

Public

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

***Democratic Services
Gwasanaethau Democrataidd***

Chief Executive: K.Jones

Date: 18th September 2023

Dear Member,

CABINET - WEDNESDAY, 20TH SEPTEMBER, 2023

Please find attached the following supplement report for consideration at the next meeting of the **Cabinet - Wednesday, 20th September, 2023.**

Item

11. **Heritage Strategy (Pages 1 - 86)**

Yours sincerely

T. Davies

p.p Chief Executive

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Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Restore, Regenerate, Repurpose A Heritage Strategy for Neath Port Talbot 2023-2038



Gwnaed yn bosibl gan

**Cronfa
Treftadaeth**

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Contents

01	Introduction	3
02	Executive Summary	5
03	Our Heritage & Story	8
04	Vision, SWOT Analysis & Themes and Objectives	23
05	Issues Facing Heritage Assets	29
06	Policy Context	34
07	Policy Drivers	40
08	Engagement with the Community, Partners and Stakeholders	43
09	Understanding Our Heritage and its Significance	45
10	Conserving & Investing in Our Heritage	47
11	Capitalising & Building on Our Heritage	50
12	Positive Management of Our Heritage	55
13	Celebrating and Promoting Our Heritage	59
14	Delivery of Action Plan	61
15	Abbreviations & Glossary	72
16	Appendix A: SWOT Analysis	75
17	Appendix B: Policies and Strategies	81
18	Pictures used in the Heritage Strategy	83

Introduction

01

Page 3



1. Introduction

Neath Port Talbot Council recognises the contribution that our area's heritage makes to the character of the county, its economic vitality and quality of life. Our heritage contributes to our local identity and sense of community, whilst our historic environment is part of the area's visual and cultural appeal, acting as a stimulus and inspiration to high quality development. Our heritage assets play an important part in increasing the appeal of the county borough as a place to live, work, visit and invest in. Working creatively with key stakeholders, we can innovatively manage and protect our historic environment to enable us to build a positive future for everyone.

Page 4

The pandemic showed the true value of the historic environment to residents, enabling them to rediscover the heritage on their doorstep and appreciate the treasures that the county has to offer. Daily walks through our historic environment and landscapes allowed people to reconnect with one another and with their local area; not only enabling people to maintain their own well-being but to collectively come together to support others in need of assistance in their locality, fostering community cohesion and resilience in uncertain times.

Through the Council's 'Let's Talk' campaign local people informed us that their local environment, the Welsh language, heritage and culture matters to them. Neath Port Talbot Council supports this community desire and its commitment to protect, promote and develop our heritage and culture is set out and endorsed in Recover, Reset, Renew (Neath Port Talbot Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2027).

This Heritage Strategy will set out actions to ensure the sustainable conservation and management of our heritage assets, and measures that can add value to the well-being of the area.

The Council secured National Lottery Heritage Funding to deliver the Heritage NPT Project that includes producing a Heritage Strategy and secondly focusing on the need to sustain the community heritage groups who play a crucial role championing and conserving our historic environment.

Executive Summary

02

Page 5



02. Executive summary

Neath Port Talbot's heritage is a major asset, not just in terms of our cultural, visitor and well-being offer, but also regarding the area's ability to attract investment and create employment opportunities. Key factors in making our area attractive as a place to live, learn, work, invest and visit include jobs, a quality environment and social and cultural infrastructure.

Neath Port Talbot's heritage is essential to all of these and our historic environment is able to support delivery of a wide range of economic, social and environmental benefits as well as supporting a wide range of economic activity. Moving forward our heritage and culture will play an integral part in supporting the achievement of the Council's purpose, **To help Neath Port Talbot residents live good lives.***

In order to support this vision it is essential to set in motion deliverable measures **ensuring the conservation, protection and sustainability of Neath Port Talbot's heritage**, the vision at the heart of **Restore, Regenerate, Repurpose** (A Heritage Strategy for Neath Port Talbot 2023-2038).

Raising awareness about the county's exceptional heritage, including its economic, well-being and environment value is central to the success of this strategy. It is partly about public awareness, but it is also about corporate awareness within the Council. Strengthening our commitment to positive management of the historic environment and the role we play in building a positive legacy for the future, across diverse service areas and corporate functions.

* Corporate Plan 2022 – 2027

To inform the preparation of this strategy, we undertook a SWOT analysis that is provided in the Appendix A. This outlines the challenges that face the historic environment during these precarious times, whilst positively identifying the opportunities that supply maximum beneficial outcomes for our heritage assets, communities and residents.

The strategy's Themes focus on the need to value our historic environment and to work collectively with partners and stakeholders to implement far-reaching and long-term interventions to achieve this. The five themes outlined in the strategy link to the delivery of the Action Plan. The Action Plan can be found in section 14.

1. **Understanding** our heritage and its significance.
2. **Conserving & Investing** in our heritage for future generations.
3. **Capitalising & Building** on our heritage.
4. **Positive Management** of our heritage.
5. **Celebrating & Promoting** our heritage.

It is necessary for a diverse range of people to have an appreciation of the role the historic environment played, and continues to play in the lives of communities. Our shared heritage instils a communal sense of belonging and connection with our past, enabling us collectively to move forward to a positive future.

Celebrating and promoting the tireless work of the community and heritage groups that champion our historic environment is essential. These groups and individuals are at the forefront of working with heritage owners and stakeholders to ensure that our heritage assets and history is protected in the long term. It is important to support these groups to ensure that their crucial activities and work continues and they are able to recruit new members to sustain their active groups, handing on the baton to new volunteers to be the future custodians safeguarding our heritage and historical inheritance for our future generations.

Partnership working is integral to the realisation of the strategy's aspirations, everyone with an interest and passion in heritage and the historic environment needs to play their part and ensure that the Heritage Strategy is deliverable. The Heritage Strategy lays the foundation to maintain the work to ensure the conservation, protection and sustainability of our heritage and provide a lasting legacy.

Our Heritage & Story

03

Page 8

3. Our Heritage & Story

3.1 Our Place

Neath Port Talbot lies at the heart of the nation, where east meets west, a place of contrast where our industrial environment is framed by the splendours of our natural landscapes. Our dramatic coastline, mountains, rivers and valleys have drawn people from all over the world to settle, work and call Neath Port Talbot home. Our communities play a central part in the celebration and promotion of our diverse cultural heritage over the years. For this tradition to continue we need to support our communities to ensure our story continues for our future generations.

Page 9

Neath Port Talbot has a population of 142,300 living in our five towns (Briton Ferry, Glynneath, Neath, Pontardawe and Port Talbot) and five valleys (Afan, Amman, Dulais, Neath and Swansea) as well as in our coastal and commuter communities. 13.5% of our residents speak Welsh. Our natural environment includes sites of national and international importance, including 21 SSSI's, 1 RAMSAR, 1 SAC, 1 National Nature Reserve and 5 Local Nature Reserves, amounting to over 950 hectares of protected land. Our habitats, including heathland, peat bogs, wildflower grassland and woodlands, and many of the heritage structures mentioned in this strategy provide homes for our nature.



Our heritage assets include structures like– 13 Milestones, 10 Aqueducts, 9 War Memorials, 3 Limekilns, 2 pigsties and 1 Castle. In addition to our collection of significant designated and un-designated buildings, landscapes, monuments, parks and gardens.

Our natural and historic environment is facing many challenges, with the housing crisis and the risk from climate change. The demand for housing poses a challenge to our natural and historic environment, with the demolition of vacant historic buildings for new builds, which could be repurposed sympathetically to accommodate residential use. Collectively we need to conserve, protect and sustain our assets for the long-term.

This strategy cannot give a complete account of everything that has cultural and heritage significance for Neath Port Talbot, promoting the story of our area is key to help improve understanding of how particular assets fit into that story and how we can harness these assets for a positive future.

Our story is one inextricably linked to our past; rapid development over the centuries transformed the social fabric and natural environment of our early settlements, producing a series of interconnected communities that today make up the county borough. How the area developed over time has shaped the historic, visual and cultural legacy that remains. From prehistoric times, waves of newcomers have settled in the area and have shaped the development of our communities and town centres.

Religion has had important impact on life in Neath Port Talbot, shaping the kinds of buildings and settlements we are familiar with today. The dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th Century led ultimately to a transfer of landholdings from the church to the local aristocracy, these estates formed the early pattern of industrialisation. The rapid change brought about by the industrial revolution created new settlements, opened up large swathes of the county to service the coal, iron, and steel industries. New transport systems like the canals and rail networks transformed our cultural and social landscape.

The historic development of the area has left an important built legacy from all periods across the county borough. The building types reflect the social and economic history of the area. These historic assets can all help to illustrate the story of the growth of the area and its changing building techniques and styles, preserving the culture and society of the past for present and future generations.

3.2 Our Heritage

3.2.1 Neath Port Talbot has an outstanding collection of designated heritage assets and a very high quality built and natural environment. Many of our heritage assets have a combined Scheduled Monument and Designated Listed Building status, illustrating their national importance and significance to the Historic Environment of Wales.

3.2.2 The strategy cannot provide a complete catalogue of everything that has a heritage interest; it can highlight some of the main themes, distinctiveness of our local history and key heritage assets that have provided us with such a valuable legacy. Understanding their significance is fundamental to people's engagement and interaction with our historic inheritance and our ability to maximise the potential benefits of this legacy.

3.2.3 Our historic environment has played an integral part in the expansion of our communities and our culture over the centuries. Our goal moving forward is to focus on the pivotal role, which our heritage can continue to play in re-energising and re-shaping our future sustainable development in Neath Port Talbot.

3.2.4 There are various provisions made for the protection of historic assets depending on their significance. The strength of protection is related to the classification status of the building or structure and therefore to its importance and significance. This ranges from the statutory protections afforded by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to local authority policies and guidance, as outlined in the Policy Context section on pages 34-39 of this document.



St Mary's Abbey Church, Margam (Grade I Listed Building).

3.3 Industrial Heritage

3.3.1 Our historic industrial environment is complex and not always conventionally 'attractive'; its historic and architectural interest is eroded by poorly contextualised new development and is impacted by minor, but significant losses. Improving knowledge and understanding of this significance is vital to maintaining the connectivity between the dispersed communities of our historic industrial environment in Neath Port Talbot.

3.3.2 Canals and railway sites are still in existence and there is potential to use these blue and green routes for Active Travel connectivity between the borough's communities.

3.3.3 Our natural and historic environment is intrinsically linked with many of our former heritage structures providing valuable habitat for nature. The canals provide vital routes for wildlife such as otters to move through our landscapes. Margam Country Park is home to 14 of 18 UK bat species. Any regeneration works in the historic environment will have to carefully plan to ensure that nature is restored and enhanced as part of the project (in line with the NPTCBC Biodiversity Duty).



Chimney at Aberdulais Falls Tinplate Works (Grade II Listed Building).

3.4 Religious Buildings: Chapels and Churches

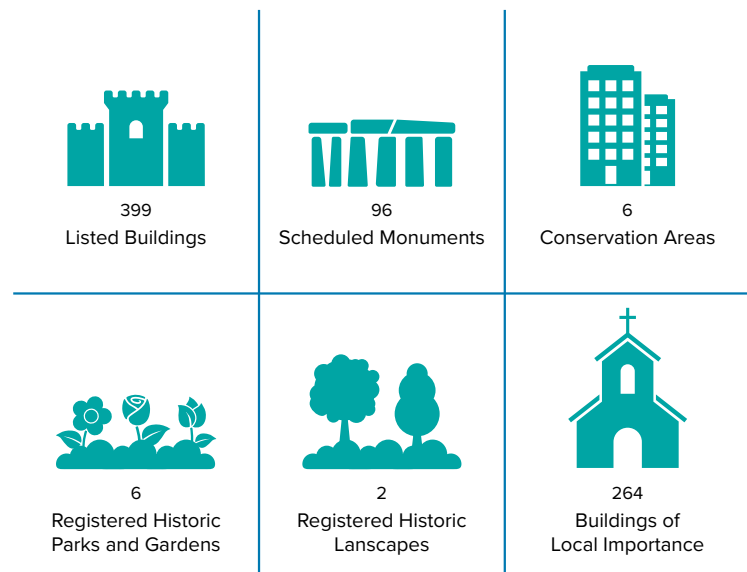
3.4.1 The religious evolution of the county is inseparable from our historic environment where our chapels, churches and halls have been bastions of the Welsh language and our local culture, heritage and traditions over the generations. With the demise of congregations, increasingly chapels and churches lie empty and are targets for heritage crime. The challenge is to find purposeful re-uses for the buildings that ensures their continuation as important assets in the cultural and built landscape of Neath Port Talbot.

