



# Llanwrtyd Wells

## Town Investment Plan

Draft Action Plan *January 2023*



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# 1 Purpose

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

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

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

One of the main benefits of the Plan is that it will help access support from the UK and Welsh Governments' programmes aimed at towns with a strategic plan in place with a vision and priorities reflecting the community and key partners. Potential programmes include:

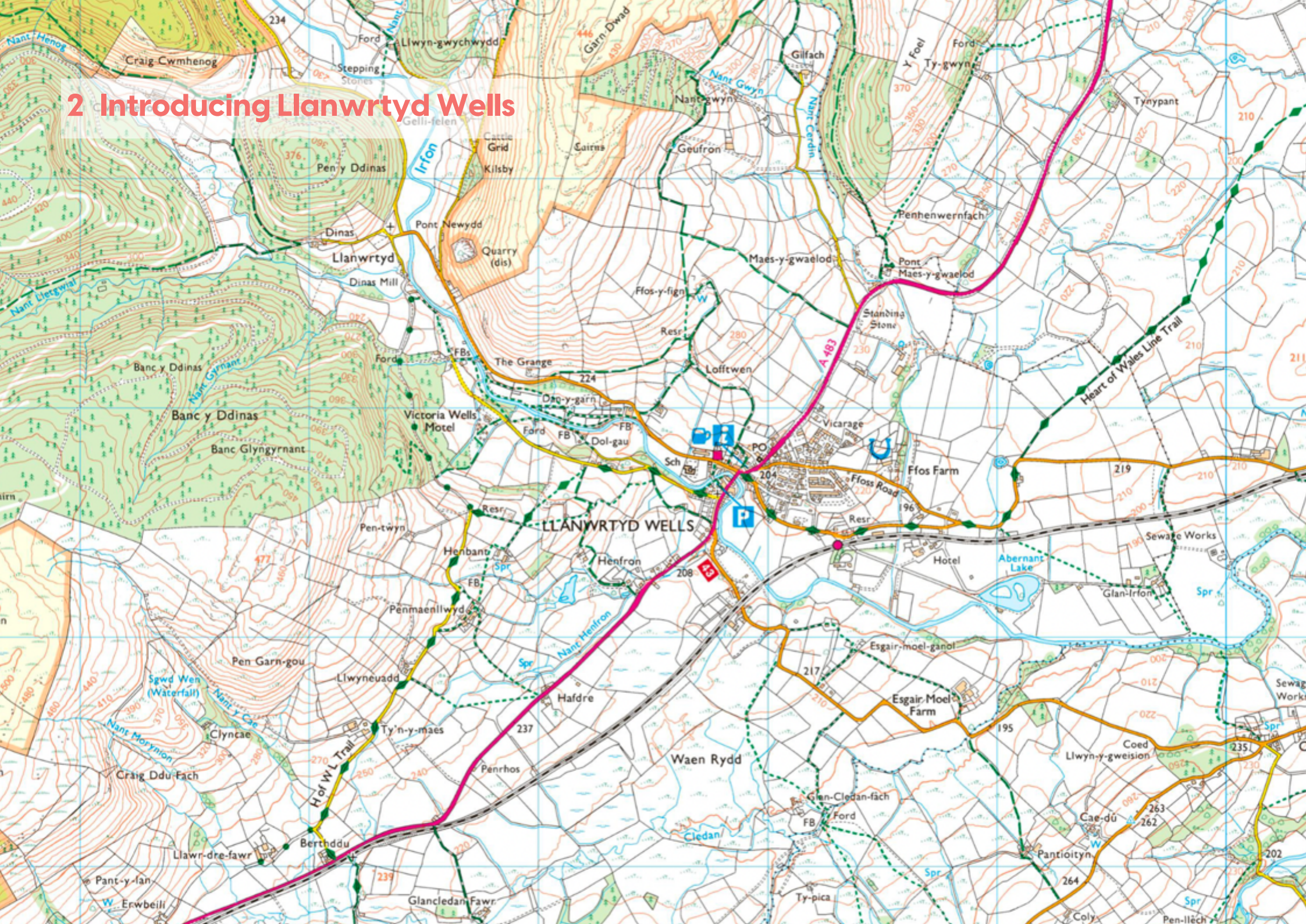
**Transforming Towns - Placemaking Grant** aimed at revitalising town centres throughout Wales and available in any town centre prioritised by Local Authority partners.

**The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)** is being delivered by Powys CC aligned with the Growth Deal and working in partnership with Ceredigion County Council as part of the Mid Wales region. Funding is available to support three Investment Priorities:

- Communities and Place
- Supporting Local Business
- People and Skills

The Plan will also assist with applications for additional fund from a range of organisations supporting businesses, heritage, tourism and voluntary and community programmes such as the National Lottery and Heritage Lottery.

## 2 Introducing Llanwrtyd Wells



## 2.0 About Llanwrtyd Wells

Llanwrtyd Wells is a lively and resolute town known both nationally and internationally as the smallest town in Britain and pioneering its original programme of quirky events. Together with the towns attraction as a base for walking and cycling, its become one of the unique destinations in the heart of Wales.

Much of the town's success has been driven by a tight knit, dedicated community, and large amount of volunteering. The community are the driving force behind the annual events and many of the attractions and facilities supporting the day-to-day operation of the town.

Llanwrtyd Wells also has an impressive range of community owned- and operated – buildings such as Victoria Hall, Institute, Heritage Centre, and church, acting as the backbone for the community and as well as visitors to the town.

Nevertheless, as with many similar rural communities, Llanwrtyd Wells faces many challenges in relation to sustaining its facilities and activities as well as its economic growth and development as a visitor destination. This Plan seeks to build on the town's strengths as well as identify the biggest challenges and the potential opportunities to secure the future of Llanwrtyd Wells.



