Llanidloes

Town Investment Plan

Draft Action Plan December 2022



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1 Purpose

The purpose of the study is to articulate a vision and priorities for the future of Llanidloes to help attract and shape investment and support the vitality of the town and its recovery from Covid. The Plan has a town centre focus whilst taking into wider consideration the importance and influence of the opportunities found within the wider urban area.

The Plan provides a focus on the town's unique challenges and opportunities and aims to realise the following:

- Develop a shared vision and strategy to give the private, public and community sectors confidence to invest in the town and support its vitality.
- Ensure investment and activity is appropriate to the individual character so it maintains and builds on its assets and strengths.
- Confirm the individual characteristics and assets are used effectively to build on the town's potential.
- Attract investment to better meet the future retailing, economic, leisure, cultural, housing and service needs of the town and local community.
- To consider good practice lessons from other towns.


2 Introducing Llanidloes
LLANIDLOES
LLANIDLOES
Afon Clywedog
River Severn / Afon Hafren
Glyndŵr's Way
Severn Way
Llwyn Dyrys
Penygreen Road
Penygreen Farm
Mount Severn
Feindre Bridge
Feindre Mill
Lower Glandulas
Upper Glandulas
Maenol
The Farm
Ty-coch
Vaenor Park
Mount Pleasant
Quarries (ds)
Quarry (ds)
Lower Green PO
Upper Green
Summerfield Park
Hafrennydd
Chapel Farm
Gorn Hill
Gorn Newydd
Berth-Iwyd Coppice
Berth-Iwyd Farm
Dolillys Cottage
Dol-llys Farm
Dol-llys Hall
Penralit
Pant-yr-ongle
Pen-yr-allt Wood
Dyfnant
Alt Gochr
Bryn-llys
St Idloes Golf Club
Castle Grid
Cefn-cwmeryr
Cwmeryr-mawr
Cwmeryr-bach
Coed Cwmeryr
Cringoed
Rhyd-y-gwreiddyn
Quarries (ds)
Dill Sort
Tan-yr-allt
Ael y Bryn
Cefn Goleugoed
Cefngoleugoed
Brithdir
Dyffryn
Bidffald
Ty-llwyd
Brion-y-geifr
Cefnmawr
Penrhos
Bedw
Pentre
Bont-newydd
Bontnewydd Fach
Morfodion
Sewage Works
Clydfanau Bridge
Clyd-Cannau
Coed Clydfanau
Vaynor
Mine (ds)
Shafts (ds)
Glyn-y-nant
Pen y Banc
Penybanc
Coed Caercrwn
Coed Caencoed
Cefnbedlog
Ty'n-yr-hendref
Upper Pencincoed
Pencincoed
Caencoed
Rhiwbrongelly
Ppg Ho
Ty-bach
Alt y Golau
Dulas Villa
Bryncoch
Cefngwilgy fawr
Cefngwilgy fach
Bryndu
Bryndu-Canol
Club House
Ty Cerrig
Penbryn-du
Gwern-y-gog
Rhos-y-pentref
Tyndrain
Prospect Farm
Top Farm
Bradnant
Hengrynwydd Fawr
Level (ds)
Ford
Ch
Ch Spr
Spr
Res
Vic
Cemy
Sch
PO
Sta
FB
W
Weir
A470
B4518
B4569
B4519
B4520
B4518

2.0 Strategic position

Llanidloes is centrally located in Powys and lies at the heart of mid Wales off the A470. The town is self-contained with the B4518 running through the town centre and linking to the A470. Newtown is located 14 miles to the north east and Rhayader to the south (14 miles) with Aberystwyth to the west (30 miles).

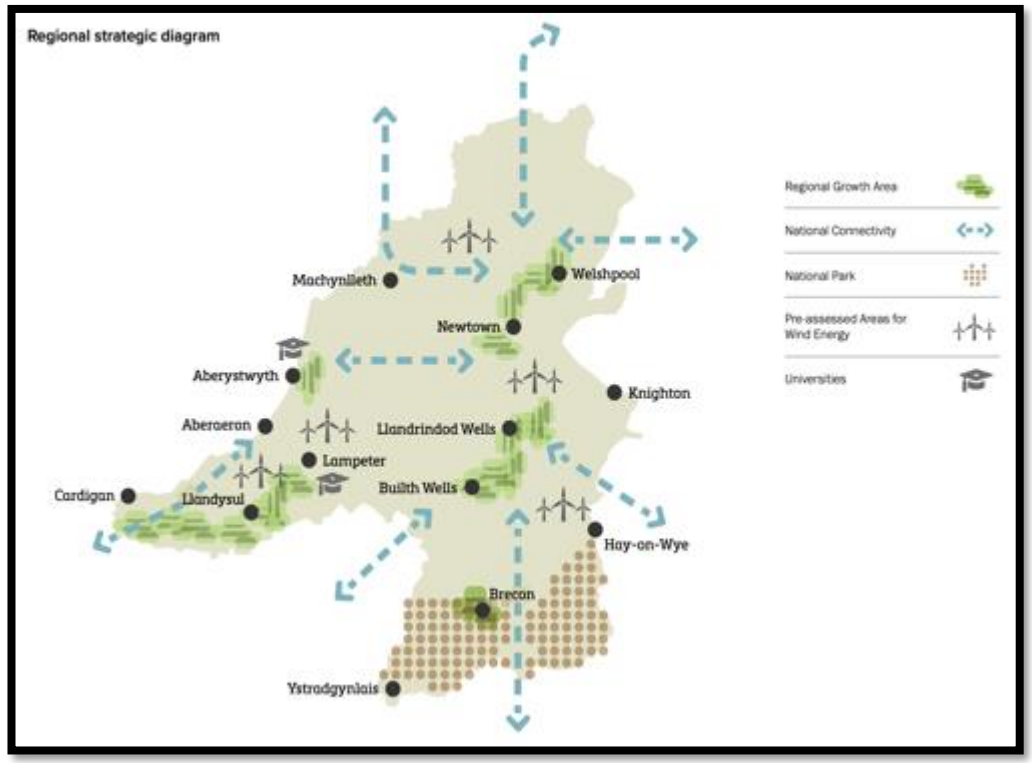
The strategic location of Llanidloes provides connections to larger centres across the border including Shrewsbury (45 miles) and Birmingham (94 miles), the latter being circa 2 hours drive time. It provides a midpoint for visitors heading to the mid Wales coast together with cross country journeys through Wales.

