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## Executive Summary

### Project Background

Macgregor Smith have been commissioned by the WDA and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, in association with DTZ Pieda, Gwent Consultancy and the Cardiff Bay Arts Trust, to prepare an Urban Design Strategy and Masterplan for Brynmawr.

### Aims and Objectives

The aims of the Urban Design and Masterplan Strategy have been developed in response to the client brief and current policy on urban renewal. The primary objectives are:

- To retain existing employment and commercial activities within the town.
- To create a high quality environment meeting the requirements of the town's existing and future generations.
- To provide a general quality of environment which helps to improve the overall image of the area to potential investors and visitors.
- To facilitate and support new investment in the town.
- To provide accessibility to and within the town, and to make the town a safe and attractive living and working environment.

### Existing Context

A brief appraisal of the key issues currently affecting Brynmawr, looking in particular at Landscape and Townscape Issues, Traffic Management Issues, and Economic and Commercial Issues, identifies a number of factors which impact upon the perception of Brynmawr. These are a poor quality Town Centre environment, poor signage and entrances to the town, and poor parking provision. In addition, pedestrian linkages between key areas, and especially between Brynmawr, Nantyglo and Winchestown are felt to be poor, with the forthcoming Lakeside development further contributing to this perception.

However, Brynmawr benefits from a unique natural setting, close to the Brecon Beacons AONB and the Clydach Gorge, with ready access to the strategic road network via the A465T.

In addition, the proposed Lakeside Development has the potential to enhance links between the local communities, through sensitive integration and design, while contributing in the long term to the setting and quality of the Town Centre and its southern approaches.

Several key themes emerge from this analysis of the constraints and opportunities presented by Brynmawr and its setting. These themes underpin the strategy which in turn forms the basis for the more detailed proposals.

### The Strategy

The unique setting of Brynmawr, and its ready access to the Brecon Beacons, and Clydach Gorge, suggests that it is well placed to serve as a local centre for **Tourism**. In addition, it is proposed to further promote the town as a **Market Centre**, taking advantage of its status as the highest market town in the UK.



**Environmental Improvements** throughout the town will help to improve its attractiveness to residents, visitors and businesses alike, while creating a distinctive sense of place.

The strategy also focuses upon **Traffic Management and Signage** issues to ensure effective and efficient use of the existing infrastructure and facilities, with improvements to signage for visitors and residents.

Proposals for improved **Linkages** have also been developed, to ensure a comfortable and safe pedestrian environment throughout the town and to surrounding communities, in particular to the Lakeside Development Area.

The strategy also seeks to engender a distinct **Sense of Place**, to make it more attractive to residents, visitors, businesses and investors alike.

In parallel, with the environmental improvements outlined above, the strategy also identifies a number of **Economic and Commercial Opportunities** to help promote economic prosperity in the town.

As with so many towns and cities today, Brynmawr suffers from poor maintenance and upkeep; the strategy therefore makes proposals for **Place Management** to help address this.

An **Artwork Strategy** has also been developed which outlines proposals for artwork throughout the town and the surrounding areas, to both engender a sense of place, promote community involvement and to contribute to an interesting and unique environment which is attractive to residents, visitors and investors alike.

The artwork strategy has been developed by CBAT in parallel, and as complementary to, the urban design and environmental improvements identified above, to ensure a holistic and

comprehensive strategy for regeneration and revitalisation is developed for Brynmawr and the surrounding communities.

## The Proposals

- ***Environmental Proposals***

The environmental improvements include proposals for enhanced gateways to the town, in particular to the Southern Approach Road, the Eastern Gateway and Winchestown to help create a distinct sense of arrival and identity, and to help to promote the town for tourism.

The proposals include ideas for artwork and land art with improved pedestrian links throughout and an enhanced landscape setting. Proposals for town centre improvements have also been made, looking in particular at opportunities for the enhancement of Market Square and Station Road and Beaufort Street, to reinforce these areas as the commercial and social heart of the town, Nantyglo, Winchestown and the Lakeside Development.

Proposals also include suggestions for paving enhancement, artwork, street furniture rationalisation and opportunities to improve the provision and setting for the market/markets in Brynmawr.

- ***Traffic Management and Signage***

Proposals for signage have been made to encourage visitors to approach the town along its most attractive and distinctive routes and to ensure the existing road network works as efficiently as possible. Signage proposals also make provision for gateway and visitor signs, in line with the overall gateway enhancements.

Car parking throughout the town centre has also been reviewed to ensure maximum efficiency and flexibility for residents, shoppers and visitors, with proposals for an additional parking area behind the Davies Wallpaper shop with a pedestrian link to Beaufort Street.

- ***Linkages***



To help promote accessibility and permeability throughout the town and integration of the surrounding communities, Brynmawr and the Lakeside Development, a series of proposals have been made for improvements to key pedestrian routes. In particular, a strategy for new links through and around the Lakeside Development have been made, so that these key links are assured as the development proceeds, and to assure optimum access for all to the facilities and amenities the development will provide.

The Integration of Welfare Park, as a key area of open space within a wider framework of green space has also been considered, with enhanced links to the town centre and to Winchestown via the Lakeside Development. Again, the incorporation of artwork and sculptural elements has also been considered, with suggestions for a lookout area which will act as a strong visual focus to the lakeside area linkages.

A proposal for a sculpture trail has also been made which will combine artwork and sculpture within a comprehensive footpath network linking Brynmawr and its adjacent communities, while providing an additional attraction for visitors.

It is suggested that the Sustrans route through the town is provided early, in readiness for completion of the connecting links.

- ***Sense of Place***

In order to further reinforce a distinct sense of place, a number of suggestions have been made including the rationalisation of paving materials and street furniture, the use of local, natural materials where practicable, and the use of distinct indigenous plant species in landscape schemes to reflect the surrounding moorland character.

The artwork strategy also makes suggestions for the development of a unique and distinctive destination, with artists working with the local communities.

- ***Economic and Commercial Proposals***

Potential development sites have been identified, with suggestions for appropriate and viable re-use. Initial ideas on funding have also been provided.

- ***Place Management***

To ensure that Brynmawr is maintained as a clean, safe and well cared for environment, it has been suggested that a Town Centre Manager could be appointed who would be responsible for marketing, litter control, car parking management, safety, market management and upkeep of the public realm generally. Suggestions for the funding of this post have also been provided.

- ***Artworks Strategy***

The artworks strategy outlines proposals for the involvement of artists into a number of the areas outlined above, looking in particular at the gateways and the Town Centre environmental improvements. A number of themes have been suggested, which make reference to the historic, cultural and landscape setting of Brynmawr and the surrounding communities.

#### **Public Consultation**

Initial public consultation has been undertaken and the results of this have been built into the report. Further public consultations are to be undertaken, supported by a public exhibition and ongoing involvement of the community in individual projects, in particular the development of the artworks strategy, as appropriate.







## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.0 Introduction

#### 1.1 Project Background

Macgregor Smith have been commissioned by the WDA and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, in association with DTZ Pleda, Gwent Consultancy and the Cardiff Bay Arts Trust, to prepare an Urban Design Strategy and Masterplan for Brynmawr, which commenced September 2001.

The strategy has been commissioned in response to the Ebbw Fach Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan, and the more focussed Brynmawr and Nantyglo Regeneration Strategy. These documents identify the Brynmawr and Nantyglo Strategy Area as suffering from "some of the most significant problems of deprivation in Wales".

These documents go on to set down a series of objectives for urban regeneration throughout the area to address these significant issues:

- To retain existing employment and commercial activities within the Town.
- To create a high quality environment meeting the requirements of the town's existing and future generations.
- To provide a general quality of environment which helps to improve the overall image of the area to potential investors and visitors.
- To facilitate and support new investment in the town which strengthens and diversifies the town's economic base.
- To provide accessibility for all to, and within the town, and to make the town a safe and attractive living and working environment.

A number of improvement schemes have subsequently been implemented in Brynmawr to begin to meet these objectives, including:

- Major investment to modernise and improve the bus station.
- Provision of infrastructure and construction of new industrial units at Barleyfield Industrial Estate.
- Upgrading existing units and provision of new industrial workshops at Pond Road Industrial Estate.
- Gateway improvements to the Blaenant, Noble Square and Barleyfield Industrial estates.
- Improvements to the Market Square car park.

In addition, work has begun on the former Dunlop Semtex Factory site to transform this considerable area to mixed use, including housing, leisure and retail facilities; the Lakeside Development Area, Nantyglo.

It is against this background that this study has been commissioned to ensure that an holistic and comprehensive strategy for urban design is developed, which ensures future and ongoing schemes realise the overall objectives for regeneration throughout Brynmawr, Nantyglo and Winchestown.

The study also considers the opportunities for integrating the proposed Lakeside Development Area with the communities of Brynmawr, Nantyglo and Winchestown through enhanced links, permeability and shared amenities; to ensure it makes a positive contribution to the rejuvenation of these communities and the surrounding areas, as well as the town centre.

#### 1.2 Aims and Objectives



The aims of the Urban Design and Masterplan Strategy have been developed in response, not only to the client brief, but also in response to current policy on urban renewal, as outlined in the Urban White Paper for England, the Urban Task Force Report and The Plan for Wales 2001, for example.

The Urban White Paper in particular, sets down a series of broad based policy statements on the urban environment which are directly applicable to the current status of Brynmawr and which reflect the overall aspirations of the WDA and Blaenau Gwent C.B.C.

*"The Government's aim is to create high quality towns and cities which people can be proud to live in. They must be attractive, clean, safe and well cared for, combining vitality and interest with practicality, sensitivity to the environment and continuity with the past. They must be well designed and planned, and make the best use of previously developed land and existing buildings"*

This is allied with an aspiration to *"enable communities to take a decisive role in their own future and to create and share prosperity",* so that *"everyone can enjoy the quality of life of the best",*

From the Urban White Paper emerge a number of clear aspirations for the urban environment:

- **High Quality and Sustainable Urban Environment**  
The urban environment should be comfortable and enjoyable, and one in which people are proud to live in.
- **Economic Prosperity**  
The urban environment should be enhanced to people and business to create a high quality environment which is attractive to shoppers, investors and optimises accessibility.
- **Town Centre Management**  
The urban environment should be clean, safe and well cared for.

- **Community Engagement and Partnership**

The local community, local authorities and local businesses should work together to develop agreed strategies for urban improvements.

It is these overriding objectives, allied with those of the Brynmawr and Nantyglo Regeneration Strategy, which the strategy set down below, will seek to realise.

### 1.3 Policy Framework

The Urban White Paper entitled "Our Towns and Cities; The Future, Delivering an Urban Renaissance" referred to above, is the first Urban White Paper to be issued for twenty years and follows the publication of the Urban Task Force Report in June 1999. The paper recognises the complex problems facing urban areas and seeks to take a long term view in addressing both development and land use issues and also other issues such as perception, crime and poverty in promoting urban renewal.

Whilst the Urban White paper is currently only relevant in England, it does outline the Government's opinions on regeneration and their future vision for urban communities. It is highly probable that many issues and policies raised and implemented in the white paper will be adopted in Wales in the future.

As well as the overall aspirations identified above, the White Paper places particular emphasis on the role of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's) which will bring together the local authority, service providers, local businesses, community groups and the voluntary sector to:

- develop a community strategy to cover the area appraising all aspects contributing to quality of life;
- a SWOT analysis and a long term vision;



- agree priorities for action and monitor performance;
- co-ordinate the work of more local or specific partnerships dealing with particular neighbourhood or issues.

Key proposals in the Urban White Paper include generous taxation measures to increase investment in urban areas, investment in a 10 year plan for upgrading and modernising transport, granting greater flexibility to Regional Development Agencies in the use of funds and greater assistance to local businesses. In terms of planning, new planning policy guidance will make urban renewal a key priority together with a review of the compulsory purchase process with the intention of increasing its effectiveness.

Emerging policy therefore provides clear support for the regeneration of towns, and in particular the re-use of urban brownfield land and focusing of new development in town centres.

The Plan for Wales 2001, issued by the National Assembly for Wales in October 2001 sets out the Cabinet's strategic plan for the remainder of the session and a longer term vision. The document is built around the guiding principles of sustainable development, social inclusion and equal opportunities. Of particular relevance, the document notes the importance of improving the national environment and ensuring an effective and accessible transport system.

Draft Planning Policy Wales issued by the National Assembly for Wales for consultation in February 2001 incorporates a number of general principles including:

- ensuring sustainable development - including maximising opportunities to develop cultural heritage, promoting mixed land uses in urban areas, re-using suitable previously developed land and maintaining/enhancing the vitality and viability of town centres.

The Welsh Development Agency's commitment to market towns in Wales has been shown by two initiatives which were launched in 1997: The Three Towns Initiative and the Market Towns Initiative.

The Three Towns Initiative was formed by partnerships between Monmouthshire County Council, the Welsh Development Agency and the respective Town Councils and Chambers of Commerce in each town. The formation of the partnerships was in recognition that the towns were facing strong competition for business and that their traditional market roles are changing. In January 1997, consultants were appointed to develop strategies for each town.

Business plans were established for each town, containing a mission statement and strategic objectives for the next 3-5 years. In addition the plans identified priority projects which would make the biggest contribution to revitalising the town. The plans were considered to be a working tool and therefore could be changed or added to at any time. Examples of the objectives for Chepstow included:

- Establish a dynamic growth orientated town centre economy, which provides a range and choice of shopping, hospitality, attractions and commerce.
- Develop co-ordinated and mutually supportive marketing and promotion activity which promotes, capitalises on and develops Chepstow's name and reputation.
- Develop and maintain high standards of customer service and facilities throughout the "Chepstow Experience".
- Establish and develop Chepstow's ambience to provide a safe, clean and attractive environment at all times, which enables lively and pleasurable town life and is conducive to business development.
- Establish sustainable organisational and communication mechanisms to support and drive the business plan and secure the active participation of all stakeholders.

Due to a lack of funding, little project implementation has taken place. The aim is to restart the programme next year, funded by





the Rural Recovery Package. Caldicot will also be added and the initiative will then become the four towns initiative.

The Market Towns Initiative (MTI) was launched in Mid Wales, with support from the European Regional Development Fund. The aim was to provide a package of support and funding for community led projects in Ceredigion, Powys and south Gwynedd. The successful towns, which included Hay-on-Wye, Tregaron and Rhayader each, received £90,000 of revenue funding over three years. The majority of the towns appointed 'Town Centre Co-ordinators' to facilitate the implementation of projects.

Again business plans were developed for the towns. Projects undertaken included a farm based accommodation project, cycle paths and local walks, town websites, food festivals, riverside amenity paths, and IT networking. Since the programme finished a new funding initiative has been introduced; the 'Toolkit' provides a package of support measures for both capital and revenue funding. The Toolkit contains 8 measures including 'seedcorn' funding, which can be used to build social and partnership capacity, funding for development of business plans and for implementation of capital projects.

#### **1.4 Design Guidelines**

To ensure that the Urban Design proposals outlined below meet the highest standards, reference has been made to a number of current best practice guidelines. These include the Llewellyn Davies/English Partnerships - Urban Design Compendium, By Design - Towards Better Practice - DETR and CABE, English Partnerships - Making Places.

