

Penarth Town Centre Framework Meeting

1 October 2013

The Paget Room, Penarth

Present:

Bob Guy (Vale of Glamorgan Council – Operational Manager for Countryside and Economic Projects)

Emma Smith (Vale of Glamorgan Council – Principal Officer, Business & Employment)

Cllr Maureen Kelly-Owen

Shan Bowden, Clerk to Penarth Town Council

Cllr Mike Cuddy

Matt Harrison - White Design

- Introduction by Bob Guy (BG), Cllr. Lis Burnett and Cllr Mike Cuddy.
- Presentation by BG on Town Centre Framework project and document
- Presentation by White Design Associates regarding their work to date in Penarth producing a vision for the town using input from local organisations, businesses and residents

Group discussion regarding the Town Framework document and White Design presentation

- Was the data that was being used taken from a considerable sample? Felt that it was important to know on what the research was being based before a lot of people got involved putting in their time and effort.
- Response from BG - Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners have worked on behalf of the Vale of Glamorgan Council to produce a document looking at all the Town Centres in the Vale. BG advised that the decision had been made to bring the consultation back out to the Towns for comment rather than accept it as the finished article to ensure that it adequately reflects the view of the towns people. ES - Invites were delivered personally to 100-150 local traders to try to ensure that it incorporates the views of the local community.
- It was suggested that individuals should be made more aware. BG advised that this specific event was aimed at the business community however the document is available for all to see on the Vale of Glamorgan website.
- There is a business group that actively meet the first Friday of each month, would be useful to get them involved.
- Shan Bowden spoke of a sub group of the Penarth Tourism Visitors Association who have been looking at different ways to attract more visitors to the town centre –

there had been suggestions that local businesses could making offerings or have a main attraction to entice people in. She also said that there seem to be a number of different group sharing similar conversations and it would be good to bring them all together to discuss their ideas.

- ES advised that the Vale of Glamorgan Council are currently advertising for a Town Centre Development Officer, she is hopeful the new post will pull trade bodies together and revive interest.

- BG asked how the document could be moved forward and implemented.

- It was felt that there needed to be a set of priorities established across the town:
 - More seating – benches
 - Sculpture
 - Offer transport from barrage to the top of the hill
 - Re-painting the lamp posts
 - Opportunity to examine the possibility of making part of Penarth pedestrian only.
 - Push availability of public transport – currently good bus and train routes to Penarth
 - Use of vintage bus from Cardiff to Penarth, advertise on the side, would stand out next to other buses
 - Encouraging visitors from the seafront into the town centre
 - Activities on the seafront - helter skelter, Punch and Judy for the children, walk of fame – take on Hollywood idea with all Welsh stars, get people visiting for the day
 - Building on assets Penarth already has such as the pier.

- Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners talked about a vision of reinforcing the Victorian image of Penarth and looking at the art and culture.

- It was suggested that the local schools could get involved – get the children’s vision for Penarth.

- There was a foreign student visit a while ago – a group of students were encouraged to suggest improvements to the town. The focus was on the railway station, good ideas at low cost, e.g., tree planting. Sadly little implemented.

- It was suggested that a small park and ride service could be provided, a circular service – there is parking available on the cliff tops. This idea was liked but there were concerns with the recycling area, this would need to be reviewed as it can be quite untidy. It was suggested that the circular ride could incorporate Cosmeston too.

- It was felt that there was a lot more opportunity to attract visitors to the cliff top, the current business is not realising its full potential.

- It was suggested that subsidised business rates were given for the early years to encourage new business in the town centre.
- It was felt that the Turner Gallery in central Penarth was not used to its full potential – it is a vibrant place for exhibitions and concerts.
- BG asked about the night time economy in the town centre and peoples thoughts – possibly late night shopping a few nights a week or encouraging evening opening for cafes and bars. It was felt Bar 44 was a good example, it had also improved that part of the town and reduced the problems that were being experienced. Some new restaurants in the town centre would be good, there are some nice restaurants in Penarth but some are out of the town centre and not easy for someone visiting to find.
- BG said there appeared to be a natural split forming – the more up market restaurants being situated around the pier with the town centre offering café bars – a more affordable and different atmosphere.
- It was felt that walking should also be encouraged, promoting healthy living.
- A member of the audience spoke of a sculpture trail that was created in Bristol, it was extremely successful and it is believed it has increased the footfall massively.
- More use of the Penarth logo, attractive but underused.