Page 13



Compare the Holy Cross Church (Grade II Listed Building), repurposed as part of a funeral home with the vacant and derelict Bethany Chapel (Grade II Listed Building).

3.5 Our Heritage Assets



For more information on the heritage assets in Neath Port Talbot see Cadw’s website [Cof Cymru](http://CofCymru).

Designation	Total	Grade I	Grade II*	Grade II
Listed Buildings (LBs)	399	7	38	354
Scheduled Monuments (SMs)	96			
Registered Historic Parks & Gardens (RHPGs)	6	1	1	4
Conservation Areas (CAs)	6			
Registered Historic Landscapes	2			

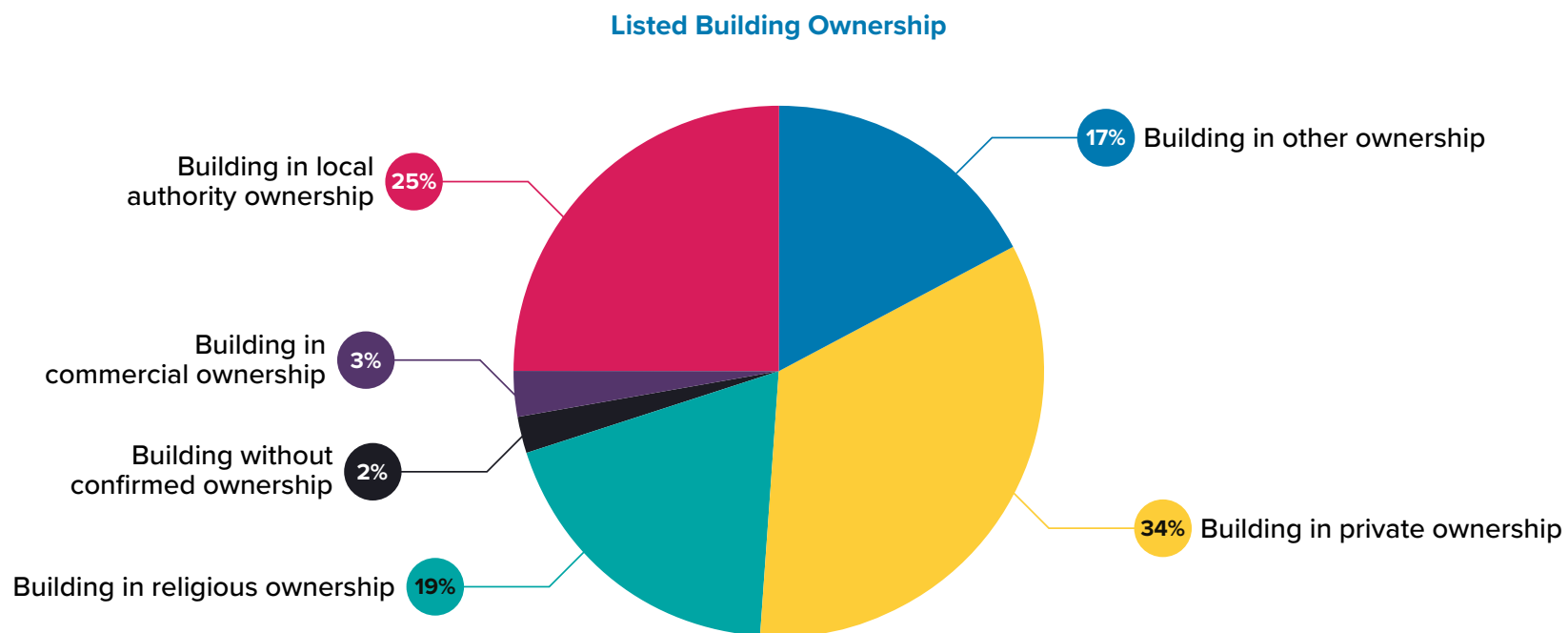
Grade I (one) is for buildings of exceptional interest.

Grade II* (two star) is for particularly important buildings of more than special interest.

Grade II (two) is for buildings of special interest, which justify every effort being made to preserve them.

Listed Buildings

3.5.1 Listed Buildings are of national importance that have special architectural and historic interest. Buildings are listed in three grades (I, II* and II) depending on their historic significance. 9% of Neath Port Talbot’s Listed Buildings are Graded II* compared to a rate of 7% on average for the whole of Wales.* Listed Buildings are primarily classified according to their purpose and use. The chart below shows the breakdown of ownership.



| Listed Building Ownership in Neath Port Talbot.

* Cadw: Understanding Listed Buildings 2018, P. 5.

3.5.2 The majority of listed buildings fall into the categories of Agricultural, Commercial, Domestic, Industrial, Religious and Transport assets, reflecting and charting the economic, cultural and societal changes in the area that catapulted the once traditional agricultural settlements of the area into industrialised powerhouse communities at the very heart of the industrial revolution.

Broad Class (Cadw)	(399)	Number
Agriculture and Subsistence		22
Civil		3
Commemorative		13
Commercial		27
Communications		6
Defence		1
Domestic		73
Education		2
Gardens, Parks and Urban Spaces		17
Health & Welfare		2
Industrial		29
Institutional		4
Maritime		4
Miscellaneous		1
Recreational		5
Religious, Ritual and Funerary		85
Transport		97
Water Supply and Drainage		8

Current Use (HAA Base)	(399)	Number	Current Use (HAA Base)	(399)	Number
Agricultural, Farm Buildings		9	Religious , Church, Church Hall, Lychgate		24
Ancillary, Icehouse, Workshop/Store		4	Religious, Chapel, Chapel Hall		32
Boundary, Gates, Gate Piers, Railings and Walls		28	Street Furniture, Milestone, Pillar Box		15
Civic Buildings		10	Transport, Bridge, Bridge Structure		28
Coastal Pier		1	Transport, Canal, Aqueduct, Bridge, Lock, Structure		43
Commercial, Bank, Hotel, Office, Public House and Shop		30	Transport, Dock Structure		2
Domestic, Cottage, Farmhouse, House		68	Transport, Railway, Aqueduct, Bridge, Viaduct		16
Extractive, Mine Building, Structure		9	Vacant, Vacant Under Refurbishment		3
Fortification, Castle		1	Water, Reservoir, Weir		3
Garden, Building, Ornament		12	No Current Use Designated		9
Industrial, Chimney, Building		7			
Monument, General, Tomb, War Memorial		16			
Other Building		14			
Outbuilding, General		11			
Process, Lime Kiln, Kiln, Mill		4			

Scheduled Monuments

3.5.3 A scheduled monument is a site that's legally protected because of its historical importance. Scheduled monuments might be archaeological sites, such as ancient burial mounds, more recent remains such as from the coal industry or World War 2.

3.5.4 Scheduled monuments represent all aspects of the lives of our ancestors and provide a connection with past generations. Scheduling helps us to recognise all the special qualities of these places and protects them for the benefit of future generations.



| Aberdulais Aqueduct (Scheduled Monument and Grade II* Listed Building).

Conservation Areas

3.5.5 Conservation areas are distinct parts of the historic environment designated by local planning authorities for their special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. There are currently six conservation areas within Neath Port Talbot and these are shown below.

3.5.6 There is scope to increase the number of Conservation Areas within the borough, if there are other areas deemed as being of special architectural or historic interest and need to be preserved or enhanced then Conservation Area designation can be awarded.



Cilybebyll



**Glynneath
Woollen Mill**



Llandarcy



Margam Park



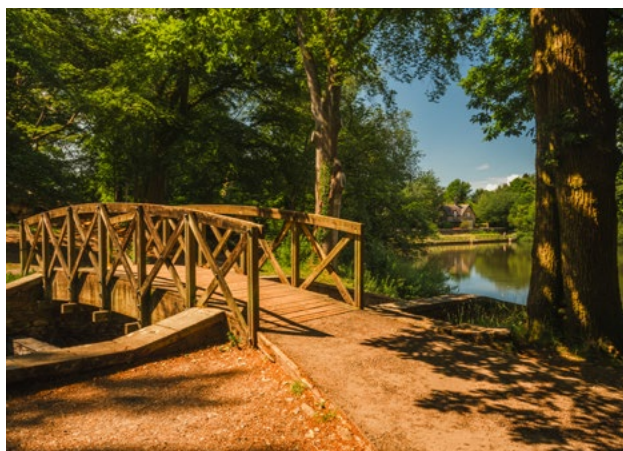
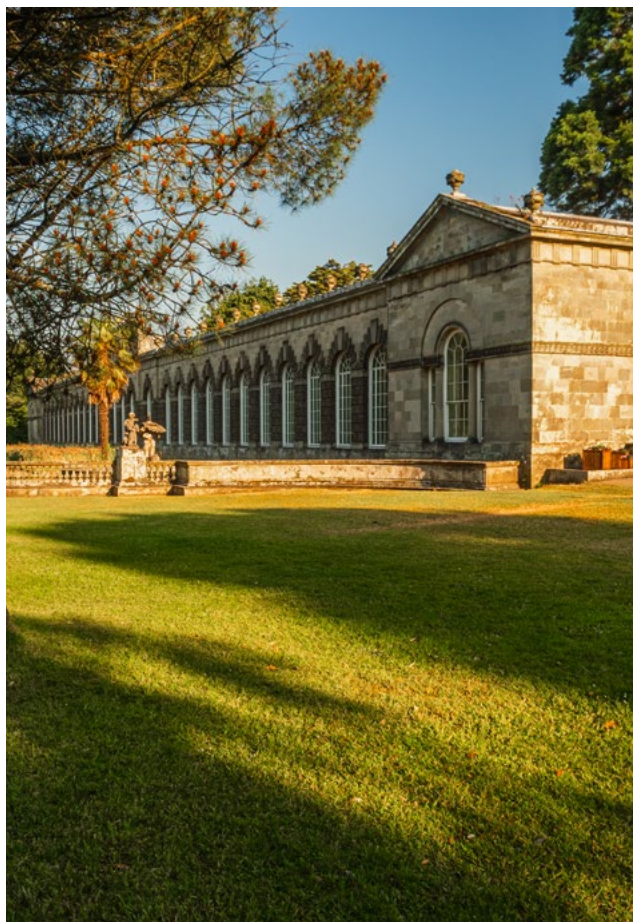
Neath Canal Depot



**Neath Town Centre
Conservation Areas**

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens (RHPG)

3.5.7 The statutory register of historic parks and gardens in Wales is compiled and maintained by the Welsh Ministers. The parks and gardens on the register, together with their settings should be protected and conserved by Local Planning Authorities. Historic parks and gardens are graded in a similar way to listed buildings (Grades I, II* and II), and the park boundaries and essential settings are defined. There are six registered parks/gardens within Neath Port Talbot and these are shown below.



