



# Newcastle Emlyn Economic Recovery & Growth Plan

Prepared for Carmarthenshire County Council

June 2021



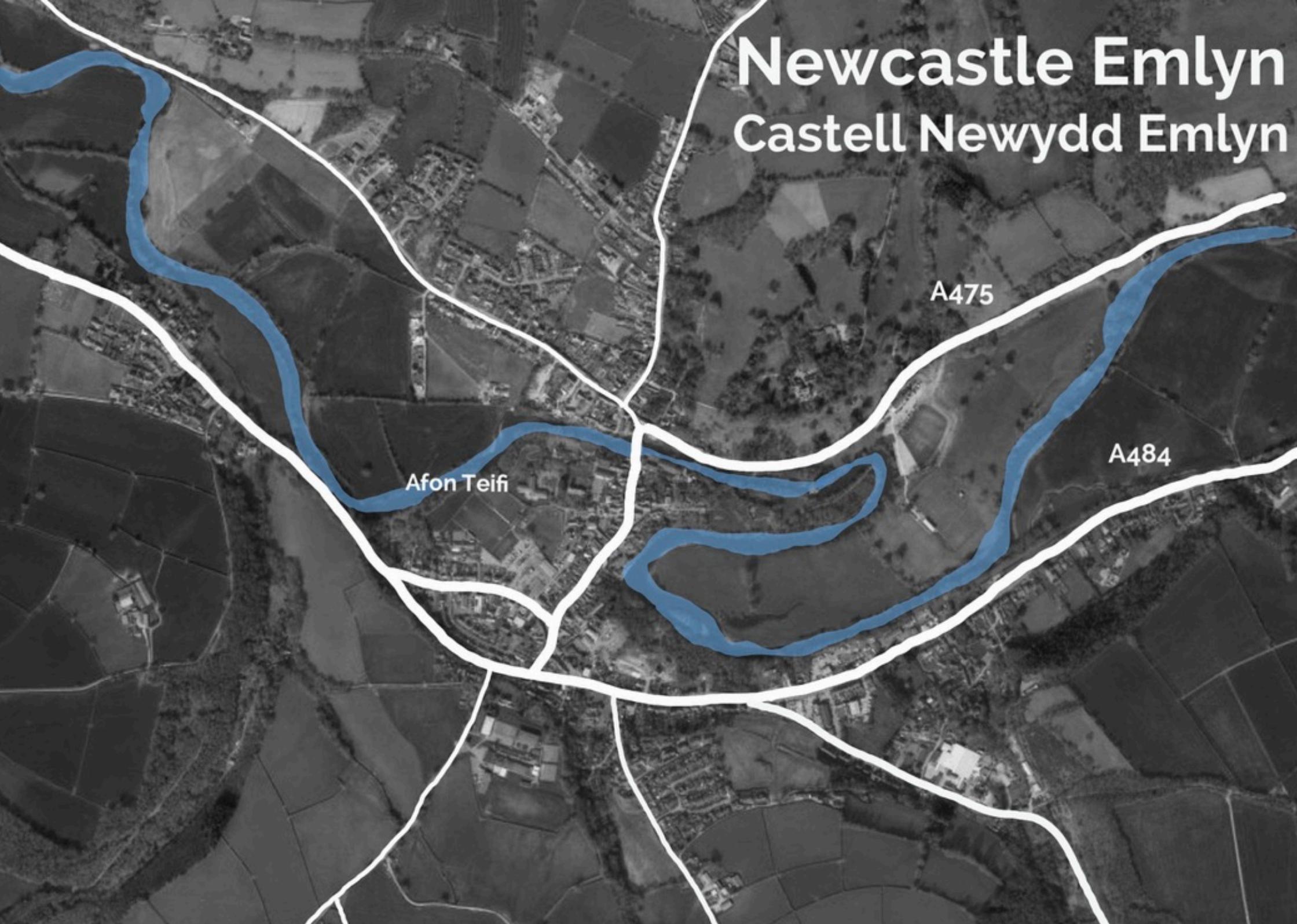
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# Newcastle Emlyn Castell Newydd Emlyn



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# 1 Purpose

This Recovery and Growth Plan for Newcastle Emlyn is concerned with immediate opportunities for sustainable economic recovery as well as the longer term prosperity and growth of the town and surrounding area over the next five years and beyond.

The economic impacts of Coronavirus are extraordinary and unprecedented for our generation. These impacts are mostly negative for the local economy, but there have also been some positives, with communities more engaged and focused on what really matters, and receptive to sustainable actions and supporting their local town and economy.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Carmarthenshire County Council had launched the Ten Towns initiative in support of the growth and resilience of rural towns across the County. The aim was to develop a long-term strategic vision for each town to support economic growth and to encourage more vibrant, economically sustainable centres. This initiative has been given a new emphasis, in light of the pandemic, to address immediate economic recovery as well as building for longer-term growth.



## 2 The bigger picture

### Carmarthenshire Economic Recovery

At the beginning of 2021, the economy of Carmarthenshire continues to be heavily influenced by Government interventions in support of jobs and business sectors and uncertainty exists as restrictions fluctuate with the pandemic and fluctuating lockdown measures.

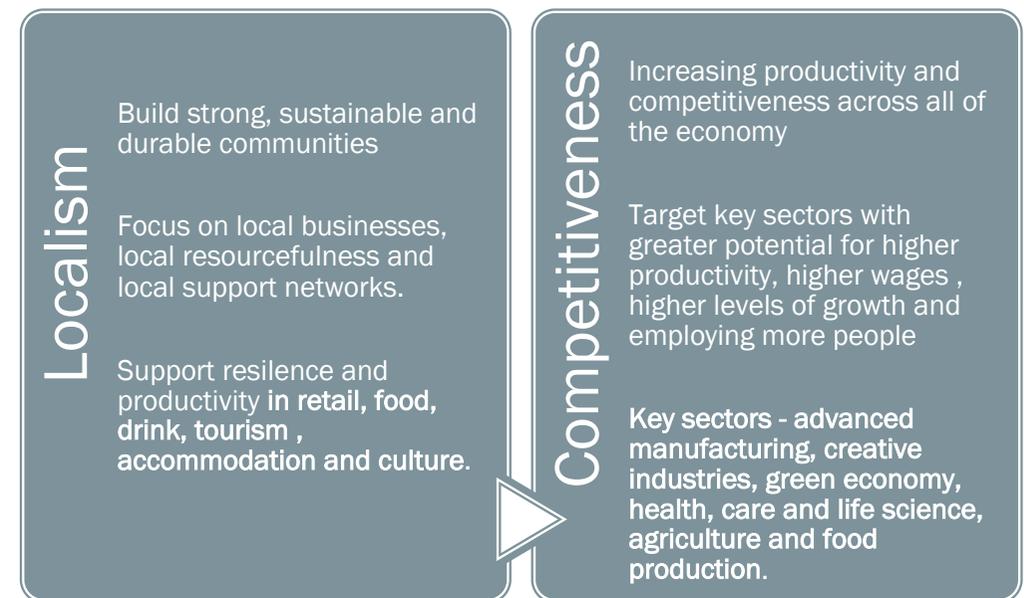
There remains a high level of ambiguity around the pattern of the recovery, as well as the impact of Brexit. Recovery will be slow, and it may take many years for the economy of Carmarthenshire to recover to its previous level, let alone make up the lost ground of the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath. Therefore, the immediate priority for Carmarthenshire's recovery is to protect jobs and safeguard businesses. There is also a continued focus on the longer-term challenges that constrain growth in Carmarthenshire including low productivity and wages, skills deficits, too few businesses 'scaling-up', and the need for investment in modern business infrastructure and premises.