Future Wales – The National Plan 2040 identifies Llanidloes as forming part of Bro Hafren - one of two designated Regional Growth Areas in Mid Wales. The Growth Area includes Welshpool and Newtown and is recognised as containing vibrant centres and industrial clusters, including advanced manufacturing, which offer high value employment and productivity growth potential.

The Regional Growth Areas (see Figure 1) represent focal points for economic and social activities with development for new employment; leisure, retail and cultural opportunities; and education and health services concentrated to sustainable and accessible locations.

A key part of the National Plan seeks to ensure a strong, resilient and sustainable economy and rural communities across Mid Wales, based on traditional rural enterprises, modern innovative businesses and the natural assets of the region. The development of the foundational economy alongside tourism, including opportunities for active, green and cultural tourism are identified as important elements in the growth of the regional economy.

Figure 1 : Regional Strategic Diagram



Source: Future Wales - The National Plan, Welsh Government, 2021

2.1 Orientation

As the first town on the river Severn, Llanidloes is bypassed by the A470 with the historic core of the town concentrated to the south of the river and west of the bypass. The town extends north of the river via two bridges (Long Bridge and Short Bridge Street respectively) with the B4518 continuing past Llyn Clywedog and the B4569 to Caersws.

Access from the A470 is provided via the B4518 from a main roundabout at the north gateway (Victorla Avenue) and from the south via Llangurig Road. The town has also developed to the east of the bypass off Gorn Road and Bryn Du Road.

Llanidloes serves a wide rural hinterland and acts as the Gateway to the Cambrian Mountains, and Llyn Clywedog (6 miles). The Elan Valley, accessed via Rhayader, is in close proximity to the south.

The key economic, social and community infrastructure of Llanidloes and surrounding area are shown at Figure 2 and include:

1. **Town centre –** historic main commercial, retail, hospitality and service town centre anchored by Old Market Hall and other listed buildings including the Town Hall, the Trewythen hotel and attractions such as Minerva Arts Centre. The town centre is designated a Conservation Area.

2. **The Foundry, Maesllan Enterprise Park and Station Buildings** - commercial employment floorspace in the town centre which support a range of occupiers in a variety of business premises.

3. **Parc Derwen Fawr Business Park and Parc Hafren** - dedicated business parks with access from the A470 located to the east and south of the A470 respectively.

4. **Hafren Furnishers** - an established local business with various commercial premises across the town, and showroom at Llangurig Road.

5. **Mount Lane & Gro Car Parks, Community Hall -** centrally located car parks serving the town centre with Mount Lane (proximity to the medical practice and community hall) linking through to Great Oak Street and the Gro located adjacent to the river Severn.

6. **Llanidloes & District War Memorial Hospital** - community hospital located outside the town centre off the B4569.

7. **Llanidloes High School and Llanidloes Sports Centre** – the secondary school (there is also a primary school) and leisure centre provide key community facilities for a wide hinterland.

8. **Llyn Clywedog and Hafren Forest** - popular visitor attractions which act as an attraction and focus for outdoor activities associated with the reservoir, wildlife and walking.

9. **Cambrian Mountains -** Llanidloes acts as the gateway to the Cambrian Mountains which includes Plynlimon, the source of the river Severn.



Figure 2: Key Features of Llanidloes

3 Key Issues and Opportunities

3.0 People and Economy

The demographic profile for Llanidloes and hinterland [1] identifies a **declining and aging population** with an estimated mid-year population of 5,164 in 2020; a marginal decrease from 5,223 in 2011. The main resident age groups in 2020 were classed as middle aged (45-59) followed by retirement (65+). There are fewer people aged 15-44 years old but a relatively large proportion of younger residents (aged 0-14) - see Figure 3. These trends are evident at the County level with initial 2021 Census data showing Powys has the highest proportion of population over 65 in Wales.

Economic activity levels in Llanidloes are broadly in line with the Powys average with 70% of working age adults economically active in 2011. The main employment/occupation sectors were in wholesale and retail trade (16%), human health and social work and skilled trades (14% each) although education, construction, manufacturing and agriculture/forestry are also important. Overall, the employment base is varied and diversified.

Whilst there is low unemployment, the study area had a high percentage of residents aged 16 and over with no qualifications and generally **lower levels of qualifications at most qualification levels** compared to the Powys average (albeit based on 2011 data whilst there is good access to Further Education facilities in the area).

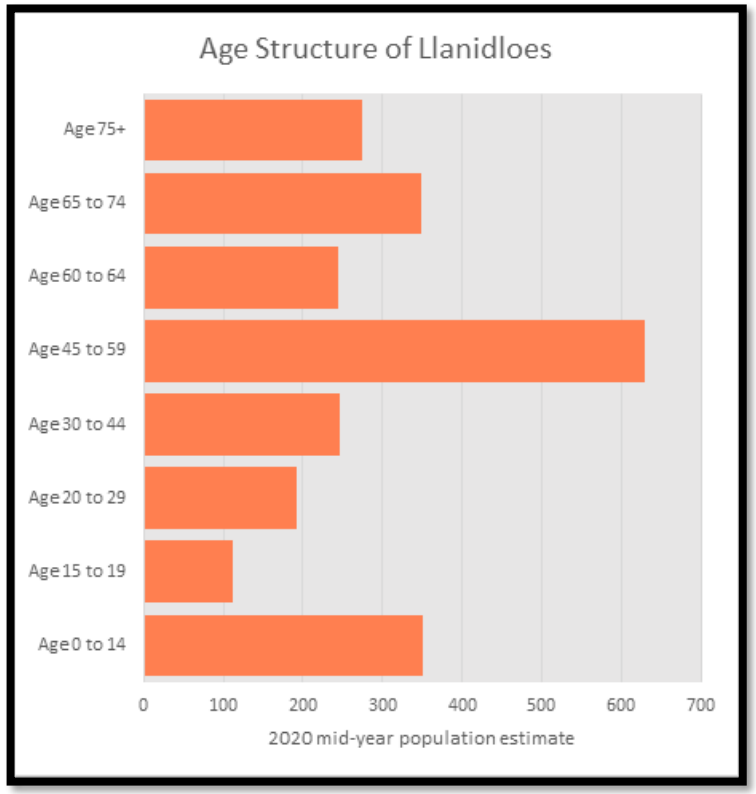


Figure 3: Age Structure of Llanidloes

[1] Lower Super Output Area (LSOA): Llanidloes 1 (W01000466), Llanidloes 2 (W01000467) Blaen Hafren (W01000429). The urban area comprises Llanidloes 1 and Llanidloes 2.

