



***REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE***

10.00 AM FRIDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2021

REMOTELY VIA TEAMS

All mobile telephones to be switched to silent for the duration of the meeting

PART 1

1. Welcome and Roll Call
2. Chairs Announcements
3. Declarations of interest
4. Minutes of Previous Meeting (*Pages 5 - 22*)
 - 17 September 2021
 - 22 October 2021
5. Rhondda Tunnel Society Presentation (*Pages 23 - 40*)
6. Asset Sponsorship - Verbal Update
7. Pre-Decision Scrutiny
To select appropriate items from the Cabinet Board agenda for pre-decision scrutiny (reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members)
8. Forward Work Programme 2021/22 (*Pages 41 - 44*)
9. Urgent items

(whether public or exempt) at the discretion of the Chairman pursuant to Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972

10. Access to Meetings

To resolve to exclude the public for the following item(s) pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the relevant exempt paragraphs of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

PART 2

11. Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Private Item/s

To select appropriate items from the Private Cabinet Board agenda for pre-decision scrutiny (reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members)

K.Jones
Chief Executive

Civic Centre
Port Talbot

Friday, 26 November 2021

Committee Membership:

Chairperson: Councillor S.K.Hunt

Vice

Chairperson: Councillor R.L.Taylor

Councillors: D.Cawsey, C.J.Jones, H.N.James, S.M.Penry, S.Purse, S.Rahaman, N.T.Hunt, S.Bamsey, J.Evans and S.A.Knoyle

Notes:

- (1) If Committee Members or non-Committee Members wish to have relevant items put on the agenda for future meetings, then please notify the Chief Executive/Chair eight days before the meeting.*

- (2) *If non-Committee Members wish to attend for an item of interest, then prior notification needs to be given (by 12.00 noon on the day before the meeting). Non-Committee Members may speak but not vote, or move or second any motion.*
- (3) *For pre scrutiny arrangements, the Chair will normally recommend forthcoming executive items for discussion/challenge. It is also open to Committee Members to request items to be raised - though Members are asked to be selective here in regard to important issues.*
- (4) *The relevant Cabinet Board Members will also be invited to be present at the meeting for Scrutiny/ Consultation purposes.*
- (5) *Would the Scrutiny Committee Members please bring the Cabinet Board papers with them to the meeting.*

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Regeneration and Sustainable Development Scrutiny Committee

(Remotely via Teams)

Members Present:

17 September 2021

Chairperson: Councillor S.K.Hunt

Vice Chairperson: Councillor R.L.Taylor

Councillors: D.Cawsey, C.J.Jones, H.N.James, S.M.Penry, S.Pursey, S.Rahaman, N.T.Hunt, S.Bamsey, J.Evans and S.A.Knoyle

Officers In Attendance: S.Brennan, C.Plowman, N.Headon, C.Jones, C.Millis, A.Spooner-Cleverly, N.Bray and K.Jones

Invitees: Councillors A.Wingrave, L.Jones and D.Lewis

1. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2021 were approved.

2. **Update on the Audit Wales Neath Port Talbot Action Plan**

Officers informed Members of the updated Regeneration Action Plan following an examination undertaken by Audit Wales.

Members were pleased that Officers had taken on board a lot of the suggestions that were made by Audit Wales. It was noted that the comments relating to communications were reassuring; if the Council continued to make progress with the recommendations detailed in the action plan, future projects could be benefited and it could provide the public with confidence in what the Council was trying to achieve. The importance of Community Benefits was also raised; it was reassuring that the Council had acknowledge a better way of dealing with this matter, and that Officers will be involved at an early stage for each project going forward. It was mentioned that this was beneficial in order for the public to be aware of the direct benefit from a project.

Officers acknowledged that there were always improvements that could be made to various elements of services; some of the barriers to this could be related to systems, resources or a combination of the both. It was stated that the milestone planner that was completed with the Media Team had been reinvigorated, in order for them to have a much better idea of what projects were coming up; Officers were hopeful that this will solve some of the issues that arise.

Following the discussion, it was agreed that the Head of Property and Regeneration would provide a report to the Committee on the subject of Community Benefits.

Members asked if there were any further updates on the Welsh Government formula for flood areas. It was confirmed that the position statement was the same as previously reported to the Committee, and that there were still a lot of issues relating to flood zones across the County Borough; the flood maps were known to change, land could be taken off the flood zone list or added onto the list, and the reasoning behind this could often be difficult for people to understand. However, it was mentioned that the information on flood areas was improving year on year, and was becoming more robust which will help the Council to make the best possible decisions in regards to the utilisation of land. Officers highlighted that the County Borough had some challenging areas with flood mitigation, and in terms of taking developments forward was an expensive process and was a risk, as the desired results may not be achieved at the end of the process.