There are two main pillars for the recovery of the Carmarthenshire economy, i.e. localism and local level action and growing the competitiveness of the whole economy. Actions in support of the recovery are focussing on overarching themes - **Business, People and Place** with four cross-cutting priority ambitions:

- **Ultra-reliable digital connectivity** and a digital culture – underpinning recovery and growth across the whole economy

- **Skills** – retrain, re-skill, up-skill and ensuring that people have the right skills to do the jobs created.
- **Green economy** – low carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure, renewable energy and sustainable homes.
- **Fair and equal economy** and support for the Welsh language and culture

Figure 1 Strategic influences



## Strategic context

The context for the plan includes wider social, economic and environmental issues facing rural Carmarthenshire including technology, climate emergency and decarbonisation, the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and leaving the European Union (Brexit).

The strategic context also includes priorities of Carmarthenshire CC, the Swansea Bay City Region and the Welsh Government, along with the growing influence of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and local Well-being Plans.

A key aim of the Act calls on public bodies to be more agile to ensure they are able to respond to ever-changing economic circumstances and to maximise new opportunities for growth. Sustainable development is applied throughout, as well as new ways of working ensuring that local authorities take account of the long term, prevent problems occurring or getting worse, take an integrated and collaborative approach and involving people.

The plan is also focused on securing a sustainable and prosperous future for the town that enables the Welsh language to thrive, through enabling entrepreneurship and small business growth in Welsh speaking regions.

Figure 2 Strategic influences



### 3 Newcastle Emlyn today

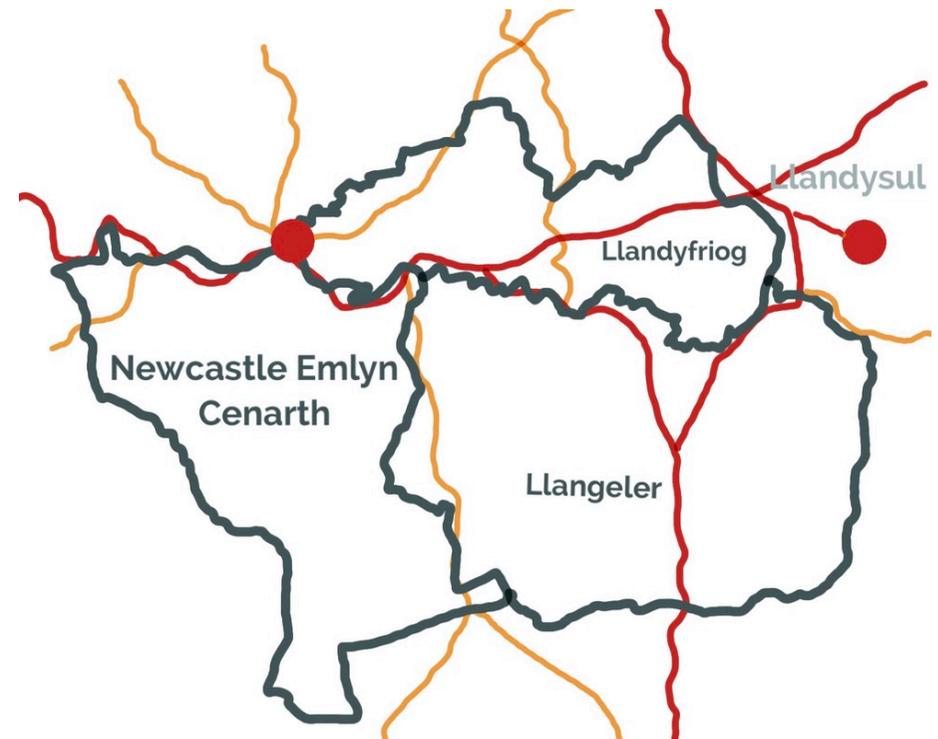
Newcastle Emlyn is located in the Teifi Valley between Cardigan and Lampeter and represents a traditional market town which serves a wide and largely rural community astride the River Teifi in both Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion.

The town supports several large regional employers including Dairy Partners together with a number of well occupied industrial areas hosting a range of enterprises including biotech and IT businesses. The town also directly supports the rural economy through the livestock market and associated feed merchants, machinery and engineering uses. Other notable industries include construction and numerous local services and trades that comprise up the foundational economy.

The rural hinterland supports a wider range of agricultural and land-based industries including food producers and tourism businesses. The distinctive and historic town centre has a good mix of retail and services with a particular focus on convenience, food and drink and speciality retail. Outside of the centre, the leisure centre and secondary school reflect the town's role as a key settlement in the north of the county.

Overall, Newcastle Emlyn performs an important destination and service centre for employment, community, education, sport and retail needs of the wider area including Llangeler and Llandyfriog.

Figure 3 Location context



## Socio-economic picture

The population of Newcastle Emlyn and hinterland is 7,380 (based on Cenarth, Llangeler and Llandyfriog wards). The proportion of people who spoke Welsh in Newcastle Emlyn (49%) was similar to the average for rural Carmarthenshire (50%). In the wider Newcastle Emlyn Hinterland, there is an above average proportion of Welsh speakers (53%).

In comparison with rural Carmarthenshire - within the last ten years - the area has experienced:

- modest population decline
- a growing older-aged population
- decline in the working-age population
- below-average economic activity and full-time employment
- lower than average household incomes
- lower-skilled local economy
- higher than average levels of home working and self-employment
- above average house prices
- 6% decline in the ability to speak the Welsh language

The data shows a large part of the local economy is dependent on part-time, low skilled and lower wage incomes.

Figure 4 Recent socio-economic trends

	Population	Working-age	Gross household income	Median House prices	Economically active	Full-time employment
<b>Rural County</b>	Increase 1.8%	Decline 3%	£28,622	£135k	66%	33%
<b>Newcastle Emlyn area</b>	Decline 1.3%	Decline 3.8%	£26,520	£154k-£180k	63%	25%
	Work from home	Self-employed	Largest occupation	No skills	Higher qualifications	Employed agriculture
<b>Rural County</b>	7%	14%	Skilled trades 19%	25%	30%	6%
<b>Newcastle Emlyn area</b>	13%	22%	Skilled trades 22%	25%	30%	11%

Sources: ONS Census & NOMIS – Baseline study



## Businesses & employment

Newcastle Emlyn and the surrounding area supports a diverse range of business activities with over 270 identified businesses, including the largest employer (Dairy Partners) through to micro, small and medium-sized companies.

Dairy Partners operates a cheese product factory with over 100 employees and 140 local farms supplying milk from within a 40-mile radius. The business is not only the town's largest employer it is also a key link with the agricultural community.

The town also has strengths in the food and drink, IT and biotech sectors including Micropharm and Caws Cenarth Cheese. The livestock market in the town centre remains an integral feature in the economic and social function of the area which has grown significantly in the last year following the closure of other regional markets.

Overall, the town's economy appears to have a robust business base, including a major employer, alongside grounded and growing local firms and the presence of business support agency Antur Cymru (Teifi).