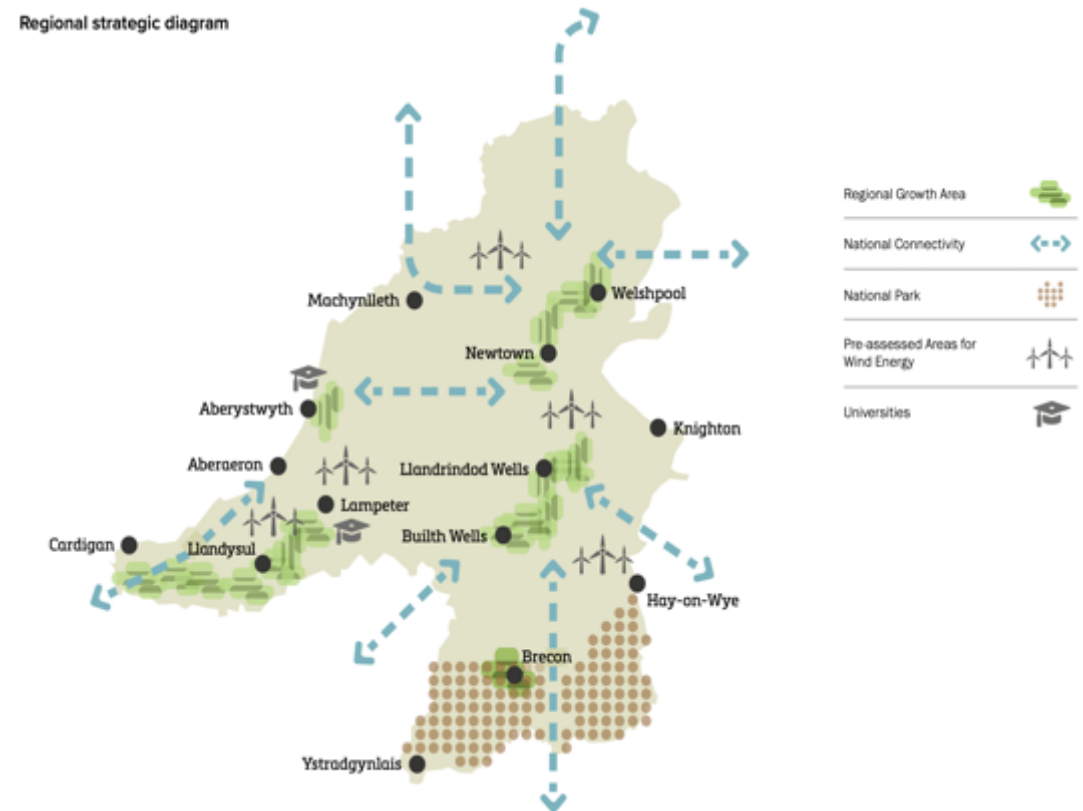
## 2.1 Strategic position

Llanwrtyd Wells is positioned on the A483, a strategic artery connecting Mid Wales with Carmarthenshire and South West Wales. Given the towns remoteness, journey times from Llanwrtyd Wells to the nearest major centres including Swansea, Cardiff, Hereford, and Aberystwyth are approximately 90 minutes by car.

The town sits between the Cambrian Mountains and Brecon Beacons and between the two larger towns of Builth Wells and Llandovery. Llanwrtyd Wells is somewhat overshadowed by these larger and better-known neighbours and largely dependent on Builth Wells for many of the towns local shopping, social and educational necessities.

**Future Wales – The National Plan 2040** has identified nearby Builth Wells as a key town within the Heart of Wales Regional Growth Area and a key location for employment, strategic housing growth and services. Llanwrtyd Wells would be expected to benefit from this growth and is itself located on the Future Wales A483 National Connectivity corridor highlighting the strategic importance of the route between central Mid Wales and South West Wales.

Figure 1 – Mid Wales Regional Strategic Diagram (The National Plan)

