Abertillery Placemaking Plan

SEPTEMBER 2023

ARUP

Blaenau Gwent
County Borough Council

ARUP

Prepared by Arup on behalf of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

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In preparing this report we are relying on information contained in reports supplied by the client and third parties, as stated throughout the document. We have relied in particular on the accuracy and completeness of such reports and accept no liability for any error or omission in this statement to the extent the same results from error or omission in the other consultants' reports.

Please note, proposals on private land require further discussions with private landowners.

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1. Church street, Abertillery

1.1 Introduction

REPORT OVERVIEW

Arup have been commissioned by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) to create a strategic placemaking plan that will provide a basis for future, strategic decision making in the study area and act as an evidence base to support BGCBC Officers with future regeneration funding applications.

The purpose of the plan is to;

- Highlight development and redevelopment opportunities that will increase the viability, vitality and functionality of Abertillery town centre
- Identify and implement measures that will act as a catalyst for private sector investment, and plan a comprehensive range of development projects suitable for applications for funding.

The plan will be used by BGCBC as a 'roadmap' for future regeneration activity in the study area with a view to stimulating economic growth, retail, leisure and the vitality of the town centre.

ABERTILLERY AND ITS CHALLENGE

The issue of post-industrial decline is manifest in above average levels of socio-economic deprivation and a subsequent lack of local spending power.

The towns topography, geographical isolation in relation to major roads, lack of existing rail network and functioning public transport network present unique challenges for the town.

Wider trends of town centre retail decline are evident in the town. The rapid onset of digital retail, remote working and services, in the wake of Covid-19, is transforming the way urban centres operate. From a position of having to use our centres to access services such as banks and retail we now need to want to visit these places.

This profound shift has led to a reduced need and lack of viability for physical retail and commercial spaces in town centres. The cost of living crisis and accelerating inflation rate has exacerbated these issues.

The withdrawal of major national retailers and all banking facilities from the town has further impacted the town centre. However, Abertillery has a well defined, historic core and a population who are motivated to see, and be part of the change within the town.

For Abertillery to reverse the decline it has seen in recent years it will require maximising the benefit from its existing assets, whilst carefully planning and providing new ones.

Given its economic profile and geographic location, Abertillery does not attract the same levels of private investment that other, more affluent and connected place do. Basing this plan on the assumption of private investment would ultimately limit its effectiveness. It also needs to be recognised that the prosperity of the town centre will inevitably be linked to the wider prosperity of local people and enterprise. Yet this should not preclude an ambitious plan to transform the town centre.

COMMUNITY LED CHANGE

The plan is to be based in part on one of Abertillery's strengths - its people. From the positive improvements the community have achieved in Abertillery Park, to the ongoing work to reopen Abertillery Institute, the desire for improvements in the town are evident. This plan should be viewed as a means of mobilising this latent strength.

A SPRINGBOARD TO THE FUTURE

The focus of this study is shown on the map overleaf, however this plan considers the town as a whole and beyond the red line boundary. This plan looks to link together these areas and the wider town and ensure opportunities for the whole town are maximised.

The second key aspect of this approach is the application of integrated place-making. This means exploring opportunities not through one particular lens such as transport but through multiple lenses including ecology, placemaking, sustainable transport and health to deliver multiple benefits from each intervention.

Abertillery Park

Abertillery Town Centre

Former Bowls Site

N

2. Agreed Study Area

1.2   Sustainable Growth

A TRANSITION IN THINKING AND THE PURSUIT OF DE-CARBONISATION

In 2019 the Welsh Government declared a 'climate emergency' recognising the need for urgent action to combat the effects of global climate change.

The target for Wales as a country to transition to Net- Zero by 2050 requires pragmatic thinking around transitioning to de-carbonisation.

Fundamentally, the impacts of climate change and the pursuit of Net-Zero will change the way in which we live, move around and require new ways in which to respond to essential needs such as waste management energy production and food supply chains.

At a global and national level, the guidance, policy, and legislation to direct decisions makes clear the need for sustainability in its broadest sense.

Consideration towards sustainability and de-carbonisation must be implemented through the design process, rather than attempting to retrofit.

THE DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability needs to be addressed in terms of long term economic sustainability whilst also maintaining and strengthening the social and cultural value of an area. A transition to reduced waste and de-carbonisation does align with many of the opportunities within Abertillery in terms of reduction of waste.

This placemaking plan creates the opportunity for Abertillery to respond to a global issue on a local level to create local resilience associated with a changing climate and extreme weather events.

GLOBAL CONTEXT

In response to the Paris Accord on Climate Change, The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) provide a blueprint at the highest level to direct decision-making towards environmental, political, social and economic sustainability.

For Abertillery, nine of the goals have been identified by Arup as being particularly relevant in steering the project and are shown below.

Any and all proposals contained within this report have been considered in the context of current and future alignment to the UNSDGs.
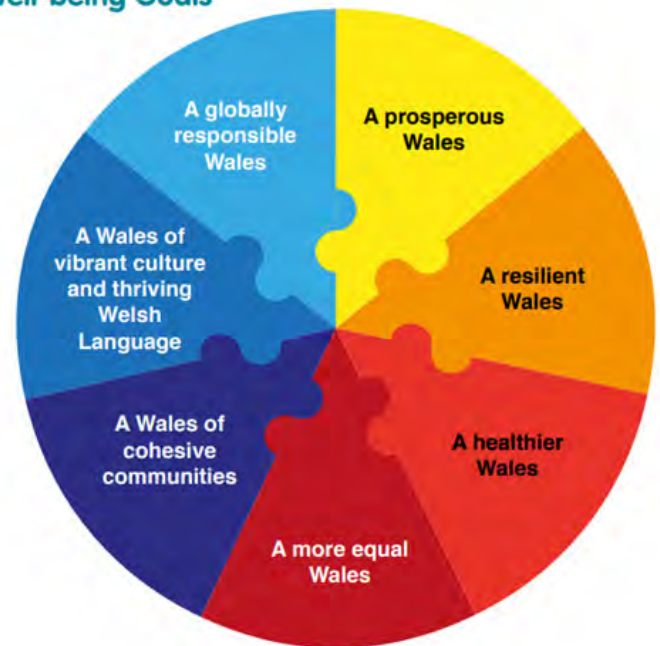
NATIONAL CONTEXT

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 offers a radically different way of approaching development and change.
The Act enshrines in law the need to consider the impact of our decisions on future generations.

Central to the act are the seven goals and of equal importance, the five ways of working which set out the means for public bodies to achieve the goals. This is a unique piece of legislation that provides us with an unprecedented means of working differently toward a common goal.

Five Ways of working

- Long-term - Balancing short and long-term needs.

- Integration - Considering impacts on all goals.

- Involvement - Ensuring representative diversity

- Collaboration - Working together.

- Prevention - Preventing problems occurring or worsening.
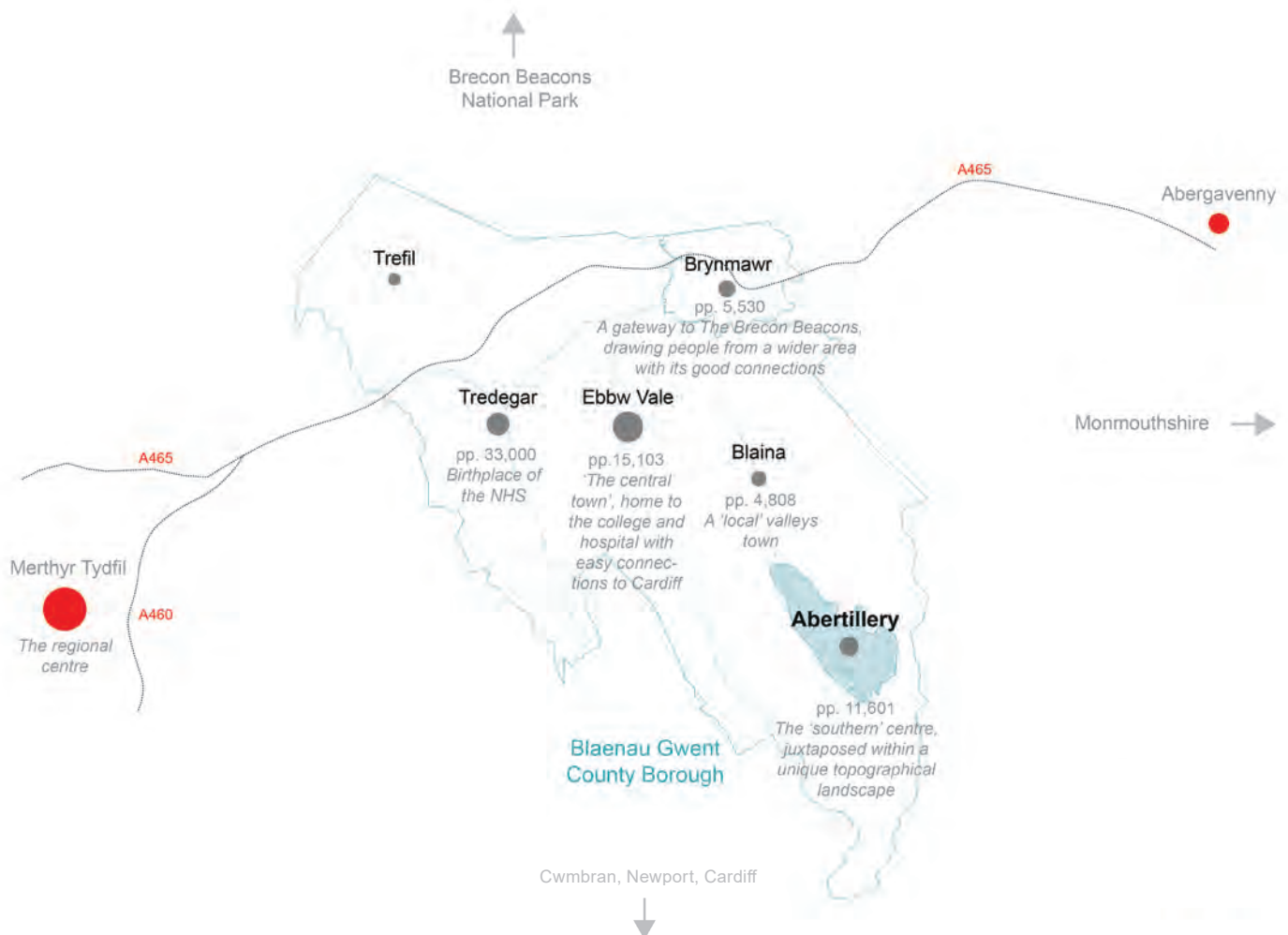
Well-being Goals

A globally responsible Wales

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language

A Wales of cohesive communities

A prosperous Wales

A resilient Wales

A healthier Wales

A more equal Wales

2.1 The wider area

ECO-SYSTEM OF 5 TOWNS

Within Blaenau Gwent, Abertillery is part of what can be viewed as a '5 town eco-system' where there are inherent linkages and interdependencies between these places. Future development within Abertillery needs to be complimentary to the other towns within the 'eco-system' rather than compete against them for footfall. The connections to larger settlements Abergavenny, Merthyr, Cardiff and Newport must also be considered.

The success and future vitality of Abertillery does not lie within competing with these areas, but instead building upon what makes Abertillery a unique place and focusing on what can be the "point of difference" for the town compared to the other settlements.

Brecon Beacons
National Park

A465

Abergavenny

Trefil

Brynmawr
pp. 5,530
A gateway to The Brecon Beacons,
drawing people from a wider area
with its good connections

Monmouthshire

A465

Tredegar
pp. 33,000
Birthplace of
the NHS

Ebbw Vale
pp.15,103
'The central
town', home to
the college and
hospital with
easy connec-
tions to Cardiff

Blaina
pp. 4,808
A 'local' valleys
town

Merthyr Tydfil

A460

The regional
centre

Abertillery
pp. 11,601
The 'southern' centre,
juxtaposed within a
unique topographical
landscape

Blaenau Gwent
County Borough

Cwmbran, Newport, Cardiff

2.2 Abertillery through time

The trajectory of Abertillery follows a similar path of many industrial town's in Wales. From rich natural habitats to growth and decline of heavy industry. The position Abertillery finds in itself in today gives us the chance to move the town into a new chapter that looks confidently forward without losing touch of its history.
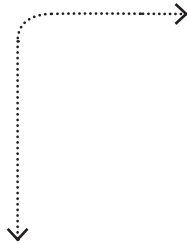

Pre-industrial

Industrial Era

Late C20th and early C21st

Do nothing - further deterioration of the town

"The Abertillery Vision"

2.3　Baseline summary

Extensive baseline data gathering took place as part of a Baseline Summary 1 report which forms Part 1 of this commission. A summary of which can be found overleaf.