It was asked if there was a process in which the Authority could challenge the decisions that Natural Resource Wales (NRW) make in regards to flood land. Officers confirmed that NRW could only be challenged on a case by case basis, as it would need to be proven that the development in question was not going to put anybody else into detriment; this was a difficult and long process, which would involve a lot of consultancy work by external specialists. It was stated that flooding issues were becoming more prevalent, and NRW were doing their best with the resources at hand, in order to understand where the impacts will be. Members were informed that when the Council provides its data on flow rates etc., NRW will look at the data and may need to change their model slightly; therefore, their model will always be a constantly changing status, which was concerning for developers as it would add to the risk element.

Officers were asked if there was an update on the progress of obtaining monies from the Levelling Up Fund. It was confirmed that there had been no further news on the Levelling Up Fund or the Community Renewal Fund; if the Council were to be successful in obtaining monies from this fund, they had a spend profile in place for the rest of the year. Officers mentioned that a lot of organisations who had been part of the bidding process, have had to change their spending profile completely due to timescales and not having confirmation of monies. It was hoped that the Council would have heard if it was successful or not during the summer period, however Officers still had no indication of when they would be receiving the decision; this caused an issue for the Council as it would be difficult to get the spend out by the end of the financial year, which was March 2022. Officers confirmed that they needed to start making decisions imminently, as work needed to be completed on the projects; however, due to not having indication on whether the Council had been successful or not, the challenge will be having to conduct the work at a risk and potentially not be able to re-claim some of the costings.

A discussion took place in relation to the Shared Prosperity Fund; in regards to this, Members highlighted that it would be beneficial to collaborate with Local Members for the town centre areas. It was stated that the Shared Prosperity Fund would follow on from the Levelling Up Fund; it was hoped that the timescales given for this would be better than the previous, in order for Officers to submit bids effectively. Members were informed that Officers had already started working on project ideas to discuss with Members in the near future; this will be beneficial as Members will have seen some of the projects that Officers were hoping to submit, prior to the event.

It was queried whether there was an indication as to what the priorities were going to be for the Shared Prosperity Fund. Officers mentioned that the UK Government had stated they had been inundated with bids for the Levelling Up Fund, which was why the decision was delayed; this was an indication that there wasn't going to be a sufficient amount of money available due to the number of bids that had been submitted.

The Committee noted the report.

3. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

The Committee chose to scrutinise the following Cabinet Board items:

Lease of 5-6 London Road, Neath to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Committee receive a report in relation to a new lease of 5-6 London Road in Neath, which would enable the continued delivery of substance misuse intervention services.

The circulated report referenced that it was not known if the perpetrators of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) used the services at the property in question; it was asked if there were any plans to monitor this going forward. It was stated that the ASB in Neath Town Centre could not be directly linked to all of those who used the services at London Road. Assurances were provided that a lot of work was being carried out, in terms of enforcement and support, to ensure that it was known who the perpetrators of ASB were and to ensure that where possible, these individuals gain access to support services; reference was made to the Street Vulnerability Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (SV MARAC), and Members were informed that regular meetings were taking place between colleagues at an operational level. It was mentioned that South Wales Police had provided information on the known perpetrators of ASB to a core group of individuals, and Officers have suggested that a 'deep dive' be conducted into these cases to identify factors such as, were they getting the help they needed or do they needed further encouragement.

It was asked if there was a correlation between the facility at London Road and the ASB in Neath town centre. Officers recognised that there was an ASB issue within the County Borough, however the blame could not be put on all of those who attend this particular facility; if the support services were not in place, the ASB issues would be much worse. It was mentioned that the services were in place to help individuals improve and stabilise their lives, and to prevent them offending, re-offending and/or stop them from being exploited. Members were informed that the Area Planning Board (APB) was embarking on a major transformation project which will be looking at the delivery of substance misuse services across the region and how they can be improved; part of this work will including identifying if services were in the right place and if they were configured in the right way. It was added that the location of these services was important as needed to be in areas in which people access them.

Members asked why the property was noted to be leased at a peppercorn rent. It was highlighted that the building was purchased and refurbished with the Welsh Government Substance Misuse Action Fund (SMAF) capital, and the pay back for this was that the property would be listed as peppercorn rent.

It was mentioned that there would be individuals who will never engage with the support services, however it was important for the Council to make the process easier for those who could potentially engage; some examples of work that had been completed to help individuals with this included assertive outreach and the establishment of the rapid access prescription service.

Concerns were raised in regards to the facility being in close proximity of Victoria Gardens, and that there had been reports of individuals going into this area to use substances; it was important to try and ensure that the issue of substance misuse and ASB did not affect those who were living within the community. It was highlighted that wherever this type of facility was located, there would always be an area in which groups of individuals will meet and choose to behave in a certain way.

A further discussion took place in regards to substance misuse. It was clarified that substance misuse included both drug and alcohol abuse; they went hand in hand, although individuals made different decisions depending on whether they were under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Officers stated that there was a need to target individuals who were abusing vulnerable people, as well as victims themselves.

