

A VISION FOR PONTYPRIDD

The aim of the Council is to make Pontypridd the 'County Town'; the economic hub and driving force for the whole of Rhondda-Cynon-Taff, and a gateway for new investment, innovation and sustainable development. Pontypridd is located at the confluence of the River Taff and the River Rhondda, and is centrally located within the County Borough being accessible from the Rhondda, Cynon and Taff valleys. To make it the County Town, such a vision will demand an unwavering political commitment to change people's perceptions of Pontypridd as a place.

In order to make Pontypridd attractive to visitors, and thereby investors, the Council must work to remove the uncertainties affecting the town's centre; breath into it a new sense of confidence and sign up to a co-ordinated 'Action Plan' that sets out its future vision for the role of the town centre and the steps that need to be taken to deliver it.

Pontypridd has a variety of significant assets including:

- Ynysangharad Park
- The River Taff and River Rhondda
- Bus and railway stations providing connections to Cardiff, Merthyr Tyfil, and also Cynon and the Rhondda valleys.
- Direct access to the A470 trunk road
- A Valuable historic townscape and physical fabric

Yet the potential for each of these assets to add value to the economy and activity in the town centre has been undermined or stifled by fractured thinking, a lack of confidence and a catalogue of delays and indecision about potential new developments.

This strategy is intended to set a new agenda for Pontypridd, one which the majority of people who work, live or shop in the town can understand and, (even if they don't agree with all the proposed initiatives which make up the strategy) they will agree with the principles which will make Pontypridd more:

- **Convenient**
- **Accessible**
- **Safe**
- **Comfortable**

And above all,

- **Memorable**

Convenient:

by making it easier to park, to live, work or shop in the Centre.

Accessible:

by removing the congestion with a radical new traffic management regime.

Safe:

by rationalising traffic circulation; enhancing pedestrian facilities/ surfaces, improving signage, lighting and security surveillance.

Comfortable:

by providing shelter from the elements and creating public spaces and streets which are enjoyable and stimulating.

Memorable:

by reinforcing Pontypridd's sense of 'place': working with its current physical assets, (Park, River, Railway, etc.) and the character of its historic physical fabric to create a place which visitors will want to return to again and again.

In order to create a vibrant town centre for Pontypridd, that is a home to a complementary spectrum of retail, leisure, office, civic and residential uses, the centre will have to have a high quality public realm and integrated transport services. It will need to capitalise upon its unique heritage and will be a safe, sustainable and successful place at the forefront of competitiveness and good practice.

New retail and leisure developments will be introduced in the heart of the town to enhance and invigorate the existing offer. Pontypridd will become a prime-shopping destination, home to up market retailers. New retail will be a catalyst for the town centre to evolve into a distinct, vibrant and high quality mixed-use centre. Leisure activities and a vibrant evening economy will grow.

Residents, as well as those working and visiting Pontypridd will benefit from the enhanced public transport system. There will be better accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists, buses and taxis through and to the town centre. Enhanced public transport networks will improve connections to the wider area. A well managed, private car access and parking regime with good models for pedestrian and cycle use will complement improvements.

A good quality, well-managed and maintained public realm will set the context for daytime visitors and the night time economy. A renewed and strengthened heart will be defined by an enhanced town square and the provision of new retail, civic and community facilities. Urban spaces will be safe to use by all ages and social groups at all times of the day and night.

With local support and participation, new sustainable developments will be created and integrated with existing communities to provide a high quality, higher density living environment which reflects the historic fabric of Pontypridd. These developments will feel urban, but will be sensitively designed to create a high quality urban form. The mix of tenure will be varied, creating a balanced community.

Redevelopment of key sites in Pontypridd town centre will enable new opportunities for work, shopping and other activities for the local population, making the area a more attractive place to live, work and visit. Pontypridd's ideal is for all sectors of society to share and work towards improving common interests including the environment, local services, employment opportunities and education.

The Regeneration Strategy for Pontypridd Town Centre is being prepared in order to place current activity and future opportunities into the context of a single 'Framework document', and to create a comprehensive and co-ordinated long term (10 year) strategy for the development of the town, which will guarantee its future prosperity and the quality of life of its residents. As the Project Brief points out, 25 years of discussion have already been spent trying to build consensus about what needs to happen in the Town Centre, without enough visible progress being made, while in the meantime competition for major development elsewhere in Rhondda Cynon Taff has grown to present a threat to Pontypridd's status and future prosperity.

Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council believes that thriving and vibrant town centres are essential if Rhondda Cynon Taff is to achieve its ambition of building a strong and sustainable local economy. Pontypridd is the largest town in Rhondda Cynon Taff. It is a market town with a university and is the commercial and administrative centre for surrounding Valley communities.

A Town Centre Forum has been established to co-ordinate activity between the Council, Chamber of Trade, Town Council, Glamorgan University, Police and other key stakeholders in Pontypridd. The Forum has successfully raised the profile of Pontypridd with a number of major events, and has forged progress on a number of major projects such as the Angharad Walk retail development and the St Catherine's Corner car park. There have also been a number of big events in the town, which have made good use of Ynysangharad Park as a venue, and have attracted visitors and shoppers to the Town.

The size and location of Pontypridd means that it has the potential to develop its "pivotal" role and importance, as the 'County Town' of Rhondda Cynon Taff. This study is expected to produce a strategy that can achieve this ambition within a ten year period.

There is already a wide range of projects under development in Pontypridd: The new bus station has recently been completed, major schemes such as Angharad Walk and St Catherine's Corner have planning consents and the Millfield depot site has been marketed to the private sector. In addition schemes for the pedestrianisation of Taff Street and the Park Lido have been developed to concept stage.

'Pontypridd in Partnership' (PIP), as a partnership between the Council, Town Council, Glamorgan University and retailers, is establishing important links with the University, to develop Pontypridd as a true 'university' town. This will also assist in enhancing the Town as a major centre of cultural, recreational and entertainment activities.

This study will ultimately gather a comprehensive understanding of these existing projects and proposals. The study will then expand on them in the context of an overall regeneration strategy, and identify opportunities

to incorporate new ideas and proposals into a final, long term strategy for the Town. The new “Framework” that will emerge will seek to integrate all the planned projects and to ensure that the Town’s full potential as the ‘County town’ of Rhondda Cynon Taff is realised, without delay.

The emerging draft strategy, or framework, will be subject to a public exhibition. The final strategy will be costed and prioritised, with a realistic programme of delivery projected. Outcomes will be measurable against the priorities of the Community Plan and the emerging Economic Strategy. The framework will also provide the opportunity to feed into and inform the emerging Local Development Plan. The strategy will provide a supporting document for future funding bids that will be necessary to guarantee sufficient investment support and to ensure its delivery.

2.1 Commercial

The chapter provides a contemporary analysis of Pontypridd town centre based on the economic and social indicators typically used to assess and measure the 'health' of town centres. The areas of analysis cover retail provision, transport, built environment, facilities, recreation and crime.

Retail sector

The prime retail space in Pontypridd is located in the Taff Street/Market Street area. Key retailers include Marks and Spencer, Boots, Woolworths and Dorothy Perkins. Trading success is known to be variable for some operators, although it is generally considered to be less successful in recent years.

The town centre offers a broad mix of retailers and services and few apparent gaps or significant deficiencies in provision have been identified through stakeholder meetings. A key issue seems to be the quality of the retail offer, with a considerable number of premises being occupied by discount sales and charity shop uses.

The larger multiple retailers are concentrated at the southern and central areas of Taff Street, although Iceland and Somerfield are located in the northern area.

Vacancy rates are variable throughout the town, although low overall at approximately 1%.

The Taff Vale Precinct at the northern edge of Taff Street is a significant detriment to the centre, the 'internal' units being almost completely vacant and in a very poor state of repair.

Business confidence generally does not appear to be high in the town centre with a few prominent exceptions (such as Alfred's Bar/Restaurant).

The Indoor Market occupies a traditional grand building in the centre of the town. The town does not appear to derive as much benefit from the Indoor Market as might be expected. Physical improvements to the building's fabric, combined with a planned approach to the interior arrangement and retail 'offer' might begin to address this.

Equally, the bi-weekly outdoor market does not, as a shopping experience, appear to contribute significantly to the retail offer of Pontypridd town centre. The range and price of goods for sale is generally comparable with that already available elsewhere in the town (such as discount items). Consequently, the outdoor market is not benefiting the town to the same extent as, say, a local quality produce/farmers market might do.

Pharmacy provision in the centre is provided primarily by Boots, and Lloyds Chemist, Sheppards and the Morgan Street surgery.

Financial Sector

A number of banks and financial institutions retain a presence in the town centre including Abbey, Barclays, Bradford and Bingley, Halifax, HSBC, Lloyds TSB and





Natwest. A number of these facilities provide 24-hour cash dispense facilities. Post Offices in the town centre are located on Mill Street and Bridge Street.

2.2 Transport

Public Transport

Pontypridd is served by a direct railway service from Cardiff to Merthyr Tydfil plus the Cynon and Rhondda valleys. The railway station is located close to the town centre to the south of Taff Street. Improvement works have been carried out during the last few years to the Station complex and concourse, although the platforms still contain some redundant buildings.

The bus station is located at the opposite end of the town to the northwest, although there is a secondary bus stopping area on Gelliwastad Road close to the Gyratory. The bus station has recently undergone a programme of redevelopment works. The vehicular and pedestrian access points to the bus station are at the busy junction of Morgan Street and Gelliwastad Road. There is a bus link between the railway station and bus station although it is unclear how well patronised this service is.

Traffic Routes

Pontypridd is located at the intersection north - south traffic routes (between Merthyr Tydfil, Cynon Valley, and Cardiff via A470) and local traffic to/from the Rhondda Valley and Ynysybwll.

The town has recently been the subject of highway works creating a road system around the town centre. Considerable congestion and delay can occur along Gelliwastad Road between Catherine Street and the A470 interchange (via Morgan Street and Bridge Street) and similarly in the direction of the town centre from the A470 on the connecting road adjacent to Ynysangharad Park. Historic patterns of traffic movement combined with poor signage infrastructure result in traffic following a congested route along Gelliwastad Road instead of via Broadway to the A470.

Potential 'vehicular gateways' to the town are on Broadway for traffic entering the town from the South and on Bridge Street for traffic entering from the A470 junction. The Taff Vale Viaduct forms a dramatic gateway for traffic entering the town from the Rhondda valley areas.

Bicycles

There are few designated cycle routes through the town centre despite the close proximity of the Taff Trail and NCR47 passing through the centre of the town.



Car Parks

There are essentially three primary car parks in the town. The closest to the town centre is the Taff Street Car Park (next to the River Taff). This is known to become congested especially at peak times and peak days. The peripheral car parks are the Goods Yard (to the rear of the Muni) and the Sardis Road Car Park. All are pay and display and there are few parking spaces typically available during normal working days.