The largest employment sectors are identified as:

- **16% wholesale and retail trade**
- **13% human health and social work**
- **11% agriculture**

Newcastle Emlyn has two established employment areas concentrated to the east of the town; the County Council owned Station Road Industrial Estate and the Aberarad Business Park. The local commercial market is characterised by:

- **healthy levels of localised demand and occupancy;**
- **a varied range and mix of accommodation, including dedicated business park although the majority of stock is older and secondary quality;**
- **lack of suitable floor space to support existing to grow and expand;**
- **lack of small incubator and starter units.**

Occupation levels are high and there is very little available business floorspace in the town which is a major concern for future growth and for encouraging new enterprise. A few businesses without adequate grow on space have expanded by occupying several smaller starter units across the town. At the same time, businesses are expanding their operations through relocating outside of the town e.g. Micropharm new facility at Cilgerran.

## Town centre

The town centre has over 80 businesses with a diverse and interesting mix of retail, hospitality, services and offices. The retail includes a good mix of main convenience facilities (Co-op and C K food store) and independent retailers (butchers, deli, specialist foods, bakery and off licence). There is a varied comparison (non-food) offer which is mainly independent and includes home furnishings, clothing, electrical, jewellery/arts/gifts, vintage/antiques, lifestyle and small garden centre. The town is known further afield for the quality of the women's fashion, and there are several speciality and destination retailers adding to the quality and attractiveness of the centre. The presence of several artisan, craft and ethically driven businesses also gives the centre an original and unique feeling.

The hospitality offer is equally strong with a good variety and choice of cafes/bistro, takeaways and public houses together with the Emlyn Hotel (and restaurant). There are signs of a basic level evening economy although without much in terms of evening leisure offer apart from the Attic Theatre.

Most of the essential local services also exist with a chemist/pharmacy, opticians, beauty salon/hairdressers, dental facilities, post office whilst local community facilities include Cawdor Hall, police station and library. The main weakness has been the loss of bank facilities and free ATM's in the centre. The nearest banks are in Cardigan and Carmarthen. Several professional services operate from offices and include estate agents, solicitors, accountants/financial advisors and architects which add to the variety and vibrancy of the town centre.

The majority of the town centre is within a Conservation Area with traditional frontages, a distinctive town hall and Clock Tower. The colourfully painted buildings add to the overall charm and attractiveness of the centre.

Despite the general vibrancy of the centre, 10% of the properties are currently vacant including several large and difficult to let units.



## Visitor economy

The visitor economy appears to be low key compared to the nearby coastal locations although there is much potential for growth. The reasons to visit the town include the charming and slightly quirky retail centre, the castle ruins and annual events programme including the food festival, fair trade town events and Victorian Christmas. The town does not offer enough activity to hold people in the town for much more than a few hours and this is reflected in the small amount of overnight accommodation including the Emlyn Hotel restaurant and spa and handful of B&Bs and caravan/camping facilities at Afon Teifi and Dolbryn.

However, outside of the town, there are several higher profile natural and industrial heritage attractions including Cenarth Falls (identified as part of the Celtic Routes Initiative), the Cenarth National Coracle Museum, the National Wool Museum and Teifi Valley railway (which like all attractions have been impacted by lockdown restrictions).

Cycling is one of Carmarthenshire's visitor destination priorities and the town has been promoted as the starting point for the Teifi River Tour. The Sustrans National Cycle Route 82 also passes through Newcastle Emlyn and connects with Fishguard.



## Brand and marketing

To grow the visitor economy of Newcastle Emlyn, there is a need to update and consolidate the current online marketing to showcase local businesses, events and experiences the area and community have to offer. This will help to differentiate the town and refresh how Newcastle Emlyn brands and communicates itself.

Presently, the Visit Newcastle Emlyn website communicates positively about the area prioritising the history and showcases some of the attractions on offer. The site links to a more up-to-date Facebook page which has healthy, but limited, interaction. However, the website feels tired and in need of regular update. The language and tone suggest that Newcastle Emlyn is a place for people of the older generation to visit and there is little on offer for families or younger people. The overall feeling is that Newcastle Emlyn is neither vibrant nor different.

Neither the Town Council nor any of the local business or events sites for the area appear on the first page of search results when entered 'Newcastle Emlyn' and have limited effectiveness to a wider audience. The Food Festival event site is also low key and could do more to show enticing insight into the festival, it's history or future offers.

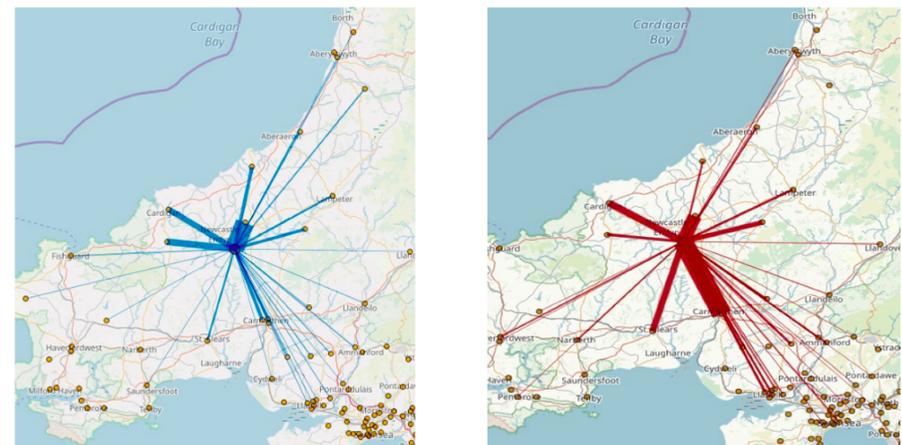
At the county level, the Discover Carmarthenshire website is more successful at promoting Newcastle Emlyn alongside the Teifi Valley, including its '36 hours in Newcastle Emlyn' feature. This is complemented by Tripadvisor and its comprehensive 'things to do', accommodation and restaurants review.

## Transport and movement

The roads serving Newcastle Emlyn are largely a network of rural A and B and lower classification roads. Connections are largely fragmented travelling north to south and more direct travelling east to west. The main challenge is in providing sustainable integrated transport for the area. Within the town, traffic levels combined with the narrow carriageway/pavements especially at Sycamore Street, impact on pedestrian safety and quality of the town centre experience. There is a good level of car parking including the main Maes Parcio.

Travel to work patterns provides a picture of commuter behaviour and understanding of the number of people travelling from the town area to a place of work (shown red) or from another place into the town for work (shown blue). The figure indicates how Newcastle Emlyn is also reliant on Carmarthen and Cardigan for employment.

**Figure 5 Travel to Work Patterns**



**Source: 2011 Census - DataShine: Commute**

## Broadband and digital connectivity

The central town and immediate rural area appear to have good connectivity, although it is clear that there are areas in the wider hinterland without sufficient bandwidth. Overall there are 888 (71%) of the 1,235 premises in the Newcastle Emlyn postcode area without non-superfast broadband.

## Planning, Development & Environment

Growth in Newcastle Emlyn is constrained by the presence of the River Teifi with large areas to the east and west at risk of flooding whilst the town is a priority area for future NRW flood preventative works. The presence of the castle and Conservation Area is also a restriction on future development within much of the town centre.