The principles of good urban design, as outlined in these reference documents can be summarised as follows:

##### **Character**

To promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to, and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development, landscape and culture.

##### **Quality of the Public Realm**

To promote public spaces and routes that are attractive, safe, uncluttered and work effectively for all in society, including disabled and elderly people.

##### **Ease of Movement and Connections**

To promote accessibility and local permeability by making places that connect with one another and are easy to move through, putting people before traffic and integrating land uses and public transport.

##### **Legibility**

To promote legibility that provides recognisable routes, intersections and landmarks to help people to find their way around.

##### **Adaptability**

To promote adaptability through development that can respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions.

##### **Diversity**

To promote diversity and choice through a mix of compatible uses that create viable places responding to local needs.

In order to ensure that the Strategy and Masterplan proposals meet the objectives outlined above, whilst responding to local issues, a brief appraisal of the key issues affecting Brynmawr has been undertaken. This looks at landscape and townscape issues, traffic management, and economic and commercial issues, under separate headings. This



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appraisal identifies a series of opportunities and constraints which will inform the strategy, and provide themes for the proposals which follow.





## 2.0 Existing Context

### 2.0 Existing Context

#### 2.1 Existing Landscape and Townscape Issues.

In order to ensure that the Urban Design Strategy and Masterplan set down in this document meets the key objectives outlined above, and responds to the needs of the communities of Brynmawr, a brief survey and analysis of the opportunities and constraints presented by the existing landscape and townscape setting has been undertaken. This initial study looks in particular at:

- **Landscape Setting**

An analysis of the existing character and quality of Brynmawr and the immediate surroundings will help to inform the development of proposals for creating a unique and attractive destination, with a distinct sense of place.

- **Town Centre Issues**

An analysis of the existing environmental quality of Brynmawr Town Centre helps to identify a number of issues, and concerns, in particular through Beaufort Street and the immediate Town Centre, which will need to be addressed in order to achieve the aims and objectives set out in Section 1.0 above.

##### 2.1.1 Landscape Setting

- **Location**

Brynmawr is located at the head of the Ebbw Fach Valley and the Clydach Gorge, with immediate access to the A465(T), Heads of the Valleys Road. The Brecon Beacons AONB lie a short distance to the north, reaching the Town boundary at the A465T roundabout. The settlements of Beaufort and Nantyglo lie to the west, and south respectively, creating an almost continuous area of development, which extends as far as Ebbw Vale. To the southwest lies the community of Winchestown, which is separated from the town by the Lakeside Development Area. See Figure 1.0 – Location Plan.

- **Landscape Context**

While Brynmawr is considered to be a Valley Town it is in fact quite elevated, with a distinctive, open character which is in contrast to the neighbouring towns.

The northern edge of the town rises to 410m AOD, falling away to the south to approximately 350m AOD.

The Brecon Beacons lie to north, while to the southeast lies Coety Mountain, with Mynydd Carn-y-cefn lying to the southwest. The Brecons are not visible from the Town, but Coety Mountain and Mynydd Carn-y-cefn form distinct and attractive features in views from many areas of the Town.

The Clydach Gorge lies to the east, with the A465 (T) running parallel to it. This forms an attractive and dramatic approach to the Town, with a number of visitor attractions located along this key route. These attractions include a number of waterfalls, nature reserves and caves, unique to the area. The caves are known to be amongst some of the longest in the world, and include a number of unexplored chambers.

- **Gateways and Approaches**



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There are no signs to inform visitors that they have arrived in Brynmawr, and travellers approaching the Town from the A465(T) are directed via the Relief Road. Although the Relief Road is well screened, this route provides an uninspiring impression of the Town, with little sense of the Town and its uniqueness. The approach from the south is also indistinctive, with poor signage and little sense of arrival. In the future, the quality and character of this approach will be determined in part by the quality and layout of the proposed Lakeside Development. On arrival at the Beaufort/Blaenavon Road Roundabout, immediately to the south of the market square, the visitor is presented with poor quality boundary treatment to the NMC Factory, and bus depot, with poor landscape treatment to the roundabout itself, and inappropriate development on its northern edge. Again the







impression of the Town approaching from this direction is generally rather poor.

The route from the west into Brynmawr is used primarily by local traffic coming from Beaufort, and Ebbw Fawr beyond. As indicated above the buffer between Beaufort and Brynmawr is very narrow, and the transition from one settlement to another blurred.

Approaching the Town Centre via King Street, is again an unattractive route, with parking problems, run-down development, and traffic pinch points creating a poor impression.

The most attractive approach to the Town from the east is via Alma Street, which is characterised by mature tree planting, set within a wide verge and larger than average properties set back from the road, although this is not currently a primary route to the Town Centre. Historically a tramline ran along Alma Street to serve the Town Centre.

- **Linkages**

Beyond the Town boundary there is an extensive network of footpaths which link Brynmawr to surrounding communities, the Brecon Beacons, Clydach Gorge and the moorland areas to the south. Unfortunately, many of these footpaths terminate at the edge of the Town, with no apparent connections through the Town, and limited signage. In addition, there are restricted physical links between Brynmawr, Winchestown and Nantyglo to the south.

Within the town itself links between key public amenities are generally poor, being either badly signed or physically restricted. The links

between Welfare Park and the Town, and the bus station and car park



to Market Square are particularly poor.

A Sustrans cycle route has been proposed to link the Town with the National Cycle Network, which would provide strategic links to the surrounding countryside, and the national network itself, although there are no immediate plans to implement this section in the foreseeable future.

- **Open Space**

The quality and provision of open space throughout Brynmawr affects both the character and perception of the town.

There are few public parks in Brynmawr, the principle being Welfare Park, which lies to the west of the Town Centre, and borders the Lakeside Development Area to the south. This park provides a wide range of recreational facilities, but is poorly connected to the Town and surrounding residential areas, with poor visual links to associated green areas.

A large sports ground occupies a site adjacent to the Relief Road, and the Blaenavon Road. This again is poorly linked to the Town, and is largely isolated from adjacent residential areas despite offering a good selection of sports facilities. A linear park runs from the western edge of the Town towards the centre. This is largely wooded, and provides limited facilities.



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Throughout the Town there are a number of isolated, open space areas, and verges. These in general, are of poor quality appearance, having no visual or amenity value.

There is a large area of open space attached to the Rehobeth Congregational Church which, while hidden from public view occupies a strategic location close to the centre of Town.







with the town Cinema, and the Griffin Hotel forming a distinctive backdrop to this key public space.



In some residential areas, open space which may have provided opportunities for recreation and play, have been turned over to car parking. In general, there are very few play areas throughout the Town, and limited facilities for young people. The local authority criteria for play provision is one play area per 250 children, between the ages of 0-14. This is the current adopted policy, reached following extensive public consultation, although the result appears to be a shortfall in play provision relative to National Playing Fields Association standards.

However, despite the paucity of open space within the town, there is generally good access to the surrounding countryside, albeit informal and unsigned. See Figure 2.0 - Landscape Setting.

### 2.1.2 Town Centre Issues

#### • Town Centre Setting

As identified above, the approaches to the Town Centre are poor, with little distinctive character and poor signage. The perception of the Town Centre is effected in particular by the poor quality appearance of King Street, the approach from Bailey Street, especially the area around the bus depot and the central garage, and the presence of the Haven Store on Market Square.

#### • Beaufort Street and Market Square

The commercial centre of Brynmawr is focused upon Beaufort Street which runs north-south through the Town, with Market Square located at the southern end. The Square itself is centred upon a war memorial,

Beaufort Street rises steeply to the junction with King Street and is characterised by very narrow pavements and poor quality paving. Parking restrictions are poorly enforced, with cars frequently seen on double yellow lines and pavements. There are restricted thresholds even outside key buildings such as the Post Office and Somerfield. A number of retail units are empty, although Beaufort Street generally appears busy. The overall impression is of a poor quality environment, with little or no sense of place.

The Market Square forms the social heart of the Town, with the library, cinema and Brynmawr Institute located around its edges. It has recently been repaved, with new tree planting and street furniture providing an attractive setting. However, while the Square is framed on 3 sides by development, the edge to the southwest is weak, with the very unattractive old government offices dominating the view, creating a poor setting to this important public space.

#### • Landmarks

While the natural setting of Brynmawr is very distinctive, there are a limited number of landmarks within the Town itself. The most distinctive of these is the Market Square, centred on the war memorial, with the cinema and Griffin Hotel providing a distinctive backdrop.

A short distance to the south of the Market Square lies the Old Boiler House, a listed building which occupies a prime site on the approach





road entering the town from the south. See **Figure 3.0 - Townscape Issues.**



### 2.1.3 The Lakeside Development Area

The former Dunlop Semtex factory site has been cleared to make way for residential, leisure and retail facilities in a comprehensive mixed use development, set against the backdrop of the existing site reservoir and pump house. The proposals provide for 173 new houses and public open space areas, and buffer planting to the site boundaries.



This 60 acre site occupies a key position between Brynmawr, Nantyglo and Winchestown on the main approach road from the south, the A467. It is bordered to the north by an existing factory site, the NMC factory, which restricts direct access to the Town Centre. Beyond this again, lies the Bus Depot, which further restricts direct movement between the lakeside site and the Town Centre. To the north west the site boundary is formed by Warwick Road and the embankment of the old railway line. This embankment creates a natural barrier between the development area and the countryside immediately to the west, and the residential areas of Twyn Cynhord to the north.

Plan courtesy of Powell Dobson Architects  
The outer edge of Winchestown adjoins the site to the south west, with Pond Road forming the southern boundary. Nantyglo Comprehensive School lies immediately to the south of this.

An additional site area lies to the east of the A467 and is focused upon the Old Boiler House. This site too has been cleared.

The overall site is roughly divided into three development areas: the western most sector at 16.11 acres is allocated for housing, while the area to the east, and closest to the Town Centre is allocated to 10 acres of retail and leisure. Further hotel and leisure use are currently proposed for the Old Boiler House 2.63 acre site. The residential area has an informal lakeside frontage, while the retail leisure development areas have more formal lakeside terraced frontage.

The Lakeside Masterplan identifies a series of pedestrian routes through the site. These appear to have been generated predominantly by visual, rather than physical links to the Pump House on the southern lake edge, resulting in rather indirect links between the site and surrounding communities. In addition the key north to south routes appear to have been established on the basis that the NMC factory site and bus depot is cleared. While redevelopment of these sites could create opportunities for improved links in the long term, the current proposed links will be ineffective in the short term, while the NMC site and the bus depot remain in use.



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A cycleway and footpath route is proposed, which follows the railway embankment to link Warwick Road and Winchestown. No direct links are proposed to further connect this route with Welfare park, and the residential areas beyond. Links between the site and the countryside are suggested, albeit indirect and discrete.

No strategy or framework for open space provision within the residential areas was available for comment at the time of writing, although provision of open space will be critical to the establishment of a successful, vibrant and integrated community.







business. Disabled parking is distributed rather randomly along the length of the street. Traffic flow along Beaufort Street is also fairly constant.



These two factors, in combination with the very narrow pavements, contribute to the impression of a very poor quality pedestrian environment, dominated by cars, which does not encourage lingering, or more critically, window shopping.

A new car park has been proposed behind Beaufort Street, between King Street and Worcester Street. This is to have a direct pedestrian link through to Beaufort Street. Further car parking may be provided as part of the Lakeside Development proposals, which would serve both the proposed retail park and the Town Centre.

## 2.2 Existing Traffic Management Issues

### 2.2.1 Car Parking

There are a number of public car parks which serve the Town, all of which are free, and which are supplemented by 1 hour parking on Beaufort Street. These car parks include Worcester/Davies Street, which is in a key position, but poorly laid out, and badly screened; Worcester Street and Glamorgan Street, which is a council employees' car park, again poorly laid out, but occupying a very central position; Market Square car park, which has been recently improved, with new surfacing, tree planting and street furniture; and the bus station car park, which again has been improved. The Market Square car park is very well used and often full. On Saturdays it is used by a local market, increasing pressure on parking provision elsewhere.

The bus station car park, while well located to serve the lower end of Beaufort Street, is often half empty, having poor visual and physical links to Market Square and Beaufort Street beyond. It is not signposted at all.

While there is allowance for short-term parking on Beaufort Street, this is inefficiently laid out, with little reinforcement of the current 1 hour limit, or penalties for double yellow line parking. As a result of the randomness of the parking, pedestrians find it hard to obtain safe places to cross the road, and are generally hindered in their daily

### 2.2.2 Traffic Movement

Brynmawr has very good and immediate access from the Heads of the Valley Road, with associated access to the Clydach Gorge and Brecon Beacons. Traffic arriving from the Heads of the Valley Road is directed west towards the Town Centre/Market Square area via the Relief Road. Traffic from Blaenavon is also directed this way, to arrive at Market Square via the Station Road roundabout.

Local traffic from Beaufort and the northern areas of Brynmawr appears to travel along King Street, which is in several areas too



narrow to accommodate two-way traffic, often resulting in congestion and hold-ups.

A considerable amount of traffic travels up Beaufort Street. This may be generated by shoppers looking for parking spaces, and it is suspected some drivers travel round the block several times in their search for a parking space.

### 2.2.3 Signage

There are no signs to inform visitors that they have arrived in Brynmawr at any of the key gateways, whether arriving from the south, Blaenavon, the A465T or Beaufort. The absence of such gateway signs is made more notable by the recent installation of the distinctive Nantyglo sign, on the Blaina Road to the south.

On reaching the outer edges of the town, there are limited signs for the town centre, with the exception of a 'Town Centre' sign located on the Heads of the Valley roundabout. This sign, however, directs visitors away from the town centre, via the Relief Road, so that they approach from the least attractive southern route. This road creates an indistinctive first impression of the town, and its setting. In some instances the signage is so poorly located as to be barely visible.

Signage to the various car parks is poor, giving little indication as to which are short term, longer term or visitor parking. There is a notable absence of signage or information for visitors, passing Brynmawr on the Heads of the Valley Road, or approaching the town centre, which does not encourage spontaneous stops or visits.

### 2.2.4 Public Transport Provision

Public transport access within Brynmawr is poor, especially to the top of Beaufort Street, and north of King Street, while bus routes to Ebbw Vale and Abergavenny pass along George Street and Alma Street only. However, bus services to Brynmawr generally are considered to be adequate, with frequent services to Ebbw Vale and Abertillery. The

nearest railway station is at Abergavenny, with Newport and Cardiff providing the nearest mainline services.



## 2.3 Existing Economic and Commercial Issues

2.3.1 DTZ Pleda Consulting has undertaken a Town Centre Health Check for Brynmawr to provide the background against which the Urban Design Master Plan can be developed and to help evaluate and monitor the future impacts of the Urban Design Master Plan.

Brynmawr is designated as a 'Commercial Improvement Area' and a large number of commercial properties have been improved. Recently, the former Dunlop Semtex Factory site has been cleared and there is outline planning permission for 200 residential properties, food and non- food retail and leisure development.

The approach to the health check has included an economic and physical analysis of the town centre. The work has involved consultations with local residents, local traders and representatives of the Local Authority and Welsh Development Agency. We have supplemented this with a market analysis which has included preliminary discussions with potential investors.