Llantwit Major Town Centre Framework & Destination Management Event

Tuesday 2nd October 2013

West House Hotel, Llantwit Major

Panel:

Rob Thomas (Vale of Glamorgan Council – Director of Development Services)

Phil Chappell (Creative Rural Communities – Principal Officer)

Mari-Wyn Elias-Jones (Creative Rural Communities – Senior Rural Regeneration Officer)

Cllr Gwyn John

- The event was well attended by approximately 25 traders and community representatives who all introduced themselves.
- Rob Thomas (RT) set out the aim of the event and the background to the Draft Town Centre Framework document. He stated that the stakeholder consultation approach has yielded a mix response. Several of those present in the room highlighted inaccuracies in the report and criticised some of the photographs used.
- Rob set out the 4 cross cutting themes within the report and that views would be taken away and that the Council would continue to work with the Town on its content. The important thing being that the Council and Creative Rural Communities is able to have a frank and open discussion on the document and the way forward.
- Mari-Wyn Elias-Jones (MWEJ) then set out the other aim of the event which was to feed back on the on-going Destination Management work that Creative Rural Communities has been undertaking with the Town Centre Study Group. Cllr Gwyn John Also fed this back.
- Rob Thomas then opened the floor for discussion. After some initial disagreement on the format of the event those present felt that an open discussion with notes being taken would be the most appropriate way in which to facilitate the event.
- Derek Driver of Cloggs highlighted the lack of footfall in the Town. Partly down to signage, but mainly due to the minimal choice of shops. He stated that the resident population are one set of customers, but questioned how the town could best serve tourists.
- Guy Ingram of the Town Council suggested that subsidised rents and rates would encourage new business into the Town. He also felt that people weren't able to easily navigate around the Town when arriving by rail. Signage does not direct people to the Town's main attractions or encourage a flow through the Town. Jerry Stanwell echoed these points in his question.
- Patricia Mayers from Llantwit Major Arts & Crafts Group stated that good signage is vital and that the Town has the potential to market itself as a thriving arts destination. Pop up shops could act as opportunities for local artists.
- Gordon Taylor from New Hope stated that the loss in bus services between Cowbridge and Llantwit had cut footfall in the Town and he urged for these services to be reinstated.

- Stephen Segal agreed that arts was an opportunity for the town as well as heritage and was concerned that directions to the beach were poor.
- Keith Geary, Mayor has observed that the Town is less accessible for disabled people than other towns in the Vale. Accessing the train as a disabled person can prove to be difficult. Stephen echoed this stating that many larger towns have shop mobility services.
- The group then discussed areas that Llantwit could exploit such as its perceived main draw, Heritage. The Galilee Chapel opening is seen as real opportunity for the Town to build upon in terms of heritage and church tourism. Others highlighted the blue plaques trail and that the Old Part of the Town was its strength in relation to visitor appeal. There are also many excellent walks towards that end of Town. The general feeling from all was that Wales often undersells itself. Richard of the West House hotel had said earlier in the evening, that "if this Town was in America it would have been a themed town by now given the church".
- Heather March felt that the walks were brilliant and that we didn't need to reinvent the wheel. Phil Chappell replied by saying that he agreed that we have so many excellent walks in the area. Creative Rural Communities has ring-fenced £75,000 for the development of walking tourism in 2014. This budget is overseen by a group of local stakeholders such as Valeways, tourism businesses and the Ramblers.
- Gareth Kiddie felt that the Galilee Chapel could be a fantastic visitor attraction. The church could be promoted and themed walks developed. E.g. Pilgrimage Trails. Over 1000 years of history.
- Patricia highlighted the fact that the Vale hosted the Eisteddfod in 2013 and that people from far and wide may have come to Llantwit major.
- Tim Draper of Llantwit in Bloom thinks that a new slipway will be of real benefit to the beach and lifesaving club. Access to the beach has not been easy in recent years.
- The group went on to discuss signage and opportunities in the Old part of town given the recent development of buildings in the square. More retail units are moving into that part of the Town than in recent decades.
- RT posed a question on the difference between Llantwit Major and Cowbridge. Llantwit Major's offering is actually pretty clear for visitors in that its identity is possibly more easily definable. It is the 'Gateway to the Heritage Coast'. Symbolism in Llantwit Major is also clear with the Celtic crosses. These are both excellent starting points in terms of the promotion of 'destination Llantwit'.
- Janet Moisan raised concerns about the unhappiness of traders but also acknowledged that the Chamber of Trade was not operating as effectively as it could. There is apathy out there amongst traders. This issue is not unique to Llantwit Major. Many in the room agreed that the Town Itself was looking very good at the moment, especially following the works on Boverton Road and the excellent work of the Llantwit in Bloom Group.
- RT felt that there should be more connection with the Beach and the Town in that visitors should be encouraged to experience both whilst here. Many visitors bypass the Town and head straight for the beach.