"We need more diversity in the town centre"

- Quote from Community Engagement
19th January 2023

BASELINE CONCLUSIONS

LOCAL ECONOMY

- There are known issues with the management of local assets such as the market
- The increase in vacancies around the town centre is a key warning and trigger for change
- The retail vacancy rate in Abertillery is higher (17% in 2020), than the Welsh average of 14.5%
- Local 'place champions' exist who could be catalysts for future change
- The night time economy is a perceived strength of Abertillery
- A number of national retailers have pulled out of Abertillery in recent years, however a limited amount of national retailers (Greggs, Iceland and Boots) have remained in the Town Centre.
- Currently there are no banks within the town
- The concentration of vacant units towards Somerset street would suggest the retail offer is oversized
- The presence of a Victorian arcade is a unique strength
- There is a Tesco adjoined to the town which competes with the town centre and poses further challenges to traders in the town

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Natural features are significant around the town and can be considered a major positive
- The topography of the town centre brings a challenge to Abertillery, the narrowness of streets brings issues related to servicing and access

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 32.3% of the local population are classified as having "no-skills"
- 15.6% of the local population are qualified to degree level
- All communities within the study are classified as being "financially stretched" or "urban adversity"
- In 2011 Abertillery had a working population – aged 15 to 64 – of 66%, and 17.2% aged over 64, which is relatively lower than the rest of Blaenau Gwent and Wales
- Abertillery employed 3,292 people in 2011
- The unemployment rate in Abertillery was 7.2% in 2011 (Compared to a Wales Average of 4.3%)

WALKING & CYCLING

The National Cycle Network Route 465 has an easy gradient with tarmac surface from Llanhilleth train station to Abertillery Park, which totals 16.5km (50 minute cycle). The path also heads north to Brynmawr. The majority of the route is a traffic free path (depicted as orange in the image) that uses the former railway line.

The Topography around the town centre is severe and provides significant barriers to active travel, especially cycling, however BGCBC are currently reviewing funding sources for a e-bike pilot as part of the Abertillery to Brynmawr WelTAG study.

The ongoing WelTAG work conducted by BGCBC is currently in the feasibility and design stage of improving the Blaina to Abertillery Recreation Park active travel route. All Active Travel improvements are undertaken as part of a wider transport and regeneration scheme, rather than in isolation.

RAIL

The nearest train station is Llanhilleth railway station which is 2.8 miles south of Abertillery town centre. The station operates services between Cardiff and Ebbw Vale. As part of the South Wales metro there is a proposal for a 3-4 mile rail link from Abertillery to Ebbw Vale Fawr at Aberbeeg. TFW are considering and looking to implement Active Travel improvements as part of the wider rail scheme.

This will include a park and ride for 100 vehicles, and a possible increase of train services on the Ebbw Vale Line to four trains per hour (two to Abertillery). It is proposed that the delivery of this will be integrated with public transport.

The indicative area for the proposed station is south of the existing Tesco store, west of Castle Street.

BUS

Bus service provision in Abertillery is limited. There are four main services within Abertillery that operate on an hourly basis Monday to Friday. There is only one bus service that operates on Sundays.

ROAD NETWORK

The road network is well defined with a clear loop around the town centre connecting to routes in and out of the town. The road provides a loop around the town centre.

The A467 provides links to Cardiff and Newport to the south, and to Blaina and Brynmawr to the north.

3. Walking & Cycling Context

Traffic Free Route
On Road Network

4. Main Vehicle Routes

Town Centre 'Loop' key movement
Primary route through Town Centre
Primary Road network

2.4 Engagement Summary

Engagement with a wide range of local groups, traders and residents has taken place in order to obtain and understand the views towards Abertillery from the people who experience it everyday.

In person engagement was held with local businesses and residents in July 2022. Whilst elected members and officers of Blaenau Gwent County Council have been engaged in July 2022 along with a separate session with the Design Commission for Wales.

Further engagement with local members was carried out in October 2022, and Blaenau Gwent Council further engaged with local residents and businesses in January 2023, which was conducted over a two day public consultation based at the Metropole Theatre in Abertillery Town Centre. The event was advertised to local businesses by flyer and residents by The Councils Social media accounts. The consultation was well received with 515 written comments received by officers in addition to significant verbal feedback.

The engagement process was undertaken to connect the community and bring them into the process of the placemaking plan.

Through online meetings and in person workshops with various stakeholder groups from local councillors to local traders, this report has been able to ascertain feedback as to what the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are for the town.

Various key themes arose from the engagement sessions. These are summarised in this section.

What is great about Abertillery?

- The strength of the community and the willingness for the community to engage with activities and create their own initiatives within the town
- The landscape features around the town are significant and breathtaking
- The Victorian Arcade within the town centre is a point of difference between Abertillery and the surrounding towns
- There are a number of significant Victorian era historical buildings within the town centre. The strong townscape within Abertillery defines the town centre

"The towns biggest strength is the community"

- Quote from Community Engagement activities 25 July 2022

Issues & concerns

- General cleanliness of the town centre and particularly Church St appearing dirty and presence of dog fouling
- Anti-social behaviour in the town which appears to stem from the lack of activities for youths
- Operational hours of town centre car parking has a significant detrimental impact upon the night time economy

- Illegal parking is an issue compounded by a perceived lack of enforcement
- Church Street is cluttered with street furniture and is too narrow for deliveries or access
- Lack of permanent bank and free cash machines in the town
- Nowhere to sit and dwell
- Abertillery feels 'unloved'

Opportunities

- Potential for a greater amount of events in the town to create a draw to the town
- A community hub to give the youth something to do and help combat loneliness in the older population
- The Victorian Arcade as a focal point of the town
- Integrate the town centre with Abertillery Park
- Pedestrianisation of Somerset Street to boost the night time economy and improve the sense of place

- Quick "wins" such as improving street cleaning
- Creating partnerships between the Council and local businesses to work towards common goals for the good of the town through business forums and ongoing engagement between council and local business

2.5 Planning Context

PLANNING POLICY WALES

The key principles for the planning system in Wales are established by Planning Policy Wales (PPW). The key theme from PPW is People and Places: Achieving Well-being Through Placemaking – using placemaking as a tool for the planning system to output sustainable places which improve well-being of communities.

PPW has to be used in three stages.

1. Assessing plans or proposals against the Strategic and Spatial Choices issues and the national sustainable placemaking outcomes. This stage is to ensure that opportunities are correctly identified and any potentially required mitigation measures are included.

2. Assessing whether plans or proposals contribute to Active & Social Places, Productive and Enterprising Places and Distinctive & Natural Places. The merits of the proposal need to be considered whether they are in the public interest.

3. Ensuring the strategy or proposal aids in contributing to either sustaining or the creation of sustainable places.

PPW's was created to facilitate good design which contributes to the viability and sustainability of places.

THE BLAENAU GWENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP)

The Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted in November 2012.
Abertillery is part of the southern area (Lower Ebbw Fach)
Relevant policies for Abertillery are as follows:

Strategic Policies
- SP2 Southern Strategy Area, regeneration – ensuring the public transport connection between Abertillery and Ebbw Vale and supporting the town centre through promoting culture and (active) tourism, removal of dereliction, promoting regeneration whilst building on the unique identity of the area (built heritage and natural environment)
- SP3 The Retail Hierarchy and Vitality and Viability of Town Centres – the district town centre of Abertillery is second in the retail hierarchy, and will be improved accordingly through refurbishment / redevelopment of buildings.
- SP4 Delivering Quality Housing – provision is made for the development of 3,907 new dwellings within the wider authority area by 2021
- SP5 Spatial Distribution of Housing Sites – limited number of suitable sites in the lower Ebbw Fach, 228 dwellings are planned here (7% of total plans)
- SP8 Sustainable Economic Growth – 50ha of employment land is allocated to meet the wider authority area's need by 2021. For Abertillery, land is only allocated for the Education Department, see ED1.2.
- SP10 Protection and enhancement of the natural environment
- SP12 Securing an adequate supply of minerals

Policy Designations

- ENV2 Special Landscape Areas – SLAs are located to the east (Eastern Ridge and Mynydd James) and north east (Cwm tyleri and Cwm Celyn) of the town centre. Mynydd Carn-y-Cefn and Cefn yr arail are located on the west.

- ENV3 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) – multiple SINCs are located around the settlement boundary of Abertillery.

Site Allocations

- H1 Housing allocations - a total of 228 housing units is planned in the area of lower Ebbw Fach (H1.12; H1.13; H1.14; H1.15; H1.16; H1.17; HC1.29; HC1.30; HC1.31) closest to town centre. This includes 33 units at the Roseyheyworth Comprehensive in Abertillery and 20 units at Cwm Farm Road.

- T1 - Cycle Routes – a cycle route extension from Abertillery to Aberbeeg is planned, one from Aberbeeg to Royal Oak, which may pass through Abertillery, same for the one from Royal Oak to Swfrydd (T1.9 which is now complete, T1.11, T1.12)

- T2 - Rail network and station improvements – T2.3 the rail link from Aberbeeg will be extended to Abertillery and a park and ride facility will be provided (T2.4).

- T6 Regeneration Led Highway Improvements – improvements are planned for the A467/

- EMP2 Employment Area Protection – the Glandwr (EMP2.20) and Llanhilleth (EMP2.21, more south, map #30) industrial estate and Cwmtillery industrial estate (EMP2.11) more north of the city centre are protected for employment use.

- ED1 Community – a new primary school is allocated more south of the town centre, at the Six Bells Colliery Site which is now opperational. This school is considered part of SP8 - Sustainable economic growth.

- M1 Safeguarding of minerals – there is one zone, Six Bells and Vivinan Tips, located west from the town centre.

5. Planning Policy Wales

6. Blaenau Gwent LDP

Landscape Context

The surrounding landscape is imposing and offers immense potential to provide new opportunities for community and environmental well-being and the visitor economy. The summary below outlines the current condition of this unique landscape.

URBAN

Abertillery has a linear town centre with a heavily industrialised past.

This creates the opportunity for the introduction of more landscape into the urban environment which can have added benefits such as improving air quality.

WATER

The Ebbw Fach River has hard engineered edges along the urban boundary. The River Tyleri is culverted through the urban area.

Run off and storm water from valley slopes which reaches the town is managed through engineered solutions (pipes and culverts) creating a fast flow of water through the town and increases flood risk downstream

It is a heavily polluted catchment (Natural Resources Wales), which would benefit from nature based solutions such as SuDs to clean and slow the run off of water.

VEGETATION

A well wooded steep sided valley mix of coniferous plantations and deciduous woodland. There are wild uplands, rough grassland and bracken on plateaux (most of which is common land).

Historically, woodland would have been cleared in the valley bottom for grazing. Likely to have consisted of a mix of flood plains and meadows and wet woodland.

This diverse landscape setting provides opportunity to provide local residents with a greater connection to nature.

7. View of surrounding context

2.7 Summary of Issues

Five biggest constraints

SHRINKING RETAIL AND LACK OF BASIC SERVICES (BANKS)

Retail in the town has declined with a number of national retailers pulling out of the town in recent years, including the lack of any bank in the town, apart from a mobile bank at the health centre.


PHYSICAL CONDITION - BUILDINGS AND PUBLIC REALM

There are issues around cleanliness and appearance of buildings. Many have large metal roller shutters which give an unpleasant appearance, whilst the pavements and walls appear dirty. There are also instances of dog fouling within the town centre.