There is a relatively high level of containment of the workforce within the area with Newtown the main location for commuters, both leaving and travelling into the town. It is anticipated that commuter flows are likely to have been impacted by changes in working trends for some post pandemic.

The latest Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019) identifies the Llanidloes urban area as **amongst the least deprived areas in Powys**.

Notwithstanding this, there are underlying economic challenges facing many rural towns of low pay, underemployment and relatively high self-employment which can mask rural poverty compounded by the cost of living and energy crisis facing local businesses and residents.

3.1 Employment, Sites and Premises

The commercial market in Llanidloes is driven by localised demand and dominated by light industrial and storage premises with a range of provision but limited availability. By contrast, the office market is more limited although changing workplace trends has raised demand for more flexible innovative workspace. The town is served by a number of dedicated employment areas:

- **Parc Derwen Fawr (Great Oak Business Park)** - business park with link road from the A470 providing modern business units with potential for c.3,000 sq. m of light industrial/office uses. The site is allocated in the adopted LDP.

- **Parc Hafren** - allocated industrial estate to the south of the town off the A470 which supports a number of business units including Celtic Travel.

- **Maesllan Enterprise Park** and **Station Workshops** - mix of small commercial units, industrial units and converted Station Buildings (13 studios) next to the town centre. The adjoining **Foundry Buildings** provide various large buildings occupied primarily by Hafren Furnishers.

- **Eastgate Street** and **Westgate Street** - concentration of commercial units off the B4569 together with premises on Westgate Street (B4518) including Hafren Furnishers and Mid Wales Welded.

Llanidloes is characterised by a diversity of local employers across a range of sectors, many in the foundational economy, and is not reliant on a single dominant employer. Important local anchor employers include Hafren Furnishers and Celtic Travel, and Randal Parker Foods located outside the town at Dolwen. The public sector is also an important local employer, especially through community health, education and leisure.

Discussions with local commercial agents identify that demand for industrial uses across Mid Wales is concentrated on small/mid-sized units (200 - 1,000 sq. m) with the office market focused on small units of less than c.200 sq. m. Occupancy rates are reported to healthy especially for industrial units with difficulties for some businesses finding appropriate premises. This general lack of available stock has implications for supporting both start up and expansion needs of local businesses.

The 'viability gap' of commercial development projects is a major constraint to development with development costs outweighing potential income generated by development. This fundamental issue is reported by local commercial agents as a key reason for the general absence of speculative development in the area. The poor qualitative condition, including energy efficiency and performance of some existing employment floorspace is another reported issue.








WHITE LEAF
THE LITTLE
WELSH BAKERY

3.2 Town Centre

Llanidloes Town Centre is designated an Area Retail Centre in the adopted Powys LDP - the highest tier of the retail hierarchy which is strategically important in its retail and service provision to a wide hinterland.

Character

The historic town centre is designated a Conservation Area and contains a significant number of listed buildings, including the Grade 1 listed Old Market Hall alongside many Grade II buildings such as the Town Hall, Flannel Mill, Plynlimon House and Trewythen Hotel. The centre is characterised by 19th century commercial buildings with attractive and well-maintained colourful frontages and shopfronts, a distinctive and unique varied streetscape and a strong sense of place.

Diversity

The centre contains a vibrant mix of uses and is dominated by an independent business profile which contributes to its diversity and appeal. A total of 91 commercial units are identified and characterised by high levels of occupation and low vacancy rate (7%) - significantly below the Welsh average of 17%. The vibrancy of the centre is further enhanced by a significant number of residential, civic and community buildings.

Eating and drinking uses account for 18% of occupied businesses and with leisure sector uses account for c. 30% of all town centre provision (see Figure 4). Convenience and comparison provision is varied for the size of the centre with a high-quality food offer (fish deli, butchers, bakery, fruit/veg, natural and health foods) and a good mix of comparison retailers, many specialist in nature (e.g. antiques centre, fabrics, clothing, electricals, gifts, art, ceramics, bookshop) which enhance the retail offer. The Llanidloes Charter Market is held weekly in Great Oak Street with stalls selling local produce and crafts.

The diverse and high qualitative offer of the independent retailers, including maker, creative and lifestyle businesses, is a strength of the town centre.

Figure 4: Composition of Llanidloes Town Centre Uses, 2022

Retail Sector	Number of Units	Total Units %
Convenience	10	11%
Durable/Clothing and Footwear	9	10%
Speciality Retailers	11	12%
Health & Beauty	10	11%
Financial & Professional Services	10	11%
Eating & Drinking	16	18%
Leisure	11	12%
Value Retailers and Charity	6	7%
Motor and Transport	2	2%
Vacant	6	7%
Total	**91**	**100%**

The town centre acts as an important service destination with a range of retail, financial, and professional services alongside community facilities (pharmacy, post office, town hall, library and medical practice). The Hanging Gardens, Community Centre and Minerva Arts Centre all provide community space. Together, the overall composition of Llanidloes town centre confirms a good level of diversity and representation across a range of sectors, which serve the local community, hinterland and visitor economy.

Analysis of change over time in Llanidloes town centre (since 2018) indicate a relatively stable level of 'churn' with changes in occupier enhancing the diversity of the town centre composition. There is evidence of the loss of some specialist shops although this has been offset by new investment.

Spending Patterns

Annual spending data identifies £3.5million is spent in the town centre with a further £2million spent online within the town's catchment area. Residential spend accounts for 84% of the total with worker and tourist spend accounting for 11% and 5% respectively. The town's shopper population is estimated to be 1,768 people with spending pattens broadly in line with the regional average spend across key retail categories.

The town's primary catchment (Figure 5) is primarily concentrated around Llanidloes which accounts for c.68% of spend with the secondary catchment area covering the large rural hinterland to the west and south and is largely absent of facilities beyond those providing the most local needs. The outer catchments are heavily influenced by other retail centres, especially Newtown and Llandrindod Wells.