The car parking proposals for the Angharad Walk and the St Catherine's Corner Car Park will both provide more convenient options closer to the town centre.

2.3 Built Environment

Like most South Wales Valley towns, Pontypridd grew with the industrialisation of the 19th century, and the associated development of the Glamorganshire canal, iron (Merthyr), coal (Rhondda), and the establishment of the heavy industry (for example Chainworks in 1818).

Landmarks

The spire of St Catherine's Church is a prominent landmark for the town, and is clearly visible from the A470 road. There are numerous other historic and landmark buildings/structures in the centre, such as the Market Hall, the Muni, the Town Museum, the Taff Vale Railway Viaduct (Brunel), Railway Station, Municipal Buildings, and of course, the famous Old Bridge.

The opportunity to enhance or accentuate these landmark features could be better exploited but are ignored through, say, the use of interpretative features, or improvements to setting or treatment (such as night illumination).

Fabric

The majority of the town's built fabric originates during this growth period and there is a range of 19th and early 20th century historic buildings dispersed widely throughout the town centre. The condition of buildings is variable and recently improved buildings are clearly prominent.

Much of the built fabric at the northern end of the town centre shows a lack of investment reflecting the unwillingness to spend on buildings whose future is uncertain in the context of the Angharad Walk development.

A number of commercial premises in the town suggest temporary occupation and/or perhaps demonstrate a general unwillingness to invest in maintenance of the properties. In comparison however, there are some well-established town centre uses and new uses that are valuable new assets, which instil some confidence in the town's economic future.

The town is devoid of modern landmark architecture. Recent proposals for St Catherine's Street Corner and Angharad Walk may go some way to addressing this.





Public Realm

The public realm in the town centre needs investment. It is often marred by heavy traffic movements. Part of Taff Street accommodates one-way traffic flows (northern sector) and the remainder is 'access only'. There appears to be insufficient enforcement or policing of illegal traffic movements along Taff Street as drivers drop-off/pick-up passengers. This, combined with deliveries and bus movements, increases the danger to pedestrians and reduces the attractiveness, safety and comfort to the users of the properties.

The most attractive streetscapes are those of Market Street and Church Street which have a generally consistent and sympathetic pattern of surface treatment and street furniture. Most streetscapes in the town are blighted by unsympathetic maintenance of street and/or buildings.

Accessibility in the town centre is difficult for wheelchairs and pushchairs. Access to the individual shops and free movement through the shopping area is hampered or prevented by the design of the public realm. Abrupt kerbs, uneven surfaces and illegal traffic movements combine in this respect.

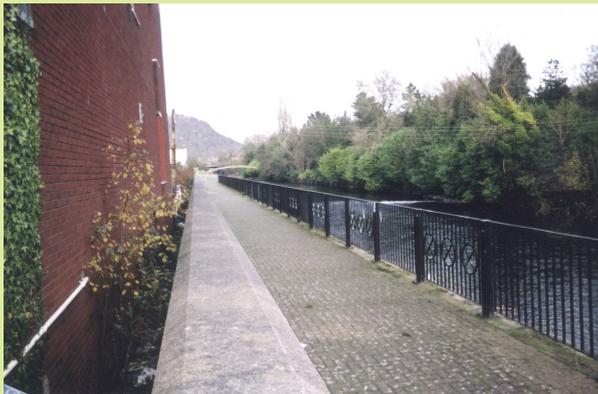
Soft landscaping in the town centre is very limited, and almost non-existent apart from the temporary landscaping associated with the 'town in bloom' events which are understood to be quite successful.



Riverscape

The town is located at the confluence of the Rivers Taff and Rhondda. The historic development of the town, in parallel with other industrial revolution towns, has traditionally ignored the rivers and consequently buildings back on to them and they are generally obscured from





view from the town centre. Views of the River Taff are limited to those from the Taff footbridge, the Old Bridge and the park. The River Rhondda can be seen from the pavement on the northern sector of the Gyratory and Sardis Bridge. Unfortunately most of these views are dominated by the rear elevations of commercial buildings which tend to be neglected, backland areas which do not exploit their aspect or waterfront location.

Gateways and Pedestrian Links

Pedestrian gateways into the town do not appear to be exploited in any planned form. Key gateway points are located on pedestrian routes from car parks into the town centre but are not identified in any way.

Links from the town centre to the Taff Street Car Park and the Sardis Road Car Park are compromised by highway infrastructure, narrow pavements and poor legibility.

Principal pedestrian links follow routes to/from peripheral car parks, plus the bus and train stations to the town centre. However, none of these routes (except possibly to/from the train station) is attractive, desirable or legible. Both peripheral car parks are located at high level relative to the shopping area and pedestrian routes are 'squeezed' onto pavements right next to busy roads (such as the Gyratory System or Morgan Street) and are convoluted and difficult for wheelchair, pushchairs and less able-bodied people.

This, combined with other factors discussed above reduces the attractiveness of the centre as a shopping destination with a consequent reduction in visits by potential shoppers who have the means and opportunities to travel to centres that are perceived to be of greater attractiveness, convenience and overall accessibility than Pontypridd (eg. Talbot Green Retail Park).

Pedestrian links to Ynysangharad Park from the town centre are limited to the footbridge (adjacent to the M & S service yard) or via Bridge Street at the northern end of Taff Street. The footbridge provides an attractive gateway to the Park although it is neither a prominent nor obvious feature from Taff Street and could easily be missed by visitors to the town.



2.4 Education

Pontypridd benefits from strong links and associations with Glamorgan University. The University campus is located in Treforest – a distance of approximately one mile south from the town centre. There are estimated to be approximately 2,000 students living in the local area plus 1,000 on campus.

A regular bus and train service provides a link between the University and the town, however the pedestrian route is perceived to be long and unattractive, and runs adjacent to a busy trafficked road (Broadway).

The facilities of the town are used by a proportion of the students for shopping (for example, Iceland, Somerfield, Indoor Market) although it is acknowledged that there are generally few large-scale attractions for students to compete with the attraction and relative ease of access and facilities in Cardiff.

The potential economic benefits of this customer market need to be maximised, although efforts (such as trader's discounts to students) are being made.

2.5 Culture, Tourism and Entertainment

The 'Muni' Arts Centre and the Pontypridd Museum are significant cultural facilities in the town centre. The historical importance of the Old Bridge (constructed in 1756 by William Edwards and was the longest single span bridge in Europe for a century) appears to be somewhat underplayed in terms of the town's profile.

Furthermore the National Anthem of Wales 'Mae Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau' was written in Pontypridd in 1856. This is identified by a commemorative plaque on the elevation of the building facing the Gyrotory system/Sardis Bridge.

Tourism facilities in the town include the Museum and Tourist Information Centre.

Intepretation features, such as town maps or information boards, are not prominent in the town and there is a general lack of coherant signposting, particularly in the car parks.

Tourist accomodation in the town centre is limited although some provision does exist (eg. Market Tavern). More substantial hotel accomodation does exist in reasonable proximity to Pontypridd at Junction 32 of the M4 and at the Heritage Park Hotel (Trehafod).

The town Library is not a prominent facility in the town centre due to its peripheral location to the west of Gelliwasted Road.

Public Houses and cafes are generally concentrated at the southern end of the town centre. 'Takeaways' however are generally concentrated at the northern end. The number of restaurant/bar facilities in the centre is lower than would normally be expected in a town of this size (Pontypridd must be one of the very few towns of its size which does not have a multi-national fast food takeaway/restaurant/burger bar in the town centre).

The 'Muni' Arts Centre includes a cinema which offers two screenings per day and provides concert and theatre space as required with the Circle Gallery providing art exhibition space . Pontypridd indoor bowling centre is located in the Goods Yard Car Park to the rear thereof.

The Bingo Hall (located at the junction of Taff Street and Sardis Road) is understood to have recently closed and it is uncertain whether it will remain viable in this use. Bingo halls are located in some surrounding towns.

There is therefore a very limited range of attractions or reasons for visitors to use the town centre during the evening or night except for drinking in the public houses





and/or visiting one of the few restaurants or takeaways which are open at night.

2.6 Open Space and Sport

The town benefits from a considerable area of formal playing field provision in the Ynysangharad Park on the opposite side of the River Taff. Direct pedestrian links to the Park are limited to one footbridge across the river. The footbridge forms only a modest, and somewhat discreet, gateway to the Park from the town centre.

The Park is a Memorial Park (opened 1923) and there is considerable local opinion that this should remain the primary purpose of the Park. The current proposal for the redevelopment of the Taff Vale Centre involves a link into the Park and a multi-storey car park at the northern end of the Park (on the site of the Health Centre). The car park has become the most contentious aspect of the Taff Vale redevelopment proposals and is regarded as a substantial reason for not encouraging the scheme, despite the wider benefits that the town centre and Pontypridd might derive from it as a whole.

Facilities in the Park include Tennis courts, Childrens Playground and paddling pool, bowling green, miniature golf course, and formal gardens. The latter is an important facility for the town that attracts a considerable number of visitors during the summer months.

The adjacent Lido is a well known landmark in the town however changing trends and a lack of funding/maintenance led to its decline and closure in the 1990's. It is derelict, frequently subject of vandalism and is now a liability to the Council. It is nevertheless a listed building with historical interest. The re-use of this building has been the subject of an earlier study (Strategic Leisure Feb 2004) although the costs of re-use are known to be considerable.

The Park also contains a cricket ground (Pontypridd Cricket Club has been based there since 1870) plus other sports pitches (rugby/football). The long term use of the Park appears to be constrained by access restrictions and/or legible access to the area in particular, pedestrian access from the nearest car parks is neither direct nor attractive. A bus stop is located at the northern gateway to the Park on Bridge Street.

The Park is know to be well used during the summer and the summer events programmes have been popular and very well attended.

The town centre does not derive as much benefit from its proximity to the Park as it should. This is undermined by the lack of physical integration with the town (signage, links and legibility) plus the restrictive approach that is generally taken to the usage of the Park and its Memorial status.

The Taff Trail long-distance walking/cycle path skirts the town at Bridge Street/A470 junction before following residential streets of Trallwn. This location is also the connecting point of National Cycle Routes 8 and 47. The



latter is routed through Ynysangharad park and across the footbridge into the town centre.

The Pontypridd Rugby Ground is located on Sardis Road to the west of the town centre. Planning applications have been recently submitted for the use of the site for a foodstore and non-food retail purpose.

Despite the outdoor sports pitches and tennis courts there is no leisure centre or swimming pool in Pontypridd town centre. The nearest facility is at the Hawthorn High School approximately two miles from the town centre.

