

**Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Castell-nedd**

**Democratic Services
Gwasanaethau Democrataidd**

Chief Executive: K.Jones

Date: 14 September 2023

Dear Member,

CABINET - WEDNESDAY, 20TH SEPTEMBER, 2023

Please find attached the following Culture Strategy and Destination Management Plan, for consideration at the next meeting of the **Cabinet - Wednesday, 20th September, 2023.**

Item

10. **Culture and Destination Strategies**
Culture Strategy and Destination Management Plan (**Pages 3 - 120**)

Yours sincerely

Tammie Davies

p.p Chief Executive

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Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

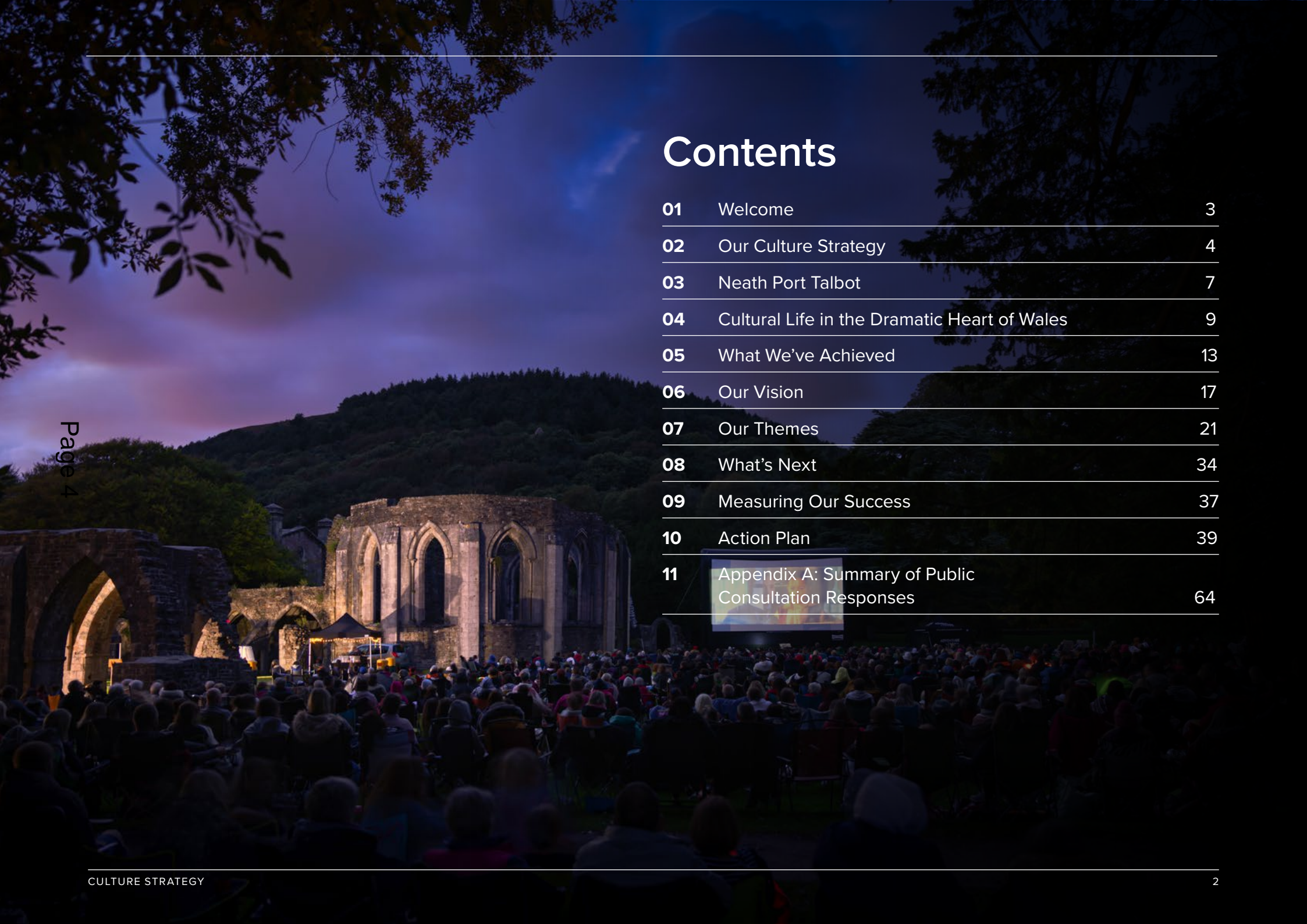
Neath Port Talbot Culture Strategy 2023

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Agenda Item 10



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01. Welcome

Introduction from Council Leader and CEO

Welcome to Neath Port Talbot's Culture Strategy. After consulting with hundreds of individuals and dozens of organisations we are excited to share our Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan.

As we recover from Covid-19 and face the huge challenge of climate change and the nature emergency we believe culture is an incredibly powerful tool to help us reconnect with each other, work together, and build our economy in a sustainable way, now and for future generations.

We need to find new ways to celebrate our amazing place of Neath Port Talbot in an inclusive and open way, and to share our resources so that all our residents and visitors can experience the best of our arts, heritage, and sports.

We are passionate about the ways in which Neath Port Talbot Council delivers services that make people's lives better, and we will use the Council's in-depth knowledge of every part of Neath Port Talbot to bring people together, ensure all communities, be they of interest, shared experience or geographic, benefits from culture, and invest in projects across the borough. However, this isn't a strategy for the Council – our Culture Strategy is for all our wonderful partners, charities, sports clubs, and community groups too; because none of us can deliver our big ambitions for Neath Port Talbot alone.

We'd like to thank everyone who took part in the many consultations that have shaped this strategy. Now is the moment for us all to work together to make it a reality.



Cllr. Steve Hunt

Leader of Neath Port Talbot Council



Karen Jones

Chief Executive of Neath Port Talbot Council

We need to find new ways to celebrate our amazing place of Neath Port Talbot.

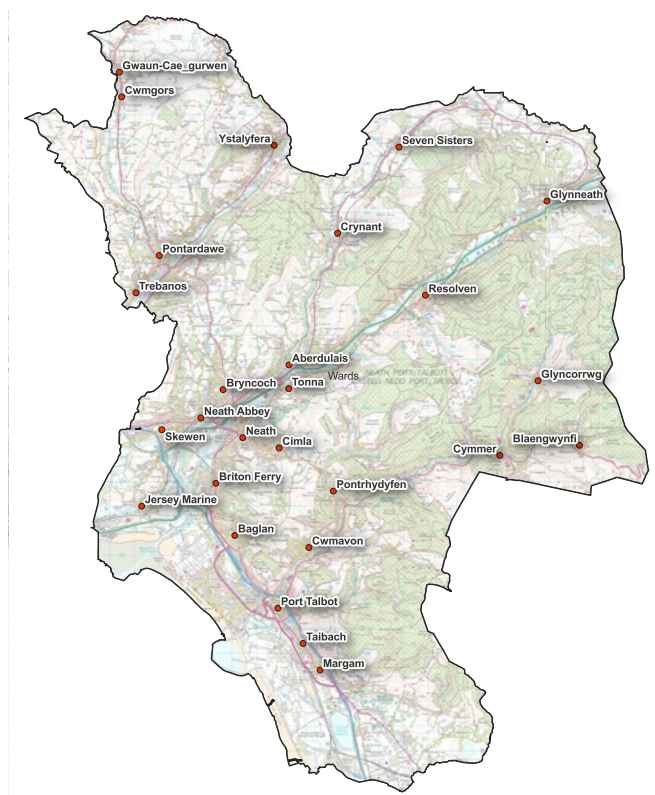
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Our Culture Strategy

02

02. Our Culture Strategy

Our Culture Strategy is for the entire county borough of Neath Port Talbot, from Gwaun Cae Gurwen and the Amman Valley in the North West to Kenfig in the South East, and from Pontneddfechan at the head of the Neath Valley to Crymlyn Burrows on the shore of Swansea Bay.



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The Culture Strategy has been developed through extensive research, consultation and public engagement between Autumn 2022 and Spring 2023, facilitated by a team of specialist consultants commissioned by Neath Port Talbot Council. Although the Council will convene and coordinate lots of the strategy's actions it is a strategy for everyone – “we” is not just the Council but all the people and organisations who work together across Neath Port Talbot to create a cultural offer to be proud of.

Our strategy is intended to help improve the health and happiness of all our communities – urban, rural, and coastal – and to bring joy to residents and visitors of all ages, abilities, and identities through participation in culture. We hope it will help create a shared sense of belonging, citizenship, and place.

It is also a strategy for our many cultural practitioners, clubs, groups, venues, organisations, businesses, and public service providers. Our strategy will help to grow audiences, recruit, and retain members, attract visitors, boost our economy, and pave the way to growing prosperity and sustainability. It is designed to help ensure the protection and sustainability of our culture, heritage, and historic environment for future generations.

“Culture” means different things to different people, and in different times and places. In our strategy we approach the term broadly to encompass heritage, sport, and the arts: the shared culture which defines and unites this historic part of Wales; and the varied cultural offer celebrated today by diverse individuals and groups, both our visitors and those who call Neath Port Talbot home.

The work has included a detailed review of existing and emerging data and literature from Welsh Government, Arts Council of Wales, Sport Wales, Cadw, Neath Port Talbot Council, and others to ensure the strategy is based on a robust evidence base and is closely aligned with relevant local, regional, and national policy priorities. Key among these is the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFGA), Wales’ ground-breaking legislation to encourage long-term thinking to improve the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales. The Culture Strategy has been designed throughout to accomplish the seven well-being goals of the WFGA and our process for creating it has strongly emphasised the WFGA’s five ways of working – thinking for the long-term, prevention, integration, collaboration, and involvement – as well as the Council and partners excellent existing work delivering the WFGA.

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Our Culture Strategy seeks to capture the unique spirit of Neath Port Talbot.

The Culture Strategy also closely aligns with Neath Port Talbot Council’s Destination Management Plan and Heritage Strategy, as well as the Corporate Plan 2022-27 where the enjoyment by future generations of the local environment, culture, and heritage is a key priority. In developing our Strategy, we considered over fifty other policies and plans including the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan, Strategic Equality Plan, draft Destination Management Plan, and the Welsh Language Promotional Strategy.

Our Culture Strategy seeks to capture the unique spirit of Neath Port Talbot, identify the themes that shape our cultural identity, and help us look to future opportunities with confidence that our story can appeal to, and inspire every local resident and visitor to this proud place: the Dramatic Heart of Wales.



Neath Port Talbot

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03. Neath Port Talbot

Stretching from the coast to the edges of the Brecon Beacons, Neath Port Talbot's 142,000 residents enjoy fine landscapes and stunning areas of natural beauty. Around half our population lives in the towns of Neath and Port Talbot, but we have many other thriving towns and villages, as well as significant rural populations.

Our population has been growing by more than the national average, with an increase of 1.8% between 2011 and 2021. In particular there has been an increase in the number of people over 65 (up by 15.5%) and of children under 15 (up by 2.5%). Our residents are becoming more diverse in many respects with 1.6% of people identifying as Asian and 0.4% as Black in the most recent census, both seeing significant increases in the last 10 years.

Our economy is home to a wide range of businesses. As well as Tata Steel, whose Port Talbot plant is one of the largest steel plants in Europe, these include Amazon, Intertissue, and Ecolab. In addition to our strengths in manufacturing we are growing our services sector with exciting investments such as Swansea University's £450m Bay Campus. Neath Port Talbot College Group is one of the largest

education providers in Wales with thousands of students studying at eight campuses across the country. We have recently been chosen as home to one of the UK's new Freeports, which will significantly increase investment in Neath Port Talbot, and help put us at the forefront of the green energy revolution and secure green and well-paid jobs for our residents.

Our natural assets are superb, including beaches, ancient natural and planted woodlands, uplands, and river valleys. Neath Port Talbot is home to fourteen Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and five local nature reserves.

As well as these strengths Neath Port Talbot faces challenges, with 24% of our population identifying as being disabled and over 12% providing significant amounts of unpaid care. Both life expectancy and healthy life expectancy in Neath Port Talbot are below the rest of Wales and the gap between those who are best and worst off is significant.

It is vital that our cultural offer reflects the ever-changing makeup of our population, and our Culture Strategy is designed to be for everyone.

Cultural Life in the Dramatic Heart of Wales

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04. Cultural Life in the Dramatic Heart of Wales

Neath Port Talbot, the Dramatic Heart of Wales, is a place where people have been creative for centuries. Our forefathers have left us a remarkable legacy of ideas, communities, buildings, customs, and traditions, all of which complement the astonishing natural beauty of our place.

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As a designated County Borough, Neath Port Talbot is only 27 years old, but our history of human culture stretches back over 6,000 years, proudly offering globally significant stories of innovation, energy, faith, industry, engineering, sport, performance, and people.

Creativity and culture are woven into our people and place: from Margam Country Park to Michael Sheen, Gnoll Park to Pontardawe Arts Centre, and Cwm Du Glen to Aberavon Beach. Neath Port Talbot continues to offer spaces for people to gather and experience culture in all its forms and to encourage and equip the cultural and sporting stars of the future. Our many arts venues, historic sites, sporting facilities, parks, and outdoor spaces combine with our amazing people to create an exciting place to work, rest, and play.

Of course, culture faces challenges and difficulties in Neath Port Talbot, as it does across Wales and the UK. The closure of Neath Museum and Cefn Coed Colliery Museum means that the borough no longer has an accredited museum or collections. Although many of our communities have risen brilliantly to the challenge of running libraries on a voluntary basis the loss of council run libraries is still a real issue. Our research for the Culture Strategy showed just how much many community sports, arts, and heritage groups are struggling with inflation, particularly in energy costs. Our Culture Strategy acknowledges these realities, recognises that we cannot solve them all, and seeks to find ambitious and achievable ways forward. We are confident culture will thrive in Neath Port Talbot because of the amazing assets we have.

Landscape, nature, and the great outdoors

Neath Port Talbot boasts some of the most outstanding open spaces in the region including the Gnoll Country Park, Jersey Park, Aberavon beach, Foel Fynyddau, Margam Country Park, and Waterfalls Country. As well as housing six conservation areas, we also have six registered historic parks and gardens and two designated historic landscapes in Kenfig and Margam Burrows, and the extraordinary Margam Mountain. Our beautiful places are accessible through a wide range of canal towpaths, mountain bike trails, and footpaths, and there is great potential for further improving access and facilities for all.

Heritage buildings

We are the proud home of many outstanding historic buildings, including 44 listed at Grade I or Grade II*, with 9% of the Borough's buildings listed Grade II and above (compared to 7% for Wales nationally). Many were built because of the significant contribution to the industrial revolution made by Neath Port Talbot, including Margam Castle, Neath Abbey Ironworks, the Neath, Tennant, and Swansea Canals and Brunel Dock at Briton Ferry. Our heritage goes back much further, however, and includes outstanding older buildings such as Neath Abbey and St Mary's Abbey Church.

Arts venues and libraries

Our three main arts venues (Gwyn Hall, Pontardawe Arts Centre and the Princess Royal Theatre) each offer a quality programme of cultural events, concerts, and talent; entertaining residents, attracting visitors, and supporting town centre day and night-time economies. We are also home to several smaller venues, run by the Council and a range of community and voluntary groups, who put on plays, performances, movies, arts classes, and more. The Council manages eight libraries, including Neath's brand new (2023) library, and we also have seven community managed libraries.

Sporting facilities

Neath Port Talbot has a range of sporting facilities including seven public leisure centres. Dedicated volunteers run a wide variety of football clubs, rugby clubs, cricket clubs, and more. Our outdoor spaces provide a wonderful environment for large scale sports participation events including Gnoll's Parkrun and the Margam Country Park charity 10k.

Festivals and events

We are home to exciting events and festivals, which bring residents and visitors together for music, sport, food, arts, and more. Regular highlights of our events programme include the In It Together Festival, Margam International Kite Festival, Dragon Ride, Gwyl Pontardawe Festival, Mountain Biking Championships, food festivals, and Aberavon Beach Festival. We are excited to be hosting the Urdd Eisteddfod at Margam Country Park in 2025.

