecting it to the existing 466 cycle route.
- 2.39. Section 5 (page 48) of the Placemaking Plan in **Appendix One** discusses our transport and movement strategy in greater detail and explores areas including improving cycle routes, bike parking provision and better integration of bus and taxi services into the town centre.
- 2.40. We will look to enhance existing pedestrian connections between The Works and the town centre and create a welcoming and functional train gateway to the town with new terminal station, high-quality public realm and improved wayfinding.
- 2.41. The potential interventions are by no means exhaustive and will need to be updated as new opportunities emerge. Further detail around the issues and opportunities is contained within **Appendix One**.

Stakeholder Engagement

- 2.42. As a result of COVID-19 engagement has been undertaken with key stakeholders via online workshops. Engagement with business stakeholders was done using one to one telephone discussions.

- 2.43. Stakeholder engagement is being undertaken in three stages:



- 2.44. Stakeholders that have formed part of the engagement for Stages A and B included:

- The Council (Officers and Elected Members)
- Welsh Government
- Key Landowners
- Local Businesses
- Eugene Cross Park Stakeholders
- Design Commission for Wales
- Transport for Wales

- Coleg Gwent
- Ebbw Fawr Learning Community
- Aneurin Leisure Trust

- 2.45. The initial engagement has supported the assessment of issues and opportunities that face Ebbw Vale Town. Pages 14-17 of **Appendix One** provide details of the issues and opportunities that were identified by the Urbanists along with stakeholder feedback on these and any other issues / opportunities that were identified.
- 2.46. Wider public engagement is also to be undertaken and will be used to support development of the delivery plan which will support this placemaking plan.

Decarbonisation

- 2.47. The Council has set a target for the Local Authority to become net zero by 2030. Mirroring this ambition there is a commitment towards supporting the borough of Blaenau Gwent to become net zero. The projects that emerge from the Placemaking Plan offer an opportunity to support further decarbonisation across Blaenau Gwent.
- 2.48. Green urban areas can be used to offset carbon emissions of businesses that operate within the town. They can also help improve overall air quality.
- 2.49. New build and refurbishment projects can be used to deliver buildings that have a lower carbon impact. This can include using local supply chains to reduce travel of materials, energy efficient lighting and appliances.
- 2.50. Transport and movement projects can also support decarbonisation. Improved active travel routes alongside multi-modal transport systems and wayfinding can assist with reducing dependence upon car travel within the Town Centre.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1. The options contained within this report relate only to the approval of the overall vision and series of core ambitions contained within the Placemaking Plan in Appendix One. Future reports will be submitted in relation to the delivery plan and details of potential projects to be developed and implemented in order for us to achieve our overall vision.

Option 1 – Do Nothing

- 3.2. Note the contents of the Placemaking Plan and take no further action. Without Council endorsement of the projects contained within the plan it is unlikely that we would be successful in securing Welsh Government Transforming Towns money for redevelopment/refurbishment of the Town.

Option 2 – Endorse the Placemaking Plan

- 3.3. Endorse the Ebbw Vale Placemaking Plan, its vision and core ambitions for the future. This will enable us to finalise the draft of the delivery plan and steps towards implementation of the projects that will be contained within it.

Preferred Option

- 3.4. The preferred option is Option Two. This will enable the projects that will support achievement of the core ambitions to be brought forward as part of the Delivery Plan. Such projects are likely to be eligible to apply for funding through the Transforming Towns funding.
- 3.5. Projects which show a strategic vision and delivery approach that are supported by Placemaking Plans will be more positively received by potential funders such as the Welsh Government than ad-hoc projects which don't consider overall impact upon the area.
- 3.6. A placemaking approach will be taken for all towns across Blaenau Gwent. Work is already underway on the Tredegar and this will be closely followed by Abertillery and Brynmawr. Work to develop a placemaking plan for Blaina is expected to commence in early 2022.

4. Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan

Future Wales – The National Plan 2040

- 4.1. Future Wales – The National Plan 2040 is the national development framework, setting the direction for development in Wales to 2040. It is a development plan with a strategy for addressing national priorities through the planning system. As the national development framework, Future Wales is the highest tier of development plan and focused on challenges at a national scale.
- 4.2. Policy 2 of the plan is Shaping Urban Growth and Regeneration – Strategic Placemaking. The aspirations of Future Wales are an opportunity to regenerate our towns. The plan sets out the policy for a strategic placemaking approach and principles to help shape urban growth and regeneration.
- 4.3. Policy 3 of the plan is Supporting Urban Growth and Regeneration – Public Sector Leadership. This policy highlights the role the public sector can play in assembling land and enabling development to realise aspirations.
- 4.4. It also supports delivery of the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan:
 - Safe and friendly communities;
 - To look after and protect the environment;
 - To forge new pathways to prosperity; and

- To encourage and enable people to make healthy lifestyle choices in the places that they live, learn, work and play
- 4.5. The Town Centre strategy will seek to ensure that our town centres are safe and friendly communities for our residents and visitors to shop within. This will include projects to maintain and enhance the local environment, increase business occupancy and create an environment in our town centres that encourages our residents to spend time there for work, learning and leisure.
- 4.6. The report supports the following Corporate Plan priorities:
- To protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure to benefit our communities;
 - To support a fairer sustainable economy and community; and
 - An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities.
- 4.7. Town Centres are one of the key themes identifies for the Regeneration and Community Services which support delivery of the priority areas identified in the Council's Corporate Plan 2018/22.

5. Implications Against Each Option

Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)

- 5.1. Option 1 – there would be no financial implications associated with option one of this report.
- 5.2. Option 2 – there would be no immediate budgetary implications as a result of endorsing the Ebbw Vale Placemaking Plan. There would however be medium and long term capital and revenue implications associated with taking forward the emerging projects that will form the Delivery Plan.
- 5.3. In the medium to long term taking forward Option 2 will result in future development and implementation costs. It is likely that development costs such as surveys, feasibility studies would be eligible under the Transforming Towns programme (subject to a successful application) but this would only be for up to 50% of the eligible costs and there would be a need for the Council to identify suitable revenue match funding for the remaining 50%.
- 5.4. Implementation costs are also likely to be eligible for capital funding under the Transforming Towns programme (subject to successful application) but this would only be able to cover up to 80% of these costs and the Council would need to identify capital match funding for the remaining 20%.
- 5.5. Further detail on development and implementation costs will be included within the Delivery Plan which will be presented for approval in early 2022.
- 5.6. The future maintenance cost implications will be incorporated into the project proposals when they are presented for approval. All project proposals will be

developed to limit maintenance liabilities for the Council and this will be included in the proposals along with proposals to establish a maintenance budget.

Risk including Mitigating Actions

- 5.7. Option 1 – if no further action is taken there is risk that sites will remain undeveloped or fall into disrepair.
- 5.8. Option 1 – footfall within the town centre associated with retail has been severely hit with the increase in online shopping and enforced lockdowns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Key to recovery will be intervention that supports repurposing and reinventing our town centres. This would not happen if option 1 is chosen and then we would have a further risk of deterioration in footfall.
- 5.9. Option 2 – further work to develop / implement projects that will achieve the core ambitions would require revenue and capital funding. Such funding is likely to be eligible for application under the Transforming Towns programme but there is a requirement to identify a suitable source of match funding to fully meet the costs.

Legal

- 5.10. There are no direct legal implications for any of the options considered within this report. The report seeks endorsement of a Vision and set of ambitions that set out our approach to future regeneration of Ebbw Vale Town Centre.
- 5.11. Legal implications associated with project delivery will be explored as part of the delivery plan.

Human Resources

- 5.12. Staff within Regeneration and Development are leading the preparatory work and working across other service areas within the Council where required.

6. Supporting Evidence

Performance Information and Data

- 6.1. A health check of the study area was carried out in January 2021. The health check identified key issues within the town:
 - Retail is suffering with a number of empty units creating ‘holes’ in the high street.
 - Lack of night-time and leisure economy with residents travelling to Cardiff, Abergavenny and Brynmawr.
 - Retail units are generally small and less well suited to modern requirements.
 - Bethcar Street and Market Street units are longer than the number of retail units and active uses can support and therefore ‘fades out’ in the north and south.

- Car dominated retail in the south undermines activity on Bethcar Street.
- Development opportunities at The Works site are currently divorced from the Town Centre.

Expected outcome for the public

- 6.2. Some of the sites included within the study area are no longer fit for purpose or underutilised. The Placemaking Plan seeks to identify these sites and identify alternative uses or opportunities for refurbishment or redevelopment.
- 6.3. Active travel routes between the town and sites such as the works need improvement. Improved active travel will provide greater accessibility for residents and visitors to move within the area.

Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)

- 6.4. Initial engagement was undertaken to understand how the town works currently and what ambitions there are for the future. This was used to form part of the issues and opportunities discussed within the Placemaking Plan (**Appendix One**).
- 6.5. As a result of COVID-19 much of the engagement has been undertaken with stakeholders via online workshops or by one-to-one telephone discussions.

Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)

- 6.6. The Placemaking plan sets a vision and series of core ambitions that are aimed at planning for the long term future of the Town Centre.

Preventative focus

- 6.7. Taking forward the outcomes of the placemaking plan will ensure that areas of the town that are in need of attention are protected and enhanced in the future.

Collaboration / partnership working

- 6.8. Many of the projects that will be identified to deliver on our core ambitions for Ebbw Vale Town Centre will require collaborative approaches to delivery. This will be developed further alongside stakeholders subject to endorsement of this report and the delivery plan.
- 6.9. In September 2021, the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee endorsed proposals to establish a partnership delivery approach towards town centre regeneration and to set up an advisory group to help steer progress in the future. This was subsequently agreed by the Executive Committee and work will now begin on identifying the membership of the group together with setting up the first meeting to agree their terms of reference.

Integration(across service areas)

- 6.10. As outlined above, initial consultation has been undertaken across service areas within the Council. This includes service areas such as highways, housing, planning and education.

Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions

- 6.11. Blaenau Gwent declared a Climate Emergency in 2020 and as a Council we have committed towards achievement of net zero carbon emissions by 2030. Creating high quality green spaces in the town centre will help with decarbonisation and offsetting carbon emissions. It will also help improve air quality.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

- 7.1. Progress will be reported through the Regeneration and Development business plan.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix One - Ebbw Vale Town Centre Placemaking Plan*

EBBW VALE TOWN

PLACEMAKING PLAN

November 2021

00 CONTENTS

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Produced By: _____ On Behalf Of: _____

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Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol
Blaenau Gwent
County Borough Council

SYNOPSIS
EBBW VALE PLACEMAKING PLAN VISION

This placemaking plan provides a Vision for Ebbw Vale town that sets a clear direction to work towards in the short, medium and long term. The plan will guide the future planning of the town, attract investment and shape future development and place enhancements.

The placemaking plan includes analysis of the current physical conditions and socio-economic trends of Ebbw Vale. This marks the baseline that the placemaking plan is responding to. It also describes the stakeholder engagement that was undertaken to prepare the baseline.

The plan then outlines the core spatial ambitions that underpin the vision for Ebbw Vale town, identifies the areas of the town that will be subject to investment and finally, describes the key projects that will help deliver transformation by 2035.

We want Ebbw Vale to thrive as a local place for its residents and businesses. If we can achieve this the town will also become a place that others visit and new businesses want to invest in.

In delivering the vision we want to embrace three key opportunity areas for the town:



1. CONNECTING THE LOCALITY



2. GREEN LEGACY



3. DIGITAL & TECH INVESTMENT

- Better connect the town with the assets that surround it.
- Create a '20-minute' neighbourhood where key destinations are highly accessible and strengthen each other.
- Improve Active Travel connections and public transport facilities.

- Extensive tree and SuDS planting to build upon Ebbw Vale's innovative green legacy.
- Create high quality green places that connect the centre to Ebbw Vale's natural backdrop.

- Embrace the digital and technological revolution with world-class connectivity.
- Help deliver the Tech Valleys agenda.
- Create an environment where new businesses can thrive and existing businesses are supported to grow.

SYNOPSIS
EBBW VALE PLACEMAKING PLAN CORE AMBITIONS

TO HELP DELIVER THE VISION FOR EBBW VALE TOWN WE HAVE IDENTIFIED SIX CORE AMBITIONS THAT WILL HELP US TO FRAME FUTURE PROJECTS AND GUIDE INVESTMENT INTO THE TOWN ...



1.

Establish the high street as a 'test-bed' for new business and **entrepreneurs**, but also cultivate **an environment of growth for existing businesses.**



2.

Create a series of new entrance spaces into the town centre that **open up the high street**, enhance the retail environment, green the centre and create space for new homes, work spaces and leisure uses.

3.

Revitalise the **connections between the town centre and The Works** to give pedestrians & cyclists greater choice, reliability and quality.



4.

Transform The Works into a vibrant and active destination; a place of arrival, culture, learning, working and living



5.

Establish **Eugene Cross Park as a regionally renowned sporting destination** that caters for specialist, elite and community teams and improve its connections to the town centre and The Works.



6.

Transform the Civic Centre site and it's environs into an **exemplary neighbourhood** of modern homes in a green sustainable setting.

WHAT IS PLACEMAKING?

PLACEMAKING IDENTIFIES AND USES LOCAL COMMUNITY ASSETS, INSPIRATION, AND POTENTIAL, WITH THE INTENTION OF **CREATING PUBLIC SPACES THAT PROMOTE PEOPLE'S HEALTH, HAPPINESS, AND WELL-BEING.**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This placemaking plan has been prepared for Ebbw Vale by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and Welsh Government as part of the Transforming Towns programme. It sets out the ambitions for the town, its role within the Capital City Region, and offers how to implement the Welsh Government's 'Town Centres First' policy.

Ebbw Vale has a strategic location at the northern part of the Capital City Region, approximately 30 miles north of Cardiff and 20 miles north of Newport. It is located strategically on the A465 (Heads of the Valleys) corridor and is connected by the railway.

Connectivity is and will continue to be transformed through the South Wales Metro and investment in greener transport. This will make it easier for people to access employment opportunities anywhere in the Capital City Region and encourage businesses to locate and invest across the region. Ebbw Vale can benefit from this, and with the right investment has a bright future. This placemaking plan has been provided to communicate our vision for Ebbw Vale and identifies the interventions and investment we want to attract to unlock the town's potential and ensure that it is a key economic, social and cultural centre for the Capital City Region.

Like all towns Ebbw Vale is facing stark challenges. The shift towards online retailing has been constant over the past 10 years, and this has now accelerated due to COVID-19. To combat this, town centres need to be re-purposed into diverse and liveable destinations that offer great experiences. This placemaking plan explains how we will help Ebbw Vale make this transition.



Ebbw Vale Town Railway Station



1.0 INTRODUCTION

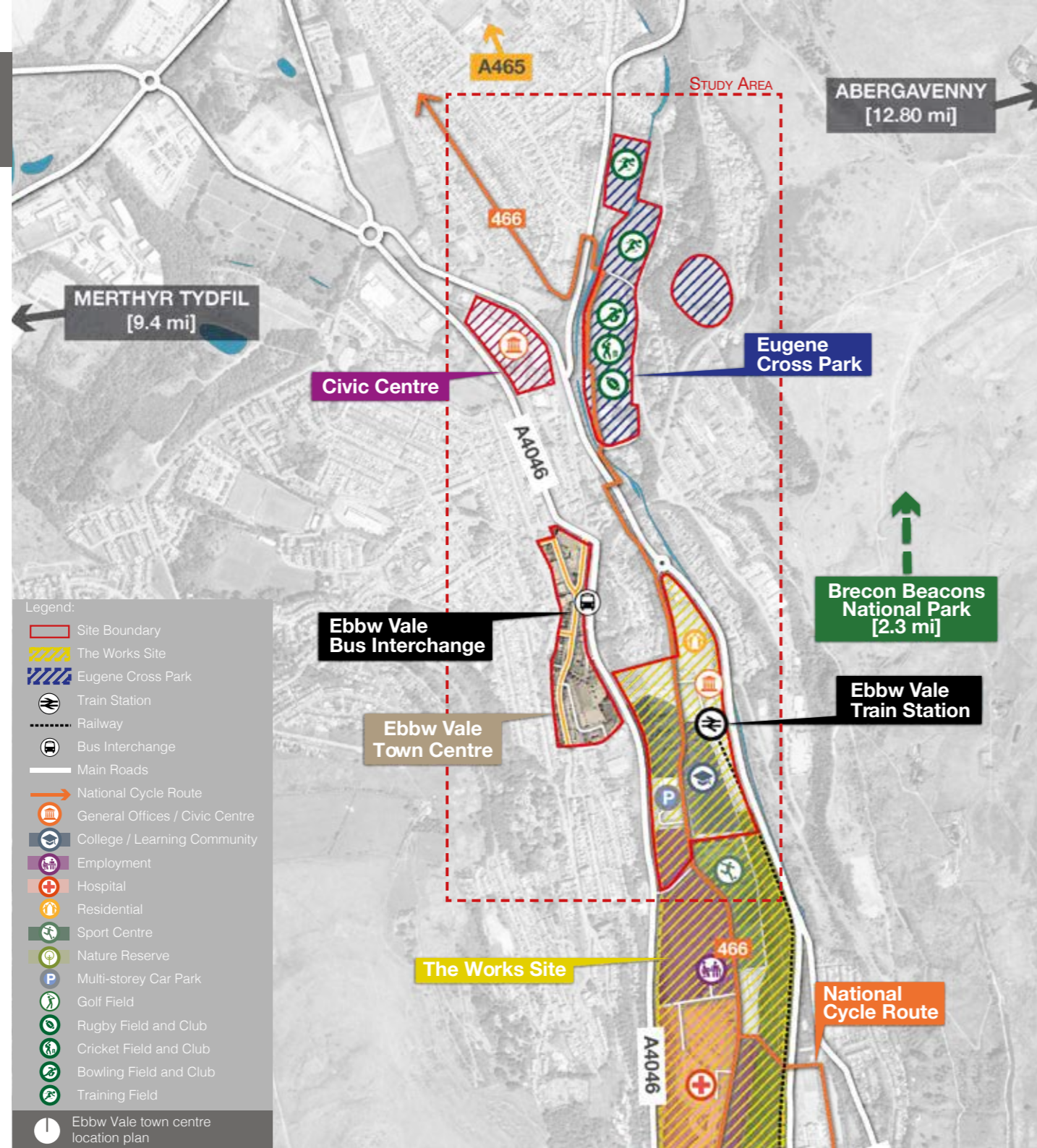
1.2 THE PLACEMAKING PLAN AREA

The placemaking plan includes the town centre, the northern area of The Works, the Civic Centre and Eugene Cross Park. An overview of each is below:

The Town Centre stretches along Bethcar Street, Market Street and James Street. It is home to a diverse community of independent retailers and businesses. The centre townscape is characterised by 2/3-storey buildings that include a series of distinctive heritage buildings. The public realm in the centre is good quality and provides plenty of space for pedestrians. There is an opportunity to create a series of distinctive green streets and public spaces.