COMPETITION FROM NEARBY RETAIL PARKS AND TOWNS

There are instances of businesses relocating to other towns within the borough. Abertillery does not currently have its own train station and does not have direct access to the heads of the valleys roads which makes other towns more appealing to do business in. There is also the issue of greater retail selection within other towns within the borough.
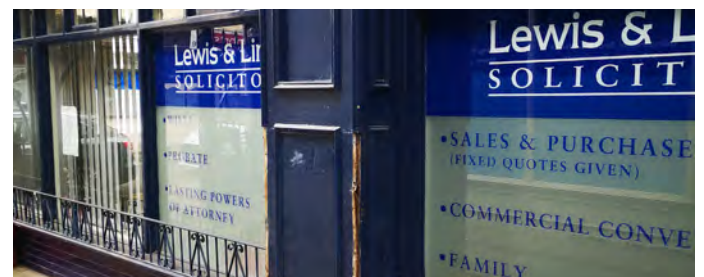
DISCONNECT BETWEEN PARK AND TOWN

There is significant landscape and land form around the town centre which gives Abertillery a striking back drop. Currently there is no direct or clear connection linking the town and the landscape including the substantial Abertillery Park.

THE TOWN NEEDS TO FIND A NEW ROLE

Supporting Abertillery Town Centre in developing its role as a centre to meet the complementary roles around culture, leisure and tourism needs of its local community and visitors.

Five biggest opportunities

COMMUNITY MOBILISATION

There is a real sense of pride and desire for improvement within Abertillery. There are numerous local champions who organise events and put plans into action which improve the area. Examples include Abertillery Park and Abertillery Workmens Welfare Institute.


HISTORICAL URBAN FABRIC AND WELL DEFINED TOWN CENTRE

Formerly Abertillery was a thriving mining town, evidence of the past success is visible in the quality of architecture within the town centre, including Trinity Chapel. The town centre is well defined along Church Street.

PRESENCE OF A VICTORIAN ARCADE

Abertillery has the only Victorian Arcade within Blaenau Gwent. It provides a real point of difference between Abertillery, and the other towns. It is currently under utilised and provides significant opportunity such as supporting the night time economy.
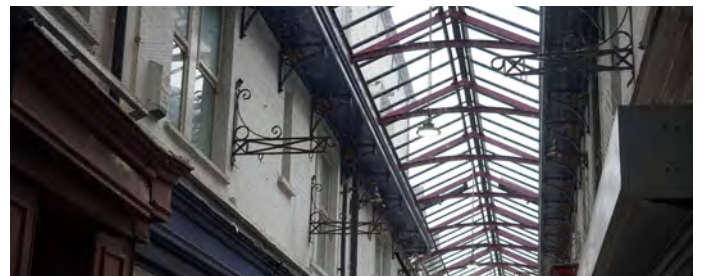
FUTURE RAIL LINK AND CONNECTION TO SOUTH WALES METRO

There is a new rail station planned for Abertillery adjacent to the Tesco site, as a spur off the Ebbw Vale line. This new link will dramatically improve accessibility of Abertillery.

LANDSCAPE SETTING

The town has significant landscape on steep valley sides and Abertillery Park, these can be better connected to the town and better utilised for activities. Cwmtillery Lakes, although outside of the town, does provide the opportunity for tourism and to be a footfall driver to the town.

3.1   Emerging trends for town centres

Welsh Government's 'Town Centre First' policy provides a clear basis for town centre regeneration. They are integral to our social, environmental and economic well-being and are the places that define us culturally. As the traditional retail-led model of town centres continues to decline, new and often innovative approaches are going to be needed to ensure they remain not just relevant but places we celebrate and give us a sense of pride.

A number of new trends are explored here that offer the potential to give new meaning and purpose to town centres and delivery against other essential agendas including education, health and environmental improvement

NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS

For many years, hard infrastructure such as culverts, concealed pipe networks and pumping have been used to manage rainwater. At the same time, bio-diversity has declined.

New approaches such as the award winning Greener Grangetown project (Cardiff) have shown that by using low-tech landscape solutions such as rain gardens we can transform the character of an area, provide invaluable habitats whilst reducing the threat of flooding and filtering contaminants from surface water. In these systems, rain water is filtered through the soil and temporarily stored underground before slowly entering the water network whilst sustaining planting.

8. Greener Grangetown, Cardiff

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The recent publication 'People, Place and Health' by Arup and the Bevan Commission outlines a radical new approach to preventative health in the community a new decentralised model where access to health and care mvoes from general hospitals towards our high streets, homes and community spaces. This could diversify our town centres and place vital services in the heart of communities where they can be co-located with other day-to-day needs

9. 'People, Place, Health' Arup Publication

TEMPORARY AND MEANWHILE USES

Covid-19 afforded local authorities the power to deliver rapid and temporary transformations to streets and public spaces. The Castle Street project in Cardiff saw one of the capital's arterial roads transformed overnight into an outdoor dining area and new bike lanes. This created a vital physical demonstration of a progressive approach to urban spaces for the public to experience first-hand whilst providing a vital lift to local businesses.

This flexible approach to streets and spaces allows us to move away from potentially complex and expensive 'fixed' designs to something far more fluid where we can experiment and trial in real time. This often reduces up-front conflict with traders and the public and delivers invaluable lessons.

10. FitzPark Pop-up Park, London

TOWN CENTRE POSITION STATEMENT

This Welsh Government Statement makes a clear recommendation for the public sector to locate our town centres. In addition, "Town Centre First" has been a requirement of development policy plans in Wales since 2021. This means town centres are to be the first consideration of new public services, education, commercial, health, leisure and retail locations and sets a clear pathway for town diversification.

11. Welsh Government Town Centre: Position Statement 2023

EXPERIENCE

Meeting friends, chance conversations, physical retail, attending events and accessing physical services such as high street banks or health services simply cannot be replicated on-line. The importance of 'experience' is now becoming an integral part of town centre strategies. Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) afford control of certain aspects of town centre management to local businesses to hand control to those whose prosperity is dependent on a thriving town centre.

12. Business Improvement Districts Handbook

3.2　Learning from elsewhere

The role of high streets are changing. No longer feasible as purely retail destinations, they must re-focus and provide additional services and amenities for the community. A number of case studies are outlined below where different uses have been introduced to high streets to support community needs and boost vitality.

PN www.positive.news

The Library of Things: coming to a town near you - Positive News

A Library of Things allows people to borrow stuff they only need now and then. Hundreds are in planning, can they help save the high street?

PN www.positive.news

Coming to a high street near you: factories that repair your electronics

Can 'fixing factories' help tackle the climate crisis and reduce waste? Campaigners think so - and want to open one on every UK high street

A COMMUNITY WHO SHARES

The Pandemic and high interest rates and the high cost of living have escalated hardship. Towns such as Abertillery are particularly vulnerable during times of increased economic hardship.

A "Library of things" allows communities to share resources they may only need occasionally. This provides both a vital service and is an important demonstrator of resource efficiency.

A COMMUNITY WHO BUILDS

Fast electronics, much like fast fashion sends millions of tons of waste to landfill every year. The cost of having to replace electronics and household items is an additional financial burden on households.

Across the UK "fix it factories" are popping up to help combat this. They allow things to be fixed rather than thrown straight into the bin, reducing costs for households and reducing waste. This is already happening informally at the nearby waste disposal centre where items too good for landfill are saved, fixed and given away for free.

The UK is poised to get its first community-run shopping centre

Can a neglected shopping arcade in West Yorkshire become a blueprint for the high street's much-needed revival?

The Teenage Market - Giving young people a free platform to showcase their creative talents

Giving young people a free platform to showcase their creative talents

A COMMUNITY WHO REINVENTS

The Victorian Arcade is under utilised and features a number of vacant units within it. Thinking about innovative ways in which this significant asset can be used provides significant potential for the town.

Within Dewsbury, West Yorkshire the Council have taken ownership of the Grade II listed Victorian Arcade with the aim to turn it into a community hub which will be home to small independent retailers, artisans, art and craft businesses and entrepreneurs with either side of the arcade being anchored by a coffee shop and bar. The building is leased as a not-for-profit community benefit.

THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

Providing opportunities within Abertillery to be part of its future is important in ensuring completeness to a whole community approach.

Giving young people a free platform to showcase their creative talents is the concept behind the "Teenage Market". What started as an idea in Stockport has caught on and spread around the country, allowing different towns to provide specialist market space for young people. This helps fosters entrepreneurship and gives a focus to young people whilst adding much needed life to our town centres.

3.3 A Walkable Abertillery

To help us reduce car travel, improve community cohesion and get us walking and cycling this placemaking plan is formed around the concept of a walkable Abertillery. This concept which is growing across the world seeks to ensure that day-to-day needs and wants are within a short walk from your front door.

The principles are outlined in the image to right. Each of these are deemed as essential to the future prosperity for Abertillery, to meet the agenda of sustainable development and to improve the lives of local people. This concept has directed the development of the recommendations of this report.
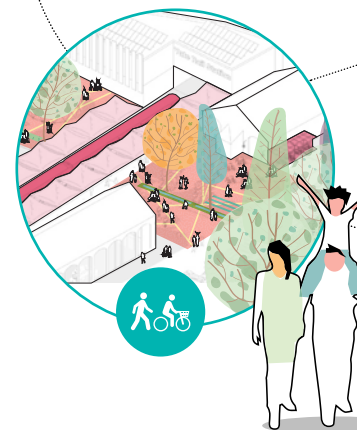
Environment
Green and blue network, climate resilient, carbon neutral, balanced natural and urban eco-system
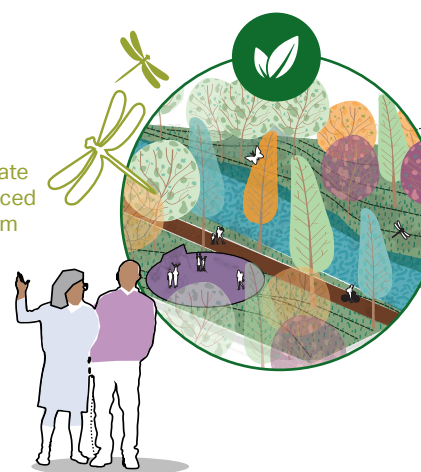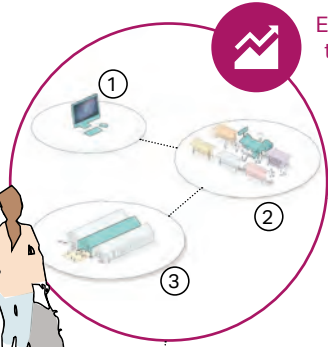
Sustainable mobility
Walking and cycling to public transport hubs (choice of travel modes), with less need for private cars
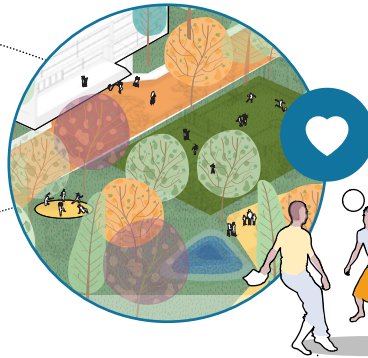
13. The Walkable Concept

Economy
Eco-system of companies, access to jobs, diversity of employment, lifelong education, space for innovation and startups
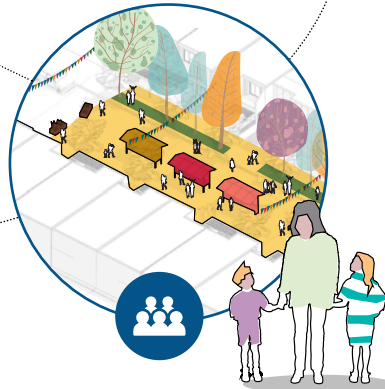
① ② ③

My home and street

Healthy, happy people
Homes, jobs, education, health and access to nature
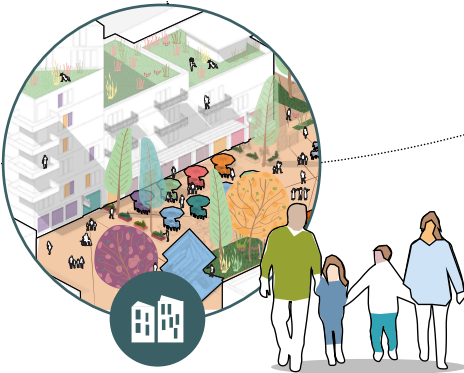
Community
Inclusive community for all ages, events, celebration, heritage and socialising

Town Centre
A destination of local culture, amenities and leisure, that celebrates local pride and identity

"We should be able to purchase all our daily requirements in Abertillery, without having to go to other towns"

- Quote from Community Engagement activities
19 January 2023

4.1 Vision - 6 missions for change

The vision for Abertillery is to reshape the town to ensure it is a vital part of day to day life and plays a crucial role in local economic prosperity and sustainable growth as part of an 'ecosystem' of towns in the region.