People

Our greatest asset is our people. The generations who came before us have given us a rich heritage of language, customs, and traditions, and we have a long history of producing outstanding talent in the performing and visual arts (including Richard Burton, Ivor Emmanuel, Katherine Jenkins, Ray Milland, Max Boyce, Bonnie Tyler, Andrew Vicari, and Michael Sheen) and sport (with just one area, Trebanos, nurturing national rugby stars Rob Jones and Justin Tipuric!). Even more importantly our place is full of unsung heroes who volunteer to make amazing things happen in parks, gardens, archives, historic houses, and community and arts centres. As well as our seven community libraries, we have an array of volunteer groups whose efforts make Neath Port Talbot a better place to live.

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We are excited to be hosting the Urdd Eisteddfod at Margam Country Park in 2025.



What We've Achieved

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05. What We've Achieved

Our Culture Strategy marks a new stage in our ambition for the role of arts, sports, and heritage across our communities, building on the good things we have been able to do in the last years.

As with other areas across Wales and the UK, cultural and creative organisations in Neath Port Talbot have struggled for funds, with Covid-19 hitting revenues and volunteering hard. However, we have had some big investments and great successes including:

Neath's new library and leisure centre offers high quality facilities to the community. The leisure centre has a 100-station gym with two state-of-the-art exercise studios, a six lane 25-metre swimming pool, jacuzzi, sauna, steam room and café. The new library offers a great range of books for all ages as well as computing facilities and meeting spaces. Importantly, in a great example of arts and culture helping to regenerate and revitalise town centres, the new facilities are nearer to the town centre than previously. Membership numbers for the leisure centre have doubled in the first six months since opening. In addition, we have received £186,000 since 2018 to relocate and modernise Skewen Library and develop a Makerspace at Port Talbot library.

Both **Pontardawe Arts Centre** and **Theatre na nÓg** feature in the Arts Council of Wales Arts Portfolio as essential partners in helping to deliver the Arts Council's strategic priorities. Theatre na nÓg has been telling award winning tales for over thirty years, igniting young imaginations in both Welsh and English. As well as outstanding theatre productions, Pontardawe Arts Centre is home to a wide range of music, stand-up comedy, cinema, and community activities and has an active friends' group. Both organisations are committed to work in Welsh, and to making Welsh accessible and fun for learners.

Neath Port Talbot was successful in Round 2 of the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund securing over £10m for the **Gnoll Estate Country Park** which will benefit both residents and visitors with new on-site visitor accommodation, access to the Gnoll House cellars, restoration of the historically important cascades, and better play, visitor centre, and cafe facilities.



The amazing work of our six community managed libraries (Blaengwynfi, Briton Ferry, Cymmer, Gwaun Cae Gurwen, Resolven, and Taibach) has avoided the loss of vital community spaces which has happened in so many places across the UK. As well as books and internet access they provide a range of groups, clubs and classes and are important as free to access warm spaces. Many of them also have a thriving online presence and meet all the Welsh public library standards.

As well as our Culture Strategy we have also developed a Heritage Strategy, funded by £250,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which will help us to understand what we need to do to care for our stunning range of listed buildings and historic monuments, and to celebrate and promote the amazing groups of volunteers who campaign for and look after them.



We have also developed a Heritage Strategy, funded by £250,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Case Study: Neath New Library and Leisure Centre

Neath's new library and leisure centre development also delivered six retail/commercial units and high quality new public space in the heart of the town. A key driver for the scheme, partly funded by the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns fund, was to move facilities closer to the town centre, delivering improved access by public transport and increasing footfall for other town centre businesses.

Both the leisure centre and the library have been designed to be spaces that meet a variety of needs in the community. The leisure centre includes a café space as well as a gym, exercise studios, swimming pool, and spa facilities. The new library not only offers a wide range of books (30,000!) for all ages, but also extensive computing facilities, a family history research area and local studies collection, meeting spaces for a range of community groups, and

sizable lobby and circulation space suitable for small exhibitions and displays. The children's library sits in a distinctly styled space at the heart of the library and, like the rest of the facility, has proved extremely popular with the numbers of visitors, items issued, and new members are all greater than those pre-Covid-19.

The buildings provide an excellent model of our wider ambition to create public spaces that can be widely and intensively used by different groups, and which contribute to placemaking in towns and villages. As well as delivering effective use of public funds this approach helps create a deeper sense of community as people with different interests share facilities. In an age when we are all conscious of the significant carbon footprint of buildings, maximising use of each facility is also an important part of our net zero journey.

The new library not only offers a wide range of books (30,000!) for all ages but also extensive computing facilities.

Our Vision

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06. Our Vision

By 2030 we want Neath Port Talbot to become a nationally recognised destination with a reputation for a high-quality, accessible and varied offer of sport, heritage, arts, and culture for both visitors and residents. Our excellent cultural offer will contribute to improved well-being for all, helping to deliver all seven well-being goals of the Future Generations Acts. Our culture and the Welsh language will thrive, and arts, sport and heritage will create skilled and satisfying jobs, improve people’s health, and sustainably grow our economy.

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People will be more aware of our outstanding natural heritage, which will be increasingly well-protected as we address the climate and nature emergency. Gnoll and Margam, our great historic parks, will be internationally recognised and will host a wide range of high-quality major events as well as attracting tens of thousands of visitors annually.

Our Heritage Buildings Strategy will help ensure that we can protect our most important built heritage assets. We will work with partners and funders to deliver major restorations at key sites, developing clear plans for Margam Castle, Park and Abbey Church, Neath Abbey, Neath Abbey Ironworks, Briton Ferry Brunel Dock, Aberdulais, Cefn Coed, and the canals. We will implement the major project planned for Gnoll Park. As we refurbish and refresh buildings our priority will be for flexible cultural spaces that can deliver many different uses for their communities.

The town centres will be reanimated with ambitious programmes of events, significant public art commissions, new and growing creative businesses, and inclusive community projects. Towns, villages, and rural areas will benefit from new events and festivals that attract diverse audiences with a particular focus on people underserved by our current cultural offer.

More people will be involved in both sports and fitness activities, and we will make a difference to health and well-being through team sports, leisure centres, fitness activities, mass events, and through individuals and families exercising in our fantastic outdoor spaces. Our buildings, activities, and events will be increasingly accessible to people with a wide variety of disabilities.

Our museum collections will be reaccredited, and we will use them to tell fascinating stories about our people and our place in a wide range of town and village venues across Neath Port Talbot, using exhibitions, displays, and digital interactions. We will support our intangible cultural heritage, telling the stories of the customs and traditions of our many communities that make up our rich heritage across NPT.

Tourist numbers will grow in a sustainable way, and we will particularly focus on increasing the number of overnight stays alongside initiatives to ensure that this has a positive impact on local communities. Local people will be able to enjoy towns and villages with a growing range of cafés, bars, restaurants, galleries, sports clubs, and creative businesses.

We will develop new ways of working collaboratively between the public, private, and voluntary sectors. The Council will provide clear leadership and talented people from diverse sectors including health, education, and transport will help design and deliver arts, heritage, and sport that can be accessed everywhere by everyone.



Case Study: Gnoll House Country Park

Gnoll House was described as one of the finest residences in Wales by John Kneale in 1822, but by 1957 it had fallen into such a state of disrepair that it had to be demolished. The grounds, however, found new life as a country park and are enjoyed by thousands of people every month – including many who come for Neath’s Park Run or to see the Hollow Tree – an oak that has been Wales’ Tree of the Year!

With a vision to use key sites in the Vale of Neath to bring visitors to the Neath, Afan and Swansea Valleys, Neath Port Talbot Council recently submitted a successful bid for to improve Gnoll Country Park. This ambitious project will:

- Reinststate the significance of the park as a key historic development in the Vale of Neath.
- Repair and restore Listed heritage features, including structures, gardens, and landscapes.
- Deliver high-quality visitor facilities including an improved café and visitor centre.
- Help promote the Vale of Neath through branding, signage, and interpretation.
- Improve the biodiversity of Gnoll Country Park.
- Use high-quality, sustainably produced, local, healthy produce.
- Have guardians and rangers supporting educational activities concerning the local landscape and heritage.

- Deliver a new focus on health and well-being with better wheelchair access and making the park more dementia friendly.
- Improve transport links, especially for walking and cycling.

Central to the plans is reinstating the site of Gnoll House, enabling people to access the old cellars, and providing both digital and physical interpretation to show visitors the house’s history and tell the stories of people who lived and worked there. The restored spaces will be able to host events and performances in a spectacular setting.



The proposed approach is deeply collaborative with involvement of community organisations and enterprise partners such as the Woodland Trust, Friends of the Park, and Park Run, and with opportunities for local community enterprises to run the shop and café.

Our Themes

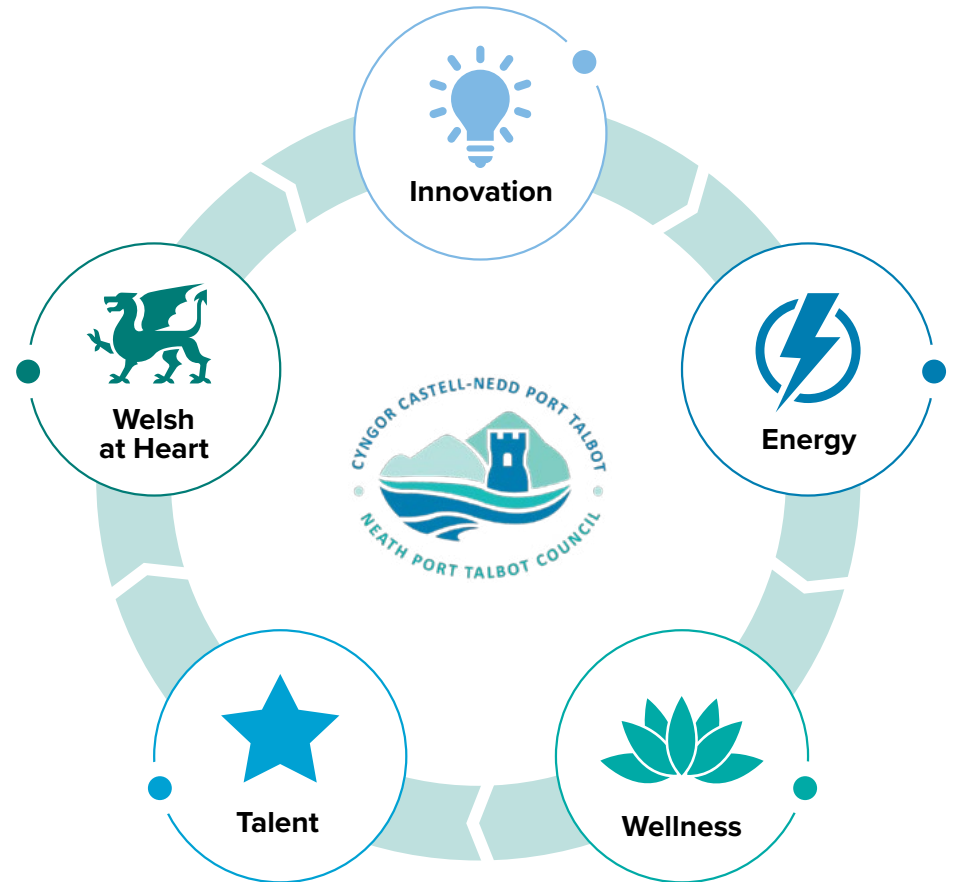
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07. Our Themes

Our five themes – innovation, energy, wellness, talent, and Welsh at heart – have been chosen following extensive consultation and reflect the unique history and personality of Neath Port Talbot and the cultural needs of our residents and visitors. The themes are designed to inspire the creativity of our communities and to provide a framework for our arts, sport, and heritage organisations in developing their projects and priorities.

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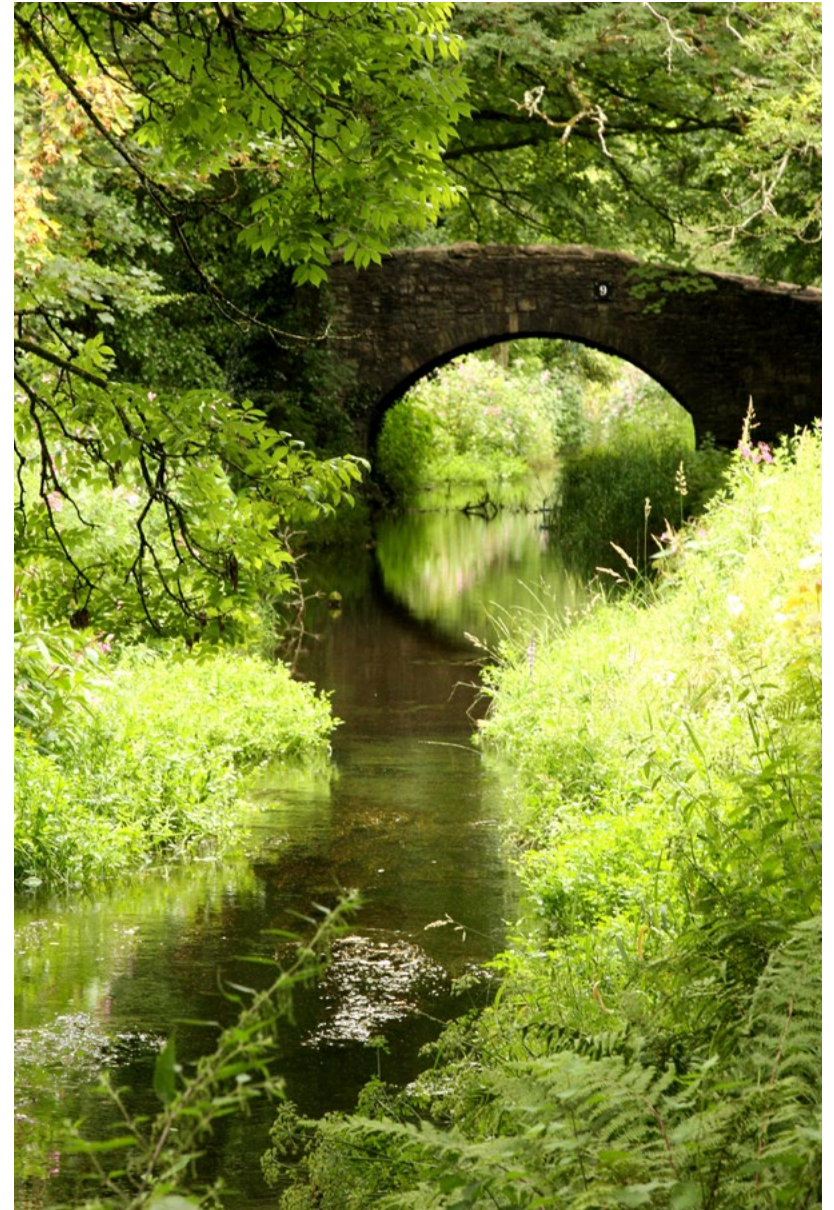


Innovation

Our innovation theme builds on Neath Port Talbot's long history of pioneering firsts. We will create new artworks and events, develop new talent, pioneer new ways of working, and tell our story in new and imaginative ways.

We have a history of innovation stretching back well over a thousand years, closely aligned to our extraordinary natural landscape. Ulrich Frosse established one of the first copperworks in Wales in 1584; Isambard Kingdom Brunel developed his iconic iron floating lock gates at Briton Ferry, whilst Neath Abbey ironworks, founded at the end of the 18th century on the banks of the River Clydach, is fundamentally important for the history of all heavy industry in South Wales, as a pioneering place in the development of steam engines, which were then exported globally. The world-famous naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace was inspired by the Vale of Neath to develop his first serious interest in natural history. More recently the deepwater harbour at Port Talbot and the creation of new parks and cycle tracks on the old mining landscape has changed the face of Neath Port Talbot once again.

Margam Country Park is a nationally significant heritage site, set in a Grade 1 listed landscape. One of the most important Welsh heritage sites it contains several Scheduled Ancient Monuments



and a plethora of Grade 1 and Grade 2 listed buildings including the Castle, the Orangery and Abbey ruins. It is a 'go to' destination for local people and tourists visiting the area and has great potential for growth in the quality of what we can offer and visitor numbers. Margam Castle itself is categorised as "at risk" by Cadw and requires major investment so that this magnificent building can be conserved for the benefit of future generations.

We are innovators in the arts too with performers of international reputation hailing from Neath Port Talbot from Sir Richard Burton to the contemporary street art of Port Talbot.