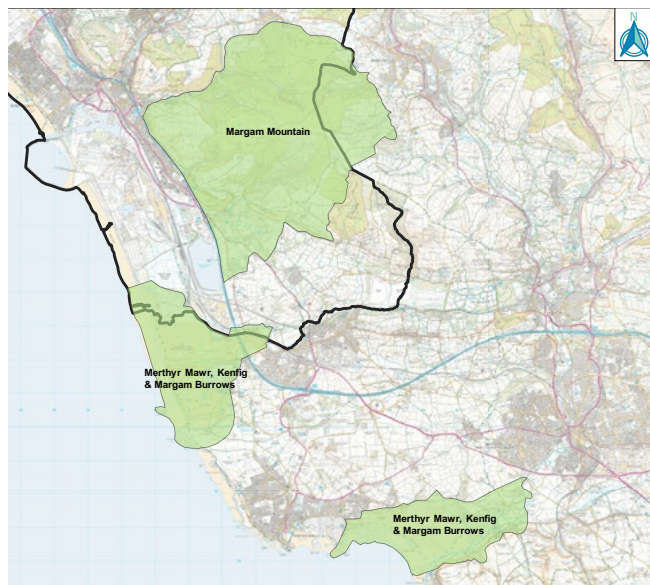
| Margam Park (Grade I), The Gnoll (Grade II*), Jersey Park (Grade II), Victoria Gardens (Grade II), Talbot Memorial Park (Grade II), Rheola (Grade II).

Registered Historic Landscapes

3.5.8 There are two registered historic landscapes within or partly within Neath Port Talbot. One adjoins the County Borough boundary and consequently could be affected by development within Neath Port Talbot.

The boundaries within Neath Port Talbot, the ‘Margam Mountain Historic Landscape’ is within Neath Port Talbot and ‘Merthyr Mawr, Kenfig and Margam Burrows Historic Landscape’ straddles into the neighbouring Bridgend County Council administration.

- Merthyr Mawr, Kenfig and Margam Burrows.
- Margam Mountain.



Registered Historic Landscapes.

Buildings of Local Importance

3.5.9 Heritage Assets of Special Local Importance are locally identified and designated buildings (and other historic assets) that may not meet the requirements to be included on the statutory list of buildings of architectural or historic importance or the schedule of monuments, but are considered to be important within the local context and therefore to be worthy of conservation. The Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (LDP) adopted in January 2016 adds an additional local designation to these provisions by including a policy affording protection to ‘Buildings of Local Importance’ (BLIs) (Policy BE2). This allows buildings or structures that have architectural, historic or local community significance to be identified and included on a local list for protection under local planning policy.

3.5.10 Currently there are 264 buildings classed as being of local importance, like listed buildings they are a link for present and future generations to connect with the past and our ancestors.

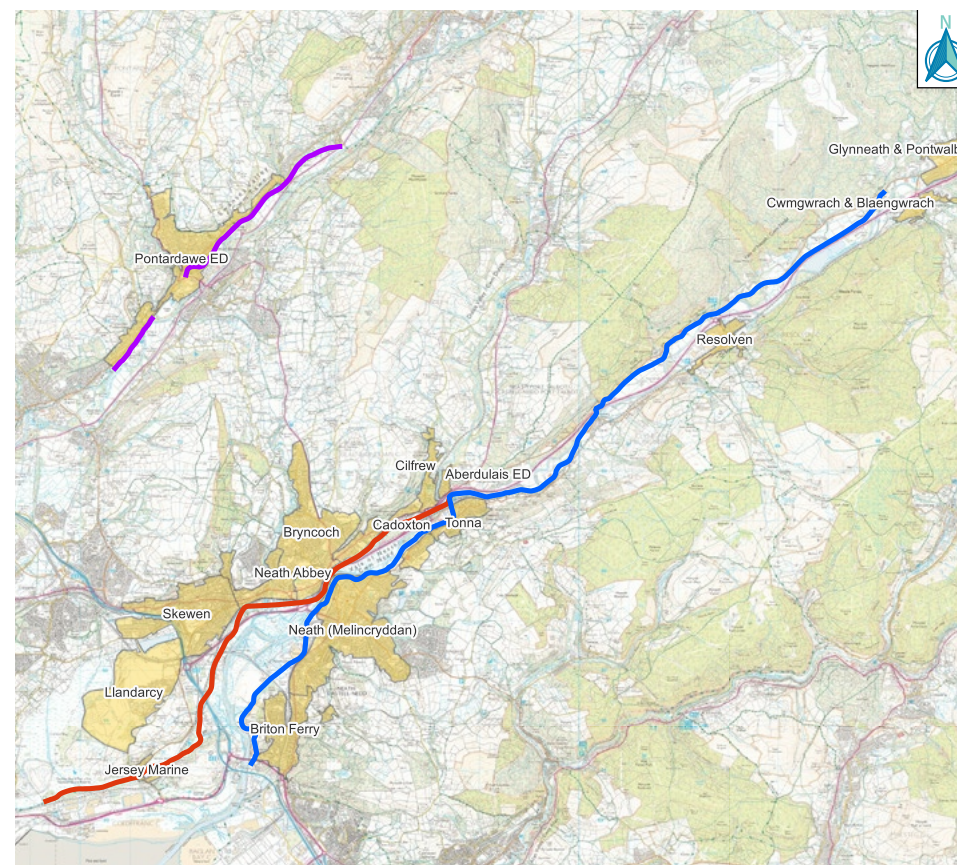
For more information on Buildings of Local Importance [SPG Buildings of Local Interest](#).

Neath Port Talbot Canal Network

3.5.11 Neath Port Talbot's canals were first built in the late 18th Century for the transportation of minerals and produce, enabling the early development and expansion of industry in the Swansea and Neath valleys. There are three principal canals in Neath Port Talbot: the Neath Canal extends for some 13 miles from Briton Ferry up the Vale of Neath to Glynneath. The Tennant Canal is some 8 miles in length running from Port Tennant near Swansea docks to link with the Neath Canal at Aberdulais; and the Swansea Canal originally linked Swansea with Abercraf, running up the Swansea Valley through Pontardawe and Ystalyfera.

3.5.12 The key stakeholders that use and manage the canals in Neath Port Talbot are keen to look for long-term solutions to ensure that the canals are protected for future generations. The aspirational vision for these blue waterways are to be navigable once again, to be used for tourism and visitor purposes, whilst an alternative idea is for these canal systems to be utilised as active travel routes connecting Neath Town Centre with its canal communities. The canals network in Neath Port Talbot is of strategic importance and although not owned or managed by the Council, residents and stakeholders alike view the Council as the appropriate organisation to drive forward approaches to ensure its long term sustainability.

3.5.13 Due to their significance and importance to the area the buildings or structures on the three canal systems that have architectural, historic or local community significance are identified and included on a local list for protection under local planning policy. [SPG Schedule of Designated Canal Structures](#).



- Neath Canal
- Tennant Canal
- Swansea Canal

| The Neath, Tennant and Swansea Canals.

Vision, SWOT Analysis & Themes and Objectives

04

04. Vision, SWOT Analysis & Themes and Objectives

Vision: Ensuring the conservation, protection and sustainability of Neath Port Talbot's heritage.

4.0.1 The **SWOT Analysis** will inform the actions to be implemented and will support the five themes enabling the vision of the Neath Port Talbot Heritage Strategy to be delivered. See Appendix A on Pages 75-80.

4.0.2 The strategy's five themes focus on the need to value our historic environment and heritage assets and to work collectively with partners and stakeholders to implement far-reaching and long-term interventions, to achieve the objectives listed on the following page.

Page 24



| Mechanics Institute, Neath (Grade II Listed Building).

Themes and Objectives

1. **Understanding** our heritage and its significance.

- **Promoting** and supporting good stewardship, improved access and sharing of knowledge, information, artefacts and interpretation in our historic environment.
- **Developing** resources, expertise and skills; identifying gaps; and making the most of opportunities for learning and training to support better understanding of our heritage.
- **Exploring** and promoting the ‘story’ of Neath Port Talbot, to improve understanding about how particular heritage assets (whether known or previously unidentified) fit into that story and contribute to local or national significance.

2. **Conserving & investing** in our heritage for future generations

- **Monitoring** the condition of our heritage assets regularly to limit further deterioration.
- **Committing** investment to a maintenance programme for the up keep of NPTCBC’s heritage assets.
- **Establishing** a multi-skilled team of Officers to ensure the sensitive maintenance, management and development of heritage assets and to secure funding and investment for heritage-led regeneration projects that jointly revitalise our communities and safeguard our historic environment.



Hen Eglwys Chapel and Defended Enclosure (Scheduled Monument and Grade II* Listed Building).

3. Capitalising & building on our heritage.

- **Promoting** our rich heritage, our culture and our high quality historic environment as part of the council's visitor facing place branding: '[The Dramatic Heart of Wales](#)'.
- **Encouraging** suitable development that respects our historic environment, use it as a stimulus for quality imaginative design, and delivers the six place making principles.
- **Maximising** opportunities to secure funding to deliver heritage-led projects that will restore and repurpose key heritage buildings. See 'Place Making Charter' on page 42.

4. Positive management of our heritage.

- **Committing** to the positive management of NPTCBC's "At Risk" heritage assets and develop a strategy to address all heritage assets at risk across the County Borough.
- **Developing** an Action Plan and Conservation Management Plans to ensure the sustainable conservation and protection of key heritage assets.
- **Reviewing** the existing Local Development Plan policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance to ensure it is up to date and consistently implemented.
- **Establishing** a programme for the appraisal, maintenance and management of NPTCBC's assets and encouraging other heritage asset owners to the same.
- **Ensuring** positive working relationships with local and national heritage bodies, stakeholders and community heritage groups to aid enhancements to the historic environment.
- **Identifying** and protecting non-designated heritage assets of local significance.
- **Maintaining** a GIS based list of local heritage assets.

5. Celebrating & promoting our heritage.

- **Celebrating**, supporting and promoting the achievement and work of communities, groups and volunteers who champion our historic environment.
- **Assisting** community and heritage groups to access funding sources to enable them to sustain their vital voluntary work safeguarding our heritage, historic environment and language.
- **Promoting** the work of existing community and heritage groups, to inspire people to join these groups or establish new groups to boost the number of active volunteers engaged in preserving our culture, language, heritage and historic environment.
- **Publicising** the positive image and identity of the borough to increase heritage related tourism, heritage-led regeneration and inward investment.
- **Supporting** the discovery, enjoyment and exploration of our heritage and historic environment by working collaboratively with the Council's Cultural Services, Library & Museum Service and Tourism Team.
- **Showcasing** examples of best practice in dealing with our heritage and the historic environment.
- **Explaining** – our heritage and its significance through innovative bilingual interpretation.