The centre is highly accessible by car from the A4046 and there is a plentiful supply of car parking spaces. The highway infrastructure surrounding the town could be enhanced to improve the pedestrian environment and to encourage active travel into the town. A bus station and taxi rank are located directly in the centre and rail access is provided from Ebbw Vale railway station located on The Works.

The Works was formerly the Ebbw Vale steelworks site, and has a rich 200 year heritage. Following the closure of Steelworks in 2002, the 21 hectare site was transformed into an exemplary public service destination that now includes a college, school, hospital, leisure centre, homes, employment space, rail infrastructure and nature reserve. The northern area of The Works includes Ebbw Vale railway station, the General Offices, Coleg Gwent, Ebbw Fawr Learning Community, Ebbw Vale Sports Centre and the Box Park. Undeveloped sites provide an opportunity to attract further investment to the site.



1.0 INTRODUCTION

There is a significant level change between The Works and the town centre, which has partly been overcome by a funicular rail connection. There is a need to further enhance west-east pedestrian connections between The Works and the town centre. The national cycle route 466 passes through the site and connects it to Eugene Cross Park to the north. This offers the opportunity to establish a high-quality active travel corridor.

Eugene Cross Park: Eugene Cross Park is a 8.6 hectare sports and recreational ground located north of the town centre and The Works. The Park is home to Ebbw Vale R.F.C., Ebbw Vale C.C. and RTB Ebbw Vale B.C. Each club has playing facilities, clubhouses and spectator space, and there are two training pitches. A public right of way (also national cycle route 466) passes through the Park following the alignment of the Afon Ebwy. The River Centre Learning Community is located adjacent to the Park, but lets space from the Ebbw Vale R.F.C. in the Park. There is an opportunity to transform the area into a sporting, community and education destination that can support both grass-root clubs and organisations and cater for elite teams. Eugene Cross Park Sports Ltd has been set up to achieve this.

The Civic Centre is located to the west of Eugene Cross Park. The site comprises the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale Job Centre and former Ebbw Vale Leisure Centre which is now vacant. The site provides a key opportunity to create an exemplary green residential neighbourhood with strong active travel links to the town centre and wider local area.



Ebbw Vale Train Station



Dragon sculpture at Bethcar Street



General Offices



Funicular



James Street and Bethcar Street Junction



Ebbw Vale Town Centre

1.3 WHAT IS PLACEMAKING?



1.4 WHAT IS THE EBBW VALE PLACEMAKING PLAN?



1.5 WHY THE PLACEMAKING PLAN?



“The way places are planned, designed, developed and managed has the potential to positively shape where and how people will live, work, socialise, move about and engage. Placemaking is ensuring that each new development or intervention contributes positively to creating or enhancing environments within which people, communities, businesses and nature can thrive. (Placemaking Guide, Placemaking Wales, 2020, DCfW).

Placemaking is a requirement in Wales and is the means to deliver sustainable development as required by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act, Planning Policy Wales and the Placemaking Wales Charter .

The placemaking plan provides a new vision for Ebbw Vale town and identifies the type of projects and investment that we want to attract. The plan is unique to Ebbw Vale and responds directly to the bespoke issues and opportunities present in the town. It does not seek to copy what has been done elsewhere. All the proposals of the plan are ‘people centred’ with each focussed on improving the experience of those that live in the town, work in the town and visit the town. The plan is the means to establish a sustainable future for the town that addresses the current issues and needs, while delivering a enhanced place and opportunities for future generations.

Like all town centres across the UK, Ebbw Vale has faced a series of significant challenges in recent years. First by the emergence of edge of settlement retail developments, then by the seismic increase in online purchasing, and most recently by the COVID-19 pandemic. The placemaking plan responds to the Welsh Government’s Town Centres First policy, offering a strategy to arrest further decline and help to re-purpose the town into a destination that people want to visit.

The plan will also ensure we deliver investment and change sustainably and appropriately as required by the national legislation and planning policy.



Ebbw Vale town centre on Market Day, a thriving place

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.6 TRANSFORMING TOWNS AND TACTICAL URBANISM

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed how we operate and has presented new challenges for many aspects of our economy and society. This include the vitality of towns across the UK. As we recover from the pandemic we must be mindful of the behavioural changes that have occurred during the pandemic and help Ebbw Vale town and its businesses become resilient to future challenges.

We can do this by working with businesses to help them bounce back, but also by attracting investment into the town that can create a better town centre environment for businesses and visitors, and also diversify the uses in the town so it becomes a place for leisure and work and to live. The placemaking plan will be the means for us to achieve this transformation.

While the placemaking plan is a long-term plan, and some projects and changes will take time to deliver, there are also short-term measures that we can start to pursue through the placemaking plan to build back better.

For example, we can adapt our streets to create external spaces for food and beverage retailers to use in the event of future social distancing restrictions. We can also utilise tactical urbanism, in the form of temporary parklets, planters, public art and seating areas, to create safe meeting and social spaces. Such spaces could become long-term assets for the town and create interest and a reason to visit.

There is also an opportunity to create new flexible work spaces for those that are unable to access office facilities. COVID-19 has placed pressures on the working lives of many people who have been unable to access the offices of employers and have instead been restricted to home-working. While for many the 'home-working' arrangement marks a significant improvement, for others it poses challenges to mental health and wellbeing and reduces social activity. To address this, there is an opportunity to deliver flexible workspaces in the town that can serve the wider residential population. Such spaces would have the added benefit of increasing footfall into the town centre.

Finally, COVID-19 has resulted in record rises in online retailing. This has forced businesses to consider how they get their goods and services to customers, with many local retailers embracing delivery services, click & collect, and online retailing. Many of the town's businesses have sought to explore these opportunities and through the placemaking plan further support can be provided to enable businesses to develop capacity in this area, and market and sell products and service digitally.



Precedent image: covered outdoor seating



Precedent image: Re-purposed parking space



Precedent image: Cafe occupying existing urban space

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.7 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

To create a placemaking plan that captures the distinctive character of Ebbw Vale and the local expertise of the people that live and work there, comprehensive engagement has been undertaken during the preparation of the placemaking plan.

The engagement was undertaken to find out about how the town works, what are the key ambitions for it, and what type of interventions and change would people like to see happen.

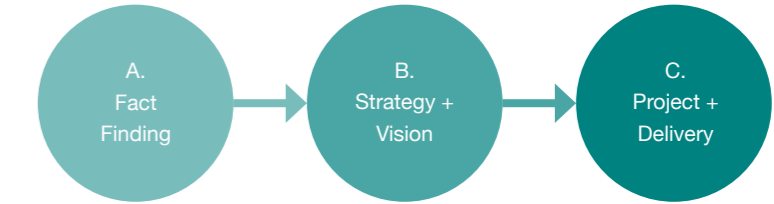
As a result of COVID-19 engagement has been undertaken with key stakeholders via online workshops. The key groups are identified opposite.

Wider public engagement is also to be undertaken and will inform the delivery of the projects that come forward through the placemaking plan.

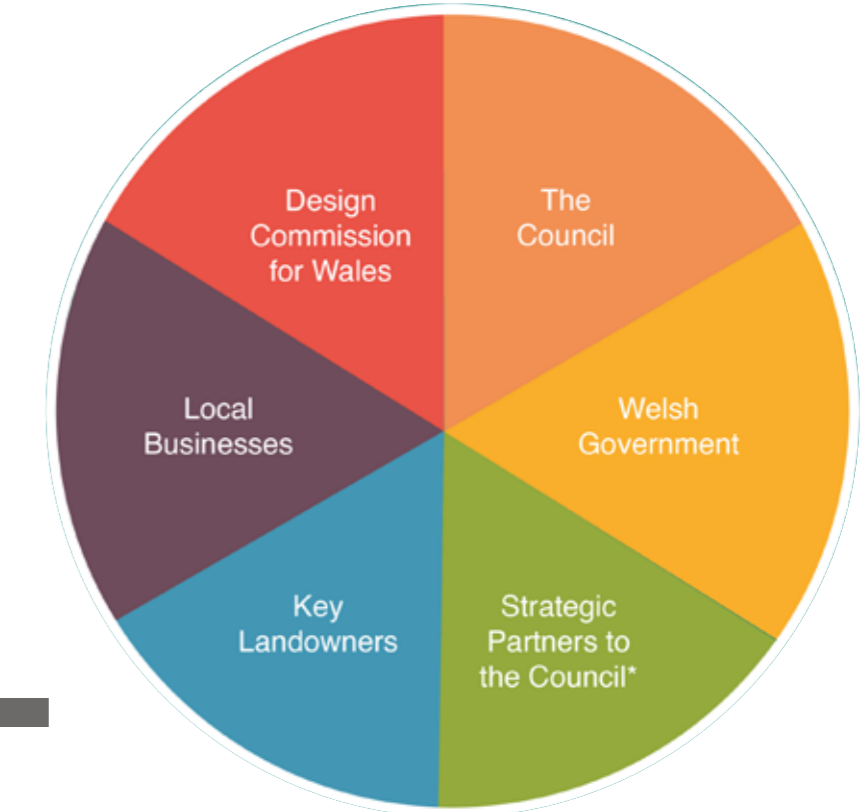
A summary of the key feedback that was provided by stakeholders is presented in the following section (Ebbw Vale Today).

* Strategic Partners:

Transport for Wales, Tech Valleys, Coleg Gwent, Ebbw Fawr Learning Community, Eugene Cross Park Sports Ltd, Ebbw Vale Cricket Club and Aneurin Leisure Trust.



Engagement stages



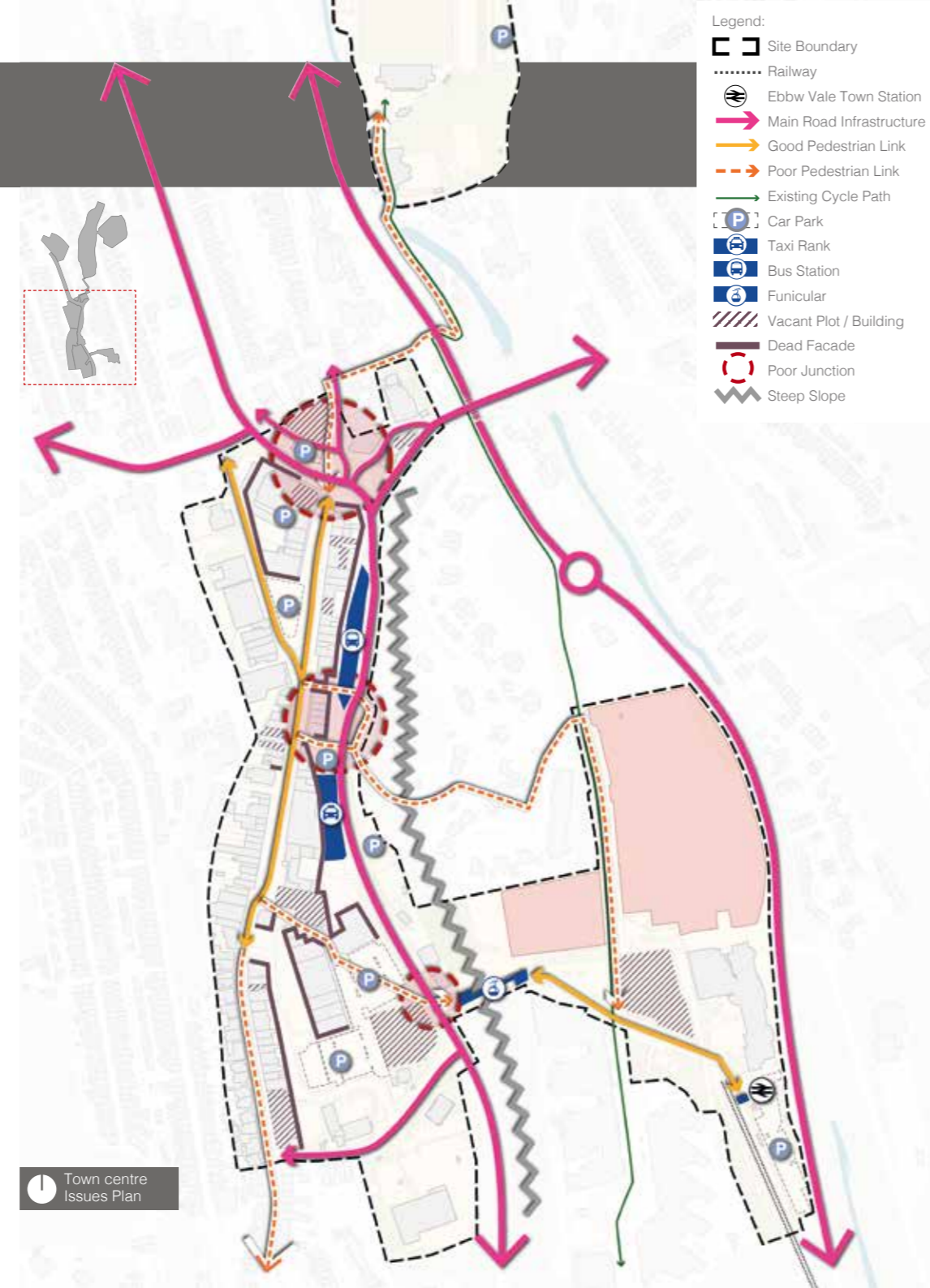
Engagement partners

2.0 EBBW VALE TODAY

To identify the issues and opportunities that Ebbw Vale town currently faces a physical place review of the town has been undertaken along with initial engagement with key stakeholders. A summary of the key findings is presented below.

2.1 THE ISSUES FACING EBBW VALE

- The multi-storey car park and associated block is of poor visual quality and has three blank edges. The structure fails to address the public realm and gives a poor first impression of the town centre when approached from the north.
- The quality of the 'northern gateway' is further eroded by redundant road infrastructure and surface parking.
- The town centre lacks high quality green open space suitable for social gathering.
- The A4046 and topography act as barriers to movement in an east-west direction, creating significant impediment to walking connections to the railway station, leisure and education facilities located at The Works site.
- The A4046 is a vehicle dominated route which combined with large areas of hard standing, and unsightly backs and service areas for shops, creates a poor pedestrian environment.
- The bus station, despite being centrally located is not visible from Bethcar Street, therefore undermining legibility and way-finding.
- The funicular railway does not function around the clock, and does not have steps as an alternative route. The alternative walking route between east and west is both illegible and circuitous.
- The railway station building lacks adequate weather protection, and is generally understated as an arrival point to the town.
- The area surrounding the railway station and General Offices lack activity beyond school hours.
- The high street would benefit from the improvement of the quality of shop fronts and buildings façades.
- Lack of variety and choice in night time economy.
- Urban form in the south east of the town centre is fragmented and vehicle dominated, providing a poor pedestrian environment and southern gateway.
- Eugene Cross park's facilities are in need of upgrades and walking connections to the town need improving.