The study therefore comprises:

- A land use survey of Brynmawr Town Centre

- An assessment of the physical environment
- A review of the local commercial market
- Assessment of possible development opportunities
- Performance Indicators.

The Health Check considers the current situation within and around Brynmawr Town Centre, identifying its strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities and provides a review of the local commercial market. The report also investigates local development potential and identifies possible development sites and properties suitable for change of use.

### 2.3.2 Brynmawr Town Centre - Background

The current situation in Brynmawr is assessed under the following headings:

- Town Centre Environment
- Catchment Area
- Access

The strength of the retail, leisure, residential and office property markets is analysed at paragraph 2.3.3.

#### Town Centre Environment

Whilst the centre is generally busy, the area is cluttered with narrow pavements and on street parking leading to a perceived dominance of the car. The condition of shop fronts and paving varies greatly throughout, although the environmental townscape improvements to Market Square at the southern end of Beaufort Street have made a notable, positive improvement to this area of the town.





### Catchment Area

The table below highlights the drivetime catchments for Brynmawr. It is clear that Brynmawr has a small catchment population and that the catchment is further constrained by the towns of Ebbw Vale and Abertillery which are both within 15 minutes drive of Brynmawr and offer a wider range of retail facilities.

I: Drivetime Populations Table

	Catchment Population
5 minute drivetime	12,858
15 minute drivetime	92,413

Source: Map Info Illumine (2001)

The table below highlights the main characteristics of the resident population within Brynmawr:

Age	
Adults 65 - 74	20% above national average
Adults over 75	27% above national average

Adults 25 - 34	11% below national average
<b>Social Class</b>	
AB	46% below national average
DE	33% above national average
<b>Unemployment</b>	
Male	32% above national average
Female	15% above national average
<b>Car Availability</b>	
Households with no car	40% above national average
<b>Consumer Expenditure</b>	
Total Retail Expenditure	11% below national average

Source: Map Info Illumine (2001)

This table highlights the fragile nature of the local economy in Brynmawr and emphasises the fact that the local population is dominated by the elderly. The younger age groups are well below the national average in number and experience comparatively high unemployment rates for both men and women.

An important statistic in terms of the town centre serving the local population is that almost 40% of households do not have the benefit of a motor car. Many local people will therefore be reliant on the local centre providing everyday convenience retailing.

### Access

From the south, Brynmawr is accessed from the A467. From the north, Brynmawr is accessed from the A465(T).



The bus station in Brynmawr is located at the southern end of Beaufort Street and has recently been improved. The bus station is in a good physical condition but the buildings surrounding the bus station are in very poor condition and give a negative first impression of Brynmawr.

Bus services are considered to be adequate with services running to Ebbw Vale and Abertillery frequently. In addition, free buses are run by Tesco (Abertillery and Ebbw Vale Stores) and Asda (Merthyr Tydfil Store).

There are a number of key car parks in Brynmawr which are all accessible to the core shopping area.

The least accessible location for visitors and shoppers is the northern end of Beaufort Street and this end of the street does suffer from a number of vacancies despite the availability of on-street parking, albeit limited, and restricted to 1 hour.

### 2.3.3 Commercial Market Review

This section provides a market review of the commercial context for development in Brynmawr as part of the preparation of an informed background against which realistic decisions can be made with regard to implementing a town centre strategy. In carrying out our assessment, we have considered development options under the following headings:

- residential
- offices
- leisure

- retail

#### Residential

Nationally, the residential market has been quite buoyant since the beginning of 1997 although growth has slowed markedly in recent months. In South Wales, the local market has tended to follow national trends although the provision of new stock has needed to be closely matched to requirements in the more marginal localities of the South Wales valleys. Commuter corridors have been particularly strong growth areas.

In Brynmawr, the housing market has tended to reflect the economic problems of the area, which has had an associated impact upon performance. Development activity has generally been restricted to very small-scale infill opportunities and in several cases the conversion of existing buildings to flats or provision of homes for the elderly.

However, it is proposed that the Lakeside development will be brought forward for around 200 new build houses. Assuming that relatively low density family housing (3 / 4 bed) is brought forward, there is likely to be adequate market demand to take the allocation up within three to four years.

#### Offices

In South Wales, Cardiff acts as the core focus for both office development and demand with the key markets focussed on Cardiff Bay and the City Centre. In the sub-region, only Newport can be viewed as having a commercial market of any strength and along with Cardiff, Newport has had success in attracting a number of important call centre developments. Other locations in the area have also been subject to interest for call centre development, in particular Merthyr Tydfil, Abertillery and Ebbw Vale.

With the exception of call centres, in each of these towns the office market is dominated by provision for public administration and local





government services. In addition to this, the commercial market focuses on small-scale premises for local professional services and the limited provision of ancillary office accommodation for manufacturing occupiers.

Whilst Brynmawr town centre is unlikely to attract a large scale call centre style development, primarily due to space constraints, we believe that a small scale office development would be feasible. Such a development would serve the under provided small scale premises market for local professional services and would ideally include an element of private sector occupation. In any event, such a scheme would require public sector support in developing and perhaps also maintaining units. The accommodation will need to be flexible in terms of the way in which individual office units could be provided.

We have identified two sites where such development could be undertaken, namely the site currently occupied by Brynmawr Trade Centre and Nos. 1 and 2 Blaina Road and the unit currently occupied by Kwik Save. An element of any office development should include managed and serviced work space which would have the benefit of assisting new start-up businesses.

### Leisure

Nationally, the leisure market has been extremely buoyant in recent years and this has been reflected in activity throughout South Wales. There are however considerable variations between sub market sectors. For example, Bingo Halls have tended to fall out of favour whilst cinemas / multiplex developments and public houses have experienced strong growth and demand, leading to fierce competition for suitable sites, particularly where these are within or on the edge of large urban conurbations.

The health and fitness sector has also expanded markedly in the past five years, although again related development tends to be concentrated close to major urban areas. Nationally, there has been continued growth over a number of years in other sectors of the leisure industry, including international and regional theme parks of a highly

commercial nature with the other end of the spectrum represented by significantly less commercialised country parks and a wide range of more specialised outdoor activities.

Coupled with this, there has been considerable growth in the movement for preservation and creation of heritage parks which reflect in particular the mining and industrial history of South Wales (e.g. Blaenavon World Heritage Site).

Recently, a major theme park has been promoted between Newport and Chepstow although, with the exception of this, South East Wales has not generally been favoured by the major national or international theme park developers, being too far from population centres and communication nodal points.

Non-commercial forms of leisure developments have tended to be carried out successfully in the South Wales context, usually undertaken by the public sector. Significant attractions in the region include the Blaenavon World Heritage site, Green Meadow Community Farm and Cwmcarn Forest Drive. The region is generally well provided with such facilities and further provision would require subsidy. This is only likely to be justifiable where there is a need to preserve landscape and / or wildlife.

Locally, Ebbw Vale acts as a key focus for leisure development with facilities including Beaufort Theatre and Ballroom, Castle Bingo, numerous working men's clubs, sports and social clubs and many privately operated public houses.

Brynmawr Town Centre offers limited commercial leisure facilities. The Market Hall contains a one-screen cinema, which opens on a daily basis. In addition, the town contains several public houses and a selection of takeaways and cafes. The town does not contain any high quality restaurants. Non commercial leisure provision includes two community centres, a library, a snooker institute, the recreation ground, Welfare Park and the Leisure Centre at Nantyglo School.



The Market Hall Cinema is the principal leisure amenity in Brynmawr. The cinema serves the populations of Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale, Abertillery, Blaenavon, Tredegar and Rhumney and opens every evening showing a different film each week. In terms of national operators, Whitbread and Brains operate single restaurant / pub style operations and although there are a number of other pubs in the town they are either owned by private landlords or small pub companies and the quality and condition of the units varies widely.

The health and fitness sector is well served by the public authority leisure centres located in Nantyglo, Abertillery and Ebbw Vale with many services/facilities having been updated in recent years. The Leisure Centre at Nantyglo School makes provision for swimming, basketball, badminton, weight training, football, rugby and football, as well as an on-site Youth Club. The leisure facilities provided at the school are to be further improved, in line with the local authority strategy for leisure, and having recently been awarded sports lottery funding, would benefit from external enhancement. Due to the demographics of the area and the local authority provision, private health club operators would not be attracted to the area.

Welfare Park offers facilities for football, bowls, tennis and roller-blading, and children's play facilities for the age group 3-15. The recreation ground has facilities for rugby, football and cricket, with limited facilities for children's play.

In the hotel sector, a number of operators are known to be in the market for sites close to motorway or main road junctions or with access to established leisure areas. However, on the basis of our review, we are of the opinion that national operators would not target Brynmawr for investment. Potential trade from both business and leisure tourism is insufficient to substantiate the levels of investment required for new build hotels. Additionally, the revenue received from a refurbished building operating as an hotel would not justify the capital required to undertake such a development.

In contrast to national operators, however, there is an opportunity for local entrepreneurs to provide smaller scale accommodation with

lower set up and operating costs. Existing demand, though small, emanates from local tourism and, to a lesser extent, business tourism.

It is therefore our opinion that a new build corporate hotel would not be viable but that bed and breakfast accommodation or small conversions, perhaps in association with existing licensed premises, would provide a product for which there is a demand from leisure tourism. Grant funding measures should be brought to the attention of existing and potential operators to kick-start such development.

Potential opportunities for such development exist at The Kings Head - Beaufort Street, The Cymru - Bailey Street, Gwesty Back - Clarence Street and the New Griffin Hotel - Beaufort Street. However, considerable public sector funding would need to be made available for the renovation of the New Griffin Hotel.

#### **Retail**

The core shopping area is found along Beaufort Street and extends along Bailey Street and Station Road at the southern end of town.

Brynmawr combines a mix of convenience (food, drink, tobacco, books, newspapers and magazines) and comparison (clothing, footwear, furniture, household textiles, electrical appliances, hardware and DIY supplies) retail businesses. The town centre business are dominated by local independent retailers with a wide range of local services including banks, a Post Office, travel agents, estate agents, and takeaways. It is surprising to find three out of the four national high street banks in such a small town, but this is a positive factor.

The Town Centre does not have a main anchor store and there is a definite lack of national retailers in the town with the exception of Somerfield, Kwik Save, Greggs, New Look, Co-op Pharmacy and Shoe Fayre. The town does not have a large supermarket with only Somerfield (Beaufort Street) and Kwik Save (Station Road) occupying relatively restricted sites in the Town Centre.



There is also a market held on the Market Square car park very Saturday. In order to facilitate this, the area is not available for car parking from midnight Friday, until 1pm Saturday afternoon.

The table below shows the breakdown of the uses of property within Brynmawr Town Centre. The uses have been broken down into relevant use classes as categorised by the Town and Country Planning Act (Use Classes Order) 1997.

Use Class	Number of Units	% of Unit	National Average Recorded (where relevant)
Shops (A1)	77	45	59
Financial & Professional Services (A2)	10	6	N/A
Food & Drink (A3)	19	11	N/A
Business, Offices (B1)	2	1	N/A
Dwelling Houses (C3)	43	24	N/A
Non-Residential Institutions (D1)	3	2	N/A
Sui Generis	1	1	1.4
Vacant	18	10	11.1

Brynmawr Town Centre is typical for a town centre with general shops being the most dominant use occupying 77 units (45%). Financial and professional service uses occupy 10 units (6%) and restaurants, public houses, takeaway uses occupy 19 units (11%). There are currently 18 (10%) vacant units and these are concentrated towards the northern end of Beaufort Street. The number of residential units is high, but this is

due to the survey using the boundary identified in Blaenau Gwent County Borough UDP – Deposit Written Statement, 2000.

Whilst there are many retail units within Brynmawr Town Centre, there is an absence of large units which would attract national retailers to Brynmawr. Potentially, adjacent, vacant units to the northern end of Beaufort Street could be joined to provide a larger unit, but the depth required by national operators could still not be provided.

It is evident that the northern end of Beaufort Street has suffered from a decline in trade. This is partly due to the lack of prominent store or key nodal point to draw customers to the northern end of the street, the only draw being Lloyds TSB. The gradient of the street compounds this problem and with the main car parks located on Davies Street near the southern end of Beaufort Street, shoppers are not encouraged to walk through the northern end of Beaufort Street. Issues of pedestrian flow and the pedestrian environment will therefore be critical in the location and design of any new development/car park.

#### Food Retailing

Brynmawr has a limited range of convenience outlets with only two small supermarkets (Kwik Save and Somerfield) and a number of independent traders. Although these stores maintain a strong local trade, they do little to enhance the town's general attraction and do not adequately cater for bulk food shopping, leaving widespread leakage of available retail expenditure to competing centres in the region. The main competing centres are Abergavenny (Tesco, Kwik Save and Somerfield), Abergavenny (Safeway, Tesco, Iceland and Somerfield) and Ebbw Vale (Kwik Save, Morrisons - outstanding planning consent, Somerfield, Iceland and Tesco)

#### Non Food Retailing

Brynmawr contains a wide range of comparison retailers including D.I.Y Stores, card shops, estate agents, banks, pharmacies, clothing shops, florists and discount variety stores.



Local independent traders dominate non-food retailing in Brynmawr with the only national multiples being New Look, Co Op Pharmacy, and Shoe Fayre. The town contains a number of variety discount stores and charity shops probably operating on short-term leases.

Brynmawr's position in the region's retail hierarchy has declined as competing centres have developed their retail offer at a faster rate than Brynmawr. As catchment areas of competing centres have expanded through better retail provision and the benefit of greater mobility, Brynmawr's importance as a retailing centre has diminished. Today, Brynmawr predominantly serves the immediate population with general, day to day requirements.

## 2.4 Opportunities and Constraints

2.4.1 An analysis of the landscape and townscape, traffic management and economic and commercial issues affecting Brynmawr, identifies a number of clear opportunities and constraints which will help to inform the emerging strategy. These are summarised as follows:

### 2.4.2 Landscape and Townscape Issues

#### Landscape Setting

#### Opportunities

- Distinctive and attractive natural setting to town.
- Highest Market Town in UK.
- Comprehensive network of footpaths around Brynmawr.
- Welfare Park provides valuable open space and amenity resource with potential links to countryside.
- Ready access to Clydach Gorge and Brecon Beacons.





### Town Centre Issues

#### Opportunities

- Natural focus for social and commercial activity provided by Market Square, cinema, Brynmawr Institute and concentration of public houses at southern end of Beaufort Street
- Alma Street is most attractive street approaching Town Centre
- Improvements to Market Square and Beaufort Street car park create impression of quality environment in the immediate area.
- War memorial and cinema provide focal point to commercial heart of Brynmawr.
- Old Boiler House provides distinctive landmark on southern approach to Town Centre

#### Constraints

- Poor quality gateways and approaches to town generally, and Town Centre in particular.

- Poor quality pedestrian links through town, and notably poor direct links between Brynmawr, Nantyglo and Winchestown.
- Poor visual and physical links between Welfare Park and immediately adjacent residential areas.
- Underutilised incidental areas of open space throughout town create generally poor impression

#### Constraints

- Poor quality setting to Town Centre approaches created by inappropriate land use, such as the bus depot, garage and Haven Store
- Linear, stretched out shopping area
- Poor visual links between existing car parks and key retail activity areas, especially between bus station and Market Square.
- Very narrow pavements create poor pedestrian realm.
- Poor controlled parking in Beaufort Street, creates conflict between pedestrians and vehicles.
- Limited hotel accommodation and facilities for visitors.