It was highlighted that early intervention was key, however it was understood that resourcing was an issue; Officers reassured the Committee that the correct agencies were in place in order to combat and address the issues at hand. It was noted that the current approach from South Wales Police was to undertake enforcement, but also look at how they can encourage people to receive the support that they need.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

Rural Development Plan 2014 – 2020

Members were provided with an update and overview of the Rural Development Plan (RDP) 2014-2020, which included detail on what

had been achieved in Neath Port Talbot during the current Programme.

It was evident that some of the most recent projects seemed to be meeting objectives better than some of the earlier projects did; it was queried what had driven this shift in the later projects.

Officers stated that at the beginning of the process there was more money available; people would submit their ideas and the team would fund some of it with a robust system in place. Following the midterm evaluation in 2020, it was noted that a more focused approach was set with trying to align this work with the Councils Corporate Plan and poverty elements; this was in line with the Local Development Strategy (LDS) to ensure that some of the corporate ideas were achieved. Members were informed that the midterm evaluation provided the opportunity for Officers to make changes, taking on board any issues that had previously arisen, due to eligibility, or a misunderstanding of what could be achieved in this process; a lot of engagement work was completed to provide people with a better understanding of the process, and to try and get more people to engage who previously hadn't, and to try to change the mind-set of what people thought that the programme was about. It was added that the programme had been extended to March 2022 in order to utilise the under spend; the outbreak of the pandemic had impacted on factors such as timescales.

Members asked if there was any monies left for additional projects to be progressed, before the programme ended in 2022. It was explained that the circulated report stated that there had been 14 new projects within the past 12 months, however this had recently changed to 16; therefore the money was reducing. Officers confirmed that there was currently £81k left, however there was one project that was with the Local Action Group (LAG) for a decision to be made, and another project that was imminently going to be put to the LAG; these projects were both worth £64k in total, therefore if they were approved there would be around £17k left. It was mentioned that there was no guarantee that they would be approved, and as such the remaining amount may fluctuate. Officers were still working with individuals who were bringing forward ideas; this process will be on a first come first served basis for remaining funds.

A discussion took place in regards to future funding opportunities and how the Council was going to make the most opportunities that may come forward. It was highlighted that the LAG had various individuals

who were involved in the group including business people, the third sector and Local Members; it was noted to be a very good network for the rural areas, and Officers would hope to see this continue or at least to retain the contacts. In relation to future funding, it was stated that Officers were discussing this regionally with Welsh Government, in order to identify the next steps and processes; Officers were keen to identify what was happening next with the new funding.

The importance of lobbying was raised, particularly for areas which had high poverty and deprivation; the money from this programme was well used in the areas which experienced this. It was asked if the lobbying will continue and if there was a chance for this programme to be extended further. Officers confirmed that there was a possibility for an extension to 2024; there were opportunities provided to extend further, but only with the money that each Local Authority had left. It was noted that the Council did ask for an extension, however there was not sufficient funds for further projects; the Council was able to re-profile the funds to be able to have the extra year or so in place (up to March 2022). Members were informed that there was a gap between the funding that was available now and the new funding coming into place; therefore it was important for Officers to find out what Welsh Government were planning.

Members explained that the complexity of achieving funding sometimes affected community groups, and meant that a lot of great project ideas wouldn't be achieved due to the difficulty of going through the process. With regards to supporting the community, it was explained that the RDP was a first step and was supposed to be innovative and creative, therefore excellent for supporting community groups; there were also facilitators that work with the groups to help progress the project.

The Committee discussed the issues around match funding; Officers recognised the difficulties with this and had reported their concerns to Welsh Government. It was mentioned that where possible, volunteers time could be used instead of using physical money, as it was a pressure for match funding to be provided.

It was mentioned that some of the projects that were listed in the circulated report could require maintenance; it was asked if the cost of maintenance was built in to the programme or if there would be financial support available. Officers confirmed that an exit strategy and sustainability element was built into the application process, therefore bidders would need to think about the future of the project.

It was stated that there was no set money for maintenance of projects, however the team help projects to identify further funding if needed.

Members asked if applications were still being accepted and if there was a closing date. It was highlighted that the team were still currently accepting bids and would welcome any ideas to be brought forward; one reasoning for this was due to the fact that it was not guaranteed that the LAG would accept the projects that had been submitted. In regards to timelines, it was mentioned that the programme was set to finish in March 2022, however Officers needed a few months allocated for closure and administration; at the moment projects needed to be finished around December/January time, which was a tight timeline to get the projects up and running.

It was queried if the Election in May 2022 would have any impact on the progress of the programme; if any Local Members, involved in projects, were not re-elected. Officers confirmed that this would not affect the process as the money would need to be committed to projects in December, which was before the Election takes place.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

4. **Forward Work Programme 2021/22**

Members noted the Regeneration and Sustainable Development Scrutiny Forward Work Programme for 2021/22.