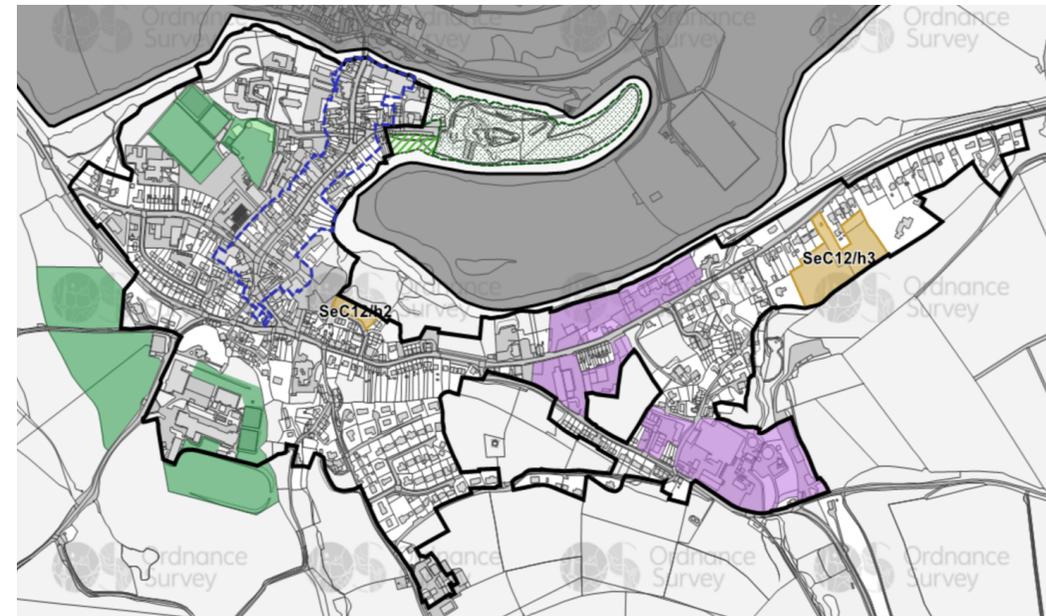
In terms of future growth and development, the Revised Local Development Plan considers the area suitable for limited growth with three housing allocations (51 new homes). However, no new employment land has been identified beyond the existing 'safeguarded' employment areas.

Local estate agents report the need for more homes, driven by demand from local families and downsizers/retired together with healthy demand for rural smallholdings, including people relocating to the area. Overall there is the need for less expensive housing, to address the imbalance between higher house prices and limited supply of appropriate homes in rural areas, particularly for one-person and couples.

The absence of any future employment land allocation for the town is a concern particularly given the high demand and lack of

supply of small and medium-sized stock. However, there are available sites and premises which offer the potential for redevelopment.

**Figure 6 LDP Extract**



## Welsh Language in the Local Economy

As noted in the socio-economic picture, the proportion of people who speak Welsh in the ward of Cenarth (49%) is slightly below the average for rural Carmarthenshire (50%) and has declined by more than 10% between 2001 and 2011<sup>1</sup>. This led to the selection of the Cenarth ward by Menter Iaith as one of the areas to be featured in the Priority Areas Initiative. As part of the Initiative, Menter have been assessing the support and use of Welsh in the area and working with local organisations to help grow the language at a grassroots level.

The support and use of Welsh in the local economy and infrastructure was assessed and reported in the progress report. The following table taken from the Menter Iaith report identified insufficient visual use of Welsh, Welsh speaking staff and Welsh speakers establishing their own businesses and creating local employment opportunities as well as a lack of support for local businesses.

Menter Iaith have recommended a series actions to tackle the issue, including the establishment of Welsh language business group and working with local businesses to increase the opportunities for local residents to speak Welsh.

Helo Blod are working to increase the use of Welsh in business in the area and implement the recommendations made by Menter Iaith. Helo Blod are closely aligned with Menter Iaith and provide individual support services for businesses (through the local Helo

Blod Officer) to support them to integrate Welsh into their business alongside a translation and text checking service.

**Figure 7 Table assessing support for the Welsh Language in the economy, services and infrastructure of Cenarth ward**

Agwedd 5: Yr Economi, Gwasanaethau ac Is-adeiledd: (a) Taflen fapio Digonol Annigonol Dim Amh.

Elfennau	Nodweddion				
5.1 Busnesau lleol	5.2.1 Oes digon o amrywiaeth o fusnesau yn cynnig gwasanaethau i'r gymdogaeth leol? E.e. siop, tafarn, garej, Swyddfa'r Post ac ati.		X		
	5.2.2 Ydy'r Gymraeg yn cael defnydd gweledol digonol o fewn busnesau'r ardal?		X		
	5.2.3 Oes gwerth digonol yn cael ei roi ar y Gymraeg (gan gynnwys sgiliau dwyieithog ar gyfer y gwaith) gan fusnesau'r ardal?		X		
	5.2.4 Oes cyfran digonol o staff busnesau lleol yn siarad Cymraeg er mwyn darparu gwasanaeth i'r gymdogaeth?		X		
	5.2.5 Ydy pobl leol yn cefnogi busnesau lleol yn ddigonol?		X		
	5.2.6 Ydy siaradwyr Cymraeg yn sefydlu ac yn cynnal busnesau eu hunain ac yn cynnig cyfleoedd gwaith lleol?		X		
5.2 Cyfleusterau Cymdeithasol	5.3.1 Oes digon o gyfleusterau cymdeithasol addas ar gyfer anghenion y gymdogaeth?		X		
	5.3.2 Ydy'r adeiladau sydd ar gael yn ddigon cyfforddus a deniadol at ofynion cyfoes?		X		
	5.3.3 Ydy'r Gymraeg yn derbyn statws digonol o fewn cyfleusterau cyhoeddus lleol?		X		
	5.3.4 Oes digon o gyfleusterau hamdden a chwaraeon o fewn cyrraedd hwylus?	X			

**Source: Menter Iaith Priority Areas Initiative progress report for Cenarth ward**

<sup>1</sup> 2011 Census, LSOA W01000646

# Key Issues



Funding commitment to support the actions and priorities of the growth plan in the short, medium and long term



Significant shortage of modern employment units, especially incubator and grow on space.



More positive and responsive planning system to support, prioritise and deliver local investment/regeneration



Concern over the lack of local banking facilities.



Encourage flexible use of town centre vacant units, including the opportunity for more affordable units and flexible/shared workspace, including digital/social enterprise hub



Need for improved signage to intercept and direct visitors into the town centre.



Qualitative improvements to the town centre environment, particularly to address the impact of traffic flows passing through the centre.



Concerns over parking control and management in the town centre.



Modernise the marketing and brand of the town and its businesses alongside a marketing strategy to promote as a must-visit destination.



Better utilise the River Teifi area and castle, including an improved riverside walk.



Limited housing delivery which impacts on affordable housing supply and the employment growth of the town.



Need for a greater choice and range of visitor facilities to broaden offer, especially for young people and families.



Improvement in digital connectivity supported by appropriate IT skills and training



Promotion of safe local walk and cycle routes and linkages into the town centre.

## 4 Priority actions

Newcastle Emlyn's economy appears diverse and vibrant, although there are several weaknesses to address and new opportunities to develop. The key short and medium focus of the Growth Plan is to address the shortage of workspace to sustain existing businesses and allow new job creation.

The Plan seeks to develop and promote the unique, distinctive and historic town centre as a vibrant destination for local residents and visitors, and to build on the visitor economy to take advantage of the growth in the staycation market. The town has many assets, including its natural and historic built environment, together with proactive local community organisations and a comprehensive level of local facilities and services which serve a wide hinterland.