2.7 Crime

There is evidence of vandalism and graffiti in the town centre particularly in the Taff Vale Precinct area, along the Riverside Walkway and at the Lido. Overall, though the perception of vandilism appears to be relatively limited.

Youth crime is considered to be a problem in the town centre at night. The few night uses that are located in the town are attractive to a generally narrow sector of the population (takeaways and public houses). Commercial premises are closed and obscured from view by security shutters, town centre residential uses are very limited and other evening/night facilities tend to be car-based or located on the edge of the town centre and consequently do not generate as much pedestrian movement through the town centre (for example Muni or Bowling).

Pontypridd's retail market has experienced a period of stagnation over the past 15 years both in real terms and in relation to comparable local centres.

Like many town centres in the region, Pontypridd's retail offer is concentrated along a single trading thoroughfare, Taff Street, which is elongated from Marks & Spencer in the south to the Taff Vale Centre car park in the north and between the River Taff and Catherine Street. Although not restricted by some of the physical constraints which handicap some neighbouring centres the building stock still contains a high level of sub-sized units.

Although historically Cardiff has been responsible for a significant level of leakage and will continue to do, further pressure has been exerted over Pontypridd's greater catchment in recent years by the improvement of neighbouring centres. Most notably Merthyr Tydfil, where Beacon's Place anchored by Tesco has recently opened, and in the future, the open A1 out of town scheme at Llantrisant where lettings have been achieved to Next, Marks & Spencer, Boots, BHS and others. In both instances, shoppers are attracted by a greater range of comparative goods on offer and an easily accessible, shopper friendly, environment.

In contrast, Pontypridd's retail environment has arguably deteriorated over recent years not least due to the absence of proactive asset management of the Taff Vale Precinct Shopping Centre that has continued to diminish in quality. The ongoing uncertainty surrounding a more comprehensive redevelopment has effectively blighted the scheme and discouraged other investment.

Elsewhere, of the remaining national multiples, many are in need of refurbishment and offer dated fascias and shop fits though Marks & Spencer remains a key anchor and footfall generator which raises the profile of the town. The presence of Marks and Spencer does provide an important point of difference and it can be a determining factor in shopping patterns.

Despite this generally held market perception, Pontypridd does have some reason to be optimistic. According to the information company Focus, 40% of the UK's top 20 comparison goods multiples are represented in the town compared to 45% in Merthyr, 35% in Port Talbot and 30% in Caerphilly. There are also at least 20 published outstanding requirements from retailers seeking representation in Pontypridd whilst the town's profile would also suit further retailers should a critical mass of complimentary retailers be achieved. Rental values have fluctuated little over the last 15 years and have not demonstrated any growth over that period. Prime rents are in the region of ZA £50 - £60 psf compared to Merthyr Tydfil at ZA £70 psf and Cardiff at ZA £275 - £300 psf.

However, the critical trigger for any revitalisation of the town's retail market will be renewed confidence which can be driven not only by the development of a town centre shopping scheme but by adopting wider reaching town centre projects. Improved parking and a modern

build environment providing optimum sized and configured units, meeting current retailer requirements, will go a long way to delivering an enhance retail environment which will help regenerate the town centre. It should also defend the town's economy from further leakage to Cardiff and the expanding out of town offer at Llantrisant.

Equally, a redevelopment of the Taff Vale Precinct will signal the conclusion of years of uncertainty and demonstrate to end occupiers and the public alike that Pontypridd can provide a vibrant and attractive place to trade.

4.1 Introduction

Arts and Culture as an Integral Part of Town Centre Activities.

The Regeneration Strategy for Pontypridd seeks to create an overarching framework which promotes further investment in the town centre. Implicit within such a strategy is the need to increase visitation to the centre, raising its profile as a place to work, do business, shop and spend leisure time.

Context

Historically Pontypridd has always enjoyed a rich tapestry of cultural activities in a variety of different types and styles of venue. Today this is still reflected in the number of pubs, clubs and more formal arts and culture venues. These do play an important role in attracting visitors to the town centre both day and night. In more recent years however, the town centre's image has become more associated with pubs and cheap alcohol. There is a need to redress this balance and make Pontypridd town centre more appealing to a broad cross section of the community.

Demand

It is understood that the Council receives regular enquiries from a wide variety of small businesses from the creative arts sector demanding economical space to rent from the creative industries sector of the community which could contribute significantly to the economic growth and, more importantly, the economic sustainability of the town centre. This latent/pent up demand could add significantly to the diversity and attraction of the town centre and indeed broaden its appeal to a wider audience of investors and business people in the Creative Arts Community. Demand for space ranges from musical artists seeking rehearsal space, to artists and craftspeople looking for workshops and retail outlets.

4.2 Key Issues

Rentals

Inevitably the nature of many of these fledgling 'businesses' precludes them from paying commercial rents for premises but does suggest that there is an opportunity for them to collectively access retail and workshop space in line with the principles of a business 'incubator' or Technium which has found success in West Wales.

Representation: The need for a Comprehensive Support Network

At present there is no framework or network in Pontypridd for people in the Creative Arts Industry to 'tap into', or seek advice from, in terms of co-ordinating a response to the demand or the needs of businesses in this sector.

The Regeneration Strategy therefore needs to set in place a representative organisation or network which can serve the needs of this sector (eg. a Creative Industries Forum.)

Venues

The obvious, but not necessarily appropriate, response to the situation would be to advocate a Cultural or Arts Quarter for Pontypridd town centre. This could then act as a focus for this sector of the business community to invest in. However, the needs of this sector are not necessarily best met by a physical manifestation or 'designated area'. It is our view that it will be more appropriate to 'enable' creative entrepreneurs to access information and support and then appropriate venues for their activities. Appropriate venues may already exist and indeed some notable examples have come to light during our appraisal of the town centre such as:

- The Old Town Hall (in private ownership with considerable refurbishment costs)
- YMCA
- Bingo Hall
- Muni Arts Centre
- Municipal Buildings (Chamber)
- Pontypridd Museum
- Clwb yr Bont

4.3 Summary and Conclusion

It is recognised that the Regeneration Strategy for Pontypridd needs to be multidimensional and consider all sectors of the Creative Arts Community from musicians, painters, ceramicists, cultural heritage, general crafts people and performing artists. No one facility is likely to be able to meet all their needs. However, Pontypridd has a history of culture and the arts (from the composing of the Welsh National Anthem to Tom Jones) and it is well placed as a gateway to the culture of the Valleys to set out its stall as the base for a range of venues for local creative industries. Indeed the principle of the themed street markets which has already proved so successful could be expanded to provide the vehicle for a wider variety of themed markets catering for:

- Local Produce
- Arts and Crafts
- Ceramics
- Street Theatre
- Clothes
- International Cuisine

These themes could then be assembled to create an annual Festival of Markets to create real critical mass and attract a much wider profile and reputation than the town currently aspires to.

5.1 Strategic Principles

The use of events to assist with urban regeneration is now a widely accepted activity. Events can successfully contribute to the repositioning, profiling and promotion of a town whilst creating an atmosphere that animates and enlivens the townscape. An event can be a one-off occurrence or a regular happening each year. It can take place over one or two days or be spread over a longer period.

Many towns have developed signature or 'hallmark' events that are unique and are recognised as being directly linked to a particular place. Good examples of signature events from Wales would include: Llanwrtyd Wells' 'Bog Snorkelling Championships', Llandrindod's 'Victorian Festival', Swansea's 'Dylan Thomas Festival', Abergavenny's 'Food Festival' and Hay's 'Literature Festival'.

It has been shown that events can make a significant contribution to the local economy and in terms of attracting both day and staying visitors into a community. For these reasons the Welsh Assembly Government has adopted a National Events Strategy whilst both the Wales Tourist Board and the Arts Council of Wales encourage and support events as a strategic development tool.

There are no clear-cut rules as to what makes a successful event. Events are a success when they capture the public's imagination and are well run. There are, however, some basic principles which can guide the development of an events strategy in order to increase the likelihood of the events being a success. These are discussed below (Section 5.2).

Rhondda Cynon Taf has established a good reputation for supporting, sponsoring and organising events, especially in Pontypridd and, notably, in Ynys Angharad Park. As a result, there is existing expertise and a good foundation upon which to build for the future. There has also been, traditionally, a good response from the community towards these locally organised events. The community is, therefore, likely to be receptive to the further use of events to help the regeneration of Pontypridd.

5.2 Guiding Principles

The development of a sustainable, successful events programme depends upon a number of physical and organisation factors:

- (a) The availability of appropriate event venues and spaces;
- (b) The availability of an experienced events management team on the ground;
- (c) An adequate infrastructure to support events including public transport, car parking, access to utilities, access to equipment (sound, lighting, signage, barriers, portable toilets, etc) and access to stewards;
- (d) Experience of dealing with independent promoters or expertise in directly promoting events.

In addition, events are more likely to be successful if they have the following characteristics:

- (a) They emerge out of an existing community event or an event already rooted in the community;
- (b) The event reflects or harnesses a strong indigenous storyline, an existing resource(s) and/or is directly linked to the history and heritage of a place;
- (c) The event involves the local community in different ways: as participants, as works/volunteers;
- (d) The event develops civic pride and is associated with enlivening, celebrating and enhanced promotion of the community;
- (e) An events strategy for Pontypridd should create opportunities for other parts of the District to become involved or as beneficiaries.

As a result, events need to grow out of the community. They need to harness the strengths and assets of a community. Events that are imposed and have no specific relevance or relationship to a community will always be more difficult to deliver. These are important considerations when considering the potential of events in Pontypridd.

5.3 Indigenous Themes and Resources

The following represents an initial audit of key themes and resources that could form the basis of future events in Pontypridd. At this stage this schedule aims to highlight opportunities; it is not prescribing the type of events that could take place.

(a) Themes

- Rugby
- Male voice choirs
- Dr William Price
- Welsh National Anthem
- Stone Bridge
- Richard Attenborough's Film Academy
- Tom Jones
- Local music scene

(b) Resources

- River Taf and river frontage
- Ynys Angharad Park
- Sardis Road Rugby Ground
- University
- Pop Factory
- Sports pitches
- Local cinema and theatre
- Taf Trail/Celtic Way
- Rhondda Heritage Park
- Heritage Park Hotel

5.4 Aims and Objectives for an Events Strategy

The aim is to propose an events template that will encompass current products, new initiatives and partnerships with independent promoters to assist the development of a distinct and sustainable events portfolio for Pontypridd and surrounding area.

The objectives are to:

- Increase footfall and economic benefit to the town;
- Create a unique identity for Pontypridd;
- Support community regeneration and instil civic pride;
- Foster a sense of ownership (and valid return on investment) within the community;
- Encourage participation and sporting competition at all levels;
- Unify the existing infrastructure of the town.