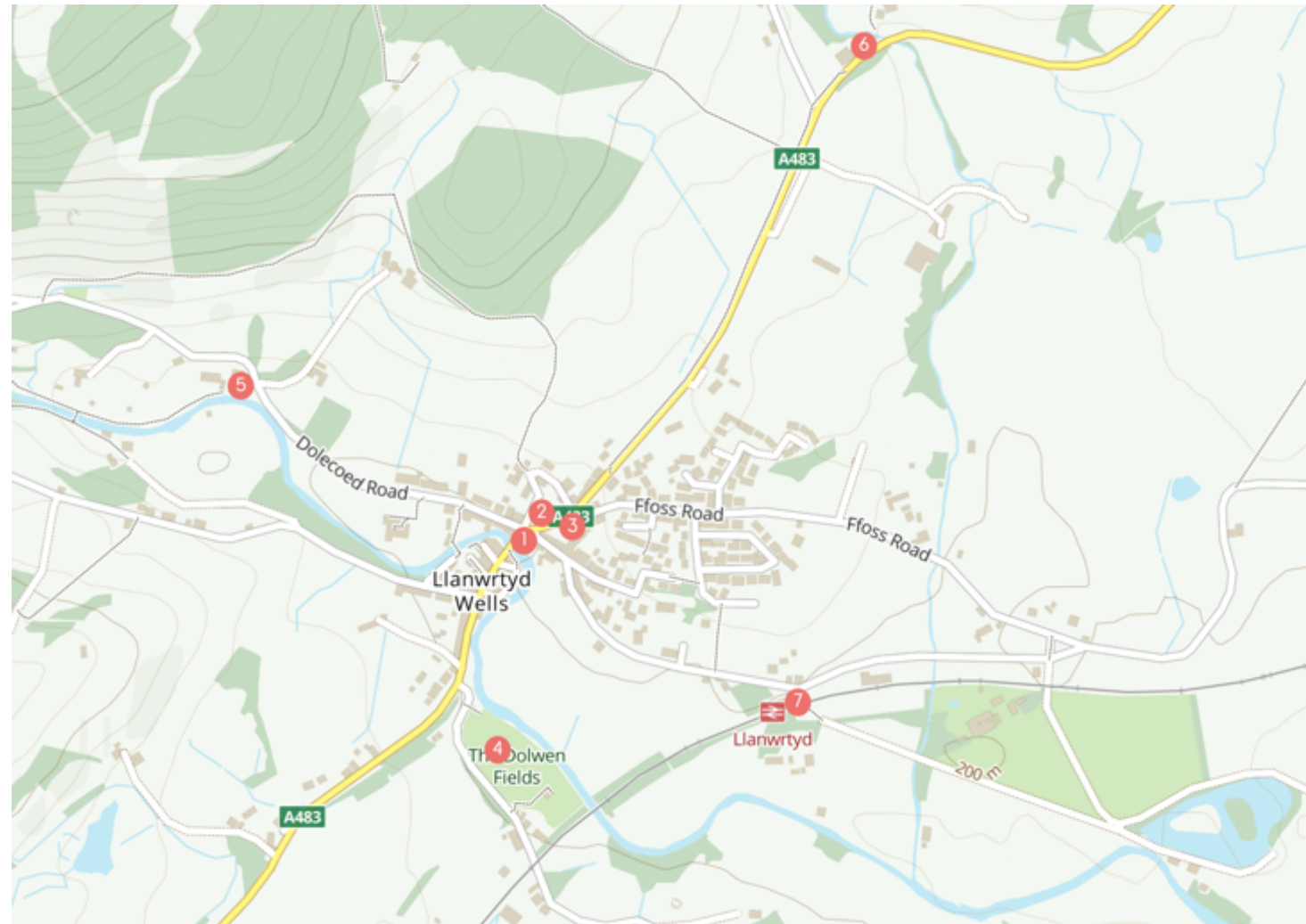


## 2.2 Orientation

The focus of this Plan is Llanwrtyd Wells and its surrounding rural hinterland. Whilst the built-up area provides most of the social, cultural and economic infrastructure of the Plan area, there are wider assets of importance outside of the immediate town.

1. **Town centre** – Llanwrtyd Wells is Britain’s smallest town and still retains a modest commercial and retail role for the population and visitors. The busy A483 passes through the centre and is a natural stopping off destination for travellers heading west through Mid-Wales.
2. **Neuadd Arms** – the prominent pub, brewery and hotel is located at the centre of the town and provides the hub of many of the events and activities that have raised the profile of Llanwrtyd Wells in recent decades.

Figure 2 - Orientation Plan



3. **Heritage & Arts Centre** – a visitor attraction where tourists can learn more about the town’s history, listen to people’s memories and experience the work of local artists.
4. **The Dolwen Field** – is the town’s main outdoor sport and recreational facility, situated on the Cefn Gorwydd Road just off the main road with a play area for children, a large green space for rugby/football and other sports and pavilion.
5. **Charcroft Electronics** – is a privately-owned specialist manufacturer and distributor of commercial electronics and the towns largest employer. The company is located at its HQ on Dolecoed Road (see image).
6. **Former Cambrian Woollen Mill** – Cambrian Woollen Mill, just north of Llanwrtyd Wells, until its closure was one of the few remaining operational woollen mills in Wales
7. **Train Station** – part of the Heart of Wales network and located some 800m outside of the town along Station Road.



### 3 Key issues and opportunities

#### 3.0 People & the economy

The demographic and socio-economic profile of Llanwrtyd Wells shows a declining, ageing population with fewer affluent and prosperous households than the average for Mid Wales. The estimated population for the ward area of Llanwrtyd Wells in 2020 was 1,761, a decline of some 6% (114 people) since the 2011 Census. This downward trend was confirmed with the 2021 Census findings showing the population was 1,551, a decline of some 21% (324 people) since the 2011 Census. The Parish population in 2021 was 800.

There are also fewer affluent and prosperous households living within the Llanwrtyd Wells catchment compared with the average for Mid Wales, although overall, there is low unemployment.

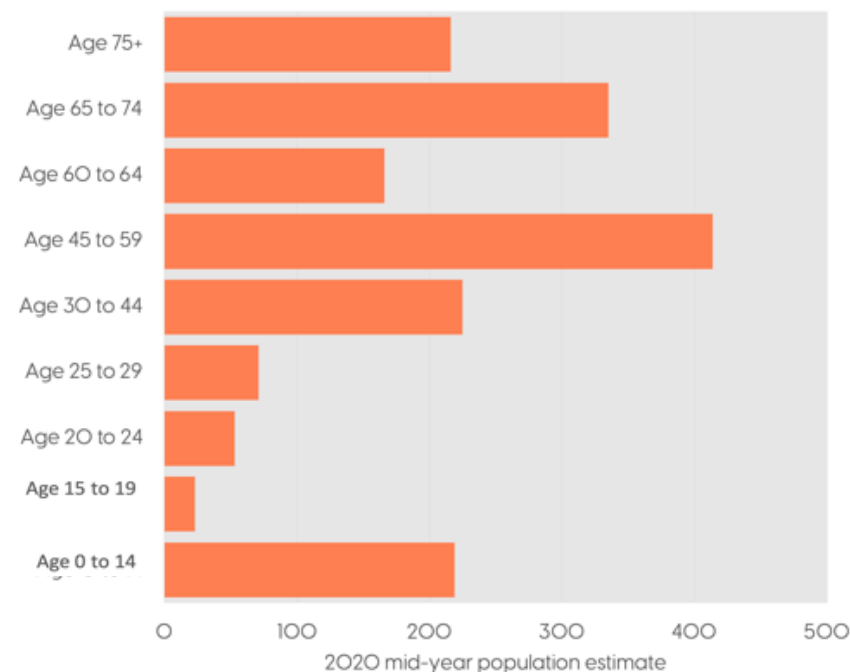
Workforce data shows the area has reasonable skill levels with average proportion of the resident with a Level 4 qualification and the largest proportion of working age adults employed in skilled trades (28%). The employment base is largely dependent on agriculture and forestry, as well as wholesale/retail, health and social care.