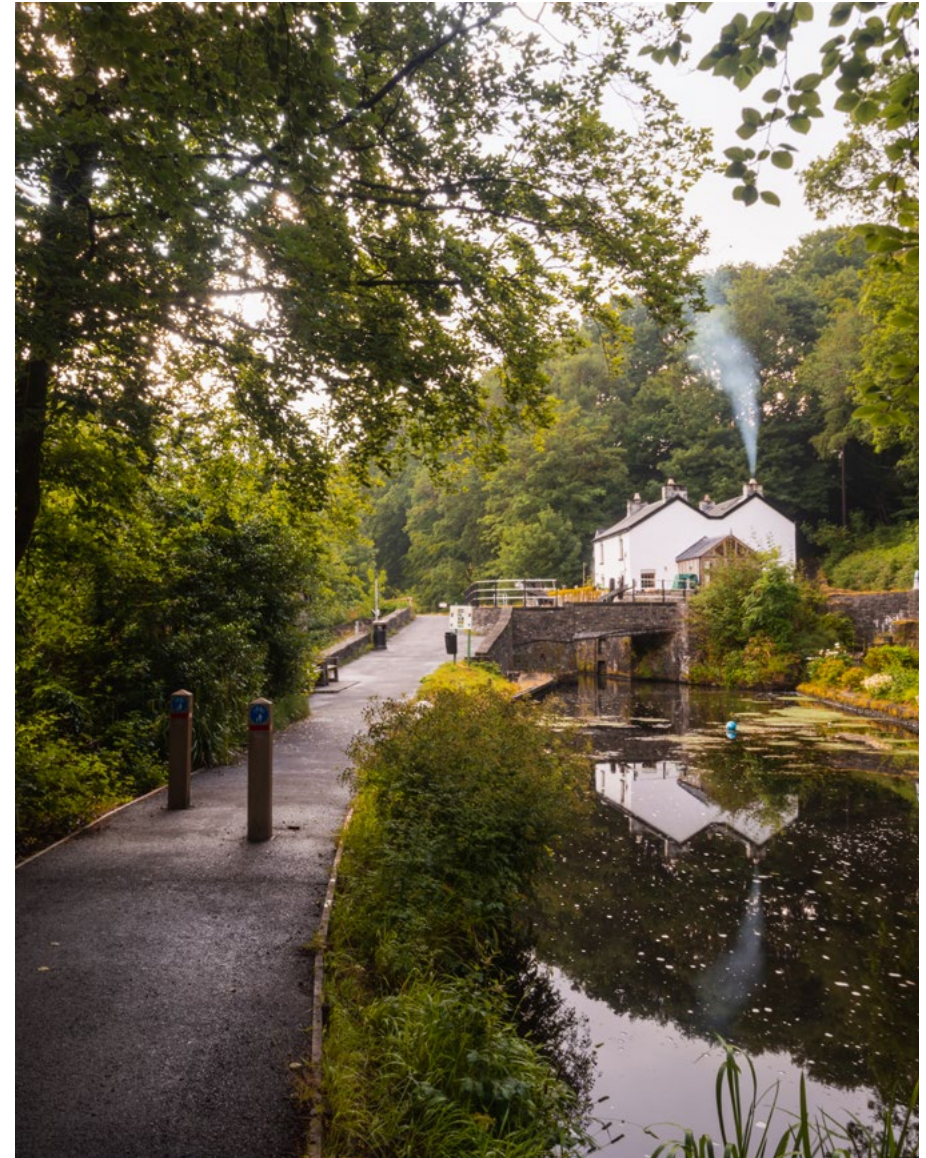


| Llandarcy Conservation Area.

4.0.3 The Heritage Strategy’s focus is to maximise the contribution that the historic environment makes to the character of the county, its economic well-being and the quality of life of its communities, residents and visitors. The purpose of the Heritage Strategy is to set informed priorities for the conservation, management and monitoring of the area’s heritage assets, including the effective and efficient discharge of the Council’s statutory duties and obligations.

4.0.4 It will help to ensure that the borough remains asset rich, that we value what we have and that we manage our heritage assets in a sustainable way. It is needed to ensure a uniform approach is adopted to assess, check, record and survey our designated and un-designated assets. In addition to conserving and protecting our heritage assets, we need to be aspirational and innovative in our ways of thinking on how we deal with these often redundant and vacant buildings, looking for meaningful alternative uses and benefits where properties can be restored, regenerated and repurposed rather than left to further deteriorate or be lost completely. These revitalised resources can continue to play a purposeful part in ensuring our communities are enhanced, resilient, vibrant places, where people wish to live, play, work and visit.

4.0.5 The Heritage Strategy complements both the Culture Strategy and Destination Management Plan; they support each other to achieve the county borough’s collective vision for Culture, Heritage and Tourism. Collaboration and Partnership working are integral approaches in all three strategies.



| Neath Canal, Tonna.

Issues Facing Heritage Assets

05

05. Issues Facing Heritage Assets

5.0.1 Many of the issues facing our historic environment and heritage assets come down to a common factor; it is essential that there is proper understanding of what we have and why it is significant. Without this, firstly, we risk losing things that really matter to people, and secondly, properly informed and balanced decision-making cannot take place and our distinctiveness gets watered down. To capitalise on this 'distinctiveness' we will seek funding and investment. Nonetheless, there is also a need for wider and better understanding amongst individuals, organisations and stakeholders involved in conserving, managing, and developing our heritage assets. The focus on conservation and preservation lies at the heart of the strategy, all avenues will be explored to ensure this approach is adopted and our heritage assets are not lost or allowed to deteriorate further.

Page 30



Canal Aqueduct over Afon Twrch, including weir, Ystalyfera (Grade II* Listed Building).



Neath Abbey Ironworks (Graffiti).

5.1 Heritage Crime

5.1.1 Heritage crime is an unlawful activity that harms historic buildings, monuments, archaeological sites, military crash sites and landscapes. Scheduled monuments and listed buildings are protected in law and it is a criminal offence to destroy or damage them. Examples of heritage crime include removal of materials, lead and slates off listed buildings. The punishment for committing damage to a protected heritage asset can be a fine or a custodial sentence. The Council is committed to work with partners and stakeholders to protect the area's heritage assets from the risk of heritage crime.

5.1.2 For more information about Heritage Crime see Cadw [Heritage Crime](#).

Neath Abbey Ironworks suffered a spate of graffiti, working in partnership with Cadw soda blasting ensured the sensitive removal of the graffiti from the heritage site.

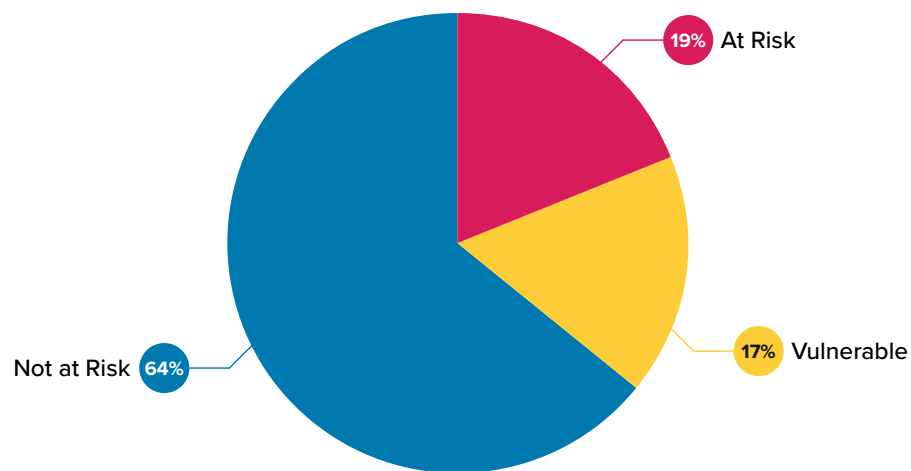
5.2 Heritage “at Risk”

5.2.1 A proportion of Neath Port Talbot’s designated built heritage assets have been formally identified as “At Risk”.

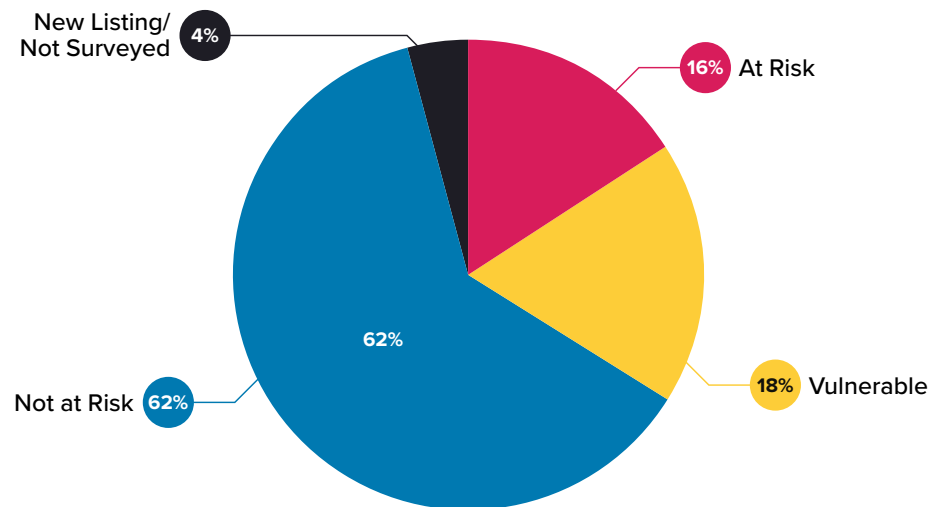
The HAA base website holds information on the condition, use, occupancy and risk status of listed buildings across Wales. Assessment surveys are undertaken every 5 years in each local authority. Listed buildings are ranked by their condition status, ‘At Risk’, ‘Vulnerable’ and ‘Not at Risk’. Surveying of the county’s heritage assets most recently took place during July 2022. This assessment process is not static, if vulnerabilities are detected, Cadw can amend the current condition status.

Page 32

Condition of Listed Buildings in 2016



Condition of Listed Buildings in 2022



| Condition of Listed Buildings in 2016 and 2022.

5.2.2 A significant number of the listed buildings and structures in Neath Port Talbot come under Council management, however a considerable proportion are held in commercial, other, private and religious ownership. The Council has statutory duties and obligations it has to carry out for all our heritage assets. Through the implementation of the themes of this strategy it is envisioned that this will be more efficient and effective, working collaboratively with owners and stakeholders to ensure that heritage assets are conserved, preserved and protected and are not allowed to further deteriorate and be demolished, thereby losing an irreplaceable piece of our heritage forever.

5.2.3 NPTCBC has an important role in the protection and conservation of the historic environment, working with owners and custodians of listed buildings to find solutions when buildings are at risk or vulnerable. Where positive support fails, local authorities should be ready to draw upon the statutory powers available under Section 54 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990) to ensure that works necessary to safeguard the significance of listed buildings are carried out in a timely manner. Also to utilise other statutory notices, aimed at securing the condition of listed buildings at risk, including Section 215 notices.

5.3 Local Distinctiveness

5.3.1 Loss of our local distinctiveness is an increasing problem and more frequently, we see development that is non-contextual and non-distinctive of the diverse character and local building traditions of our area. This means we are less able to pick out what really is locally distinctive or significant about a place. The challenge for the Council through the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) is to promote and attract high quality, energy efficient, distinctively designed developments, which at the same time strives to retain the area's visual and cultural appeal. Innovative use and appropriate adaptation of vacant listed buildings and other heritage assets can ensure that we have attractive design and development fit for living, recreation and workspace, which remains true to our historic environment and spirit of local distinctiveness.

5.4 Resources and the Historic Environment

5.4.1 Within a context of nation-wide reductions in public sector funding and cuts to local budgets, the Council has to “do more with less” in terms of diminishing finances and skilled staff. Pressure on council budgets mean we rely on external grant funding, which is the main source of available income and investment to protect and conserve our heritage assets, this is not always successful. Working collaboratively with our passionate and committed communities, interest groups and stakeholders is a way forward in the positive management of our communal heritage and we need to support this approach and build capacity.

Policy Context

06

06. Policy Context

6.0.1 This strategy has a wide-ranging role to play in the conservation and management of our area’s heritage. The national legislative and policy framework is accompanied by guidance at the national and local authority level.

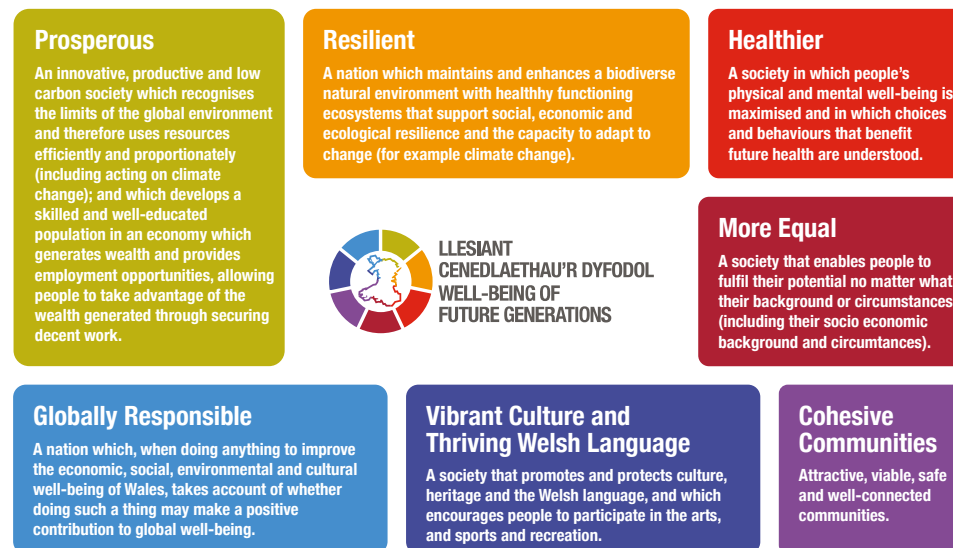
6.1 Legislation

Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015)

6.1.1 The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty on public bodies (including Welsh Ministers) that they must carry out sustainable development. “Sustainable Development” means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving well-being goals. [Planning Policy Wales: Edition 11, P.7.](#)

6.1.2 The Planning system is central to achieving sustainable development in Wales. It provides the legislative and policy to manage land in the public interest so that it contributes to the achievement of the well-being goals.