5.5 Context

The consultations undertaken to date concerning an Events Strategy include:

- Peter Hands, Heritage Hotel
- Elisabeth Whittle, Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments
- Councillor Robert Bevan, RCT
- Chris Edwards, Town Centre Manager
- Chris Richards, Event Manager
- Brian Davies, Pontypridd Museum
- Pontypridd Town Centre Forum
- Pontypridd Chamber of Trade
- Capital Region Tourism Partnership

There are several existing large/medium-scale events that occur regularly in the town. Existing products include annual music/popular culture events (Parti Ponty), themed events (Winter Wonderland, French and Italian markets), lighting/laser shows and fireworks displays (All Lit Up) and recently floral displays. There are numerous smaller-scale events and exhibitions throughout the year.

Events that are remembered with pride and affection include Rugby at Sardis Road (recent loss of status is keenly felt), Cricket (Glamorgan vs. South Africa - 1994), the Taff Street Dash (a sprint race held on several occasions in the town) and a laser light show - 2002 (staged in Ynysangharad Park).

At a recent workshop with Members of the Town's Regeneration Group, the following events assets were recognised:

- Pontypridd is a recognised market town with an active Town Centre Forum;
- Birthplace of several famous people and home to internationally recognised cultural icons;
- Ynysangharad Park contains event areas capable of hosting large-scale outdoor events in close proximity to the town centre;

- Sardis Road ground;
- University of Glamorgan situated close to the town.

The following were identified as strengths:

- Proposed partnerships with the University of Glamorgan;
- Accessibility (particularly by rail);
- Several historically proven venues;
- Famous sons and daughters, artists, designers, composers and engineers.

The following were identified as weaknesses:

- Traffic management, including vehicle flows and car parking;
- Local lack of expectation;
- Some weak civic organisations;
- Physical problems of a town that has “turned its back on the river”;
- Inappropriate or inadequate signage

Event suggestions from the workshop included:

- 2006 anniversary celebrations (stone bridge and national anthem);
- Events concerned with innovation, engineering and design;
- Lighting (park and bridge);
- Heritage tourism packages (celebration of bridges, chain works etc.);
- First class music event;
- Band event;
- Commission a play by local author;
- Community play;
- International Film Festival;
- Multimedia installation;
- Reinstate foyer of railway station;
- Public art trailer;
- Build something significant and commemorative.

5.6 Proposals and Recommendations

Proposal -

To develop a portfolio of medium-scale events that complements the existing product and provides a unique signature for Pontypridd. The events should be devised and developed in line with WAG’s National Events Strategy.

Event Design -

Focus on the concepts of “real” (e.g. “*Real Rugby*”), “as it should be” (e.g. “*The National Anthem as she should be heard*”) and “innovative” (e.g. *The Pontathalon*). This theme strongly reflects the heritage and character of Pontypridd and its residents.

Event Framework -

Each event should be piloted, or have at least 12 months lead-in to maximise benefits. Events should be introduced incrementally and evaluated over a period of up to three years.

Event Strands

(1) Anniversary Celebrations

Commemorations in 2006 of the 150th anniversary of the National Anthem and the 250th anniversary of the building of the world's longest single span stone bridge.

The Anthem - as she should be heard

In 2005 launch (Tom Jones?) a celebrity challenge to come up with the most innovative version of the anthem, composed by James James, a pub harpist and reputedly meant to be played "up-tempo". Those who accept the challenge might be invited to unveil their version in a judged competition during 2006. The venue/scale of the event will depend on the response. The winner's prize should be an opportunity to perform their version of the anthem at a prestigious event/venue.

Duration: One or more evenings, depending on take up

Frequency: Once only (High Broadcast/Media potential)

Promoter: Town Centre Forum/RCT

Cost range: variable, between £10K-100K

(2) Hybrid event

A hallmark event for Pontypridd, drawing on a range of strands: sport, commemoration, heritage and popular culture.

The Pontypridd Pontathalon

The town has a number of bridges, several of which are significant in terms of design and engineering. An event might be staged to link the bridges, town, river Taff and surrounding countryside, involving a series of challenges that require strength, agility, ingenuity and stamina. These could include a "Parkour" or "free running" activity, a new take on the "Taff Street Dash", an orienteering element, "crossing the river without getting wet" or "pushing a mattress up the Rhondda" etc.. As with the annual Snowdon Race, this could attract local, regional, national and international competitors. Piloting this event to a local audience in Year 1, this event could withstand major development for Year 2 and beyond.

Duration: One week
Frequency: Annual (Broadcast/Sponsorship potential)
Promoter: Partnership event
Cost range: £ unknown

(3) Sport, Fitness and Health

A youth event, focused on participation, health and fitness.

Real Rugby - as it should be played

Pilot and launch the event in Year 1 by enlisting the support of a sporting Champion (Neil Jenkins?) and organising a high profile veterans' match. Develop in subsequent years to involve youth teams in a knockout competition. Matches might be played at various grounds in the area, with the finals at Sardis Road.

Duration: Two days

Frequency: Annual (Sponsorship potential)

Promoter: Ponty Rugby Ltd

Cost range: £5K-10K

(4) Cultural/Commemorative

This is a project to focus the town's positive image and signpost its economic regeneration.

The Tom Jones Pavilion

A suitable area for major events is the Lido within Ynysangharad Park. Currently this site is semi-derelict, with no potential for complete restoration. The Lido is a listed building and important as it is probably the last surviving Lido of its size in Wales. When threatened it is vociferously defended. An elegant solution might be to restore part of the existing buildings as technical support facilities and develop the remainder of the site as a multi-purpose public event and recreation space, incorporating a tensile, semi-permanent, flown roof over. This would create a unique, covered outdoor arena for concerts, theatre, dance and lit spectacles. Additionally, the built structure could incorporate a new bridge over the river, thus uniting the park and town. This would be an innovative engineering project echoing strong local themes. Selection might be by means of a competition, open to architectural practices throughout Wales, offered through the National Eisteddfod 2006 in Swansea and organised in conjunction with the WDA. It would aim to attract public and private funding, named sponsorship and endowment. This facility would enhance existing events and encourage new events to the town.

Duration: Medium/Long term

Frequency: Continuous, year round

Promoter: RCT, WDA

Cost range: £unknown

(5) Existing and Ancillary Events

- Parti Ponty
- Continental Markets
- Seasonal Lighting
- Floral Displays and Exhibitions
- Museum Exhibitions
- Youth Theatre Productions

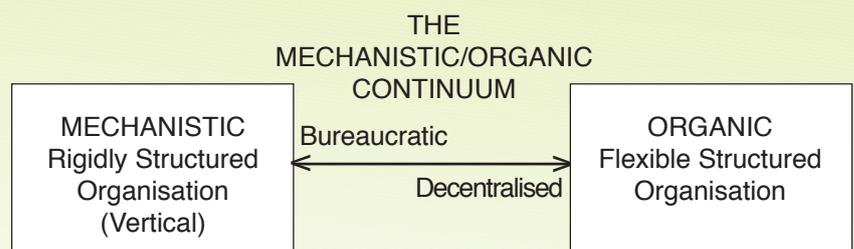
2005 - 2009 implementation schedules

Events Strand	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
1	Set Challenge	Event	Evaluate		
2	Devise	Pilot (Local)	Event	Event	Evaluate
3	Devise	Pilot (Vets)	Event	Event	Event
4	Devise/Promote	Competition	Develop	Develop	Events
5	Events	Events	Events	Evaluate	Events

Event Decisions - The above event strands are not intended to be prescriptive, but indicative of the brief: to develop hallmark events with regional, national or international significance. As previously discussed, it is vital to the process that events are generated from within the coordinating organisation and conform to local needs whilst trying to challenge local perceptions. These are “clays” and there to be shot at, but what finally replaces them should be of similar weight and able to fly as well or even better!

5.7 Organisational Structure

Building a Team - In order to draw down funds, work effectively with partners and manage tasks effectively, members of the coordinating group(s) should form a properly constituted, not for profit organisation. For event planning and coordination the organisational structure should be flexible, based on a “wheel and hub” model, and toward the “Organic” end of the “Mechanistic/Organic Continuum” (see below)



The Planning Process

Roles and Responsibilities -

Once the organisation is constituted the roles and responsibilities of members and the arrangement of sub-groups, including overall target outcomes, should be agreed.

Identify key partners -

Event champions, funding bodies, local authority departments, emergency services, commercial and community stakeholders.

Form a Stakeholders' Committee and a Safety Advisory Group.

Event planning sequence -

Formulate ideas

Prepare event proposal(s)

Test feasibility

Make decisions based on feasibility

Plan & organise

Prepare & promote

Present

Evaluate

The event planning sequence should realistically allow a lead-in of around twelve months, during which 80% of available time and effort should be assigned to the planning, organising and promoting of the event(s). Timescales for funding applications vary, but it is advisable to allow at least the maximum indicated in the funders' guidance notes, particularly if the viability of an event depends on external funding sources. Current indications are that many funding applications require nine to twelve months lead time in order to be effectively implemented. It is advisable to undertake regular evaluation of each event to inform future development.

5.8 Budgeting

Costing guide - Infrastructure costs, based on a medium-scale (2000-4999 pax.) outdoor, ticketed event of up to 3 day/evening duration, are estimated to be:

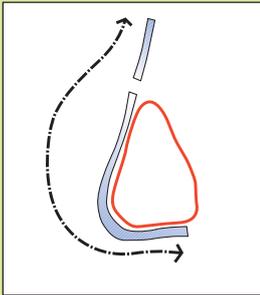
Venue hire	To be agreed
Licence fee	1500
Performers' fees	TBA
Insurance - PL/EL	1500+
Stage (10m frontage)	7500 per week
Tents & temporary structures	2500 per week
Lighting (stage)	3000 per week
Lighting (amenity)	1500 per week

Sound (PA)	3000 per week
Toilets	1500 per week
Toilets (Cleansing)	400 per day
Signage (AA)	600
Fencing & barriers	3000 per week
Emergency services - attendance	2500 per day
CCTV provision	750 per day
Waste management	500 per day
Event safety management	750 per day
Security & Stewarding	2000 per day
Equipment, miscellaneous	3000+
Consumables	500 per day

Zone

Attributes

Opportunities

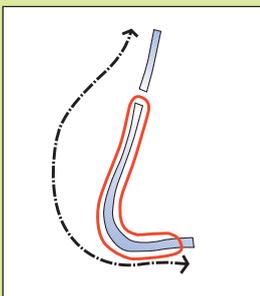


1. Ynysangharad Park

Much loved Memorial Park. Huge heritage asset as well as tourism attraction. Significant river frontage which is under exploited.

Highly visible from strategic northern and eastern gateways to town centre. Natural venue for events and festivals. Registered Historic Park.