Town centre Issues Plan

2.0 EBBW VALE TODAY

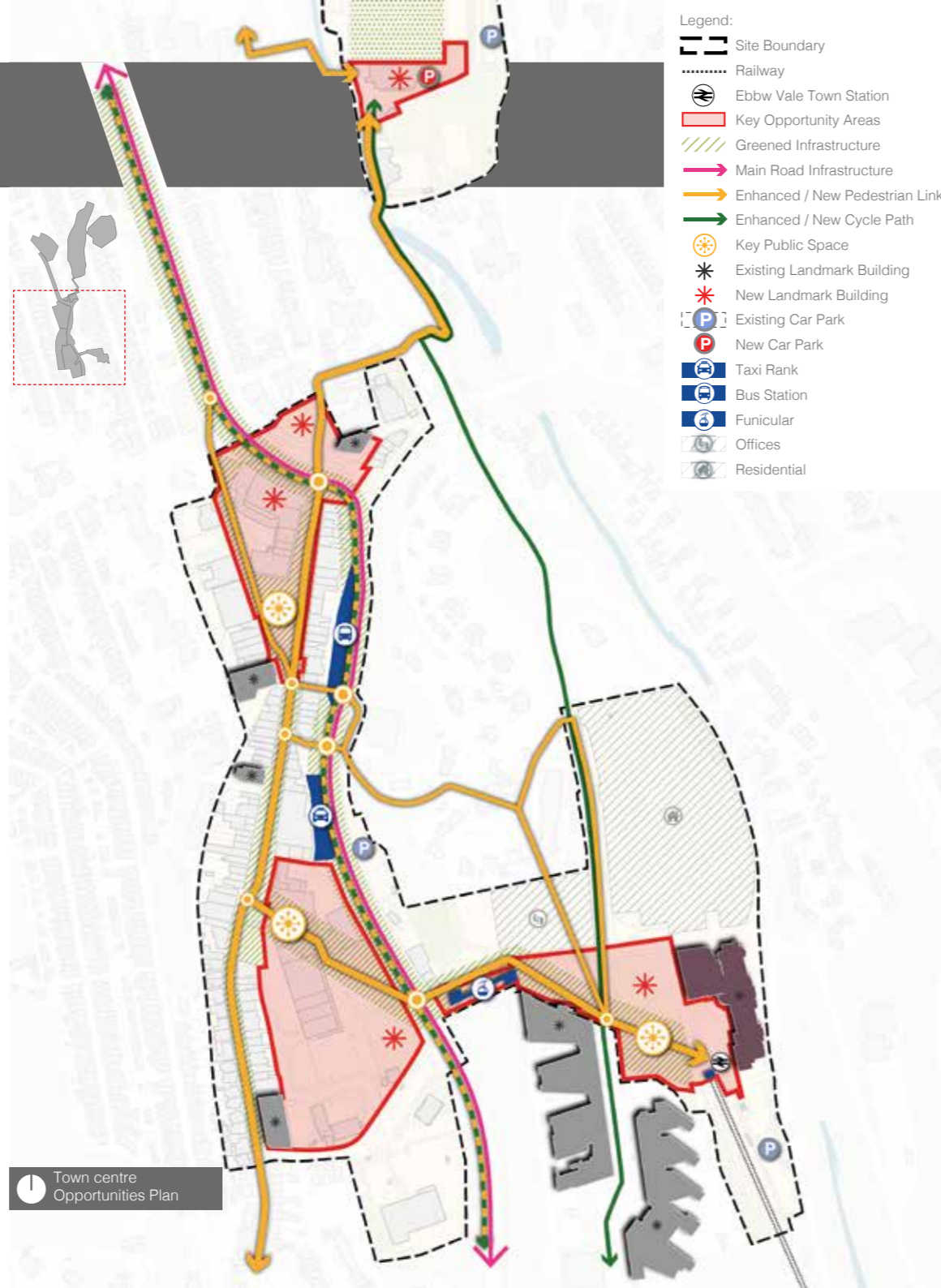


Eugene Cross Park & Civic Centre Issues Plan

2.2 STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK ON KEY ISSUES

- Movement**
 - Physical pedestrian connections between the Works and the town centre need to be improved. Signage also needs to be enhanced.
 - Population is due to increase in Ebbw Vale and opportunities to improve active travel should be considered.
 - There are key access points to the town centre that are susceptible to congestion.
 - A coordinated approach to parking requirements are required to provide sufficient capacity without the infrastructure dominating.
- Green Infrastructure**
 - The slope between the town centre and The Works contributes green infrastructure, but affected by Ash die-back and requires management/species diversification.
 - Opportunities for planting on-street could be limited due to street services
- Use and Activities**
 - Consider the future role of town centres, encourage more start up businesses in the town.
 - Residential development in the centre should be done in the right way.
 - The commercial future of the multi-storey complex is unclear and requires management.
- Public Open Spaces**
 - Public spaces at The Works are not well utilised, as they are exposed, shady and poorly maintained. Maintenance and countering anti-social behaviour should be a key consideration for all design proposals.
 - The multi-storey at the top end of the town is no longer fit for purpose and physically detracts from the town centre.
 - There is limited space to create a terminus rail station building to create a landmark entrance without impacting on the existing parking. Consider synergies with the Station Square to create canopy, cafés and active frontage.
- Eugene Cross Park**
 - Parking and access are limited
 - Overall utilisation of the site is poor, and the overlap between the cricket and rugby pitch can be problematic
 - The Ebbw Vale R.F.C. clubhouse is outdated and not functional.
 - There are no changing facilities at the northern end of the Park.
 - The northern pitches drain poorly and lighting is limited.
- Long-term use of the police station needs to be considered.
- The town centre uses are not attractive to students and young people.

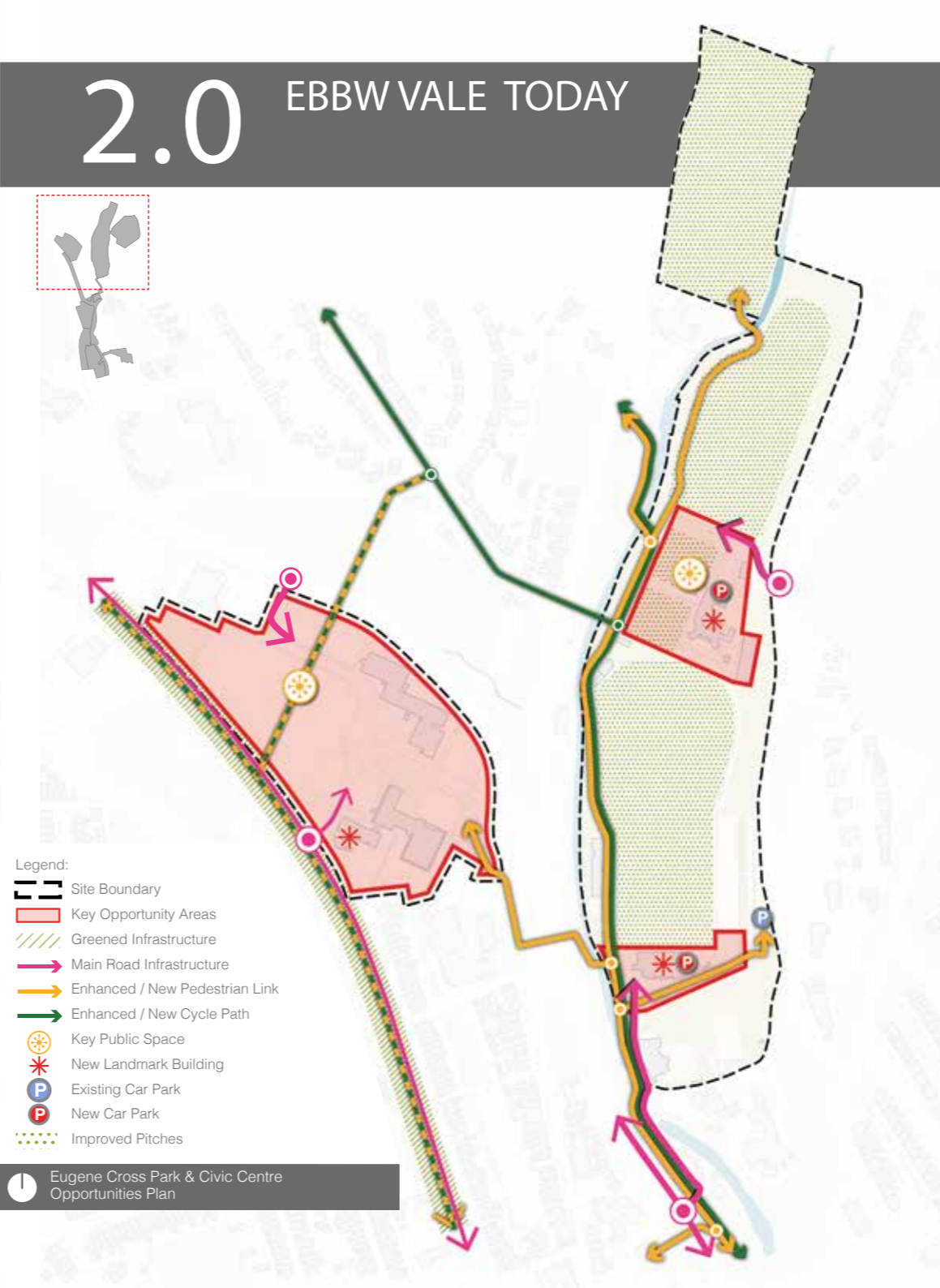
2.0 EBBW VALE TODAY



2.3 THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EBBW VALE

- Create a strong West-East movement corridor through the town.
- Create another pedestrian connection to bridge the slope between the town centre and The Works.
- Improve the legibility and safety of West-East and North-South pedestrian and cycle connections.
- Improve connections to Eugene Cross Park and the Ebbw Vale Sport Centre from the town centre and public transport nodes.
- Create a positive street environment for the A4046, which has active frontage; safe and comfortable foot and cycleways and convenient crossing points.
- Create clear visual links to the town centre from the bus station and the A4046.
- Create active frontage and attractive edges to the A4046.
- Create a series of high quality public open spaces, that draw on the character of the surrounding buildings and activities.
- Improve poor quality buildings and shop-fronts.
- Create an appropriate setting for key character, landmark and listed buildings.
- Diversify town centre uses to provide a broader mix of uses that create a more vibrant and active town centre.
- Create a new northern gateway that considers the renewal of the multi-storey car park and the associated development block and James Street car park.
- Create a vibrant, attractive and rail gateway; with a series of high quality public open spaces and uses that connect the town to the railway station and enable the area to become a destination in its own right.
- Deliver a new railway terminus building that creates a landmark entrance.
- 'Green' the town centre, by introducing new planting and SuDS
- Replace and/or rejuvenate the built facilities and Eugene Cross Park.
- Unlock the development opportunity provided by the Civic Centre.

2.0 EBBW VALE TODAY



2.4 STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK ON KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Movement

- Improve the pedestrian crossings on the A4046 and improve the pedestrian links through The Walk and to The Works.

Green Infrastructure

- Central Valley improvements are an asset to the town, connections to the reserve should be considered.
- The 'green lung' in the centre of the study area should be retained and enhanced.

Use and Activity

- Work with town centre businesses and help them to diversify and thrive. There are good examples of businesses that are doing well, demonstrating demand for local retail.
- A series of flexible commercial spaces could be established in the town centre to create an opportunity to introduce and trial new uses and create new business opportunities.
- Create more start up spaces for homeworkers and entrepreneurs in the town centre, since Box Park units have been received well. Ebbw Vale library is also being pioneered as work space.
- Introduce more residential uses in the town centre to diversify uses.

Development Opportunities

- Create a vibrant, destination space that is a focus for hospitality uses and community events.
- Some food retail on The Works should be considered for the College and rail commuters.
- Welsh Government will invest £100m over 10 years to create 1,500-plus jobs. Transforming Towns has offered a range of interventions across Ebbw Vale, including Box Park and enhanced 5G coverage.
- There is an identified opportunity for Ebbw Vale to use the Tech Valley proposals to diversify uses within the town centre.
- The College is likely to grow its curriculum in the coming years which would require new premises close to the current College building. There is potential to accommodate this within the town centre to increase footfall and expenditure in the town centre.

Eugene Cross Park

- Establish a diverse facility to be used by multiple sport clubs from grass roots sports to professional clubs. Eugene Cross Park Sports Ltd has been set up to deliver this vision.
- There is an ambition to transform the facility into a key social hub, not solely a sports facility, while complementing the town centre offer.

2.0 EBBW VALE TODAY

To understand the commercial and economic constraints and opportunities that need to be considered in order to effectively deliver investment to Ebbw Vale we have examined the regional and local property market. The issues and opportunities identified are summarised below.

2.6 COMMERCIAL PROPERTY CONSTRAINTS

- The past 12 months has been one of the most turbulent and challenging periods for the UK economy with retail, leisure and hospitality businesses being some of the most seriously hit businesses by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Online shopping has grown exponentially. Already accounting for 19% of all retail expenditure in 2019, total e-spending reached 28% for 2020.
- Local spending power limited since 20% of the resident population are on benefits; and gross weekly full time pay is 16% lower than the Wales average and nearly a quarter less than the GB average.
- Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, average footfall was declining steadily by around 5% year-on-year between 2015 and 2019; with shopping centres, retail parks and High Street venues all seeing an impact.
- Vacancy rate expected to increase with Local Data Company recorded a UK-wide net reduction of -7,834 occupied retail units in H1 2020, with the greatest number of closures in 'comparison' retail
- Completion of the Heads of Valleys road will make out-of-town retail including Cyfartha Park and Trago Mills; and leisure facilities at Abergavenny more accessible.
- There is currently only limited office-based employment in Ebbw Vale with no bespoke office park.
- Town centre 'leisure' offer appears to have declined over the last decade, and in contrast to national trends which has generally seen the rise of the "coffee-shop" and other leisure services within town centres.

Resulting fundamental structural change in the retail and leisure sector has huge consequences for the role and function of our town centres..

Some of the trends and impacts as follows:

- Town Centre retail dominance is over – a much broader social mix of activities is needed within town centres.
- Rising consumer focus on "convenience" – especially in terms of accessibility of places, response to 'click & collect' and same day delivery response from on-line retailers.
- Downward value of the retail asset class



Generally low vacancy rate across the town



Uncertain long term future for some key retailers



National bank closures impact on High Street

2.0 EBBW VALE TODAY

2.7 COMMERCIAL PROPERTY OPPORTUNITIES

Looking forward, some of the key drivers considered vital to future success of places include:

Local Employment Prospects

- Much of the strategic employment growth is directed to either The Works (3.5ha) or the Ebbw Vale Northern Corridor (Rhyd y Blew 13.2ha & Bryn Serth 10 ha). Successful delivery of these proposals, especially new employment growth will help reinforce and strengthen the economic vitality of Ebbw Vale town centre, provided efficient and sustainable connectivity between the sites is also realised and maintained.
- The procurement of new enterprise floorspace is, we suggest, one of the priority actions for a town centre redevelopment as it would bring in young, entrepreneurial businesses that should grow and establish themselves in the town. In addition to directly generating new employment and investment, increased footfall can only assist existing retailers and nurture new retail and leisure operators.
- The attraction of high value-added businesses in digital, life sciences, creative and tech is a clear target of the Tech Town Centre initiative. However, there is a growth of local services and small businesses in the foundational economy and this entrepreneurial spirit should be nurtured and encouraged. This will require cost-effective 'easy in, easy out' floorspace, with low rents, no business rates (under SBRR threshold) and, importantly, high-capacity digital connectivity. There are a large number of vacant shops and accommodation in the upper floors above shops could readily be exploited in this regard.

Demographic Trends

- Changing demographics (both population size and age structure) will present towns with different demands in terms of access, movement and the overall sense of place. As the primary settlement, Ebbw Vale is expected to deliver some 45% of planned housing growth (some 952 units)

Connected Communities

- The value of thinking and acting locally has increased during the enforced lock-down period with many people re-assessing their traditional journey to work and reconsidering local accessibility of services, entertainment, leisure and shopping activities. This in turn perhaps creates more demand for housing within walking distance of town centres.
- This is evidenced in the rise of the 20-minute city idea whilst people are also seeking more flexible space within their homes. Resilient digital connectivity in our homes is also now paramount in purchasing decisions.

Experiential Environments

- Consumer behaviour has moved away from shopping as the main event to demanding wider experiences and enjoyment of "places". Whilst potentially halted during the pandemic, this trend is expected to resume with town centres needing to offer a broader mix of activities and cultural events whilst also creating safer environments for stronger social connections.

Digital and Mobile Technology

- Town centres must adapt and respond to the demands of technology and find ways to interact more effectively with consumers of the future; especially if looking to attract younger consumers.

Importance of Space & Safety

- The Covid-19 pandemic has undoubtedly made people re-evaluate their surroundings and homes and it is clear a premium is placed on access to green spaces – both in the wider countryside and within our urban areas. Creation of effective, safe and attractive public spaces is paramount in designing successful places for the future. Thinking around personal space and impact on people density is evolving with more space required for each person whether they are resting or moving. This may lead to a desire for wider footpaths and more space for outdoor seating. Places that deliver a stronger sense of personal safety are likely to create a competitive advantage.

Climate Change Demands

- Consumer responses to climate change is leading pressure to buy local, reduce the need to travel and cut unnecessary packaging. Something especially highlighted during the pandemic with local traders and independents seen as "going the extra mile" to help. The e-retail sector will be quick to respond to these challenges, with movement on packaging and investment in electric vehicles for distribution.