6.1.3 The Act puts in place seven well-being goals to help ensure that public bodies are all working towards the same vision of a sustainable Wales. In relation to the historic environment, the most relevant well-being goal is the achievement of ‘a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language’, which includes the requirement to promote and protect culture, heritage and the Welsh language. [Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 \(Essentials\).](#)



| The seven well-being goals that contribute to sustainable development.

The Historic Environment (Wales) Act (2023)

6.1.4 This historic piece of legislation provides bilingual, orderly and accessible law for the effective protection and management of the historic environment so that it can continue to contribute to the well-being of Wales and its people. This consolidation Act supersedes the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The three main aims of the 2016 Act are:

- To give more effective protection to listed buildings and scheduled monuments;
- To improve the sustainable management of the historic environment, and
- To introduce greater transparency and accountability into decisions taken on the historic environment.

The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023 will come into force in the latter part of 2024.



Milepost at Margam Park entrance.

6.2 National Policy & Guidance

Future Wales – The National Plan 2040

6.2.1 Future Wales – the National Plan 2040 is the national development plan for Wales and sets the overall planning strategy and framework for the country. It is a development plan with a strategy for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy, achieving decarbonisation and climate-resilience, developing strong ecosystems and improving the health and well-being of our communities. This national development plan aligns with the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015), the Programme for Government of the Welsh Government and other key policies and strategies.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 11 (2021)

6.2.2 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) set out Welsh Government policy and guidance, states that the planning system must take into account the Welsh Government’s objectives to project, conserve, promote and enhance the historic environment as a resource for the general well-being of present and future generations. The historic environment is a finite, non-renewable and shared resource and a vital and integral part of the historical and cultural identity of Wales. It contributes to the economic vitality and culture, civic pride, local distinctiveness and the quality of Welsh life. Any decisions made through the planning system must fully consider the impact on the

historic environment and on the significance and heritage values of individual historic assets and their contribution to the character of a place.

6.2.3 PPW guidance supports the delivery of the ‘Distinctive and Natural Places’ theme that focuses on ‘fostering and sustaining a sense of place through the protection and enhancement of the natural, historic and built environment and allows for supporting uses and activities which provide for creative and cultural experiences’. [Planning Policy Wales: Edition 11, P.122](#).

6.2.4 By focusing on the positive outcomes of the [Place making Wales](#) holistic approach, an area’s potential can increase to create high quality development in the historic environment that promotes people’s prosperity, health, happiness and well-being in the widest sense. [Planning Policy Wales: Edition 11, P.122](#) Place making Guidance will inform and dictate Neath Port Talbot’s future service delivery programme in the our communities.

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 24: The Historic Environment (2017)

6.2.5 [Technical Advice Note \(TAN 24\): The Historic Environment \(2017\)](#) gives more advice that is detailed on the historic environment in relation to the planning system in Wales. This includes information on the following matters:

- **Archaeological remains.**
- **Listed buildings.**
- **Conservation areas.**
- **Registered historic assets** (historic parks and gardens and historic landscapes).
- **Historic assets of special local interest** * Identified as Buildings of Local Importance (BLIs) in the current Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (LDP).

Conservation Principle for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales (Cadw 2011)

6.2.6 ‘Conservation Principles’ sets out the guidance principles that Cadw applies when undertaking work on the monuments in its care and when considering consent and grant applications. The principles embody the objectives of conserving and enhancing the historic environment for the benefit of present and future generations and the aim to nurture Wales’ rich culture and heritage as a vehicle for regeneration and for fostering local character and distinctiveness.

6.2.7 Cadw’s Conservation Principles highlight the need to base decisions on an understanding of the impact a proposal may have on the significance of an historic asset. [Conservation Principles](#).

Cadw Guidance

6.2.8 Cadw (the Welsh Government’s Historic Environment Service) have also published a wide range of guidance documents to complement the Historic Environment (Wales) Bill 2023 and recent planning policy and advice. These include the following titles:

- Managing Change to Listed Buildings in Wales.
- Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales.
- Managing Lists of Historic Assets of Special Local Interest in Wales.
- Setting of Historic Assets in Wales.
- How to improve energy efficiency in historic buildings in Wales.

6.2.9 For more information on Cadw Policy, advice and guidance see Appendix B on Page 91 to 92 and see [Cadw: Policy, advice and guidance](#).

6.3 Local Level Policy

Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan 2011-2026

6.3.1 Neath Port Talbot as the Local Planning Authority (LPA) uses its Local Development Plan (LDP) to provide the basis for decisions on land use planning in the county borough, including any development that affects the culture and heritage assets of the area.

6.3.2 The Planning system must take into account the Welsh Government's objectives to protect, conserve, promote and enhance our historic environment as a resource for the general well-being of present and future generations.

'The historic environment can only be maintained as a resource for future generations if the individual historic assets are protected and conserved'. [Planning Policy Wales, Edition 11, P.126](#).

6.3.3 'Respecting Distinctiveness' of our built heritage and historic environment is an overarching strategic objective of the current Local Development Plan [NPTCBC LDP \(2011-2026\), P.20](#). During the Local Development Plan's creation, this guiding principle influenced strategic decisions about where future development, will or will not happen. Strategic Policy 21 (SP21) and Policy BE2 Buildings of Local Importance focus on the Built Environment and Historic Heritage. The Supplementary Planning Guidance documents 'The Historic Environment' (2019), [SPG: The Historic Environment](#) 'Schedule of Buildings of Local Importance' (2019) [SPG: Schedule of Buildings of Local Importance](#) and 'Schedule of Designated Canal Structures'

(2019) [SPG: Schedule of Canal Structures](#) are utilised when assessing developments that affect the borough's historic environment.

6.3.4 The Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) (2023-2038) is currently under development within the Council's Planning department. As part of the review process for the RLDP (2023-2038), all policies and supplementary planning guidance will be reviewed.

6.3.5 It is the responsibility of all those with an interest in the planning system, including planning authorities, applicants, developers and communities, to appropriately care for the historic environment in their area. The protection, conservation and enhancement of historic assets is most effective when it is considered at the earliest stage of plan preparation, when designing new proposals.

6.3.6 It is important that the planning system looks to protect, conserve and enhance the significance of historic assets. Any change that has an impact upon an historic asset or its setting has to be managed in a sensitive and sustainable way.

Policy Drivers

07



Policy/Strategy	Focus	Historic Environment Reference
<p>Llwybr Newydd – The Wales Transport Strategy 2021 Llwybr Newydd – The Wales Transport Strategy 2021 (Pages 36 & 58)</p>	<p>A transport system that supports the Welsh Language, enables more people to get to arts, sports and cultural activities, protects and enhances the historic environment.</p>	<p>Well-being ambitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Former railway lines and other redundant transport infrastructure are safeguarded for the future, or for re-use or as cycle paths, footpaths or footways. More people can use walking and cycling to enjoy Wales’ historic sites and monuments, national parks and landscapes and coastal areas.
<p>Neath Port Talbot Public Service Board – Well-Being Plan Neath Port Talbot Public Service Board Well Being Plan (Page 20)</p>	<p>Well-being Objective 3: Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage engagement and participation in cultural activities and the celebration and preservation of our cultural assets.
<p>Recover, Reset, Renew NPTCBC Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 Recover, Reset, Renew Corporate Plan 2022-2027 (Page 42)</p>	<p>Well-being Objective 3: Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People actively conserve, improve and enjoy our stunning natural environment, treasure the Welsh language and are actively engaged with the rich sporting, cultural and industrial heritage of the area.

Policy/Strategy	Focus	Historic Environment Reference
Place-making Charter Place Making Charter	Through the application of the six place making principles, the planning system should aim to create high quality development and public spaces to promote prosperity, health, happiness and well-being in the widest sense.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Development supports and enhances existing places. • Identity: The positive, distinctive qualities of existing places are valued and respected. The unique features and opportunities of a location, including heritage, culture, language and built and natural physical attributes are identified and responded to.
Neath Port Talbot Economic Recovery Plan (2022) Neath Port Talbot Economic Recovery Plan (2022) (Page 35)	Quality and Connected Places: Components of 'Value of place' and 'Quality life assets'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrating our natural and built assets, where NPT's natural environment and heritage assets have the potential to contribute to the growth of the visitor economy.
Neath Port Talbot Destination Management Plan (2023-2038) Include hyperlink for DMP (Page 15)	Vibrant Communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers exceptional experiences based on our rich heritage, culture and stunning coast and countryside, which fully deliver on the 'Dramatic Heart of Wales' promise.

Engagement with the Community, Partners and Stakeholders

08

Page 43

08. Engagement with the Community, Partners and Stakeholders

8.0.1 The results from the Culture Strategy consultation March 2023 highlighted that respondents felt that the Council should prioritise the support and development of the following aspects of cultural life – 1. Parks and public spaces and 2. Heritage and historic environment.*

Page 44

Outcome	Rank
Parks and Public Spaces	1
Heritage and Historic Environment	2

8.0.2 The Action Plan will be updated to include the analysis of the results of the consultation on the heritage strategy.

* NPTCBC Culture Strategy Consultation March 2023: Page 27.



| Gelli Houses, Cymmer (Grade II Listed Buildings).

Understanding Our Heritage and its Significance

09

09. Understanding Our Heritage and its Significance (Theme One)

9.0.1 There are highly informed and committed individuals both within and outside the Council who are passionate about our history and environment, and work hard to champion and protect our heritage. However, there is also a widespread lack of understanding about what we have, perhaps even some complacency. A central goal of the strategy is to turn this issue around, to raise our extraordinary heritage up on the agenda and encourage people to see the significance and value of the historic environment as a shared community asset, which not only has cultural and aesthetic value but can also bring economic, social, and environmental benefits to our area.

9.0.2 Whilst the historic environment is an important and particular visible aspect of the area's heritage, "heritage" must be seen in much broader terms, including the natural environment, culture, skills, tradition, and nostalgia and shared remembered histories, artefacts, knowledge and interpretation. All of these things contribute to our sense of local identity and distinctiveness and add value to our economic vitality and our quality of life.

9.0.3 In order to maintain and share our knowledge and understanding of our areas wider historic environment we must continue assessing, inspecting and monitoring the condition of historic properties and sites, whilst keeping communications open

with heritage groups, owners and stakeholders to ensure that there are no gaps in our listings of known heritage assets and our knowledge about their condition.

9.0.4 The historic environment is not static, demolitions and redevelopment can unearth new discoveries of our past that are nationally important and need to be conserved and protected through designation and scheduling. We need to promote learning and training to support better understanding of our heritage and its significance to developers, owners and residents.

9.0.5 The heritage of Neath Port Talbot offers some very real opportunities for schoolchildren and the public to learn about the history of the borough, and the contributions made by ordinary working people as well as those with wealth and influence in shaping the area we see today. The Curriculum in Wales 2022 with its emphasis on teaching Cynefin provides immeasurable opportunities for children and young people to connect and engage with our local community heritage groups and historic environment.