It was highlighted that the Committee had their Forward Work Programme Workshop scheduled for Tuesday 21 September.

CHAIRPERSON

Regeneration and Sustainable Development Scrutiny Committee

(Remotely via Teams)

Members Present:

22 October 2021

Chairperson: Councillor S.K.Hunt

Vice Chairperson: Councillor R.L.Taylor

Councillors: D.Cawsey, C.J.Jones, H.N.James, S.M.Penry, S.Pursey, S.Rahaman, N.T.Hunt, S.Bamsey, J.Evans and S.A.Knoyle

Officers In Attendance C.Morris, S.Brennan, .J.Davies, N.Headon, A. Collins, C.Roach and C.Davies

Invitees: Councillors D.Jones, L.Jones and S.Jones

1. **Chairs Announcements**

The Committee was informed of an error in the following report on the Cabinet Board Agenda:

- Agenda Item 8 – Key Performance Indicators 2019/2020 – Quarter 1 (1 April 2021 – 30 June 2021)

It was noted that the title of the report should read '*Key Performance Indicators 2020/2021 – Quarter 1 (1 April 2021 – 30 June 2021)*'

Following the update, Members noted the error.

2. **Declarations of interest**

The following Members made a declaration of interest:

Cllr. S. Rahaman -

Re. Cabinet Board Agenda Item 7 – Covid-19 Grant Support for Local Businesses from March 2020 to Present, as he owns a local business within the County

- Borough which received grant support.
- Cllr. S. Pursey - Re. Cabinet Board Agenda Item 7 - Covid-19 Grant Support for Local Businesses from March 2020 to Present, as he is a Trustee of Taibach Community Library which has received grant support.
- Cllr. S. Knoyle - Re. Cabinet Board Agenda Item 7 - Covid-19 Grant Support for Local Businesses from March 2020 to Present, as he is the Director of Glynneath RFC Limited and also has a local business within the County Borough which has received grant support.
- Cllr. R. Taylor - Re. Cabinet Board Agenda Item 7 - Covid-19 Grant Support for Local Businesses from March 2020 to Present, as she is a Trustee of Taibach Community Library which has received grant support.
- Cllr. D. Cawsey - Re. Cabinet Board Agenda Item 7 - Covid-19 Grant Support for Local Businesses from March 2020 to Present, as he is a Trustee and Non-executive Director of various charities and organisations that received grant support.
- Cllr. S. Hunt - Re. Cabinet Board Agenda Item 7 - Covid-19 Grant Support for Local Businesses from March 2020 to Present, as he is a member and Chairman of various charities and organisations that received grant support.
- Cllr. H. James - Re. Cabinet Board Agenda Item 7 - Covid-19 Grant Support for Local

Businesses from March 2020 to Present, as he is Chair of the Neath Port Authority which received grant support.

Cllr. N. Hunt -

Re. Cabinet Board Agenda Item 7 - Covid-19 Grant Support for Local Businesses from March 2020 to Present, as he owns a local business within the County Borough which received grant support.

Cllr. C. Jones -

Re. Cabinet Board Agenda Item 7 - Covid-19 Grant Support for Local Businesses from March 2020 to Present, as he is an official at Alltwn RFC and owns a local business within the County Borough which received grant support.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2021 were approved.

4. **Report on Community Benefits**

Members were provided with a report on outputs and results from the delivery of community benefits through the construction phase of Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School.

It was stated that all of the Councils construction projects were linked to the South Wales Contractors Regional Framework; and all had contractual community benefits within the construction projects. It was mentioned that they were based around targeted recruitment and training; for example taking on local unemployed people, providing work experience opportunities, taking on local apprenticeships using the local supply chain and supporting community initiatives.

Officers explained that they decided to use Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School as an example because despite the pandemic, they had overachieved on all of their targets; apart from the school engagement target which was difficult to achieve due to

the pandemic. It was highlighted that this target was hoped to be achieved by the end of next year.

A discussion took place in regards to the sustainability of the projects. It was noted that the Council part funded the shared apprenticeship scheme, which has enabled work experience and shared apprenticeships to be completed; this has provided individuals with opportunities to obtain local jobs as they had been upskilled and trained to do so. Members were informed that long term unemployed individuals had been taken on via the Workways and Communities for Work Project; the contractor had also worked with local social enterprises including Women's Aid social enterprise arm, Thrive, and given them employment opportunities.

The Committee noted the report.

5. **Rhondda Tunnel Society Presentation**

It was confirmed that the Rhondda Tunnel Society Presentation would be deferred to a future meeting of the Committee due to unforeseen circumstances.

6. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

Commercial Property Grant: 23 Church Place, Neath, SA11 3LL

The Committee received a report regarding the proposal to part fund improvements to the external appearance of the commercial property 23 Church Place, Neath, SA11 3LL.