Although most of the local workforce travel outside of the town for employment, there is a high level of containment of the workforce with workers living and working typically in Powys. The relatively low unemployment rate likely masks low pay and underemployment. And the high levels of self-employment and home working combined with low incomes is likely to be masking rural poverty. The latest 2021 census data

indicates 37% of households in the town centre are deprived in one dimension 34% for surrounding area and 35% for Powys as a whole

High seasonal employment, relatively low productivity, and a lack of diversity across the economy as reported in recent studies all contribute to a high degree of economic vulnerability. And the forecast population and employment decline, if not addressed, will result in the economy lagging behind.

Table 1 – Age Structure of Llanwrtyd Wells





### 3.1 Employment, sites & premises

Llanwrtyd Wells is a highly localised industrial market with demand mainly from established agricultural, engineering and manufacturing businesses for small to mid-sized units. Occupancy rates are very high, suggesting that new businesses looking to enter the market would have difficulty finding appropriate premises. Property Agents are reporting little activity or available stock is also holding back the growth of established businesses.

The situation is compounded by the lack of formal designated industrial estates or allocated sites earmarked for employment uses that could provide a focus for investment. However, the area includes a few private employment areas including:

- Maesydre Enterprise Park – two small industrial units originally built by the WDA. The adjoining employment expansion land assigned as a part of the original site development was recently granted planning permission for housing at appeal.
- Station Road – Builder Merchants site
- Ty Hen Ysgol – Engineering/auto workshops
- The Cambrian Woollen Mill – Motor engineering

In addition, Charcroft Electronics Ltd manufacture and distributes components and is the towns largest employer. With 100 skill staff the company continues to expand and has outgrown its main site and has a requirement for new sites allowing the operation to expand locally.

Mid Wales Motorrad are in the former Cambrian Woollen Mill and specialises in the repair, servicing and rebuilds of BMW motorcycles. The company acquired the former estate (image above) in 2019 because of the position on the A483 which is popular with motorcyclists. A large proportion of the site remains vacant and in need of repair and refurbishment to bring it into economic use. The buildings are an important opportunity to support the economy and have the potential to provide much needed lettable business floorspace.

Overall, the shortage of available employment land and vacant business property means it is necessary for new employment space to be created through the regeneration and repurposing of a range of existing buildings. Additionally, the growth of remote and home-based working, particularly in attractive 'lifestyle' rural locations, will see places like Llanwrtyd Wells continue to grow their employment either through hybrid workspaces, home working and with the potential for further growth in new enterprises including those from a diversifying agricultural sector.

## 3.2 Agriculture

Agriculture and forestry continue to provide the main source of employment for the local economy, although mechanization of the Agri/Forestry sector suggests the number of job opportunities are decreasing. There's also evidence locally of large family farms being bought and taken out of mainstream agriculture which may have wider consequences for the rural economy in terms of employment opportunities.

# Cupboards & Cakes

## 3.3 Town Centre

### Character

Llanwrtyd Wells is one of the smallest towns in Britain and this is reflected in the charter of its centre which is very compact, supporting only a small number of shops and services.

The centre is historically attractive and charming with numerous substantial Victorian buildings originally developed as hotels, guests houses and shops.

Despite the limited range of facilities and services, the centre provides the basics including a convenience store, filling station/garage, and Post Office (located within the garage). There's also a town centre pharmacy housed in the health centre and the library is a short walk and located at the school. Whilst there is no bank, there is a 'hole in the wall' ATM and overall, the availability of the essentials ensures the centre provides a focal point its local community.

The commercial area is spread along the A483 with the striking Neuadd Arm Hotel enclosing the heart of the centre where Dolecoed Road and Irfon Terrace meet. Despite the openness and wider pavements, the quality of the town centre environment is diminished by the dominance of moving traffic along the busy A483.

Whilst the centre will soon become a 20mph zone, there are concerns about the speed of traffic, mainly HGVs and large agricultural vehicles travelling downhill and towards the centre from the direction of Builth Wells. The pedestrian environment, junction arrangement and absence of a zebra or controlled pedestrian crossing point in this location makes crossing the road difficult.

### Diversity

In its heyday there were 35 shops in the town centre, however this has declined over several decades and as of 2022 there are 18 non-residential properties of which 13 are commercial uses/businesses.

The largest number of businesses fall within the Hotel and Accommodation and Eating and Drinking sectors which represents 46% of the total. Traditional shopping no longer provides the primary reason for visiting the town centre.

There are a small number of specialist independent shops providing interesting and attractive experiences



including a women's clothing shop, fabrics/haberdashery, general/hardware store, arts and crafts.

While there has been a long-term decline of the centre, historical data over the last six years demonstrates several notable businesses have recently closed including an estate agent, butcher and bank. There is also evidence that commercial property agents operating in larger towns in Powys no longer actively market opportunities in Llanwrtyd Wells, mostly because of the small number of opportunities and perceptions of limited market interest. It appears that vacant commercial properties tend to be converted into residential, hence shrinking the commercial centre. This is reflected in the small number of vacant premises (two or 13% of the total) which is below the Welsh high street average of 17%.