Our vision for Ebbw Vale town is simple; we want it to thrive as a local place for its residents and businesses. If we can achieve this Ebbw Vale will also become a place that others want to visit and new businesses want to invest in.

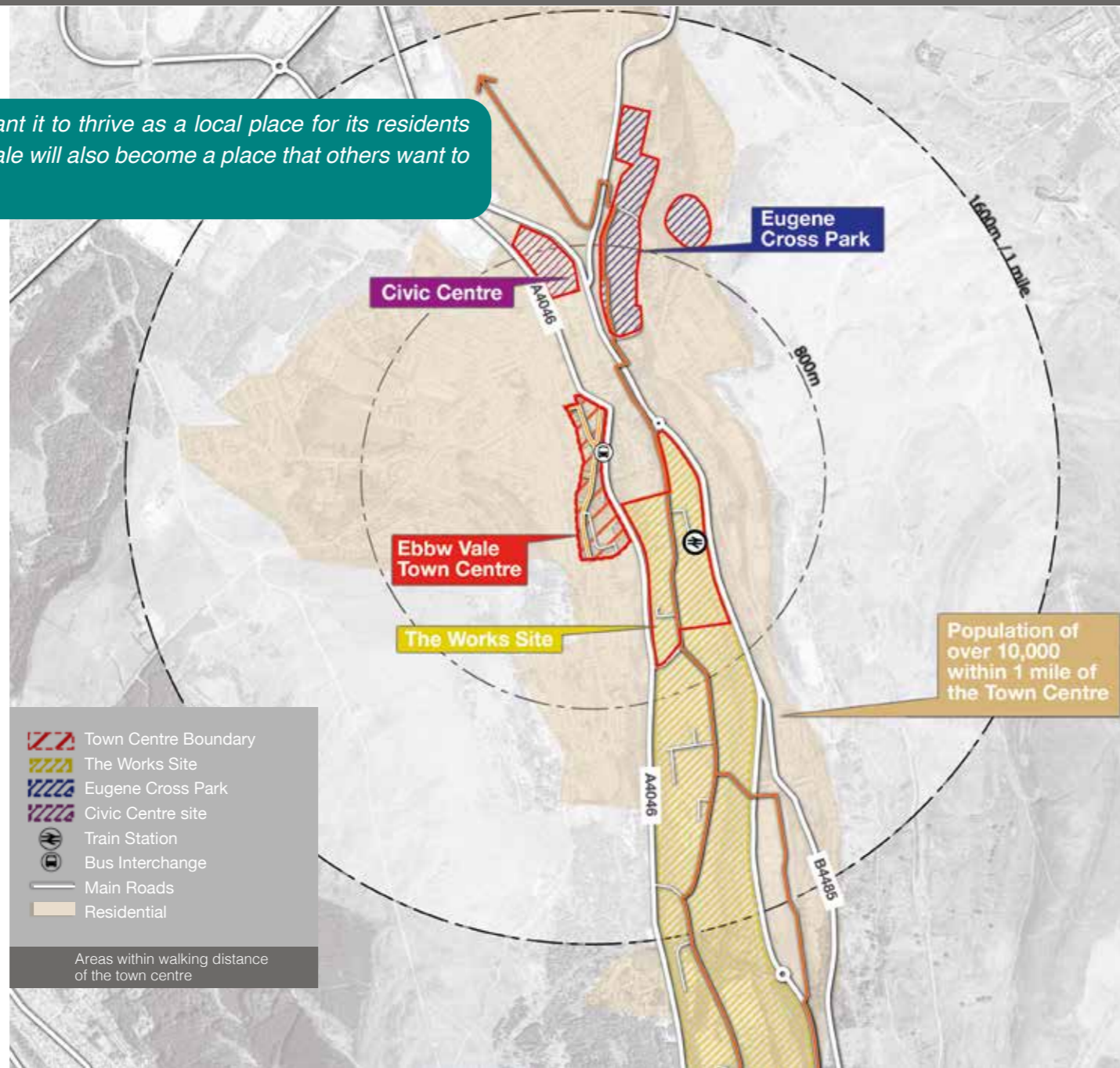
3.1 UNDERSTANDING THE VISION

To achieve our vision and transform the town after the Covid-19 pandemic, we need to put the 'Town Centres First' policy into action, and the placemaking plan provides the means to do this.

In delivering our vision we also want to exploit three key opportunity areas for Ebbw Vale town:

1. Connect the town with the locality and destinations.
2. Build on the area's green legacy.
3. Exploit tech and digital investment opportunities.

Further detail on each of these opportunity areas that can be delivered through the placemaking plan follows.



1. CONNECTING THE LOCALITY

- Better connect the town with the assets that surround it.
- Create a '20-minute' neighbourhood where key destinations are highly accessible and strengthen each other.
- Improve Active Travel connections and public transport facilities.

3.2 A 20-MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The Covid-19 pandemic requirements to stay local, and work from home has led to people rediscovering their local centres. The 20-minute neighbourhood concept embraces this, with people living and working in their local centres, enjoying open spaces close to home, and accessing all the goods and services for everyday life conveniently on foot or cycle.

The town's catchment is extensive and includes a number of key sites like The Works, Eugene Cross Park and the Civic Centre. If we can better connect the town with these area and the wider settlement via high quality active travel routes and good public transport we can ensure that the town and the surrounding area works together as one to increase vitality.

In addition to the physical connections creating a mosaic of diverse uses, in the town centre is also critical to encourage more people into the town. Introducing more residential uses and creating new types of workspace and leisure use in the town will help to create round the clock activity that will breathe life back into the centre. While making the town cleaner, greener and more inviting and enhancing its distinctive features would create a unique experience-based offer that cannot be bought online.

Finally, uses in the surrounding destinations need to complement the town centre offer. Ebbw Vale is undergoing extensive housing growth that can increase the vitality of the town. Complementary investment into the key sites of the The Works, Eugene Cross Park and Civic Centre site can further strengthen the town centre while also rejuvenating each site.

Key Facts:

- 45% of planned housing growth to be accommodated in Ebbw Vale
- Rail frequency to be increased to half hourly service
- Anywhere in Ebbw Vale can be reached in 20 minutes on an electric bike or public transport.



2. GREEN LEGACY

- Extensive tree and SuDS planting to build upon Ebbw Vale's innovative green legacy.
- Create high quality green places that connect the centre to Ebbw Vale's natural backdrop.

3.3 A GREEN AND HEALTHY TOWN

Greening town spaces have well-documented multi-faceted benefits on people's physical and mental wellbeing, as well as environmental benefits. Urban green spaces provide:

- Greater levels of social activity.
- Stronger neighbourhood relationships.
- Greater levels of physical activity.
- Improved health and wellbeing.
- De-carbonisation and tackling climate change.
- Improved air quality.
- Reduce flood risk and better manage water quality.
- Create new habitat and improve biodiversity.

Blaenau Gwent has outstanding natural assets, and a rugged backdrop visible from anywhere in the town. Moreover, Ebbw Vales Garden Festival at it's peak attracted over 2 million visitors to Ebbw Vale and provided the town with a national reputation and rich green legacy.

New green park spaces, vertical greening and street planting could be incorporated to unlock the numerous and health and environmental benefits and mark a new chapter in the town's innovative green legacy.

Key Facts:

- The Blaenau Gwent We Want study, part of the 2017 Blaenau Gwent well-being assessment found that (36%) identified the natural environment as what is special about the area
- Parks, vertical greening and street planting could be incorporated to bring the town's green character right into the centre



3. DIGITAL & TECH INVESTMENT

- Embrace the digital and technological revolution with world-class connectivity.
- Help deliver the Tech Valleys agenda.
- Create an environment where new businesses can thrive and existing

3.4 EMBRACING THE 4TH REVOLUTION

Not since the onset of the industrial revolution has technology been poised to play such a transformational role in the lives of consumers and operation of businesses. Preparing for this technological revolution that is upon us now is essential.

Increasing reliance on technology, including: cloud computing; digital interactions; artificial intelligence and 'Internet of Things' has changed patterns of working.

The future workplace has begun to look radically different as employers respond to a growing requirement for a work-health balance. While the town centre will grow importance in delivering social connections, community and personal experience.

There is the potential for a whole range of different types of business accommodation to thrive in the town centre, including small suites and co-working space for small companies and start ups.

There is a need to re-calibrate the town centre so they are resilient to change. The Tech Valley's policy which applies to Blaenau Gwent creates the opportunity to diversify uses within Ebbw Vale's town centre.

Key Facts:

- Welsh Government's Tech Valleys is committed to creating a new tech-cluster in Ebbw Vale
- £100m Tech Valleys programme offers a mixture of 5G technology, a new campus for cyber testing & innovative new business space

“The Fourth Industrial Revolution will be the most disruptive period any of us has ever known, as we continue to witness a blurring of the real world with the technological world.” Grimsey Review 2 (2018).

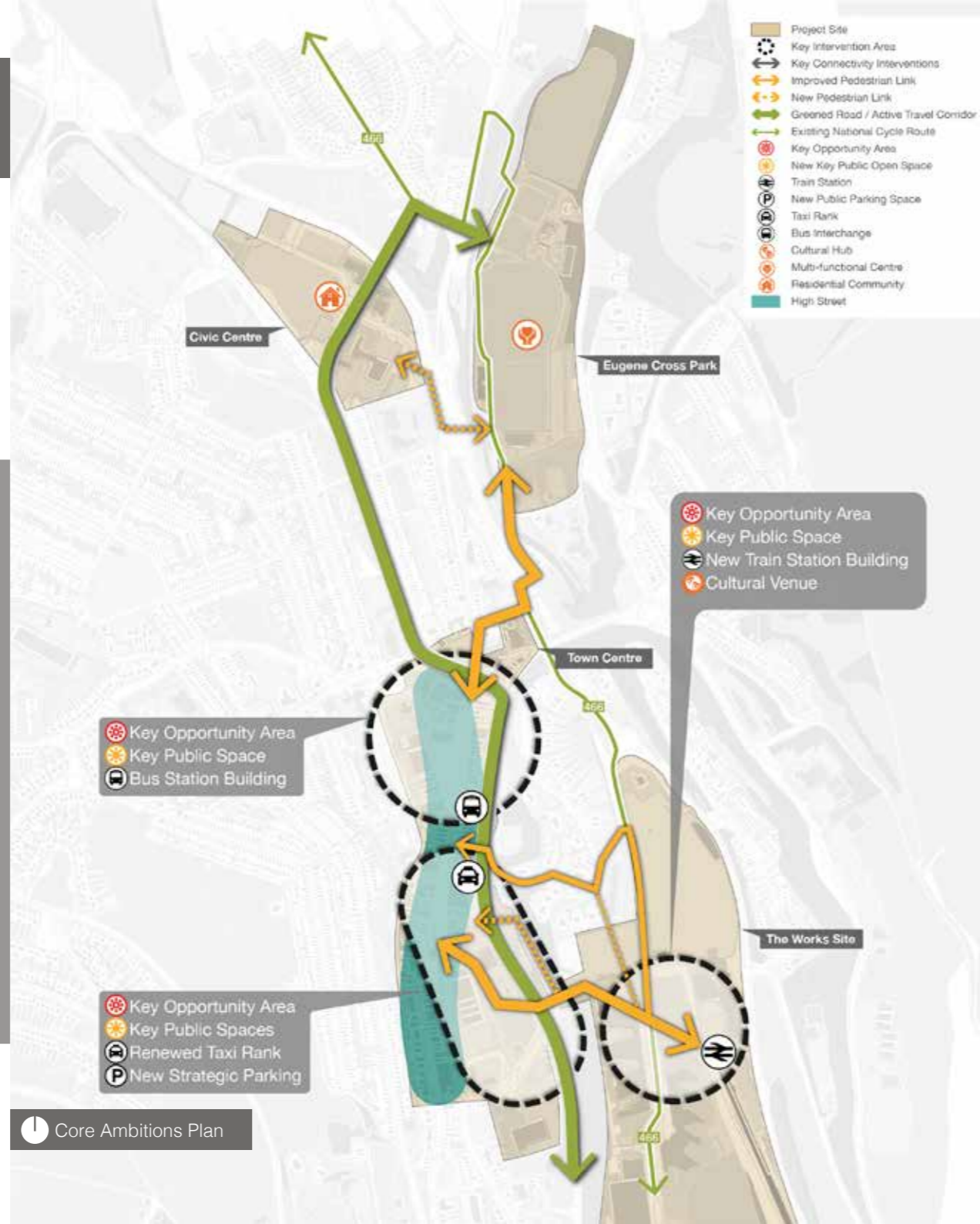
3.0 EBBW VALE IN 2035

3.5 THE CORE AMBITIONS FOR EBBW VALE

To help us deliver our vision for Ebbw Vale town we have identified six core ambitions that the **placemaking plan must deliver upon**. These respond to the key issues and opportunities identified through the place analysis and stakeholder engagement and if achieved will deliver the vision.

The six core ambitions will guide the type of projects and investment that we will pursue through the placemaking plan and explain the type of changes that we will deliver over the plan period. They will provide strategic direction over the placemaking plan period.

Our core ambitions for Ebbw Vale town follow.



3.0 EBBW VALE IN 2035



1. Establish the high street as a 'test-bed' for new business and **entrepreneurs** but also cultivate **an environment of growth for existing businesses**.



2. Create a series of new entrance spaces into the town centre that **open up the high street**, enhance the retail environment, green the centre and create space for new homes, work spaces and leisure uses.



3. Revitalise the **connections between the town centre and The Works** to give pedestrians and cyclist greater choice, reliability and quality.



4. **Transform The Works into a vibrant and active destination**; a place of arrival, culture, learning, working and living.



5. Establish **Eugene Cross Park as a regionally renowned sporting destination** that caters for specialist, elite and community teams and improve its connections to the town centre and The Works.



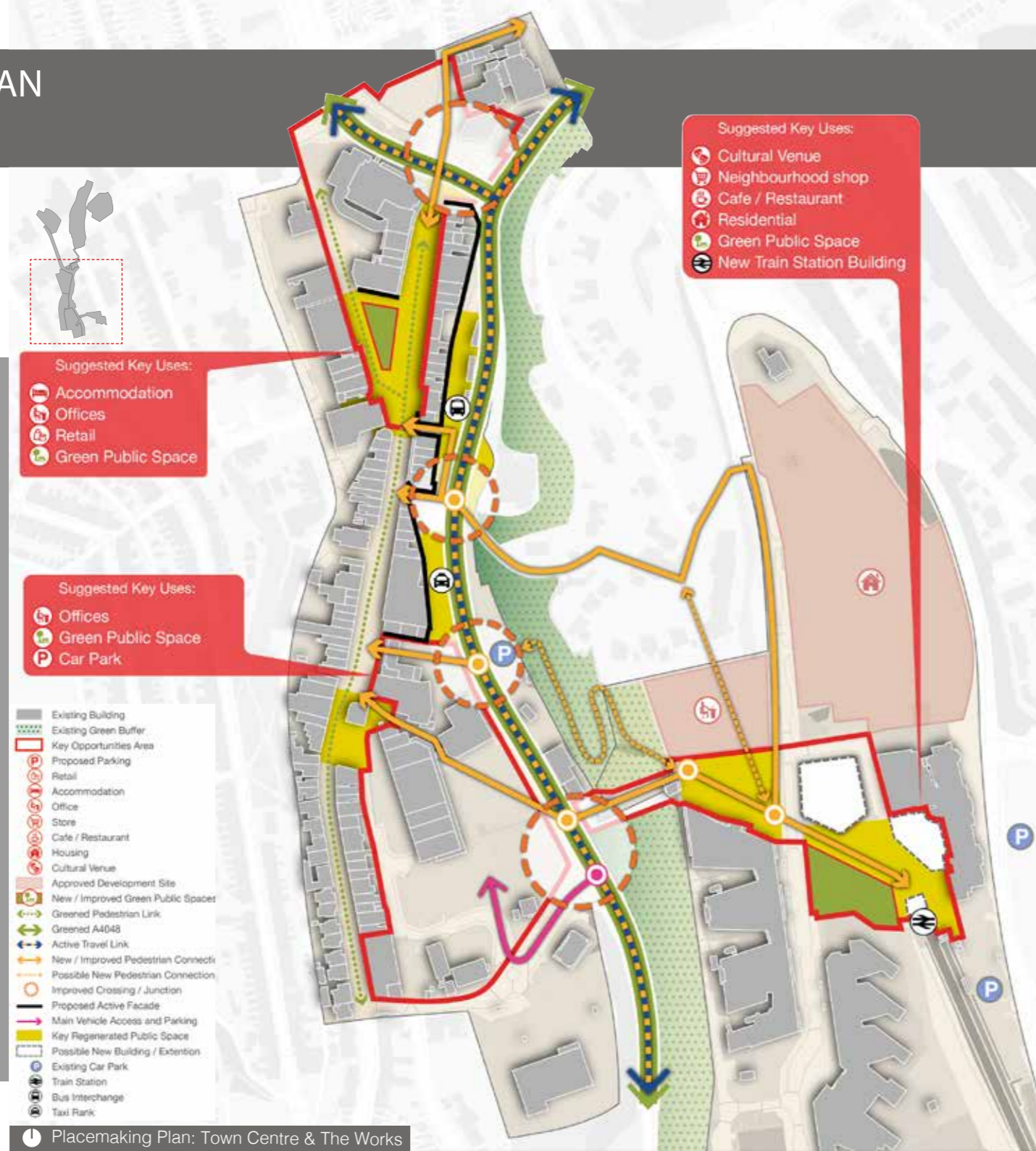
6. Transform the Civic Centre site into an **exemplary neighbourhood** of modern homes in a green sustainable setting.