Need to consolidate and develop tourism potential and strengthen links to Town Centre – opportunity for more pedestrian connections across River.

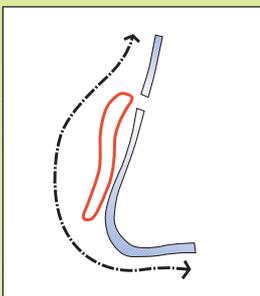


2. Riverside and river confluence

Most significant unexploited asset of the Town. The wide sweeping River Taff has potential to create more amenity for Town Centre and reinforce links to Park.

Wide free-flowing Taff offers a dynamism and potential waterfront for Pontypridd. Riverside walk has good aspect over river and Park.

Need to establish better links, with and over River, between Town Centre and Park and raise profile of River Taff as a potential amenity area.

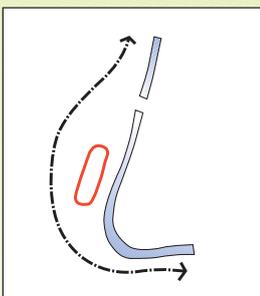


3. Taff Street/Retail Core

Taff Street is the principal shopping street of Pontypridd. It is an unusually long, characterful retail area which deserves greater investment and enhancement. The northern is probably the part of Pontypridd which has suffered most from the uncertainty which has surrounded the Angharad Walk retail proposal.

Historic and architecturally interesting, this is a traditional 'high street' which reflects Pontypridd's Victorian heritage. Taff Street offers a range of outmoded retail floorspace and which demands a comprehensive upgrade and some form of pedestrianisation.

Uncertainty over the Angharad Walk development has blighted the Town Centre's prospects in recent years, but new consent should now provide springboard for further investment in the wider street infrastructure, traffic management and a flexible pedestrianisation scheme.



4. Market Area/Church Street/Mill Street

Although integral to the retail 'core' this area enjoys a different smaller scale and more intimate character than Taff Street. Includes the significant indoor market and derelict Town Hall as well as the former Co-op site facing Gelliwastad/Catherine Street (used on Saturdays as part of the outdoor market).

The former Co-op site presents a large gap in the Victorian fabric of the Town Centre. It's significance as an investment location will increase once the multi-storey car park is completed on the St Catherine's Corner site opposite. Covered by Conservation Area designation.

Opportunity to create a new mixed use development with focal open space comprising commercial retail/offices, car parking and potentially even some residential development on a site at the 'heart' of the Town Centre. Potential to build upon the catalytic effect of Alfred's Bar and the possible 'Cafe' Quarter.

Zone

Attributes

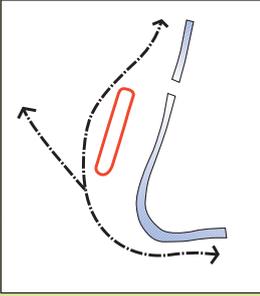
Opportunities

5. Gelliwastad Road

The professional/business quarter of Pontypridd. A long wide carriageway still dominated by through traffic and congestion despite alternative relief routes around the town centre.

Characterful architecture, a well defined public domain and some significant buildings including St Catherine's and St David's Churches, Municipal Buildings, and muni Arts Centre. It offers a formal and potentially prestigious business address for Pontypridd. Also covered by Conservation Area designation.

Opportunity to build upon the character of the area to create a recognised 'business quarter' with a radical new approach to the highway corridor, local access and parking arrangements.

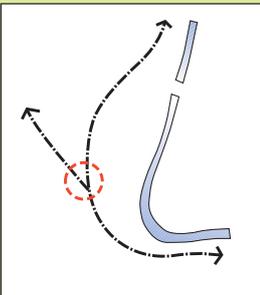


6. The Gytratory

Off-centre, transport-dominated area of 'no-mans-land' which hides the attractive asset of an interesting bend in the River Rhondda.

Offers a segregated pedestrian link from the western approaches to the Town Centre and dramatic views of the railway viaduct arches as well as a peaceful stretch of the River Rhondda.

Although significantly overgrown and presently uninviting, could offer an enhanced pedestrian access to the Town Centre, subject to access and traffic circulation. The dominating feature of the viaduct arches could be significantly enhanced through 'feature lighting'.

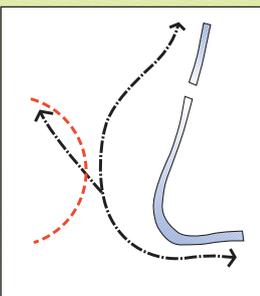


7. Western Approaches

Incorporates a diverse range of sites which although not directly related to the Town Centre do offer development opportunities which could strengthen Pontypridd's town centre offer in terms of complimentary leisure, office and residential development opportunities.

Comprises former Mill Street Depot, Pontypridd RFC ground, Sardis Road Car Park and the former NCB Laboratories site. A range of diverse 'fringe' sites which are isolated from the Town Centre by road and rail infrastructure, but which offer strategic opportunities which could strengthen the vitality of the Town Centre.

Taken together as a portfolio of sites (3 are Council owned), these could offer a substantial strategic development which might appeal to the private sector. The Depot and Rugby Ground benefit from valuable riverfronts which could help harness a range of leisure, residential, office and parking projects. There is therefore the opportunity to enhance the river frontage.

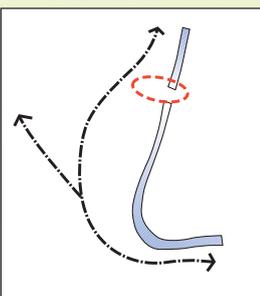


8. Northern Gateway

Focus of one of the most significant historic river crossings and entrances to Pontypridd Town Centre. The transition from the A470 intersection across the river to Berw Road and the town's new bus station provides a real 'threshold' to the town centre.

The historic 'Old Bridge', Museum and Park Riverside provide iconic references to Pontypridd's heritage and antecedents. Unfortunately this gateway is blighted by the ugly edifice of the Taff Vale Centre.

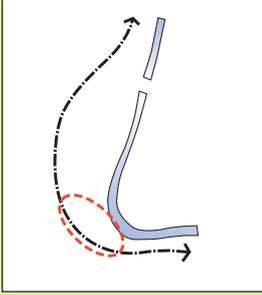
Potential to create a grand statement of entrance to the Town Centre by day and night. This gateway demands much greater articulation. The establishment of a proper 'gatepost' building with presence at the northern end of Taff Street to signal the entrance to the Town Centre and which responds to the architecture of the Museum opposite.



Zone

9. Southern Gateway

Highway dominated road corridor into Pontypridd which bypasses any aspect of the town centre to its north, but which now offers a more positive aspect to the entrance to the Railway Station to the south.



Attributes

The high retaining walls of the railway embankment and the elevated railway station provide a dramatic southern flank to the 'Broadway' dual-carriageway entrance from the A470. The northern flank is more fragmented but does offer attractive views to the Park. The Station is covered by Conservation Area designation.

Opportunities

While the southern gateway comprises a large piece of highway infrastructure there must be an opportunity to create a more dramatic focus in terms of new surfaces, lighting and signage which can celebrate and advertise the relationships and links between the Station, Taff Street and the rest of the Town Centre.

7.1 Strategic Positioning/Profile

The Council (members) need to recognise the significance of Pontypridd in the overall hierarchy of town centres in the County Borough. The health of Pontypridd is the key to the health of the Rhondda Cynon Taff Valleys. There needs to be an understanding that resources must be more focussed on the County Town as opposed to 'spreading the jam too thinly' across the whole County Borough. This is not to suggest that the other towns should be ignored, however, resources should be allocated relative to the significance of Pontypridd as the County Town. Pontypridd is the 'heart' which keeps the 'limbs' alive: if it dies then all the others will wither and die in due course.

This demands a political commitment and some clear thinking. Until there is a consensus on this issue it is going to be increasingly difficult to win the support of the WDA/Assembly to 'gap fund' any town centre scheme such as the Angharad Walk Development (irrespective of whether it would include a supermarket or not).

7.2 Private Sector Investment

We made great emphasis in our bid that there can be no regeneration of Pontypridd town centre unless the Council engage fully with the private sector. Alfred's Bar is an excellent example of the public and private sectors working in partnership to create a 'catalytic' development which has already changed the perception of Pontypridd for many visitors: It is a microcosm of what needs to happen across the town centre in terms of building the confidence of current investors and businesses and should be used as an example to others.

The Town Improvement Grants Scheme needs greater promotion by the public sector as an enabling device to pump-prime further private sector investment in the centre. It may currently appear to be inhibitive and the application process may appear unclear to potential applicants. The private sector needs to be aware of what grants are available and should be encouraged to apply for grants where appropriate. The value of such a grant scheme needs to be capitalised upon and can be utilised to create a set of new complimentary uses including residential accommodation ('living above the shop'), small scale office use, student accommodation and facilities (e.g. a major venue for graduations and events).

Until the Council can stimulate a broader engagement with the private sector, Pontypridd town centre is going to struggle to increase its stature above other centres in Rhondda Cynon Taff (e.g. Llantrisant).

7.3 Traffic Management and Car Parking

There is recognition that traffic circulation in the town centre needs to be revisited irrespective of whether Taff Street is pedestrianised (in part or as a whole). The Bridge Street junction seems to be the focus of many of the problems and while it is recognised that this has already been 'improved' there are still major shortcomings in the traffic circulation which

reinforces the disincentive to enter the Town Centre in the first place.

Traffic congestion is further exacerbated by historic travel patterns (for example drivers travelling from Rhondda to the A470 via Gelliwastad Road instead of via Broadway which can be quicker). This is compounded by a lack of effective signage at key gateways to the centre to inform drivers of parking spaces and traffic routes.

A traffic model produced by the Council, which replicates the movements of vehicles through and within the town, shows that the Gelliwastad Road is used as a rat-run by traffic travelling to and from the A470. This creates significant queues at the junction of Gelliwastad Road with Bridge Street, which extend back to the A470 (North) junction and also onto the Sardis Road gyratory to the south.

The whole road system needs to be revisited and the modelling should be re-run if the travel patterns and parking habits are to be changed.

The construction of the St Catherine's Corner Car Park and Angharad Walk will offer the opportunity to evaluate car park pricing policy so that the most convenient parking is priced at a premium to encourage longer stay parking at fringe (and less convenient) locations.

7.4 The University

Pontypridd in Partnership (P.I.P.) has created a valuable platform for the town to engage more effectively with Glamorgan University and its students. PIP's role needs to be projected much more effectively and made a vehicle for new forms of working with investors in the Town Centre: the idea of creating an executive steering group which is 'a' political to drive forward innovative new forms of educationally-led investments (e.g. Town Hall Theatre as a venue; new Town Centre Student accommodation; and potentially business/research incubation units at, say, the Station Platform buildings) offers real appeal and a prospect of changing people's perceptions of Pontypridd as more of a University town instead of an adjunct to it.