### The Lakeside Development

#### Opportunities

- Proposed development will create 200 new homes, thus strengthening the local population.
- Redevelopment of this strategically located site will create opportunities for providing better links between Brynmawr, Winchestown and Nantyglo.
- Redevelopment of this key site will create opportunities for enhancing the setting of the southern approach to the Town Centre.
- The provision of retail and associated parking in this key



site could complement existing provision, and reduce retail leakage from town.

### 2.4.3 Traffic Management Issues

#### Opportunities

- Good access to Heads of the Valley Road A465(T), and strategic road network
- Selection of car parks within walking distance of the key retail area of Beaufort Street.
- Proposed Sustrans route through town, with potential connections to wider national network

#### Constraints

- Proposed retail component of development may threaten existing retail provision in Town Centre
- Possible loss of links between Winchestown and Brynmawr, in particular the Town Centre if sensitive development and layout is not enforced.
- Possible detrimental impact on key site frontage along Blaina Road if high development standards are not enforced.

#### Constraints

- Poor signage from main roads to Town Centre.
- No visitor information.
- Poor signage and management of existing car parks
- Loss of Market Square car park on Saturday mornings to market.
- Poor control of parking on Beaufort Street, contributing to poor quality environment.

### 2.4.4 Economic and Commercial Issues

#### Strengths

- Diverse range of retail services.
- Four National Financial Institutions - Lloyds, TSB, Barclays, HSBC and Halifax
- Busy shopping centre
- Sense of Local Community - family run businesses
- The Cinema





- The market attracts people from outside Brynmawr
- Extensive Leisure Centre at Nantyglo School.

#### Opportunities

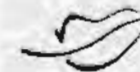
- Low rental levels
- European Funding
- Expansion into bulky goods retailing
- Living above the shops
- Relocating the market
- Office development at key gateway location - Blaina Road.
- Growth of internet and associated business/marketing opportunities.

- Large vacant building in prominent position - former Griffin hotel at southern end of Beaufort Street
- Limited presence of national retailers - no anchor store
- High level of vacancies in central locations
- Servicing of shops occurs at the front
- Market perception
- Limited leisure facilities
- Limited provision of restaurants
- Absence of modern purpose built shopping facilities
- Leakage of available expenditure to competing centres

#### Threats

- Tesco in Abertillery
- Surrounding Retail Centres i.e. Ebbw Vale and Abergavenny
- Somerfield or Kwik Save closing
- Proposed retail at Lakeside Development
- Growth of Internet and impact of Town Centre retailing/employment structure

#### Weakness



#### 2.4.5 Summary

The summary tables above identify a number of key issues which currently, and may in the future, influence the setting, perception, and economic prosperity of Brynmawr.

In summary, the key constraints and problems are perceived to be a poor quality Town Centre environment, poor signage and entrances to the town, and poor parking provision. In addition, pedestrian linkages between key areas, and especially between Brynmawr, Nantyglo and Winchestown are felt to be poor, limiting pedestrian movement and social interaction.

However, Brynmawr benefits from a unique, natural setting, close to the Brecon Beacons AONB and the Clydach Gorge, and with ready access to the strategic road network via the A465. The town's natural setting has a positive impact on the town, with glimpsed views from within the Town Centre itself, giving it a distinctive and unique character. Furthermore, Brynmawr is known to be the highest market town in the UK, and already supports a busy shopping centre.

The proposed Lakeside Development, through sensitive integration and design, has the potential to enhance links between Brynmawr, Nantyglo and Winchestown, while contributing in the long term to the setting and quality of the Town Centre and its approaches from the South.

These key opportunities and constraints will be used to inform the Urban Design and Masterplan Strategy, to ensure that it best meets the needs of the community, to create a high quality town "which people can be proud to live in", and which will in addition be "attractive to shoppers, investors and visitors", and to fully realise the opportunities which the town presents.





## 3.0 The Strategy

### 3.0 The Strategy

3.1 The appraisal of the existing landscape, townscape, traffic management, economic and commercial issues set down above, suggests a number of opportunities which could be developed in order to engender the revitalisation and enhancement of Brynmawr.

3.2 The unique and attractive location which Brynmawr enjoys, with its ready access to the Brecon Beacons, Clydach Gorge and a range of outdoor activities, suggests that it is well placed to serve as a local centre for **Tourism**. Its status as the highest **Market Town** in the UK also suggests opportunities for exploitation of this unique position.

3.3 However, the appraisal above also identifies a number of problems associated with the quality of the existing urban environment, with some areas presenting a run-down and unattractive appearance, poor linkages and an indistinct sense of place.

3.4 If the strategy is to meet the objectives of the WDA and Blaenau Gwent C.B.C., as well as the overall and general aims of current urban regeneration policy, then it is these issues which will need to be addressed, while building upon the strengths which Brynmawr has to offer.

3.4.1 The strategy therefore sets out to provide proposals for **Environmental Improvements** to lift the quality of the Urban Environment, making it more attractive to residents, visitors, businesses and investors alike.

3.4.2 The strategy will set down proposals for **Traffic Management and Signage** to ensure effective and efficient use of the existing road infrastructure and car parking facilities, to ensure both residents and visitors are directed and signed to the Town Centre via the most effective and attractive routes, while having access to a good selection of car parking facilities which serve the key commercial and retail areas of the town.

3.4.3 Proposals for improved **Linkages** have also been developed, to ensure a comfortable and safe pedestrian environment is created throughout the town and to surrounding communities, in particular the new Lakeside Development Area to encourage social interaction and improved connectivity.

3.4.4 As identified above, while Brynmawr enjoys a unique and attractive setting, the Town Centre itself has little inherent character. The strategy will therefore seek to engender a distinct **Sense of Place** to make it attractive to residents, visitors, businesses and investors.

3.4.5 In parallel with the environmental improvements outlined above, which are intended to engender an economic revival in Brynmawr, the strategy also identifies a number of **Economic and Commercial Opportunities** which will go some way to nurturing economic prosperity in the Town.

3.4.6 As with so many towns and cities today, Brynmawr suffers from poor maintenance and upkeep, due primarily to a lack of funds. The strategy will therefore include proposals for **Place Management**, to ensure that the urban environment is maintained to a high standard, now and into the future.

3.4.7 Carefully considered artworks in the public realm can increase best value and capital expenditure, in terms of the quality of the built environment. As well as enhancing the perception of the town to residents, businesses and investors alike,



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appropriate artwork can also provide a unique draw to visitors from outside the area, reinforcing the promotion of Brynmawr as a local centre for tourism. A detailed **Artworks Strategy** has therefore been provided which sets down proposals for developing this theme, with particular reference to opportunities for community involvement and participation.

**See Figure 4.0 – Masterplan.**

**3.5** The following section sets down proposals for the development of each of these key themes, with supporting illustrative material, with detail proposals for the Public Arts strategy set down in Section 5.0.



## 4.0 The Proposals

### 4.0 The Proposals

#### 4.1 Introduction

The proposals set out below focus upon the key themes of the strategy set out above. That is :

- Environmental Improvements
- Traffic Management and Signage
- Linkages
- Sense of Place
- Economic and Commercial Opportunities
- Place Management
- Artwork Strategy

A description of the proposals is set down below, and illustrated where appropriate through a series of project sheets.

See Figure 5.0 – Key Plan to Project Sheets.

#### 4.2 Environmental Improvements

The Environmental Improvements proposed for Brynmawr focus upon a couple of key areas to ensure optimum benefit to residents, and to make the town more attractive to visitors, businesses and potential investors. These key areas are the Gateways to the town, and the Town Centre environment itself.

##### 4.2.1 Gateways

While Brynmawr enjoys an attractive position on the edge of the Brecon Beacons AONB, this is not reflected in the quality of the three primary 'gateways' to the town; that is, the approach from the south via the A467, the approach from strategic road network, the A465(T) to the east, and the approach from Blaenavon and the World Heritage Site there.

- *The Southern Approach*

The proposals cover the area between the Relief Road roundabout and the Station Road roundabout, with frontage predominantly to the Lakeside Development Area. The redevelopment of the Lakeside site provides a unique opportunity to create an attractive roadside environment and gateway to Brynmawr, which is not constrained by existing development.

It is proposed to:





- Create an attractive and generous parkland landscape around the lake edge which provides clear routes for pedestrians and cyclists between the Town Centre, Winchestown, Nantyglo and the Lakeside residential areas.
- Create a formal avenue which reinforces the approach to the urban heart of Brynmawr, while providing shelter from the elements and which helps to soften the impact of the new development areas.
- Consider opportunities for artwork installations in this key location (see Section 5.0 - Artworks Strategy)
- Create a distinctive gateway landscape, which emphasises entry to Brynmawr Town Centre, and provides a point of orientation for residents and visitors.
- Carefully consider options for development layouts on the Lakeside Development site to ensure these enhance the urban approach to the Town Centre, rather than detract from it.
- Open up views from the Relief road roundabout, across the lake area, to create a visual link between this area, the lake, Lakeside Development, the Pump House and the countryside beyond. This will help to engender a greater sense of place and connection with the landscape and heritage of the area than at present.

See Figure 6.0 – Southern Approach

- ***The Eastern Gateway***

The roundabout area at the head of the Clydach Gorge marks a major entry point into Brynmawr. However, at present this is an indistinct arrival point, with poor signage and little sense of orientation.

It is therefore proposed to improve this area through:

- Improved signage to the Town Centre.
- Installation of a new town gateway sign.
- Remodelling and replanting of the roundabout, and the embankment to the south, to create a more distinctive, open and attractive setting which reflects the topography and vegetation of the local moorland, in order to engender a greater sense of place and orientation. The use of distinct earthforms, or environmental artwork installations, in this remodelling would help to further engender a sense of arrival and uniqueness.
- Installation of a clearly signed and delineated pedestrian and cycleway route which connects Brynmawr with the surrounding network of footpaths, and the proposed Sustrans route.

See Figure 7.0 – Eastern Gateway.

- ***Winchestown Gateway***

To help reinforce a sense of community and arrival at Winchestown, proposals for a gateway and pocket park area have been made. The pocket park area could serve as a shared amenity for the residents of Winchestown and the Lakeside Development area.

See Figure 8.0 – Winchestown Gateway

#### 4.2.2 Town Centre Improvements



The environmental improvements undertaken to date within Brynmawr have been successful, and it is proposed to extend the benefits of these to the rest of the Town Centre; in particular to the southern reaches of Market Square and the Station Road roundabout area, and to Beaufort Street.

- **Market Square and Station Road**

The proposals for Market Square and Station Road build upon the environmental improvements made to date, and are intended to help reinforce this area as the primary focus for social activity within Brynmawr and as its commercial heart.

It is proposed that :

- Links between Market Square and the bus station are improved, through paving works, signage and improved crossing points, with a review of the opportunities for creating a new public square and covered market area in the vicinity of the Haven store.
- Existing crossing points are reviewed and relocated where a more direct link can be created on primary desire lines.
- The Station Road roundabout area is improved through remodelling of existing land forms, planting and exploration of artwork opportunities.
- The Bus Depot site is screened through the installation of a 2-3m high fence. This fence could provide an opportunity for involvement of an artist and the community to develop a unique and attractive screen.
- Consideration be given to the potential for redevelopment of the Brynmawr Trade Centre site, and conversion to a more appropriate use in this key Town Centre setting.

See Figure 9.0 – Market Square and Station Road.

- **Beaufort Street**

In order to promote vibrant retail activity, encourage shoppers to use Beaufort Street and to make it attractive to visitors, it is proposed to:

- Improve the pedestrian environment along Beaufort Street through pavement widening and resurfacing. Particular emphasis on widening the pavement outside key buildings, such as Kwik Save and the Post Office, with a wider public threshold outside the Griffin Hotel and at the junction with King Street.
- Reduce the current conflict between pedestrians and cars, by narrowing the road corridor to a minimum of 3.5m width, and introducing speed tables and clearly defined crossing points to slow traffic, and to make pedestrian movement safer.
- Introduce artwork to promote Beaufort Street as a distinct retail destination, and to create a strong sense of character.
- Rationalise and clearly designate parking areas, and distribute disabled parking along the length of the street to ensure ease of access.
- Develop a series of design guidelines for improvements to retail units to ensure the establishment of a high standard of refurbishment, in order to maintain a high quality environment.
- Provide an attractive pedestrian link from Beaufort Street to the proposed King Street/Worcester Street car park.

See Figure 10.0 – Beaufort Street.

#### 4.3 Traffic Management & Signage



### 4.3.1 Signage

Traffic is currently signed from the strategic road network via the A467, away from the Town Centre. It is proposed that traffic be signed from this direction via Alma Street, which is a more attractive and distinctive approach to the Town Centre. Alma Street would be subject to environmental improvements and offers opportunities for artwork installations to further reinforce its character and distinctiveness. Clear signage for traffic arriving from the south is also proposed, with clear signs for the Town Centre and car parking provided throughout.

As well as the gateway signs mentioned above, it is also proposed to provide information signage for visitors at key locations, which can provide information on accommodation, eating and leisure activities.

See Figure 11.0 – Traffic Circulation and Signage.

### 4.3.2 Car Parking

While there are a number of car parks distributed around the commercial/retail heart of Brynmawr, it is felt that these are inadequate and poorly located.

The strategy will seek to address this through:

- Rationalised and clearer parking along Beaufort Street.
- Provision of a new car park behind Davies Wallpaper shop with a direct pedestrian link to Beaufort Street. This will make new provision for parking at the northern end of Beaufort Street.

See Figure 12.0 – King Street Car Park

- Review the layout and user restrictions on the car park on Gloucester Street to make this more efficient, attractive, with potential for increased availability to a wider number of users.
- Improvements to Worcester Street car park to make this more attractive and efficient.
- Make alternative provision for the Saturday market which is currently located in Market Square Car Park, so that this car park remains available for parking on this key day.
- Provide more direct and attractive link between the bus station car park and Market Square to encourage greater use of this well located car park.
- Ensure the layout of the proposed Lakeside Retail Area optimises opportunities for shared car parking facilities which serve both the Lakeside Development area and visitors to the Town Centre.

See Figure 13.0 – Traffic Management.

## 4.4 Linkages

4.4.1 In order to promote accessibility and permeability throughout the Town, and the integration of the forthcoming Lakeside Development with the existing residential communities, a series of proposals have been made for improvements to key routes. The routes through and around the Lakeside Development Area have been reviewed in some detail, as redevelopment of this key site offers unique opportunities for establishing robust, attractive and safe links between Winchestown, Nantyglo and Brynmawr at the outset.

As an extension of these links, proposals have been made for the connection between the Lakeside Development Area, Welfare Park and onwards towards Brynmawr Town Centre, via Warwick Road.





The existing footpath network has also been reviewed, with proposals for improvements and enhancements which make it more useable and attractive to both residents and visitors.