It is essential that people be supported to discover and learn about our heritage and historic environment, by having access to both digital and tangible resources through our Library & Museum Service and community held archives, records and resources.

Conserving & Investing in Our Heritage

10

PLAZA

Page 47

10. Conserving & Investing in Our Heritage (Theme Two)

10.0.1 The historic environment, our built, natural and cultural heritage has a key role to play in sustainable development bringing about change and seeking beneficial improvements and enhancements in the quality of our historic environment. Planning should always aim to secure high quality design and should conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of present and future generations.

10.0.2 There is a need to allocate proper resources to ensure our heritage assets are monitored regularly and that sensitive maintenance, management and development happens to jointly revitalise our communities and safeguard our historic environment.

10.0.3 Our own Local Development Plan recognises that preservation and protection of the historic environment is important, whilst new development also offers opportunities for positive change that respects our distinctiveness:

‘All development proposals will be expected to demonstrate high quality design which fully takes into account the natural, historic and built environmental context and contributes to the creation of attractive sustainable places’ [NPTCBC:LDP, 2011-2026 P.85](#).



Jersey Park's formal entrance gateway in need of maintenance and repair.



10.0.4 Routine maintenance is the most important action that can be taken to protect historic buildings. Identifying minor problems earlier can prevent series damage and the need for expensive repairs later on. The Council should prioritise a programme for its own assets, which will assess and identify any repairs that need carrying out and put in place a work programme to carry out timely repairs. The recent Culture Strategy consultation highlighted the preference for spending money in ways which does the basics well, and maintains what already exists rather than creating new things.*

10.0.5 Investing in our heritage is paramount to the continuing story of our built environment and communities. Collaborative working with owners, developers and key heritage stakeholders can ensure that our heritage assets can be adapted and enhanced to have meaningful uses and roles once again in our communities building a positive legacy for the future.

* NPTCBC Culture Strategy March 2023, page 24.

| The Bandstand in Talbot Memorial Park in need for maintenance and repair.

Capitalising & Building on Our Heritage



Page 50

11. Capitalising & Building on Our Heritage (Theme Three)

11.1 Heritage-led Regeneration: Our Heritage & Economic Well-being

11.1.1 NPTCBC has secured over £12 million of UK Government Levelling UP Fund (LUF) funding to repair and restore the Listed Structures of the Gnoll Estate Country Park to improve accessibility and the visitor experience. This funding will hopefully act as a catalyst to lever further funding to build upon the ‘String of Pearls’ heritage sites to realise the vision of the Vale of Neath Heritage Corridor. There is a direct relationship between quality environment and the ability of the area to attract investment, businesses, shoppers and visitors. This includes not just the town centres but also the outlying areas. Key factors in attracting people to live, work and invest in the area includes quality environment, choice and quality of housing, parks and green infrastructure, public realm and the cultural/heritage offer.

11.1.2 The far-reaching benefits of heritage are widely acknowledged and heritage affects many aspects of people’s lives. It is therefore important that heritage is not considered in isolation, but in a wider context, that takes account of its capacity for ‘added value’ to our economic well-being.

11.1.3 Heritage is an important and effective driver for economic development, regeneration and growth. This role is often misunderstood. Historic buildings form a significant part of the infrastructure of our town centres and communities, mainly in productive use for a range of purposes, which include commercial, residential and recreational uses. The motive for most people and companies investing in heritage is for its utility value or investment value.

11.1.4 One route to regenerate our communities is by bringing vacant and unused heritage buildings back into reuse. Repurposing buildings is a sustainable way of changing a building to meet current development needs. Imaginative, contextualised design can blend the past with present, reinvent and change buildings for a mix of uses that meet contemporary requirements. Transformations can be seen across Neath Port Talbot, where restoration and repurposing is protecting and sustaining our heritage properties. This approach can bolster employment opportunities in the borough, with local contractors and businesses undertaking this formative work and training up the next generation of tradespeople through apprenticeship schemes.

The Visitor Economy (Tourism)

11.1.5 The Council’s visitor facing place branding: ‘The Dramatic Heart of Wales’ promotes our rich heritage, language and our beautiful natural environment as part of Neath Port Talbot’s unique visitor offer. Our Historic Environment already draws significant numbers of residents and visitors to heritage sites including Aberdulais Tin Works and Waterfall, the Gnoll Estate Country Park, Margam Country Park and Neath Abbey. The Destination Management Plan 2023-2028 provides the roadmap for the tourism sector and visitor economy, with our culture, heritage and historic environment playing a key role. [Hyperlink to DMP](#).

11.1.6 There is a need to provide high quality accommodation, attractions and bases for activities for visitors wanting to experience an authentic cultural heritage experience in the area. To capitalise on this demand under-utilised and vacant heritage assets can be repurposed to provide facilities for the visitor economy.

Film and the Creative Industries

11.1.7 The historic environment in Neath Port Talbot is showcased to the world through the creative industries, namely featuring in major film and television productions. Fans of blockbuster productions such as Da Vinci’s Demons, Dr Who, Sex Education and the film Pride will recognise some of our local heritage treasures, such as Margam Castle, Margam Park, the Gnoll Estate Country Park and the former mining community of Banwen as backdrops for filming. By promoting awareness of our rich historic, industrial and natural

environment and its versatility for film and television productions, Neath Port Talbot can position itself as desirable film location and attract more production companies to film in the county.

11.1.8 Our heritage assets can support the demand from within the creative industries for suitable films locations and the provision of creative and exhibition spaces. Our historic buildings and structures can be innovatively repurposed to fulfill this need.

Workforce Development and Local Trade

11.1.9 Repairing and conserving historic and traditional buildings places a greater emphasis on a highly skilled workforce, generally it is difficult to find skills and expertise locally. There is currently a shortage of skilled heritage construction workers with many in this field close to retirement. There is a real need and benefit in bringing in a new wave of young trainees and apprenticeships to this industry so that vital skills are not lost. Developing heritage skills training with providers is crucial to ensure the continuation of traditional building skills.

11.2 Our Heritage & Physical & Mental Well-being

11.2.1 Our built and natural heritage offers diverse opportunities to bring benefits to community and individual health and well-being.

11.2.2 Our historic environment offers opportunities for people of all ages, particularly those socially isolated to get involved physically and practically at local sites. Volunteers work hard maintaining heritage sites and this provides opportunities for active engagement, which is essential to maintain a happy and healthy life.

Engagement

11.2.3 We should encourage younger people to connect and engage with their local heritage. Encouraging young people to connect and become involved in conservation is a way of fostering a lifelong interest in culture and heritage, whilst instilling a sense of value and belonging to their community.

11.2.4 The strategy will look at engagement opportunities to motivate people to continue learning about and protecting the culture and heritage in their community. A vital element is to enable the voluntary heritage community groups to be sustainable.

11.2.5 Engagement and consultation with communities, groups and stakeholders is essential for the delivery and success of the strategy. The consultation process will empower people to have a say in how our assets are to be conserved, maintained and managed moving forward.

Communities

11.2.6 Our historic buildings, landscapes and monuments play a significant role in our communities; they serve as important reference points for understanding our history and culture whilst inspiring a sense of value and belonging. Our heritage, culture and traditions connects communities to their past, where buildings, language, places and traditions are markers of a shared community consciousness. Engagement with local heritage reinforces community and family cohesion through experiences, learning and play.

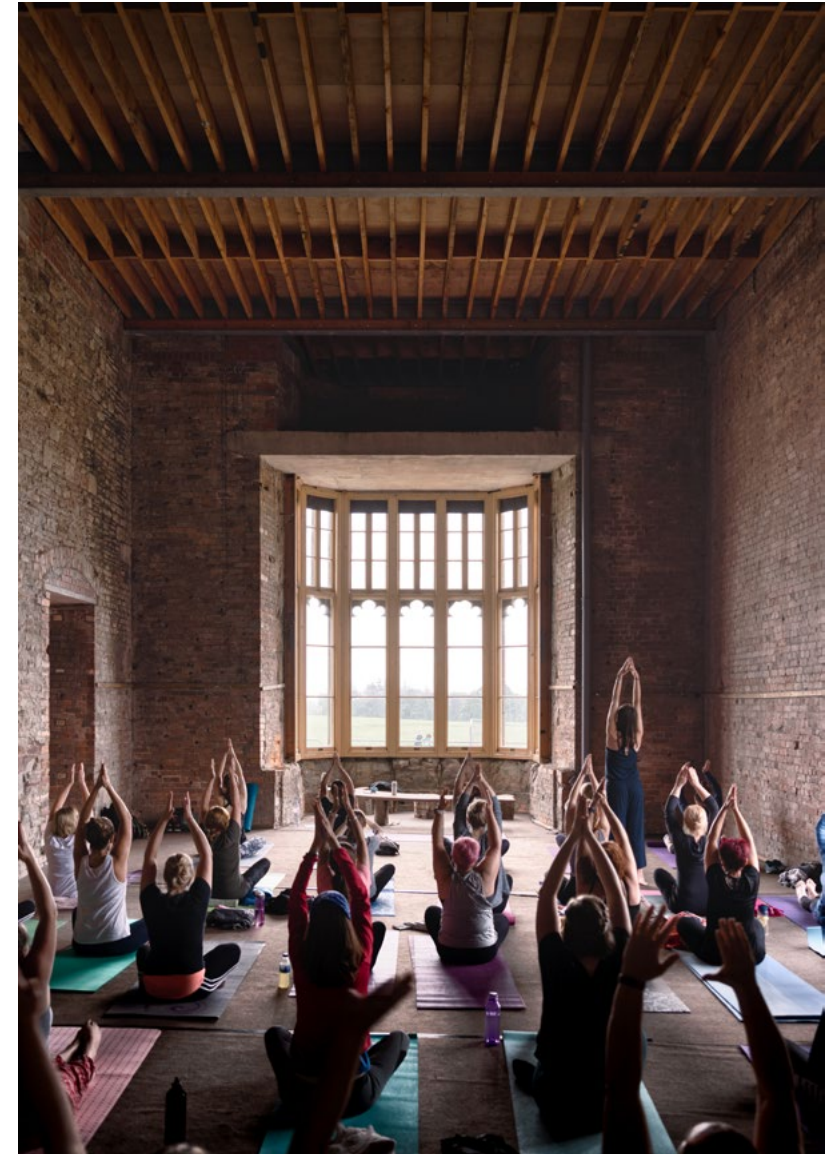
11.2.7 Encouraging communities to work with the Council, owners and heritage partners to provide community or cultural facilities and functional public amenities through the adaptive re-use of historic buildings that maintains the distinctive design and architectural character of the area and asset.

Volunteers

11.2.8 Supporting the sustainability of the various heritage groups and volunteers to conserve, preserve and protect the culture, history and heritage assets of the area, lies at the heart of the priorities of this strategy. It is essential that these groups have the resources, skills, support and training to continue their activities, without these guardians, many of the heritage assets would deteriorate further and much of our area's culture and history will be lost forever.

Capacity building measures will ensure that groups and new volunteers will be well prepared and able to work, independently following their training and action plans.

11.2.9 Volunteering brings benefits to both the individual and the wider community, as well as to the heritage asset itself with volunteers self-policing some sites.



| Yoga inside Margam Castle (Grade I Listed Building).

Positive Management of Our Heritage

Page 55

12

12. Positive Management of Our Heritage (Theme Four)

12.0.1 The Council is seen as the key organisation to take forward measures to sustain heritage assets and sites that are of strategic and local importance. For those heritage assets identified as ‘Building at Risk’ (BAR), the Council will positively engage with owners and other key stakeholders to collaboratively find solutions to address deterioration and consolidate the building or structure in the long-term.

12.0.2 Heritage is not self-managing and without intervention heritage assets degrade and deteriorate, whether through natural weathering processes, damage and demolition, physical alterations and additions to the historic fabric, or through changes to the surroundings and context.