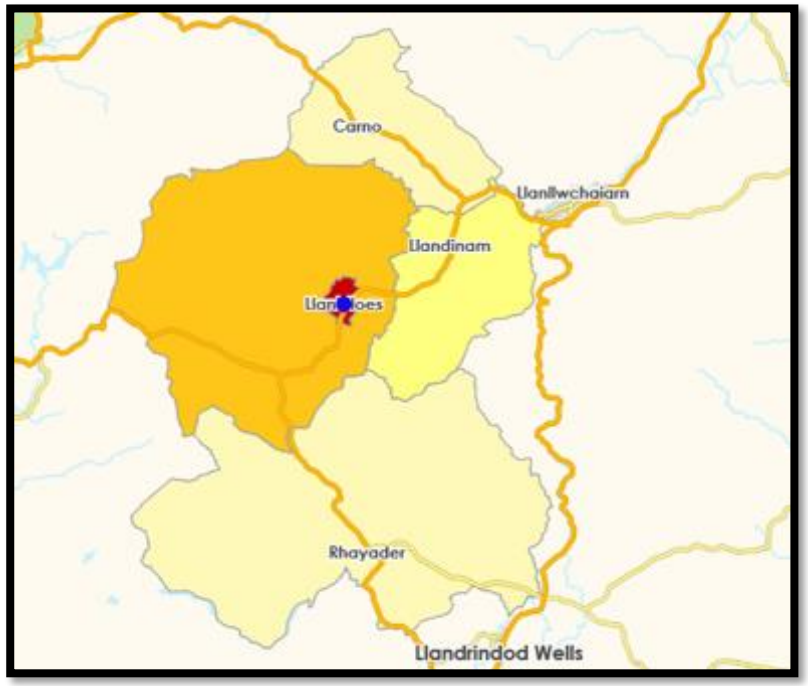


Figure 5: Map of Llanidloes retail catchment

- Primary catchment – 68% of shoppers
- Secondary catchment – 25% of shoppers
- Tertiary catchment – 4% of shoppers
- Quaternary catchment – 3% of shoppers

Infrastructure

Whilst the A470 bypass removes significant traffic from the town centre, the B4818 provides direct access with parking concentrated at the pay and display long stay car park at Mount Lane which links through to Great Oak Street and contains public EV charging points. The Gro car park on Chapel Street is typically occupied by local residents and contains public toilets. There is good provision for short stay on street parking throughout the town centre (including dedicated disabled parking).

3.3 Leisure & Culture

The leisure market in Llanidloes town centre is heavily linked to the visitor economy, and especially those visiting the outdoor attractions of the local area with a good range of hotels, public houses, restaurants and cafés present. The extensive listed buildings and industrial heritage associated with the weaving, flannel, lead smelting, iron foundry and Chartist Movement ensure a strong cultural identity and history.

The Minerva Arts Centre acts as a key cultural facility for Llanidloes. Home of the Quilt Association, the centre provides space for exhibitions throughout the year with a focus on Welsh arts, crafts and textiles. The arts and crafts theme are a positive asset for Llanidloes and acts as a unique attractor for related activities, exhibitions and craft workshops.

The Old Market Hall (owned by Llanidloes Town Hall and leased to Powys County Council) represents the iconic cultural building in the town centre although it has been closed for the last 3 years. The building has been subject to structural investigations with the continued protection and positioning of the building, and scope for a viable use of the building a key priority.

The town museum (Llanidloes museum of local history and industry) is co-located with the library at the rear of the Town Hall. The Hanging Gardens Project at Bethel Street provides a community hub (and host for many local organisations) with a café, workshop, exhibition space and meeting room. The project, led by The Wilderness Trust, seeks to repurpose a number of derelict buildings comprising Bethel Chapel, Bethel Hall, garages and a community garden for the local community. A feasibility study has been prepared to explore the delivery of new uses for the wider community.

Outside the town centre, formal sports and leisure facilities are concentrated at Llangurig Road which include Llanidloes Sports Centre that provides a wide range of sporting and leisure activities including a swimming pool, sports hall and gym together with outdoor facilities (floodlit 3g sports pitch and tennis courts). The bowling, tennis, croquet and cricket club are also located nearby. In addition, the town football club is at Victoria Avenue. The main green spaces are located at the fringe of the town centre at Severn Porte Park (riverside park with skatepark) and the Millennium Garden at Llangurig Road.



Summary

Llanidloes town centre is performing relatively well and is characterised by the dominance of the independent offer, especially convenience and specialist retailers, which represent key attractors alongside a growing reputation as a food and lifestyle destination. Local stakeholders consider the town serves a rural hinterland of circa 10 miles with evidence of expenditure patterns indicating the performance and diversity of the centre is supported by a general level of prosperity in the hinterland when compared to many other areas in Powys which is further complemented by the visitor economy. The unique and distinctive heritage environment further add to the appeal of the town centre with the Old Market Hall reported as the 'jewel in the crown'.

There are however a number of issues the town centre must address. The town centre (with the exception of Saturdays) is reported by stakeholders to be quiet especially during late afternoons and the winter months with early closing by some businesses. Changing trends post pandemic are reported to have reduced footfall with the need to encourage more local residents to use the town centre and its facilities. Encouraging people to stay longer in the centre and attracting more visitors off the A470 are considered key issues.




Coedwig
Hafren
Forest

3.4 Visitor Economy

As 'The First Town on the river Severn, the visitor economy is important to the town and its hinterland which also acts as a strategic 'gateway' to the Cambrian Mountains, Llyn Clywedog and Hafren Forest.

The industrial and cultural heritage of the town is well established with prominent historic buildings including Old Market Hall, Town Hall and Saint Idloes church, medieval kingdom of Arwystli, arts and crafts, and Chartist Movement prominent in local history. In addition, the profile of the town centre as evidenced by the comprehensive range of accommodation, hospitality and food and drink uses confirms a visitor orientated offer alongside its retail and service function.

Alongside the town focused attractions and facilities, the natural environmental assets of the wider area act as major destination for visitors and support a comprehensive range of outdoor activities, which include:

- Llyn Clywedog - sailing, canoeing, fishing, bird watching;
- Hafren Forest - opportunities for hiking and mountain biking;
- Cambrian Mountains - an extensive area for hiking, cycling, motorcycling, off road driving, wildlife and scenery;
- Walking destination focused around Glyndwr's Way, the Severn Way and other walks in close proximity to the town;
- National Cycle Network associated with National Route 81 (Lon Cambria) and National Route 8 (Lôn Las Cymru);

Llanidloes acts as a base for visitors (day and staying) exploring Mid Wales and offers a distinctive blend of 'town and country', ranging from a unique and distinctive historic town with places of interest and supporting commercial activities, to natural attractions in the rural hinterland for outdoor activities and scenic touring. Free town guided walks are held in the town during the summer months.