This Vision aims to:
Maximise Abertillery's assets namely its people, its built and cultural heritage and landscape to draw more people and businesses.
It will do this by **embracing innovation** to **trial and test new ideas** and **bring new partners** to the table to **support existing local champions.**

The vision will be delivered via six missions which are explained in the following pages.

14. View of Abertillery ©Tylerian

Six Missions for Change

A 'mission' based approach sets clear objectives for stakeholders and the community to follow. In this section, these missions are explained.

15. FitzPark, London - Pop Up Park London

1) **Shape a more attractive and diverse centre and be a test bed for new ideas by**

- Trialling new pop up and temporary uses to rapidly test ideas and learn
- Improving the cleanliness and appearance
- Physically consolidate the town centre to fill vacancies on Church St and High St
- Bringing other services, leisure and community uses into the town centre
- Continue to ensure local tourism opportunities such as Cwmtillery Lakes, align with regional and national strategies.
- Pro-actively work with partners to deliver change such as Ffrindiau Tyleri, Welsh Water, NRW and the local health board.

2 Translate Community passion into community action by

- Creating new opportunities for community led regeneration such as the arcade to encourage community projects and new start-ups
- Ensuring the Abertillery Workmens Welfare Institute project is realised and supported
- Expanding the event calendar utilising spaces such as Jubilee Square
- Targeting hard to reach groups such as youth groups

16. Frau Gerolds Garten, Zurich - Community Space

3) More space for people and nature by

- Maximising the potential of Abertillery park

- Tackling regional green infrastructure issues at a local scale by embedding SuDS as part of any public realm project

- Regional bike hire strategy linked to destination park

17. GoApe, Alexandra Palace - Tree Top Adventure

4) Support the local business community and entrepreneurs by

- Partnering with the local businesses
- Continuing to regularly engage with local businesses
- Work in partnership with Coleg Gwent and other educational partners

18. Treorchy High Street - Community Action to create 'Britain's best High Street'

5) Embed and embrace the use of technology by:

- Creating a single, shared website for the town
- Offering targeted skills training for local businesses to maximise digital (web, social media)

19. Love Treorchy Website

6) Make getting to and from and around Abertillery easier and safer and prioritise sustainable transport by:

- Working with TfW to ensure that the proposed station is seamlessly connected to the town centre
- Making parking more accessible by extending opening times
- Improving bus access and waiting facilities
- Improving safety around walking routes, lighting and perception

20. Nimes-Pont-Du-Gard Train Station - Multi-modal interchange

4.2 The town-wide context for change

The focus of this report is:

Key Move 1 - Revitalise Abertillery town centre
- a. Short term Projects
- b. Longer term Projects

Key Move 2 - Opportunities for Abertillery Park

Key Move 3 - Abertillery's conection to the Rail link

Although outside of the study boundary, Cwmtillery Lakes is another important site which can attract footfall to Abertillery. Building on its existing popularity for walking and fishing to offer other outdoor and water based activities such as stand up paddle boarding and camping can reap rewards for the town.
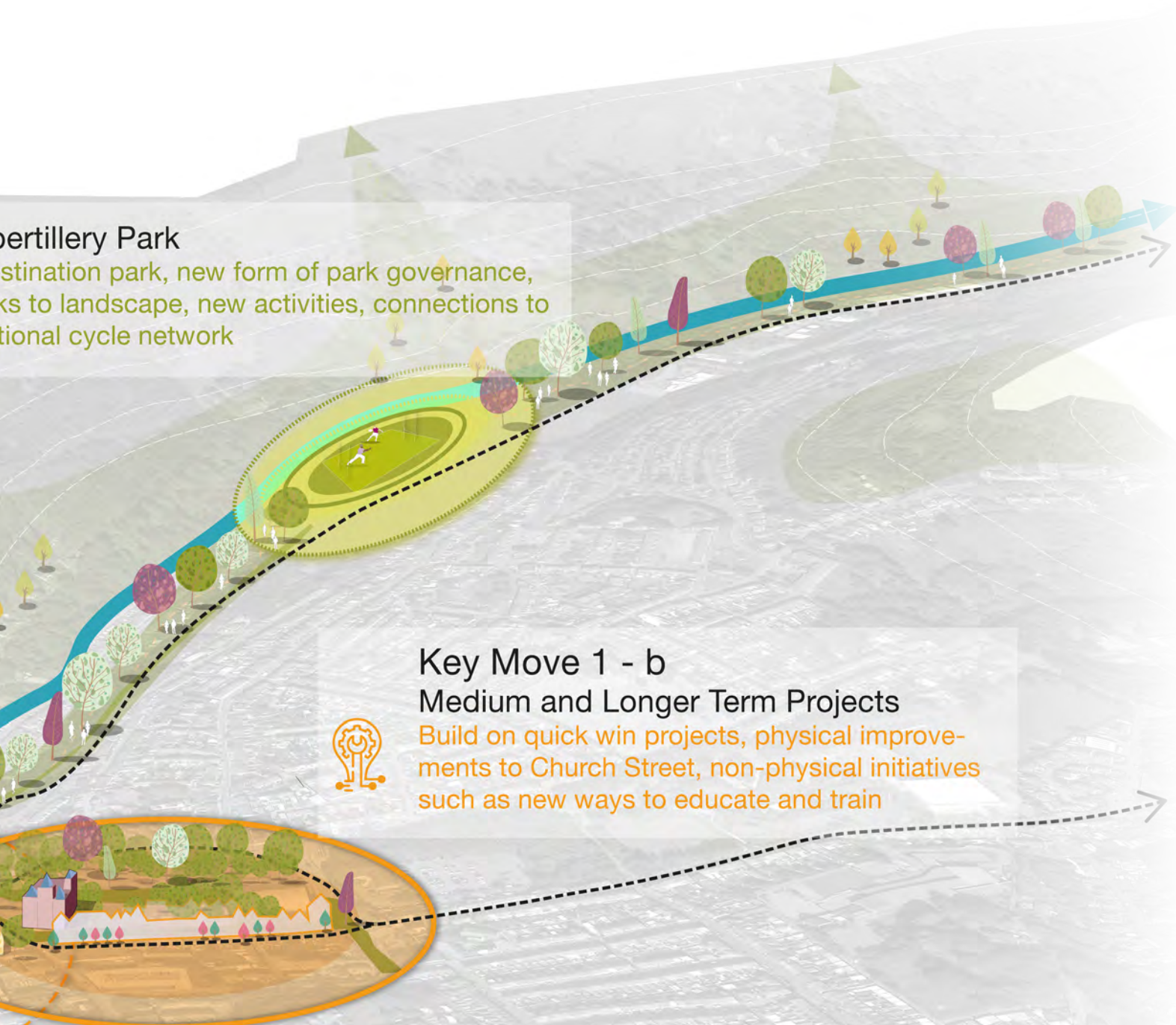
Key Move 3
Abertillery train station

This report notes the development of new housing at the former bowls club. The delivery of new housing within a short walk to the town centre is welcomed and consideration should be given to linking these new homes with the train station and town-wide green infrastructure and existing active travel National cycle Route 465.

bertillery Park
stination park, new form of park governance,
ks to landscape, new activities, connections to
tional cycle network

Key Move 1 - b
Medium and Longer Term Projects
Build on quick win projects, physical improvements to Church Street, non-physical initiatives such as new ways to educate and train

Key Move 1 - a
Quick Wins
Pedestrianise Somerset Street, clean Church Street, a test bed for new businesses, community support, pop-up and trial

4.3 Key Move 1 - a . Short Term Projects

The following pages outline the proposed initiatives for Abertillery. They are presented in two stages, initial short term projects and a second stage which focusses on more significant or complex projects. This plan illustrates the short term projects which are outlined over the following pages .

Property Enhancements

Improvement of façades within the town centre.

Example: 'Town Centre Loans' Blaenau Gwent

Cleaning

A consisten
regular clea
strategy fo
Street

Further Community engagement

Continuing to engage and consult with the people of Abertillery

Partnership working

Supporting and growing new partnerships such as Town Centre Businesses

Jubilee Square

New uses in an underutilised space

Example: St Andrews Cardiff

Strategy

...nt and
...aning
...r Church

Extending car park opening times & events

Test and trial later opening hours and potential pop up uses

Example: Peckham Levels, London

Maximise the Met

Supporting the Met to expand its events to new additional locations

Example: Wareham Cinema

Somerset Street pedestrianisation

Trial street closure to create outdoor dining and meeting space.

Example: FitzPark, London

Arcade Regeneration

Revitalise the arcade with new uses

Example: St Nicholas, Bristol

Key Move 1 - a . Short Term Projects

QUICK WINS STRATEGY

There is a need for quick, actionable wins to achieve visible and tangible change to gain buy-in from the community and demonstrate the commitment to improving Abertillery.

The key aims for the quick wins strategy is to:

- Align to the overarching vision and objectives
- Demonstrate change – alter perceptions, bring in more people
- Be prudent – through the creative reuse of existing buildings and spaces
- Enable local groups and local champions to play a role
- Collaborate – continue to build relationships with stakeholders and partner groups
- Keep the conversation going – continue to engage with the public and stakeholders

SIX MISSIONS FOR CHANGE

1. Shape a more attractive and diverse centre and be a test bed for new ideas
2. Translate Community passion into community action
3. More space for people and nature
4. Support the local business community and entrepreneurs
5. Embed and embrace the use of technology
6. Make getting to and from and around Abertillery easier and safer and prioritise sustainable transport
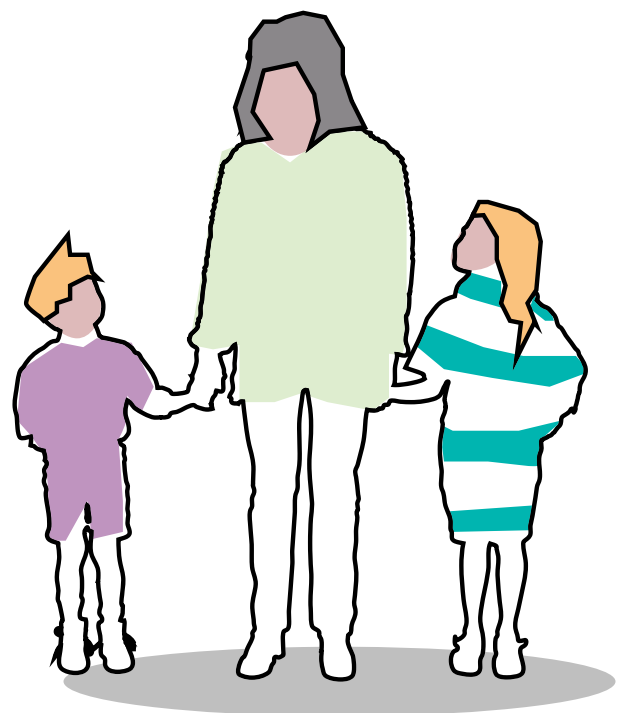
SOMERSET STREET PEDESTRIANISATION

During community engagement it became clear that there was demand for improving the pedestrian environment on Somerset Street.

This can be done on a temporary bases by restricting through traffic to allow more street space for local businesses and provide a new way of using the space for local residents and businesses.