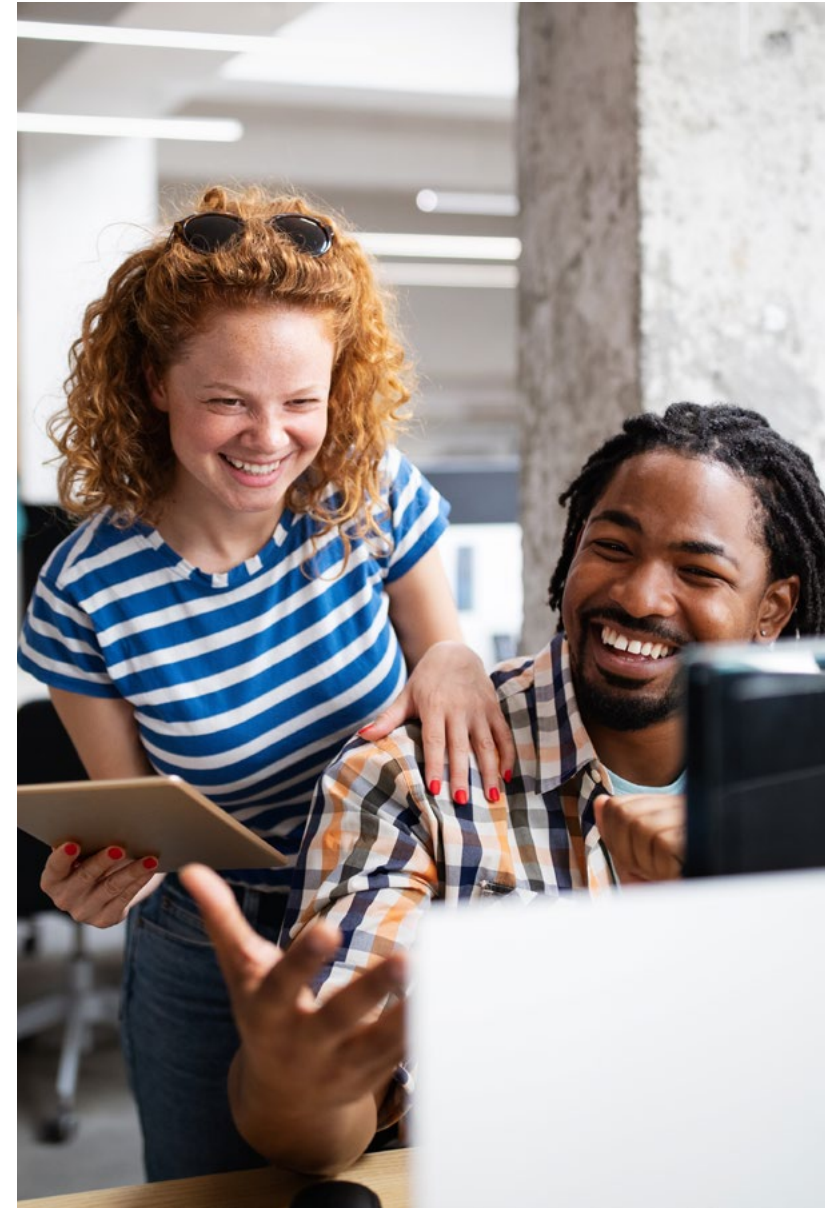
Delivering the ambitions of the Well-being of Future Generations Act requires new and innovative ways of thinking and acting. There is a strong appetite for cultural interaction in Neath Port Talbot and many cultural organisations have showed great innovation and tenacity in delivering great services with limited finances. The Council has provided a range of financial support in the past, and this will continue through a range of grant schemes like the Shared Prosperity Fund. Many organisations struggle to access funding from other sources. This will be addressed by the Local Authority and other funders working together to provide as much medium-term certainty as possible to funded groups, and by focussing limited resources on supporting groups with their own fundraising, such as support with governance, fundraising strategies, and grant applications.

The development of new skills is fertile ground for innovation, and the presence of Swansea University's Bay Campus in the Borough, and of Neath Port Talbot College are key opportunities to encourage



the development of new creative businesses. We know that creative businesses, like other sectors, benefit from ‘clustering’ and will look to develop places where this can happen. One possibility is that the former Neath Library site could be used to support the development of a ‘creative quarter’ near the Gwyn Hall and independent galleries around Queen Street.

Neath Port Talbot has an amazing range of locations, and many films and TV programmes already shoot here. We will establish a dedicated film office to try and grow this work, which brings income and employment and showcases our amazing places on screens, big and small, around the world.



Energy

Geology, technology, and enterprise made Neath Port Talbot a cradle of the industrial revolution. We will continue to celebrate both traditional and new industries and in our energetic and creative communities.

With a multitude of rivers and the highest concentration of waterfalls in the UK, Neath Port Talbot has long used the power of wind and water to create energy. Margam Castle was the second domestic building in the UK, and the first in Wales, to be lit by electric light, and the turbine house is back in use, having been recently refurbished, with a water turbine now generating power.

Today, Neath Port Talbot is focussing on how the power of place can drive new forms of energy. We have the one of the highest onshore wind power generation capacities of any local authority area in Wales, and Baglan Energy Park provides an energy focussed home for business, research, manufacturing, and services.

These steps will contribute to a globally responsible, resilient, and prosperous Wales and can be supported by our cultural offer. We will ensure that our landscapes and heritage buildings are preserved, revived, and sensitively developed for future generations.

We will help our many community sports, arts, and heritage groups in the transition to net zero for their buildings and facilities. We have huge ambition to use the industrial sites and water courses of a previous age to provide new opportunities for arts, culture, and leisure, as well as contributing significantly to Wales's programme to combat the climate emergency.

Additionally, we are determined that the clean energy revolution will deliver astonishing creative outputs as we harness the energy, enthusiasm, and passion of our people to sustain and grow a wide range of cultural and sporting activities, groups, events, and festivals.

The energy of Neath Port Talbot is manifested in our tradition of hosting distinctly Welsh quality events, ranging from Neath Fair to The Port Talbot Passion. We are ambitious to further develop this activity strand with both local and international partners and are actively pursuing key projects which will grow our Visitor Economy, provide local employment opportunities, and showcase our visitor offer.

Case Study: Aberdulais Falls

Aberdulais Falls and Tinworks has been owned and managed by the National Trust since 1980. The site is at the upper end of the Neath Valley, where the River Dulais meets the River Neath. The spectacular waterfall can be reached by a circular walk and provides a haven for wildlife. The site includes a range of nineteenth century tinsplate work buildings; the modern waterwheel which sits in the original pit is the largest electricity generating waterwheel in Europe and supplies power to the National Grid through an onsite turbine, providing electricity for most of the neighbourhood.

Innovation has driven Aberdulais since copper smelting works were first established there by Ulrich Frosse in 1584. The industrial revolution saw the site repurposed as a tinsplate works supplying tin all over the world. A school was built ensuring that despite the tough working conditions, local children were educated. Aberdulais has a long artistic history too, with Turner making several drawings and paintings of the waterfalls and mill.

Following Covid-19 site closure and a major re-investment in the site, the National Trust have now reopened Aberdulais. There will be some key differences for visitors – firstly, access to the site will be free for the first time in the Trust’s ownership. Secondly, there will be upgraded fully accessible paths across the whole site. Thirdly, the Trust will be pioneering their new partnership with St Giles’ Trust, a national charity working to support community partnership and offer new opportunities for individuals to re-integrate with society. St Giles’ Trust will be using part of the site buildings for classrooms and training programmes.

These new initiatives allow the National Trust to make one of the most important and popular industrial sites in Wales operate in a new way with its local community, becoming more connected, representative, and accessible to a range of people within a 10-mile radius as it becomes a home for another charity’s programmes.

Aberdulais Falls and Tinworks has been owned and managed by the National Trust since 1980.

Wellness

Our Wellness theme is about the power of culture to support people's health, fitness, and joy in life.

Culture has huge potential to enhance people's health and well-being and our culture strategy will help us deliver the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Neath Port Talbot faces real challenges in health and well-being, with life expectancy for men and women below the average for Wales and a fall in the percentage of adults in Neath Port Talbot reporting that their health is good or very good from 78% in 2011 to 68% in 2020. A range of partners is working hard, particularly through the Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board, to bring together organisations that can make a difference.

As part of our Culture Strategy, we will seek to make the most of our 171 square miles of space and make best use of facilities for exercise and health both indoors and outdoors. We will build on the excellent work of the [Valleys Regional Park](#) and the investment made at Afan Forest Park Visitor Centre. As part of a wider strategy of encouraging people's use of our superb open spaces the Council will continue to work in partnership with Natural Resources Wales on developing the visitor experience at Afan Forest Park, with the Woodland Trust on the new woodland offer next to Gnoll Country Park, and with partners on and around Aberavon beach and the Neath, Tennant, and Swansea canals.

We will work with health sector partners to ensure that the importance of cultural, sporting, arts, and heritage activities for people's mental health are always considered.

As our population ages it will become even more important that we provide cultural activities that are accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities. We will work with experts to ensure that whatever people's physical or mental health needs they are able to access cultural buildings, activities and events.

Sport is a deep-rooted part of our cultural identity, from the formation of the Welsh Rugby Union in Neath's Castle Hotel to our many grassroots football teams and world class mountain biking tracks and facilities. We will reinvigorate active engagement and connection with sport with priorities including growing the number of people joining in fitness classes, increasing the number and size of our large scale running and cycling events, and improving facilities for active travel across Neath Port Talbot so that we grow the proportion of journeys taken on foot and by bike.

Neath Port Talbot has excellent transport connectivity by road and rail to Swansea, Cardiff, Newport and Bristol and we will make the most of opportunities to further share our wonderful range of natural assets with a wider, more diverse, younger population, including the Swansea University Bay Campus and the proposed Wildfox visitor development in the Afan Valley.



Public transport was the most often discussed topic in our public consultation. All our cultural partners need to be committed to working with a range of public bodies and private companies on transport issues. For the Culture Strategy to succeed, transport to and from cultural events and spaces must be sustainable and fit for purpose. Cultural programming must be sensitive to both environment and communities. It should embrace our disabled, ethnic minority and welsh speaking communities , ensuring the right infrastructure and resources are in place. Our action plan includes making relatively straightforward changes as quickly as possible (e.g., provision of bus stops at culture and heritage venues) and developing long-term approaches to public transport that help everybody have access to great culture.

Mental health and well-being are as important as physical health, and participation in cultural activities is strongly correlated with improved mental health. Although impacting people of every age, the effect of Covid-19 on mental health has been particularly pronounced for our young people, and engaging them in a wide range of arts, sports, and heritage activities will be a priority. Youth services have been particularly hard hit over the last 15 years and, although we will not be able to return to the number of specialist facilities for youth of the past, we will build on the work of projects such as the New Plaza in Port Talbot to create multi-purpose, multi-generational cultural spaces.

★ Talent

Our Talent theme recognises that our amazing people are Neath Port Talbot's greatest asset and we plan to grow their opportunities, confidence, and skills to provide new generations of stars and unsung heroes.

Almost everyone in Neath Port Talbot, rightly, knows about Richard Burton, Anthony Hopkins, and Michael Sheen. We are home to dozens of famous talents – from Max Boyce to Ivor Emmanuel, Rebecca Evans to Bonnie Tyler, and James Hook to Della Jones – as well as thousands of people whose creativity might not be world famous, but still brings joy to them, their families, friends, and communities.

Great talents deserve great nurture. We will help everybody make the most of their abilities in arts, sport, crafts, and creative industries by ensuring that organisations across Neath Port Talbot are well equipped to meet the opportunities of the new Curriculum for Wales, with its strong emphasis on encouraging schools to use local assets, stories, and opportunities to help young people be confident citizens and lifelong learners. We will encourage schools to use our remarkable landscapes, buildings, and people to teach a wide range of stories that illuminates Neath Port Talbot's place in the world.



Case Study: Neath Comedy Festival

The Duke of Wellington feels an unlikely setting for a comedy club. Neath's oldest pub is usually a heavy rock venue, and it feels more like 1980s Camden than a small market town in South Wales.

Conventional wisdom is that comedy clubs only work in cities or bigger towns. But Neath comic Paul James, with just a handful of gigs under his belt, decided to start one in 2009. The Clown's Pocket Comedy Club attracted audiences in large numbers.

Internationally acclaimed acts including Milton Jones, Jarred Christmas, and Mark Thomas, provided a platform for Paul James, and other local up-and-coming comics, to perform.

By 2010 so many comics wanted to come to the club to preview their Edinburgh Fringe shows that the monthly comedy night couldn't fit them all in – and the first Neath Comedy Festival was born.

From that first one-venue, week-long programme the Comedy Festival (now Wales' longest running!) is a multi-week, multi-venue event attracting big TV names, circuit legends, and international performers, all supported by local artists. The programme has included children's shows, workshops, Welsh language shows, magic, comic illustration, and circus skills classes.

Paul has been supported by dedicated volunteers who have used their skills to build the festival, assisting at shows, helping with brochure design, delivering leaflets, and showing hospitality to comics from far and wide. The festival has included acts from underrepresented communities in a culturally diverse programme and, unlike many other comedy festivals, is proud that all the artists get paid for performing at Neath.

With its regular attendees and newcomers every year, the festival is building a great community and has amazing opportunities to continue to grow and attract the help it needs to build to the next level.

Skills can be developed and grown at any age, and we will encourage cultural organisations to work closely with our College and University to ensure that people of all ages have the skills to match the jobs of the future. Many of our biggest capital projects will involve restoration of heritage assets from the industrial revolution and before. However, there is a national shortage of the heritage craft skills (such as stonemasonry and carpentry) which we will need to match our ambition, and of heritage professionals in curation, conservation, exhibitions, and education. We will work with Swansea University's CHART (Centre for Heritage, Research and Training) to help us develop a more coherent approach to heritage and heritage skills.

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Much of our talent is 'underground' – bands in garages, people practicing their stand-up in front of family and friends, and an army of painters, crafters, model makers, printers, and more. Our ambition is to help anyone who wants to develop their talent or to make it into a career or business to have the right opportunities. We will do this by delivering high quality, affordable, community venues and public spaces, working hard to keep charges low for access to sports, arts, and heritage, and targeting support to ensure those least able to pay will still be able to participate. We will support freelancers and micro-businesses to start and grow, and make sure cultural organisations can get help with their fundraising. We will seek to create a culture of philanthropy and encourage individuals and companies to donate generously so that everyone can use their talents.

The success of many of the theatre, dance, visual arts, heritage, and sports groups that nurture so much talent across Neath Port Talbot is hugely dependent on the goodwill of hundreds of volunteers who serve as trustees, maintain buildings, teach classes, and publicise events. We want to make our place a great place to volunteer and maintain the amazing spirit that sees so many give back so much to their communities.



Our ambition is to help anyone who wants to develop their talent or to make it into a career or business to have the right opportunities.

Case Study: Pontardawe Heritage and Visitor Centre

A longstanding desire for a Heritage and Visitor Centre in Pontardawe was able to be realised when, in 2017, the lease for the former Stables at Herbert Street was going to be relinquished by the Town Council. A small group of volunteers gathered to explore the idea of establishing a centre. The Old Stables was an ideal space, with a long history of use by the local community as a library and youth training centre, and with a heritage connection to the canal as a former stables.

When the youth club using the centre took up a site in Ynysmeudwy it became possible to envisage a space dedicated to Pontardawe's heritage and, with strong support from the community, an organisation was created that was able to take on the lease.

The business plan to cover overheads was to raise funds by renting space, selling items from a reception area, selling membership to the centre, and holding events. The Centre opened in a phased plan with the shop/reception area, and a smaller exhibition room opened first. The larger main hall is still in development, but is already used by several groups, including an astronomy group, sewing group, coffee mornings by the Royal British Legion, and has hosted historical performances and presentations and talks.

There is an active committee of volunteers and trustees who organise activities and manage the building, and there has been advice and support from the CVS and the Council. The Heritage and Visitor Centre's emphasis is very much on creating a commercially sustainable venue. Since Covid-19 the Centre has hit the ground running and been busier than ever with monthly local craft markets and some very popular exhibitions.

The Pontardawe Heritage and Visitor Centre charity hopes to continue to develop the building, becoming more of a tourist destination and local amenity, with plans to create up to four pop up shop/retail units for rental to local artisans in the style of Pontardawe's old shop frontages.