Llanidloes hosts a range of events and festivals which confirm the strong community spirt in the town. Events include Llanidloes Carnival Day, Christmas Craft Fair, Heart of Wales Music Festival and Pumpkin Festival whilst the Minerva Arts Centre hosts exhibitions across the year. Cambrian Mountain Events also host a mix of community and outdoor endurance events in the wider area.

Llanidloes and hinterland is well served by a comprehensive range of accommodation options, ranging from hotels, traditional B&B's, self-catering lodges and cottages, caravan parks, camping/glamping. The town centre has a good provision of serviced accommodation including the Trewythen (4 star) grade II listed hotel and Chartists Restaurant, together with the Queens Head, Red Lion and Unicorn Hotels. A number of the public houses also provide accommodation.

These facilities are complemented by guesthouses, self-catering cottages and lodes - both in town and the rural area, together with campsites and caravan parks including Dol-Llys Farm Caravan and Camping, Red Kite Touring Park and Clywedog Riverside Holiday Homes, all within c. 1 mile of the town.

Summary

Llanidloes has benefitted from the growth in the domestic staycation market. The increasing importance of the visitor economy is evidenced by the range of tourism orientated businesses in the town and local area although there is an opportunity to better promote and 'make more of Llani' as a destination, and its existing facilities (e.g. Old Market Hall, Minvera Arts Centre and Great Oak Street).

The comprehensive level of facilities and visitor infrastructure available, especially across the hospitality sector related to accommodation (both formal and informal with an increasingly alternative niche offer available in the hinterland); the varied food and drink offer; and strong representation of maker, creative and lifestyle businesses in the town, are all considered elements which provide a strong base for developing and strengthening the visitor destination 'product'.

There is a recognition that 'Llani' has the potential to elevate itself and build on its town centre facilities, offer and geographical gateway location to the natural assets of the hinterland. This is considered important in broadening the tourism profile of the town which has historically focused on older visitors with a need to encourage and attract more visits from younger age groups and families, to take advantage of the significant interest in outdoor leisure, health and wellbeing. The promotion and development of a year-round offer is needed.

In this context, there is a recognition that a strategy is needed, as undertaken in nearby Rhayader and other towns balancing a service and visitor role) with potential to build on the tourism clusters of the natural environment and outdoor activities, local heritage and culture, and food/drink/speciality retail theme. Other issues highlighted include developing the programme of events/festivals, and to encourage more people to visit the town both from those passing on the A470 and those staying elsewhere in Mid Wales.





3.5 Movement

Llanidloes is strategically located at the heart of mid Wales and is dependent on the A470. The nearest mainline rail station is Caersws, circa 6 miles to the north east along the A470. At the local level, the service provides stops to Newtown, Welshpool and Aberystwyth.

Whilst Llanidloes is not located on the Traws Cymru bus network, the town is served by a number of services inking to Rhayader, Newtown, Welshpool, Llandrindod Wells and Aberystwyth. The Bwcabus also operates from Llanidloes whilst Llanidloes and District Community Transport Scheme provides transport to local residents from home for health-related and occasional social journeys.

3.6 Housing

The adopted Powys LDP identifies five sites for residential development in Llanidloes totalling 158 new dwellings with all sites lying outside the defined town centre. New housing activity has come forward at the former livestock market at Gorn Road in the town centre as part of the County Council's social housing programme with more housing planned adjacent to the A470. The accessible location of Llanidloes, local facilities, strong community, attraction of Llanidloes High School, relative affordability and attractive environment are all identified as key factors driving local housing demand. This is set against the challenges of affordability and historic limited housing supply which have implications for retaining local people, especially younger groups in the local area.

3.7 Development constraints

Given the proximity to the river Severn, parts of the town are constrained by flooding especially to the north and the south west. The town centre is located in Flood Zone 1 and is not subject to flood risk although the area bounded by Smithfield Street and Chapel Street is impacted by Flood Zone B and C2.

3.8 Conservation Area

Llanidloes town centre is designated a Conservation Area and is dominated by listed buildings including the Grade 1 listed Old Market Hall and a concentration of typically Grade II listed buildings along Long Bridge Street, China Street, High Street, Great Oak Street, Short Bridge Street, Bethel Street, Smithfield Road and Foundry Terrace. The heritage sensitivities of the town centre are key planning considerations in assessing new development proposals in the centre.

3.9 Digital infrastructure

The town centre has free public wi-fi operating across the central area with locally based business support and hosting by a number of town centre businesses. A number of LoRa gateways are in place locally at Llanidloes CP School and Llanidloes Hospital. The majority of Llanidloes town centre has fibre broadband although some premises remain on copper-based services. It is understood that Openreach have a target for full fibre by end 2026 although this could occur earlier. The town has 4G coverage through all four of the main providers but no 5G coverage.

4 Priorities

From understanding Llanidloes as a place and listening to the view of its stakeholders, we have identified a draft set of priorities and themes that will guide the Town Investment Plan.



VISITOR ECONOMY

Set the profile and direction for the town and hinterland, broaden profile and market as a year round destination



TOWN CENTRE RESILIENCE, VITALITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS

Protect and support the role and function of the town centre to ensure resilience and vitality of businesses and services, enhance use of existing assets and public realm improvements



EMPLOYMENT & ENTERPRISE

Support existing and new workspace, skills and infrastructure provision for start-ups and local business expansion to strengthen the working town



PARTNERSHIP AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Support, co-ordinate and develop active community partnerships to drive forward sustainable regeneration and growth

5 Proposed Actions

5.0 Visitor Economy

The visitor economy is important to Llanidloes and confirmed by the range of tourism orientated businesses operating in the town and local area. Driven by the growth in the staycation market and the natural strengths of the local hinterland and wider Mid Wales area, there is a strong opportunity to build on this offer, strategic gateway location and town centre offer to better promote and 'make more of Llani' and the surrounding area, both as a visitor destination in its own right but also as a gateway base for exploring the wider area and as a stop off location for those travelling along the A470.