4.0 THE PLACEMAKING PLAN

4.1 THE PLACEMAKING PLAN STRATEGY

To explain how we can deliver our core ambitions for Ebbw Vale Town we have prepared a placemaking strategy. This is visualised below and shows the key areas we want to change and projects we want to pursue. The key outcomes of following this strategy would be:

- New northern and eastern gateways into the town centre that enhance the pedestrian environment and deliver new commercial uses that diversify the centre.
- A more diverse high street on Bethcar Street, James Street and Market Street with new homes, work spaces and leisure uses alongside retail businesses.
- A series of green streets and spaces that can be utilised by local people and businesses and support biodiversity.
- A restored townscape that includes modern architecture and heritage buildings and shop fronts.
- Enhanced active travel routes that better connect the town and its wider settlement.
- A greater sense of arrival to the town by train and transformation of The Works into a diverse destination that complements and strengthens the town centre.
- Transformation of Eugene Cross Park into exemplary sports and community facility and the Civic Centre into a green neighbourhood.



4.0 THE PLACEMAKING PLAN

In addition to the physical projects and interventions that we intend to make, there are a series of non-physical interventions. While these cannot be shown visually on a strategy they are essential to the success of Ebbw Vale town. Such measures include developing a digital presence for the town, strengthening the quality of WI-FI coverage, creating a favourable commercial environment for businesses to survive and grow and establishing a regular series of events and initiatives that raise interest in the town as a destination and increase visitors. Each of these has been built into the placemaking plan and further detail is provided later in the document.



Through the analysis we have identified a series of unique intervention areas in the town and surrounding area where projects and investment can be focussed to deliver the placemaking strategy. The focus for each of these areas is identified below, with the following analysis demonstrating the type of investment and projects we intend to deliver in each area.

4.2 INTERVENTION AREAS

Northern Gateway

A new entrance space from the north where pedestrians are prioritised, new green space is created for everyday enjoyment and local events, and key buildings are redeveloped to create an attractive and engaging townscape that enhances the street-scene.

Eastern Gateway

A new entrance to the town from the east that delivers an improved pedestrian environment, better public realm that opens up the entrance to the town centre and connects the centre to The Works. Redevelopment of key blocks to offer a greater mix of viable uses in the centre.

Town Centre Core

Restored buildings and shop fronts in a green street setting. Diverse mix of uses that include vibrant retail businesses, workspaces, incubator and tester units for 'start-ups', leisure uses, homes and live/work spaces.

The Works

New landmark entrance to Ebbw Vale by rail with new terminus building and Station Square development to provide new civic and cultural space and outdoor event spaces. Enhanced pedestrian connections to the town centre.

A4046 Corridor

An enhanced active travel environment with space for cycle lanes, planting and priority pedestrian crossings to connect the town centre and The Works. Better integration of the bus station and taxi rank into Bethcar Street and treatment of rear properties.

Civic Centre

A new green neighbourhood with modern energy efficient homes and new active travel corridors that provide access to the town centre, The Works and Eugene Cross Park.

Eugene Cross Park

A modern sports and community destination with a new indoor training facility and community hub, all-weather outdoor training pitches and enhanced active travel and vehicle connections.



Project Intervention Areas

Non physical projects are not included in the intervention areas, but they are pivotal for the success of the town centre and are included in the following analysis.



Glamorgan Archive at the General Offices

4.3 THE TOWN CENTRE CORE

Main Issues

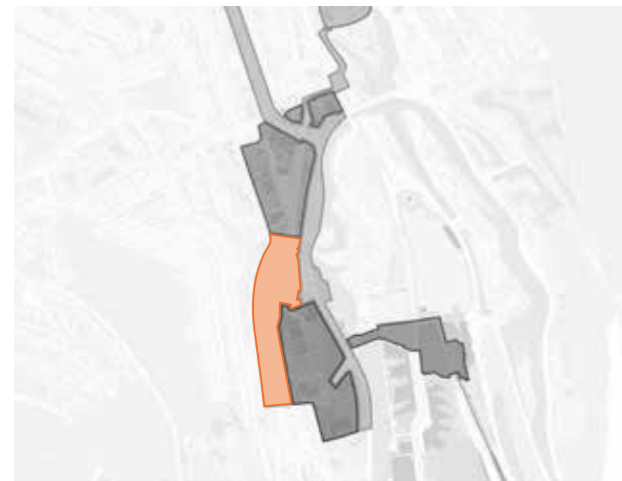
- Lack of high quality public spaces for outdoor socialising and events.
- Lack of greenery and park spaces.
- Lack of public space activation and "spill-out" spaces.
- Extended retail zone, with building vacancy affecting footfall and creating unattractive / inactive spaces.
- Overall quality of the retail offer needs improvement.
- Lack of commercial space, which would offer lunchtime trade.
- Under-utilisation of upper storeys.



Northern entrance to Bethcar Street.



Public space in front of the library.



The Walk access to Bethcar Street.



View of Bethcar Street looking south.

Re-enliven the town centre core by focusing upon visitor experience, creating a unique place with a mix of independent retail and hospitality. Delivering change will rely on a mix of place based projects: uplifting quality of the built fabric and shop fronts, creating character areas around new and reinvigorated public open spaces, and activity based proposals: condensing the retail zone, supporting & enabling new uses, and embracing technology.



Potential Projects

- Create a series of flexible commercial units that can be utilised by emerging businesses to test and grow their business.
- Deliver 'live-work' units in the town centre and identify targeted opportunities to create new homes above commercial premises that can cater for a range of needs (including and ageing population and young people), diversify town centre uses and increase activity beyond retail hours.
- Create a series of 'spill-out' spaces for existing cafe / coffee shop retailers.
- Restore and refurbish building façades and shop fronts to enhance the character of the town centre. Key priority to be given to batches of properties facing onto key public spaces.
- Green the street-scene through targeted tree planting, SuDS and vertical green infrastructure. New planting to connect to strategic greening interventions delivered as part of the northern and eastern gateways (refer below) and frame spill out spaces created for retailers. Ongoing maintenance to inform specification.
- Rationalise street furniture and ensure appropriate maintenance measures are in place to maintain the retained furniture.
- Create a regular programme of events and temporary placemaking to create interest and drive foot fall into the town.
- Establish a Local Development Order to provide greater flexibility for changes of use that would complement the town centre and help increase activity and footfall.
- Promote the town centre as a 'pilot project' to test the benefits of freezing or reducing business rates for town centre businesses.
- Nurture strong local leadership (via establishment of a BID or Chamber of Commerce) that can organise the growth and diversification of the town centre offer from the 'grass roots' up.
- Provide high-speed network coverage in the town centre to enable businesses to trade but also encourage visitors and flexible workers to stay in the town.
- Develop an online digital presence for the town centre that promotes the town and its businesses and provides a means for retailers to trade online.

Fulfilled core ambitions:



Establish the high street as a "test-bed" for new business and entrepreneurs but also cultivate an environment of growth for existing businesses.

4.4 NORTHERN GATEWAY

Main Issues

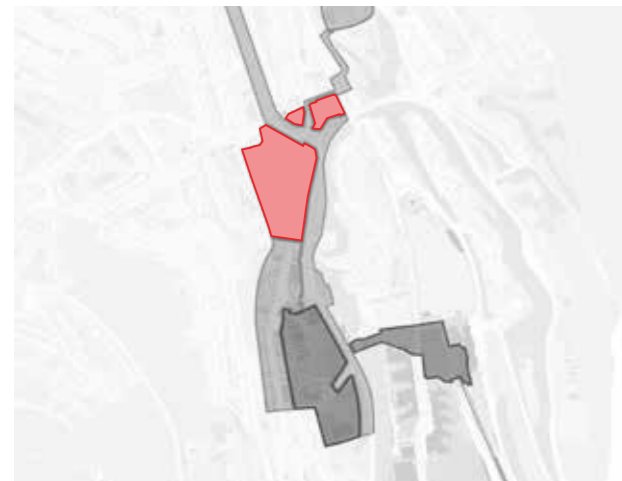
- The gateway is dominated by surface and multi-storey car park, and redundant road infrastructure, creating an unattractive entrance to the town centre.
- The main public space (Market Square) enclosed between Market Street and James Street is used as car park, precluding the use of the space for social gathering and events, temporary markets, and events.
- With the exception of two mature trees, there is no greenery.
- Inconsistent use of materials and need to rationalise street furniture.
- Dead / inactive façades onto public spaces.



Northern gateway, complex junction arrangement.



Northern gateway, multi-phase crossing.



Market Square.

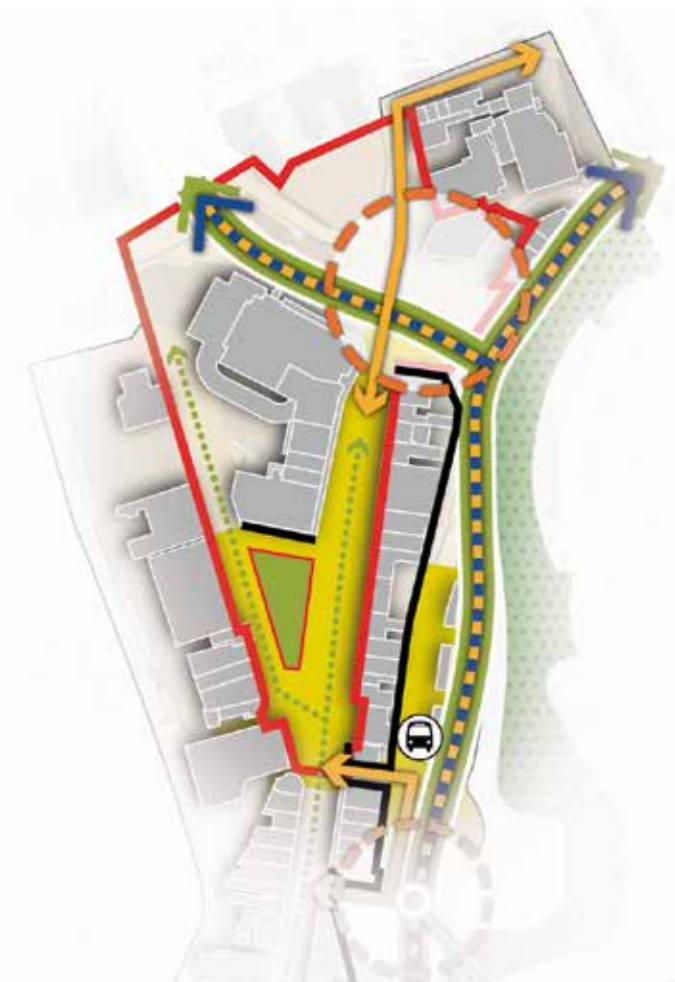
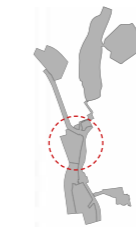


James Street looking towards Market Square.

The proposals seek to create a usable and beautiful green open space that acts as an anchor for community life, alongside street redesign that improves pedestrian connectivity and legibility. The space & accompanying introduction of active and interesting frontages will be the catalyst for strategic projects to create a distinctive and attractive landmark building that defines the Northern Gateway.

Potential Projects

- Create an improved pedestrian entrance into the town centre by simplifying the A4046 junctions serving Market Street, Libanus Road, Market Square and James Street to prioritise pedestrian movement, improve driver legibility, create a greener environment and unlock commercial development opportunities.
- Redevelop key development plots to create a landmark visual entrance into the town centre, deliver a greater mix of uses (including residential, retail and work space) and revitalise the street scene.
- Create a green public open space on Market Square to provide a green core to the town centre that can soften the town centre street scene, integrate new commercial development into the town centre, create a setting for music/theatre events and businesses and provide residents and visitors with an everyday social space.



Fulfilled core ambitions:



Establish the high street as a 'test-bed' for new business and **entrepreneurs** but also cultivate **an environment of growth for existing businesses.**



Create a series of new entrance spaces into the town centre that **open up the high street**, enhance the retail environment, green the centre and create space for new homes, work spaces and leisure uses.

4.5 EASTERN GATEWAY

Main Issues

- The gateway is characterised by an empty lot at the south east corner and by extensive car parking.
- Lack of sense of arrival and weak pedestrian accessibility.
- Poor legibility and pedestrian environment, with ill defined links to both the Town Centre and The Works.
- Lack of green public spaces and amenities.
- Changing retail habits mean the long term future of this type of retail development should be considered.
- Existing pattern of development lacks synergy with the town centre.



Pedestrian link to the town centre is poorly overlooked.



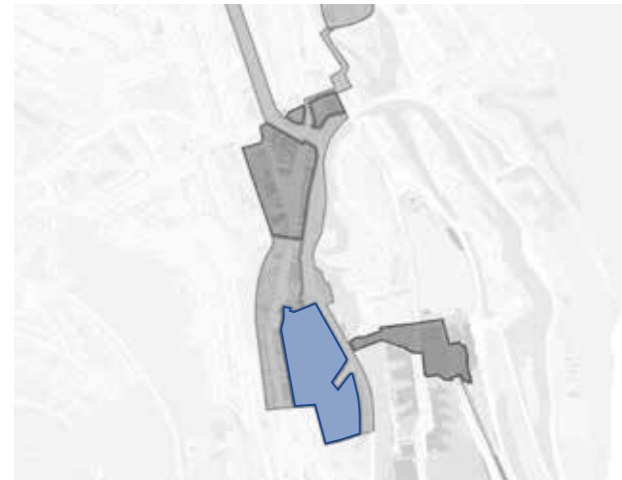
Path that connects The Works to the town centre is overgrown.



The pedestrian link that crosses Iceland and Argos parking.



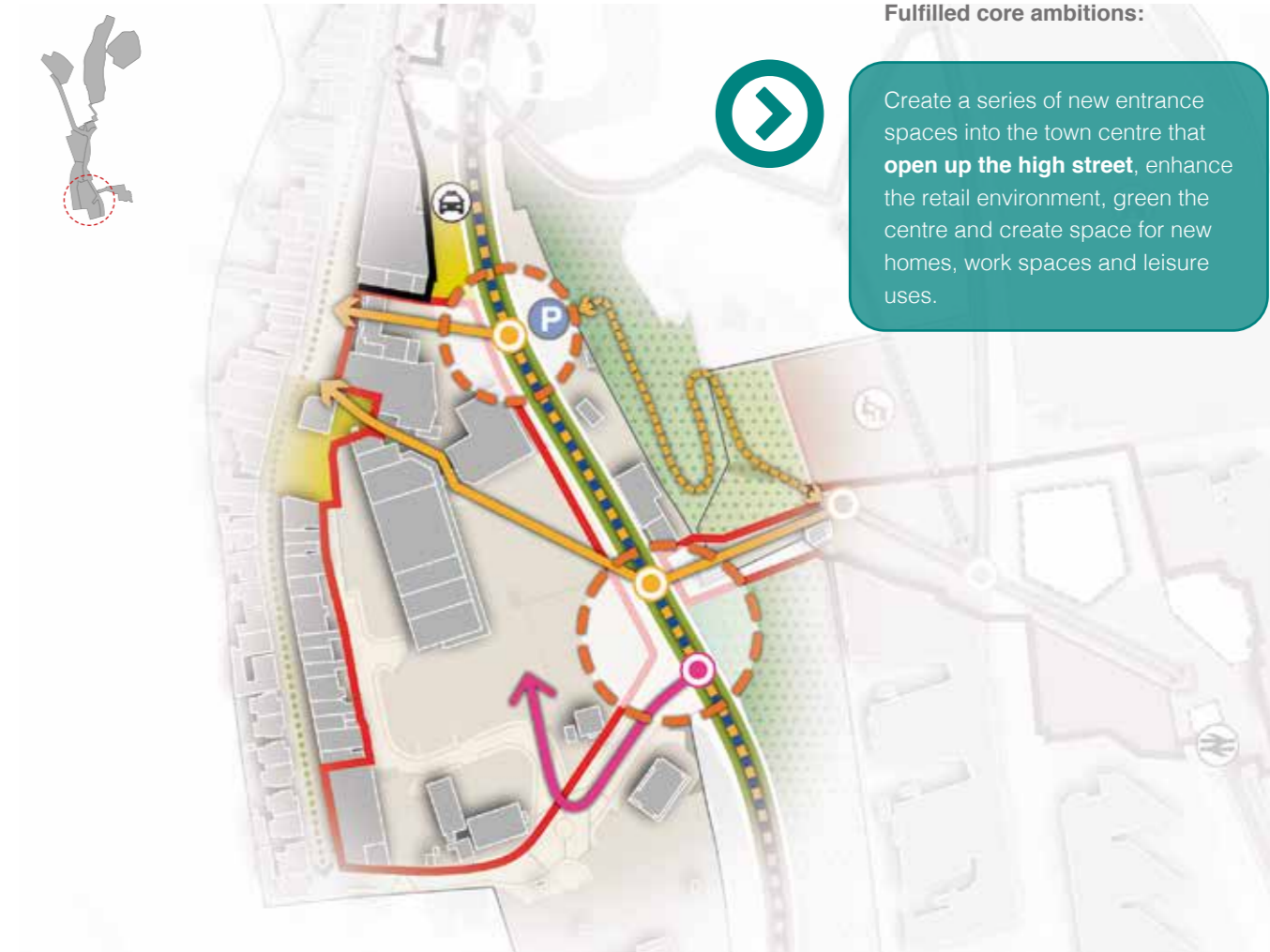
Ebbw Vale Police Station, Bethcar Street entrance.