The Centre is, a labour of love, with many volunteer hours given to the rich heritage of the area and shows the power of people's pride in place.

Welsh at Heart

For thousands of years Neath Port Talbot has been the Dramatic Heart of Wales. Our Welsh heritage is important, to both Welsh and English speakers, and our story is deeply rooted, and beautifully reflects the wider story of Wales.

Nearly 2,000 years ago the Romans chose a site near Neath for a fort they named Nidum, a base to protect their road from Gloucester to Carmarthen. A thousand years later Robert, Earl of Gloucester, constructed Neath Castle. Founded in the 12th Century, Neath Abbey was described in the 16th century as “the fairest abbey of all Wales”. By the 1700s its grounds had become a copper smelting plant and later an ironworks. Works have recently been done, are planned or are underway to improve public access, facilities, or interpretation at all these sites.

Our rich agricultural land brought prosperity to Neath Port Talbot even before we played a vital role in the industrial revolution. Our mines, ironworks, copper smelters, tin plate works, canals, docks, and railways tell the story of Wales’ contribution to one of the greatest revolutions in history. Today, Port Talbot’s steel works and Baglan Energy Park continue to show how Neath Port Talbot is contributing to modern-day Welsh industry.

Our diverse Welsh cultural offer includes spoken word, events, performance, and exhibitions of high-quality street art. Our organisations regularly put Welsh culture at the heart of their work, such as Welsh language plays and films at the Pontardawe Arts Centre, Twmpath sessions where the whole family can learn traditional Welsh dances with Urdd Gobaith Cymru at Margam Castle, and Welsh language shows and activities for children in conjunction with Menter Iaith Castell-nedd Port Talbot. Our Culture Strategy will build on these foundations to promote the Welsh language and make Welsh culture accessible, visible, and relevant.

The Welsh language, ‘y Gymraeg,’ is integral to Welsh culture, heritage, and daily life and is key to Wales’s shared identity as a nation. The Welsh Government has made an ambitious goal to have “a million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050”. Neath Port Talbot has pockets of Welsh speakers throughout, with the Upper Amman Valley having the most. Whilst the number of Welsh speakers in the county has fallen slightly in the last decade (13.5% in 2021) the Council has a ‘Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023-28’ and a ‘Welsh in Education Plan 2022-32’ which seek to promote use of the Welsh language by both children and adults.





We recognise the importance to residents of our uniquely Welsh cultural and creative grassroots organisations and events which support and develop local talent, reach diverse audiences, and celebrate communities. The importance of and pride in Neath Port Talbot's acting and sporting successes came through strongly in the public consultation for this Strategy. We will make more creative and cultural use of existing public space to encourage participation, increase access, and promote a vibrant Welsh culture and language, including public art installations and signage inside and outside existing cultural venues and within new civic and commercial developments.

We will continue to bring to life Neath Port Talbot's Welsh cultural offer and contemporary stories that create resonance and connection with our people today. We will make outstanding use of signage and interpretation to help every resident feel that the Welsh language and culture is important to them, and every visitor feel that they have visited somewhere with a proud and distinct identity.

We will make more creative and cultural use of existing public space to encourage participation, increase access, and promote a vibrant Welsh culture and language.

What's Next

08

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08. What's Next

Delivering this strategy will require strong leadership, good governance, and close collaboration by individuals and organisations from across Neath Port Talbot and beyond. Its priorities and approach will also need to deliver some of the objectives of the new Destination Management Plan and Built Heritage strategies.

Delivery will happen through the arts, sports and heritage organisations who collectively make up the 'cultural sector' and also its wider community groups, businesses, education providers, and public bodies, each of whom has a role to play in developing and promoting culture across the county borough, and benefits to derive from doing so.

To support this, in year one of this strategy we will establish a Cultural Partnership for Neath Port Talbot. In other places such partnerships bring together local authorities, businesses, education providers, and cultural and community leaders, driven by a shared ambition for culture and place, to co-design and deliver a vision for culture within a place.

Partnership members will be drawn from across the public, private, and voluntary sectors, including a suitable chair and administrative support. Its initial membership will be directly appointed to build momentum and make rapid progress. This will be supplemented over time through the recruitment of further members to address skill and knowledge gaps and strengthen capacity, networks, and reach. Ensuring that the membership reflects the diversity of Neath Port Talbot will be essential. Once established, the Partnership will be responsible for driving forward the delivery of the Culture Strategy, monitoring, and reporting on its success. It will meet regularly, with clear terms of reference and an agreed action plan and will work collaboratively in support of shared objectives and priorities.

Everybody and every organisation in Neath Port Talbot has a part to play in delivering our Culture Strategy. The Council will play a vital role in delivering as the owner of many cultural assets, as a force for convening, coordinating and leading. Every person and organisation will be empowered to play their own part.

The Culture Strategy is supported by an Action Plan which sets out over fifty actions for the Council and partners to take over the period 2024 to 2026 to realise our cultural ambition. After 2026 a new action plan will be curated.

Measuring Our Success

09

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09. Measuring Our Success

To measure success, we need to know what success looks like. One key aspect of that will be the delivery of the Action Plan. However, to stay on track in successfully delivering our long-term vision for culture in Neath Port Talbot an initial priority of the Culture Partnership, will be to develop a “benefits realisation framework” linked to the strategic vision, goals, and action plan. This will identify:

- **Intended benefits** and the **beneficiaries** to whom they will primarily accrue, including positive outcomes for individual residents and organisations, as well as measurable economic impacts for Neath Port Talbot as a whole.
- **Expected timeframes** for these benefits to materialise.
- **Indicators** of whether the benefit has been achieved.
- **Methodologies** for capturing and evaluating benefits indicators. These will range from simple exercises to capture immediate outcomes for individuals (e.g., audience surveys, stakeholder surveys, visitor feedback forms) through to more complex exercises to assess cumulative long-term impacts (e.g., economic data analysis).



Action Plan

10

Action Plan

The aim of this action plan is to deliver collaboration and partnerships that enable us to make the most of the many unique cultural assets in Neath Port Talbot. It sets out how Neath Port Talbot Council will work in partnership with a range of organisations, community groups, and residents to help deliver our shared vision of ensuring a strong and thriving arts, sports, and cultural offer that benefits individual residents and visitors, their families, and our wider communities, as well as contributing to the vitality of our towns, villages, and rural areas.

We believe we can only really animate our communities, grow our economy, improve our skills, raise aspirations, and support residents in leading healthy and happy lives by deep collaboration with partners and across sectors.



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The tables below set out the key actions that the council and other organisations based or working in the borough need to take to implement the Culture Strategy. The tables are comprehensive until 2025, and set out plans for further actions, which may be adapted or changed depending on what is achieved in years 1 and 2. It is recommended that the Action Plan be renewed annually, to maintain a two-year detailed plan and further years of outline ambitions.



Our long-term vision is ambitious across the whole of Neath Port Talbot, which means no one organisation will be able to deliver it all. Particularly in Years 1 and 2 there are more areas where the Council will lead, utilising its convening and coordinating power to create the right policy and governance frameworks, but there are many elements where the expertise lies with our partners, both the big and the small actors on the cultural stage.


10. Culture Strategy Action Plan




10.1 This Action Plan lists the key things that need to happen over the next two years to deliver our vision for growing and vibrant culture across Neath Port Talbot. It is designed to be a living document which is regularly updated as actions are completed. The Cultural Partnership should ensure that it is revised annually to ensure that there is always a detailed two-year forward plan. Many of the actions are led by Neath Port Talbot Council as a key convening body, but there is plenty of scope for other parts of the public sector, and for businesses and the voluntary sector, to contribute to ensuring the actions are undertaken and that culture thrives.




Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
1	Innovation 	Establish a Culture Partnership to facilitate the implementation of the Culture Strategy and its future development.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First meeting of partners (Q4 2023). • Recruitment of independent chair (Q1 2024). • Partnership takes ownership of Culture Strategy (Q1 2024). • Welsh Culture to be embedded within the high level governance. • First annual review/revision of Action Plan (Q1 2025).
2	Innovation 	Agree priorities across the Culture Partnership for major cultural capital project priorities in accordance with the Culture Strategy and communicate these priorities to major funders (e.g., Welsh Government, NLHF, Arts Council of Wales, Cadw).	Culture Partnership and NPT Council with input from expert partners (e.g., CADW, National Trust)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate detailed list of possible major investment projects (Q4 2023). • Develop criteria and weighting for scoring (Q1 2024). • Culture Partnership members score projects to provide ranked list (Q2 2024). • Ensure the Welsh language and culture is fully embedded. • Begin implementation of Action 02 (Q3 2024).



Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
3	Wellness 	Ensure that we have the right facilities available in the right place to enable an overall increase in the physical activity of residents, especially the least active.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission a Sport Facilities Needs Assessment and Strategy Action Plan to identify current and future needs and demands for sports facilities (scope to be confirmed). (Q2 2024). This will determine what NPT's needs are for sports facilities. It will analyse supply and demand data to determine if there are sufficient facilities in the area (it also identifies gaps and over supply) and seeks opportunities for increasing physical activity. A key driver for the report and on-going challenge for NPT is to ensure that people in rural areas and from all backgrounds and communities have access to can be challenging (e.g., through co-location) Assessment (Q3, 2024) and Strategy Action plan report completed (Q4 2024 subject to budget, commissioning date and scope).




Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
4	Wellness 	Carry out review of pricing for car parking across different leisure locations (e.g., Margam, Aberavon Beach, Gnoll) with a view to delivering consistency, accessibility, and in line with prioritisation of active and public transport. Explore potential to create “package” offers for NPT residents to include leisure centre sites.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine scope of review (Q2 2024). Review completed (Q3 2024). Implement recommendations of review (from Q4 2024).
5	Innovation 	Build on the work being undertaken at Margam Country Park to develop a National Lottery Heritage Fund bid, with an ambitious project that recognises the huge historic significance of the house and its surroundings.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a timeline for a major project (Q4 2023) to include smaller scale interim projects and essential maintenance. Begin implementing interim strategy (Q1 2024). Provisional submission date for major NLHF bid (Q1 2025).



Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
6	Innovation 	Review the support being offered to arts, sporting and cultural groups by the NPTCVS and other parts of NPT Council and sector support organisations with a view to signposting organisations to the most effective source of support. Where possible signpost to support that is already funded enabling Local Authority resources to focus on filling gaps in provision. The CVS website provides a wide range of resources – review currency of these, fill any gaps, and ensure groups and individuals know this is the place to go.	NPT Council, CVS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the existing resources for currency, relevance and any gaps (e.g., developing commercial or trading income) (Q1 2024). Develop comms campaign to ensure all relevant organisations know about benefits of joining the CVS (Q2 2024). Revise any dated resources and provide additional resources identified in review exercise with an emphasis on signposting to high quality external resources rather than creating new ones (Q3 2024).



Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
7	Innovation 	Develop an integrated interpretation strategy (including existing 'In their footsteps' trails, new plaques and revised website) for key NPT historic resources, which reviews both innovation relevance and where historic wealth came from, and tells a real story of place and people in Welsh and English (through digitised collection and archive resources).	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree staff lead and timetable (Q4 2024). • Revise website and develop application for any further tools (e.g. plaques) Q2 2024.
8	Innovation 	Ensure co-creation with local communities for these plans, developing innovation and talent in line with the Welsh Curriculum, Library and Archive access plans and a range of community initiatives.	Culture Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with local heritage and community groups, schools and West Glamorgan Archives via existing channels to confirm priority stories and sites, as well as how to promote existing Heart of Wales trails to local audiences (Q1 2024).
9	Innovation 	Establish a new film office in NPT Council and attract more productions to film in the borough. Consider establishment of a production fund (equity shares in specific productions).	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree development of a film office (Q4 2024). • Staff recruitment and set up (Q2 2025). • Film office established (Q3 2025).




Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
10	Innovation 	Give grants from the Shared Prosperity Funds that encourage innovation across the cultural sector and visitor economy.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All SPF grants from current round distributed and spent.
11	Innovation 	Develop and deliver a new, large-scale, significant event for NPT that is embraced by residents, draws both day and overnight visitors and makes a positive contribution to the local economy.	NPT Council and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop ideas for possible events and select preferred option (Q3 2023). Fundraising and planning (Q4 2023). Decision made and publicity rollout (Q1 2024). Event held (Q3 2024).
12	Innovation 	Develop and deliver at least one significant public art commission for a location which is underrepresented in the borough's current public art offer and which has good levels of footfall. Project to include skills development piece and strong co-creation with relevant community groups.	Culture Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore and report on possible locations (Q4 2024). Decide preferred location (Q1 2025). Design and fundraising (Q3 2025). Installation and unveiling (Q3 2026).




Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
13	Energy 	Building on the success of the Port Talbot Artwalk and Richard Burton Trail, produce a list of key public art installations in Neath Port Talbot. Ensure the list and locations are available on the Council website and on a Wikipedia page. Create a public art trail – to include elements of the ARTwalk trail but also a wider range and geography of public art.	Culture Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping exercise, update website and Wikipedia page (Q4 2024). • Trail created and launched (Q2 2025). • Develop a Street Art policy to ensure promotion of high-quality works building on this special element of Port Talbot (and the wider borough's) culture (Q1 2025).
14	Energy 	Prepare an Arts Development Plan to coordinate and prioritise a programme for investment in the performing and visual arts.	NPT Council, Arts Council of Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define scope of arts organisations NPT Council believes it ought to fund according to the priorities of the Culture Strategy (Q3 2024). • Work with key arts groups to prepare them to apply for Arts Council Portfolio status at the next appropriate opportunity (Q1 2025) with agreed NPT/local funding to support those bids in place.




Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
15	Energy 	Review the success of Aberdulais Falls new operating model with a view to learning lessons for other sites across NPT.	National Trust, NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review data gained after 12m of opening in new format (Q2 2025).
16	Energy 	Support and integrate CADW plans to Improve the facilities at Neath Abbey, including visitor centre and interpretation, and develop plans for Neath Abbey Ironworks (parking, interpretation, toilets). Publicise new and improved offer.	CADW, NPT Council, Friends Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial improvements to be completed by Q4 2025.
17	Energy 	Work with Welsh Government to reaccredit NPT's museum collections, fulfilling the commitments around care and conservation, as well as providing a range of opportunities for public display (see also Action 19).	NPT Council, Welsh Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Result of application to SPF fund for feasibility study (Q3 2023). Options assessed and next steps decision (Q1 2024). Apply to NLHF for funding to assist with reaccreditation (Q2 2024). Application for re-accreditation requires collections on display by Q4 2026.




Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
18	Energy 	Investigate the feasibility of Neath Old Library as a creative workspace (possibly including co-working space, maker space and studio space) with small scale exhibition/display facilities, possible in partnership with an education or third sector provider. This could catalyse the development of a creative quarter with a joined-up approach between Planning Policy, Planning, Economic Development, Arts and developers.	NPT Council and creative sector partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission feasibility study including looking at wider opportunities for the area around the library (Q4 2023). Feasibility study reports. If positive commission capital cost assessment and Business Case (Q1 2024). Seek operating partner (Q3 2024).
19	Energy 	Utilise a wide range of spaces in venues across the Borough for temporary exhibitions of the Council's (and other) collections of art and artefacts. To include both previously used venues (e.g., Mechanic's Institute) and new ones (e.g., new Neath library, Gnoll new visitor centre).	NPT Council and range of venue partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify range of possible venues and display exhibition themes for period 2024-2026 (Q1 2024). Implement short term programme in "easy" Council owned venues (e.g., Neath Library) (Q3 2024). Produce and carry out full programme in a range of venues (Q1 2026).





Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
20	Energy 	Ensure that the Culture Strategy priorities support the NPT Nature Recovery Action Plan and that artists can be part of the Council's climate change agenda.	Culture Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate round table event for culture sector organisations on climate change and decarbonisation (Q2 2024) – perhaps as part of wider culture sector conference day. Embed consideration of what artists and creatives can offer into all communications of climate emergency messaging from NPT Council (Q3 2024).
21	Energy 	Ensure that organisations with responsibility for venues (including community halls and libraries, sports facilities pitches and creative businesses) are supported in their efforts to reduce carbon emissions and address the nature emergency. In particular the provision of early stage support with surveys, needs assessments and signposting to funding opportunities will be a priority. Development of new financing mechanisms to fund energy saving measures (e.g., loans to community groups with repayments funded from savings on bills) could offer rapid impacts.	NPT Council with Sport Wales and Culture Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop clear understanding of relevant organisations' needs in this area (Q2 2025). Begin to deliver support to organisations through a variety of financing mechanisms to deliver carbon reductions (Q3 2026). Early stage support including nature surveys, needs assessments and signposting to funding opportunities will be a priority.




Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
22	Energy 	Digitisation can give new life to collections. Digitising key items from Neath Port Talbot's museum collections will enable them to be used proactively to animate spaces and tell local stories (in English and Welsh) to a wide variety of audience in exciting and energy efficient ways.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop timeline as part of reaccreditation work.
23	Energy 	Host the Urdd Eisteddfod in Summer 2025.	Urdd Gobaith Cymru, NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working towards event date of 26-31 May 2025.
24	Energy 	Develop an events calendar that utilises our superb open spaces to events of varying sizes, with a particular focus on events distinctive to Wales and Neath Port Talbot. Grow high quality partnerships with events organisers to ensure a balance of music, sporting and other cultural events.	NPT Council with commercial and voluntary sector partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure existing major events captured in comprehensive events calendar and in NPT "What's On" type pages and other mar/comms (Q4 2024). Identification of gaps in calendar (both in time and event type/theme/scale) and undertake exercise to propose appropriate events to fill gaps (Q4 2024). Review/assess options generated and develop business cases for those most likely to deliver strategic objectives (especially around health and wellness) with balanced budgets (Q1 2025).




Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
25	Wellness 	Take the opportunity of insourcing Celtic Leisure to review staffing structures, programmes, and business operations to ensure they meet the current and future needs of the NPT population.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake review (Q3 2023). Begin implementation of resulting changes (Q2 2024). Most significant changes to structure and programmes proposed completed (Q4 2024).
26	Wellness 	Build on learning from the New Plaza project and elsewhere to find ways to diversify the use of a range of buildings across Neath Port Talbot to engage more people in more cultural activities for their wellbeing.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report indicating possible opportunities for similar projects in future completed (Q1 2025).
27	Wellness 	Consider active and public transport as a priority in all culture and heritage projects. Review and develop connectivity around and between key assets for cycling, walking and green transport, particularly where these are easy to put in place (e.g., Neath Abbey, Canal towpath project). Provide accessible community assets for active recreation, travel, and heritage visitor destinations connecting communities along the way.	NPT Council and relevant partners (e.g., canal owners/trusts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake review and identify quick wins that would significantly benefit cultural attractions (e.g., minor timetable changes, path resurfacing, wayfinding, bus stop relocations, additional bike parking) (2024 Q4). Ensure public and active transport elements prioritised in LUF project delivery, Margam NLHF bid and all other major projects (2025 Q2). Identify and prioritise more significant works required (e.g., new cycle ways, new bus routes) to align with the prioritised list of major projects (Action 02) (2025 Q4).




Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
28	Talent 	Neath College and CHART to explore skills needed for heritage regeneration at a range of levels and develop and deliver appropriate courses, to provide skilled work, ensure the conservation of heritage assets and grow the economy.	NPT Council, Neath College, CHART	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree delivery timescale by Q3 2024 as part of formation of Culture Partnership.
29	Talent 	Ensure that all schools across the borough are aware of the opportunities for integrating local history and culture into their curriculum. Ensure pupils have many opportunities for digital and in-person visits with fascinating local people and places. Increase the proportion of pupils visiting the borough's cultural assets year on year.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief education colleagues on Culture Strategy (Q4 2023). Ensure all schools and teaching colleagues receive the Culture Strategy (Q4 2023). Use events for teachers, newsletters, INSET, online learning and other tools to ensure teachers are aware of cultural offers connected to the new curriculum (Q3 2024). Devise additional educational visit offers connected to the new curriculum at key heritage and cultural venues across the borough and online (from Q4 2024).
30	Talent 	The Local Authority will review, and encourage cultural partners to do the same, its charges for a range of culture activities with an emphasis on developing mechanisms to encourage greater participation by those least able to pay.	NPT Council and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce report with recommendations (Q1 2025).




Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
31	Talent 	Building on the Big Help Out (May 2023) and other volunteering initiatives ask the CVS to lead, and encourage all culture organisations to work together to provide high-quality opportunities for cultural volunteering with a particular emphasis on increasing the diversity of volunteers.	NPT CVS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather/collate volunteering data from cultural, arts and sporting organisations for analysis (Q2 2025). Produce recommendations for improving volunteering based on data and stakeholder consultation (Q4 2025). Fund and implement improved programme for cultural volunteering (Q2 2026).
32	Innovation 	Ensure that the capital improvements at Gnoll funded by Levelling Up Funds are accompanied by high quality activity plans which drive greater engagement with the cultural assets thus improved. To include funding applications for revenue work.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be aligned with LUF capital programme timescales.
33	Welsh at Heart 	Complete the Heritage Buildings Strategy and report back to National Lottery Heritage Fund.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be completed and published by Q2 2024.





Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
34	Welsh at Heart 	Collaborate on a shared Welsh identity and language programme across cultural organisations.	Culture Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner organisations present Welsh language activities and development plans to the Partnership (Q3 2024). Culture Partnership agree key priorities for improving Welsh language provision and work together to deliver these (from Q4 2024).
35	Welsh at Heart 	Help ensure cultural organisations adopt the Welsh language through their day-to-day business and marketing and are reflective of their Welsh identity.	Culture Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene seminar/roundtable to discuss greater use of incidental Welsh across English language signage, interpretation and comms – taking inspiration from Bannau Brycheiniog and other recent initiatives (Q3 2024).
36	Welsh at Heart 	Develop a Parks and Open Space Welsh Identity and Language Strategy maximising the opportunities for Welsh specific creative and cultural activities in these important spaces.	NPT Council (parks team)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review quality of Welsh Language provision across parks and open space wayfinding, interpretation and activity (Q2 2025). Develop an action plan for improvement with clear activities, outputs, responsibilities and timeframes (Q4 2025).
37	Welsh at Heart 	Put in to practice the objective of ‘strengthening our commitment to the Welsh language and culture’ as mentioned in Neath Port Talbot’s ‘Recover, Reset, Renew Corporate Plan for 2022 – 2027’.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake work to analyse what steps are needed and create detailed workflow (Q4 2024).



Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
38	Welsh at Heart 	Sustained focus on shared marketing and publicity resources for Welsh identity and the Welsh language, enhancing the existing work of The Dramatic Heart of Wales tourism initiative and others.	NPT Council (Visitor Economy/ Comms)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing from Q4 2023.
39	Innovation 	Work with local communities and the cultural sector to produce new work and events that support and celebrate the diversity and histories within the Borough and reflect the identities of local neighbourhoods.	NPT Council, NPT Ethnic Network Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with local communities to deliver a series of small neighbourhood events as pilots in Summer 2025. Review success of Summer 2025 events and build a more expansive programme (for 2026 onwards) celebrating NPT's diversity, and signposting new audiences to cultural opportunities.
40	Energy 	Building on the achievements of libraries and other spaces as warm hubs in 2022/23, develop cultural and creative opportunities for these spaces in subsequent winters – particularly engaging local voluntary groups to provide “pop-up” performances and events.	CVS, NPT Council (libraries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify winter 23/24 warm hubs (Q3 2023). Apply for funding for small scale events and activities in these spaces including evaluation (Q3 2023). Deliver activities and plan for future iterations (from Q4 2023).







Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
41	Innovation 	Access and promote meanwhile uses in empty buildings in order to support local creatives and galvanise the cultural ecology of the area. Work with landowners and developers to broker agreements to establish creative meanwhile spaces.	NPT Council and BID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a register of larger commercial property owners willing to allow meanwhile use and set up a mechanism to help creative people and organisations access those opportunities (Q1 2026).
42	Innovation 	Develop the Margam Country Park offer including improvements to the car parking, customer experience, catering and new motorhome site.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise car park infrastructure (Q2 2024). • Review catering offer (Q3 2023). • Deliver new motorhome site (Q4 2024).
43	Wellness 	Explore the foundation model for parks allowing a trust to deliver greater volunteering and work opportunities for a wide range of people. Run an initial pilot on one or two parks for two years to understand impacts.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select parks for pilot scheme (Q1 2026). • Identify partners to deliver the pilot and contract independent evaluation (Q3-4 2026). • Pilot runs (2026-2027).

Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
44	Talent 	Develop new and/or more widely accessible adult education timetables/courses in areas that support the creative sector (writing, music, crafts etc.) and Welsh language and culture.	NPT Council, NPT College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current course offer and identify opportunities to align with Culture Strategy (Q1 2025). Additional courses or revised timetable begins to be delivered (Q3 2024).
45	Energy 	Improve access to and wayfinding and interpretation at the Briton Ferry Brunel Dock. Explore opportunities for bringing the Accumulator Tower building back into use.	NPT Council with Brunel Dock Trust and Institute of Engineers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission access, wayfinding and interpretation proposal (Q3 2024). Options assessment on accumulator tower (Q3 2024). Implement access, wayfinding and interpretation improvements (Q2 2025). Seek funding for Accumulator Tower if a viable option found (Q3 2025).
46	Energy 	Work with CADW/Welsh Government and other stakeholders to deliver a sustainable solution for Cefn Coed colliery building as part of the priority objectives for the Built Heritage strategy, building on the 2022 Options for the Future paper.	NPT Council with CADW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In principle decision to implement recommendations of Options report or not (Q2 2025).

Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
47	Innovation 	Develop the cinema offer in Pontardawe with a new cinema offering a broader range of mainstream and arts cinema subject to viable business case.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works start on site (Q1 2024). Project completed and open (Q4 2024).
48	Innovation 	Strengthen NPT Council's team to enable delivery of the Culture Strategy. An additional 2 FTE posts will be required for 3 years to deliver the action plan items over the period April 24-Mar 27. Ensure significant focus within these roles on seeking further external funding to ensure they are self-sustaining in the long term.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree in principle (Q3 2023). Draft role descriptors and advertise (Q4 2023). Appoint (Q1 2024). Roles start (Q2 2024).
49	Innovation 	Assess the appetite for and feasibility of developing a bid for UK City of Culture 2029 and/ or 2033 (in partnership). Should the feasibility work prove positive make a bid.	Culture Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin assessment of appetite and feasibility (Q4 2023). Make decision about bidding (Q1 2024).

Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
50	Innovation 	Hold an Annual Conference to bring partners together in an informal setting to exchange ideas, needs, ambitions and best practice.	CVS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan to hold event annually from 2024. Culture Partnership to work out best time of year given other events and commitments for participants.
51	Innovation 	Deliver a new library strategy.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt new strategy by Q4 2024.
52	Energy 	Work with Tata Steel, as a key local employer in the steel sector, strongly connected to the industrial heritage of Neath Port Talbot, to find ways to better tell the story of Port Talbot Steel, perhaps through a visitor attraction.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold initial meetings (Q1 2024). Assess feasibility of various options (Q4 2024).
53	Innovation 	Ensure the culture sector works with NPT Council and the Welsh Government's business support services to ensure that suitable support is available for freelancers and micro-businesses in the cultural sector to develop and grow.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review business support provision appropriate to cultural enterprises and freelancers (Q1 2025).

Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
54	Energy 	The 100th anniversary of Richard Burton's birth will be in 2025. There is clear demand from a range of stakeholders for a series of anniversary events and we will work together to create a fitting series of events that will engage local people and drive the visitor economy.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial planning for events and list of planned activities compiled (Q4 2023). Develop public awareness of forthcoming anniversary and build further events (Q1-3 2024). Funding applications for events (Q2 2024). Full events programme published (Q4 2024). Events held throughout 2025 with a focus on the birth date – 10 Nov.
55	Talent 	Undertake some work to bring together some of the excellent musical opportunities that exist in the borough already (e.g., Neath Rotary Club, St David's Church Neath, male voice choirs) to a more focussed event such as a music month or local Eisteddfod.	NPT Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small scale pilot event (Q3 2025). Decision on larger scale future music events (Q4 2025).

Culture Strategy Action Plan				
Action Number	Principal Theme	Action	Lead Organisation(s)	Milestones
56	Energy 	The Calon Afan group has many innovative ideas for heritage preservation, enhancement and interpretation in the Afan Valley. We will seek to develop this network to involve a wide range of stakeholders and encourage the delivery of high-quality projects.	Calon Afan group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal establishment of Calon Afan Group (Q1 2024). Meetings of relevant stakeholders to help with priority setting (Q2 2024).
57	All     	Review this Action Plan annually, maintaining a two year detailed forward plan and outline actions for a further 2-3 years.	Culture Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First review of Action Plan Q3 2024.

Appendix A

A

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Appendix A

Summary of Public Consultation Responses

This paper briefly summarises public responses to some of the key questions in the Public Consultation. A full analysis, including a breakdown of responses to all questions and the demographic profile of those who responded to the survey is available as a separate document.

Approach and Responses

The public questionnaire was conducted both online and at venues across the borough in February and March 2023. It was extensively promoted through the Council's website, TV screens in Neath and Port Talbot Bus Stations and Neath Train Station, social media, a press release and emails to NPT Council Elected Members, NPT Citizens' Panel and stakeholders who had previously been consulted with requests to promote it through their own channels.

A total of 288 responses were received, the vast majority (82.3%) from Neath Port Talbot residents. These included fifteen elected members (from Neath Port Talbot Council, Senedd, and Community Councils).



Cultural Engagement

This section of the survey sought to understand whether people had taken part in a range of cultural activities over the last 12 months. The following table shows the activities ranked by the percentage of respondents who participated in them three or more times in the last 12 months:

Activity	% age doing this 3 or more times in last 12 months
Visit a cinema	42%
Visit a library	42%
Watch a concert or gig	38%
Watch a play, musical or other theatrical performance	35%
Watch a local sporting fixture or event	35%
Attend an event or festival	32%
Undertake an activity within a local leisure centre	31%
Visit a museum	29%
Take part in a creative community project	26%
Visit an art gallery or exhibition	25%
Take part in a creative class or workshop	24%
Participate in an activity at a local sports club	22%
Volunteer (e.g., coach) within a local sports club	13%
Take part in a local sporting fixture or event	11%
Watch a dance performance	7%



Local Assets

Respondents were presented with a summary of local cultural assets based on our initial findings and asked to what extent they agreed with this assessment and if they thought there is “anything that you feel is missing from this section and/or should be highlighted in the final strategy as an issue or challenge that needs addressing?”.

Of the 213 respondents who had read the assets statement 47% very much agreed with it and 50% somewhat did. Over 120 people made comments on our cultural assets. Key things that emerged were:

- There were lots of comments on individual assets that people felt should feature in the final strategy. Most frequently mentioned were libraries, canals, volunteers, artists, and craftspeople, Aberafan Beach, Pontardawe, the tunnels, Afan Forest Park, Port Talbot Artwalk, Jersey Park, and Sarn Helen.
- There was only small demand for additional assets – the addition of a new museum and reopening/reuse of Cefn Coed Colliery Museum were the most frequent requests.
- Lots of comments discussed signposting, maps, and marketing – an indication that respondents feel that the assets are good, and that attention needs to be given principally to raising awareness of them.
- Respondents would like to see the older history of the area (neolithic, Roman and pre industrial) considered more fully.
- Poor public transport was mentioned as a problem in accessing cultural assets.

Issues and Challenges

Respondents were presented with a summary of issues and challenges, drawn from the initial findings document. Of the 210 respondents who read the issues and challenges statement 61% very much agreed with it and 37% somewhat did (total 98%). Key themes emerging from over 100 comments on these issues were:

- By far the most cited problem was poor public transport provision.
- A feeling in both Welsh and English language submissions that there is a need to promote the Welsh language more.
- Recognition that disability inclusion is poor – a problem of physical access at some sites and events but also strongly correlated to public transport.
- The challenge of linking the “many places to visit” effectively – both in terms of transport but also through trails, information, and signage.
- The need to link cultural activities to the health and well-being agenda.
- A desire to record memories of industries while they are still within living memory.
- A need to avoid overreliance on industrial heritage and develop a diverse heritage offer reflecting a longer view.