The scope exists to set the direction for Llanidloes and refine a visitor product which can elevate and strengthen the visitor attraction of the local area. It is also important in broadening the tourism profile which has historically focused on older visitors with a recognition of a need to encourage and attract more visits from younger age groups and families alongside greater positioning of the opportunities related to outdoor leisure and eco-tourism, health and well-being activities

To help address these issues, the following key actions are identified:

1. **Tourism Action Plan** – preparation of a tourism strategy and action plan to co-ordinate and promote 'Llani and area', its offer and attractions to visitors based on the identification and clear understanding of the visitor 'product' of the town and hinterland. A new focused strategy and action plan would help to establish a joined up and coordinated approach to provide a framework for future actions, activities and initiatives to help enhance the local tourism offer and extending the tourist season.

   An Action Plan would help to:

   - identify focus of the 'product(s)' concentrating on the clusters of the natural environment and attractors of Llyn Clywedog, Cambrian Mountains, Hafren Forest, river Severn; heritage and culture; arts and crafts; and food and drink;
   - integrate local promotional and marketing activity, and review of existing marketing of 'Llani' including online platform and branding;
   - encourage and support visitor related local businesses to respond to existing and emerging market opportunities and changing tourism trends, fundamental for broadening the visitor profile and developing a year-round destination;
   - investigate capacity and quality of existing visitor infrastructure e.g. car parking and management, signage;
   - complement existing and emerging tourism strategies at the county, regional level and national level.

2. **Walkers Are Welcome** - Llanidloes and area is a popular hiking location with the national trails of the Severn Way and Glyndwr's Way passing through the town and a network of local trails well promoted through the existing 'Walk Llanidloes' website (part of Llanidloes.com). Aligned to the promotion of outdoor activities, the national Welcome to Walkers Initiative seeks to establish an accreditation scheme for walk-friendly towns for the benefit of the local community and visitors. It also provides a network for member towns to share support, ideas and advice. The Initiative would help to further promote Llanidloes nationally including local events, encourage participation in walking and support active travel linkages.

3. **Improved Signage (A470)** – the existing tourist (brown) signage on the A470 are in need of visual improvement to better showcase the facilities and offer available in Llanidloes. This would help to attract

more visitors from the A470 heading north and south who currently bypass the town centre to encourage stop off visits and use of town centre facilities. Larger and more prominent signage showing existing facilities would help to promote local services and present a 'welcome message' to passing travellers.

Improved Signage (town centre) - the opportunity exists for a digital information board to be sited in the town centre to provide a focal point for visitor information based on a touch screen setting out local attractions, events, accommodation, food and drink and other relevant information. A local example exists at West Street in Rhayader.

4. **Events** – Llanidloes hosts a number of established events (and festivals) whilst a range of primarily outdoor activity events are held in the wider hinterland. The opportunity exists to develop a year-round programme of events and to maximise the linkage of existing events with town centre and visitor related businesses to generate spin off expenditure (and ensure local business trading hours align with events). There is scope for new events (e.g. arts, music, food, sustainability including strengthening links with the local agricultural community, drawing on the proactive and innovative ideas amongst many local community organisations. It is recognised the organisation and promotion of events is dependent on resources (especially capacity and expertise) which reflect the importance of local partnership and capacity building (see later).

Case study – Raising profile as a visitor and cultural destination, Frome

The historic town of Frome has developed a strong brand centred around heritage, culture, food and the arts that celebrates its heritage as a market town. Recognised for its thriving independent business scene especially for creative/maker traders alongside cafes, shops and restaurants, Frome has elevated itself through a blended approach of an extensive promotion of the town via social media and marketing, branding and events. The town has successfully drawn on community ideas which have transformed the vitality of the centre alongside promotion of local businesses and championing of Frome. The monthly themed market, the largest in the South West, provides a showcase for local producers from start up to established, and is supported by entertainment and street performances with a calendar of events linked to the market.



5.1 Town Centre Resilience, Vitality & Attractiveness

Llanidloes town centre is a well performing historic centre which balances a role and function as a working town and key service hub for the local community and rural hinterland alongside serving a visitor economy.

The protection and support for the continued role, function and attractiveness of the town centre is fundamental and will need to ensure an underlying resilience, vitality and viability to enable the business community, services and facilities to thrive and evolve. This will help ensure Llanidloes is well placed to respond to the opportunities and challenges facing town centres.

The Action Plan identifies a number of incremental actions to protect, strengthen and enhance the performance of Llanidloes town centre and its existing assets and public realm.

1. **Make more of existing building and land assets** - Llanidloes town centre contains a number of distinctive buildings and places, set in an historic built environment which contribute to a unique and distinctive centre. The opportunity exists to review and encourage the potential for a greater use of assets for hosting activities to extend the range and offer available in the centre, including investigation of opportunities for reuse of underutilised buildings and land for beneficial uses. Examples include:

    - Great Oak Street - a focal point for the town which hosts the weekly Charter Market but offers scope for more street based events (subject to highways management).
    - Old Market Hall - represents the iconic building of Llanidloes but remains unused (due to structural investigations). Priority should focus on exploring sensitive appropriate options which could deliver a realistic and viable use for the Grade I listed building.
    - Minerva Arts Centre and Llanidloes Community Centre (recognising need for refurbishment) - important centrally located community spaces which could host additional events.
    - Hanging Gardens, Bethel Street - has brought forward underutliised space for a range of community uses with further plans for the former Chapel and workshop space.
    - Former Abattoir Site, Bethel Street - a long term vacant brownfield site in the town centre, which subject to further investigation, could support future potential for single or mixed uses such as housing, employment, community and green space.

2. **Incremental public realm improvements** - to preserve and maintain the heritage quality of the town centre and its public realm based on targeted actions and enhancements where necessary. Whilst the overall public realm is attractive and of high quality, there are a number of potential public realm opportunity areas:

    - Shared surface space around Old Market Hall - the Old Market Hall represents a traffic island which can raise issues for pedestrians and road users. A shared space urban design approach minimises the segregation between different modes of road user and removes features such as kerbs and road surface markings. This potential action would need to fully consider the Grade I listed status and Conservation Area setting together with relevant highways considerations.
    - Green infrastructure - scope to identify green infrastructure initiatives to encourage more green spaces in the town centre, incorporating landscaping and planting, improved drainage, potential seating and active travel infrastructure. The two car parks at Mount Lane and The Gro (subject to resolution of Village Green status) could offer potential for green infrastructure enhancements.