#### 4.4.2 Lakeside Links

The redevelopment of the Lakeside site offers opportunities for creating new links between Winchestown, Nantyglo and Brynmawr. It is therefore proposed that some of these links are created early to establish the principle of key routes before development takes place. In summary, the proposals suggest:

- The creation of strong pedestrian routes through the Development Area, between key gateways and public facilities and along primary axis. These links should be viable in the short term and work irrespective of the ongoing presence of the NMC factory and bus depot. However, these links should also acknowledge the fact that there may, in the future, be opportunities to extend links through these key central sites, if they are redeveloped.
- The creation of a linear public park adjacent to the lake edge which provides a focus for recreation within the Lakeside Development Area, and to help reinforce primary pedestrian and cycle routes from Winchestown to Brynmawr Town Centre.
- The improvement of the pedestrian route around the southern edge of the lake, through footpath widening, resurfacing, review of existing boundary treatments and opening up of views across the lake. Consider opportunities for creating a lookout deck around the Pump House Tower to act as a strong visual focus to the Lakeside area.
- The creation of a distinctive gateway feature which marks the approach to the Lakeside residential areas, and Winchestown on Pond Road, with clear routes for pedestrians and cyclists.

- The creation of a new play facility on the existing scrap yard site, which serves the residents of Brynmawr, Winchestown and the new communities of the Lakeside Development Area. While it is acknowledged that this area is allocated for housing, it is felt that provision of a new play facility should be provided within the new housing areas, as part of its open space allocation, which serves all the surrounding communities, and provides a focus for 'social' activity which unites existing and new communities.

See Figure 14.0 – Lakeside Links

#### 4.4.3 Welfare Park Links and Lakeside Belvedere

At present there is no direct connection between the Lakeside Development Area and Welfare Park. It is proposed therefore to reinforce access to this important recreational resource through provision of a direct footpath link, and a belvedere which acts as a landmark structure at the end of one of the key axis across the Lakeside Development Area. Both southern entrances to the park should be improved, with enhancements to the route to the Town Centre along Warwick Road.

It is also recommended that the northern gateways to Welfare Park are opened up and upgraded to encourage greater use of the park's facilities by all the residents of Brynmawr. See Figure 15.0 – Welfare Park Links and Lakeside Belvedere.

#### 4.4.4. Sculpture Trail and Circular Walks

The environs of Brynmawr are well served by a number of footpaths. However, a number of these do not actually connect.

It is therefore proposed to make the additional connections necessary to create a comprehensive network of footpaths, which offers the opportunity to circuit Brynmawr, and which can be accessed from any number of points. This network would reinforce a sense of





permeability and connectivity, through the town and between adjacent communities.

The network of footpaths might be further enhanced through the installation of artworks, or the creation of distinctive seating and lookout areas, which optimise the uniqueness of Brynmawr's location. This 'Sculpture Trail' would provide interest for both residents and visitors, helping to promote Brynmawr for tourism both locally and regionally. See Figure 16.0 - Sculpture Trail and Circular Walks.

#### 4.4.5 Cycle Routes

There is a proposal to route a Sustrans cycleway through Brynmawr and it is recommended that the link through the town is installed at the earliest opportunity to reinforce permeability and to ensure effective and fast connection to the national cycleway network when the routes to Brynmawr are constructed. See Figure 17.0 - Cycle Route Proposals

### 4.5 Sense of Place

4.5.1 As previously identified, while Brynmawr benefits from a unique location on the periphery of the Brecon Beacons AONB, the Town Centre itself does not have a distinct character. This is reinforced by the sometimes poor quality urban environment, which will be addressed by the environmental improvements outlined above.

However, it is proposed to engender a distinct sense of place through a number of routes so that Brynmawr is attractive to residents and visitors, engenders a sense of community and ownership, and attracts investment from both within and outside the town.

4.5.2 The following suggestions are made to help create and reinforce a sense of uniqueness and character:

- Create a new emblem/insignia for Brynmawr, which reflects its unique surroundings, and which can be used in marketing, and the townscape environment generally.
- Promote the Boiler House and enhance its setting to create a distinct landmark on the approach to Brynmawr, which can be seen from the southern approach road and from the Blaenavon roundabout. This could be an interpretation centre for C20 industrial architecture, combined with a local visitor centre and accommodation information point, and a bike hire facility, for example.

- **Planting**

Brynmawr's unique moorland setting suggests the use of distinct indigenous plant species within the town to help reinforce this setting. Tree species might include:

Sessile Oak  
Downy Birch  
Holly  
Rowan

While shrub species could include:

Hazel  
Hawthorn  
Juniper

Grassland and heath vegetation might include:

Heather  
Bilberry  
Bell-heather  
Crowberry  
Wavy hair-grass  
Sweet Vernal grass etc..



The use of these species would not only help to reinforce a distinct sense of place, but also ensures that planting is robust and best suited to the harsh climate experienced in this part of Wales.

- **Materials and Street Furniture**

The careful selection of materials and street furniture would also help to engender a sense of character and place. A palette of paving materials and street furniture has already been used for the environmental improvements undertaken to date in Market Square. It is recommended that these materials are used within future environmental improvement schemes to reinforce continuity and coherence.

The local building materials used to create the gateways to the Barley Field industrial areas and the Nantyglo gateway sign could be used in other locations and gateways to again provide a sense of continuity and to reinforce the character of the surrounding countryside.

The round houses and defensive structures built in the last century, and the distinctive Pump House on the lake, could provide the 'motif' and form for new gateways and structures, to help reinforce a distinct sense of history.

- **Artworks Strategy**

To further promote a distinct sense of place with Brynmawr and to help promote it for tourism, a strategy for artwork has been developed by CBAT The Arts and Regeneration Agency in parallel with the proposals set out above.

The extensive strategy is described in detail in Section 5.0 which follows, while a summary of the key opportunities is illustrated on **Figure 18.0 - Artworks Strategy.**

In addition to the benefits the artwork strategy will have for the environmental quality of Brynmawr, and in promoting it for tourism, it is also seen as a valuable tool for involving all sectors of the community in the regeneration and enhancement of their town.

In line with current government policy on 'Community Engagement and Partnership', this will help to promote community involvement and participation in the development of strategies and proposals for improvements to the town.

## **4.5 Economic & Commercial Proposals**

### **4.6.1 Development Potential**

In order to consider how the performance of Brynmawr town centre can be improved it is necessary to consider:

- The available expenditure in the catchment area
- Demand for floorspace
- The potential opportunities for accommodating new developments within the town centre

#### **Expenditure**

In order to assess whether developers will be attracted to Brynmawr it is necessary to analyse the available expenditure.

#### **Food Retailing**

National Convenience Goods expenditure is £1,308 per person, per annum (1996). Local estimates generated from MapInfo Illumine show that annual convenience expenditure in Brynmawr is 95% of the national average, or £1,244 per head.

There is currently 14,000 sq. ft of convenience floor space in Brynmawr. Applying average turnover to floor space ratios this gives a total expected turnover of around £4.4 million; or 28% of available



expenditure within a 5-minute drivetime. These figures clearly demonstrate the widespread leakage of available food retailing expenditure.

### Non Food Retailing

Comparison Goods expenditure, excluding special forms of trading is £1,693 per head nationally (1996 prices). Local estimates generated from MapInfo Illumine show that durable goods expenditure in Brynmawr to be around 84% of the national average, or £1,420 per head.

Using a 5 minute drivetime population estimate of 12,858, total available expenditure on durable goods in Brynmawr is likely to be around £18 million (1996 prices). Applying average turnover to floorspace ratios gives a total expected turnover of around £8.3 million; or 46% of available expenditure within 5-minute drivetime. Whilst not as severe as food retailing leakage, there is a significant leakage of non-food retailing from Brynmawr town centre.

### Demand for Floorspace

The redevelopment of the Dunlop Semtex Factory opens up new opportunities for Brynmawr. The proposal is to provide 200 new homes over a seven-year period. In addition, there is outline permission for food and non-food retail on the site. Initial enquires with potential investors have indicated that they are not likely to relocate to Brynmawr. The responses from Developers only confirm the findings of the local commercial market review.

We are of the opinion that there is very little demand for floor space in Brynmawr town centre. Firstly, the units do not fit well with the requirements of national retailers today and secondly the catchment population is not large enough to attract them.

However, we have given consideration to the likely impact of the proposed development upon the future trading performance of the

Town Centre. Whilst it is beyond the remit of the study to prepare a detailed impact assessment (which will be required to be submitted by the developer in support of any detailed planning application for retail uses confirming the scale, location and type of goods sold), the analysis set out earlier in this section demonstrates that there is significant leakage of convenience and comparison expenditure from the core 5 minute catchment to other town centre/out of centre facilities. In total, this expenditure leakage is likely to be in the region of £21 million per annum. Of this, approximately £11 million relates to convenience goods and around £10 million to comparison goods.

At this stage potential retail occupiers have not been identified or detailed proposals for the scale or nature of retail units worked up. Therefore, a precise impact assessment cannot be prepared. However, based on the characteristics of existing provision in Brynmawr and the substantial degree of leakage, we are of the opinion that the majority of trade needed to support such facilities can be generated by the claw-back of trade leaking to other areas. In addition to this, the development of modern high quality retail facilities as part of the Lakeside Development with strong linkages to other town centre facilities, provides an opportunity to significantly raise the quality of provision in the centre and thereby generate benefits for existing facilities from spin off trade.

#### 4.6.2 Potential Development Sites

A number of sites have been identified that should be considered for development. The characteristics and redevelopment opportunities for each site are outlined below. Each of the identified sites has an important contribution to make to the long-term potential of Brynmawr town centre.

- ***Brynmawr Trade Centre and 1 & 2 Blaina Road***  
This is a key gateway site, which is currently visually unattractive. Numbers 1 & 2 are vacant, derelict residential properties and Brynmawr Trade Centre is occupied by a use (Car Garage) not traditionally found in a town centre. It is recommended that





Brynmawr Trade Centre should be relocated and the residential properties demolished. It is felt that an office development could be brought forward on the site of between 5,000 and 10,000 sq.ft.

- **Former Local Government Offices - Haven Discount Shop**

This is another building in a key location which gives a very poor first impression for people arriving by bus in particular. It is suggested that provision for a covered market could be made in this vicinity in association with refurbishment of the Haven Store to provide a more attractive backdrop to Market Square and this key link.

At present, the market only takes place once a week and it is limited to a retail market only. Establishing a more recognised site for the market, which could be used more frequently without impacting on the car parking capacity within the town, would help endorse the town as a "market town".

- **The former Griffin Hotel**

The former Griffin Hotel is a vacant building in a prominent location. Consent is unlikely to be granted for the building to be demolished. Suitable uses, could be a mixed office and a community facility or residential flats. However, any option for the redevelopment of this building, due to its internal layout, will not be cheap and is unlikely to be economically viable unless public sector funding or grant aid is available.

- **Factory Premises/Factory Road**

We understand that both of these commercial premises are available for redevelopment. The premises are now situated within a well established residential area and represent non conforming uses. On this basis either a residential redevelopment or layout as open space would be appropriate.

- **Proposed King Street/Worcester Street Car Park**

The derelict land area lying between King Street/Worcester Street and adjacent to the Rehobeth Congregational Church has been identified as a site for a new car park. We believe that this is the best possible use for the site and it is recommended that the car

park be implemented. The new car park will help to draw more people to the northern end of Beaufort Street, which is currently suffering from high levels of vacancies.

- **The relocation of the Saturday Market.**

It is recommended that the Saturday Market be relocated to the area in front of the Market Hall and extended into Bailey Street and an area in the vicinity of the Haven Discount store. By relocating the market to a higher profile location, the popularity of the market will increase and the reputation of Brynmawr as a market town enhanced.

Different types of markets could be encouraged to visit the town and utilise a more "trader friendly" site. Flea markets, craft fairs, farmers markets and antiques and collectors fairs all operate in the region but do not visit Brynmawr. Encouraging such fairs/markets to visit Brynmawr on a weekly/monthly cycle would enhance the regeneration and vitality of Brynmawr Town Centre.

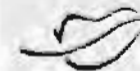
- **Brynmawr Welsh School site**

Situated opposite the northern end of Beaufort Street, the development of this site will have important implications on the future of the northern boundary of Brynmawr Town Centre. The draft development brief for this site has identified residential use as the most appropriate should the whole of the site, 2.2 acres, become available. We are in agreement with this conclusion and estimate that the site could facilitate between 20 and 25 dwellings and that such a development would have a much needed positive impact on the northern retailing area of Beaufort Street.

Should only part, of the site become available, the lower land, then the development options would be severely curtailed and restricted to car parking and circulatory use.

- **Kwik Save Unit**

Since Somerfield acquired Kwik Save they have been rationalising their operation nationally. We have spoken with Somerfield and, as





yet, they have not made a decision as to their future representation in Brynmawr. However, we are of the opinion that they are more likely to keep trading from the more central Somerfield store, which would release the Kwik Save site for refurbishment/redevelopment.

Situated prominently in Station Road fronting the main gateway to the town centre from the south, the Kwik Save site is a prime development site close to two of the larger car parks in the town. A refurbishment of the existing building could provide approximately 5,500 sq. ft of office accommodation.

- ***Council owned property – 16 – 19 Beaufort Street***

We understand that Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council owns the above terrace of units. The buildings are situated in the heart of the retailing core of the town and the whole site extends to approximately 7,250 sq. ft. We have identified the site as suitable for a mixed retail and residential development which could provide 2,500 sq. ft of retail space together with approximately 15 / 17 residential flats. Alternatively, the retail accommodation could be provided with approximately 12,000 sq. ft of office accommodation.

- ***4/5 Station Road***

Situated between Kwik Save and the recently refurbished Cabaret Club, units 4 & 5 Station Road occupy approximately 25% of the overall site area. The buildings are therefore suitable for either refurbishment and extension or demolition and new build to provide a small office development. Alternatively, new retail accommodation could be provided on the site, although the commercial viability of such a development is questionable.

- ***Former Boiler House***

The future use of the boiler house is a very contentious issue, particularly as the building is the last example of the structures which formed the Dunlop Semtex building. Conversion costs associated with the building will be very high and it is hard to

envisage a use that would be commercially viable without a high proportion of public funding.

The building occupies a prominent site, with potential car parking, adjacent to one of the main access routes into the town centre. It is therefore ideally located to serve as a public sector run visitor centre, with associated facilities. Without public sector support, such a use would not be able to generate sufficient revenue to cover the rent/costs of conversion.

An alternative approach would be for the public sector to purchase the building which should ensure that this historic building is put to a suitable and beneficial use. Whilst the building is in the ownership of private developers it will clearly not be refurbished unless a commercially viable use can be found which would compliment their overall scheme or until public sector support is guaranteed. This could lead to the site lying idle for some time and becoming a blight on the town centre.

- ***NMC and Bus Depot Sites***

These sites are situated in a very prominent location adjacent to one of the main access routes into the town centre. If the two occupiers of the above sites were relocated a substantial development site would be created in a prominent location. The sites also present the opportunity to further improve linkages between Lakeside Development and Brynmawr Town Centre.