Overall, the town centre provides an important but limited range of essential local shops and local services. The small range of specialist retailers is an important attraction for a wider than local customer base and provides an additional level of interest for visitors staying in local accommodation or attracted by the hospitality offer. However, there is a need to stem the decline of businesses, and preferably encourage their growth if the town is to sustain its long term appeal as a visitor destination.

In terms of wider diversity and attractions, the **Victoria Hall** is run by a local charity and provides a hall for hire, a business hub/ meeting room, a kitchen and a gym. The hall also hosts regular events for the community such as table tennis, yoga and a gardening club on a weekly basis, making it a centrepiece for locals.

## Shades of Green

An example of the economic changes taking place in the town centre is demonstrated by Shades of Green. A notable retail shop that sells the works of local artists and recycled clothing, with commission used to fund local good causes.

Inside it is an authentic Victorian shop with a beautiful interior that attracts many visitors. The shop is currently open two days a week, however, the owners have moved away and wish to sell the premises and the community would like to preserve the historic shop and its use.

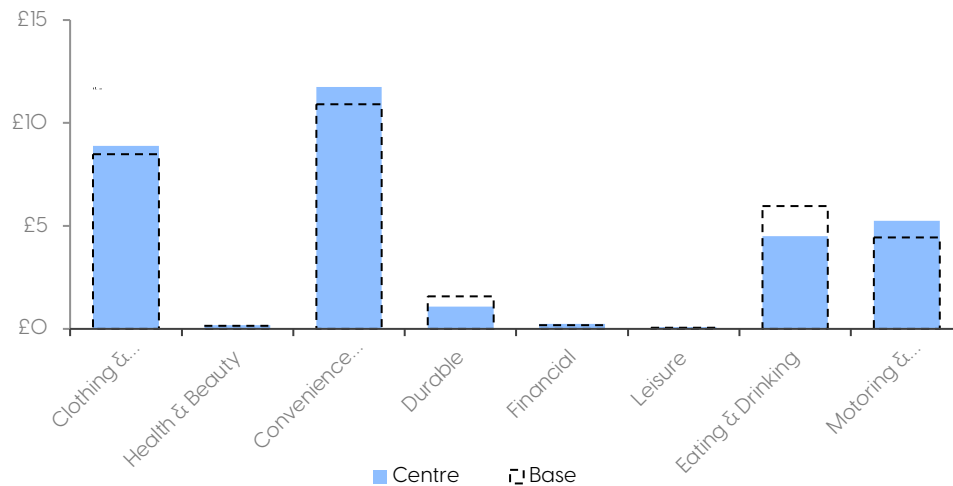


The **War Memorial Institute** is an important local armed forces institution and the base of the Town Council. There are plans for its refurbishment. Proposals include refurbishing the ground floor meeting rooms as well as changing the use of the first floor to create flats. The property also hosts the Whistlers Art Studios.

### Spending patterns

Annual spend in the town centre is estimated to be £160,800 with the majority being drawn from the town and its hinterland (within approximately 8 km). This includes several smaller villages, such as Llangammarch Wells and Tirabad (to the south), Llanwrtyd and Abergwesyn (to the north). The catchment is naturally small because of the more significant retail role of nearby Builth Wells and Llandoverly.

**Table 2 – Average Weekly Spend Per Person**



### Infrastructure

The centre benefits from two small public car parks (free). Both are slightly hidden away from a visitor’s perspective in their location behind the Neuadd Arm and Victoria Hall. There are also occasional issues with the availability of parking spaces when large-scale events take place.

The town centre public toilets are also an important visitor asset; however, they are positioned by the riverside in an obscured location with opportunities to improve the wayfinding signage to help visitors immediately identify where they are.

There’s also a concern about the absence of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations in the centres and in the wider area. This is a weakness particularly for a town that wishes to attract long distance visitors from across the UK. There is also a community initiative investigating public E-bikes for the town centre which is in the early stages of development

### 3.4 Community buildings

Llanwrtyd Wells has a significant number of community owned buildings located within and near to the town centre such as the above-mentioned Victoria Hall, the Institute, the Heritage Centre and the Church. Whilst these buildings are essential for the community, serving as social venues for residents, supporting local enterprise and larger events that attract visitors, many need investment and access to new funds. And at the same time important privately owned buildings are also in need investment and in some cases are encouraging the community to step forward to help save them e.g. Shades of Green.

The town faces the challenge of identifying funding sources to improve the fabric and adapt/modernise the quality and use of the existing community buildings, as well as raising funds to purchase additional buildings.

#### Victoria Hall

The Victoria Hall is a 'larger than local' venue capable of hosting events such as concerts, with a capacity of about 200-250 people drawing in audiences from across mid Wales. The Hall also plays a role in supporting many of the town's events and visitors regularly attend the community-led activities that run across the year.



It is well equipped for a variety of uses, having wi-fi extensions in every room, a catering facility and space for hot-desks. The Hall also has a gym with a good amount and variety of equipment. Many aspects of the building need updating to sustain its current level of use such as the electrical wiring, sound system and insulation. However, it also has the potential to expand its roles providing additional office space (to support the growth in home working/business tourism) and potential to adapt to provide more multi-use facilities



### 3.5 Visitor Economy

The town has a multi-layered reputation as a visitor destination. It is celebrated for quirky outdoor activities that has made it famous world-wide and attracts thousands of people from across the UK to experience events such as the World Bog Snorkelling Championships and Man vs. Horse.