The strategic priorities that shape the Plan are as follows:

### Strategic Priorities

- Employment floorspace - to support new starts and business expansion whilst encouraging firms to remain in the town
- Improvement of the town centre public realm - to address traffic impact, parking and promote a safe and attractive environment for pedestrians and business

- Marketing and branding – locally led to promote the town, businesses and its attractions as a destination
- Lack of housing delivery – more affordable homes for young people and to support the economy
- Walking and cycling - improved walking and cycle links between the town and the surrounding communities
- Digital infrastructure, including a SMART Town with reliable connectivity and data-driven growth, marketing and visitor strategies

Actions in support of the recovery and growth address the aforementioned three overarching themes - **Business, People and Place** with four cross-cutting priorities for creating ultra-reliable digital connectivity, improving skills to do the jobs created, low carbon and green economy and a fair and equal economy that supports the Welsh language and culture.

The priority actions for recovery and growth are:

## 1 – COVID-19 Recovery

The Covid-19 pandemic is the biggest public health and economic crisis in generations. It has had a dramatic effect on communities, the economy and how we live and work. It has reminded us that the strength of the places where we live, and work can at times be fragile.

The quality and accessibility of the town and countryside were hugely important for people's health and their well-being during the periods of lockdown. There has been a collective appreciation of the value of green spaces, walking and cycling routes and the local shops and amenities.

Among the many important challenges in the recovery period are the urgent actions to safeguard local business and employers and to determine which changes in behaviour that were introduced in response to the pandemic are emerging as permanent features of life and work. These have implications for the town because people are using places differently, travelling less and spending more time working from home. The recovery and growth plan must respond to these changes and contribute to a sustainable recovery, shaping the town around a vision for more economically resilient places.

The impact of the pandemic will continue to be felt for some time and the following actions can be taken in support of businesses and the town. There is an identified need to safeguard and create jobs particularly in some of the hardest hit key sectors including retail, leisure and hospitality, and to support businesses that are experiencing skills challenges as a result of the pandemic e.g. with digital and IT skills, marketing and diversification including

developing new markets tendering where appropriate (linked to local procurement opportunities), efficiency measures etc.

## 2 - Supporting business growth

Where there is a lack of employment infrastructure to accommodate current or future needs, the resilience and sustainability of an area may be undermined, possibly contributing to decline. The lack of employment opportunities is also a key reason behind rural depopulation, particularly in the younger workforce. By supporting and encouraging the growth and expansion of locally grounded firms, particularly in more specialised industries, this will help to create long term higher paid employment, retain workers, broaden the skills base and help sustain local communities.

The foundational economy is the backbone of the rural economy and represents those parts of the economy that supports our everyday needs (social care, retail, tourism, food, drink, construction, energy etc). Similarly, local food and drink processing of agricultural and horticultural products is a growing industry. All of these types of businesses require similar business support and employment infrastructure such as good quality and affordable workspace with the best possible digital connectivity.

### **A) Investment in business premises to support new start-ups, business growth and expansion.**

There are few suitable workspaces to support the growth of micro and small businesses. However, opportunities should be explored

to create new business space either through new development sites, using surplus publicly owned buildings, acquiring vacant buildings, or establishing new shared workspaces.

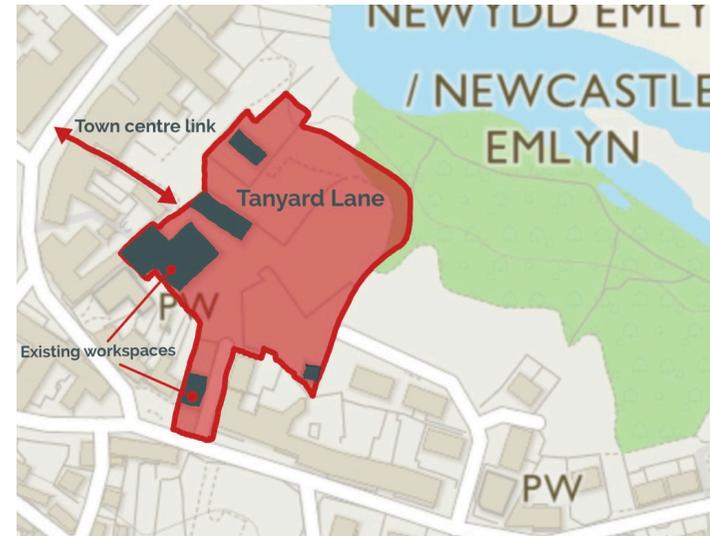
In rural areas where large scale developer interest is largely absent, the public sector also has an important role to play working with a range of smaller local developers and landowners to address the hurdles to development. These include addressing the viability gap between the cost of building and modernising new employment spaces and the rental income; and an important economic development role in guiding small developers through the planning process.

Opportunities include:

- Land at Tanyard Lane - The edge of town centre brownfield opportunity comprising commercial uses, including garage, showroom and office together with public car park. The site benefits from planning permission for a retail food store with associated parking. However, the central location and scale of the site offers potential for a mix of uses, such as employment and residential.
- Land at Station Road - The Castle Motors site represents a large prominent brownfield area adjacent to Station Road industrial estate. Sited at an out of centre location, it benefits from planning permission for mixed employment and food store. Options for bringing forward the employment element of the development as originally planned or at a larger scale should be considered.
- Investigate opportunities for redevelopment and/or intensification of existing allocated and safeguarded

employment land in the town, where appropriate.

**Figure 8 Land at Tanyard Lane**



**Figure 9 Land at Station Road**



## B) Work hubs and shared workspaces

Changes to working practices and the growing interest and ability to work closer to home and remotely from main offices may result in a higher demand to live in rural areas and opportunities to retain the working-age population. Actions that help provide flexible workspaces closer to home include:

- Feasibility study – a local study to investigate the specific level of demand and requirements from the local town and rural population.
- Investigate potential for a new public sector work hub created in rural towns to accommodate agile working across the county.

## C) Re-use of vacant and underutilised buildings.

These provide opportunities for a range of enterprise and physical regeneration actions:

- Town centre property offers opportunities for 'pop-up' 'maker' and trial-testing new customer-facing business ideas particularly for young people to become actively involved in the community and to develop entrepreneurial skills. The provision of flexible, affordable space is an important consideration for supporting small local independent businesses.
- New business premises – either re-using surplus public sector buildings or selectively acquiring key vacant buildings that have made a broader contribution to the physical and economic regeneration of the town.

There are several prominent and vacant buildings including the former Barclays and Lloyds bank and in future the Co-op building following relocation to New Road. The community initiative to regenerate Neuadd Emlyn Hall is another opportunity for including new flexible workspace.

Vacant and under-utilised buildings in the town centre also offer opportunities for reuse and repurposing by extending the mix of uses, such as employment, residential (including affordable), community, education and leisure/hospitality uses, which together extend activity and vibrancy.

## D) Supporting business growth within grounded firms.

The growth of the local economy is linked with the success of the town's larger employers and in particular, locally grounded firms that have decision making rooted firmly in the community. There is a strong emphasis on increasing the number of grounded firms, as well as establishing a firmer base of medium-sized businesses (c.50 employees) which are capable of selling outside Wales.

- **Medium Size Businesses** - There are a number of medium-size and grounded firms based in Newcastle Emlyn. The measures to support their growth include:
  - Engaging with leading employers to identify future investment opportunities and area of future support.
  - Help to support the up-skilling of the existing workforce and to train and re-skill future employees.