The success of this should be judged on a test and trial basis with the success leading to a next stage which can include more regular temporary closures such as on weekends. By first implementing this as a temporary project it allows it to be tested at a low budget and its success to be judged prior to more perminent, potentially higher cost solutions.
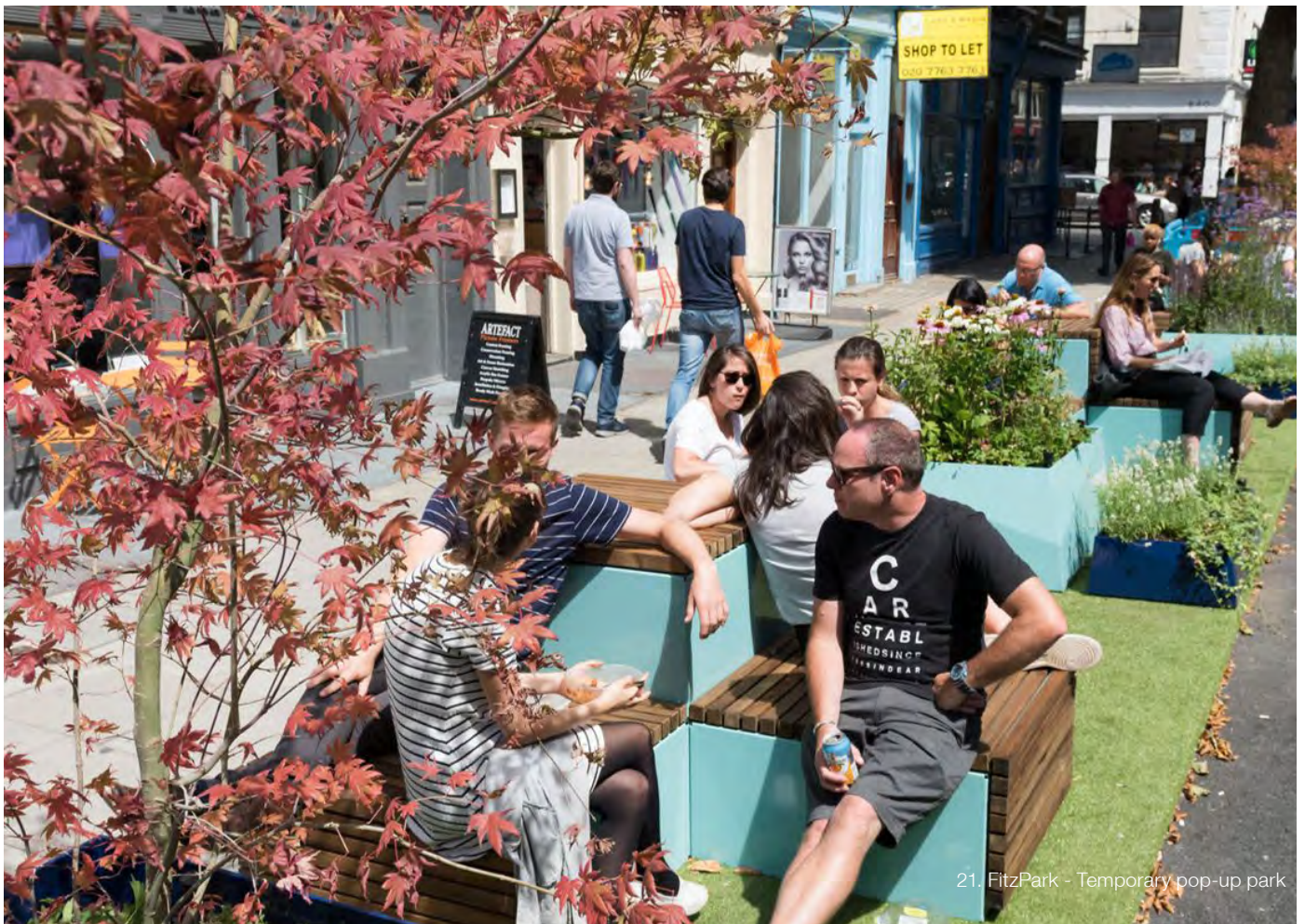
21. FitzPark - Temporary pop-up park

CASE STUDY
BRIDGE STREET USK

Arup engaged with Monmouthshire County Council and local stakeholders in Usk to temporarily close the heavily trafficked Bridge Street for one day.

The event proved successful with local traders enjoying their best takings of the year.

Implementation of this helped to change public perception of the road and obtain public support for further interventions within the area.

22. Bridge Street, Usk © John Winder

23. Bridge Street, Usk temporary closure

ARCADE REGENERATION

The Victorian Arcade is unique within in Blaenau Gwent. The opportunity for the Arcade is to bring other uses beyond traditional retail such as including service provision. In addition consideration should be given to other uses that serve the needs of the community such as the examples below and those referenced on page 27. This will help ensure that the Arcade remains a vital part of community infrastructure with new stakeholders to ensure future vitality and viability.

24. St Nicholas Market, Bristol. Arcade transformed into food destination

www.positive.news

Coming to a high street near you: factories that repair your electronics

Can 'fixing factories' help tackle the climate crisis and reduce waste? Campaigners think so - and want to open one on every UK high street

theteenagemarket.co.uk

The Teenage Market - Giving young people a free platform to showcase their creative talents

Giving young people a free platform to showcase their creative talents
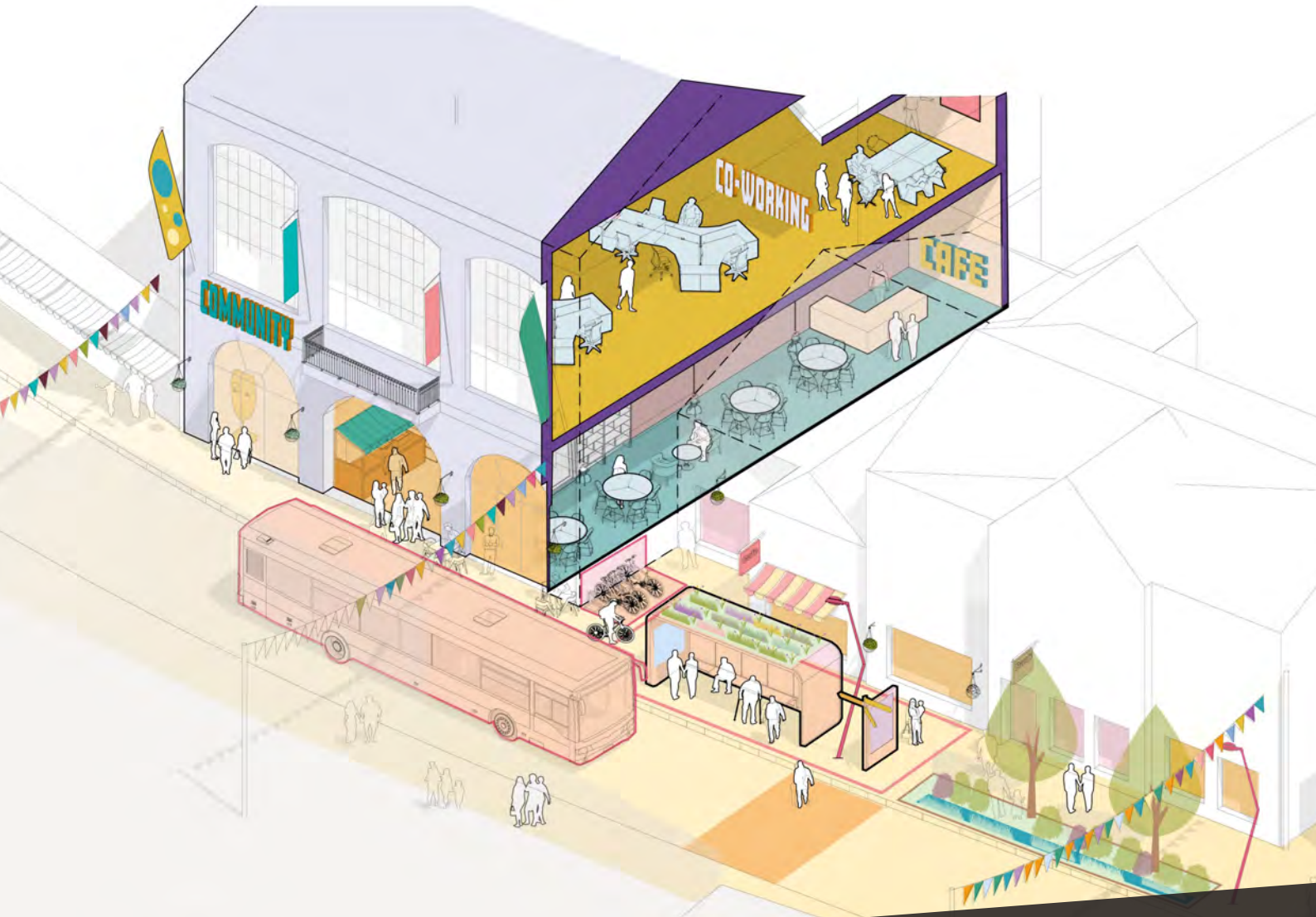
The future of high street fashion? A hub where you mend, make and swap clothes

An empty shop in England has been turned into a hub, where people are inspired to achieve sartorial satisfaction beyond fast fashion

25. Possible uses for the Arcade

IMPROVING BUS WAITING FACILITIES

CASE STUDY:

ARUP MOBILITY HUB CONCEPT

The concept is to take an integrated approach to public transport that can help breathe new life into town centre buildings and spaces. It includes co-locating bus stops with complimentary uses such as cafe spaces, co-working, community space. This transforms customer experience of bus travel and helps underpin the viability of key services. Such a concept could be considered for the Arcade.

CLEANING STRATEGY

A common message from engagement was the perceived poor condition of the street. It was seen as grubby and dirty and many local residents saw the appearance of the street as a major concern.

A consistent and regular cleaning strategy for the street will quickly create tangible change within the town centre.

26. Council Clean Ups to keep High Street presentation high quality

"Business would be so much better if the street was more appealing"

- Quote from Community Engagement activities 26 July 2022

EXTENDING CAR PARK OPENING TIMES & EVENTS

Currently the multi-storey car park within Abertillery closes early, and is not supportive of late afternoon shopping or an evening economy.

Testing later opening hours of the car park is a simple and temporary method to improve the town centre. The success of this can be assessed, and if proved popular further interventions such as temporary events on the top deck of the car park can be used.

28. Bussey Building, London - Reimagination of a roof space to create an outdoor cinema

27. Peckham Levels, London - Adaptive Re-Use of a car park as bar, pop-up and event space

JUBILEE SQUARE

A currently under-utilised space in a prime position on Church Street. Opening up Jubilee Square to the public can have a dual and mutually beneficial impact on both the residents of Abertillery and for St Michaels Church.

By allowing local people to use the space it provides a place to gather and host pop-up businesses. This would also allow St Michaels Church to generate revenue from initiatives such as selling coffee or baked goods, and utilised for community events to drive footfall on Church St.

This represents a potentially low cost initiative which can be adapted or extended depending on the success of initial tests and trials.

29. Jubilee Square, Abertillery

30. St Andrews Church, Cardiff - Before

31. St Andrews Church, Cardiff - After

32. St Andrews Church, Cardiff

CASE STUDY ST ANDREWS COFFEE COURT

Turning under-utilised negative space into positive space that provides small events, coffee and other uses that help to generate new revenue for the Church, whilst improving the street and urban area.

MAXIMISE THE MET

From engagement activities it is clear that 'The Met' is a cherished and valued community asset. The theatre continues to host a range of successful events.

The Met should be encouraged to explore additional events in new and different locations, opening up opportunity for a greater range of events such as connecting with Abertillery Park or utilising the top deck of the multi-story car park for larger outdoor events.

33. Community Cinema

"The Metropole is excellent"

- Quote from Community Engagement activities 26 July 2022

34. Outdoor Events

FURTHER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Significant community engagement has been undertaken with town centre stakeholders and feedback received has contributed to this placemaking plan and has informed its findings and recommendations.
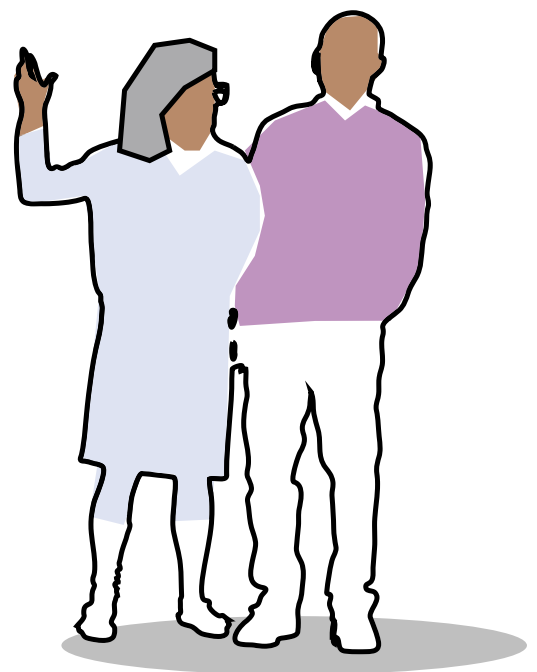
Engagement with the local population and stakeholders should be continued in order to harness the passion within Abertillery, and to ensure projects are implemented side by side with the community.