Cultural Engagement

Respondents were presented with a summary of strengths and opportunities, drawn from the initial findings document. Of the 204 respondents who read the strengths and opportunities statement 39% very much agreed with it and 59% somewhat did (total 98%). This question had a significantly lower rate of agreement than the challenges and weaknesses section, suggesting that the more negative aspects resonated more strongly with respondents. Key or recurring themes of the 100+ comments included:

- The need to emphasise community and small-scale work, largely led by volunteers, with was seen as a particular strength by many.
- The effectiveness of the voluntary sector in working together to deliver cultural and other benefits.
- The range of outdoor activities were good examples of future orientated opportunities with possibility for growth.
- There was recognition of the challenges facing leisure facilities and some positive comment on the intention to return the facilities to direct running by the Council.

Vision

Respondents were presented with a draft version of our vision for Neath Port Talbot culture (see Section 6) and asked whether they had suggestions for things to be changed about it. Comments which related directly to the vision, and which led to changes being made to it in the final Strategy include:

- The vision needs to refer to natural heritage more explicitly.
- Strong vision and leadership are needed to regain the area's (Welsh) identity.
- Be clear about the necessity of cross sector (public/private/third sector) partnership.
- Greater emphasis on well-being in the vision.
- Emphasis on new ways of working and collaboration being pioneered.

Strategy Themes

Respondents were presented with five initial strategic themes (innovation, power, nature and well-being, active and unhurried travel, and Welsh to our bones) and asked for their agreement with them and anything they felt is missing and/or should be highlighted in the final strategy. Comments on the Themes were made by over 70 people and have shaped the final themes significantly, including changes to both the theme contents and how they were phrased.

Culture Strategy Outcomes

Respondents were presented with eight possible outcomes of a Culture Strategy:

- **Job creation** – creating employment for local people.
- **Social impact** – improving the education, health & well-being of local people.
- **Cultural impact** – improving the quality & reputation of local arts and culture.
- **Equality, diversity & inclusion (EDI)** – widening access to & participation in culture.
- **Sustainability** – protecting/promoting the environment & natural assets.
- **Heritage Preservation** – protecting/promoting local heritage & historic assets.
- **New Audiences and Tourism** – attracting more people and money to the area.
- **Volunteering** – building the volunteer network to support cultural activity.

They were asked to rank them (1-8, with one being the most important) according to which they felt should be prioritised. The priorities expressed were:

Outcome	Rank
Job creation	1
Social impact	2
Sustainability	3
Heritage preservation	4
Cultural impact	5
New audiences and tourism	6
EDI	7
Volunteering	8

Many respondents noted that these outcomes are interrelated, but we believe that in a world of constrained resources some sense of prioritisation is valuable. The Culture Strategy seeks to reflect the priorities of job creation and social impact, which also align well with the wider priorities of the Council and Welsh Government, particularly around the well-being of future generations.

Culture Priorities

Respondents were presented with fifteen aspects of cultural life and asked to rank them (1-15, with one being the most important) according to the extent to which respondents felt they should be prioritised for support and development within the new culture strategy. “What matters most/least to you?”. By rank order the priorities expressed were:

Outcome	Rank
Parks and public spaces	1
Heritage and historic environment	2
Community leisure facilities	3
Libraries	4
Theatres and performing arts	5
Museums and galleries	6
Venues (for live arts, music, events)	7
Events and festivals	8
Creative and cultural education	9
Music and musicians	10

Outcome	Rank
Creative and cultural workspace	11
Community arts activities	12
Sports clubs	13
Archives and collections	14
Visual art and artists	15

Those cultural activities that are most widely used largely dominated the top rankings (parks, leisure facilities, libraries) and spread of average scores was reasonable. However, there was a strong “cluster” effect with only 2.03 points separating 2nd and 12th places, which suggests people want to see the Culture Strategy offer support for all aspects of cultural life. The final Strategy reflects this with attention given to all areas of cultural life, but a particular emphasis on developing plans for improving and expanding access to those aspects of the cultural infrastructure that are most highly valued by residents and visitors.







Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Neath Port Talbot Destination Management Plan

2023 – 2028



**NEATH
PORT TALBOT**

The Dramatic Heart of Wales

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Summary – DMP on a Page

Long term growth: Visitor economy has grown by more than 14% between 2010 and 2019.

Jobs: More than 1,600 FTE (2019).

Visits: More than 1.5 m visits representing more than 2m visitor days and nights (2019).

Visitors: Day visitors account for 68% of visits. Staying visitors account for 16% of visits.

Visitor Spend: Staying visitors spend £395.97 per trip whereas day visitors spend £25.81 per trip on average.

Product: The combination of the coast, countryside provide basis for strong activity offer.

Strengths:

- Varied natural landscape.
- Afan Forest Park and Waterfall Country as key visitor hubs.
- New ‘Dramatic Heart of Wales’ brand identity.
- Recent funding successes.



Weaknesses:

- Lack of high quality accommodation.
- Nearby competition (Gower and Brecon Beacons).
- Limited resourcing of tourism function.
- External perceptions of the area.



Opportunities:

- Pipeline investment into catalyst projects.
- Potential to develop heritage and culture offer.
- Create a vibrant events programme.
- Integrate communities into visitor management plans.
- Develop coastal offer.



Threats:

- External economic factors.
- Regulatory changes for sector.
- Growth in overseas holiday taking.
- Staffing and recruitment issues in tourism sector.



Sector survival, recovery and growth

Demand for outdoor-based experiences

Localism and authentic experiences

Adaptable adventure

Sustainable and responsible tourism

Increasing use of technology

Neath Port Talbot is a vibrant, year-round, destination of choice where visitors can stay and enjoy high quality, authentic experiences and also acts as a gateway to the wider south Wales region.

Following post-pandemic recovery, tourism is now making an increasingly important contribution to the economic, social, cultural and environmental sustainability of the County Borough.

The Dramatic Heart of Wales brand is established in the UK marketplace and the destination’s visitor economy is growing each year at 1% above the average of its neighbours.

1. Developing a distinctive and responsible destination

2. Transforming awareness and perceptions of the area

3. Supporting thriving businesses and workforce

4. Vibrant communities

5. Promoting sustainable and active travel

6. Working in partnership more effectively

Introduction

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1.0 Introduction

The Neath Port Talbot Destination Management Plan (DMP) sets out the blueprint for how the county intends to sustain, grow and manage its visitor economy between 2023 and 2028. The DMP is a shared statement of intent to develop tourism in Neath Port Talbot to deliver exceptional experiences and transform people's perception of our diverse and distinctively different area. The DMP recognises the economic and social value of tourism, articulating the role of different stakeholders and identifying priority actions that reflect resources.

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Despite the real challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic and cost-of-living crisis, this is an exciting period for the visitor economy in Neath Port Talbot. As detailed in this plan, substantial public and private sector investment will underpin the sector's recovery from the pandemic and will provide impetus and direction for future growth, helping to build resilience and raise awareness of Neath Port Talbot as a quality, 'alternative' tourism destination. The visitor economy in Neath Port Talbot is on the cusp of transformation

driven by visionary ambition and major public and private sector investment. The new £300m Wildfox Adventure Resort driven by the private sector together with the 'Levelling Up' fund success and funding commitments from the Council's Shared Prosperity Fund will be a game-changer in boosting the visitor offer. A focus of the DMP is to support effective delivery of these catalyst projects in a way that benefits all communities in Neath Port Talbot.

As a county borough, Neath Port Talbot faces long-standing challenges. However, building on our unique asset base and under the leadership of the County Borough, a new partnership is emerging to drive inclusive, responsible growth for the visitor economy. As such, the DMP articulates visitor economy priorities and reflects the needs and opportunities of the sector.

The DMP is intended to be a living document that will be periodically reviewed to take into account new opportunities, the operating environment and market considerations.

Vision

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02

2.0 Vision

Our vision for the future of tourism in the borough for the next 5 years is set out below:

Neath Port Talbot is a vibrant, year-round, destination of choice where visitors can stay and enjoy high quality, authentic experiences and also acts as a gateway to the wider south Wales region. Following post-pandemic recovery, tourism is now making an increasingly important contribution to the economic, social, cultural and environmental sustainability of the County Borough. The Dramatic Heart of Wales brand is established in the UK marketplace and the destination's visitor economy is growing each year at 1% above the average of its neighbours.

Alongside the vision, the Destination Management Plan will be framed by three cross-cutting principles:

- **Responsible tourism:** Contributing to a net-zero emissions county for the benefit of our environment, our people and our prosperity.
- **Inclusive growth:** Ensuring that tourism benefits every person that lives and works in Neath Port Talbot.
- **Collaboration and partnerships:** Creating a shared action plan between private and public partners (including Visit Wales) and our communities.

We will be a destination that:

- Is seen as distinctively different from others in Wales while providing a range of good quality accommodation, places to visit and things to do.
- Makes the most of our location on Wales' primary transport routes where visitors can stay and easily explore the wider South Wales region.
- Is proud of our unique story and cultural connections within and beyond Wales which resonate with residents and visitors alike.
- Offers exceptional experiences based on our rich heritage, culture and stunning coast and countryside, which fully deliver on the '**Dramatic Heart of Wales**' promise.
- Warmly welcomes visitors and respects their individual needs.

Neath Port Talbot Today

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3.0 Neath Port Talbot Today

Facts and Figures

The area’s natural environment, coupled with strong elements of cultural and industrial heritage, are the County Borough’s main strengths as a tourist destination. Neath Port Talbot has seen significant investment in tourism infrastructure over the last ten years and it has developed as a destination and continues to grow its market presence and product offering.

In terms of the visitor economy, the underlying long term trend data is positive for Neath Port Talbot County Borough. Looking at the ten-year period from 2010 to 2019, visitor days and visitor numbers (combining day trips and overnight stays) have both increased by more than 11% and direct expenditure and economic impact have both increased by more than 14%. The graphic opposite highlights the key performance indicators for the sector in the County Borough for 2019. This is used as it is the most recent year prior to Covid-19.

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Neath Port Talbot’s VISITOR ECONOMY 2019*

A total of **1.51 million Tourism Visits**, equating to 10.3% of all tourism visits to South West Wales



A total of **£129.3 million** was generated within the local economy through visitor and tourism business expenditure

1.15 million tourism visits made by **Day Visitors** to the County Borough



In total, **staying visitors** generate a total economic **Impact of £85.59 million** for the businesses and communities of Neath Port Talbot

Visitors to the County Borough supported **1,626 active full time equivalent jobs**

Between 2010 and 2019, **Visitor Numbers increased by 11.1%**



Total bedstock in Neath Port Talbot is 2,887 beds

Comprising 1,435 serviced beds, 1,028 non-serviced and 424 camping and caravanning spaces

Day Visits generated **£43.72 million** for the local economy of Neath Port Talbot in 2019



Economic Impact grew by +14.8% between 2010 and 2019



2.07 million Visitor Days and Nights generated by visitors in 2019

0.36 million visits were made by visitors staying in **Neath Port Talbot** as part of a holiday or short break, generating **0.92 million nights** in accommodation across the County Borough

* The last full year Pre-Covid-19

Source: STEAM and CBCSNPT

Impact of Covid-19 on volume and value

The pandemic has had a sharp downward impact on Neath Port Talbot with major reductions in volume and value. The staying visitor market in particular has experienced a substantial fall. The pattern is less pronounced for day visitors which experienced a lower reduction in 2020 and a faster recovery in 2021 and economic impact where the substantial drop in 2020 has only partially been recovered in 2021. Employment levels dropped sharply in 2020 (down by more than a third at -34%) and only showed a small recovery in 2021 of just over 1%. Despite the staycation ‘bounce’, there is no doubt that the past 2-3 years have proved to be difficult trading conditions for most parties in the tourism sector. The focus for the tourism sector in the immediate term is to support business resilience and to foster future growth once the recovery returns to pre-pandemic levels.

Visitor profile

The Neath Port Talbot Visitor Survey in 2022¹ identified that 60% of respondents felt they had wanted to enjoy the landscape, countryside and beaches on offer within the county, which had increased considerably from 47% when the research carried out in 2017. The main reason for visiting Neath Port Talbot for two thirds of visitors (65%) was to take part in outdoor or sporting activities (increasing slightly since 2017).

Overall, Neath Port Talbot attracted slightly older visitors in 2022 compared to 2017, as the proportion of children and younger visitors had decreased slightly in 2022. The proportion of older visitors aged 55 and over had increased in 2022 compared with 2017. Visitors tended more towards the ABC1 socio-economic groups (67%) than C2DE (33%), which was also the case in 2017; however, the proportion of AB visitors had doubled since 2017. Almost a quarter of visitors also came to Neath Port Talbot with a dog.

Two thirds (65%) of visitors to Neath Port Talbot in 2022 came from Wales, while almost a third (31%) came from England. Only 1% came from other countries in the UK and a further 3% came from overseas. Since 2017, there had been an increase in the proportion of visitors coming from Wales and a decrease in the proportion of visitors from England. However, the proportion of overseas visitors was consistent with pre-pandemic levels (3%). As in 2017, the highest proportion of Welsh visitors came from neighbouring Bridgend (25% cf. 20% in 2017). This was closely followed by Swansea (22% cf. 19% in 2017) and Rhondda Cynon Taf (17% cf. 16% in 2017). Almost three quarters of visitors were familiar with Neath Port Talbot; 73% were repeat visitors, with just over a quarter visiting for the first time.

1. Research Report, Neath Port Talbot, Visitor Survey 2022. Beaufort Research.

Market trends

The Neath Port Talbot Destination Management Plan will need to respond to market trends and changes in consumer behaviours, particularly as the sector continues to recover following the pandemic. Some of the key trends include:

- Localism and a desire to experience authentic experiences.
- Growing environmental awareness and interest in sustainable eco travel.
- Pet friendly travel.
- The rise of ‘work-and-play-cations’.
- Rise in active holidays, which can create hotspots and overcrowding.
- Value for money plays an important role in choosing a destination.
- Fast reliable internet connectivity is expected and online booking for attractions, restaurants etc has now been normalised. This is leading to a shift from printed marketing to digital marketing.

Strategic and policy context

At a national level, Welsh Government has committed to support the four ‘foundation’ sectors of the Wales economy – tourism, food, retail and care – acknowledging that for some parts of Wales the foundation sectors are the local economy. The strategic emphasis is focused on five interconnected themes, all of which are important to Neath Port Talbot:

- Recovery and resilience.
- Net Zero and decarbonisation.
- Technology change.
- Changing environment for public investment.
- Recruitment and retention.

The Welsh Government is consulting on a number of key policy areas which could impact on the tourism sector, for example, the potential visitor levy and the statutory licensing scheme for visitor accommodation, changes to the Non-Domestic Business Rate (e.g., for self-catering properties) and revisions to the structure of the school year. The changes to the policy landscape are at an early stage but it will be important that the DMP builds in flexibility to adapt to a new policy landscape.

In addition, the DMP will need to play a positive role in meeting the strategic objective set out in the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act** of improving social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being in its seven wellbeing goals. A critical element is focussed on **sustainable development**. The design and delivery of the Destination Management Plan will need to reflect a sustainable and responsible approach toward tourism related development and marketing.

The ambition in the national **Tourism Action Plan, Welcome to Wales (WTW)** is ‘to grow tourism for the good of Wales’, balancing economic growth, environmental sustainability, social and cultural enrichment, health benefits for the benefit of visitors and locals.

At a regional level, the DMP reflects the regional context, which continues to develop, including the preparation of a Regional Economic Delivery Plan for South West Wales which builds on the success of the Swansea Bay City Deal. The Valleys Regional Park continues to champion the landscape and people of South West Wales, including its investment focus on twelve Gateway Sites.

At a County Borough level, there is a strong policy fit at local level to support the development of the visitor economy in Neath Port Talbot. **The Recover, Reset, Renew – Corporate Plan 2022-2027** sets out a clear vision and direction of travel to assist recovery, specifically move towards the ‘reset and renew’ phase with an emphasis on young people’s wellbeing, thriving communities, ensuring that the local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations and that local people are skilled and have access high quality, green jobs.

The Neath Port Talbot **Local Development Plan (LDP) 2011-2026** acts as the overarching planning policy document for the county and sets out the planning policies and land use allocations that will shape the future of the County Borough area. The LDP vision states that, ‘*The County Borough’s rural areas and valley communities will be supported and revitalised through encouragement of new and expanded economic activity through provision for sustainable small-scale employment, including tourism initiatives capitalising on existing successes such as the strategic tourism destinations at Margam Park and the Afan Valley*’.