- Investigate opportunities for the local economy from within their respective supply chains.
- **Micro-businesses** - Identify and target support for the next phase of growth amongst small micro-enterprises, often family-owned firms and self-employed people within the community.

### E) Promoting the use of Welsh in business.

Encouraging Welsh speaking and learning into a business can help to connect them to a wider range of people and opportunities as well as Welsh culture and heritage. Support is available through Helo Blod, which includes an officer covering West Carmarthenshire, working with Menter Iaith to enable businesses and organisations to introduce small amounts of Welsh into their business through translation and text checking service.

### F) Agriculture and food production

Much of the area's agriculture is in the dairy sector, and at present, Carmarthenshire has no direct milk processing facility; in view of this, the Rural Task Force have suggested that a micro/macro milk processing facility based on a cooperative model be investigated. It is also supportive of small and medium-sized food based business and the establishment of production units to support added value food products, which could include artisan cheeses, ice creams and other dairy products capable of commanding a premium based on local provenance.

The aim is to support initiatives that create higher value and more productive businesses by increasing the productivity, diversity and efficiency of farming. Proposals in the plan for new modern workspaces, digital infrastructure and marketing and promotion seek to support and contribute towards this aim.

## 3 - SMART digital town and countryside

Digital technology has played a significant role in enabling businesses and communities to adapt during the COVID 19 pandemic. Carmarthenshire CC is currently working with both UK and Welsh Government to support businesses, employees and communities to take advantage of all the benefits associated with faster and more reliable internet connections and to develop wi-fi digital applications to promote rural market towns e.g 'push notifications' to members of the public visiting towns.

Actions include:

- Ensuring gigabit-capable connectivity is available to the whole community and ensuring all rural residents and small businesses with less than 100mbps are able to benefit from government broadband upgrade initiatives e.g. Broadband Upgrade Fund. This involves aggregating the demand and uses local needs information to broker improvements with telecom providers.
- The SMART town combines the deployment of a Town Wi-Fi solution with the regular analysis of the data collected so that it is shared with businesses to support customer and marketing insights. Such analytics include visitor trends such as: footfall;

dwell time; busiest days of week etc; measure success of event to justify future investment; can be used to attract new business.

- The Internet of Things and LoRaWAN technology is a new innovation network that supports business and community innovation. The technology forms part of developing the right combination of connectivity infrastructure, awareness, skills and support to enable businesses and residents to thrive and take full advantage of the digital revolution.
- Digital training - digital technology is only as good as the skills and confidence that exist to use it. Local training will be essential in order to upskill, share information and encourage the use of technology across the market town.

## 4 - Town centre

### A) Public Realm

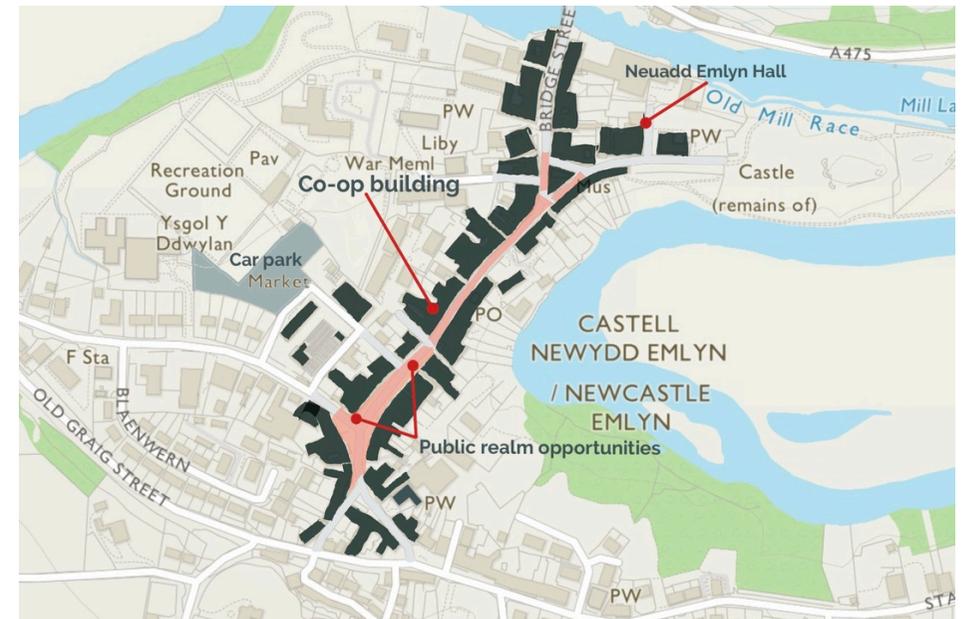
Newcastle Emlyn has an attractive and characterful town centre although opportunities exist to improve the legibility and appearance of the main gateways and the amount of space available for pedestrians within a COVID-secure and socially distanced environment.

The main challenge is to manage a large amount of traffic which passes through the centre on the A475 and the conflicts that occur where the streets become narrow. Issues of illegal on-street parking also contribute to the movement difficulties experienced in the town centre.

Opportunities exist to examine and identify realistic options to qualitatively improve the public realm in the town centre to

create a more attractive and safer pedestrian environment recognising the impact of through traffic. Actions could also provide a potential to review current parking controls including enhanced enforcement measures. In the context of the current pandemic, the scheme would need to consider the scope for creating additional outside seating and covered areas to support the towns hospitality sector.

**Figure 10 Public Realm**



### B) Banking

The loss of all high street banks and free ATM's in the town centre has been a major blow for the status of Newcastle Emlyn as a main rural service centre and has directly impacted on the way that businesses operate.

There have also been knock-on effects on footfall and the visitor economy. Stakeholders have proposed that Newcastle Emlyn becomes a pilot scheme for reintroducing bank facilities and free ATMs. Support would be required to engage with the banking industry to positively lobby for a new model and pilot scheme for more extensive rural banking services.

## **5 – Walking and cycling**

Prioritising walking and cycling and supporting the implementation of the Active Travel Act will help create a more comprehensive network of routes that connect places that people need to get to for everyday journeys and for travelling to work.

Opportunities exist to investigate the potential to improve walking and cycling links between the town and surrounding rural settlements to provide safe connections for residents and tourists, including those visitors staying outside of the town. The local initiative Trac Teifi represents an example of the type of initiative that may exist.

## **6 – Visitor economy**

### **A) Visitor signs**

Coordinated and effective visitor signage is required on the main approach roads that would intercept travellers heading towards the coastal towns and nearby attractions. Most of the town centre charm and retail attractions are hidden from view on the A484 and an imaginative signage and information strategy would be more effective at tempting passing visitors towards the town

centre and its facilities (including car parking) and encouraging overnight stays. This will be important given the growth of the staycation holiday market.

### **B) Visitor attractions**

There is a need to add more diversity and character to the level of visitor attractions and activities close to the town centre. Activities that are appropriate for 'wet weather' and that grab the attention of young people and families in particular would help to grow the visitor economy. Opportunities that align with ideas for the repurposing of vacant and underused buildings offer wider regeneration benefits for the town, such as a wider range and choice of visitor accommodation. Other examples include competitive socialising activities or outdoor activities linked to the river and local area, alongside greater showcasing of local produce, including local food and drink and Welsh culture and heritage. These examples represent the type of family experiences that could be investigated and encouraged in the town centre.