The ultimate success of a town is dependant on engagement to ensure the measures are implemented to meet the needs of its stakeholders.

BUSINESS FORUM

There is a need to re-establish the business forum within Abertillery which will need continued support to ensure alignment between the council and local businesses within the town.

This should be supported and expanded with initiatives such as branding for the town, and a town wide website to support and advertise Abertillery which is explored later in this report.

Key Move 1 - b. Longer term Projects

The Institute improvements

Cleaning Strategy

Town library

Jubilee Square events

Gateway to Abertillery

The short term change will lay the foundation for longer term, more complex projects. These projects will have a catalytic effect and will require adequate resource and capacity from the local authority. They will likely need to be developed alongside business cases and should be treated as individual packages of work that are aligned to the overarching vision of this placemaking plan.

Extending car park opening times & events

Church Street De-cluttering and greening

Maximise The Met
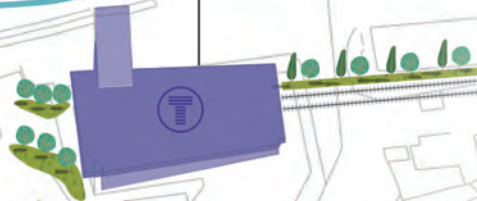
Somerset Street pedestrianisation

Realisation of Abertillery Station

Arcade Regeneration

Key Move 1 Projects Longer Term

MEDIUM AND LONGER TERM (2-10 YEARS)

The following section outlines the proposed longer term strategies. These will:

- Align to the overarching vision and objectives
- Build on quick win projects
- Deliver ambitious projects that are beyond small scale change
- Develop projects in line with business cases to maximise funding opportunities that are available

SIX MISSIONS FOR CHANGE

1. Shape a more attractive and diverse centre and be a test bed for new ideas
2. Translate Community passion into community action
3. More space for people and nature
4. Support the local business community and entrepreneurs
5. Embed and embrace the use of technology
6. Make getting to and from and around Abertillery easier and safer and prioritise sustainable transport

TOWN LIBRARY

Proposals to re-locate the existing Castle Street library to a modern, 'state of the art' library facility at the Former Trinity Chapel building on Church Street should be supported. Re-location of the library to the High Street will improve accessibility to core services ultimately improving footfall to both the library and Town Centre.

Re-location to a modern facility provides the opportunity for the library to integrate other vital serves such as community space and co-working.

35. Render of proposed new library

"GATEWAY" TO ABERTILLERY AND CONNECTION TO CULTURE

Currently there is no clear visual distinction to create a sense of arrival. A Gateway is more than just a physical object, but can help to celebrate a towns identity.

There is opportunity for town branding to be linked to this as a way to celebrate Abertillery and its rich history. This could compliment The Guardian of The Valleys as part of a series of local landmarks.

Other initiatives to fit in with a town branding can look to integrate a colour palette that is linked to Abertillery such as "Six Bells Red" which is a unique shade of red that has been created through recycling ochre minerals from the Six Bells colliery. "Turning Landscape" was created as a project partnership between UCL and The Coal Authority and has achieved Heritage Lottery Funding. Celebrating Abertillerys passed and existing attractions such as the Guardian of The Valleys and Cwmtillery Lakes.

A celebration of culture should also provide the opportunity to celebrate famous and notable individuals from Abertillery such as Beatrice Green who was a prominent activist in the 1920s who lobbied for women's birth control, organised aid for striking miners amongst other courageous acts.

A detailed study should be undertaken to determine the nature of a physical gateway. This could include wall art, sculpture, (re)naming of existing streets and spaces. This could include the existing mosaic underpass located south of Abertillery Park, or at the junction of Castle Street and High Street or the adjoining buildings.

36. "Guardian of The Valleys"

37. "Six Bells Red" paint made from recycled ocher minerals from the disused Six Bells Colliery

38. Image of the General Strike 1926, which Beatrice Green coordinated aid for striking workers families ©Walesonline

FORMER PEACOCKS BUILDING

The former Peacocks building has one of the largest floor plates and inhabits a prominent position on Church Street. Efforts to find a tenant for this building have proved problematic due to the existing lease taken up by Peacocks which is still being serviced by the administrators.

A threat to this building is security and in the short term it needs to be ensured it does not become a target for anti-social behaviour. Initiatives such as painting the external walls or placing murals or art on the windows can help to improve the address to Church Street.

In the long term an aspiration should be to find a suitable tenant for this important building. Whether this be carried out through market forces, or through public intervention to support any business, or cluster of businesses who would be open to take on the building.

39. Former Peacocks Building

ANVIL COURT

The location of key public services within the town centre is a major strength, and aligns to Welsh Government policy on Town Centres which recommends locating public services within town centres.

However, the current Council lease of the building expires in 2025. Although as it stands BGCBC have no intention of leaving this location, should they re-locate then additional work and study would be required to find a suitable use for this building and to mitigate any drop in footfall to Abertillery town centre.

40. Anvil Court

CHURCH STREET DECLUTTERING AND GREENING

Church Street remains the centre of Abertillery. Improving the street in terms of general cleanliness and street design has been a continued engagement theme. Further redesign of the street will involve detailed design work to remedy issues such as street furniture 'clutter'.

These issues need a careful balance between vehicle access and pedestrians. Such a substantial redesign would likely be a longer term aspiration that would require careful stakeholder engagement and the acquisition of additional capital funding

In the short to medium term a more nuanced approach for Abertillery would consider a flexible approach to the street that allows for temporary closures to accommodate events (weekly markets for example). In the event of permanent design changes, 'Mini-Holland' plans in England adopt a pedestrian focused design approach that incorporate strong landscape elements such as Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS) to deliver multiple benefits including flood resilience, improved character and habitat.

41. Greener Grangetown

42. Church St, Abertillery

45. Orford Road, Walthamstow, London - 2011 ©Google Maps

44. Orford Road, Walthamstow, London - 2015

**CASE STUDY FOCUS
WALTHAMSTOW**

De-cluttering and re-configuration of Walthamstows main retail core towards a pedestrian focus has led to significant aesthetic and allowing local businesses to thrive

43. Orford Road, Walthamstow, London - 2022

THE INSTITUTE IMPROVEMENTS

Community action has secured funding to improve the building but more support is needed.

There is a proposal to change the frontage of the building to face towards the town centre. Further investment in the building itself can be seen as an opportunity for the creation of a key community asset in a strategic location, which can provide uses and community value to all ages, from youth clubs, to seniors events. This would create another destination in the town

Abertillery Workingman's Welfare Institute has an existing business plan which aims to support the long term survival of the club by re-developing, and diversifying its uses. Where possible the club should be wholly supported in developing what would be become an important community facility and opportunity for Abertillery.

The immediate next steps for the Abertillery Workingman's Welfare Institute require the completion of architecture plans which will require funding to be found to the approximate value of £40,000, which will facilitate the tender stage

46. Abertillery Institute

CASE STUDY:
BETHNAL GREEN
WORKING MENS CLUB

Saved from closure and transformed with modern uses and events to attract a younger generation such as yoga, club nights and pop up street food vendor, whilst still providing for older generations with a quiet bar, bridge club and bingo nights.

Key move 2 - Abertillery Park

THE POTENTIAL OF THE PARK

Abertillery Park is currently home to several sports groups and provides essential outdoor space for the community.
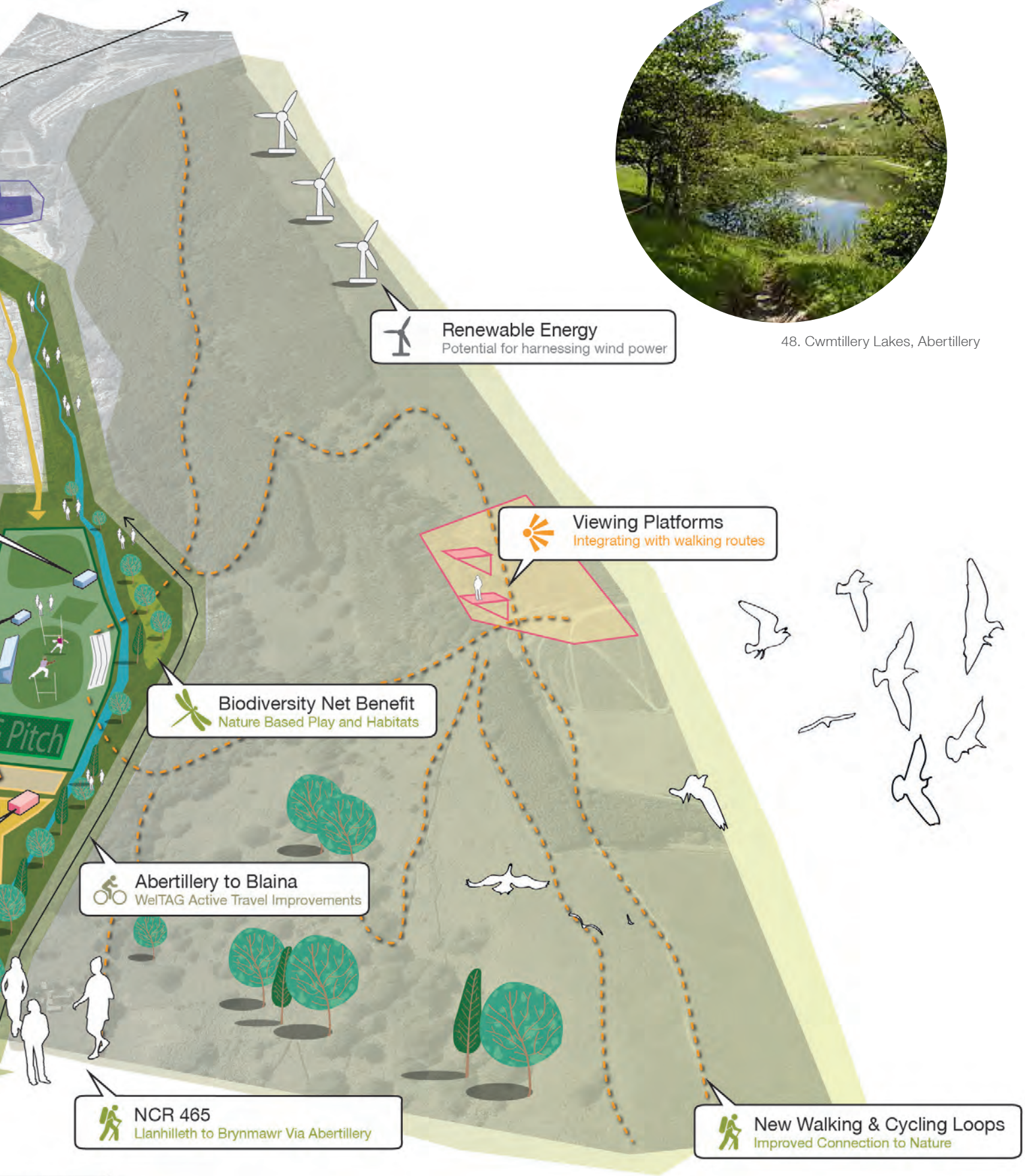
There is an opportunity for a more ambitious use of the park that creates a new destination. This new destination can link to other major landscape destinations such as Cwmtillery Lakes.

This could profoundly improve the physical, mental, environmental and economic well-being of the town. The concept illustrated here proposes a radical rethink on the surrounding landscape. This is explored further in the following pages.