Creating an attractive, well defined entrance to the town from the south, an improved public realm, and establishes visible connections to the Town Centre and the Works. Re-imagining this area will include redevelopment of key development blocks to create a diverse range of uses, including a high quality public open space, cafe/restaurant, consolidated retail uses, and new workspaces.

Potential Projects

- Redevelopment of the former Police Station and adjacent buildings to diversify uses and increase high street activity.
- Future redevelopment of the Police Station site to include landscape features space that can become a green heart at the town centre for use by residents and visitors. New green space to improve west/east pedestrian movement and enhance views of the town centre from the A4046.
- Open the southern facade of the old bank building so that commercial activity has the opportunity to spill out onto the Old Bank Square.
- Re-purpose The Walk shopping centre to include a mix of uses and create an external environment that is green, prioritises pedestrians and opens up access to the high street from the east of the centre and The Works.
- Provide electric charging points in The Walk car park and establish as a flexible town centre car park to encourage prolonged visits into the centre.
- Redevelopment of vacant development plot to create a southern landmark for the town centre and diversify uses in the town. New development to improve pedestrian connectivity between the town centre and The Works.
- Reduce the vehicle dominated design of The Walk by improving pedestrian connections.
- Consider the requirement for signalisation of the junction connecting The Walk and A4046.



Fulfilled core ambitions:

Create a series of new entrance spaces into the town centre that **open up the high street**, enhance the retail environment, green the centre and create space for new homes, work spaces and leisure uses.

4.6 A4046 CORRIDOR

Main Issues

- Redundant and hard road infrastructure, creates a poor and unpleasant pedestrian and cyclist environment. This is also accentuated by the complete lack of active façades along the road.
- Unsightly service areas and rears of properties dominate the street scene.
- Poor junctions and crossing provides a bad pedestrian connectivity.
- The bus station is badly integrated into the town centre.
- Taxi rank design is inefficient and unattractive.



Redesign of the whole street corridor to create a safer, more inviting environment for pedestrians and cyclists. The project introduces cycle lanes, safe and convenient crossings, new green infrastructure and sustainable water management. Better integration of the bus station and taxi rank and the town are also proposed.



Potential Projects

- Reduce the design speed of the A4046 as it passes through the town centre area and prioritise the movement of pedestrians, including west / east movement between the town centre and The Works. To include wider pavements, enhanced pedestrian crossings at strategic connections between the town centre, reduced carriage and painted central reservations, removal of barriers and street clutter, targeted planting.
- Designate a traffic free cycle route that connects to Eugene Cross Park and the Civic Centre and interfaces with existing and proposed active travel corridors.
- Targeted treatment of the rear of properties on Bethcar Street and Market Street to reduce the visibility of poor quality backs and the presence of service and storage areas to create better views of the town centre and a better pedestrian and visitor environment.
- Integrate the bus station into Bethcar Street via targeted removal of structures, street furniture and infrastructure to improve pedestrian connections and create views into the high street and new northern gateway.
- Improve pedestrian movements through the bus station by replacing existing barriers to movement (notably on the pedestrian island) and instilling natural traffic calming measures that correspond to the wider treatment of the A4046.
- Reconfigure the taxi waiting area to a 'pull in' from the A4046 to reduce the space given over to vehicle waiting areas and create opportunities to enhance pedestrian connections into the high street and activate the adjacent unit for commercial activity.
- Green the existing car park to the east of the A4046 and equip with electric charging points.

Fulfilled core ambitions:



Create a series of new entrance spaces into the town centre that **open up the high street**, enhance the retail environment, green the centre and create space for new homes, work spaces and leisure uses.



Revitalise the **connections between the town centre and The Works** to give pedestrians and cyclists greater choice, reliability and quality.

4.7 THE WORKS

Main Issues

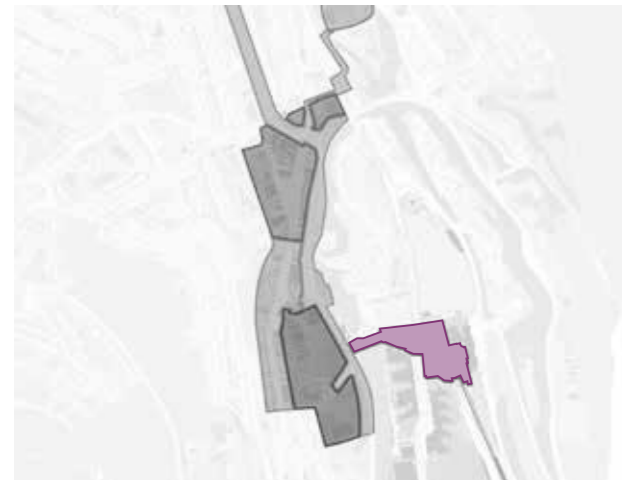
- Poor way-finding and sense of arrival.
- Small train station.
- Undeveloped sites provide a poor sense of enclosure and surveillance.
- Lack of activities, footfall and surveillance encourage anti-social behaviour.
- Underused green space and lack of good quality public space able to accommodate events and social gatherings.
- Lack of direct pedestrian access to the town centre through ramp / stairs.



Ebbw Vale Town Station.



General Offices building and the new annex.

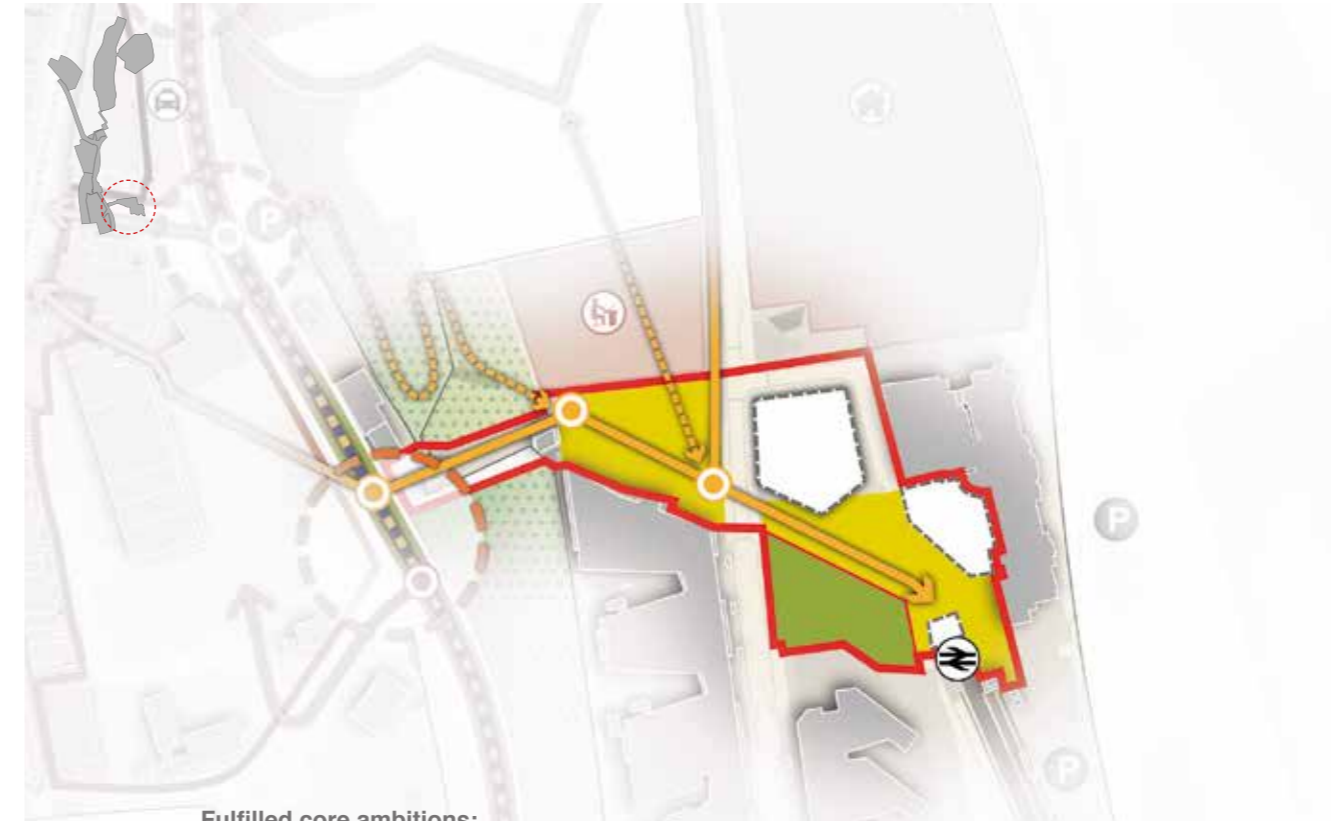


Station square empty plot.



The funicular that connects the Works site to the town centre.

Redevelopment of Station Square to create a new outdoor event space, a heritage-led expansion of the General Offices, and improved pedestrian connections to the Town Centre. A new landmark railway terminus building will improve passenger waiting and offer a better sense of arrival.



Fulfilled core ambitions:



Transform The Works into a vibrant and active destination: a place of arrival, culture, learning, working and living.



Revitalise the **connections between the town centre and The Works** to give pedestrians and cyclists greater choice, reliability and quality.

Potential Projects

- New railway station terminus to create a sense of arrival to Ebbw Vale and improve the passenger waiting experience.
- Heritage-led expansion of General Offices to accommodate the growing use of the building for civic and democratic purposes, with event space to add to the sense of arrival.
- Redevelopment of Station Square to provide a new cafe / restaurant and mixed use development with multi-use landscaped outdoor space.
- New landscaped square for outdoor events and to provide a 'day-to-day' work and learning space. Signature lighting to create a distinctive night-time entrance.
- Enhance the existing pedestrian connection between The Works and town centre with enhanced signage and lighting and explore opportunities to make the route more direct.
- New direct pedestrian connection that connects The Works and town centre via The Works Box Park.

Station Square and the General Offices

Station Square is the rail gateway to the town and represents a key place to design a high quality sense of arrival and place, while also creating a local destination. There is an opportunity to redevelop the vacant site on Station Square, a new Railway Station building, a possible heritage led extension to the General Offices building to respond to the increased use of the facility and high quality public spaces and routes.

New commercial uses delivered in the Square must be appropriate to the setting provided by the General Offices, education uses and new box park and complement the vitality of the town centre. The design of new development should be sensitive to the listed General Offices with appropriate scale and massing and an high quality architectural approach that utilises complementary materials.

- a1 New building uses to be defined, but could include cafe / restaurant, work space, cultural venue and residential.
- b1 New railway terminal building including covered outdoor waiting area bike racks and rentals to support active travel.
- c1 Sensitive extension to General Offices.
- d1 Easy to maintain green infrastructure & rain gardens.
- d2 Attractive and hard wearing hard landscape.
- d3 Enclosed outdoor rooms act as spill-out spaces.
- d4 Street furniture to for socialising and recreation. Signature lighting to reinforce places and routes.
- d5 Legible way-finding system.

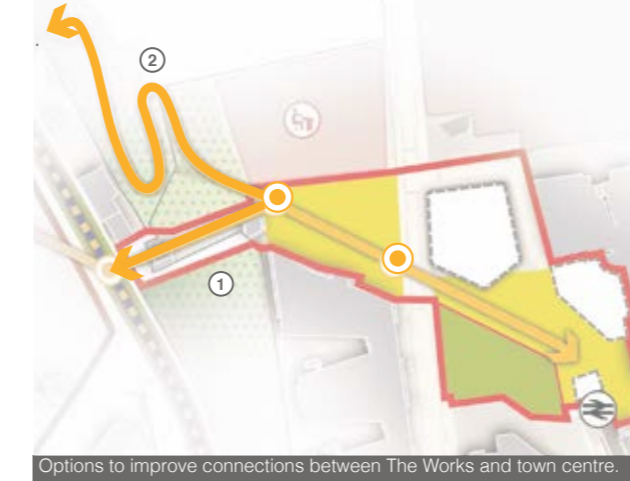


Station Square sketch visual.

West-East Pedestrian Movement

Increasing the connectivity between The Works and the town centre it is fundamental to improve accessibility, support active travel and attract visitors and businesses into Ebbw Vale. The existing funicular rail line marks a significant investment but alternative options are required to provide connectivity beyond its operational hours.

As a minimum the existing pedestrian routes between The Works and the town centre need to be enhanced, with better way-finding, lighting and surface treatments. There is also a need, to explore providing a more direct route. The topography between The Works and town centre is the key constraint to delivering this with a sharp change of approximately 25m. Two options have been identified that need to be investigated: the first a plaza and stepped structure aside the existing funicular (1), the second a ramped access that would run through the green corridor and provide access to the car park on the A4046 (2).



Options to improve connections between The Works and town centre.



Station Square: New development to be sensitive to the setting.



Station Square: Easily maintained spaces for interaction and socialising.



Station Square: Development can diversify The Works and create activity.

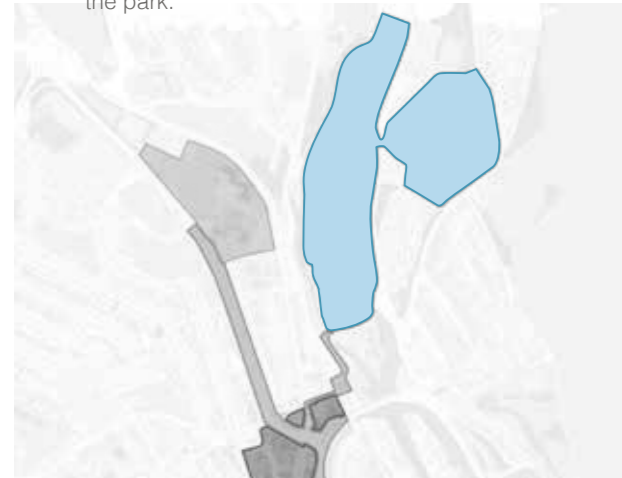


Movement: Stepped access featuring planting and a water feature.

4.8 EUGENE CROSS PARK

Main Issues

- Poor accessibility.
- Lack of parking space.
- Obsolete buildings provides poor energy performance structures and poor facilities.
- Rugby and Cricket field overlap.
- Lack of a communal facility and of public sport provisions.
- Poor drainage affects the quality and playability of sport pitches.
- The Afon Ebwy River is visually disconnected from the existing pedestrian and cycle paths that run across the park.



Southern access to Eugene Cross Park



Rugby Club House.

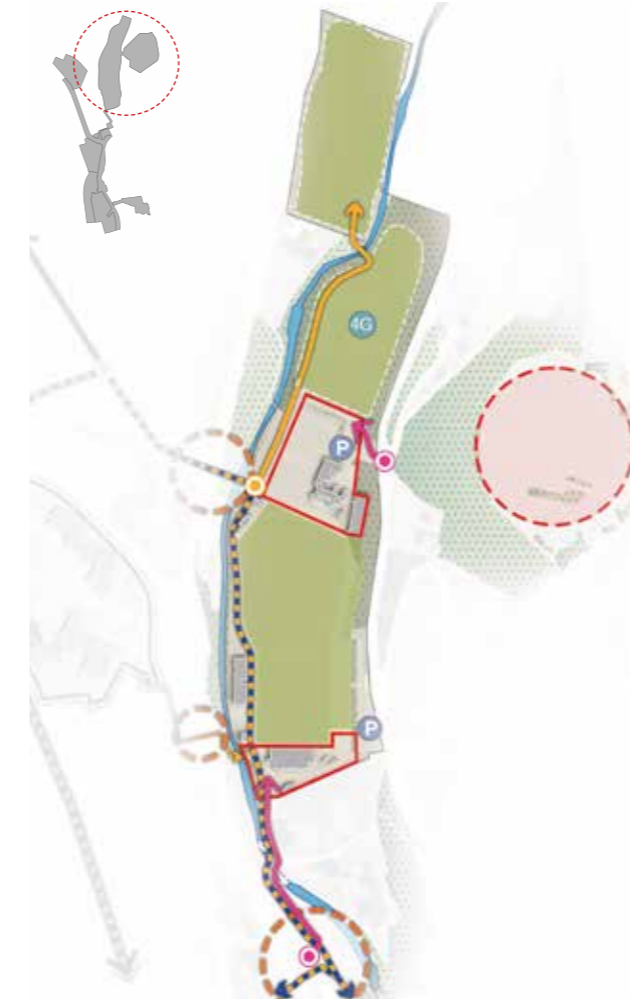


Afon Ebwy River.



Eastern access.