7.5 Living in the Centre

While student accommodation and short-stay accommodation (such as hotels) may well add a new vibrancy to the Town Centre we should not lose sight of the opportunities to create more orthodox residential accommodation in the Town Centre with 'living over the shop' initiatives promoting a 24/7 environment and a far more sustainable Town Centre. An increase in office provision in response to market demand would also help to improve vitality.

The riverside and parkland aspect offers huge and exciting potential which is currently untapped and if the current Angharad Walk Development does not proceed then maybe that site along with the Taff Street Car Park could become a new focus for a mixed use development of retail, offices, and residential uses.

7.6 Events and Tourism

While the Memorial Park is a wonderful asset for the town, its potential to host major events can be nevertheless tempered by its memorial status. Further work obviously needs to be done to explore the re-use of the 'Lido' and the works to the 'sunken gardens' reflecting the sensitivity which surrounds the Park.

Pontypridd has a significant events programme but fails to celebrate cultural history. Considerable resources need to be directed at the 2006 Anniversary of the Old Bridge and the Welsh National Anthem which in terms of their contribution to the culture and heritage of the town are considerably under-exploited.

7.7 Pedestrianisation, signage, streetlights and public realm

While there has been a long term commitment to the pedestrianisation of Taff Street the comprehensive pedestrianisation of the street has not yet materialised. Although this suggests long-term indecision, it does however offer the opportunity to re-visit the principles of pedestrianising the street and to explore the benefits of a more pragmatic management of the street environment, which can offer the flexibility to respond to changing circumstances. Restricting servicing to those times which suit retailers, maximising the convenience to pedestrians and the disabled when and where it matters most, and indeed potentially offering greater vehicular access at night to enable more people to live in the town centre and gain convenient access to it during out of retail hours. These are all issues which need indepth consideration.

This would also provide the opportunity for a comprehensive approach to be taken to the long-term location, aspirations and direction of the outdoor market.

The rationale for pedestrianisation can then drive enhancement strategies for street-lighting; signage; materials; public art and indeed the creation of accessible and attractive congregation spaces for street events (such as informal piazzas, squares and orientation points which are of local historic interest).

7.8 Summary

There is a wide variety of inter-related factors affecting the future prospects of Pontypridd Town Centre: The most significant factor is that they all need to be considered comprehensively together: not considered in a piecemeal way in isolation from one another.

However, until the Council recognises the significance of Pontypridd's prosperity in the context of the economy of the rest of the County Borough, the town centre is going to continue to be vulnerable to competition from other centres where the private sector have greater confidence of achieving success.

8.1 Introduction

The regeneration strategy draws on the opportunities, and translates the vision, to create a co-ordinated, integrated framework for the transformation of Pontypridd town centre.

Key elements of the strategy must be:

- Dynamic retail, leisure and commercial development
- Sustainable transport and commercial development
- Quality public realm
- Integrating the town centre with Ynysangharad Park
- Town centre residential uses.

The regeneration framework is shown in Figure 5 and described below.

8.2 Dynamic Retail and Leisure

An expanded and improved range and quality of retail and leisure facilities in the town centre will increase its appeal to a wide variety of users – including people who live, work and visit Pontypridd. It will act to reinforce the town centre's role as the 'County' town and nurture its development as a shopping and leisure destination. Bringing more people into the centre and capturing their spend is fundamental to ensuring the longer term health and economic sustainability of Pontypridd.

This step change in Pontypridd's retail offer depends upon the delivery of a substantial new retail-led scheme such as Angharad Walk. This should be anchored by a new store and include a range of shop units for quality retailers and leisure operators. Such a development could incorporate the refurbishment and reshaping of existing facilities at the northern end of Taff Street.

The principal features which, in combination, differentiate such a proposal from the former Taff Vale Precinct are as follows:

- The overall size of the site which could be assembled, allowing the opportunity to develop a store together with a substantial element of smaller unit shops, providing a range of new shopping facilities.
- The central location and complementary fit with existing uses and urban form ensuring strong pedestrian movement through the area.
- The proximity of this area to the existing prime shopping positions in Taff Street, and the scope for linking new development to the rest of the town centre. This characteristic is crucial in seeking to attract support from retailers for any new scheme in the town centre.
- The potential to utilise the adjacent Day Centre site for carparking and security servicing facilities, assisting in scheme design and layout and giving some potential for cost savings.

- The relative ease and cost of site assembly. The Teesland Development Group already has extensive ownership/interests in this area, and relatively few third party acquisitions would be required.

Once developed, the new high quality retail development would reinforce the northern gateway to the town centre. All new developments must be accessible to people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

The successful implementation of such a project should itself significantly upgrade the profile of Pontypridd, and would foster the wider modernisation of existing facilities, both in the retail and non-retail sectors. This in turn could lead to further refurbishments by the private sector in adjacent units in a bid to compete with the new retail centre.

Public events and markets must also play an important role in enhancing the retail and leisure offer. The future of the Indoor Market needs to be the subject of a separate study, whilst implementation of the strategy will require decisions to be taken on the appropriateness of the location of the outdoor street market. Potential locations for public events and quality markets include a new square at the intersection of Taff Street and Penuel Lane, and in association with the redevelopment of the former Co-operative site at the western end of Mill Street.

8.3 Sustainable Transport and Land Use

By ensuring that Pontypridd's town centre is accessible by public transport, on foot and by bicycle to all people living, working and visiting the area will ensure that it remains attractive to all users and meets sustainable development policy objectives. This can be achieved through:

- Enhanced public transport, with enhanced multi-modal interchanges allowing for better accessibility by bus and train.
- Making the relief road operate effectively in terms of guiding through traffic to the A470.
- An integrated parking and land use strategy.
- Improved pedestrian links within the town centre and Ynysangharad Park
- Improved cycle links and facilities.

In order to ensure that the above proposals are responsive and realistic, an in-depth transport study will need to be undertaken before any plans can be implemented.

It is known that the Council is pursuing a scheme for a 'bicycle intersection' for Pontypridd. This will clearly feed into the above recommendations.

Multi Modal Interchange

While it is acknowledged that the idea of an integrated bus station and rail station at the northern end of town (in order to integrate public transport services) has been explored in the past, the idea of creating a rail interchange facility next to the bus station is worthy of reinvestigation.

Integrated transport services will help to reinforce the importance of Pontypridd as a key transport interchange for the Valley Lines. Such a development would contribute to securing Pontypridd's position as a major satellite town serving Cardiff as well as being a destination in its own right.

Breaking down the barriers

Changing the nature of Gelliwastad Road so that it becomes a more pedestrian friendly environment will allow more convenient access to the town centre, and opportunities for the centre to face outwards. The street would no longer be dominated by through traffic. People would be encouraged to walk and cycle to the town centre, bringing more activity to the area and, enable Gelliwastad Road to be changed from a busy traffic environment to a more user-friendly, vibrant urban street environment.

The following measures could achieve this change:

- At-grade signal controlled, non-staggered pedestrian crossings at key points.
- Introducing environmental improvements, including on street parking (south), footpaths, lighting, street furniture and planting to establish a stronger streetscape character.
- Traffic management measures, including lanes that give priority to buses, taxis and cyclists (particularly in a northerly direction).
- Encouraging enhanced built frontages to the road, with active uses to provide surveillance and vitality.

Once Pontypridd has enjoyed the benefits of its town centre regeneration and is in a better position to attract new commercial enterprise, new high-density mixed-use development of the area around Church Street and Mill Street could become commercially attractive. Appropriate uses could include retail, offices, a hotel and decked car parking.

Preliminary testing of restricting through-access northwards up Gelliwastad Road and restricting it to **buses only** suggests that 'through-traffic' travelling to the A470 would use Broadway instead and reduce the pressure on the Morgan Street/Bridge Street junction and traffic lights. A more detailed transportation assessment will need to be carried out as a separate study and modelling exercise to confirm the transport viability of these proposals and the specific costs of measures that can be put in place.

An integrated parking and land use strategy

The key to bringing forward many of the development opportunities in Pontypridd town centre will be the adoption of a parking strategy (including a charging strategy) that encourages a transition from surface level to multi-storey car parks. It is critical that any new multi-storey car parks introduced to the centre are well integrated with both existing and proposed developments.

The town centre has a substantial amount of surface level car parking and this land represents the principal opportunity for new, higher density development. Fundamental elements of the regeneration strategy, including the Angharad Walk scheme and pedestrianisation of Taff Street, rely on being able to develop on surface level car park sites and re-providing car parking elsewhere.

A car parking strategy needs to be in place that allows multi-storey car parking to be self-financing. The viability of any town centre development will inevitably be strained if it has to cross-subsidise the cost of providing new multi-storey car parking. For example, this is a key issue for Angharad Walks. A comprehensive car parking strategy needs to be prepared. If it can move towards a charging regime that allows multi-storey car parks to be financially self-sustaining this will be of considerable assistance to the regeneration strategy.

Care, however, will be needed to balance the deterrent of high car parking charges with potential benefits. Much will depend upon relative pricing policies in comparison with competing centres. The Welsh Assembly Government's sustainability policy may increasingly help develop an appropriate pricing strategy. It is likely that over time policy tools will increasingly be used to push up car parking charges across the town centre.

Pedestrian links

Improved pedestrian links will create a more attractive and inviting experience for movement within the town centre, and will cement connections across the inner relief road. Enhanced linkages that are integral to proposals to break the relief road 'collar' need to include:

- At grade pedestrian crossings in place of subways and bridges
- The pedestrianisation of Taff Street, and
- More cross-river links between the centre and Ynysangharad Park.

Cycle facilities

Access for cyclists to and through the town centre should be improved, with new east-west and north-south links through the centre, and cycle parking strategically located in the town core.

A conceptual plan for suggested cycle links provided overleaf as Figure 4.

8.4 Quality Public Realm

An enhanced public realm will make Pontypridd town centre a more pleasant and enjoyable experience for people living, working and visiting the town and thereby benefit businesses in the centre. The public realm should be robust, visually exciting and of a high quality. It should be accessible to people of all ages and physical abilities. If the town centre is to become more attractive to both future users and investors, greater emphasis needs to be given to the quality of the environment, the streets and alleyways and the existing network of pedestrian areas. This will be achieved by providing a co-ordinated townscape, which is safe, accessible, interesting and legible for all users.

In addition to proposals to improve pedestrian links, an enhanced public realm can be achieved through changes including:

- The phased pedestrianisation of Taff Street
- A new Town Square
- A network of new public spaces
- Improvements to buildings and façades
- High density development in place of surface level car parking
- Public art

Redeveloping the area of 1960's single storey shops to the north of the Town Hall could potentially allow the creation of a new square. This would help to open up the core area, make the town centre more legible, create a better first impression of the town centre for visitors and add significant value to the retail fronting onto the new site. Ideas for improvements to the new square could include a new landscaped performance space.