- Gateway improvements - works to improve and enhance the appearance of the roundabout at Long Bridge Street and the main A470 roundabout. Improvements to these entrance locations, potentially through appropriate planting and/or appropriate design (that maintain highway safety) would help to enhance 'first impressions' and a visual welcome.
- River Severn - the river is relatively hidden to visitors with opportunities to promote the linkages between the Severn Porte Park riverwalk and the town centre.

3. **Electric vehicle charging** – the provision of electric vehicle charging facilities is an important element in delivering a low carbon future and sustainable transport. Whilst EV charging points are provided at Mount Lane car park, it will be important to review levels of provision and potentially extend the public EV facilities available within the town centre to support the local community and the visitor economy, including those seeking charge facilities from the A470.

4. **Improved and extended facilities for cycle and motorcyclists** – provision of more facilities for cyclists and motorcyclists supporting the outdoor activities focus of the hinterland and the service role of Llanidloes, including its location on the National Cycle Network. This action would include the development of more secure cycle and motor-cycle parking / storage together with appropriate signage.

5. **Data analytics and SMART towns** - an extensive free public wi-fi operates in the centre which provides the opportunity to make use of data analytics to help inform decision making for local businesses and organisations and support active management and measurement of town centre activities (e.g. pedestrian footfall, dwell time, activity areas). The action area could be expanded to evolve digital infrastructure related to SMART town measures which could help manage and measure traffic flows; parking; recycling and refuse collection etc.

Case study – Repurposing key assets and enhancement of the high street, Guisborough

Guisborough is a market town at a gateway location to the North Yorkshire Moors which serves a large rural hinterland. Over recent years, the town has focused on preserving key heritage assets including the repurposing of a derelict heritage building to deliver a mix of uses for the local community, visitors and commercial workspace. The project has involved significant community engagement which has acted as a catalyst for a programme of action and improved business confidence, evidenced by growth in the occupation of town centre premises by independent businesses and creative industries. The range of active community organisations have helped to drive forward the positive promotion of the town to local residents and tourists alongside the delivery of public realm improvements and active travel enhancements to support its service centre and tourist gateway role.



5.2 Employment and Enterprise

Llanidloes is a working town with a strong foundation economy and a good range of employment sites and employers throughout the town, many orientated towards light industrial and storage uses. It will be important to protect and evolve the economic base and performance of the town and the surrounding area, and to encourage and support sustainable economic growth to ensure the workspace and skills needs of current employers and future commercial requirements are satisfied. This will require the provision of a range, choice and flexibility of employment floorspace to enhance the quality and quantity of available stock at all levels having regard to underlying issues, many common to the commercial market across Mid Wales, related to:

- commercial viability issues which have resulted in the lack of development of commercial properties by the private sector;
- investment to regenerate and update existing employment units / stock and to bring commercial premises up to modern standards and energy efficiency levels;
- identifying a supply of flexible shared workspaces particularly for start-ups and small enterprises;
- wider marketing and promotion of the business and commercial credentials of the town and hinterland which combine the quality environment and opportunities related to green/clean industries, net zero carbon sectors and the circular economy;
- addressing business and skills needs of local employers.

To address these challenges, the Action Plan has identified a number of proposals for Llanidloes:

1. **Developing a flexible and shared workspace hub** – there is a need to investigate a shared workspace offer/enterprise hub, ideally in Llanidloes town centre, to support local SME's and those seeking hybrid working provision from the town and hinterland. The provision of such modern flexible affordable space (supported by high quality digital infrastructure) to meet changing workspace and workplace trends would help accommodate business start-ups, especially support for young entrepreneurs and encourage more young professionals to stay in the area, support the increased numbers working from home seeking a flexible environment, and those seeking opportunities for collaboration. Further investigation into suitable buildings/premises will be required and could align with business support/mentoring advice and/or as part of a wider community offer. The presence of many attractive and heritage buildings in Llanidloes offer the opportunity for innovative character workspace, with examples such as the work by Wilderness Trust at Bethel Hall (community based mixed uses with further plans for Bethel Chapel) reflecting the potential available in the town.
2. **Improvement of Existing Premises and Expansion** - support for local businesses at all levels to modernise premises to address qualitative deficiencies, especially in relation to energy efficiency and building design sustainability. There are a number of older industrial premises such as the Foundry buildings and units at Westgate Street which offer scope for enhancement although many premises will need to manage their qualitative condition and environmental resilience to extend the operational performance of premises that better meet occupier requirements. Additionally, the expansion needs of local businesses should be fully supported and explored to ensure local employers are retained and their accommodation needs are met (potentially on suitable new sites) which would offer the opportunity for redevelopment of existing sites, for commercial or potential alternative uses.
3. **Marketing and Promotion of Llanidloes** - there is the need to raise the commercial profile of Llanidloes through improved marketing to reflect

Case study – Supporting business growth, Ten Towns Initiative, Carmarthenshire

A key element of Carmarthenshire County Council's Ten Towns Initiative is focused on supporting business growth and job creation in rural towns across the county to develop the resilience of the local economy. The initiative has led to investment in new business workspace including industrial units to accommodate current and emerging needs, encouragement for the repurposing of vacant and underutilised buildings for enterprise such as work hubs and shared workspace, and support for the growth and expansion of locally grounded firms to retain and broaden the skills base and help sustain local communities.

The initiative also supports wider employment infrastructure needs focused on business support and enhanced skills for new and existing employees related to high quality apprenticeships, training and work experience opportunities.



the improved accessibility of the area arising from the Newtown bypass, availability (land/units) at Great Oak Business Park and the wider environmental benefits as a green business location. It will be essential for the commercial opportunities of the area to be reflected in future strategies and aspirations as set out in the Mid Wales Growth Deal and future land needs, if required, are addressed through the Development Plan review.

4. **Addressing business skills deficits** – Businesses are reporting that skills deficits are a significant barrier to recruitment and retention and have led more to hire by word of mouth and social media rather than via formal job postings. The Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership (RSL) reports that the skills deficits are impacting businesses across all sectors in the region, in line with national trends. Local businesses and stakeholders are reporting that challenges with recruitment are affecting hospitality businesses in particular. The RSL has engaged and surveyed businesses who reported that the lack of work readiness in the workforce is the key issue. This is followed by the need for soft skills (including communication) and customer service skills. Similarly, young people are reporting that they lack the confidence to engage with businesses.