These events take place against the backdrop of a spectacular location placed between the Brecon Beacons and the Cambrian Mountains that makes the town and surrounding area a base for visitors exploring the remarkable natural landscape and the dark skies of the National Park.

The town is also distinguished as the smallest in Britain, as well as playing on the spa town heritage as the self-branded 'Wellness' Heart Wales'.

## **Green Events**

Green Events provide the driving force for many of the town's events, it is run by a group of local businesspeople and supported by volunteers from across the local community. The town's notoriety started in the 1980's and over the last 40 years it has established an impressive annual programme of imaginative outdoor events across a wide range of disciplines including running, walking, cycling and horse-riding. The annual World Bog Snorkelling Championships was named by Lonely Planet as one of the top 50 must do things from around the world.

However, the severe disruption of Covid led to a reduction in the number of events and coincided with other developing challenges including declining levels of volunteering, rising insurance costs and the shortage of skills such as trained first aiders. At the same time there's growing competition from similar outdoor UK events, a mounting need for a new generation of event organisers and a requirement for more skills such as marketing and promotion to help sustain and grow the town's events programme.

## **Food, drink and hospitality**

The town is also known for its hospitality venues including the Neuadd Arms Hotel, the eye-catching pub and brewery at the centre of the town is the centre for many a quirky event but is also one of the many places providing food and drink in the town centre. There is a notable range of cafes and restaurants appealing to a variety of tastes including the award winning and environmentally conscious Drovers Rest restaurant and cooking school.

## **Heritage**

Interest in the history of the town and the region can be experienced at the Llanwrtyd and District Heritage and Arts Centre, located in one of the town's old chapels. The Centre is a seasonal attraction (April – November) and open from Thursday-Sunday. There is a desire for the centre to develop its promotion as well as the activities for younger people to increase footfall.

## **Accommodation**

The accommodation base is a variety of B&Bs, country hotels and remote cottages. There are also important facilities outside of the town such as the Abernant Lake Hotel activity centre, a major residential outdoor pursuits centre with enough space for 200 young people.

The town's position on the A483 route across Wales is an opportunity to intercept travelling visitors and the increasingly popular motorhome explorers.

## **Family attractions**

In a town with few activities geared towards families with young children, the children's playground located at Dolwen Fields provides a small yet important facility adjacent to the town centre. However, the playground requires upgrading/investment (including an outdoor gym) with the potential to appeal more effectively to families looking for 'anything for children to do' as part of a visit.

On the whole, Llanwrtyd Wells is in an enviable position to capture some of the growth in the tourism industry pertinent to Mid Wales that includes a growing desire for 'uncharted destinations and authentic experiences, growth of wellness, culinary explorers seeking out unique and high quality food offers, and a trend towards quirky pursuit. However, there are several challenges that could potentially limit the towns future growth:

- Cost, skills and capacity issues with sustaining and growing the programme of events
- Staff and skills shortages experienced by the hospitality sector
- Seasonality, and the need for additional indoor attractions and a stronger year-round offer
- Infrastructure issues including parking during events, availability of EV charging, public transport accessibility, availability of accommodation
- Diversity and quality of accommodation

## The Chapel

A local entrepreneur and music industry platform Amplify are currently refurbishing the former town centre Methodist Chapel and developing a new initiative under the name 'CHPL.live' It will result in the building converted into a unique 300-person performance venue.

The Chapel has already hosted several live music community events and will eventually serve as the centrepiece for live performances simultaneously broadcast in the metaverse (virtual reality) to a global audience. The promoters of the project believe The Chapel has the potential to vastly grow Llanwrtyd Wells' name both nationally and worldwide through a unique music offering and regularly scheduled events across the year.

One objective of the promoters is to help reinforce the town's food, drink and accommodation businesses through regular footfall and new visitors to the town centre.



### 3.6 Movement

Despite the town's strategic position on the A483, its remoteness results in much poorer connectivity and more transport difficulties than experienced in nearby towns. Whilst there is a daily bus service, it is limited and therefore the Llanwrtyd Wells Community Transport Service (LWCT) has grown to provide services for residents needing access to shops, the hospital, or other essential services.

**The Heart of Wales Line** connects the town with the rail network, with station stops located on the edge of the town and at nearby Sugar Loaf. Whilst the line provides a vital transport link for rural communities, the time, frequency and reliability of services (4 a day) has meant the line is considered best suited for day trippers and walkers and less so for essential journeys and commuting.

There are no immediate plans for investment in the fabric of Llanwrtyd Wells station, however, Transport for Wales currently plan to convert carriages into flexi-seating to accommodate a growing interest of cyclists in exploring the walking routes along the line. They also intend on expanding the service on the line to 5 trains a day from December 2022.

Future opportunities are likely to be focused on developing the integrated transport and movement facilities from the station, incorporating the current Community Transport building with improvements for walking and cycling.

### 3.7 Digital infrastructure

A digitally enabled town is of increasing importance to enable Llanwrtyd Wells to grow and function socially and economically. The town already has a good level of basic digital infrastructure, and most of the town benefits from fibre broadband. The plans for fibre broadband on Dolecoed Road are currently under review. Town Wi-Fi has recently been installed through the Powys CC town Wi-Fi programme and there is 'Good' 4G coverage through the Vodafone and O2 networks.

In addition, there is a community broadband scheme established and led by the Town Council – through the scheme Broadway are installing FTTP broadband. The town also benefits from a digital gateway to connect with the cloud – the LoRa gateway is in place at Ysgol Dolafon.

Overall, a number of important building blocks are in place that would enable the town to exploit digital for the benefit of the town's business and visitor economy.