It was explained that this grant would physically enhance the character of Church Place and the Neath Conservation Area, as the existing rendering was in poor condition and had become a safety hazard to pedestrians due to the rendering crumbling and falling to the street. Officers added that the grant would be used to re-render the Old Market Street and side elevations of the building.

Reference was made to the target areas of the Commercial Property Grant; one of which was specific commercial centres. It was confirmed that the grant could be offered to various commercial centres across the whole of the County Borough; however they had to be in a significant visual area. Members were informed that the idea of the Commercial Property Grant was to improve the streetscene, therefore the buildings that were very visible to the public.

Members queried what the finish of the building was going to look like, and highlighted the importance of the visual appearance of Neath Conservation Area. Officers confirmed that they will liaise with colleagues in the Planning Service to ensure that the new rendering fitted in with the conservation area.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

Covid-19 Grant Support for Local Businesses from March 2020 to Present

(Cllr. S.Rahaman, Cllr. N.Hunt, Cllr. S.Knoyle and Cllr. C.Jones re-affirmed their interest at this point and withdrew from the meeting)

An update report was provided to Members on the activities of the Economic Development Service in processing Covid-19 financial assistance to local businesses from March 2020 to August 2021.

It was noted that in March 2020, the UK Government announced that the Country would be entering a lockdown; following this Welsh Government announced that they would be using a non-domestic rate system to deliver emergency grant payments to businesses across Wales. Officers confirmed that at that time, to qualify for grant support, business needed to either be in receipt of small business rates relief, be operating within the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors or be a registered charity or community sports club; initially these grants were in the region of £10k and £25k, and the level of support was dependant on the rateable value of their property.

Members were informed that it quickly became apparent that there was going to be a huge demand on services, in terms of providing advice and guidance to local businesses to help them access the relevant support; in response to this, three members of the Economic Development Team were immediately assigned to support the Business Rates Team. It was stated that this enabled the Business Rates Team to concentrate on processing the grants and providing payments to businesses as efficiently as possible; the Economic Development Team focused on fielding all of the queries that were coming in, which was quite substantial at the time. It was added that throughout the first three months of the lockdown, the Teams were able to provide a supportive and practical service to help local businesses through the difficult period.

Officers outlined some examples of issues that arose during this time, which they had to overcome; such as many premises weren't on the

on the Council's business rating listing, some landlords hadn't registered their premises as multiple occupancy and some units had been split and business rates hadn't been informed of the change. It was added that many of the local businesses that were claiming small business rates relief didn't inform business rates that there was a change of ownership; this resulted in a significant amount of work that needed to be completed in order to get the business premises registered with the valuation office, which wasn't an easy task at the time due to the valuation offices across Wales being inundated with the same issues. The Committee was informed that a lot of businesses struggled to apply for the grants with the online application forms, therefore Officers had to provide support with this to get them through the process.

It was stated that, on a daily basis, there was a lot of information that was being released from UK and Welsh Governments regarding the various programmes of support; as well as trying to field all the calls and enquiries, the Teams also had to make sure they were up to date with the latest information including the eligibility of the various schemes.

Reference was made to the self-employed income support scheme, which was highlighted to be one of the key schemes due to a lot of the businesses being registered as self-employed; these businesses weren't necessarily able to access the other grants, therefore this support scheme was essential for them.

In the first three months, it was highlighted that the Economic Development Team helped more than 850 local businesses apply for the grant funding; they dealt with over 3,500 emails in addition to many telephone calls, and they supported the registration of 400 new premises onto the Council's business rating system. It was mentioned that in those first three months, £40million worth of grants were delivered and over 3,000 local businesses were supported.

The Committee was informed that over the following 14 months, the Economic Development Team went on to deliver a further nine rounds of grants on behalf of Welsh Government, which came at various points in time; the first scheme delivered supported new business starts. It was added that they also delivered three rounds of the freelancer fund which provided support to businesses and individuals working within the arts, heritage and creative sectors; as well as delivering six rounds of discretionary funding which provided support to micro businesses impacted by the various lockdowns.

Overall during this period, it was noted that the Team processed 1,700 applications to the value of £2.4million; these were significantly small scale grants which varied between £1.5k and £2.5k. However, it was stated that these grants were of major importance to enable many of those businesses to survive.

Officers made reference to the quotes from local business, which were included in the circulated report, which showed their appreciation for the support the received.

It was noted that delivering these grants was important for the Teams as it helped them engage more with the foundational economy; the small businesses that service local needs. Officers highlighted that this element would be important going forward; especially as many of the businesses weren't likely to have linked with the Council previously. It was confirmed that Officers now had a better understanding of these businesses including their operations and what support they will require moving forward with recovery from the pandemic.