47. The Jungle, Northern Ireland

Cricket
New pavillion

Abertillery Sports
New & Improved Facilities

New Arrival
New Access and parking

Park Cafe
Coffee, bikes, dog wash

Tree Top Adventure
A New Destination

Ebbw Riv
Enhanced R
wayfinding,

48. Cwmtillery Lakes, Abertillery

Renewable Energy
Potential for harnessing wind power

Viewing Platforms
Integrating with walking routes

Biodiversity Net Benefit
Nature Based Play and Habitats

Abertillery to Blaina
WelTAG Active Travel Improvements

NCR 465
Llanhilleth to Brynmawr Via Abertillery

New Walking & Cycling Loops
Improved Connection to Nature
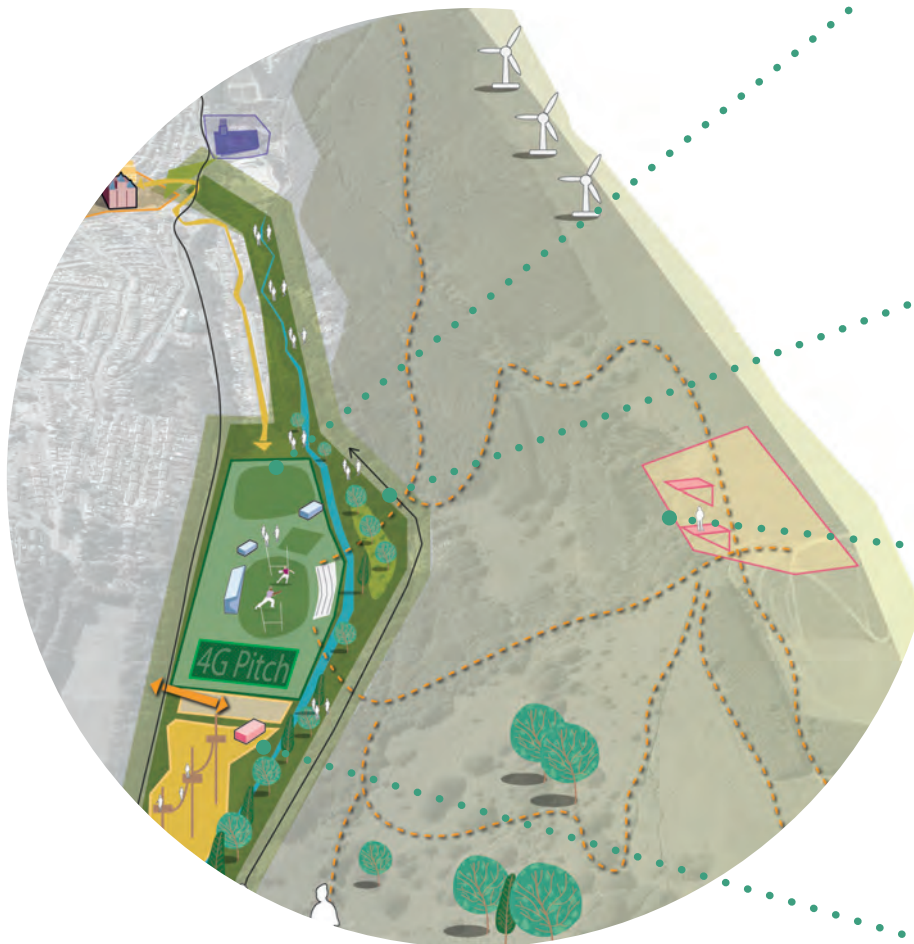
er Corridor
oute, lighting,
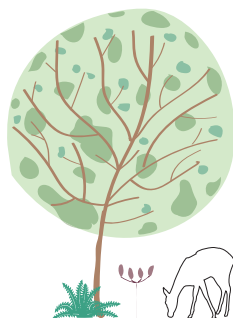river connection

Abertillery Destination Park

The early vision for the park centres around 7 distinct themes.

Long-term contact with nature is linked to longer lives.

Source: The Lancet Planetary Health

50. Claygate Cricket Changing Rooms and Cafe Bar

1. SPORT FOR EVERYONE

Allowing everyone to enjoy the benefits of nature and the natural environment by:

- Supporting existing sports, improving existing facilities which need investment and providing space for new ones such as a 4G pitch to support existing sports clubs
- Enhanced route to the park on the Abertillery to Brynmawr WelTAG corridor , lighting and wayfinding
- Linkage to Welsh Sports strategy - greater uptake from younger groups, community benefit, community health and well-being, social inclusion
- Support increased participation in sports as per Welsh Government 'Climbing Higher' strategy

49. Bio-diversity improvements - FitzPark, London

2. BIODIVERSITY NET-BENEFIT AND NATURE BASED PLAY

Placing nature at the heart of the strategy to reverse species decline and raise awareness amongst younger people by:

- Facilitating community habitat creation
- Creating citizen science opportunities
- Habitat retention schemes
- SuDs linked to the Ebbw Fach River
- Delivering a management and monitoring strategy

51. Sustrans Route 465

3. ACCESS - NEW WALKING AND CYCLING ROUTES

Encouraging a more active lifestyle and the opportunities for recreation within the landscape through:

- Improved and new walking and cycling routes
- Creating the opportunity for links to health through social prescribing
- Walking and cycling/mountain biking routes (new routes linked to National Cycle Route 465) for all ages and ability
- Alleviating congestion on Glandwr Street by exploring the opportunities for an alternative access to Abertillery Park

52. GoApe, Alexandra Palace

4. NEW DESTINATION

Attract new users and provide for existing park users through the creation of:

- A new Adventure park to attract new users (subject to feasibility)
- Potential new park access to the north side of the park and new arrival area
- New cafe space
- Customer experience focus - A outdoor dog wash and bike wash
- Creation of new social groups based around activities within the park and landscape

Abertillery Destination Park

53. Wyre Forest Dog Wash

54. Incredible Edible UK

55. Blaenavon Totem

5. EBBW RIVER

Increasing the prominence and connection to the Ebbw River by:

- Nature based solutions around the river to clean polluted water at source and slow its flow
- Where possible, daylighting the river and providing greater access to the water
- Greater connection between the river and the park to provide better integration
- Explore feasibility for micro-hydro to support the sports clubs utility costs

56. River Ebbw adjacent to the park

6. VIEWS

Linking to other park initiatives such as the new walking and cycling, there is the opportunity to celebrate the landscape through the inclusion and marking of:

- Viewpoints over the landscape of Abertillery
- Wayfinding markers such as totems which can link back to the town branding and celebrate moments in history from Abertillery

57. Blaenavon Totem

7. NATURE BASED PLAY

Encouraging younger people to engage with nature and live active lifestyles by:

- Strategising with local schools to encourage use of the park.
- Providing space for natural play
- Outdoor classrooms for links to education
- Initiatives such as Incredible Edible UK

58. West Gorton, Manchester

CASE STUDY:

WELCOME TO OUR WOODS RHONDDA

A community partnership set up to make local resources more accessible and useful to the local community, and wider region. This is achieved by a new destination park with funding and governance model. Bottom up/top down sustainability that joins the dots between landscape, town and community.

The work done by the partnership has three key elements of focus on:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Skills and Jobs
- Poverty

The partnership secured first round funding from the National Lottery Community Fund - Climate Action Fund.

The project:

- Was initiated by local community
- Learned from elsewhere - Scotland
- Has a dedicated website
- Aligns to funding, delivery and operations

SKYLINE PROJECT:

Skyline Project

CROESO WELCOME
I'N COEDWIG TO OUR WOODS

PAY AS YOU FEEL CAFE:

MICRO HYDRO PROJECT:

Pay As You Feel Café

Micro Hydro Project

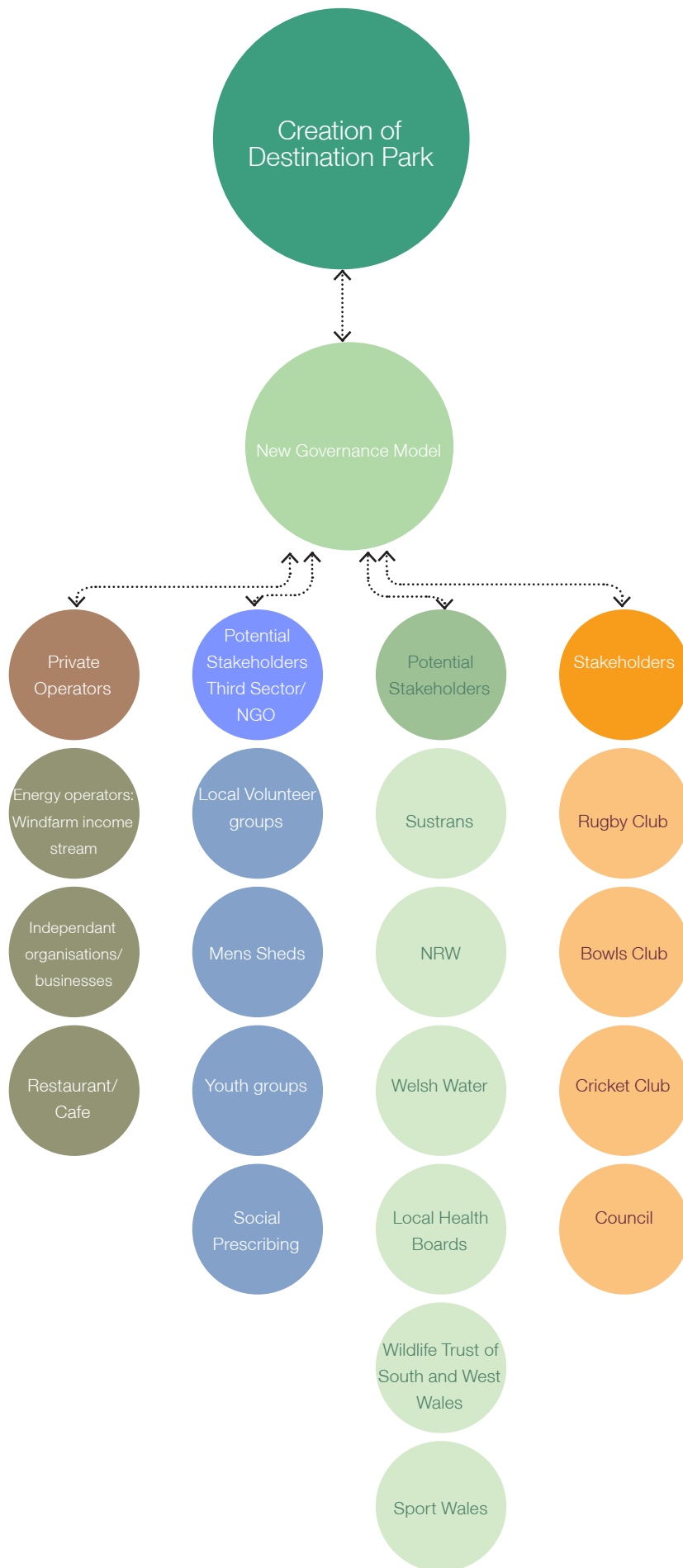59. "Welcome to the Woods" Web page   73

A NEW FORM OF GOVERNANCE

Existing stakeholders are playing an essential role in ensuring that key sports facilities remain operational. To realise the potential of the park, these stakeholders will need to be bolstered and partnered with a new cohort of individuals and groups.

Linking with new partners can facilitate private investment, new uses, greater footfall and revenue generation. These mutually beneficial relationships can lead to fresh ideas towards turning Abertillery Park into a flexible and resilient destination which is a significant community asset.

A potential list of organisations and stakeholders its outlines overleaf. This list is not definitive, but illustrates the scale of opportunity and diversity in organisations of which can be brought on board for the future next step of the park.

Creation of Destination Park

New Governance Model

Private Operators

Potential Stakeholders Third Sector/ NGO

Potential Stakeholders

Stakeholders

Energy operators: Windfarm income stream

Local Volunteer groups

Sustrans

Rugby Club

Independant organisations/ businesses

Mens Sheds

NRW

Bowls Club

Restaurant/ Cafe

Youth groups

Welsh Water

Cricket Club

Social Prescribing

Local Health Boards

Council

Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales

Sport Wales

Key move 3 - Future Rail Station

The new proposed rail link at the "Former Lo-Cost Site" which will connect Abertillery to the Ebbw Vale rail line is a significant opportunity for improved public transport.