   To address these intertwined issues, there is an opportunity to engage local businesses, particularly in target sectors, to create more work experience opportunities. This will make it easier for young people to engage with employers and open up more pathways to employment. This will also need to be accompanied by engagement with local schools to ensure that these opportunities are communicated to students and that the right students are encouraged to apply - in particular, those who are not pursuing further or higher education. At the local level, Cambrian Training have a well established apprenticeship programme especially in the hospitality sector which provide an excellent work based example of the approach to skills and training.

5.3 Partnership and Capacity Building

There are a large number of proactive local groups and organisations involved in a variety of community led initiatives at the local level who are responsible for delivering many innovative projects in Llanidloes and the wider hinterland, many focused around environmental and sustainability themes. The opportunity exists to build on these partnerships and to co-ordinate a town focused community local development group to drive forward ideas and initiatives for the town, drawing on the expertise, knowledge and commitment of community organisations and individuals.

To help deliver this priority, the Action Plan has identified the following proposals:

1. **Llanidloes Regeneration Forum** - establish a local development/regeneration group (or equivalent and structure) comprising representatives from key organisations and individuals in the town and hinterland, as a structure for co-ordinating and organising key priorities and initiatives. This would help to focus and sustain regeneration activity to meet local needs and will help to build local buy in for initiatives. This action would further help to build community led capacity and partnerships for the benefit of the area.

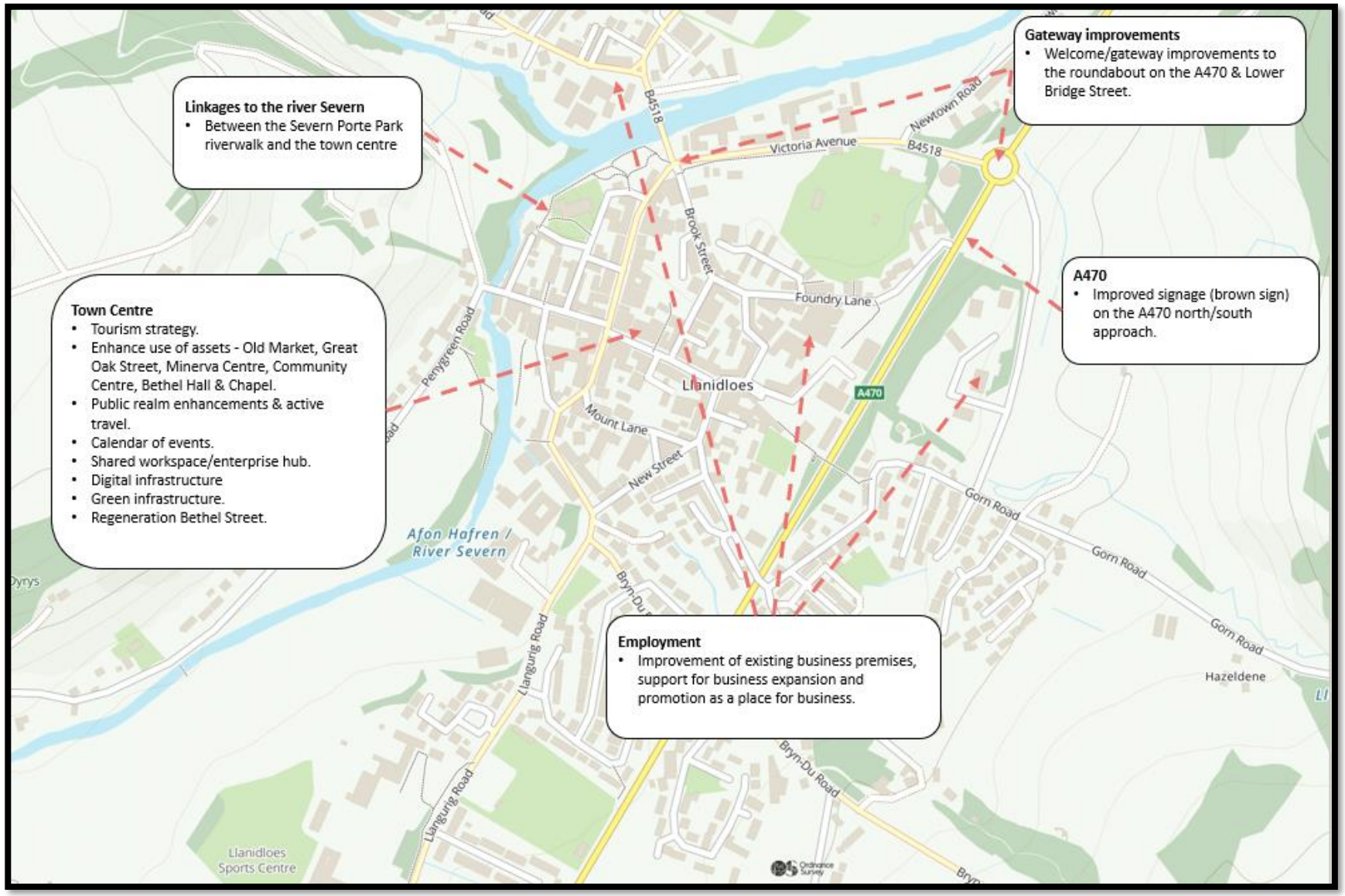
2. **Co-ordination and capacity support** - to address the lack of capacity and to help support regeneration actions and initiatives at the local level, there is need for a dedicated resource, potentially a Town Champion, linked to the work of County Council Officers, to enable and co-ordinate delivery of the identified Action Plan projects, initiatives and interventions, and to help drive forward other and future initiatives. This resource would help to ensure close facilitated working with key stakeholders, third sector and local community organisations in Llanidloes and act as the key contact and co-ordinator for ideas and funding opportunities.

Case study – Community action, Hebden Bridge

A market town in West Yorkshire where economic, social and physical rejuvenation has been driven by community action and a co-ordinated programme of local community led initiatives and local civic leadership including Hebden Bridge Town Partnership, Community Association, and committed local individuals. Initiatives have sought to enhance and elevate the town by building on its character, heritage, countryside and recreational resources with attention on the physical appearance of the town centre and beneficial viable use of key vacant and under-used heritage properties, including community owned and operated civic space and the conversion of a chapel into a charity-run community centre. An annual arts festival and gallery trail to showcase local arts has been established alongside the activation of spaces through other events, community activities and promotion of independent retail, commercial and leisure opportunities.



Figure 6: Summary of Proposed Actions

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