The level of success achieved by the Lakeside development will impact on the redevelopment potential of the sites. The sites could be redeveloped with either residential units or a small office block, with a permeable layout which allows easy and safe pedestrian movement between the Lakeside scheme and Brynmawr Town Centre. Redevelopment of this site also provides an opportunity to create a more appropriate and attractive backdrop to the Town Centre than at present.

See Figure 19.0 – Key to Potential Development Sites.



### 4.6.3 Development Strategy

It has not been part of the brief to prepare a detailed development scheme for the sites identified for potential development. We have provided a high degree of certainty that the proposed schemes can physically be accommodated in the identified sites but it is unlikely that all the proposals would be viable in the short to medium term.

The majority of the proposals identified will require public sector grant to be brought forward. Many variables will have an impact on the overall viability of the schemes and more detailed investigation of:

- Physical constraints/ land ownership
- Acquisition costs
- Tenant/ developer interest
- Overall viability

... must therefore form part of the report phase of the town centre strategy.

It is important to emphasise that no explicit demand exists at this stage from retailers willing to occupy retail units in Brynmawr town centre. This also applies to the retail units proposed for the Lakeside Development. Such apathy from retailers is a function of the local economic and demographic profile of the area and future change will very much be dependent upon longer-term employment and housing growth strategies.

### 4.6.4 Performance Indicators

A number of quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure the town centre activity and competitive position have been identified. These indicators will allow projects implemented under the Urban Design Master Plan to be monitored and evaluated.

#### Indicator 1 – Proportion of vacant retail units

Monitoring the number of vacant units will allow the Local Authority to observe the town centre economy. Any decline in vacancy rates will show a growth in local trade. The growth in trade may be caused by a number of factors including an increase in visitor numbers or an increase in the retention of local trade.

#### Indicator 2 – National/Local Representation

If the number of national representatives increases in the town centre it would show increased confidence in the expenditure available in Brynmawr. This in turn may lead to the creation of new jobs. However, until retail units suited to national retailer needs are provided, such an increase is unlikely.

#### Indicator 3 – Diversity of Use

This indicator looks at the balance between different uses such as shopping; offices; restaurants etc. By increasing the diversity of uses, Brynmawr will be able to compete with a wider range of shopping destinations. Shoppers today expect more than just shops, they are looking for the retail/leisure experience. Figures presented under the heading Existing Economic and Commercial Issues within this report will act as a suitable base from which to draw comparison.

#### Indicator 4 – Urban Design Quality

People's perception of the town environment is very important. An improved town centre environment will encourage more visitors. Gateway features and signage are also very important and their success can be gauged by local market surveys.

#### Indicator 5 – Accessibility



The ease and convenience of access by a choice of means of travel is important to the success of the town centre. The quality and location of car parking and public transport facilities are therefore important.

#### 4.6.5 Potential Funding

Situated within an Objective One area, projects within Brynmawr can apply for Objective One monies, if they are eligible projects. With the aim to promote the development and the structural adjustment of regions whose economic development is lagging behind, Objective One money is targeted at commercial development and the development of small and medium sized enterprises. Money will not be provided where retail is the main beneficiary, nor will money be provided for projects which should be the responsibility of the local authority.

The Welsh Development Agency promote a wide range of grant aid schemes, the majority of which are structured to reduce the gap between costs of works and value to enable development to proceed. The WDA schemes range from giving direct assistance to property development to environmental improvement grants.

In terms of aiding new build and building refurbishment proposals within Brynmawr, potential sources of funding will include the property development grant, development finance grant, development services grant and the business premises fitting-out grant. Varying degrees of support are provided by these grants, but the total grant aid permitted to be given to any one project is limited by state aid rules.

A number of WDA grant aid schemes are targeted specifically at regeneration schemes. 50% of eligible costs is normally provided by the town improvement grants scheme which supports the cost of external improvements to buildings. The environmental improvement grant operates in a similar way to the town improvement grant but targets rural areas, particularly entrances and approaches to towns. The

regeneration investment grant aims to support regeneration projects by gap funding new build or refurbishment schemes and is probably the most important grant aid in relation to this study. The grant supports regeneration projects, which are not otherwise economically viable. The grant will provide a bridge between the eligible development cost of the project and the open market value on completion, allowing occupiers to develop, purchase or lease premises at open market value. The grant will support the construction of new premises or refurbishment of existing buildings for offices, industrial or warehouse premises.

Eligible costs include:

- Acquisition of Land : the lower of the actual land purchase price and open market value. The land will, however, have a negative market value in relation to the proposed development.
- The actual cost of providing services and infrastructure which are specific to the subject property or which form part of the planning conditions for the development.
- The construction or refurbishment of the buildings may only be supported with gap funding if the buildings would be suitable for occupation by a wide range of users. Consequently eligible costs exclude any costs associated with specialist buildings works, adaptations or fitting out works which are designed to meet the needs of specific occupiers.
- Interest or similar finance charges.
- Professional fees etc. incurred in the cost of development.

The National Assembly for Wales administer the local regeneration fund, a fund through which the Assembly provide funding for capital projects. This scheme allows local authorities to apply for funds for specific projects. However, priority for such funds in Objective One areas is currently given to match funding Objective One projects.





An important source of future funding for Blaenau Gwent is being set out in the Corus strategy which will provide a comprehensive package of measures to help communities hit by the redundancies announced by Corus. The aid package amounts to £92m, but as yet aid to specific areas and projects has not been released to the public.

In addition to the above, a number of smaller grant aid schemes are administered by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. Maximum grants from such schemes range from £3,000 up to £30,000 per project, but actual amounts received vary from project to project and depend heavily upon the benefit provided to the local economy / community. Whilst administered by the Council, an annual application for money has to be made to either the National Assembly for Wales or European Funds to ensure the continued operation of these grants. The level of grant received each year is not guaranteed and therefore the level of grant aid awarded under such schemes is variable. Details of such grant schemes are included in Appendix D.

## 4.7 Place Management

4.7.1 Without effective place management the highest quality public environment will quickly fall into a state of disrepair. The Urban White Paper develops this theme further, and identifies "the need for a strategic approach to the management and improvement of the local environment."

4.7.2 It is therefore recommended that a Town Centre Manager is appointed to ensure that Brynmawr is maintained as a clean, safe and well cared for environment. The Town Centre Manager could be responsible for :

- Marketing
- Litter Control
- Car Parking Management
- Safety
- Market Management
- Upkeep of Public Realm

4.7.3 The White Paper suggests that legislation might be introduced to permit local authorities to levy a supplementary business rate, which could be used to fund Town Centre Improvement Schemes (TISS). Alternatively, a proportion of the total sum spent on the regeneration of Brynmawr, could be held in trust to provide for the ongoing maintenance of the Public Realm and Open Space areas.

4.7.4 The Trust could be set up as a Partnership between local businesses, relevant authorities, existing management initiatives, and local community groups. The Trust could potentially provide funding not only for appointment of a Town Centre Manager, but also for:

- **Capital Projects and Management**  
Identification of ongoing improvement projects.
- **Economic Development**  
Identification and management of initiatives to strengthen the local economy, such as training for local businesses, and those who are unemployed or employed in unskilled, low paid jobs.
- **Marketing and Promotion**  
The marketing and promotion of Brynmawr as an attractive and unique place to live, work and visit.

## 4.8 Public Consultation

4.8.1 Initial public consultation has been taken, through a number of public meetings and comments from these have been built into the report.

4.8.2 Further public consultations are to be undertaken. Supported by a public exhibition, and the ongoing involvement of the community in individual projects, in particular the development of the Artworks Strategy, as appropriate.









years been less well informed and confident about the skills of professional artists, and how they may be applied in major developments. A considerable shift in this position has occurred in recent years. Towns and cities such as Wolverhampton, Milton Keynes, Gateshead, Liverpool, Bristol and Swindon in England, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee in Scotland and Cardiff, Wrexham, Swansea, Caerphilly, Newport and others in Wales, have all engaged artists within development structures in the public realm.

*In almost every regeneration programme the inclusion of artists and artworks is considered to be a major benefit and is viewed as the rule rather than the exception.*

## 5.0 Artworks Strategy

### 5.0 Artworks Strategy

The strategy for the integration of artworks with the emerging Urban Design Strategy and Master plan for Brynmawr has been prepared by CBAT on behalf of the WDA and Blaenau Gwent, CBC. It has been developed alongside and is complementary to the Urban Design and Masterplan Strategy outlined above.

#### 5.1 Introduction

##### 5.1.1 Art in the Public Realm

In many Northern European nations, the commissioning of artworks from professional artists, within major infrastructure and construction works is the norm. In Britain we have until recent

##### 5.1.2 Benefits of a Public Art Strategy for Brynmawr

A strategy for public art in Blaenau Gwent, incorporating Brynmawr and dovetailing with the surrounding towns of Nantyglo and Ebbw Vale, will facilitate considerable returns and a number of significant benefits, aside from assisting the establishment of local identity and distinction.

A comprehensive strategy and its properly managed delivery can:

- Provide vital factors in economic recovery
- Attract significant cultural tourism
- Contribute to local identity and economic recovery
- Improve social, physical, and environmental quality
- Assist the delivery of Agenda 21 and Objective One strategies
- Deliver competitive advantage through environmental quality
- Maximise land value and investment potential
- Increase use of public open space
- Reduce potential vandalism and criminal activity
- Maximise the potential for best value in infrastructure

These are not simply indicators but established precedents.



*Both in the UK and internationally these are proven regeneration factors, enhancing the potential for economic, environmental and cultural success.*

### 5.1.3 National and Regional Policy on Environment and Land Use

In 1990 the Government published its first comprehensive strategy for the environment *This Common Inheritance*. The strategy identified ways in which new developments and buildings can help create the conditions for improved quality of life and the significant role played by the arts in relation to such developments. The strategies set out ways in which these developments could be effected at local level through partnerships of individuals, private sector companies, and local authorities. Following this initial strategy the *UK Strategy for Sustainable Development* was published in 1994 and revised and updated in 1999 as *A Better Quality of Life*.

The Welsh Development Agency maintains policies for material and social sustainability in development, as do most local authorities and the role of professional artists as catalysts to regeneration activity is widely recognised. This recognition is further strengthened by the National Assembly for Wales' 23/11/10 establishment of a Commission for Architecture and Design in Wales, comparable in structure to CABE (The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) in England.

## 5.2 Context

### 5.2.1 Public Art and the Brynmawr Town Centre Study

This document sets out a framework and identifies mechanisms by which the expertise of professional artists may be procured, within the revitalisation of Brynmawr Town Centre. The study also takes into consideration CBAT's Public Art Strategy for Maincourse Developments, for the Lakeside Park Project on the former Brynmawr Rubber factory site.

Carefully considered artworks in the public realm, professionally procured and delivered, increase best value and capital expenditure to public benefit in terms of the quality of the built environment. They can also help express aspiration toward innovation and help to draw attention to Brynmawr, assisting positive change in the perception of the area, building on the relatively sound physical and social infrastructure extant in the area.

This strategy has been commissioned by the Welsh Development Agency (WDA), in association with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC).

### 5.2.2 Study Area

The study area includes Brynmawr Town Centre and its main approaches, and considers the Welfare Park, and nearby Winchestown, adjacent to the Lakeside Park development on the former Brynmawr Rubber Factory site.

### 5.2.3 Historical Context and Economic Fortunes

Brynmawr's fortunes were inextricably linked to the mining of iron ore and coal and to the production of steel. Like most of the South Wales industrial heartland, its economic prosperity was directly linked to the rapid rise and equally sharp decline of these industries.

Before 1795, when the first ironworks opened in Nantyglo, the area differed little in appearance from the nearby Brecon Beacons, with small parishes and sprawling farmland. The explosive demand for coal and iron however, brought about the rapid growth of towns around mines and ironworks, with a massive influx of migrant workers from other parts of Wales, England, Ireland and many other European countries.

Conditions, particularly in the earlier periods, were poor and the economic polarisation between workers and owners was vast. Inevitably this caused intermittent unrest, prompting ironmaster





Crawshay Bailey to build his roundhouses at Nantyglo as defensive structures to protect him from uprisings among the workforce.

During the depression of the 1930s, unemployment in Brynmawr was as high as 80 to 90% among the male population. Socialist activity was widespread and membership of the Communist Party high - hence the nickname 'Little Moscow'. The plight of the town was such that the Quaker community opened new coal levels at Coalbrookvale in 1931, to help ease unemployment. Funds from the Quaker community were also later channelled toward the construction of the Welfare Park and its pavilion.

Representatives of many Christian denominations formed part of the Brynmawr community, including Catholic and Baptist denominations and a variety of non-conformist Chapelgoers as well as a thriving Jewish congregation. There is still a small Jewish cemetery within the main burial ground above the town, wherein the most recent grave was dug in 1999.

### 5.3 Art and the Regeneration of Brynmawr Town Centre

The understanding that the arts themselves can be a major regenerative force means that the commissioning of artworks in the public realm is now recognised as an effective means by which to:

- express status and ambition
- enliven public space
- provide points of interest
- engender ownership
- establish continuity between generations
- strengthen community links
- contribute to the economic base of cultural industry in Wales

Cities such as Bilbao, Marseilles, Liverpool and London have centred urban regeneration initiatives on art galleries and studio facilities. Barcelona, Gateshead and Cardiff have all used strategic commissioning programmes to assist regeneration. Margate (Turner

Centre), Salford (Lowry Centre), St. Ives (Tate), Portmeirion (Architecture of Clough Williams Ellis and cult status related to The Prisoner) and Blaenau Ffestiniog (artist colony, David Nash studios), are all using their historical links with the arts to attract visitors and broaden appeal, stimulating cultural tourism.

The initial aspiration for the commissioning of artworks within the redevelopment of the urban framework of Brynmawr is to:

- improve its public realm
- raise the profile of the town
- enhance environmental quality
- assist improved social quality of life
- stimulate and attract inward investment
- secure local distinction
- contribute to cultural tourism

Through participation such a programme will:

- increase the confidence and creativity of residents
- assist skill building
- provide opportunities for communities to directly affect their environment
- create a context for local entrepreneurship
- contribute to enhancement of local partnerships
- maximise the shared benefits of visitors to the area

### 5.4 Commission Opportunities and Site Potential

#### 5.4.1 Approaches to the Town: Eastern and Southern Gateways

The two main approaches to the town centre are from the eastern gateway via the A465 Heads of the Valleys road which carries the visitor through the spectacular Clydach Gorge, and the southern gateway, via the A467 cutting through the former industrial landscape





of the town. Traffic from the A465 enters the town centre via King Street and Alma Street and from the A467 via Blaina Road.

The Character of each approach is distinct and each has its own set of historical and geographical circumstances, with a specific infrastructure layout. Development plans exist for the widening of the A465 and any permanent work commissioned for this site will need to take this into account and indeed the effect on the Clydach Gorge.

Artworks commissioned for these sites should:

- create a sense of arrival
- raise expectation
- enhance local distinction
- create recognisable landmarks
- act as gateways into Brynmawr

#### 5.4.2 Eastern Gateway

The A465 approach from Gilwern and Abergavenny, through the Clydach Gorge is in itself a rewarding experience. The vertical landscape has over time reclaimed the remnants of industry, and mine workings, quarries, lime kilns, rail and tramlines can be seen emerging and disappearing again into the dramatic, rugged cliff faces and the mountainside which provides natural waterfalls and unexpected vistas.