The process of compiling the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) 2023-2036 has commenced and a call was issued for candidate sites in the summer of 2022. It is important that the continuing aspirations for the sustainable growth of the visitor economy within Neath Port Talbot are reflected within the RLDP and the sector should be encouraged to engage with the Council on shaping the future plan. The continued development of Neath Port Talbot as an authentic, sustainable visitor experience provides an opportunity to generate economic and social benefits and stimulate the step change that is required to truly transform the local and broader regional economy. Training, development and retention of staff in tourism and hospitality sectors in Wales continues to be a challenge, which is also recognised in Neath Port Talbot.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) sets out the Council’s vision and commitments to protecting, maintaining and improving the Public Rights of Way (PROW) Network, and wider countryside access, in Neath Port Talbot. It also seeks to ensure that countryside access provision meets the needs of its users, providing benefits for

health and well-being, tourism and recreation. Partnership working and collaboration in delivery of the ROWIP will play an important part in supporting leisure and tourism in Neath Port Talbot; ensuring that access to key destinations is maintained and promoted, and recreational activities that rely on the PROW network can continue and flourish.

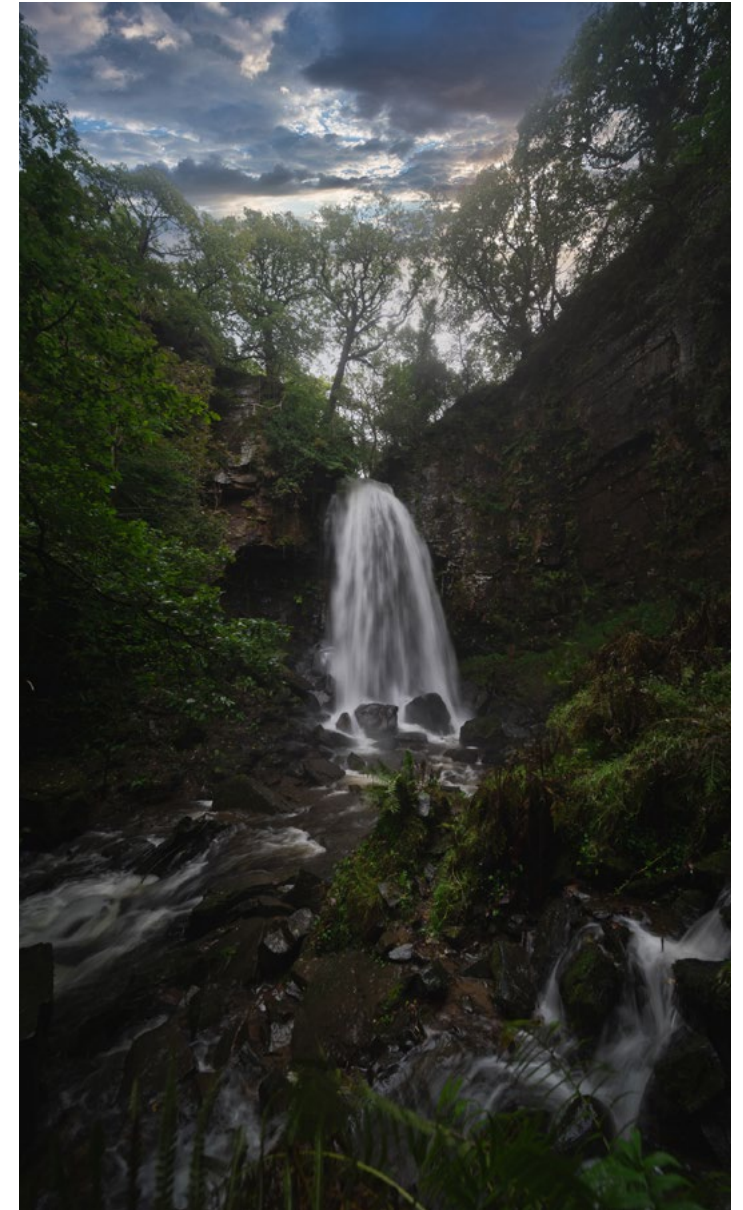
The **Neath Port Talbot Culture Strategy** aims to capture the unique cultural strengths and spirit of Neath Port Talbot. It will be important that the DMP builds on the outputs and plans of the Culture Strategy specifically its varied offer of arts, heritage and culture for visitors and residents. The Culture Strategy, Heritage Strategy and DMP are integrally linked and support each other.

The **Neath Port Talbot Heritage Strategy ‘Restore, Regenerate, Repurpose’** will set out actions to ensure the sustainable conservation, maintenance and management of our heritage assets and the measures that can add value to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area. The strategy will focus on raising awareness of our local heritage and the need to sustain the heritage community groups who play a crucial role work in conserving our historic environment.

The Council has a legal duty under the **Welsh Language Standards Regulations (No.1) 2015** to comply with a set of standards of conduct on the Welsh language. The Standards require the Council to draw up and publish an action plan, as detailed within the Welsh Language Promotional Strategy 2023-2028, to promote the Welsh language with the aim of increasing language use and the number of Welsh speakers in the county borough. As a visitor destination the Welsh language provides us with a sense of place which distinguishes Wales from other countries. Encouraging the use of Welsh and integrating the Welsh language into the way that we tell the heritage and cultural story of our county is an important tool in developing the area further as a visitor destination.



As one of the main strengths of the County Borough's tourism offer, looking after the natural environment is a key aim underlying this strategy. In 2021, the Welsh Government declared a nature emergency, which acknowledged the significant loss of biodiversity caused by humans. On a local level, NPT Local Nature Partnership (LNP) has undertaken an assessment of the State of Nature of NPT. The habitats of NPT were grouped into 11 broad categories (e.g. woodland, coastal etc.), and sadly, of these 11 habitat categories, only two were assessed to be achieving 'good' ecosystem resilience. This means that habitats across NPT are not resilient enough to deal with pressures and demands such as climate change. Action needs to be taken now to improve the ecosystem resilience of our habitats across NPT and ensure that our natural environment remains an asset for tourism into the future. The **NPT Nature Recovery Action Plan** provides a roadmap to helping the natural environment in NPT and the **Biodiversity Duty Plan** outlines how NPT CBC intends to maintain and enhance biodiversity in exercising its functions, including promoting sustainable tourism.





SWOT Analysis



04



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4.0 SWOT Analysis

Below we set out a SWOT analysis which details the key Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats associated with Neath Port Talbot as a destination.

Strengths 	Weaknesses 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature, coast and industry – distinct contrasts. • Varied landscape: natural landscape, coast and countryside. • Established adventure/activity product (including Afan Forest Park). • Network of walking and cycling routes, including Wales Coast Path and Sustrans Routes. • Non-motorised watersports usage at Aberavon. • Range of heritage assets (albeit currently under-utilised). • Strong political commitment and ambition. • Access to markets: position within M4 corridor. • New destination website and brand identity. • Destination Marketing and Pride of Place campaign 2023-2025. • Secured Government funding (UKSPF and Levelling Up Funds). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively low length of stay. • Low spend/local markets. • Current lack of high-quality accommodation. • Limited poor weather options. • Heritage product has limited profile. • Nearby competition – e.g. Gower, Bannau Brycheiniog (although this is also an opportunity). • Not a homogenous product/destination. • Relatively unknown proposition – ‘flies under the radar’ as a destination. • Varied resourcing of tourism. • Limited private sector engagement. • Some socio-economic challenges in terms of residential market.

Opportunities 	Threats 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undiscovered/‘alternative’ destination. • Transformational impact of private sector investment: Wildfox Resort (significantly expanding accommodation base with strong year round occupancy). • Deliver investment in innovative and interactive built heritage products at Gnoll Estate Country Park and other sites for example Neath Abbey, Neath Abbey Ironworks, Margam Country Park etc. • Deliver investment in visitor infrastructure at Waterfall Country Pontneddfechan. • Seek funding to create a strategic events programme across the County which aligns with the NPT place brand. • Regeneration of Margam Castle (early stage of a National Lottery Heritage Fund project) and links to wider heritage offer in the immediate area and the wider sub region. • Implementation of nature recovery actions which enhance the local environment and biodiversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unknown timescale linked to recovery of tourism within county borough. • Regulatory changes within the tourism sector. • Resurgence in outbound international holidays. • Tendency to “talk down” Neath Port Talbot. • Further development of adventure tourism products in adjacent local authority areas e.g. Swansea – Kilvey Hill adventure park and Zip World at the former Tower colliery site (although could also be an opportunity). • Ongoing cost of living crisis and risk of potential recession.

Opportunities 	Threats 
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partnership working with adjacent authorities.• Development of coastal asset/product to complement activity offer (including new management structure).• Investment in cultural and arts based activities/programmes throughout the county borough.• Subject to funding, long-term opportunities linked to Swansea, Tennant and Neath canals.	

Moving forward –
Our priorities

05

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5.0 Moving Forward – Our Priorities

The Destination Management Plan provides an opportunity to reset priorities in order to implement innovative solutions to support local tourism and address our three cross-cutting themes:

- Responsible tourism
- Inclusive growth
- Collaboration and partnerships

Feedback from our businesses and stakeholders still demonstrate uncertainty about the future and the overwhelming need to build resilience and stability.

Following the pandemic, the growth in domestic tourism has helped to soften the blow and the immediate actions taken at a national and local level to restore and re-activate the sector has mitigated the impact on jobs and businesses.

However, the visitor economy continues to face a number of significant challenges. We recognise that developing Neath Port Talbot as a visitor destination and brand is a long-term process that will require on-going investment and commitment.

Our focus for the next 5 years is on development and stability: delivering our catalyst projects and enhancing our unique assets and themes that Neath Port Talbot already has strengths in – our rich heritage, culture and stunning coast and countryside – to sustain and grow the visitor economy.

We also need to protect the core appeal of the area – its landscape and historic environment – and meet the needs of our residents.

The Destination Management Plan will deliver the vision by focussing on six main objectives:

1. Developing a distinctive and responsible destination

Creating, enhancing and supporting more sustainable visitor facing products in the drive towards Net Zero – facilities, outdoor adventure, heritage, culture, events and the public realm – increasing our appeal to staying visitors across the destination and reducing seasonal fluctuations. The evolving tourism product and service will warmly welcome all visitors and respect their individual needs.

2. Transforming awareness and perceptions of the area

Extending the reach and traction of the ‘Dramatic Heart of Wales’ brand, and marketing Neath Port Talbot by working together with a consistent, joined-up approach and clear messaging understood and amplified by all stakeholders.

3. Supporting thriving businesses and workforce

Learning the lessons of external economic shocks and building the resilience of businesses within the visitor economy to better cope and recover through periods of adverse trading conditions. Welcoming new investors and encouraging local businesses to re-invest in their offer and the recruitment, training and retention of their workforce.

4. Vibrant communities

Supporting host communities’ vital role in delivering the wider tourism experience, by investing in facilities and public realm as a key element of successful and thriving places. Embracing and celebrating local and wider Welsh culture as an integrated part of the tourism offer, delivering an authentic sense of place.

5. Promoting sustainable and active travel

Working with partners across the public and private sector to enhance connections into our valleys and rural communities through promoting active travel choices that encourage sustainable, planet-friendly, travel for the visitor economy.

6. Working in partnership more effectively

Creating a strong and representative advocate voice for the tourism sector as partners in managing the destination, making the most of our existing strengths and plugging the current gaps. Developing an effective and accountable delivery mechanism for this plan through further partnership working within and beyond Neath Port Talbot.

Delivering the Destination Management Plan

06



6.0 Delivering the Destination Management Plan

Destination Management Leadership Group (DMLG)

The Neath Port Talbot DMP is a roadmap for the sustained recovery and medium-term growth of the visitor economy in Neath Port Talbot. A visitor economy can only be successful if the public, private and third sectors work both together and with local communities. Delivery of the new DMP will require leadership, consensus and partnership, as well as financial and other resource commitments.

The key leadership role will continue to rest with the Visitor Economy Team at Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, but the DMP is relevant to all public, private and voluntary sector organisations involved in the visitor economy and the Council cannot hope to deliver on its own.

The former Neath Port Talbot Destination Management Plan was supported by a Destination Management Strategic Steering Group, made up of representatives from public and private organisations with an interest in developing the visitor economy in Neath Port Talbot.

In addition, a range of partnership groups have been set up on an area destination basis to engage partners and stakeholders including:

- Aberavon Seafront Steering Group.
- Afan Forest Park Destination Management Stakeholder Group.
- Margam Park Destination Management Stakeholder Group.
- Waterfall Country/Vale of Neath, which is managed by Bannau Brycheiniog National Park.

While there are a number of existing platforms for engaging with tourism businesses in the Borough to support the Council's role and achieve wider buy-in to the plan and its priorities, themes and actions, we recommend that the Destination Management Steering Group is refreshed as a Destination Management Leadership Group (DMLG), which will be the primary conduit to reach out and engage with tourism businesses and partners across the County Borough.

The Council will retain its role for destination management and marketing and crucially identifying resourcing and financing of the DMP. The DMLG will be the acknowledged point of contact for business engagement and local partnership engagement to support the design and delivery of priority actions.

Its terms of reference will need to be determined by partners but are likely to include:

- Overall strategic responsibility for monitoring DMP delivery.
- Providing support and guidance on product development and marketing.
- Presenting a coherent voice for the visitor economy.
- Articulating and stewarding the visitor 'narrative' and ensuring synergy with the place-making activities.

The Leadership Group will be between 10-12 member drawn from the sector, will have an independent Chair with representation across the visitor economy sector, including the various local partnership groups which are in existence. Thought will need to be given as to where the DMLG sits within the family of private public sector partnerships within Neath Port Talbot, specifically its relationship with investment and place-making in the borough.

The role of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Limited resources at the destination level make partnership working increasingly important. However, as indicated, Neath Port Talbot CBC will continue to play an operational role to develop the visitor product as well as marketing and promoting the borough. The Visitor Economy Team is lean (two permanent FTEs). In collaboration with other Council departments, the team will play a central role in ensuring that external funding, including the Shared Prosperity Funding programme and Vale of Neath Levelling Up Fund, are delivered in an effective and efficient way. Indeed, sometimes securing capital funding can be easier than funding the 'nuts and bolts' of destination promotion and management.

Thought will need to be given as to the Visitor Economy Team's capacity to continue to play a lead role facilitating the various stakeholder groups identified. It is recognised that engagement with stakeholders across the sector is an important activity in identifying priorities and delivering stakeholder aspirations in partnership with the sector, however there are currently insufficient resources within the Visitor Economy Team to deliver support in this way.

The primary focus is to ensure that resources are in place to drive forward the Destination Management agenda for the area. A revised resource and staffing plan will need to be developed taking into account the additional responsibilities set out in DMP around product development, events, marketing and coordination.

Action Plan 2023 to 2028

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7.0 Action Plan 2023 to 2028

Introduction

The Action Plan for Neath Port Talbot sets out a package of co-ordinated actions to deliver the vision and strategic objectives identified above. They will support the recovery and thereafter sustainable growth of the visitor economy – benefitting tourism businesses, host communities and the environment.

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council cannot deliver the Action Plan on its own. There is a requirement to work in partnership with the private and third sectors and local Communities.

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Catalyst projects

A number of catalyst tourism projects, at different stages of development, are being delivered in Neath Port Talbot, which will drive the recovery and growth of the visitor economy.

Once delivered these projects will radically change the tourism base and profile in the County Borough as well as delivering economic multiplier, employment and supply chain benefits.

The main transformational projects are:

Private sector led

i. Wildfox Resort

In the Afan Valley, planning permission has been secured to develop a major £400m adventure resort which will incorporate over 550 lodges, a hotel, apartment hotel, food and beverage offers alongside supporting leisure facilities.

Action (Catalyst Project One): Close collaboration between NPTCBC and the operator for project implementation through the construction and operational phases. Ensure that mechanisms are in place so the local communities benefit from this investment programme.

Partnership led

ii. Future development of Afan Forest Park

A development plan is being finalised to improve the visitor product at Afan Forest Park and help it to regain its position as a leading mountain biking destination. There is an ongoing requirement to work with NRW to secure future investment to develop Afan Forest Park as a key destination for mountain biking and outdoor recreation.

iii. Vale of Neath Heritage Corridor Framework

The framework sets out range of interventions to support the development of the tourism offer in the Vale of Neath. There is a focus on partnership working to deliver new products, enhance existing visitor sites and supporting marketing activities.