A multi-purpose Sports and Community Campus at Eugene Cross Park with renewed and reconfigured sports pitches and associated facilities. Improved vehicular access on site, and new training facilities will improve utilisation of the site. Enhanced connections to the riverside walk and the wider active travel network.



Potential Projects

- Enhancement of Ebbw Vale R.F.C. clubhouse and ground infrastructure to create a new southern entrance to the Park.
- Enhancement of Ebbw Vale Cricket Club and RTB Ebbw Vale Bowls Cub facilities to create a renewed heart to the Park.
- Provision of dynamic indoor multi-purpose sports and community facility on the northern playing fields with associated parking areas.
- 4G training pitches on the northern playing fields with indoor changing and storage facilities.
- Enhance the existing vehicle access into the middle of the Park from Newchurch Road to improve access to the 4G training facility, Cricket Club and Bowls Club.
- Provide a new vehicle access from the west of the Park to serve the indoor facility and 4G training pitches.
- Enhancement of existing right of way through the Park into an attractive riverside walk with outdoor exercise facilities and which connects to wider active travel links to the town centre and wider settlement.
- Enhance the key pedestrian and cyclist routes from Eugene Cross Park to the town centre, Civic Centre and The Works to encourage visits by foot and bike. To include better lighting, hard landscape treatments, planting to soften the journey and cycle lanes.

Fulfilled core ambitions:



Establish **Eugene Cross Park as a regionally renowned sporting destination** that caters for specialist, elite and community teams and improve its connections to the town centre and The Works.

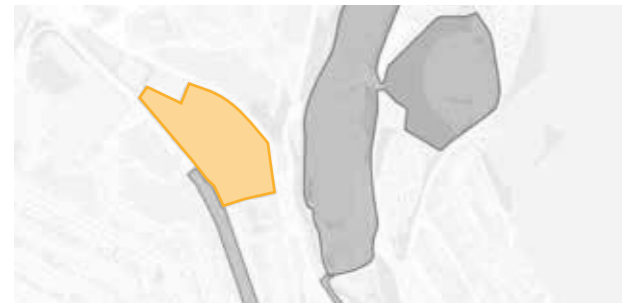


Precedent image: Pitches marked for multiple uses.

4.9 CIVIC CENTRE

Main Issues

- Civic Centre and former leisure centre buildings are vacant.
- Vehicle and road infrastructure dominant environment.
- Poor pedestrian and cycle connectivity to the town centre and Eugene Cross Park.
- Lack of public spaces and amenities.



Former leisure centre site



South east boundary with buffer planting



Department of Work and Pension's Job Centre building



Council Building and car park to the South

Potential Projects

- Residential redevelopment of the Civic Centre site and adjacent land to create a vibrant green neighbourhood with a mix of modern energy efficient homes.
- Integrate the existing health centre and residential development to create a wellness village.
- Establish an active travel corridor that connects the Civic Centre site with the town centre to enable residents to move easily and quickly to the town centre. Active travel route to continue north to wider residential development being delivered in the Northern Corridor growth area.
- Enhance pedestrian connections from the Civic Centre site to Eugene Cross Park and The Works.

Fulfilled core ambitions:



Transform the Civic Centre site into an **exemplary neighbourhood** of modern homes in a green sustainable setting.

The civic centre site is proposed for redevelopment, to create sustainably located homes within easy reach of the town centre and Eugene Cross Park.



Precedent: Mixed use scheme with residential and health/community uses.



Precedent: Contemporary homes that respond to Welsh vernacular.

4.10 TOWN WIDE PROJECTS

There are a number of projects that apply to the whole placemaking plan and a critical to its successful delivery. These projects, summarised below, are equally pivotal for the success of the town centre.

- Establish better cycle routes & cycle parking throughout the town centre to serve leisure and commuter cyclists.
- Incorporate bike hire facilities in key areas throughout the town centre. Include electric bike hire to address level change throughout the town.
- Reinforce signage from the Ebbw Vale Town Railway Station and The Works to the town centre.
- Consolidate town centre signage to reduce clutter while clearly signposting attractions and parking and highway requirements.
- Coordinated lighting throughout the town to enhance the sense of place of key buildings and key spaces in each of the key intervention areas.
- Expand on the existing programme of events to develop a consistent calendar of activity that includes heritage, food, music and recreation.
- Work with existing businesses to improve the diversity of retail and hospitality offer within the town centre.
- Deliver improved frequency of rail service, including later evening train services with integrated ticketing.

DIGITAL INTERVENTIONS

- 5G connectivity throughout the town centre with 5G classroom at the Works site.
- Create a digital high street through development of an app that allows interaction with Ebbw Vale and provides access to local businesses.
- Establish a brand and marketing strategy for the town, that consistently promotes the leisure, tourism and retail offer that is available in the town and wider region.
- Create or link to existing digital resources (online maps/council website/app) to aid way-finding for the cycle and walking opportunities through the town.

Fulfilled core ambitions:



Establish the high street as a 'test-bed' for new business and **entrepreneurs** but also cultivate **an environment of growth for existing businesses.**



Safe separate foot-way, with street trees and rain gardens

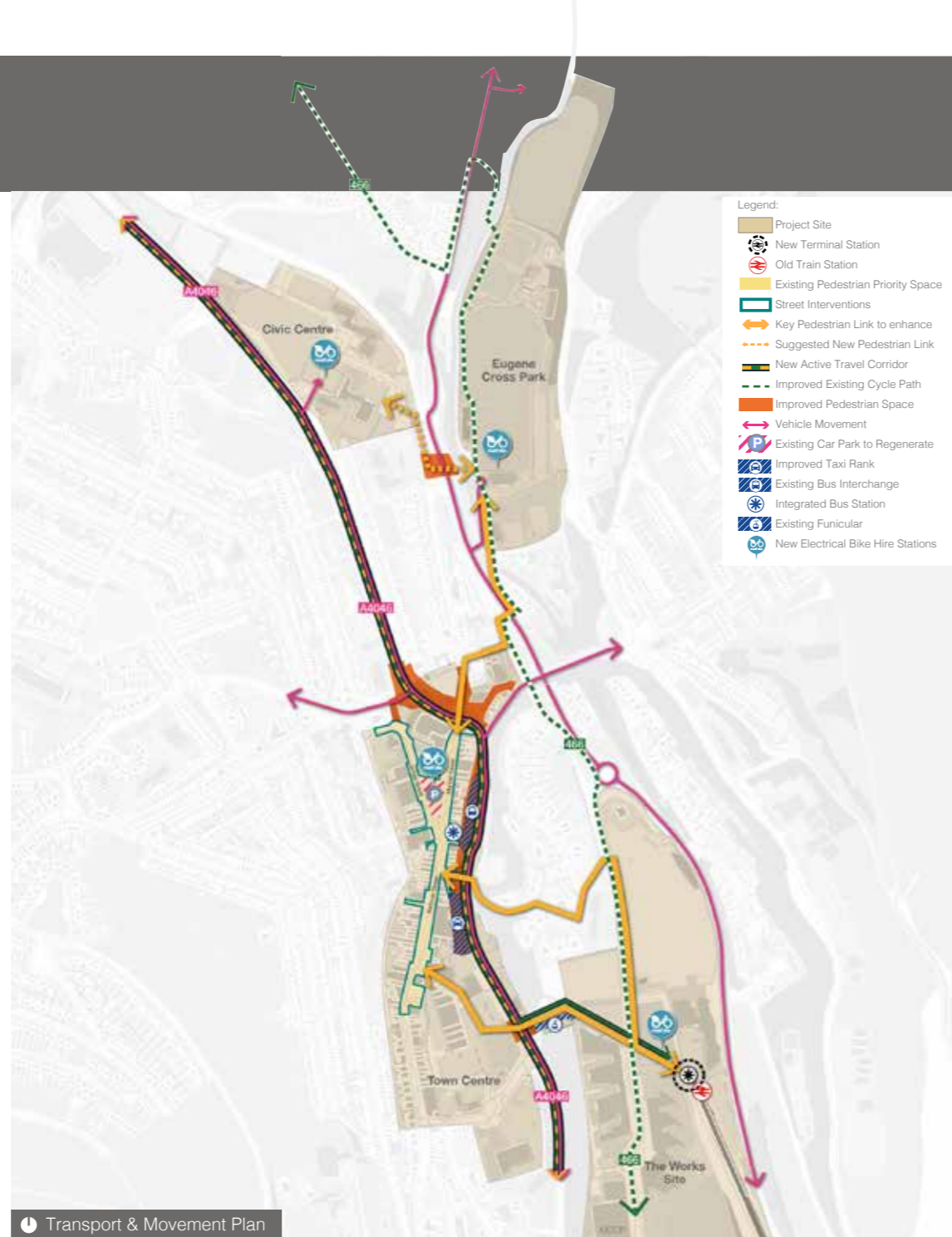


Walking route south through The Works and wildlife park with backdrop of Ebbw Vale's green landscape.

5.0 TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT STRATEGY

Given that the placemaking plan has opportunities to deliver investment and projects in different areas of the town and locality, excellent connections and active travel infrastructure are critical. Our strategy for connecting the placemaking plan area is described below.

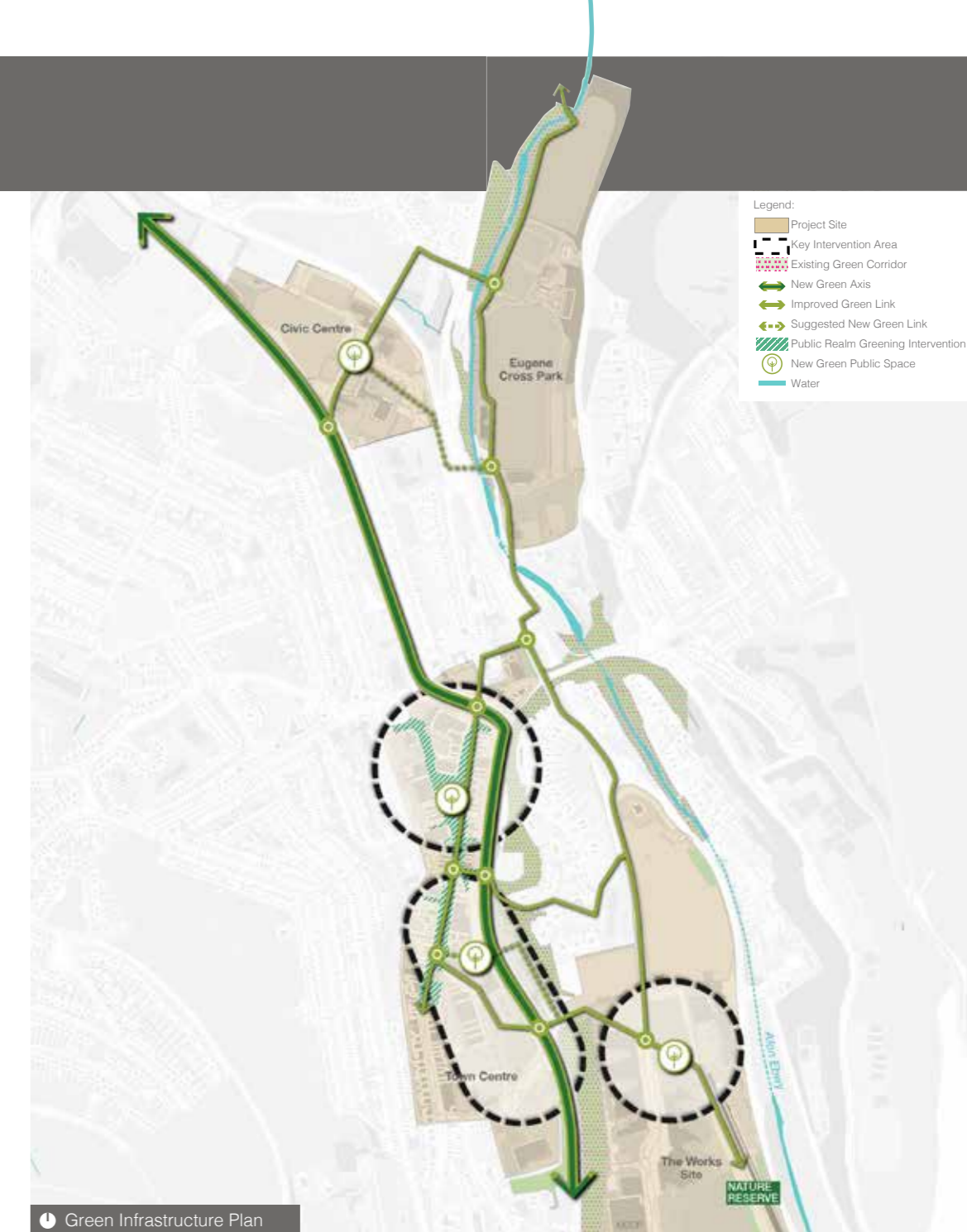
- Remove redundant road infrastructure along the A4046 to provide a safe and attractive active travel corridor for pedestrians and cyclists. Connect it to the existing 466 National Cycle Route.
- Connect the new active travel corridor on the A4046 to the existing 466 National Cycle Route.
- Improve existing cycle routes into the surrounding settlement, increase bike parking provision and introduce rental bike service across the town. Electrical bikes to be considered to provide fair accessibility to nearby residential communities.
- Better integrate the bus station into the town centre.
- Better integrate taxi rank into the town centre.
- Regenerate Market Street surface car park into a green public space, while providing flexibility to retain the area for parking.
- Implement an attractive and clear way-finding system.
- Provide an alternative pedestrian connection alongside the existing funicular to improve west/east connectivity.
- Enhance the existing pedestrian connection between The Works and town centre with signage, lighting and surface treatments.
- Create a welcoming and functional train gateway to the town with a new terminal station; high quality public realm; improved way-finding.
- Incentivise rail passengers to utilise the Ebbw Vale Parkway Station and its park and ride to address congestion at Ebbw Vale Town station.



6.0 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

In achieving our vision for Ebbw Vale we want to unlock the areas' green legacy and establish the town as an exemplar 'green' town. In better connecting the placemaking plan areas through investment in our active travel network we will create a landscape network of green corridors and places. Our strategy for delivering this is below.

- Regenerate the A4046 into a north-south green corridor with integrated active travel.
- Provide a green infrastructure network by greening the key pedestrian links through the plan area. For example the connections between the town centre, The Works and Eugene Cross Park.
- Introduce new public green spaces to serve the local community and attract visitors, and which are maintainable and 'owned' by new commercial developments and the community.
- Introduce parklets, planters and modular furniture to soften the town centre streets.
- Further consider vertical greening solutions in those parts of the town centre that are constrained by underground utilities.
- Protect the existing green corridor that runs along the A4046 and the River Ebbw.
- Provide a safe and active connection to the existing nature reserve located in The Works Site and work with partners to continue enhancing the reserve for the local community.



7.0 THE PLACEMAKING WALES CHARTER

In Wales placemaking is a statutory requirement of the planning system; the means to deliver sustainable development and provide solutions and investment that addresses current needs while also safeguarding the demands of future generations. The Placemaking Wales Charter provides guidance on how to undertake placemaking and introduces six placemaking principles to be considered. The placemaking plan for Ebbw Vale town has been prepared in accordance with the Charter and its principles. The below provides a summary of how the placemaking plan responds to the principles.