The town benefits from the castle and river setting both of which represent core assets but offer good opportunities for enhanced use via promotion, improved pathways, and information to widen the appeal and accessibility to visitors.

### **C) Cycle tourism**

Cycling is a key priority for Carmarthenshire's visitor economy with the local area supporting a network of published rides and National Cycle Network. Local initiatives such as Trac Teifi Trail also has the potential to further develop the cycling credentials of the area. The opportunity exists to encourage more accommodation

providers to obtain the 'Cyclist Welcome' place to stay accreditation.

#### **D) Events**

The town is already known for its range of seasonal events, including the food festival Urdd Carnival and Victorian Christmas. The aim is to support the active local interest groups and organisations behind these existing events to help grow and develop alongside investigation of new opportunities for events throughout the year.

### **7 – Promoting Newcastle Emlyn**

As the economy recovers from the pandemic and positive change occurs, Newcastle Emlyn will need to project an attractive image of the town and its businesses to the local community and visitors. Suggested approaches include:

- A destination marketing initiative to identify the core messages and the key themes, stories and reasons to visit including the towns attractive shopping and leisure experience, specialist businesses, local producers and activities.
- In addition to a big campaign that shouts loud from one central source about the town and surrounding area, the proposal is to also reach the town's customer and visitors through the local businesses themselves. This would be achieved by harnessing the collective communication power of the individual business and their direct interaction with existing audiences and customers using town level core messaging and the social media and communication

skills that should be developed to empower each business. A dynamic approach to marketing would need to fully exploit the availability of SMART town technology.

The opportunity exists to promote a modern message which focuses on the involvement of respected local influencer businesses (e.g. Caws Cenarth, Emlyn Hotel) along with many of the independent creative and ethically driven businesses to showcase local talent and raise the image of the town and surrounding area.

The town supports many proactive local community groups and organisations although the need will be to ensure a consistent and co-ordinated approach to develop, promote and facilitate local initiatives and events.

### **8- Progressive Procurement.**

The public sector in Carmarthenshire spends hundreds of millions per annum on goods, works and services, providing businesses of all sectors and sizes with a range of commercial opportunities.

The County Council and wider public sector recognise the significance of their spending power and look to purchase as much of this as possible from within the County. More can be done to support local procurement with actions to:

- encourage local businesses to access advice and guidance on local procurement opportunities.
- promote opportunities, particularly to small and new businesses, for lower value public sector contracts which

may traditionally not have been attractive to smaller suppliers.

## 9 - Community energy schemes

Local resilience is a key aim of the Ten Towns initiative and thus a core element is to support the development of community energy plans for the respective towns which will ultimately provide a source of income for local communities and local businesses as well as help to address fuel poverty in rural areas. This Plan outlines the potential to embrace the opportunities linked to renewable energy which is well established in the County particularly in terms of its direct benefits for local communities and supporting greater environmental resilience.

To help achieve this, Ynni Sir Gar (Carmarthenshire Energy) will support business and other organisations to identify and scope potential sites for community energy generation. The host sites will benefit from a reduction in their energy costs.

## 10 – Circular economy

A circular economy is where waste is avoided and the resources we use are kept in use for as long as possible. By supporting and promoting the circular economy amongst local businesses and enterprises, this seeks to retain and maximise resources through re-use, repair, remanufacture and refurbishment. Together this offers opportunities to support jobs, develop new skills and embrace sustainability and resource efficiency to protect the environment.

The Plan seeks to support opportunities for business owners, entrepreneurs and volunteers with ideas to help develop the circular economy in the town and across Carmarthenshire.

## 11 - Affordable homes

Thriving, resilient and sustainable rural towns require a mix of new housing as well as employment opportunities if retaining and attracting a working-age population is to be achieved. The dynamics of the rural housing market includes several factors, not only house price, but other issues such as relative affordability, inward migration, travel-to-work patterns, population projections and new dwelling completions rates etc. Overall, there is the need for smaller, less expensive homes for young and newly forming households - whether at market price, intermediate or affordable rent.

At the local level, Newcastle Emlyn has experienced relatively low levels of developer interest in recent years. At the same time, affordability issues have grown as house prices exceed the rural average along with lower than average household incomes. The lack of delivery has resulted in an overall reduction in the number of planned homes. Through a series of actions, the opportunity exists for the public sector, landowners and smaller local developers to work together to bring forward the planned new growth in accordance with the Local Development Plan thereby helping to build and support a more sustainable local economy.

## 6 Delivery Plan

The delivery plan provides an indication of timescales, suggested delivery partners and next steps. In each instance a detailed review of the project scope would be required and or more detailed design work to provide costings.

The plan includes three stages, short, medium and long term with a suggested level of priority based on stakeholder engagement and the need to complete certain tasks such as data collection to enable development of key projects.

- Short term – immediate and next 12 months
- Medium term - 2 to 3 years
- Long term – 5 years and beyond

It is recommended that a series of early, 'quick win' projects are identified and initiated in order to demonstrate action and gain business and community buy in. These will typically be projects that can be funded from existing revenue streams or of low capital outlay. Where more complex but high priority projects are identified, early development of outline business case and design development should be prioritised.

Funding and resource streams often vary from year to year and those available at the time of preparing this plan are set out in the following tables. Following the UK's departure from the EU there will be significant changes to the funding landscape existing programmes that are underpinning existing activity such as the European Regional Development Fund (LEADER) will

eventually be replaced at a UK level and directed through Welsh and local government. At the time of writing there is no certainty as to how this will be done. In light of this, the plan will need to be responsive over the coming 12-24 months and aligned to emerging sources of finance.

Table 1 – Action Plan

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	KEY STAKEHOLDER/DELIVERY PARTNER	POTENTIAL FUNDING & RESOURCES	NEXT STEPS
<b>1 - COVID-19 RECOVERY</b>	Short term	Carmarthenshire CC, Business Wales, and Regional Learning and Skills Partnership (RLSP)	CCC Business Recovery and Support Fund for businesses.  LEADER Seed Funding	Carmarthenshire CC will be coordinating with partner agencies support for businesses recovering from the impacts of the pandemic
<b>2 - SUPPORTING BUSINESS GROWTH</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Business premises</b></li> <li>• <b>Work hubs/shared workspace</b></li> <li>• <b>Re-use buildings</b></li> <li>• <b>Supporting business growth</b></li> <li>• <b>Agriculture &amp; food production</b></li> <li>• <b>Support Welsh language businesses</b></li> </ul>	Short and medium	Carmarthenshire CC, business and property owners, Business Wales, and Regional Learning and Skills Partnership (RLSP)       Helo Blod	LEADER Seed Funding  Carmarthenshire CC Business Grant Funds & Commercial Property Development Funds       Helo Blod	Initiate dialogue with land and property owners and undertake site feasibility and masterplanning studies       Working with key local employers to identify business needs and growth requirements       Continue existing programmes targeting Newcastle Emlyn
<b>3 - SMART DIGITAL TOWNS AND COUNTRYSIDE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Broadband upgrade</b></li> <li>• <b>Wifi town</b></li> <li>• <b>IoT/LoRaWAN</b></li> <li>• <b>Digital training</b></li> </ul>	Short and medium term	Carmarthenshire CC, Town Council and Business groups	LEADER Seed Funding  Wi-fi Towns fund and resources  IoT/LoRaWAN deployment and training   Broadband Upgrade Fund	Aggregate demand for broadband upgrade    Wi-fi towns support and training for local delivery partner    Identify business interest in IoT/LoRaWAN