- Stephen Segal felt that the Town needed a strong brand and image. The essence of the Town should be distilled in this brand through its various components. Phil Chappell challenged this to a degree in that he felt that the Town should possibly pick its key USP as opposed to being all things to all people. Many towns in Wales have a thriving arts community, good walks and access to the Coast. What many don't have is a Christian History like Llantwit Major. Llantwit should also be capitalising on its proximity to the Capital. The Gateway to the Heritage Coast keeps emerging as a possible way to badge the town.
- John Moisan said that Llantwit Major is going to need assistance in the promotion of itself as a tourism destination and that the Council has an important role to play in that. The Wales Coast path is also a recent addition to the tourism offer in the County and this should be exploited.
- Many in the room agreed that it was unhealthy to continue the on-going comparisons between Cowbridge and Llantwit because they are different towns with different things to offer visitors. More joint working should be encouraged. Events can be an integral part of a town's identity. The timing of events is critical so that they do not compete with each other across South Wales.
- The focus of discussion then turned to how these ideas could be developed and who should develop them. Phil Chappell stated that Creative Rural Communities has a budget for Destination Management set aside of approximately £20,000 for Llantwit to achieve some quick hits. The general consensus was that whilst Llantwit Major had many active groups doing good work in the town, no single group was looking at the town as a destination. Creative Rural Communities could possibly act as the secretariat for such a group for a period of 12 months. The group would act as a Place Board for the Town. These have proven to be successful elsewhere in the UK.
- Many of the ideas as branding and signage could act as the initial agenda items for early meetings.
- Action for Market Towns who have facilitated several place boards across the UK and were attending the Cowbridge event to discuss a similar option for them. Phil proposed that we have them along to talk at a future meeting to discuss how it might work in Llantwit Major.
- All attending those were encouraged to put down any ideas and comments on the comment cards available and could feed into the consultation process on the framework at any point.

Comments on the Framework Document:

- "Agree with need to have a coherent image"
- "Agree with idea link to Heritage Coast"
- "Street scene may be improved by better signage"
- "Yes Llantwit should be seen as destination Llanilltud"
- "Good"

Comments received on cards re the way forward:

- "More attention to old part of Town. Niche market shops such as bakers and confectioners."
- "Signage to the Beach".
- "United front".
- "Focus Group – not just a talking shop".
- "There are many small groups in Llantwit Major but they are autonomous. A general coordination is required to bring these groups together. This would create a body which is greater than the sum of its parts".
- "Why not adopt "Llanilltud" as the brand / logo for Llantwit Major as a destination? Could build on what we have done at the Church?"
- "Need to ensure we link up ideas re trails. We are planning a pan Vale trail Llandaff > St Fagans > Bonvilston > Llancarfan > Llanilltud > St Donats > St Brides > Merthyr Mawr > Ewenny > Margam."
- "Good idea to think of Arts & Crafts as a vehicle to attract visitors."