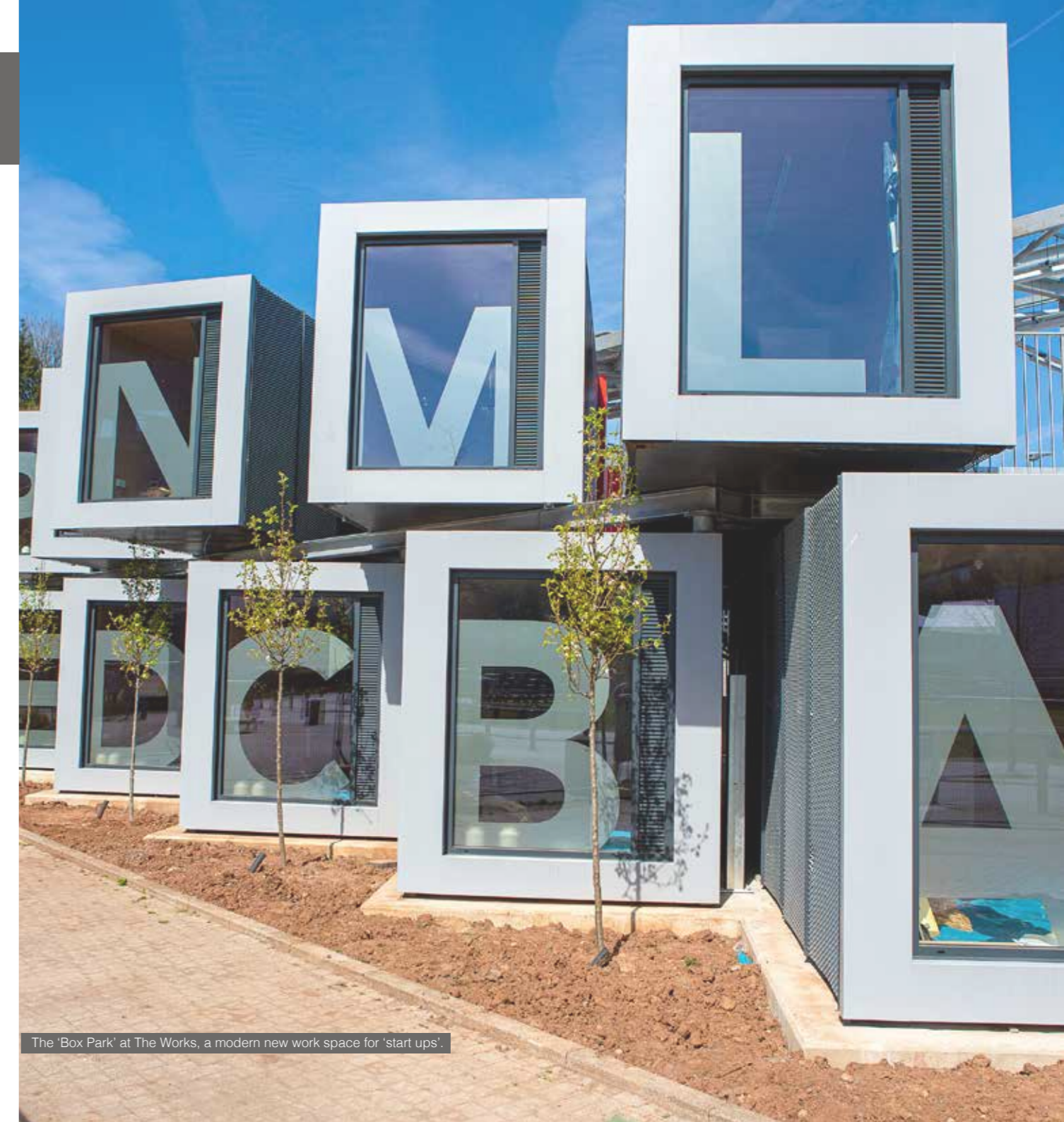
PLACEMAKING WALES CHARTER PRINCIPLES	EBBW VALE PLACEMAKING PLAN RESPONSE
<p>1. People and Community</p> <p>The local community are involved in the development of proposals. The needs, aspirations, health and well-being of all people are considered at the outset. Proposals are shaped to help to meet these needs as well as create, integrate, protect and/or enhance a sense of community and promote equality.</p>	<p>Comprehensive engagement has been undertaken during the preparation of the placemaking plan to find out about how the town works, what are the key ambitions for it, and what type of interventions and change would people like to see happen. Wider public engagement is also to be undertaken and will inform the delivery of the projects.</p>
<p>2. Location</p> <p>Places grow and develop in a way that uses land efficiently, supports and enhances existing places and is well connected. The location of housing, employment, leisure and other facilities are planned to help reduce the need to travel.</p>	<p>A key element of the vision is the 20 minute neighbourhood. The proposals intend to create a fine mosaic of diverse uses, intensifying residential uses, introducing new urban parks and creating new types of workspace will create round the clock activity that will breathe life back into the centre.</p>
<p>3. Movement</p> <p>Walking, cycling and public transport are prioritised to provide a choice of transport modes and avoid dependence on private vehicles. Well designed and safe active travel routes connect to the wider active travel and public transport network, and public transport stations and stops are positively integrated.</p>	<p>The form of new development will reduce the need to travel, while improved active travel infrastructure will reduce the reliance on private vehicles. Street space and underutilised plots previously dominated by cars are given over for planting, gardens, new public open spaces and bike lanes.</p>
<p>4. Mix of uses</p> <p>Places have a range of purposes which provide opportunities for community development, local business growth and access to jobs, services and facilities via walking, cycling or public transport. Development density and a mix of uses and tenures helps to support a diverse community and vibrant public realm.</p>	<p>The Placemaking Plan comprises a number of projects, strategies and non-spatial interventions. The tenure, mix and density is outline at this stage and will be developed at the next stage, however, a vibrant mix of uses that supports the 'Town Centre first' principle, supports local businesses, digital innovation and promotes active travel will be adopted.</p>
<p>5. Public Realm</p> <p>Streets and public spaces are well defined, welcoming, safe and inclusive with a distinct identity. They are designed to be robust and adaptable with landscape, green infrastructure and sustainable drainage well integrated. They are well connected to existing places and promote opportunities for social interaction and a range of activities for all people.</p>	<p>Individual projects will tie together to create a multifunctional network of green streets, formal and informal spaces, walls and roofs. Projects include: introducing new park spaces and vertical green elements; extensive native street tree planting, management of existing green infrastructure, introducing SUDs to new and existing urban streets and spaces throughout the town.</p>
<p>6. Identity</p> <p>The positive, distinctive qualities of existing places are valued and respected. The unique features and opportunities of a location, including heritage, culture, language, built and natural physical attributes, are identified and responded to.</p>	<p>We have the opportunity to build on Ebbw Vale's distinctive heritage to create a unique experience-based offer in contrast with online shopping, convenient by proximity. Projects will build upon the town's Green legacy, strengthening the green infrastructure connections through the town. Projects will seek to build on incorporate Digital innovations and promote Ebbw Vale as a tech cluster.</p>

8.0 CONCLUSION

This placemaking plan responds to Ebbw Vale town's unique setting and attributes and provides the basis for enhancing the town into a unique place to work, live and visit. The vision set by this placemaking plan is ambitious in the current context, but it is also realistic and can be delivered by private and public stakeholders working collectively over a phased basis.

Welsh Government's Transforming Towns agenda has meant that investment into the placemaking plan area is already underway at The Works. Improved connections between key destinations, digital enhancements, along with the new development and placemaking opportunities identified in this plan form an action plan for implementing the Town Centres First policy and will be transformative for the town.

The projects and placemaking opportunities identified in this plan respond directly to this exciting and changing context, and collectively they can enable the town and its surrounding area to once again become a key economic, social and cultural centre that provides for the needs of its residents and also acts as a catalysts for spreading growth and prosperity through the wider County Borough and Capital City Region.



The 'Box Park' at The Works, a modern new work space for 'start ups'.



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Agenda Item 10

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Regeneration Scrutiny**
Date of meeting: **8th December 2021**
Report Subject: **Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Performance Review 2020/21 Q2**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr N Daniels, Leader / Executive Member Corporate Services**
Report Submitted by: **Michelle Morris, Managing Director
Ellie Fry, Head of Regeneration & Development**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
16.11.21	18.11.21	26.11.21			08.12.21	27.01.22		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform Scrutiny Committee on the performance of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD) against projects relating to investment in Blaenau Gwent during over the middle period of 2020/21.
- 1.2 This report summarises and highlights key programmes of work Blaenau Gwent (BG) are engaged in and are of interest to BG.

2. Background and Context

- 2.1 The report includes progress of the programme against key targets identified within the CCR Business Plan for 2020/2.
- 2.2 Highlights for BG include:
 - Metro Plus Programme - Transport for Wales (TfW) progress
 - Ultra Low Emission Transformation Fund
 - Housing Catalyst Fund
 - Challenge Fund Application
 - Aspire Roll Out
- 2.3 There are a number of projects that are now being progressed with CCR funding in Blaenau Gwent and these are outlined below with an update on the current position.
- 2.4 **Metro Plus Programme - Transport for Wales (TfW) progress**
Progress is continuing on the rail project components put forward as part of the Metro Plus scheme in BG on the Abertillery spur.
- 2.5 This local authority Metro Plus scheme is progressing as part of the wider programme of small, regional enabling infrastructure, to stimulate economic growth and regeneration across Cardiff City Region, supporting the

sustainable mobility of people, and improving the way people make their economic contribution.

- 2.6 The GRIP 3 development and design work on the Abertillery line funded by CCR is being progressed by Tfw and will continue through 21/22 and 22/23. The links and services to both Cardiff and Newport are still being tested in detail as part of the wider infrastructure and scheduling work.
- 2.7 Conversations with UK Govt Department for Transport are ongoing in terms of providing funds to bring the Abertillery spur back into use alongside the other work being done on the mainline. This opportunity might well have been missed if we hadn't had the CCR Metro money to develop the initial WelTAG work and designs in preparation.
- 2.8 **Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Transformation Fund**
The progress on the £1.3million from the Welsh Government Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) Transformation Fund which will assist with the transition to Low Emission across the region is set out below.
- 2.9 As a reminder the two projects being funded across CCR are: the Taxi ULEV project and the Taxi ULEV charging infrastructure on taxi ranks for the sole purpose of charging taxis. The charge points have now been installed in the taxi ranks and we are just awaiting last checking for them to 'go live'.
- 2.10 The work programme is now focussing on the Depot charger installations and we will be installing a rapid charge point at the Depot for use by taxi operators. Charging times will be limited to those when taxi operators are on site for annual testing on Tuesday – Thursday at 11am or 1pm which the funders are happy to accept. We are currently awaiting a date for the site visit with the contractor to agree the optimum location for the charger taking into account the supply and parking/operational needs on site. The Head of Community Services will attend the site visit to ensure he is happy with the installation arrangements.
- 2.11 Charge point power connection timetable:
- Carmel Street – we are still waiting for WPD to confirm the date their works will commence.
 - Ebbw Vale Taxi Rank – DNO works complete, meter will be installed on 23rd November, so the charge point should be live late November / early December
 - Station Rd, Brynmawr – DNO works complete, we are waiting on a meter installation date
 - Gwent Shopping Centre – DNO works due to commence on 11th November.
- 2.12 With regards to the EV Taxi provision for each local authority to encourage take up of electric taxis – BG has been assigned 2 electric taxis to enable the 30-day trials to go ahead once the EV charging infrastructure has been installed.

- 2.13 The BG EV taxi project has been out to tender for a management company to run the 30 day free trial test. BG Licensing is involved with CCR in this part of the project. The tender has been awarded to Day's Rental and they will be managing the vehicles with first 30 day vehicle loans being organised from the 1st December 2021. The website for booking was launched on 10th November for taxi drivers to book their trial. The email address is:
<https://www.electrictaxiwales.co.uk>
- 2.14 The last area of work is the public EV charge point infrastructure. BG were part of the evaluation panel for the tender submission which has now appointed the successful contractor. They are currently in the process of signing contracts. We now have 12 sites identified for public EV charge points, including the car park on council owned land at the end of William Street, Cwm. We will be reviewing these initial suggestions as we progress with the project so that we try and spread provision in the areas where it is required.
- 2.15 **Housing Catalyst Fund**
The CCR Housing Viability Gap Fund second stage of the process has been ongoing since August. This is a targeted funding programme to bring forward new homes on key strategic housing sites across South East Wales.
- 2.16 The BG successful submission had a known viability gap and was ready to deliver, with the ability to progress the development within the timelines set out by CCR. The appraisal by CCR and CPRE has now agreed that there is a viability gap which requires a grant input to support the development to go ahead.
- 2.17 The next steps will be to work through the discharge of conditions over the next few weeks with an aim for the contract arrangements being agreed by the end of 2021. CBRE/CCR will make the recommendation to their Cabinet in late November for approval and issue the draft agreement. BG will review the agreement and put in place the grant agreement with the developer. Legal advisors are in place to action this work within the deadlines.
- 2.18 When the scheme is finalised and the planning has been issued the development will be subject to a further appraisal review. The scheme is also dependent on a successful land sale. The development is currently based on 77 homes which includes 10% affordable.
- 2.19 Subject to final approval/sign off the current indicative timeline is:

Action	Year
Secure Planning Permission	Q4 2022
Commence CCR Funded Infrastructure Work	Q1 2023
House construction works start	Q4 2023
First homes completed	Q2 2024

2.20 **Cardiff City Region Challenge Fund Application**

The funding for the Civic Crowdfunding project through the CCR Challenge Fund submissions was unsuccessful. BG was advised that it didn't fit the criteria for the CCR Challenge Fund although initially the Council was encouraged to submit it as a project. As a reminder this fund was asking us to explore creative and innovative solutions to local economic challenges; developing ideas/products that could be scaled up locally or nationally and build local wealth.

2.21 The CCR Team have advised that they will assist us in looking at other funds to bring this project forward, but this will result in a delay in implementation until we find another source.

2.22 **Aspire Roll-Out across the City Region**

CCR Investment panel received a proposal from Aspire BG to roll out the offer across the Region to provide support for Industries of the Future in 2020. Following a review of the existing apprenticeship landscape across SE Wales, specifically focussing on Shared Apprenticeship Programme aspect in relation to growing and priority sectors we have received a response from CCR.

The CCR Investment panel approved the paper in October 2021 along with the sum of £500k for two years, this will need to be agreed by CCR Cabinet and they will meet on the 29th November. It is understood that this funding will be for a Shared Apprenticeship pilot delivery model and further research.

2.23 The next stages of the pilot will be reported back once we have further information on process.

3. **Recommendations for Consideration**

3.1 That the content of the CCRCDD report is noted.

4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 The CCRCDD is a key strategic initiative for the Council, which will assist in delivering the Corporate Plan in terms of job creation, housing and improved transport connections in addition, alongside nine other Local Authorities we are working to deliver a range of programmes to improve the connectivity, infrastructure and business governance of the region.

4.2 These projects support the amendments made to the Outcome Statements within the Corporate Plan in its review in October 2019.

Corporate Plan 2020/22 Outcome Statements:

- Protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure to benefit our communities
- Support a fairer sustainable economy and community
- To enable people to maximise their independence, develop solutions and take an active role in their communities

- An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities

5. **Implications**

5.1 There are no direct implications as part of this report as it is monitoring other projects that will or have been reported and have separately listed implications.

6. **Monitoring Arrangements**

6.1 Monitoring is undertaken through the CCR gateway review and project progress updates summarised in this report.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1

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Appendix 1 – EV Charge Point Locations

Taxi ULEV Charging Infrastructure

- Carmel Street car park Abertillery
- Brynmawr Taxi Rank, Station Road, Brynmawr
- Ebbw Vale Taxi Rank
- Tredegar Taxi Rank in Gwent Shopping Centre car park.

Car Park and On Street EV Charging Infrastructure for use by the public

Blaenau Gwent officers have put forward 12 sites to be included within the contract and two sites for the reserve list. These sites are:

1. Two car parks at the General Offices, Steelworks Road, Ebbw Vale
2. Council owned land opposite Rassau Industrial Estate, Ebbw Vale
3. Armoury Terrace car park, Ebbw Vale
4. Car park opposite Blaentillery Club, Tillery Road, Cwmtillery
5. Llanhilleth Railway Station
6. Ebbw Vale Parkway Railway Station
7. Gwent Shopping Centre
8. ViTTC, Tredegar Business Centre, Tredegar
9. Bryn Bach Park
10. Market Square car park, Brynmawr
11. William Street car park, Cwm, Ebbw Vale
12. Car park at Cwm Terrace, Cwm, Ebbw Vale

Reserve list

- Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate, Tredegar
- Anvil Court

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Agenda Item 11

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **8th December 2021**
Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme: 9th February 2022**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr David Davies, Deputy Leader and Executive Member Regeneration and Economic Development**
Report Submitted by: **Cllr John Hill, Chair of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
x	x	26.11.21			08.12.21			

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present to Members the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 9th February 2022 for discussion and agreement.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Scrutiny Work Programmes are key aspects of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and support the requirements of the Constitution.
 - 2.2 The topics set out in the Forward Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's revised Corporate Plan, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
 - 2.3 Effective work programmes are essential to ensure that the work of scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services.
 - 2.4 The Committee's Forward Work Programme was agreed in June 2021, recognising the fluidity of the document to enable the Committee to respond to urgent and emerging issues, and included timescales when reports will be considered by the Committee. The work programme is managed and implemented by the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer under the direction of the Chair and Committee.
 - 2.5 The forward work programme for the forthcoming meeting will be presented to Committee on a 6 weekly cycle in order that Members can consider the programme of work; request information is included within the reports, as appropriate and / or make amendments to the work programme.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1:** The Scrutiny Committee consider the Forward Work Programme for the meeting 9th February 2022, and

- Make any amendments to the topics scheduled for the meetings;
- Suggest any additional invitees that the committee requires to fully consider the reports; and
- Request any additional information to be included with regards to the topics to be discussed.

3.2 **Option 2:** The Scrutiny Committee agree the Forward Programme for the meeting 9th February 2022, as presented.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Forward Work Programme – Meeting on 9th February 2022.

Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme

Date	Topic	Purpose	Lead	Executive / Council
Wednesday 9th February 2022 Deadline: Wednesday 26 th January 2022	Audit Wales – Regenerating Town Centres	Performance Monitoring To consider the Audit Wales report.	Ellie Fry <i>Invitee: Audit Wales</i>	Audit: 22 nd March 2022
	Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme	Performance Monitoring To update on the current performance of the Aspire programme and associated external business engagement.	Tara Lane	Executive
	Aneurin Bevan report	Pre-Decision To consider and support the report findings and recommend approval to the Executive.	Moe Forouzan	Executive
	Tredegar Place Making Plan	Pre Decision Endorse the proposals for placemaking in Tredegar	Amy Taylor	Executive
	Blaenau Gwent Replacement Local Development Plan	Pre Decision Endorse the Deposit Plan and the report of Consultation on the Preferred Strategy	Steve Smith	Council

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