Introducing a network of open spaces that link through east to west and north to south will complement existing and proposed buildings and existing spaces. The proposed new town square would act as an important link in this network. Proposed new squares, each of differing scales and character, will help to draw people through the town centre. This network of spaces will help to make the centre more legible and will provide different areas of the town centre each with a clearly defined character.

Existing facades and buildings, particularly around the new square and Penuel Lane should be upgraded/ redeveloped to present a cared for, clean and attractive image.

The redevelopment of surface level car parks with a high-density development (eg Gas Lane) will help fill in void areas in the town centre and create a more intimate streetscape, allowing complementary land uses for a more attractive centre.

Arts and cultural vitality supports social inclusion, diversity and learning, and provides the basis of an exciting offer that will attract new businesses, residents and visitors. Activities could include street performances, markets,

public gatherings and informal recreation. The new square and proposed cultural framework could be the focus for such activity.

8.5 A Civic Hub

Raising the civic and community profile within the town centre will help to reinforce the importance of both Community and Council functions. This can perhaps most effectively be achieved through development of a new civic hub.

This offers the opportunity to:

- Create a high profile asset for the town centre
- Develop new synergies between existing and modernised facilities
- Provide a valuable resource for the local community, and
- Demonstrate a commitment to latest thinking and best practice.

Potential elements could include a relocated library, re-focused as a learning resource centre, the town museum (already recognised as a high quality venue), health centre and fitness, and meeting space. Examples of comparable schemes include Peckham Library and Hackney's new Technology Learning Centre, with a learning resource centre, museum, bars and restaurant units, fitness suite, and Council offices.

Potential locations for a new civic hub include:

- The Angharad Walks development
- Sardis Road Car Park

8.6 Town Centre Living

A high-density residential-focused quarter can complement other uses, add to the attractiveness and interest of the centre, and create viable new uses for peripheral locations. It would build on the trend towards city centre living established across the UK and create a new local market for wealthier small households looking for convenient access to a dynamic town centre and train station.

A residential mixed-use area is proposed for the western approaches to the town centre. Development could be solely residential, or could include civic and office uses, and possibly a hotel. The quarter would complement and merge with a new leisure area on the ground of Pontypridd Rugby Club and the existing residential to the south-west.

The development of new housing in this part of the town centre could also have the benefit of bringing additional life and activity to the central shopping area outside shopping hours – which have helped to improve security and reduce vandalism in other towns that have brought a wider mix of uses, including new housing, into their central areas.

8.7 Conclusion

Development of a new retail scheme anchored by a major store, better transport integration and the breaking of the relief road 'collar' with pedestrian friendly spaces offers the potential to transform Pontypridd town centre. Success will lay the way for investment in improved existing retail space, a new civic hub, creation of the leisure and residential quarters to the south west of the centre, and outward looking development along Gelliwastad Road and the riverside. The town centre will have complemented its assets with high quality, integrated new uses, and established a virtuous circle of improvement and competitive advantage.

The following section describes the key components of this strategy and looks at the development opportunities on each of the sites where there is potential for change and new investment.

9.1 Introduction

The Pontypridd Regeneration Strategy was prepared following a series of meetings and workshops with key stakeholders and the Client Group prior to the formation of the initial strategy proposals. This was followed by a series of public consultations prior to the preparation of the Final Report. This section of the report records and analyses those stages of the process. It highlights those issues seen as important to the general public and assists the Council in project prioritisation.

9.2 Stakeholders

The initial 'fact finding' and familiarisation of the study area and critical issues was undertaken through a series of meetings and interviews with the Client Group and Stakeholders. The stakeholders represented a broad and very extensive range of interests particularly the Town Centre Forum (which included the Police, the Highways Authority and Councillors).

Separate meetings were held between the Consultant Team and the following groups (or representatives thereof) during the pre-Interim Report stage:

- Town Centre Forum;
- Council Service Areas;
- Pontypridd Observer;
- Pontypridd Market Company;
- Pontypridd Chamber of Trade;
- Glamorgan University; and,
- Key retailers / multiple outlets.

The benefits of these meetings to the preparation of the study can not be over-estimated. Each stakeholder group had considerable ideas and opinions concerning all manner and scale of Pontypridd issues – some specific to one particular group or location (such as the Lido) whereas others were more generic (such as the quality of the built fabric).

The priorities and issues raised through these workshops have been translated into the study and examined in greater detail allowing the overall strategy to encompass the desires, requirements, aspirations and needs of the key stakeholders.

9.3 Public Exhibition

The second phase of consultation was the public consultation following the preparation of the draft Regeneration Framework. Following presentation and discussion of the Interim Report with the Client Group a series of presentation panels were prepared for the public exhibition. These panels included the key drawings of the Report plus explanatory text. A copy of the exhibition panels is included in Appendix 1.

The exhibition was held over three days (14th to 16th April 2005 inclusive) at Pontypridd Indoor Market and manned by members of the Consultant Team.

It was well attended throughout the period with approximately two hundred and fifty people attending over the three days. The mix of attendees on the Saturday was considerably broader than Thursday / Friday and included more families and younger sections of the population than the weekdays.

Considerable interest was shown in the Framework and comments were provided both verbally and in written form with attendees being invited to complete a questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire are covered below.

9.4 Verbal Responses

Generally the verbal responses were very much in favour of the proposals and attendees were pleased to see 'something happening'. The alternative view was that a similar study was undertaken 15 to 20 years ago and this was a repeat of that exercise. This was accompanied by considerable scepticism of whether it would 'happen'.

The main contentious issue that was commented upon was 'development in Ynysangharad Park' and the belief that the study was perpetuating this. The Angharad Walk proposal was shown on the Framework drawing as the scheme benefits from planning permission (subject to legal agreement) and therefore provides realistic context for the wider regeneration proposals. Similarly the St Catherine's Car-park scheme was also shown on the Regeneration Framework drawing as that too has planning permission and (hence) has a greater likelihood of being progressed than otherwise.

It was interesting to note the polarisation of views in relation to this element between Thursday / Friday and Saturday. The weekday visitors were generally against any development in the Park whatsoever, whereas the weekend visitors generally saw Angharad Walk as a positive development (although were frustrated at the delay in implementation).

There was much discussion on the recently granted planning permission for the Morrisons scheme and the Angharad Walk scheme. Generally the opinion was that the Morrisons proposal would be a real benefit to Pontypridd whereas the Angharad Walk scheme would not. Morrisons was not seen as being harmful to the town centre as it was considered to attract A470 traffic as opposed to town centre shoppers. The views were mixed on whether Morrisons and Angharad Walk should both be implemented. The opinions against Angharad Walk were generally based on the car park element, the belief that traffic congestion would be worsened, and the fear that shoppers would visit only that element in the town.

A considerable verbal response reinforced our opinion of the significant value of Ynysangharad Park in Pontypridd. Unfortunately a great number of attendees

instead focussed on the perceived negative aspects of the Angharad Walk scheme, including the associated car park development on the Day centre site, and the belief / fear that the Regeneration Framework was encouraging general development in the Park. This negative approach was frequently taken against supporting the overall framework for the regeneration of the town.

Pedestrianisation of Taff Street was considered by the shoppers to be a positive proposal as the existing shopping environment was unattractive and sometimes dangerous. There was a general agreement that any pedestrianisation scheme must be flexible in operation. Comments were similarly made regarding the difficulty of access for wheelchairs and prams and a desire that this be addressed in any scheme.

Traffic congestion was seen as a key problem in Pontypridd which needed addressing.

There was good verbal support for the Peniel Square proposals – as a focal point, opening up the Indoor Market northern elevation, removing the existing buildings which blight the area and enhancing the setting of the historic drinking water fountain.

There was generally very strong support for the establishment of the Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Head Offices in Pontypridd and an appreciation of the benefits that this would bring for the Council, employees, town centre and visitors to the Council.

There was good support for the leisure centre and residential proposal on the Rugby Ground site (in the event that the Rugby ground was to relocate). It was almost unanimous that the town required a swimming pool.

In the event that rugby was no longer to be played at the existing Sardis Road site there was support for it to be returned to Ynysangharad Park (as previously, before construction of A470) with an appreciation of the benefits that this would retain for the town. Strong support was given for residential use on the Sardis Road and particularly the Millfield sites which was seen as preferable to commercial / retail / restaurant uses.

9.5 Written responses

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were completed at the Indoor Market exhibition and are discussed below.

The panels were also provided for display at Pontypridd Library. The exhibition remained there from 21 April to 5 May (for a period of two and a half weeks) although it was unmanned during this period. Questionnaires were also completed by the Library exhibition and the responses are analysed below. A copy of the questionnaire and the respondent statistics are provided in Appendix 2.

A total of 123 questionnaires were returned from the exhibitions. 57% of those were provided from the Indoor Market exhibition.

The majority of respondents were within the 46 – 64 years age group (39%). Shopping was the primary reason for visiting the town centre and over four-fifths of respondents were resident in Pontypridd.

A large majority (91% overall) agreed with the principle of an overarching strategy that makes Pontypridd the County Town of Rhondda Cynon Taff. Benefits to this were seen as being an increase in public sector investment, and an enhancement of the town's image and stature. There was no clear reason for objectors to this proposal although some respondents were seeking clarification of its meaning / significance.

The single most important factor that it was considered would make Pontypridd more competitive was an improved retail offer (30%). Approximately one-third of respondents stated this. The range of responses in this category included broadening the range of shops (such as books, music, boutiques etc.) and making the shopping environment more attractive.

The second most common factor was that Pontypridd requires fundamental town centre regeneration (12.6%) and a consequent improvement / enhancement of the overall image of the town (7%). Some respondents even suggested that the only solution is to demolish the town and start again!

Improving the parking facilities, in terms of the number of spaces, accessibility, location and cost was also a popular factor (11.6%).

The provision of a new leisure facility was also seen to be the key factor (9.5%), although this is perhaps more a key aspiration than a factor to improve the retail competitiveness of the town. It would however increase the reasons to visit the town with consequent benefits for businesses, incomes, vitality etc.

Traffic congestion featured as the key single factor in 6.3% of responses however this percentage is perhaps artificially low as this factor also featured, in part, through many general responses (where more than one factor was listed) concerning parking. This is clearly an important part of the overall town centre image to be addressed through the framework.

There was a general response of over 5% that the single factor that would make Pontypridd more competitive with its rivals was 'action' and the actual 'implementation' of proposals. This is clearly a reaction to the perceived past lack of progress.