Cowbridge Town Centre Framework & Destination Management Event

Monday 7th October 2013

The Bear Hotel, Cowbridge

Panel:

Bob Guy (Vale of Glamorgan Council, Operational Manager - Countryside and Economic Projects)

Mari-Wyn Elias-Jones (Creative Rural Communities – Senior Rural Regeneration Officer)

Anna Rees (Creative Rural Communities – Grants Officer)

Mike King (Action for Market Towns)

- Introduction by Mari-Wyn Elias-Jones (MWEJ)
- Presentation by Bob Guy (BG) on Town Centre Framework project and document
- Presentation by MWEJ on Destination Management work in the area to date
- Presentation from Mike King from Action for Market Towns (AMT)
- Groups discussion regarding the AMT presentations
 - Debbie Leigh - pop up shops to regenerate areas and fill retail space has worked before
 - Sam Edwards - who would pay for the AMT benchmarking work? MWEJ – there is a small budget designated to Destination Management work that could be used for this. CRC have already bought the licence which allows the work to be gathered in the area.
 - Who decides whether it goes ahead or not? MWEJ – CRC can facilitate but Cowbridge as a town/group have to take ownership.
- Marketing for the town needs to be strengthened – activities such as cyclepaths and activity breaks. Also retail and food marketing – ‘ladies who lunch’ – homeowners – stopping and shopping.
- Loss of transport links – this has hugely affected the town. Cannot get to Cowbridge from Llantwit Major or Barry. Greenlinks trying to bridge the gap.
- Not just about visitors, it’s about people’s talent and passion to become involved and encourage a cohesive approach with a strong identity for the town.
- Who steers this work? MWEJ – Cowbridge as a town (or group to be set up) to take ownership.
- John Andrew – 2 good pieces of work but nothing will happen unless the community drives it forward. There are plenty of existing groups so no need to set up another.
- Bob Guy – the town centre framework is a high level document which sits at a much broader level than the destination management project.
- Coach parking – lack of it in Cowbridge but the cattle market can be used for this purpose.
- How do you attract visitors from afar? Cowbridge is becoming more and more unique in South Wales.
- Sarah Legg – Happy Days don’t advertise locally. We need to go further afield. We need a joint approach and group together for a more cohesive approach.

- Sunday opening – difficult to do unless all traders participate and make it worthwhile for visitors to come for the day.
- Cattle Market – is it being sold off by the council for more houses? Bob Guy – CRC are instrumental in supporting the market group and a feasibility study has been completed.
- Peter Jones – no mention of unsightly area of the Butts. An improvement to this area could be a quick win.
- Alun John – the council can do something quickly and cheaply to remove the recycling bins. Suggestion that they are moved to the back of the Town Hall car park. They don't need to be so visible. Moving them would easily improve the area aesthetically.
- Signage for parking is poor.
- Alun John – the suggestions made as a result of the Destination Management workshop, many of them have been tried and have failed. How can we direct tourists for the West into Cowbridge? We need to improve signs from the motorway. MPs, AMs and councillors have been approached but cannot make any headway whatsoever. Can we use evidence based data to convince those who are in power of the need for extra signage.
- Alun John – Cowbridge is a unique historic walled market town. What use is it advertising the town if people can't find it. Need to improve signage first.
- Sarah Legg – we need to look at more creative advertising.
- Clive Voakes – we don't need another group, what we need is more effective integration. It's a disgrace that Cowbridge is undersigned. We're too modest and humble with an outreach strategy. It needs momentum and consistency. We need to focus on one or two things as opposed to lots of things.
- Alun John – we need to narrow these suggestions down to what can be achieved, what the Vale can do, what's been tried and what's already in progress.
- Who is going to manage the development? Existing groups such as the Chamber of Trade?
Alun John – we need a broader group.
- Andrew Watts – as there's a small pot of money available why not let independent consultants do the work?
- We need a lead – someone to bring together representation from all Cowbridge stakeholders. Who could do this role?
- The information gathered as part of the AMT benchmarking work could be very useful for all concerned in Cowbridge. Visitors may not care about the recycling bins. We should have reliable evidence as opposed to just the views of people who attended the first Destination Management workshop.
- Sarah Legg – we may also benefit from market research from other areas to see if they know about Cowbridge.
- Mike King (AMT) – somebody needs to take a lead. Town councillors could take a lead but new group need not necessarily be formed.
- Alun John – we could look for a representative that attends all the different groups to take the lead. Town Council? Is there a need for a separate group?
- Peter Jones – The Vale Market Action Group could widen its remit.