A discussion took place in regards to lessons learned and plans going forward; over the past 18 months it had been particularly difficult for many businesses, however some had adapted well by remodelling their operations, introducing new services and actively finding new ways to generate income. It was stated that many of the changes that businesses have had to make will become permanent, and Officers anticipated that the demand for investment funding will grow considerably over the coming years. Members were informed that Cabinet had recently agreed to additional internal funding of £260k to support local businesses recovery from the pandemic, and those seeking to make investments to promote growth going forward; a briefing note had been prepared for Members, outlining the proposed application and assessment process for distributing that fund. In addition to this, it was noted that Welsh Government had also asked Economic Development Departments across Wales to deliver a business recovery grant on their behalf; which highlights that they were moving away from emergency funding, and going into the business recovery phase. It was confirmed that currently the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) were leading on the discussions with all 22 Local Authorities, and Officers hoped to be made aware of exactly how much funding will be allocated to Neath Port Talbot in the coming weeks; it had been agreed that any additional Welsh Government funding would be integrated into the existing business grant support schemes. Officers hoped that the

Council would be in a position to start promoting and delivering the Welsh Government funds the first week in November, before launching the Councils own Neath Port Talbot growth and investment fund in January 2022.

Members highlighted the processes of the business recovery grant, and asked if this was setting the scene for future funding; whether Councils were going to be used to deliver grants like this in the future. It was noted that at the start of the pandemic, Welsh Government had quickly realised the value of the Economic Development Teams across all Local Authorities; in particular their ability and the range of contacts that they had. It was stated that Welsh Government had expressed going forward that they wanted to continue working with Local Authorities in regards to this, as they had realised that their model did not have the capacity to deliver these sorts of grants. Officers mentioned that the working relationship between the Council and Welsh Government, throughout the pandemic had been positive; they had been very supportive. It was added that there was potential for more UK Government involvement in this moving forward, which meant that Local Authorities would need to further learn and adapt.

Following on from this, it was queried whether there would be sufficient capacity and support within the Teams to continue with this work if it becomes the 'normal' process going forward. Officers highlighted that it was very clear throughout the pandemic that whilst the Teams performed very well, the circumstances of the work weren't sustainable; Officers were working weekends and extremely long days, and the service relied on the good will of the Teams to do this. Officers recognised that there was a need to look forward into the recovery of the pandemic and beyond, and look at how the Teams could be effectively resourced; the economy was going to change, and it was important to understand what was needed to support businesses to survive and thrive.

The Committee thanked the Teams for their hard work throughout these difficult times.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

(Cllr. S.Rahaman, Cllr. N.Hunt, Cllr. S.Knoyle and Cllr. C.Jones re-joined the meeting from this point onwards)

7. **Forward Work Programme 2021/22**

Members noted the Regeneration and Sustainable Development Scrutiny Forward Work Programme for 2021/22.

8. **Urgent items**

Because of the need to deal now with the matters contained in Minute No. 11 below, the Chairperson agreed that these could be raised at today's meeting as urgent items pursuant to Statutory Instrument No.2290 (as amended).

Reason for Urgency:

Due to the time element.

9. **Access to Meetings**

RESOLVED: that pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following items of business which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

10. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Private Item/s**

The Committee scrutinised the following private Cabinet Board item:

Proposed acquisition of Land and Domestic Garage at the Junction of A48 and Water Street, Margam for the proposed Footpath/Cycleway Scheme linking Eglwys Nunydd and St David's Park, Margam

Members were provided with a report regarding the proposed acquisition of Land and Domestic Garage at the Junction of A48 and Water Street, Margam for the proposed Footpath/Cycleway Scheme linking Eglwys Nunydd and St David's Park, Margam.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

11. **Proposed Disposal of Land at Harbourside to NPT College together with the proposed Acquisition of Land at Fabian Way from Welsh Government**

Members were provided with a report which detailed the proposed disposal of Land at Harbourside to NPT College together with the proposed Acquisition of Land at Fabian Way from Welsh Government.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

CHAIRPERSON

Rhondda Tunnel



Presentation to NPT Council 3rd. December 2021

Steve Mackey – Chair

Tony Moon – Project Secretary

Project Costs

Creating a “Must Visit” attraction

Blaengwynfi

Project Costs



Detailed Plans Created by our Technical Subcommittee
after consulting with leading UK tunnel engineers

Physical work will take 18 months

Project Cost includes:

- Visitors' Centres

- Micro-hydro schemes at both sides

Recently validated by Corderoy (Quantity Surveyors)