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	KEY STAKEHOLDER/DELIVERY PARTNER	POTENTIAL FUNDING & RESOURCES	NEXT STEPS
<b>4 – TOWN CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public realm</b></li> <li>• <b>Banking facilities</b></li> </ul>	Short, Medium and Long term	Carmarthenshire CC, Town Council  Carmarthenshire CC, Local business community, Banking industry	LEADER Seed funding Ten Towns Capital Fund  Banking industry	Investigate feasibility/options for public realm improvements with Carmarthenshire County Council and Town Council  Investigate opportunities for a pilot scheme with the banking industry (potential to link with other towns)
<b>5 – WALKING AND CYCLING</b>	Medium and Long term	Carmarthenshire CC, Private landowners	Ten Towns Capital Fund  Cycling Friendly Infrastructure Funds	Investigate opportunities to improve walking and cycle opportunities locally
<b>6 – VISITOR ECONOMY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Visitor signs</b></li> <li>• <b>Visitor attractions</b></li> <li>• <b>Cycle Tourism</b></li> <li>• <b>Events</b></li> </ul>	Short and Medium term	Carmarthenshire CC, Discover Carmarthenshire /Destination Management Partnership, Town Council, local community and business organisations, local businesses	LEADER Seed Funding  Carmarthenshire CC Business Grant Funds & Commercial Property Development Funds  Digital SMART Town Resources	Develop signage and digital visitor interception proposal.  Working with local property owners and existing business to promote new uses and diversify offer for visitors  Investigate, develop and promote an expanded local events programme with Discover Carmarthenshire, local community groups & businesses
<b>7 – PROMOTING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Destination marketing</b></li> <li>• <b>Business digital marketing</b></li> </ul>	Short and medium term	Discover Carmarthenshire /Destination Management Partnership, Town Council, Business organisations and businesses	LEADER Seed Funding	Coordination with Discover Carmarthenshire/Destination Management Partnership Link with SMART town & Wi-fi initiatives

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	KEY STAKEHOLDER/DELIVERY PARTNER	POTENTIAL FUNDING & RESOURCES	NEXT STEPS
<b>8 – PROGRESSIVE PROCUREMENT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Low Value Contracts</b></li> </ul>	Short, Medium and Long term	Carmarthenshire CC	Carmarthenshire CC Business Grant Funds Carmarthenshire CC Progressive Procurement initiatives	Actions in response to the recommendations following the advancing progressive procurement study
<b>9 – COMMUNITY ENERGY SCHEMES</b>	Short term	Business and Ynni Sir Gar	LEADER/ Ynni Sir Gâr	Ynni Sir Gâr have LEADER funding until March 2022 for developing community renewable energy projects and they are looking for business and other organisations to take this forward.
<b>10 - CIRCULAR ECONOMY</b>	Short and Medium term	Businesses and Carmarthenshire CC	LEADER Seed Funding and Circular economy initiative	Circular Economy feasibility study recommendations
<b>11 – AFFORDABLE HOMES</b>	Short, Medium and Long term	Carmarthenshire CC/developers	Developer contributions and Carmarthenshire CC and Cartrefi Croeso	Secure new affordable homes via the review of the LDP policy and direct delivery via developers and Cartrefi Croeso and housing associations

## Table 2: Funding & Resources

### MARKET TOWNS OFFICER SUPPORT

Funding has been secured via the RDP Leader programme to recruit 2 x Market Town Officers who will work with the 10 Towns to take forward actions identified within the economic growth plans. These posts will be the key link between the towns and the various directorates across the Authority.

### LEADER SEED FUNDING

£10k revenue to assist the towns to support and develop recommendations emerging from the growths plan. Examples of activities eligible for support (*not exhaustive*) might include premises costs, tourism and events, training, marketing, specialist advice and COVID-19 recovery measures.

### DIGITAL/SMART TOWNS

A range of initiatives to support businesses and communities to obtain faster and more reliable connectivity and application of digital SMART towns.

- Wi-fi towns - funding to secure free wi-fi for pilot towns and roll out to all Ten Towns for period of 2 years. The aim is to collect data that provides visitor trends such as: footfall; dwell time; busiest days of week etc; measure success of event to justify future investment; can be used to attract new business. Officer time is also available to work with the towns to analyse the data and to ensure that local businesses receive this information and to develop regular newsletter providing information on the towns; local business offers, events etc
- Internet of Things – initiatives to explore and develop the use of IOT and LoRaWAN technology as a way of supporting the Ten Towns. Funding secured to purchase IOT gateways. Further funding ringfenced for the purchase of sensors and deployment once ideas have been identified.
- Digital training - To facilitate a series of virtual training events in order to upskill, share information and encourage the use of technology across market towns.
- Digital Connectivity - The Authority is currently working with both UK and Welsh Government to promote the Broadband Upgrade Fund to help businesses,

employees and communities take advantage of all the benefits associated with faster and more reliable internet connections.

### CARMARTHENSHIRE CC BUSINESS RECOVERY & SUPPORT

Subject to formal approval it is anticipated that the County Council led business recovery and support funding streams will be made available in 2021:

- Recovery Fund to safeguard/create sustainable jobs within target growth sectors.
- Revenue Support Fund to invest in skills, marketing and diversification to safeguard and grow jobs.
- Carmarthenshire Rural Enterprise Fund - development of new and existing business premises.
- Transformational Commercial Property Development Fund - to provide financial assistance for the construction of buildings for industrial and commercial use.
- Business Start Up Fund - capital support for the creation of new businesses resulting directly in the creation of jobs.
- Business Growth Fund - support towards capital expenditure projects and specialist revenue expenditure, where new jobs are created.

### TEN TOWNS CAPITAL FUNDING

Carmarthenshire CC are currently considering a new capital fund to assist with delivery of initiatives and future funding bids for projects identified in the Growth Plans.

### LOCAL MARKETING/DISTINCTIVENESS

Funding has been secured via the Leader programme to promote rural Carmarthenshire to tourists - led by Carmarthenshire CC Marketing & Media Team to develop stories and reasons to visit, those that amplify Welsh culture, language, locally produced produce etc and deliver a marketing action plan (including branded promotional material, prepared social media content e.g. text, images and video, a business toolkit.

### EMPTY PREMISES/MEANWHILE USES

Welsh Government funding to develop a good practice guide for the region enabling communities to develop empty premises into 'meanwhile' spaces or pop up shops, providing practical advice on legal issues, business rates etc. Potential to utilise the £10k Leader funding to fit out empty premises for this purpose.

#### A CIRCULAR ECONOMY - A SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY FROM COVID-19

County Council is currently developing a strategy to support local investment in circular businesses and enterprises; that is, enterprises which keep things in use longer, through re-use, repair, remanufacture and refurbishment, and in doing so, helping regenerate the community by adding jobs and developing skills locally. By doing this locally, the initiative will not only keep money in circulation within the county, but vitally also reduce the impact that Carmarthenshire has on the environment. New potential projects are encouraged with local stakeholders, business owner, entrepreneur, volunteer etc.

#### COMMUNITY ENERGY SCHEMES

Development of community energy plans for the respective towns which could potentially provide revenue generating opportunities for the towns.

Carmarthenshire Energy Limited have been commissioned to identify and scope potential sites across the Ten Towns working closely with Energy Services Wales that could be further developed into community energy projects.