### 3.8 Development & constraints

The Local Development Plan (LDP) identifies the potential for circa 70 new dwellings across three sites in the town. If developed, the sites have potential to grow and sustain the local economy and local services. However, there are concerns about smaller than anticipated amount of affordable housing expected to be provided as part of these developments due to reported cost and development viability issues.

There are also concerns about investment in the sewage treatment capacity and phosphate stripping facilities to overcome current restrictions on new developments.

## 4 Priorities

From understanding Llanwrtyd Wells as a place and listening the view of its stakeholders, we have come to a draft set of priorities and themes that guide the Town Investment Plan. The Plan focuses on the town's assets and strengths, rather than problems and needs. Overall, there's the ambition for the town to become more accessible, green and sustainable thus growing its population, lifting the levels of prosperity, tackling the weakening town centre, and capturing greater levels of year-round resident and visitor spending.



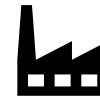
### VISITOR ECONOMY

Vitalise the town's events, grow & promote a stronger year round offer.



### TOWN CENTRE

Create a higher quality public realm & grow the number of businesses & attractions



### EMPLOYMENT & ENTERPRISE

Sites & premises that encourage start-ups, support economic diversification & business expansion



### TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

A low carbon & better connected town with improved public transport, parking & cycling facilities

## 5 Proposed Actions

### 5.0 Visitor Economy

Llanwrtyd Wells is a naturally attractive destination that enjoys an enviable profile and reputation for a range of experience important to tourism in Mid Wales. The events programme already satisfies the adventurous, the natural environment attracts nature lovers, walkers and cyclists, a food offer draws culinary explorers and heritage centre appeals to history buffs. However, despite its diversity, the economy is intermittent and seasonal and there is a need to grow a larger scale continual year-round offer.

In addition to the comprehensive range of events, there's also a need for more year-round and indoor activities capable of attracting visitor's week in, week out and especially in poor weather. And through boosting out of season tourism, the greater the potential to sustain and encourage a bigger range of town centre businesses. The town centre gains strength from its small range of independents, food, drink and craft shops and increasing spending and lengths of visit provides the foundations for a greater range and quality retail and leisure.

And accommodating larger events and number of visitors would mean the centre would need additional parking, accommodation options and improved public transport that allows visitors to access the town with confidence and ease.

### 1 – Events

The Plan has identified several cost, skills and technical challenges faced by event organisers, including Green Events, that hinder the preservation and growth of events. There is the need for:

- Support and training for event organisers to maintain and grow safely and cost-effectively.
- Encourage existing event providers in Mid Wales work together to share resources, expertise and to build a pool of skilled volunteers, and skills such as marketing support and trained first aiders.
- To identify and address 'event inhibitors' such as sufficient amount and range of local accommodation, public transport services, parking and sufficient electric charging for cars.
- Support to sustain and potentially extend the programme of events to include more variation in the types of events and establish a year-round calendar to promote the off-shoulder season.
- More indoor event facilities

### 2 – The Chapel 'CHPL.live'

The Chapel is a new private sector led opportunity to develop a unique and potentially flagship cultural attraction that diversifies Llanwrtyd Wells' events offer and elevates the town's position on the world wide map. The visualised 3D virtual 'metaverse' live music venue would provide a new indoor and year-round offer. The Chapel also has the potential to diversify spending patterns from the new audiences attracted by arts and culture and grow related spend in other parts of the economy such as leisure and recreation, and food and beverage.

### 3 – Aires

Identifying opportunities for a more diverse accommodation base includes roadside Aires for motor homes and camper vans. Aires traditionally help capture greater levels of travelling visitors and generate additional income in local shops and food and beverage establishments and reduce unwanted overnight parking. As part of this initiative, it would be necessary to identify potential sites capable of providing water, electricity and waste disposals alongside a suitable communication strategy that informs potential visitors of the presence and locations of these Aires.

## 5.1 Town Centre

The town centre needs to re-establish itself as a vibrant, diverse, and more interesting visitor and shopping destination to draw residents spending back to the high street and ensure Llanwrtyd Wells continues to provide a sustainable place to live, work and visit. The centre also needs to address the impact of through traffic on the quality of the environment and the over-all appeal of the centre.

### 1 - Town Centre Prospectus

The town centre would benefit from more leisure and shopping activity, driven by the opportunities of a stronger year-round visitor economy with a focus on growing the range of independent and distinctive traders.

This could be achieved through a prospectus that addresses head on the lack of awareness of the town's potential and business opportunities. The town could appeal to 'lifestyle entrepreneurs' attracted by the town's distinctiveness, reputation and appeal as a place to live and work. The prospectus if marketed properly would help influence property agents,

development proposals and property owners could help ensure the re-occupation of vacant town centre properties.

Encouraging private and community sector investment is likely to require grant support for property improvements and adaptation. Powys CC could provide a signposting role to funding and support property owners and businesses through the process. 'Larger than local' community facilities such as the Victoria Hall have also been identified for investment to sustain and improve the leisure offer and facilities for local residents, business and visitors.



## 2 – Public Realm

The area around the Neuadd Arm Hotel - Dolecoed Road and Irfon Terrace is an important and natural 'town centre' where targeted improvements could create a more attractive and pedestrian friendly heart for Llanwrtyd Wells. A targeted public realm scheme would have the potential to:

- Create a high-quality space that generates a greater level of excitement and intercept a larger number of people passing through Llanwrtyd Wells.

- Reconsidering the design of the whole space and create much improved walking and cycling environment with safe and appealing crossing points across the A483
- Provide impactful 'welcome' and wayfinding signage to enhance the sense of arrival in a distinctive place and direct visitors towards the public toilets and key features

Figure 3 – Public Realm Improvements



### 3 – Street furniture

Incorporated into the public realm scheme, new signage and visitor information will be required to clearly identify the location of the town's car parks and public toilets, seating and introducing cycling friendly infrastructure such as town centre street pumps and cycle stands.