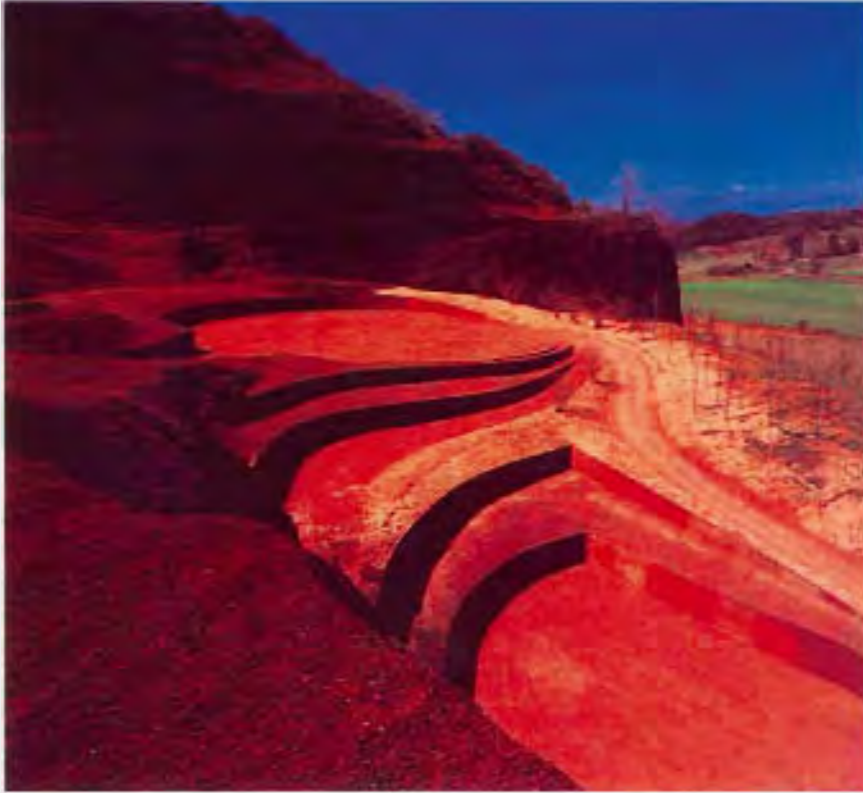
The junction with the A467 and Alma Street is a roundabout and to continue on the A465 a straight right turn is required. The road and the roundabout are set in a cutting but the A465 continues uphill, to reach its highest point above the town at just over 1,300 feet. The work commissioned here should respond to the function of the site as a traffic interchange and gateway to the town. However it should not be just a free standing object, placed at the centre of or adjacent to the roundabout.

An opportunity exists to commission a significant work from an experienced and internationally renowned artist. The work should not only act as a gateway to Brynmawr and a landmark along the A465, but should also address the particular environmental characteristics of the locality, and signal the links to Blaenavon World Heritage site and the Brecon Beacons National Park.

The landform, both natural and man made will determine the appearance and structure of the work, although some reference to the past industrial activities in the area could be included, primarily in its form and in the choice of materials and textures.

The work should be developed and implemented with consideration of the planned widening of the A465 allowing it to form an integrated whole within the infrastructure of the junction. The work should influence and to an extent define pedestrian use of the site. Current facilities for pedestrians to cross the roundabout are outdated and have become problematic and a new interchange should be developed.





*Luis Vila, Clastics, Spain*

An international design competition advertised through relevant media or secured by invitation is recommended for a site of such importance. A project of this nature could well attract significant international attention, assisting any additional fundraising that may be required.





*Nils Udo, Berlin*

#### 5.4.3 The Southern Gateway

The route into Brynmawr through Blaina Road runs alongside the former Brynmawr Rubber Factory site, now Lakeside Park, a mixed retail and residential development. The character of this key approach road will be determined by this new development. The sense of arrival at the town is currently muted due to lack of distinction and it is important that a sense of urban structure be re-established at this section of Blaina Road in its layout and appearance, with careful consideration of adjacent carpark layouts and screening.

The Southern Gateway provides an opportunity to refer to the vaulted roof structure of the former Brynmawr Rubber Factory, designed by Ove Arup, avoiding a literal interpretation but demonstrating a design approach informed by the former landmark. The work should not seek to recreate or commemorate the structure, but could reinterpret the design and construction

*Kirchmayer,  
France*

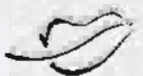
principles, at the same time creating sufficient urban scale to provide a tangible sense of arrival at Brynmawr.

#### 5.4.4 Recommended Selection Process

In the case of these gateway sites and especially a site of such crucial importance as the Eastern Gateway, an artist selected through an international



*Peter  
Struycken,*





## *Arnhem*

design competition advertised through relevant media or secured by invitation is strongly recommended.

An international competition inviting artist/architect partnerships to apply, or suitably experienced artists to join the design team, should be established. Teams or individual artists should be appointed on track record and approach.

### **5.4.5 Points of Connection: The Welfare Park and Alma Street**

The Welfare Park and Alma Street are situated either side, to the West and East respectively, of the town centre. Alma Street is of generous width, tree lined on either side and in sections, split over two levels and flanked by residential and other properties including warden accommodation, a health practice and local authority offices.

### **5.4.6 The Welfare Park**

The Welfare Park was built with the assistance of public donations including contributions from the Quaker community, on wasteland donated by the Duke of Beaufort. The park is an important communal space in itself and is situated at the centre of several long established and more recently created residential communities, to which the Lakeside Development will be the newest addition. The objective of any art centred project at this site would be to strengthen the function of the park as a communal public space, in particular by strengthening the pedestrian and cycle links along Warwick Road.

This project should be developed in parallel or even directly linked to projects proposed for the Lakeside Park development with Maincourse Developments and the house builder Persimmon. A strategy particular to that development will be prepared.

The Welfare Park project is particularly suited to community participation, and community and school groups should be considered, with particular focus on the areas known as "New Houses" and "Winches Town". {Consideration may also be given to the former Heathcote Rest and the former site of the Jewish Synagogue.}

These projects, although contemporary in appearance, could be informed by traditional and historical factors such as the pedestrian and tram routes between Winchestown and Brynmawr, the Quaker and Jewish communities, the iron works, methods of transport, and travelling communities and traders. These themes may be explored in structured workshops and find expression in the selection and exploitation of materials, physical appearance of the works and in text

and images incorporated in the works.



*Site, Best Shopping  
Mail, USA*





The project should be developed in partnership with other arts and cultural organisations in the area, such as Brynmawr Local History Society, Gwent Historical Society, amateur filmmakers, writers, musicians, local drama and theatre companies. Gwent Theatre based in Abergavenny, Brynmawr schools, community centres and other such groups will be especially important.

The Welfare Park presents opportunities for a team of lead artists selected from a shortlist, appointed on track record and supported by a second tier of local artists working to clear briefs and within a structured workshop process. The shortlist should be established through advertising the opportunity, or from CBAT's extensive records. Alma Street may be treated by an artist/s selected from a shortlist established through advertisement and appointed on track record and approach.

#### 5.4.7 Alma Street

Alma Street is traditionally the access route to the town centre from Abergavenny and the Clydach Gorge. It is a wide road with mature trees and large, mostly Victorian houses flanked by grass verges, which separate the traffic on the main road from a lower level access route to the houses. Its character is that of a distinct semi-urban and very pleasant environment with plenty of green areas, leafy glades and generous front gardens. Historically Alma Street formed the course of an industrial tramway from the Clydach Gorge, which was demolished early in the last century. The name is derived from the Battle of the Alma during the Crimean War.

As part of the Urban Design and Masterplan Strategy it is recommended that Alma Street's function, as a link from the A465 to the Town Centre should be reinforced, and an art centred project should respond to its linear nature. Such a work may find expression in the form of bespoke street furniture, planting and landscaping, orientation systems and incidental works. Specific themes should not be prescribed rather a brief established to allow suitably experienced artists to reveal and positively exploit the extant characteristics of the site and create an inclusive strategy within soft and hard landscaping schemes.

#### 5.4.8 Recommended Selection Process



*Andrew Leicester, Cincinnati Gateway*



*Mags Harries, Wall Cycle to Ocotillo, Phoenix, Arizona*

#### **5.4.9 Town Centre Revival: Beaufort Street and New Covered Market**

Beaufort Street is the historical shopping street and the traditional 'main artery' of Brynmawr and is central to the Urban Design Strategy. Beaufort Street plays a key role in the economic revival of the centre and its retail status must be developed if the town is to improve its economic base.

Beaufort Street rises with a rather steep gradient from the Market Square to King Street and is almost entirely straight. At the top of the street, at the opposite side of King Street is Ysgol Gymraeg Brynmawr adjacent to the lane which once provided access to the former Police Station, now Lloyds TSB bank.

Proposals are included in the Urban Design Strategy to upgrade street and pavement surfaces and to reduce the width of the carriageway, creating parking bays with widened pavements and to introduce traffic calming measures. This will give the street a more inviting character for pedestrian use.

The Strategy also presents the opportunity to relocate the outdoor market to an area near the former Government Offices. A covered market in this vicinity could offer an excellent opportunity for integrated works by artists.

#### **5.4.10 Beaufort Street**

A proposed theme to be included in a structured artist brief might be the influences of weather and a work that responds to the linear nature of the street. Light should be an important factor, although the works should also be of interest in bright conditions. Beaufort Street was named after the Duke of Beaufort, a major landowner in the area. However, an intriguing parallel could be drawn by references to the Beaufort Scale, used to measure wind speed. Brynmawr is the highest town in South Wales, with its highest point at 1200 feet and is therefore exposed to severe weather from time to time.





Inclusion of the local school communities in educational and creative ways can be effected via a linked weather station perhaps housed in the school grounds. This would function as an educational resource, as well as a means for manipulation of the artwork. A change in weather conditions, in particular in wind speed, wind direction and the factors that influence the airflows in the atmosphere, would effect a change in the appearance of the work. Similar precedents exist nearby, especially in Newport where a weather station on top of the museum and art gallery functions effectively as an aid to meteorological and environmental education.

The proposed relocation of the school and development of the site for housing does not negate such a project. The weather station artwork could be incorporated into the new site layout, or move with the school to their new location, while its connection with the Beaufort Street work could be maintained along a direct landline, or via an Internet connection. A dedicated web-site, hosted by the school, local library or by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, could form part of the work and provide an additional resource and contact point.

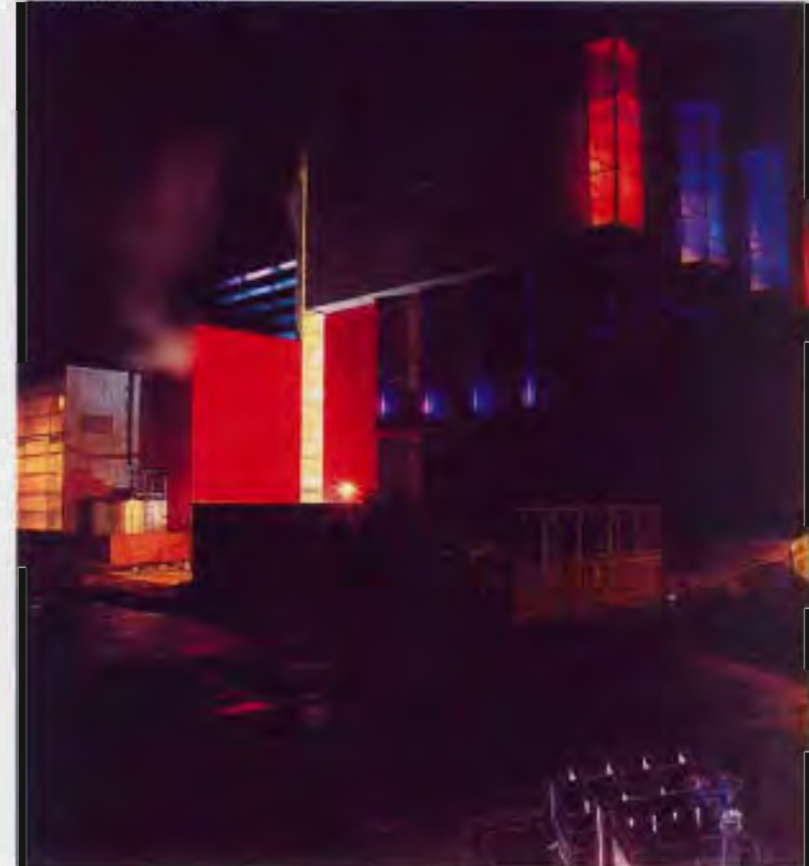
#### 5.4.11 New Market

The construction of a new covered market place adjacent to the bus station offers an excellent opportunity for the integration of artworks. An artist or artists should be engaged to work with the architects to develop a unique structure. Their contribution can manifest itself in:

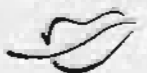
- A themed series of small works
- Treatment to canopy surfaces
- A colour scheme
- Lighting
- Layout of the market space
- A unique street surface

The works could represent the different trades represented in the market, draw from historic practices in trading, the exchange of currency for goods, recall historic elements of the site, enhance the

social aspects of the market or highlight the traditional ethnic diversity of market traders.



*Martin Richman, Tysley Waste to Power Plant, Birmingham*





*Mags Harries, Asaroton, Massachusetts., USA*

#### 5.4.12 Recommended Selection Process

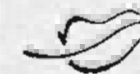
Artists may be selected on the basis of track record, from a shortlist researched by CBAT, and seconded to the design team. Artists may also be selected from a shortlist established through advertisement inviting applications from individuals or teams, appointed on the basis of an outline design, to be finalised in the first stage of the project.

#### 5.4.13 Connecting Communities: Winchestown

'Winches Town' is technically part of Nantyglo and lies outside the study area. However, the boundaries are indistinct and its location is such that it will be immediately affected by aspects of the Urban Design Strategy, the Lakeside Park development and, in turn, will influence the outcome of the study.

Winchestown comprises an extensive housing estate, its named gained from the pit winches originally sited here. It has in recent years experienced social difficulties and a degree of deprivation and there is a concern that the new developments on Lakeside Park may aggravate rather than assist regeneration of the estate. A community based art project could play an effective role in bridging the gap and in encouraging residents to positively affect their immediate physical and economic condition. This will be a key factor in assisting the aspirations of BGCBC and the WDA to develop effective strategies for addressing current issues and tangible social exclusion.

A project within the community of Winches Town should not be in any way imposed. Rather, any initiative should connect with existing initiatives and structures both formal and informal. Extensive and effective consultation must take place if residents of the community are to be convinced of the value of any project and its ability to facilitate the constructive expression of anxieties, concerns and fears as





well as ambitions, hopes and desires. The structure of any project must be such that it assists confidence building and gives voice to those



*Mags Harries, Winding Down the Charles River, USA*

who may not normally be vociferous in expressing concerns. The project should investigate and highlight in creative ways issues of concern and careful strategies for improvement. The project should also seek to address the current sense of isolation and lack of identity, and a long-term programme of improvements and activities should be established to ensure human and social sustainability.