Nearly 82% of respondents agreed that the Local Authority Headquarters should be located in the town centre. The 13% which disagreed stated that it was unnecessary and / or a waste of money.

Nearly 93% of respondents agreed with the concept of a flexible form of pedestrianisation for Taff Street. This improvement scheme also featured in general comments (see below) and verbal comments made at the first exhibition.

Almost 75% of respondents stated that they would support more residential occupation in the town centre. Of the 14% who disagreed - the main reason was that it was considered that it could cause more problems for vehicle congestion and parking.

Over 69% considered that circulating traffic via the alternative route of the Broadway was favourable over the current Gelliwastad Road, however 20% disagreed and 11% were undecided. The main reason for not supporting it was a doubt that such a scheme would work, that it would be too restrictive and / or would transfer congestion to a different area.

The majority of respondents (60.7%) considered that a new edge of town centre leisure facility would be preferable to development in Ynysangharad Park and a number of them stated that it should be at the proposed Sardis Road location. However, over 24% preferred an option centred on the Lido, and 6.5% suggested that both options should be pursued. There was clear overall opinion that Pontypridd needs a new leisure facility and no respondents stated otherwise.

The final section requested 'any other comments'. The following is an overview of the key issues raised.

The main point made was that implementation of the regeneration framework should be undertaken as soon as possible. There was a frustration at a perceived lack of progress and reference was made to previous schemes that appear not to have been implemented. This desire for action was by far the majority single view in this section of the responses. Over 20% overall commented on this aspect, which is twice the percentage of the second most frequent comment.

The second most popular statement was that there should be no development in Ynysangharad Park. Almost 10% of respondents stated this, although it is worth noting that a far higher percentage was recorded in the Library exhibition questionnaires (14%) than the Indoor Market (7.4%) where there were members of the Consultant Team present to explain the proposals. This percentage increases if combined with comments made specifically against the Angharad Walk scheme (over 12% combined total overall).

Again this response represents the generated fear of Pontypridd residents that the Angharad Walk development (including the Day Care Centre) will lead to encroaching development in the Memorial Park. The Regeneration Framework of course emphasises the key assets of the Park for Pontypridd and seeks to encourage increased use.

There were equal volumes of support for addressing the Lido and developing a leisure centre on the Sardis Road site (5.3% each overall). Plus another 3% commented that Pontypridd needs a swimming pool, although were not specific concerning a location.

Traffic congestion featured in over 5% of responses with suggested solutions being given including to remove the traffic lights at various junctions, re-introduce right turning

into Taff Street, add additional traffic lanes on the gyratory, and re-open the A470 sliproads. The introduction of a Pontypridd Park and Ride scheme was suggested by 1.5% of responses.

An improvement to the riverside walkway area was mentioned by nearly 4% of responses overall. Interestingly these were all from the Market exhibition questionnaires.

The other issues raised by 3% or more overall were: Pontypridd should be promoted as a market town with an attractive market, the retail offers must be improved (range, quality of shops), and they supported the Morrisons retail scheme.

There were varying levels of direct support and objection expressed for the currently proposed supermarket schemes for the Precinct site (support 3.1%, object 2.3%); on the Brown Lennox site (support 3.1%, object 0.8%); and on the Sardis Road site (support 0.8%, object 2.3%). Considerable caution should be exercised concerning these percentages, however, as additional support and objection is contained within comments against supermarket schemes in general, against any development in the Park area, in favour of demolishing the Precinct, supporting the leisure proposals for the Sardis Road site, and increasing the town's retail offer and car parking.

9.6 Additional responses

Following the public exhibition copies of the exhibition material were also provided to Peacock & Smith (Planning Agents for Wm Morrison Supermarkets Plc) and Morbaine Ltd. (Agents for the food and non-food retail proposals for the Sardis Road site). A response was received from Morbaine Ltd which raised the following points. These issues are brought to the Council's attention to provide additional context to the proposal and for the consideration of the Council.

The main issue raised in the response is the suitability of the Sardis Road site over the Brown Lennox site. It is stated that although the Brown Lennox site lies outside the study area, the Morrisons scheme has "*important implications for retailing in Pontypridd and it cannot be ignored when an alternative foodstore scheme has been proposed on the sequentially superior Sardis Road centrally located site*".

It states that the Regeneration Framework must "*promote the role of Pontypridd town centre for retailing at the expense of any out-of-centre opportunities*" and that a new edge-of-centre foodstore at the Sardis Road site would complement the town centre retail offer and this cannot be ignored. It is recommended that the Framework proposes "*a new foodstore for the town – which is what townsfolk want – on the most commercially available and sequentially acceptable site i.e. the Sardis Road site*".

Furthermore it is suggested that the Framework should recommend that this site is allocated for retail development, whether food, non-food or a combination thereof in response to a need for additional non-food retailing in Pontypridd which has been identified by Morbaine Ltd.

Finally it states that the current Framework proposal residential and leisure uses can be located on alternative sites in the town which are “*acceptably located in policy terms. Yet only the Sardis Road site can satisfy the Government’s more stringent planning policy requirements in terms of meeting Pontypridd’s retail needs.*”

9.7 Conclusion

The Regeneration Framework was produced following a detailed and stringent consultation process. The involvement of these various groups was fundamental in providing a thorough understanding of the issues, aspirations and needs of the town.

The public exhibitions have demonstrated the support for Pontypridd to be the County Town of Rhondda Cynon Taff and shown majority support for the key elements within the Framework. It has also shown that there is a strong desire to see regeneration and change in the town, although there is some cynicism about whether the Framework will be progressed.

The response from Morbaine Ltd disagrees with the Framework’s proposal for leisure and residential uses on the Sardis Road site and states that this should be promoted for food retail and / or non-food retail in line with the currently submitted planning application.

11.1 Removing uncertainty

The Consultant Team's analysis has highlighted that the one fundamental issue which has stalled Pontypridd Town Centre achieving its full potential is the uncertainty affecting three major components of the town centre:

- a) The Angharad Walks Development
- b) St Catherine Corner
- c) The Lido in Ynysangharad Park

Until at least the first two projects materialise on the ground, it is difficult to see how any real progress can be made in attracting new investment to the town centre.

11.2 Confidence

The above uncertainty has undermined confidence in the town centre whereby property owners have resisted investing in their buildings and this, combined with a lack of progress on the major development projects and the pedestrianisation of Taff Street, have reinforced the lack of confidence held by traders in the town.

11.3 Good Prospects

Despite this lack of confidence there is evidence of latent/potential demand amongst retailers not currently represented in Pontypridd. King Sturge has identified that there are at least 20 major retailers with outstanding requirements in the town centre, with the prospect of attracting more should a critical mass of complementary retailers be achieved.

Much will depend upon the delivery of the wider strategic investments. Improved car parking, a modern shopping environment and enhanced public realm would do a great deal to boost confidence and hence new investment in the fabric of the town.

11.4 Engaging with the Private Sector

Stemming the leakage of expenditure from Pontypridd to other centres such as Cardiff, Llantrisant, Caerphilly and Merthyr will rely heavily upon working with the private sector to introduce the right investment into the town centre. This may demand joint ventures and public/private partnerships. The Alfreds Bar development on Market Street is an excellent example of the two sectors working together to deliver a truly catalytic project which has already shown how quality and attention to detail can make a real difference to the catering and entertainment offer in the town centre.

11.5 Infrastructure

As well as the physical upgrade and the removal of blight it will be essential to make the town centre more accessible to all sectors of the community, more convenient and indeed more comfortable.

There is an urgent need to rationalise traffic movements, enforce traffic restrictions, instigate a flexible and well

managed pedestrianisation scheme for Taff Street and ensure that car parking is priced competitively close to the centre to guide long-term car parking to the fringes leaving the central car parks free for shoppers.

11.6 Glamorgan University

It is vital that the Authority continues to build upon its positive working relationship with the University (Pontypridd in Partnership) and that students are actively encouraged to visit, shop, spend their leisure time and indeed live in the town centre more than they currently do.

Students can add significant vitality and value to a town's way of life and it is important that Pontypridd benefits from their energy and creativity which can do a great deal to attract other users (and investors) to the town centre.

11.7 Creative Culture

The Council also needs to respond to the needs of the local Creative Arts Industry by encouraging artists, entertainers, craftspeople and musicians to network to find greater representation in the town centre. Pontypridd deserves a 'cultural quarter' but this need not take on the form of a fixed physical form, indeed it could find expression through a variety of forms, venues and media. The Street Market might well provide an appropriately animated framework for the Creative Arts industry.

11.8 Events

Pontypridd also demands a co-ordinated all year programme of events. These could well provide the platform for raising the profile of the town and offer a sustained basis for the new confidence which Pontypridd needs to express in itself. The celebration of 2006 is the anniversary of both the composition of the Welsh National Anthem and the construction of the Old Bridge in the town could provide the ideal vehicle to kick-start such a programme of events.

11.9 Tourism

These initiatives should all provide a springboard for the more proactive promotion of the town's tourism assets including the town's principal tourism asset: Ynysangharad Park. The greater the number of attractions for visitors, that are promoted in the town, the greater the demand will be for visitor accommodation also in the town. The Market Tavern appears to be the only current town centre accommodation. A managed events programme may well lead to demand for a budget hotel in the centre.

11.10 Public Realm

It is recognised that the quality of the public realm in Pontypridd town centre needs urgent upgrade if it is to compete with its nearest rivals. This warrants the continuation of the principles (if not the details) of the street improvements in Church Street and Market Street combined with a flexible approach to the servicing of premises and the managed pedestrianisation of Taff Street/Mill Street/High Street. There may well be the opportunity to introduce greater levels of shelter along the street in the form of glazed arcades in front (and potentially independent from) the principle retail frontages. Equally the management and distribution of the outdoor market; enhanced facilities for cyclists and the disabled; improved street lighting and signage will all go a long way to regenerating the town centre and instilling confidence in its future.

11.11 Catalysts

Finally, the essence of any regeneration strategy for the centre of Pontypridd must be based upon the Council looking to promote its own assets in a more creative and co-ordinated way. The Authority owns substantial freeholds on what is referred to above at the 'western approaches' to the town centre; the Millfield site; Sardis Road car park and Pontypridd Rugby Club ground.

The strategy promotes the idea that these sites should be considered together as one portfolio of sites. Their assembled value is estimated (King Sturge, March 2005) to be anywhere in the order of £35.5 million. This is a substantial asset which could be used to generate new interest from particularly commercial and residential developers. The redevelopment of these sites either in partnership or by outright sale and/or leaseback arrangements could attract considerable new investment and provide the new air of confidence that the town centre urgently requires. The sites could also (either through capital receipt and/or Section 106 Agreement) help to fund upgrades to existing assets, new amenities as well as investment in public infrastructure.

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