### 4 – Adopt a Smart Towns approach

There is potential to use the town's digital infrastructure to advance a 'Smart Towns' approach, adding value to future investments and place management initiatives. For example, utilising town centre wi-fi and interactive digital visitor information signs similar to the example available in Rhayader, or the installation of sensor to gathered data (e.g. footfall, dwell time and information about first time visitors) as used in Cardigan to help inform investments in events marketing and to inform the trading of businesses.

A Smart Town encourages the sharing visitor data between businesses, Community Council and County Council and is used to build detailed business cases for future investment in the town centre. Sensors also have the potential to be used to support the upkeep of the town centre – managing when bins need to be emptied, when plants need to be watered and the monitoring and to inform the schedule of toilet management maintenance and upkeep

### Case study – Rhayader digital interactive sign

The town centre digital totem creates a positive engagement with visitors, it helps engage visitors and encourage interaction using an interactive touchscreen with pages including Google maps, business, and accommodation directories and up to date; what's on' and information about nearby attractions. Touch screen digital signage grabs attention far better than printed signage and can be linked to individual business and event pages.



## 5.2 Employment & Enterprise

The economic performance of the town and surrounding area has been impeded by the lack of available employment sites and premises as well as skills and staff shortages. There is a need to address:

- investment to regenerate existing stock and to bring commercial premises up to modern standards and energy efficiency levels.
- commercial viability issues which have resulted in the lack of development of commercial properties by the private sector;
- identifying a supply of employment sites particularly for start-ups and growing local businesses.

### 1 - Planning and site promotion

There is the need to plan for additional employment land premises at the larger than town level and this is best achieved through the revision of the Local Development Plan and its strategic approach to employment land planning. As part of the process, there's also a need to work proactively with landowners and local businesses to assist in bringing sites forward for development in response to actual market demand. This could be through streamlining/assisting with planning processes, exploring site opportunities/constraints and Powys CC could hold regular engagement with landholders. As part of this process dialogue with Charcroft Electronic is recommended to identify local options for growth and expansion.

### 2 - Viability funding and support

There is often a viability gap discouraging private sector investment and the potential exists for a more direct, public-sector planning and delivery of advanced commercial property in the area. This is required to help attract new business occupiers and build confidence in the commercial development market with the longer- term objective to create a more sustainable commercial property market. In addition, Powys CC could provide a signposting role to funding and support that landowners and businesses could access to help sites to come forward.

### 3 - Repurposing and modernising existing premises

Businesses are increasingly looking to repurpose surplus space and modernise premises to meet the needs of the local economy. Furthermore, businesses are looking to reduce their carbon footprint, driven by regulations/policies of governments, rising energy costs and consumer expectations.

Businesses could be supported to bring underutilised and modernised property forward that's energy efficient and able to create small scale workspace opportunities. Properties, including within the town centre, can address the need for additional workspace. Examples of buildings that might be appropriate for investment and conversion include the former Cambrian Woollen Mill

#### **4 – Skills and workforce development**

Businesses are reporting the lack of available and skilled staff particularly in the hospitality sector. The Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership (RSL) reports that the skills deficits are impacting businesses across all sectors in the region, in line with national trends. The RSL encourages local businesses, particularly in target sectors, to create more work experience opportunities and to target young people to engage with employers to open more pathways to employment. Local schools provide opportunities to communicate with suitable students.

### **5.3 Transport & Movement**

There's a need to invest in low-carbon transport and technologies, supporting active travel and ensuring Llanwrtyd Wells becomes a sustainable and attractive place to visit.

#### **1 – Electric Vehicle Charging**

In the absence of EV charging in the town and surrounding area, there is a need to identify specific locations where charging points are required. These should be located within the town's main car parks, as well as at significant visitor destinations located around the town including the train station. The number of spaces delivered needs to reflect not only the size of the town but its popularity as a visitor and events destination. As well as developing a suitable communication strategy that informs potential visitors of the presence and locations of these charging points, it will be necessary to work with partners such as Green Events and accommodation providers to help promote their availability.

#### **2 – Active Travel**

There's potential as part of future development plans for Llanwrtyd Wells station to create an integrated transport and movement facilities aligning with the Community Transport services and improvements for walking and cycling. Investment by Transport for Wales should consider installing EV charging points at stations. In addition, the area of the station has the potential to provide additional 'overflow' parking facilities when the town hosts major events. There would be the need to identify supporting infrastructure e.g., signposting and wayfinding, bike storage, E-bikes, charging points etc.

#### **3 – E-bikes**

The e-bike project is an existing initiative and collaboration between the Tourist and Trade Association (LT&TA), Nant y Walch Barn (N y WB) in the Irfon Valley just outside Llanwrtyd Wells and Shades of Green. The aim is to provide a local green, accessible and affordable transport system to enable local people and visitors' better access to explore their natural environment, and to provide employment and volunteering opportunities. The project aims to improve green transport into green spaces for the local community and visitors enabling people who have previously been excluded from exploring the Cambrian Mountains by conventional biking too difficult in what is a very hilly area. The ambition is to help repurpose the Shades of Green shop and at Nant Y Walch Barn for bike hire. The project is also linked with Cycle-Tec in Builth Wells for advice and help with the project.

## 5.4 Project Coordination

Many of the ideas set out in this Plan require coordination and management. The creation of a key, dedicated Town Champion linked with Powys CC regeneration to enable and co-ordinate delivery of all the Action Plan projects / interventions should be explored. The role would ensure close facilitated working with key stakeholders, third sector and local community organisations.

Figure 4 - Proposals Plan