Projects should incorporate a variety of media, including in particular photography, film, music and creative writing via a structured programme of workshops. Resulting works will be exhibited locally, but wider media interest and specialist coverage will need to be achieved. Initially projects should include temporary and ephemeral works allowing lead times for strategies to be developed for permanent interventions, informed by the outcomes of workshops and other projects, implemented alongside more general improvements to the estate.

Such precedents exist at Penrhys, Butetown, St Mellons and elsewhere in Wales and have proved highly effective as a means to tackle social exclusion. The importance of such a structured approach for Winchestown cannot be overlooked.

#### **5.4.14 Recommended Selection Process**

Artists should be appointed on the basis of track record from a shortlist established through research by CBAT.

#### **5.4.15 New Directions: Lakeside Park**

Lakeside Park, a development on the former Brynmawr Rubber Factory Site factory site by Maincourse Developments (retail) and Persimmon (residential) is subject to a separate study and report. This will highlight various opportunities for integrated artworks within the landscaping,



retained listed structures and new developments on the site. It will also develop strategies for the integration of the site within its surroundings, in particular through its links with the Welfare Park and Winches Town.

Suggested projects will include:

- free standing works within the "glades" in the soft landscaping surrounding the site
- a work centred around the reflective pool at the edge of the lake
- works to highlight the pedestrian and cycle routes around and within the site
- works highlighting various viewpoints
- works integrated into the hard landscaping of the public realm
- integration and use of retained structures.

### 5.5 Framework for Procurement

The process of commissioning artists and managing public art projects is a complex one. Upon adoption of the strategy by BGCBC, CBAT recommends the appointment of an agency to effect delivery.

The skills of a dedicated public art commissioning agency with a proven track record will be required and such an agency should demonstrate the following:

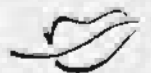
- Substantial knowledge and understanding of contemporary visual arts and contemporary practice in the public realm
- A track record of initiating and implementing visual art projects
- A thorough understanding and knowledge of procurement mechanisms within major construction projects, including compliance with CDM regulations
- A track record in project management, including contractual, financial and technical management
- A practical knowledge of public funding mechanisms of the arts and evidence of raising partnership investment with both private and public sectors

- The ability to operate on many levels, acting as broker to productive, positive partnerships between artists, architects, engineers, developers, the public sector and both resident and visiting communities

Such an agency will need to demonstrate that they carry sufficient public liability and professional indemnity insurance, operate Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities and Environmental Policies and have the ability to operate and manage dedicated client accounts. Agencies should provide:



Melanie Jackson, *soil and seawater*, Cardiff Docks





- Terms and conditions for engaging artist
- evidence of insurance
- name and address of insurance broker
- a letter of authorisation to their bank to communicate with WDA & BGCBC, for reference purposes
- two professional references
- a full list of completed and current projects
- evidence of the legal status of their organisation and articles of association
- CVs of the relevant team members, their status and roles in the organisation,
- names and expertise of any external consultants,
- three years of audited accounts
- directors report
- a statement on CDM regulations and project Management Control
- a copy of Health and Safety, Child Protection, Equal Opportunity and Environmental Policies

The mechanisms detailed below are effective in the procurement procedure and they constitute CBAT's recommendations for delivery of this strategy, if adopted. CBAT recommends the process be split into three phases, within the framework of desk and field studies described.

#### 5.5.1 Phase 1

Assessment and recommendations regarding suitability of proposed locations:

- Site visits and meetings with appropriate key figures,
- Detailed briefing meetings with client
- Desk study and assessment of findings
- Drafting of project briefs and report
- Presentation of findings

#### 5.5.2 Phase 2

Selection of artists:

- Finalise briefs and research of long-list of artists, advertisement of opportunities
- Short-listing and management of selection process
- Confirmation of artist appointments and drafting of contracts

#### 5.5.3 Phase 3

- Management of commissioning process to completion of works:
- Site meeting and client meeting with artists
- Monitor and assess workshop and design processes
- Administrative support, contractual and financial management
- Final site visits, any snagging, hand over and certified completion

#### 5.5.4 Mechanisms for Funding and Delivery

In the event that this strategy is adopted by BGCBC, a number of funding mechanisms should be considered to assist or match fund existing public sector investments.

#### 5.5.5 Existing Investment

Blaenau Gwent is within the South Wales Valley area designated by the European Commission as an Objective One, targeted regeneration area. Grassroots projects instigated at community level and demonstrating effective partnerships will be eligible to apply for Objective One funding and Agenda 21 support.

The European Social Fund may also apply where projects include the provision of training and skill building. BGCBC should also investigate any community development funds they may allocate, or small improvement grants to groups or individuals.



BGCBC and WDA are already making considerable investments in the regeneration of Ebbw Vale. Public art projects involving paving, lighting, street furniture or other elements of the infrastructure should be incorporated in costs for such construction. In most cases construction budgets can be identified and, where possible, enhanced to include public art provision. Such public sector investment helps considerably in attracting private sector interest.

#### **5.5.6 Local Authority Policy and Leverage**

Many local authorities have now adopted a strategy for public art provision, for cultural tourism and policies related to quality and sustainable development. Local authority policies including Economic Development, Culture, Leisure and Tourism, Education and Community Development, Agenda 21 and other policies addressing social exclusion, all provide supportive frameworks for the commissioning and development of projects.

Private sector expenditure on artworks in the public realm may be levered by means of supplementary planning guidance, as demonstrated by most UK local authorities. Speculative developments are increasingly subject to Section 106 agreements and this is an effective mechanism for procurement.

#### **5.5.7 Arts & Business Cymru**

In particular circumstances, projects may be eligible to apply for and attract matched private sector funding through Arts & Business Cymru. These additional funds if acquired may be used to enhance the profile of the project. Projects eligible for consideration will be those demonstrating innovation in terms of content or new approaches to sponsorship.

#### **5.5.8 Landfill Tax Credit Scheme**

In line with existing government environmental policy funds it may be possible to attract through Landfill Operators within a certain radius of the project location. It should be noted that Local Authorities will need to work with a recognised, registered environmental body in order to attract such funds. The Landfill Tax Credit Scheme can be complex and local authorities must demonstrate that they are not a direct beneficiary of their own taxation. In all cases a third party sponsor is required to provide 10% of the gross project costs in order to lever the landfill tax credits. Community pocket parks, school playground improvements, urban parks, skill building and training for youth and other social groups, represent the types of initiatives eligible to apply and likely to attract funding via this scheme. All are subject to ENTRUST approval.

CBAT operates a company registered with ENTRUST as a recognised Environmental Body and funds a number of environmental projects in partnership with Landfill Operators and the private sector.

#### **5.5.9 Lottery**

Funding may be available through the National Lottery Scheme and specifically through Heritage and Arts Lottery funds. Projects in Blaenau Gwent will fit well with the strategic aims of the Lottery to provide greater access to culture in all its forms and to enhance sustainable community development partnerships. However, the application process is complex and in particular the Arts Lottery (both capital and revenue schemes) are heavily over subscribed. The application process alone can take up to 18 months with no guarantee of success. The Arts Council of Wales frequently re-schedules its lottery assessment panels due to the sheer volume of applications. ACW cannot at this time guarantee adherence to specific timetables.

#### **5.5.10 Other potential source for supplementary funding**

Other funds that may from time to time provide additional funding for arts projects which benefit communities are the Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust and the Foundation for Sports and the Arts. Neither will





be the sole funder of a project and applications will be lengthy and detailed, with limited chances of success since the funds are usually well over subscribed.

The Wellcome Trust and the Henry Moore Foundation will from time to time support art projects of a particular nature and of a very high standing. The former support imaginative and innovative collaborations between the arts and sciences, while the latter supports sculptural projects of exceptional quality and International status. The Eastern Gateway commission could fall into this category, but this would require a lengthy selection process and a serious commitment from the client to achieve a project of excellence.

#### 5.5.11 Summary

The regeneration of Brynmawr town centre offers many opportunities for the integration of works by professional artists. This will add many benefits to the regeneration process, provide distinction and assist in the sustainability of the regeneration effort.

Precedents for this approach exist elsewhere in Wales, the UK and Europe, but each approach is unique and distinct and specific to the physical, social and economic factors of the location.

Brynmawr's location at the highest point in the Heads of the Valleys road, at the edge of the Brecon Beacons, adjacent to the Clydach Gorge and close to the Blaenavon World heritage site and the old market towns of Abergavenny and Crickhowell, provides an excellent opportunity for the revival of the town centre. Other features, which could be developed into tourist attractions, include the Nantyglo roundhouses, the defensive structures erected by one of the most notorious iron masters, Crawshay Bayley.

Tourism attracted by the Brecon Beacons and the unique caving opportunities in the area, will be an important factor, but also the quality of life that can be offered, which may attract and retain young entrepreneurs in the cultural industries.

The provision of a high quality and stimulating environment is therefore not only of importance to the existing population of Brynmawr, it will also encourage inward investment and promote Brynmawr as a positive location.

The opportunities for art projects vary from high profile and International commissions to outstanding and established artists, to projects aimed at participation of specific sections of the community, encouraging social inclusion and reviving links between old and new developments within the town.

The programme of commissions will need to be adequately resourced, integrated into the planned regeneration works and professionally managed. A suitable commissioning agency should be charged with the management of the programme. Artists should be engaged in the early stages of planned developments, to work within design teams and establish community-based projects to encourage ownership of the regenerated public realm.

The projects should not be isolated and a programme of regular consultation and publicity is to be established to ensure awareness, participation, understanding and ownership.

The joint clients should provide resources for the project, but could seek to obtain supplementary funds from other relevant sources. Private sector investors, such as Maincourse Developments, should be encouraged to engage in the commissioning of projects integrated within their developments, or within other suitable locations in the town.





- Linkages
- Economic and commercial opportunities
- Artworks strategy
- Place management

... should ensure the revitalisation and enhancement of Brynmawr, and the successful integration of the Lakeside Development Area, into the fabric of the town, so that in the words of the government White Paper "everyone can enjoy the quality of life of the best".

## 6.0 Conclusion

### 6.0 Conclusion

6.1 The Urban Design Strategy and Masterplan set out above has been developed in response to the aims and objectives set down by Blaenau Gwent Country Borough Council and the WDA and current government policy on urban regeneration. The strategy has also taken into account the opportunities presented by the inherent qualities of the town itself, while addressing its key problems.

6.2 The distinctive setting of Brynmawr at the edge of the Brecon Beacons AONB, its strong links to the strategic road network via the A465T, its proximity to some of the best caving facilities in the world, and its status as the highest Market Town in the UK, present the town with a unique opportunity to develop for tourism.

The strategy develops this theme, while seeking to engender a high quality and distinctive environment which is attractive to residents, visitors, business and investors. The successful implementation of the strategy and proposals, namely:

- Environmental Improvements
- Traffic management and signage







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Figures



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## Appendices



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Appendix A  
Cost Estimate



Beaufort Street Traffic Count			
Undertaken on 24/10/01			
	Top Section	Mid Section	Bottom Section
Available Spaces	12	4	-
Spaces Taken	9	4	-
Av. Disabled Spaces	2	-	10
Spaces Taken	1	-	-
Illegally Parked	4	2	11*
<b>Total Spaces Available</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>

\* Indicates that all cars occupying Disabled Bay were illegally parked

Total Number of spaces available (existing) including disabled : 28

Total number of proposed spaces available : 33  
(not including a loading bay)

## Appendix B

### Beaufort Street Traffic Count







## Brynmawr Drivetime - Demographic Appraisal

### BRYNMAWR DRIVETIME - DEMOGRAPHIC APPRAISAL

#### BRYNMAWR - 5 MINUTE DRIVE TIME POPULATIONS

	5 minute drivetime
Population	12,858
Annual convenience expenditure (£)	1,244
Annual comparison expenditure (£)	1,420

Potential convenience expenditure: £15.9m per annum;  
Potential comparison expenditure: £18.3m per annum.

#### Key Points

##### 5 minutes

- 0-4; 5-14; 15-24; 25-34; 35-44 - all lower than GB average
- 65-74 - 20% over GB average
- 75+ - 27% over GB average
- social class AB 46% lower than GB average
- social class de 33% above GB average
- 39% households have no car

#### BRYNMAWR - 15 MINUTE DRIVE TIME POPULATIONS

	15 minute drivetime
Population	92,413
Annual convenience expenditure (£)	1,256
Annual comparison expenditure (£)	1,464

## Appendix C



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Potential convenience expenditure: £116m per annum  
Potential comparison expenditure: £135m per annum

### Key Points

#### 15 minutes

- 25-34 – 10% lower than GB average
- 65-74 – 15% above GB average
- Social Class AB – 44% lower than GB average
- DE 36% above GB average
- 39% of households have no car



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## Appendix D

### Available Grant Schemes

#### Appendix D: Available Grant Schemes

The following grant schemes are administered by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council but are funded through either the National Assembly for Wales or European Funds.

##### Commercial Improvement Grant

Owners or occupiers of commercial premises situated within the Brynmawr Commercial Improvement Area, which primarily encompasses the town centre, can apply for a grant under the Commercial Improvement Grant Programme. Grants are provided for converting or improving buildings as well as for improving amenities. The grants are based on 50% of eligible costs as agreed with the Council and eligible works can include new shop fronts, roofs, the construction of new fencing, landscaping, construction of vehicular access and parking. A maximum of £15,000 is available for any one scheme. Priority will be given to dangerous and vacant buildings.

##### Economic Development Grant

The aim of the Economic Development Grant is to assist new business start-ups or SME's within the Blaenau Gwent area, operating in the





manufacturing or support to manufacturing sectors, to develop their business. The grant is based on intended capital spend, generally related to fixed assets and the creation or safeguarding of jobs. The maximum value of grant available is £10,000, although in some cases this may be enhanced to £20,000 subject to job creation and available funding. In any case the level of grant received will not exceed 50% of intended capital spend.

#### **Kick Start Package**

The Kick Start Package grant aims to encourage and assist individuals or groups of individuals to start up their own business. Applications are invited from all sectors and if successful a comprehensive package is provided to the applicant which includes rental discounts, marketing assistance and one to one mentoring support. A maximum grant of £3,000 is available but the actual level of grant will not exceed 50% of intended capital spend. Proposed businesses must not directly compete with an existing comparable business in the local area.

#### **Industrial Improvement Grant**

Any owner or occupier of premises within Brynmawr Industrial Estate (incorporating Blaenant, Barleyfield and Cwmcracken) and Noble Square Industrial Estate, can apply for an Industrial Improvement Grant. The grant provides financial aid towards the improvement, extension or conversion of commercial and industrial premises and also towards the improvement of the environment surrounding commercial and industrial premises. The grants are based on 50% of the eligible costs of works agreed by the Council and the maximum grant available is £30,000 on any one scheme. There is no automatic right to a grant. Applications are judged on their own merits with particular consideration being given to the number of jobs created and safeguarded.

#### **Key Buildings Grant**

The Key Building Grant Programme is to encourage the improvement of Key Buildings in terms of visual appearance and location or services to the local community. These buildings can be a community based project or a commercial venture. Grant funding for community use is based on 75% of eligible works up to a maximum of £20,000 while commercial premises are based on 50% of eligible costs up to £15,000.