12.0.3 Positive management requires investigating the key vulnerabilities, better skills; expertise and resources are needed for an effective positive management regime.

12.0.4 Collectively, we need to understand the threats and opportunities of how climate change is effecting our historic environment. We need to build the resilience of the historic environment by taking measures to adapt and respond to the risks, reduce vulnerability and maximise the benefits for our heritage assets and landscapes. For more information see: [Historic Environment and adapting to climate change.](#)

12.0.5 As part of living more sustainably anyone who wants to improve the energy efficiency of a traditional or historic building, needs to adopt a ‘whole building approach’ in devising and implementing energy efficiency improvements; this can lower carbon emissions and reduce fuel bills. For further information see: [How to improve energy efficiency in Historic Buildings in Wales.](#)

12.0.6 The strategy has a number of priorities for the positive and progressive management of the Historic Environment. Ensuring there is a comprehensive up to date list of heritage assets and sites that would be available digitally to identify our local heritage assets in order to monitor their ongoing condition.

12.0.7 The establishment of a beneficial work programme for the appraisal, maintenance and management of heritage assets and sites is essential. A proactive regime will be implemented with inspection of heritage assets occurring on a five yearly basis. Progressive working relationships with stakeholders are required, as well as management measures to ensure that the status of the area’s assets are assessed and monitored, ensuring they do not become “At Risk” of further deterioration. In order to add to the layers of protection and regulation for our historic environment, tools for the delivery of positive management include Action Plans, Conservation Management Plans and Supplementary Guidance (CMPs).

12.0.8 A crucial element of positive management measures is the ability to maximise opportunities for the enhancement and protection of our historic environment, whilst adding value to the social and economic fabric of our communities.

Innovative planning, regeneration projects capitalise upon our rich historic environment and economic development will bring much needed investment to our communities and heritage.

Resources and the Historic Environment

12.0.9 This document will provide a bank of document resources to inform developers and stakeholders of the current legislation and policies, to steer developers and staff on the right course of action to ensure sympathetic development in the historic environment.

12.0.10 This strategy can provide inspiration for communities and partners to work together to prepare Place Making Plans in line with Welsh Government's Place making agenda. It can help with understanding the value of our heritage assets and identify regeneration opportunities that incorporate local assets in a beneficial and sustainable way.



Unchecked adaptation to properties are diluting the appearance, character and special interest of our designated Conservation Areas. Llandarcy Conservation Area and Glynneath Woollen Mill Conservation Area.



Partnerships

12.0.11 Private, third sector and public sector partnerships will need to be established to deliver many of the actions identified.

12.0.12 Volunteer groups play a pivotal role in accessing additional funding sources to deliver local heritage projects. These volunteers forged partnerships to transform our heritage sites into wildlife and biodiversity rich spaces, for people of all ages to access. Further partnership agreements with community heritage groups will be effective to encourage stewardship of sites, enabling management of heritage sites and improving access for people.



The work of dedicated volunteers who cleared vegetation from the Blast Furnaces at Neath Abbey Ironworks.

Celebrating and Promoting Our Heritage

13



Page 69

13. Celebrating and Promoting Our Heritage (Theme Five)

13.0.1 People are passionate about our heritage and enthused by over 2,000 years of change and development that has shaped our history. Communities must be able to participate in and celebrate our heritage. Stronger connections between people and places is needed to encourage, raise awareness and increase the valuable relationship we have with our past.

13.0.2 Neath Port Talbot's historic environment, including its open spaces, buildings and cultural venues are increasingly used as a stage for major events. Heritage is often the unique selling point behind an event, offering prestige and a distinctive experience. We need to promote our historic and open spaces for cultural activities.

13.0.3 Celebrating and promoting our heritage is a key objective in the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2027, enabling people to take part in appealing cultural and heritage activities and events live good and healthy lives. There is opportunity to broaden Neath Port Talbot's cultural offer through promoting a diverse and innovative programme of events in historic locations, expanding how it is experienced and invigorating and regenerating our communities.

13.0.4 The industrious work of the numerous heritage community groups that champion our culture and historic environment must be celebrated, promoted and recognised.

13.0.5 The strategy will implement measures that will identify, celebrate and commemorate important figures, cultural traditions and heritage assets and inspire our future generations to play a continuing part in the protection and promotion of our culture, heritage and history.

Delivery of Action Plan

Page 61

14

14. Delivery of Action Plan

14.1 Heritage Action Plan

The Action Plan will consist of a programme of works, which relate to the strategy's key objectives. The Action Plan will set out realistic objectives and actions for the next 15 years. The Action Plan has been developed from consultation with stakeholders and the community (Action Plan to be amended following the consultation process). In terms of the priority awarded, Short term (S) = 0-2 years, Medium term (M) = 3-8 years and Long term = 9-15 years.

Understanding Our Heritage and its Significance:

Ref	Objective	Action	Delivery Partners	Priority
1	To promote information about our historic environment.	Update the website to include information on our heritage assets and sites.	TBC	S
2		Undertake a mapping exercise of existing interpretation at heritage sites.	TBC	S/M
3		Create an accessible bank of documents and guidance for use by developers, owners and staff on the historic environment.	TBC	S/M
4	To improve access to our historic environment.	Work with owners and stakeholders to increase the number of heritage assets and sites that are accessible to the public.	TBC	S/M
5		Develop an Accessibility Strategy for heritage sites which will ensure inclusion for all.	TBC	M

Understanding Our Heritage and its Significance:				
Ref	Objective	Action	Delivery Partners	Priority
6		Develop an accessibility rating system for heritage sites.	TBC	M
7	To develop local training opportunities to learn heritage/traditional skills to conserve our historic environment.	Develop training programmes in traditional skills	TBC	S
		Develop college courses in traditional skills with partners.	TBC	S
		Create apprenticeships with contractors and colleges.	TBC	S
8	To promote a better understanding of our historic environment.	Engage with owners of designated heritage assets.	TBC	M
9		Ensure that staff are given appropriate training and induction of the heritage value of their place of work.	TBC	S
10	To raise awareness of threats to our historic environment.	Run a series of workshops for staff and community groups on issue of Heritage Crime.	TBC	S
11		Install appropriate signage at sites explaining Heritage Crime and its detrimental effects on the historic environment.	TBC	M

Conserving & Investing in Our Heritage:				
Ref	Objective	Action	Delivery Partners	Priority
12	To safeguard our historic environment.	Establish a full time Heritage Conservation Team to deliver the Action Plan.	TBC	S
13	To monitor the condition of our historic environment.	Maintain and improve systems that record the condition of our heritage assets.	TBC	M
14	To commit investment to maintain our historic environment.	Establish a maintenance programme and conservation management plan for NPTCBC's heritage assets.	TBC	S/M
15		Create a working register of capital projects.	TBC	S/M

Capitalising & Building on Our Heritage:				
Ref	Objective	Action	Delivery Partners	Priority
16	To maximise funding opportunities for project delivery.	Develop a universal Council approach for the repurposing of vacant religious buildings.	TBC	S
17		Prioritise a list of capital works/projects from the Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) produced for heritage sites.	TBC	S/M
18		Repurpose buildings to provide accommodation, attractions or bases for visitor activities.	TBC	S/M
19		Redevelop buildings for mixed uses such as cafés, creative spaces, restaurants and shops as part of regeneration schemes.	TBC	S/M
20	To promote our quality historic environment's cultural value.	Promote and showcase heritage assets as film locations.	TBC	S
21		Repurpose our buildings innovatively to provide creative and exhibition spaces for creative industries.	TBC	
22	To ensure suitable development that respects our historic environment and delivers place making.	Create Place Plans working collaboratively with communities and stakeholders.	TBC	S
23		Encourage communities to work with stakeholders to provide community or cultural facilities and functional public amenities through the adaptive re-use of historic buildings.	TBC	S/M

Positive Management of Our Heritage:				
Ref	Objective	Action	Delivery Partners	Priority
24		Work with SW Police to establish a 'Operation Heritage Cymru' scheme across force area, and monitor and record incidents of Heritage Crime.	TBC	M/L
25	To commit to the positive management of the county's 'At Risk' heritage assets.	Continue to update the 'At Risk Register' and identify priority structures for investment.	TBC	S/M
26		Develop a collaborative solution with stakeholders to address repairs, restoration and consolidation of structures.	TBC	S/M
27	To develop the delivery tools for sustainable conservation and protection of heritage assets and sites.	<p>Prepare Action Plans and Conservation Management Plans for heritage assets and sites to improve facilities, interpretation and access.</p> <p>To service Urgent Works Notices to owners and custodians of listed buildings that are At risk or Vulnerable.</p> <p>Maintain systems including a GIS list of locally based heritage assets.</p>	TBC	S
28	Engage with volunteers providing training and support for them.	Create a work programme for the appraisal, maintenance and management of heritage assets.	TBC	S/M

Positive Management of Our Heritage:				
Ref	Objective	Action	Delivery Partners	Priority
29		Prepare a priority list of capital projects from the Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) produced for heritage sites.	TBC	S/M
30	To review Local Development Plans, Supplementary Planning and National Policy on Heritage and Conservation.	Undertake Conservation Area (CA) Appraisals and consider new CA designations.	TBC	M
31		Continue to update the Buildings of Local Importance (BLIs) database.	TBC	M
32	To ensure positive working relationships with heritage bodies, community groups and stakeholders.	Forge Partnership Agreements with community heritage groups to ensure continued stewardship and management of heritage sites.	TBC	S/M

Celebrating & Promoting Our Heritage:				
Ref	Objective	Action	Delivery Partners	Priority
33	To celebrate, promote and support the work of communities, groups and volunteers who champion our historic environment.	Develop a Community Heritage Group Training Plan that include nature considerations for heritage sites.	TBC	S
34	To assist community groups to access funding to sustain their work and activities.	Deliver training to build capacity and sustainability.	TBC	S/M
35		Lead on strategic projects where community groups do not have capacity or resources.	TBC	S/M
36	To support the discovery, enjoyment and exploration of our heritage and historic environment.	Encourage more venues to participate in Cadw's Open Doors events.	TBC	M
37		Launch a Blue Plaque scheme to celebrate our heritage and culture.	TBC	S
38		Develop new heritage trails/walks.	TBC	S
39		Develop a programme of fun community activities that promote well-being at heritage sites.	TBC	S/M
40		Continue to support and encourage additional 'Open Doors' events.	TBC	S/M

Celebrating & Promoting Our Heritage:				
Ref	Objective	Action	Delivery Partners	Priority
41	To promote the activities of our community heritage groups.	Organise an annual Heritage conference.	TBC	S/M
42	To explain our heritage and its significance through innovative bilingual interpretation.	Install inclusive directional wayfinding signage to mark locations of heritage assets and sites.	TBC	S
43	To promote the work of groups and inspire people of all ages and abilities to join heritage groups.	Run Volunteering events.	TBC	S/M
44		Showcase and share examples of best practice in dealing with our heritage and historic environment.	TBC	S/M

14.2 Resources

The primary focus is to ensure that resources are in place to drive forward the implementation of the Heritage Strategy. A revised resource and staffing plan will need to be developed to facilitate the delivery of the Actions. Many of the activities outlined in the action plan are entirely dependent on the establishment of a Heritage Team.

14.3 Implementation and Monitoring

To enable successful delivery a monitoring framework will be developed that links to the strategic vision, goals and action plan. This framework will identify the benefits for individuals and organisations as well as measuring the economic and societal impacts for Neath Port Talbot. Methodologies for capturing and evaluating both benefit and impact indicators will be implemented, to ensure that positive outcomes for communities, residents and heritage are realised. These are listed:

- A wider range of people involved in heritage.
- Heritage is in a better condition.
- People have greater well-being.
- People can learn about heritage leading to changes in ideas and action.
- Local communities are supported in protecting heritage.
- Knowledge and skills improved.
- Partnership working is supported.