Total Project Cost: **£13.111M**

South Wales has Two Abandoned Long Tunnels

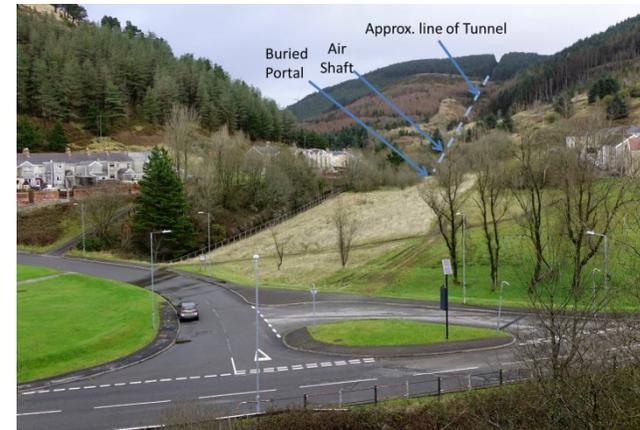


Abernant-Merthyr



RCT has
a Portal of
Both Tunnels

Rhondda



Active Travel Route – Merthyr-Aberdare

Continued Public Funding

but

Little public support

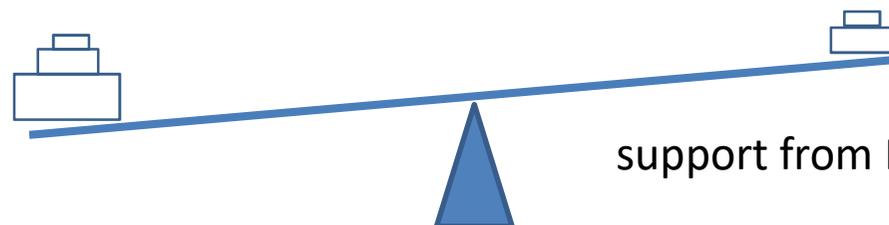
Merthyr Council lobbies hard for support

Longest in Europe

Seen more as a Visitor Attraction

Huge Public Support
but no public funding

...this is how it sometimes feels



Strong
support from NPT Council can balance

Current Situation



Both Tunnels are owned by Westminster DfT – Grant Shapps MP

DfT will transfer them to the Welsh Govt. with a small sum
(£60k for Rhondda)

but

Welsh Govt. wants Several Million Pounds

Chris Bryant MP is approaching DfT on behalf of
Welsh Govt. for Funds

RCT Council are working on a Heritage Lottery Fund application

The Rhondda Tunnel has 526 alcoves

The middle is dry and mild all year

It offers a huge exhibition space

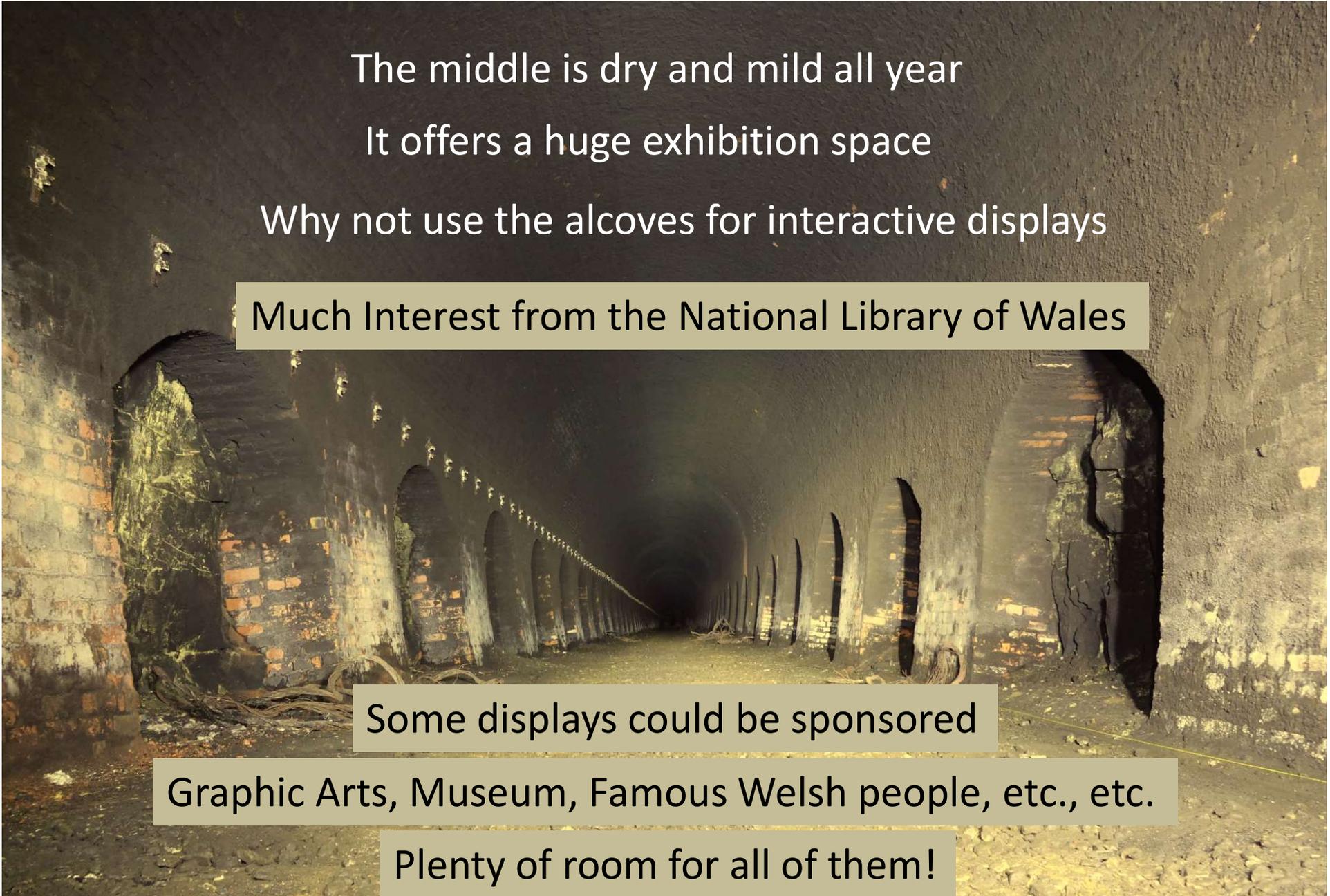
Why not use the alcoves for interactive displays