Comment cards:

- Need action not words

- Form a place board and pay for benchmarking work to be done
- Signage – market Cowbridge as a historic market town
- Use of livestock market area for coach parking
- Tidy up Butts area completely. Remove cattle market buildings adjacent to town wall for car parking and use for Christmas market.
- More and improved signage
- More car parking
- Remove unsightly obsolete buildings
- Establish a new business development group on the same lines as some of the other volunteer groups.
- Town Centre Framework document very general and of limited help. AMT working could be the way forward
- Elect leader to pull together all existing groups and use tool kit to generate the KPI evidence as a base for deciding what is needed. Each group should put forward one rep for the umbrella organisation/elected leader to lead.
- We need to move quicker than a four month timescale.
- We need a new group!
- Please let's have a place boards and spend part of the budget on quantitative research.
- Good to see new people. Are they the right people to form a new group?
- Comments regarding the Wool Barn should not be taken out of context.

Conclusion:

- Pay for AMT to collate benchmarking information
- Ask the Vale Market Action Group to consider taking this area of work forward but also widen its remit and allow new representatives that are interested and passionate about taking this work forward.
- CRC to act as facilitator.

Barry Town Centre Framework Meeting

Monday 21st October 2013

Dock Offices Board Room, Barry

Present:

Bob Guy

Dave Williams

Emma Smith

Cllr Anne Moore

Cllr Claire Curtis

Cllr Charlotte Williams

Cllr Rhona Probert

Cllr Ian Johnson

Mr Tony Bennett – Assistant to Alun Cairns MP

Mr Nick Frangoulis (N & M Frangoulis, Shoe Repairs)

Mrs Maria Gentile (Paul Gentile's jewellers)

Miss Aldene Thomas (Secret Garden of Beauty, Tynewydd Road)

- Bob Guy (BG) introduced the event as an opportunity to discuss the Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners draft Town Centres Framework relating to Barry town centre and High Street/Broad Street.
- Presentation by BG on the Framework
- Initial comments came from Cllr Probert who felt that the visual impact of High Street was poor creating a negative visual impact.
- Holton Road has poor building conditions too. Feels that it is an uphill struggle to tackle this problem and suggested that the council should hold landlords to account and there is certainly an argument for the Council to take positive action on this.
- It was mentioned that IT companies have shown great interest in finding accommodation in the town above shops to locate their businesses.
- A suggestion was made for the council to go into schools and encourage entrepreneurship to start up businesses in Barry.
- The traders present felt we should focus on the 50,000 residents who want to visit a vibrant and positive town centre rather than trying to attract in outsiders.
- A 50+ ladies clothes and shoe shop is badly needed in the town especially Holton Road. High Street has its share of quality clothing boutiques but this is not mirrored in the main shopping centre.
- Overall, attendees of the meeting feel the council is running events well. The Christmas light switch on event needs to be earlier than the 6pm switch on of previous years.

- Traders made a commitment to encourage other retailers in the vicinity of the square to remain open a little later to cater for residents/visitors attending the switch on event.
- Everyone agreed that markets are good and would like to see more of them.
- Not enough encouragement is offered to people considering opening a retail business in the town. Business advice and support should be retail focused and financial support provided. This could come in the form of the council encouraging landlords to offer a year's free rent to fill vacant units to get the businesses up and running then discuss terms and conditions for the future.
- Young blood in the town is required. Reference was drawn to three sisters who have recently opened up a dress agency in the town centre. They all have jobs but have managed to set up the shop by running the place between them as well as holding down employment. The shop appears to be doing well in its infancy and more of this type of attitude is required.
- Traders believe the Council should run session for retailers looking to start up. Two of the retailers (Aldene and Maria) offered to become mentors to these people where they would be happy to attend sessions to give people the benefit of their experience. Maria has been in the town centre for 35 years and Aldene for 10 years.
- Another suggestion was to set up an Amazon collection/delivery portal in the town which would mitigate the internet shopping revolution by bringing users into the town centre to collect their web bought goods and send them back if necessary.
- Cycle paths running into the town centre were requested however the point was made that priority spending for council budgets may not look at this as a particular priority in the near future.