14.4 Partnership and Delivery Structures

14.4.1 The Neath Port Talbot Heritage Project Board will assume authority of the governance structure, which will include many key partners from the private, public and third sector to ensure the timely, appropriate and practical implementation of the Action Plan.

14.4.2 The success of the Heritage Strategy will be determined by the effectiveness of the partnerships developed to deliver its Action Plan shown below:

Partners may include:

- Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority (BBNPA).
- Cadw.
- Canal and Rivers Trust.
- Chapels and Churches.
- CHART (Centre for Heritage and Research Training) Swansea University.
- Churches in Conservation Trust.
- Conservation specialists.
- Further Education(FE)/Higher Education (HE) Institutions .
- Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT).
- Institute for Historic Building Conservation (IHBC).
- Local Businesses.
- Other Local Authorities.
- National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).
- National Trust.
- Natural Resources Wales (NRW).
- Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service (NPTCVS).
- NPT Heritage Network (collective of community and heritage groups).
- NPT Local Nature Partnership.
- Private owners.
- Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW).
- Schools.
- Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB).
- South Wales Conservation Officers Group (SWCOG).
- South Wales Police.
- Ty-Mawr Lime.
- Tywi Centre.
- West Glamorgan Archives.

Abbreviations & Glossary

15

15. Abbreviations & Glossary

Active Travel	'Active Travel' refers to everyday journeys made by walking, cycling or wheeling (using a wheelchair or mobility scooter).
ACW	Arts Council of Wales.
Biodiversity Duty Plan	Neath Port Talbot Council (NPTC) has a legal duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity, and in so doing, promote the resilience of ecosystems under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. This plan demonstrates how we will fulfil that duty and will act as a driver for conservation activities throughout Neath Port Talbot (NPT).
Cadw	Cadw is the historic environment service of the Welsh Government and part of the Tourism and Culture group.
CPG	Commercial Property Grant (NPTCBC).
Cynefin	Cynefin is a Welsh term defined by Curriculum for Wales as “the place where we feel we belong, where the people and landscape around us are familiar, and the sights and sounds are reassuringly recognisable”.
GIS	Geographic Information Systems.
GWR	Great Western Railway.
Historic Environment	“All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and deliberately planted or managed”.
HTCE Fund	Heritage, Tourism, Culture & Events Fund (UKSPF) (NPTCBC).
Local Planning Authority (LPA)	Local Planning Authorities: prepare development plans; consider planning applications and give planning advice. Our LPA is Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.
Local Development Plan (LDP)	The LDP sets out each local authority’s proposals for future development and use of land in the area.
NLHF	National Lottery Heritage Fund.
NPTCBC	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

NPTCVS	Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service.
NRW	Natural Resources Wales look after the environment for people and nature.
RAMSAR Site	RAMSAR Sites are wetlands of international importance that have been designated under the RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands. (RAMSAR in Iran).
RCAHMW	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.
SAC Site	Special Area of Conservation Site, they are protected and support important plant and animal species.
SSSIs	Sites of Special Scientific Interest — SSIs are the most important sites for Wales' natural heritage.
SW Police	South Wales Police.
V&V Prosperity Fund	Valleys & Villages Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) (NPTCBC).
WATs	Welsh Archaeological Trusts.



Appendix A: SWOT Analysis



16

Page 75



16. Appendix A: SWOT Analysis

Strengths 	Weaknesses 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing levels of awareness and recognition of the importance of heritage and the historic environment as demonstrated by local and national government. A considerable number of extremely knowledgeable local stakeholders who support heritage in the borough and are members of the Neath Port Talbot Heritage Network.* Proactive volunteers who work with Council to secure additional funding to conserve and preserve key heritage sites within the borough. Council membership of a Welsh Government led Built Heritage Forum that allows for the sharing of best practice in the management of the historic environment. Proactive promotion of the Welsh Language in Neath Port Talbot. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constraints on heritage resources, including no Building Conservation Officer and no Listed Building enforcement budget. Heritage regeneration schemes normally need lots of money and time to complete, as we are rich in heritage assets there is internal pressure to inevitably prioritise which heritage projects are taken forward. Lack of up-to-date, accurate and accessible information on NPTCBC's heritage assets. The need for accessible information for interested stakeholders and heritage asset owners on skilled craftspeople operating within the borough. The need for an expanded Heritage at Risk Register to identify buildings and sites within the historic environment that are most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development.

Strengths 	Weaknesses 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council’s proven track record in successfully securing funding and delivering exemplar heritage-led regeneration projects.** • Knowledge and skill set of Council staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited sources and amounts of funding available to support heritage projects and capacity to deliver enhancements to the historic environment. • Difficulty to engage with certain sections of the community about heritage and the historic environment.

* A NPTCBC Library & Museum Service set up forum of local heritage organisations, history societies and community groups brought together for society news, information exchange & the sharing good practice and projects.

** Examples include the Plaza and Magistrates Court in Port Talbot, the Gwyn Hall and 12 Wind Street in Neath, which have been developed for commercial, leisure and retail uses.

Opportunities



- To use this strategy to identify and agree objectives, priorities and actions to ensure the council and stakeholders deliver effective and efficient management of its heritage and the historic environment.
- To promote existing heritage assets.
- Utilise Planning Enforcement as an effective tool to control and ensure the pro-active management of the historic environment.
- To increase the number and types of heritage assets that are accessible and open to a wider range of people.
- To support and develop means of training and learning to develop heritage skills, knowledge and employment opportunities.
- To improve traditional heritage skills education and training.
- To support the Culture Strategy, that helps to align heritage with other aspects of culture as an important part of the area's identity and presents opportunities to gain access to funding as partners for our heritage projects as part of a coherent whole.
- To promote a shared understanding of local character and distinctiveness and provide protection and management through appropriate means.

Threats



- The potential conflict between development pressure and ensuring the significance of the historic environment is preserved and enhanced.
- A continued shortage of skilled quality craftspeople, which has the effect of increasing the cost of conservation works or reducing the quality of appropriate work.
- Limited building conservation, planning expertise and resources within the Council.
- An inability to effectively address Heritage at Risk through management techniques leading to the threat of heritage being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development.
- Continued limitations on available funding for maintenance and improvements to public and privately owned heritage assets, which can perpetuate a lack of investment.
- Reliance on external funding and short term contracts of heritage staff at the council.
- Loss of staff or resources at key stakeholder organisations, which includes accumulated knowledge and localised knowledge.
- Threat of Climate Change affecting the fabric of the built heritage.

Opportunities





- To provide a heritage focused community grant scheme (National Lottery Heritage Fund) and assist groups to develop heritage and culture projects for delivery across the borough.
- Identify other sources of funding and investment opportunities to assist with the conservation of our heritage assets and sites.
- To deliver heritage projects, heritage-led regeneration and public realm enhancements.
- To identify under-utilised and vacant heritage assets that can be repurposed as high quality accommodation.
- Build on the existing and explore the potential of expanding the borough's heritage-led tourism offer.
- To improve connectivity between heritage assets and develop destinations as part of the heritage visitor offer.
- To promote innovative and interactive built heritage projects at Gnoll Estate Country Park and other key sites for example Neath Abbey, Neath Abbey Ironworks, Margam Country Park, etc., to raise the heritage profile.
- Re-use and Repurpose heritage assets in our town centres and settlements for mixed use to improve long-term sustainability.

Threats



- Ensure any that proposals for the voluntary sector to assist in the delivery of the council's heritage services are realistic, appropriate, rewarding for participants and there is not an over-reliance on this sector.
- The risk of heritage crime happening to our heritage assets and sites.

Opportunities 	Threats 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To utilise key heritage sites and assets to host arts and cultural events as part of a countywide activity programme. • Connect heritage projects (small and large, private, community and council-led) together to create strategic place projects. • To use voluntary sector expertise to assist in the establishment of new community groups. • Increase the number of community groups overseeing the stewardship of heritage assets//increase the number of volunteers within the existing heritage groups. • To improve and provide effective engagement with local communities through different and innovative methods of communication. • To celebrate and promote achievement and best practice for exemplar historic environment projects. • To signpost Heritage Asset owners and custodians to guidance, advice and funding for protection, conservation, energy efficiency and re-use. • Work with key stakeholders to implement measures to reduce heritage crime. 	

Appendix B: Policies and Strategies

17

Page 17



17. Appendix B: Policies and Strategies

Policy and Strategy	Link
Cadw: Conservation Principles for Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales	Conservation Principles for Sustainable Management
Cadw: Policy, advice and guidance	Policy, advice and guidance
Curriculum for Wales	Curriculum for Wales
Future Wales The National Plan 2040	Future Wales The National Plan
Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023	Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023
How to improve energy efficiency in Historic Buildings in Wales	Improving Energy Efficiency
Local Development Plan (NPT 2011-2026)	Local Development Plan
Place Making Charter	Place Making Charter
Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 February 2021	Planning Policy Wales 11
Recover, Reset, Renew (NPT Corporate Plan 2022-2027)	NPT Corporate Plan
Supplementary Planning Guidance: The Historic Environment	Historic Environment SPG
Supplementary Planning Guidance: Designated Canal Structures	Canal Structures
Supplementary Planning Guidance: Development and the Welsh Language	Welsh Language
Supplementary Planning Guidance: Schedule of Buildings of Local Importance	Buildings of Local Importance
Technical Advice Note 24 (TAN 24) The Historic Environment	Technical Advice Note 24
Well-Being of Future Generations Act (2015)	Well-Being of Future Generations

Pictures used in the Heritage Strategy

18

Page 83

18. Pictures used in the Heritage Strategy

- **Front Cover:** Parish Church of St Illtyd Grade II* Listed Building and Neath Canal, Neath.
- **Contents:** Church of Saint Peter Grade II Listed Building and Swansea Canal, Pontardawe.
- **Introduction 01:** Plaza Cinema, Port Talbot Grade II Listed Building.
- **Executive Summary 02:** Cadw Open Doors 2022 event at Neath Abbey, Scheduled Monument.
- **Our Heritage & Story 03:** Neath Castle Scheduled Monument and Grade II* Listed Building.
- **Vision, SWOT Analysis & Themes and Objectives 04:** Bont Fawr Aqueduct, Pontrhydyfen Grade II* Listed Building.
- **Issues Facing Heritage Assets 05:** Canalside, Aberdulais on Tennant Canal.
- **Policy Context 06:** Neath Abbey, Scheduled Monument and Neath Canal at Neath Abbey.
- **Policy Drivers 07:** Pontardawe Arts Centre, Pontardawe Building of Local Importance.
- **Engagement with Community, Partners and Stakeholders 08:** Workshop, store and smithy, Tonna Grade II Listed Building and part of the Neath Canal Depot Conservation Area.
- **Understanding our Heritage and its Significance 09:** Sarn Helen Mosaic, Roman Road, Banwen.
- **Conserving & Investing in Our Heritage 10:** Plaza, Port Talbot Grade II Listed Building.
- **Capitalising & Building on Our Heritage 11:** Constitutional Club, Neath (Allan Leonard Lewis Pub) Grade II Listed Building.
- **Positive Management of Our Heritage 12:** Victoria Gardens, Neath Grade II Registered Historic Park and Garden.
- **Celebrating and Promoting Our Heritage 13:** Parish Church of St David Grade II* Listed Building and Neath Town Centre.
- **Delivery of Action Plan 14:** Brick Row, Seven Sisters Buildings of Local Importance.
- **Abbreviations & Glossary 15:** Gnoll Estate Country Park, Neath Grade II* Registered Historic Park and Garden.
- **Appendix A: SWOT Analysis 16:** Gwyn Hall, Neath, Grade II Listed Building.
- **Appendix B: Policies and Strategies 17:** Margam Castle, Margam Grade II* Listed Building.
- **Pictures used in the Heritage Strategy 18:** Millenium Gardens, Dulais Valley.
- **Back Cover:** Neath Abbey Railway Viaduct, Neath Abbey Grade II Listed Building at Neath Abbey Ironworks Scheduled Monument.



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