The station must be integrated with the town via clear, safe and direct links. It must also be connected seamlessly to local buses and active travel routes, to offer a viable alternative to car travel.

The design of the station area should be focused on contributing to the overall character of Abertillery and improving the sense of place. The Arup publication 'Tomorrows Living Station' provides a blueprint for integrating stations into the surrounding area whilst delivering multiple benefits such as green infrastructure, community cohesion and local economic prosperity.
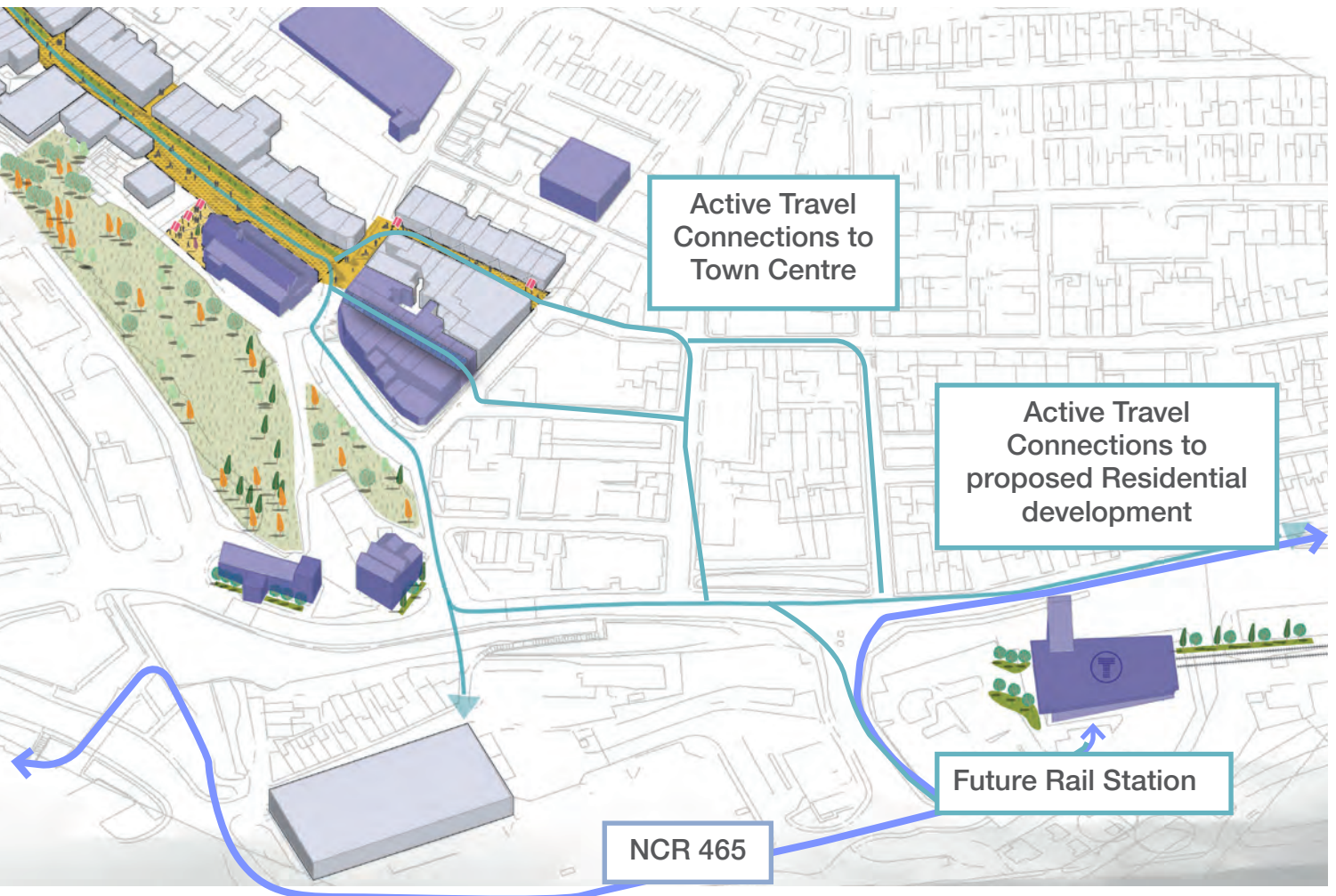
BGCBC are currently working with TfW to ensure Active Travel improvements are delivered as part of the wider rail scheme and linking to the ongoing work on improvements to the active travel route between Blaina and Abertillery Recreation Park.
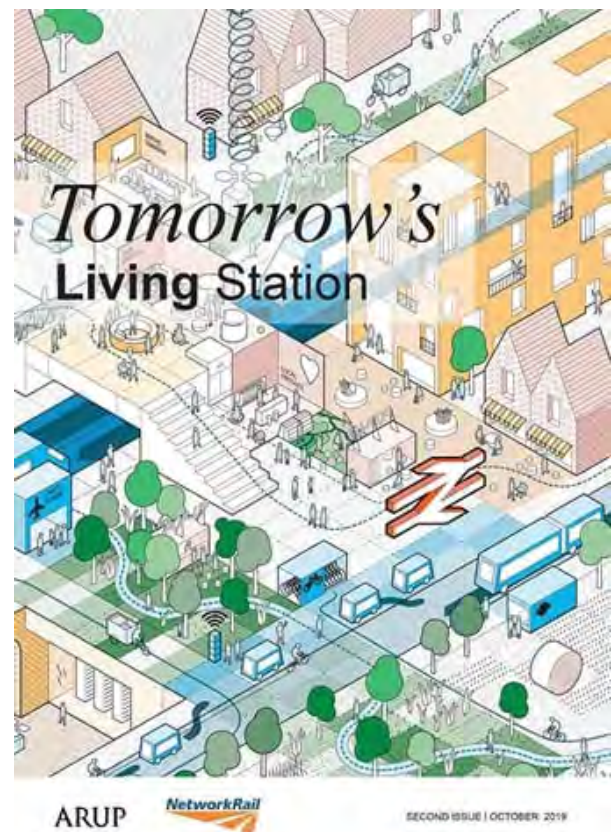
60. "Tomorrow's Living Station" Arup Publication

61. Tilburg Station, Netherlands. High quality public space and interchange

Active Travel Connections to Town Centre

Active Travel Connections to proposed Residential development

Future Rail Station

NCR 465

5.1 Phasing & Delivery Summary

DELIVERY AND PHASING

A delivery plan has been developed, as a separate document, to support this placemaking plan.

This articulates the case for investment in Abertillery and sets out clear and deliverable actions to move the plan forward. For each identified project, a set of key actions and overall delivery plans has been developed.

To support delivery of the projects, and the next step actions associated with each, there are several potential sources of funding available. These are summarised in the delivery plan, and include:

- Shared prosperity fund (UK Government): £585 million of funding allocated to help spread opportunity and level up Wales, with three investment priorities – Community & Place, Supporting Local Business, and People & Skills (approx. £28M of which is ringfenced for Blaenau Gwent).
- Levelling Up Fund: £4.8 billion fund supporting town centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects, and cultural and heritage assets.
- Transforming Towns: supports projects to redevelop and improve town centres.
- Cardiff Capital Region City Deal: a £495M Wider Investment Fund aimed at priority investment areas of innovation, infrastructure and challenge.
- National Lottery Heritage Fund: provides funding for heritage projects at range of scales (from £3,000 to £5M), prioritising projects that meet outcomes of involving people, resilience, wellbeing, skills, local economy and creating better places.

Alongside seeking grant funding support, there are several other sources of funding for delivery of the identified projects, including private investor funding using key partners to support delivery of specific projects e.g. The Arcade.

There could be an opportunity to consider a Business Improvement District (BID) in Abertillery. This would need further investigation, and exploration with the business community before implementation.
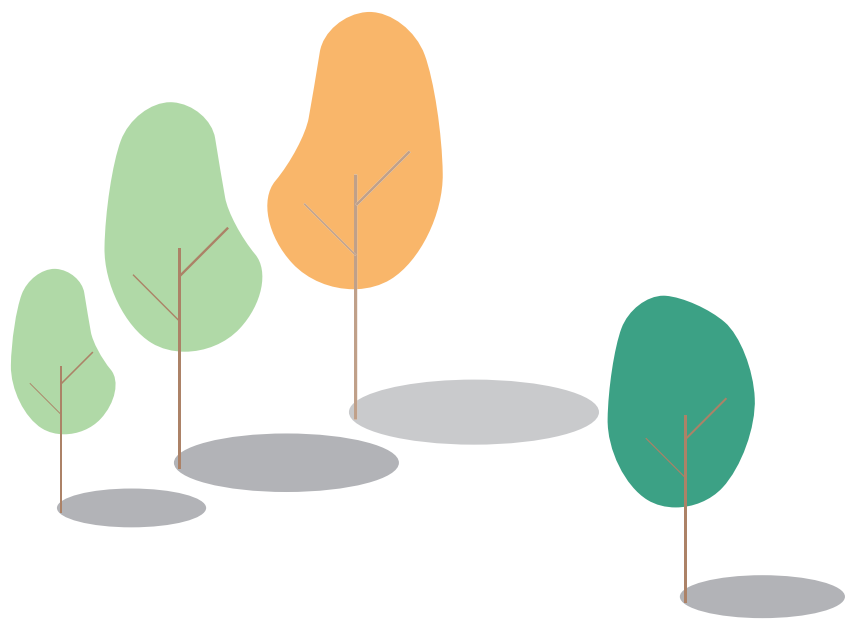
6.1 Conclusion & Next Steps

This plan identified a clear necessity for a placemaking plan that uses the power of the community to drive change. This grass roots approach puts the community at the heart of change. The following conclusions are offered:

CONTINUATION WITH THE COMMUNITY

The plan will need to work for people of all ages. Young people in particular are often overlooked. The plan offers a wide range of opportunities for young people to mitigate issues of anti social behaviour. Abertillery Park, Jubilee Square, The Arcade and potential teenage markets offer new spaces and places for young people to become involved in meaningful activities that can and should be aligned to broader strategies to improve physical and mental well-being and entrepreneurship.

QUICK, DECISIVE ACTION

For the first phase projects or "quick wins" it is vital that these are actioned and implemented immediately by the Council to gain community buy in. The plan and project sets the foundation for a new cohesive relationship between the Council and community stakeholders.

TEST, TRIAL. ASSESS

Many of the projects within this plan suggest a test and trial approach. This is to assess a project's success and build support prior to expensive permanent interventions. Testing and trialling also allows different interventions to be implemented to create an early impact and to change the perception of areas and how they can possibly used, such as the multi-storey car park.

BE AMBITIOUS

This plan has strong ambitions for Abertillery and successful implementation will require a positive attitude towards the potential that Abertillery has.

This is especially important during the early phases of implementation when momentum has yet to be built.

BUILD ON SUCCESS

There are projects already in creation within Abertillery (for example the library project) and this plan looks to build on these successes. This plan should not be seen as an end state but projects should be continuously assessed and discussed as to how to evolve them and to keep improving Abertillery.

NEXT STEPS

Outlined below are a number of next steps towards the delivery of this plan and where to begin to build momentum and get projects off the ground and into reality.

QUICK WINS

Implementation of the quick wins strategy should start immediately. Especially for areas council have control over such as the cleaning strategy for Church Street.

CONTINUE ENGAGEMENT

Engagement should continue with stakeholders and the public, not just for their thoughts on the plan but also to get them involved with the projects and make them part of the change within Abertillery.

FEASIBILITY

A number of the larger projects such as Abertillery Park and ownership of the Arcade will need feasibility studies to establish full costs to align with a Business Case in order to achieve funding from the appropriate funding stream identified within the delivery plan.

POP-UPS AND TEMPORARY USES

Engaging with the businesses on Somerset Street to facilitate temporary closure should be quickly put into place.

The trial for extending opening times for the multi-storey car park has also begun. The surrounding community should be continually engaged with starting now to obtain feedback on its success, but also to address any issues or concerns that may be raised.

CELEBRATE THE PLAN

The plan aims to support Abertillery and build on its strengths and opportunities. Generating excitement around the plan and the projects in the pipeline will help to stimulate positivity and build momentum for change.

Communicating the positive chagnes that are to happen and the benefits to the community will help to shift public perception and build on the pride within the town.