To date NPTCBC have secured Levelling Up Funding to deliver two of the key projects – the Waterfall Country Gateway Visitor Infrastructure scheme and enhancing the visitor experience Gnoll Estate Country Park Heritage and Visitor Infrastructure scheme.

Action (Catalyst Projects Two and Three):

Secure funding and develop partnership to allow these projects to be delivered effectively.

Neath Port Talbot led

iv. Waterfall Country Visitor Infrastructure Scheme

To address issues related to increasing visitor numbers to Waterfall Country and provide rural employment opportunities, a gateway visitor and community hub is being developed in Pontneddfechan. The project incorporates high-quality tourist accommodation, a community/farm shop and car parking alongside supporting visitor infrastructure. Funding has been secured from the Levelling Up Fund.

v. Gnoll Estate Country Park

Over £12m has been secured to transform the Gnoll Estate Country Park visitor experience. Investment is focussed on enhancing the existing visitor centre, making the rich heritage of the country park more accessible, introducing self-catering accommodation within the grounds and upgrading the supporting visitor infrastructure such as car parking. Funding has been secured from the Levelling Up Fund.

vi. Regeneration of Margam Castle and Country Park

Currently, a National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) supported project is exploring options to regenerate the characteristic Grade I listed Margam Castle, (located in Margam Country Park) as a heritage based visitor experience, with an education offer and potential for visitor accommodation. There is a need to continue to build the business case in readiness for an application to the NLHF and other funders.

Further opportunities will be explored to develop the wider country park to improve the visitor experience and attract more visitors.

vii. Aberavon Seafront Strategy

The forthcoming Aberavon Seafront Strategy will steer for future investment and development at the seafront. The plan will examine existing and potential future provision for the development of Aberavon Seafront as a leisure destination.

The outcome of this strategy will inform future actions within the DMP in relation to Aberavon Seafront.

Action (Catalyst Projects Four to Seven):

Ensuring there is adequate support and project management resources available within NTPCBC to take forward and deliver the transformational schemes in the immediate term (and funding is secured to regenerate Margam Castle).

Individually each project has the potential to make a real positive difference to the tourism sector in the County Borough, however, when combined a 'package of interventions' has the potential to transform the market profile of Neath Port Talbot as a tourism destination and the tourism experience itself.

Action Plan 2023 to 2028

The development of the 2023 to 2028 action plan has been shaped by:

- Extensive engagement including four workshops, online surveys to engage with Members and tourism businesses and one-on-one consultation with individual stakeholders.
- Market assessment and wider research.
- Site visits.
- Best practice.

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Action Plan Framework

- **Goals/objectives:**

- 01.** Developing a distinctive and responsible destination.
- 02.** Transforming awareness and perceptions of the area.
- 03.** Supporting thriving businesses and workforce.
- 04.** Vibrant communities.
- 05.** Promoting sustainable and active travel.
- 06.** Working in partnership more effectively.

- **Indicative timescale:**

- **Short-term** within 12 months.
- **Medium-term** years 2 to 3.
- **Long-term** years 4 to 5.

Developing a distinctive and responsible destination

Supporting and attracting investment to develop sustainable, high-quality and consistent tourism products and experiences to create compelling reasons to visit Neath Port Talbot to encourage a greater share of overnight stays. Ensuring that new interventions align with the Dramatic Heart of Wales place brand.

Developing a distinctive and responsible destination				
Actions		Lead	Goals	Timescale
Develop the events offer to address issues of seasonality and attract new market segments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an Events Action Plan to support the successful delivery of UKSPF events funding over the next two years. 	NPTCBC (with input from NRW)	O1, O2, O3, O4, O5.	Short-term/medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successfully stage the Tour of Britain 2023 and Urdd Eisteddfod in 2025 at Margam Country Park in order to raise the profile of Neath Port Talbot as a location for major events. 	NPTCBC	O1, O2, O3, O4, O5.	Short-term/medium-term

Developing a distinctive and responsible destination				
Actions		Lead	Goals	Timescale
Develop the events offer to address issues of seasonality and attract new market segments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attract, develop and deliver a programme of signature events at Gnoll Estate Country Park, Margam Country Park and other 'sites' (e.g. those managed by others including the private sector and NRW), which could be themed on, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heritage and culture. Adventure and activities (land and water-based) e.g. downhill mountain biking event, of national importance, on NRW owned land in the Vale of Neath. Food and drink. Ensure that key outdoor venues have adequate supporting infrastructure in place (to enable hosting of large-scale and other events). 	NPTCBC (with input from NRW)	O1, O2, O3, O4, O5.	Short-term/medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create Events team within the Council to co-ordinate the delivery of the Events Action Plan and events across the county borough. 	NPTCBC	O3, O6.	Short-term

Developing a distinctive and responsible destination				
Actions		Lead	Goals	Timescale
Increase the quality and quantity of visitor accommodation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a positive environment for investment in visitor accommodation. 	NPTCBC/ Private sector	O1, O3, O6.	Medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage the development of new creative accommodation experiences, for example, build on the introduction of camper van charging points and the trialling of 'aires' at strategic locations within the county. 	NPTCBC	O1, O2, O6.	Short-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with existing accommodation providers to improve the quality of their bedstock through grading and accreditation schemes. 	NPTCBC	O1, O6.	Medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver accommodation proposals as part of the UK Levelling Up funded projects at Gnoll Estate Country Park and Waterfall Country Pontneddfechan. 	NPTCBC	O1, O2, O6.	Short-term

Developing a distinctive and responsible destination				
Actions		Lead	Goals	Timescale
Attract private sector investment in the tourism sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review sites owned by the council and others, which could accommodate tourism uses, such as a caravan park, prepare an investment prospectus and to take to market. 	NPTCBC	O1, O2, O3, O6.	Short-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide advice and assistance to support major investment proposals at Wildfox Resort in the Afan Valley (subject to Planning input). 	NPTCBC in partnership with private sector	O1, O2, O6.	Long-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide advice and assistance to support major tourism investment proposals at East Pit in Tairgwaith (subject to Planning input). 	NPTCBC in partnership with private sector	O1, O2, O6.	Long-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide advice and assistance to support major tourism investment proposals at Rheola Estate in the Vale of Neath (subject to Planning input). 	NPTCBC in partnership with private sector	O1, O2, O3.	Long-term

Developing a distinctive and responsible destination				
Actions		Lead	Goals	Timescale
Develop and champion sustainable outdoor recreation and adventure products.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development of on-water products/ experiences (building on water use of the Neath Canal at Ty Banc Cottage, near Resolven, Margam Adventure at Margam Country Park and Surf School Wales at Aberavon beach). 	NPTCBC	O1, O2, O6.	Medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore options for nature and wildlife tourism (particularly given growing consumer interest in the environment, the climate and biodiversity emergencies and the Lost Peatlands Projects). 	NPTCBC	O1, O2, O6.	Long-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to explore the feasibility of developing/ re-instating the Neath and Tenant Canals for tourism, leisure and recreation use. 	NPTCBC	O1, O4, O5, O6.	Medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scope out potential expansion of Fforest Fawr Geopark into the county – work closely with Bannau Brycheiniog in respect of the overall Geo-park. 	NPTCBC/ Geopark/ Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority	O4, O6.	Medium-term

Developing a distinctive and responsible destination				
Actions		Lead	Goals	Timescale
<p>Create a vibrant seafront at Aberavon.</p>	<p>Develop a vision and masterplan for Aberavon Seafront – creating a cohesive offer through a range of interventions/projects e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in seafront public realm alongside updating information provision and signage (both along the seafront and from the M4). Piloting/trialling introduction of seasonal, high-quality mobile food units on the seafront. Supporting non-motorised watersports activities at Aberavon, as a complementary offer to Afan Forest Park and Waterfall Country. Identify opportunities for new car parking provision and explore options for consolidating car parking provision along the seafront to better manage peaks and troughs in usage. Use IoT and geospatial (mapping) technology to generate real time ‘busy-ness’ data, which could report on the capacity key car parks at Aberavon Seafront which along with variable roadside messaging to promote alternative park and ride scheme. 	NPTCBC	O1, O2, O3, O4, O6.	Short-term/medium-term

Developing a distinctive and responsible destination				
Actions		Lead	Goals	Timescale
Develop the heritage and cultural market place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement an Action Plan to deliver the Vale of Neath Heritage Corridor Strategy. Also, identify priority projects e.g. (a) work in partnership with Cadw to deliver investment at Neath Abbey and also Neath Abbey Ironworks, (b) at Melincourt explore potential to enhance visitor facilities and car parking (c) at Aberdulais Falls work with the National Trust to get the site fully operational once more. 	NPTCBC and Partners	O1, O2, O4, O6.	Medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the Culture Strategy dovetails with DMP to support key themes and initiatives. 	NPTCBC	O6.	Short-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote new arts and culture product which emerge through the Culture Strategy in order to add to the appeal of Neath Port Talbot to wider market segments. 	NPTCBC	O1, O2.	Medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the emerging proposals to regenerate Margam Castle, which could have a stronger tourism focus (including the potential to introduce visitor accommodation within the castle itself). 	NPTCBC	O1, O2, O6.	Medium-term/ long-term

Developing a distinctive and responsible destination				
Actions		Lead	Goals	Timescale
Develop the food offer – an emerging opportunity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on the success of Neath Food and Drink Festival, nurture the development of the local ‘food scene’ (which will help to draw in staying visitors and attract new visitors). 	NPTCBC	O1, O2, O3, O4, O6.	Medium-term
Deliver excellent customer service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide customer service training for people working across the tourism sector to deliver consistent and high-quality services for all visitors to Neath Port Talbot. This will run alongside the investment in the tourism product. 	NPTCBC/ private sector	O3, O4, O6.	Short-term
Create an accessible destination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure public and private sector investment to develop accessible tourism infrastructure. For example, accommodating groups of multi-generational visitors, sensory experiences, accessible pathways, Changing Places facilities, accessible play etc. 	NPTCBC	O1, O2, O4, O5, O6.	Medium-term

Developing a distinctive and responsible destination				
Actions		Lead	Goals	Timescale
Ensure that a sense of place is integrated into all project proposals in order to change perceptions of Neath Port Talbot and instil pride in the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the Welsh language and Welsh culture is integrated into all communications and projects being developed by the Council and within partner projects. Advise stakeholders and businesses within the tourism sector on how to integrate the Welsh language and a sense of place into their own activities. Deliver the Shared Prosperity Fund funded Destination Marketing and Pride of Place Campaign between April 2023 and March 2025. Continue to integrate the Neath Port Talbot place brand with place-based marketing activities and development across the Council. 	NPTCBC	O1, O2, O3, O4.	Short-term, medium-term.

Transforming awareness and perceptions of Neath Port Talbot as an alternative destination

Work with partners to promote Neath Port Talbot as a quality, alternative destination.

Transforming awareness and perceptions of Neath Port Talbot as an alternative destination				
Actions		Lead	Goals	Timescale
Raise the profile of Neath Port Talbot as an alternative year round visitor destination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver the destination marketing campaign utilising the 'Dramatic Heart of Wales' destination brand. 	NPTCBC	O1, O2, O3, O6.	Short-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen co-operation with neighbouring areas to create sub-regional experiences, which showcase the place brand and link to the areas strongest activity and heritage/culture led products. 	NPTCBC	O6.	Medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure the on-going collection of data to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaigns. 	NPTCBC	O2, O6.	Short-term
Change perceptions of Neath Port Talbot as a place to live and work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver the Pride of Place marketing campaign. 	NPTCBC	O2, O6.	Short-term

Supporting thriving businesses

Build back better a more innovative and resilient industry to recover market position and accelerate growth over the medium – long term.

Supporting thriving businesses				
Actions		Lead	Goals	Timescale
Secure greater engagement and buy-in from the tourism industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure regular communication and engagement with industry partners (e.g. latest market data, delivery of projects etc). Introduce an annual Neath Port Talbot Tourism Summit. 	NPTCBC	O3, O6.	Medium-term
Encourage up take of advice/ support offered by NTPCBC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that tourism businesses are aware of and are able to access business support and advice delivered by NPTCBC. 	NPTCBC	O6.	Short-term

Supporting thriving businesses				
Actions		Lead	Goals	Timescale
Develop a suite of supporting industry toolkits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a Tourism Entrepreneurs Toolkit to support the start-up of new tourism businesses – adding positively to the tourism offer. Refresh the ‘Green Toolkit’ to support tourism businesses to become sustainable and their journey to reach Net Zero. Develop an accessibility toolkit to encourage businesses to place ‘accessibility’ at the heart of their ‘product offer’ and customer experience. 	NPTCBC	O6.	Short-term
Provide up to date data ² .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to collect bedstock data, site specific footfall data and commission annual STEAM reports alongside ad-hoc data on motivations to visit, spend levels, impact of events etc. Set up a programme to collect annual occupancy data to inform Council and business decision making. 	NPTCBC	O3, O6.	Medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate the data to businesses in the tourism sectors and others with an interest in economic development (could form a core part of the annual tourism summit). 	NPTCBC	O3, O6.	Medium-term

2. This empirical evidence base will also help to demonstrate the importance of the tourism sector to all stakeholders and interested parties, enable tourism businesses to respond to latest market trends and make informed decisions based on evidence and also can be used to support future funding bids.

Vibrant communities

Vibrant host communities and local businesses are at the heart of the tourism experience across the county borough. However, host communities do not necessarily benefit from increasing visitor numbers and they can suffer from the negative impacts associated with increased visitor numbers. There is a need to balance the requirements of visitors and communities.

Vibrant communities				
Actions		Lead	Goals	Timescale
Minimise impacts on host communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify tourism hotspots and produce plans to minimise negative impacts and maximise the positive impacts of tourism on host communities. 	NPTCBC	O4.	Short-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that appropriate community engagement is carried out in respect of future development projects. 	NPTCBC	O4, O6.	Ongoing
Improve the public realm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under the Valleys and Villages Prosperity Fund and other funding sources support investment in the public realm to help create a sense of vibrancy and welcome e.g. refresh of key public spaces, use of small-scale events, reuse of empty shop fronts. 	NPTCBC	O2, O4, O6.	Long-term
Get the basics right.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out an audit of the provision of WC facilities, signage, wayfinding, interpretation and car parking – these facilities are often the first touch-point for visitors on arrival. Upgrade where required and introduced new supporting facilities where there is demonstrated demand³. 	NPTCBC	O2, O3, O4, O6.	Short-term

3. Some projects may be fundable via the Valleys and Villages Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

Enhancing connectivity and active travel

The car is the main mode of transport utilised by visitors to travel to and around the county borough. Actions are required to promote and encourage visitors to use more sustainable means of transport to move around the county borough.

Enhancing connectivity and active travel				
Actions		Lead	Goals	Timescale
Develop travel itineraries linked to public transport.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work closely with public transport providers to develop integrated visitor offers in the form of linked travel itineraries. 	NPTCBC	O5, O6.	Medium-term
Encourage the uptake of walking and cycling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under the Valleys and Villages Prosperity Fund and other funding support investment in active travel projects. 	NPTCBC	O5, O6.	Medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure funding mechanism is in place to support ongoing maintenance of trails/routes e.g. Afan Forest Park and wider trails within Waterfall Country (a key element of the tourism offer within the county borough). 	NPTCBC	O2, O5, O6.	Medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formalise a 'branded' route from Aberavon Seafront through to Glyncoirwg (supporting 'Valleys to Coast' product). 	NPTCBC	O1, O4, O5, O6.	Short-term

Enhancing connectivity and active travel				
Actions		Lead	Goals	Timescale
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore options to facilitate supporting infrastructure and activity related to the growth in the use of ebikes. 	NPTCBC	O1, O5, O6.	Medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scope out option to link Wildfox Resort and Afan Forest Park Visitor Centre via an off-road route. 	NPTCBC	O1, O4, O5, O6.	Medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore option to improve linkages for walking and cycling route between the mainline railway station at Port Talbot and the seafront at Aberavon. 	NPTCBC	O1, O4, O5, O6.	Medium-term



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