Much Interest from the National Library of Wales

Some displays could be sponsored

Graphic Arts, Museum, Famous Welsh people, etc., etc.

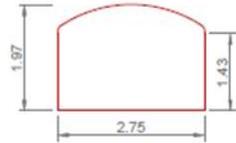
Plenty of room for all of them!



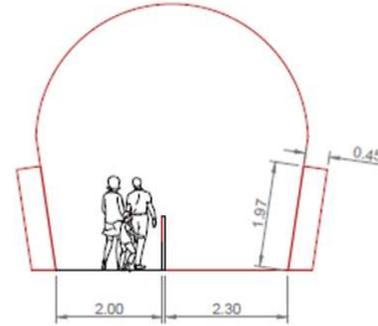


Sound and Light Displays in Bare Wall Sections

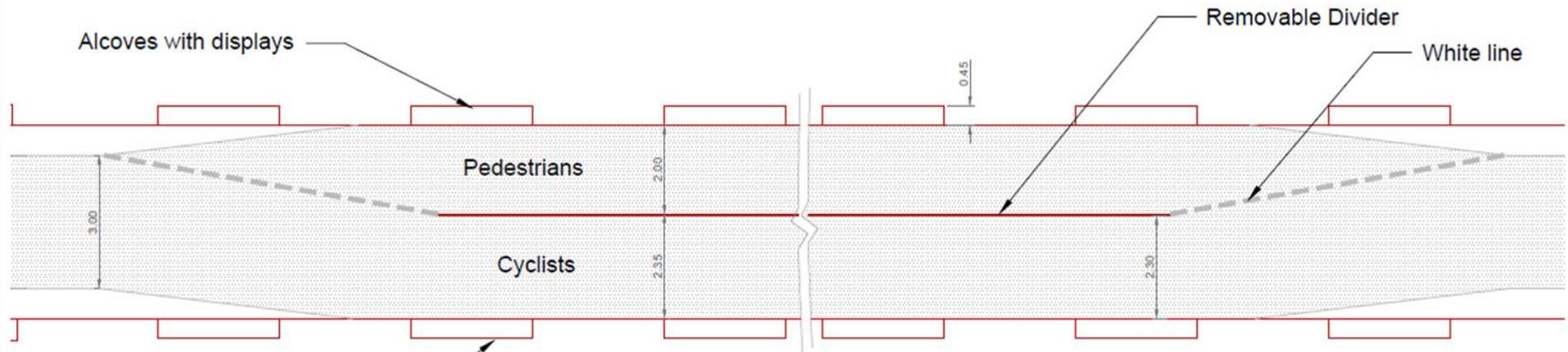
Again, plenty of tunnel!



Alcove Elevation



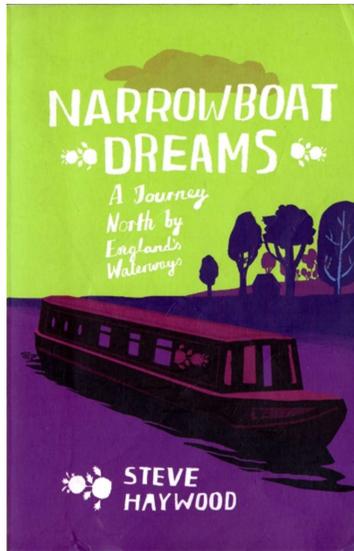
Tunnel Cross Section



Plan

Normal Cycle Path width of 3m
widened to full width of tunnel for
Display Section





Standedge Canal Tunnel

between Manchester & Huddersfield

“Let me tell you a secret about the Standedge tunnel.
One they know but won't even whisper.”

5500yds (3 miles) long; 645ft. above sea level

It takes 3 hours to go through by boat

“...What they won't tell you, the secret they keep to themselves,
is that it's also very boring.”

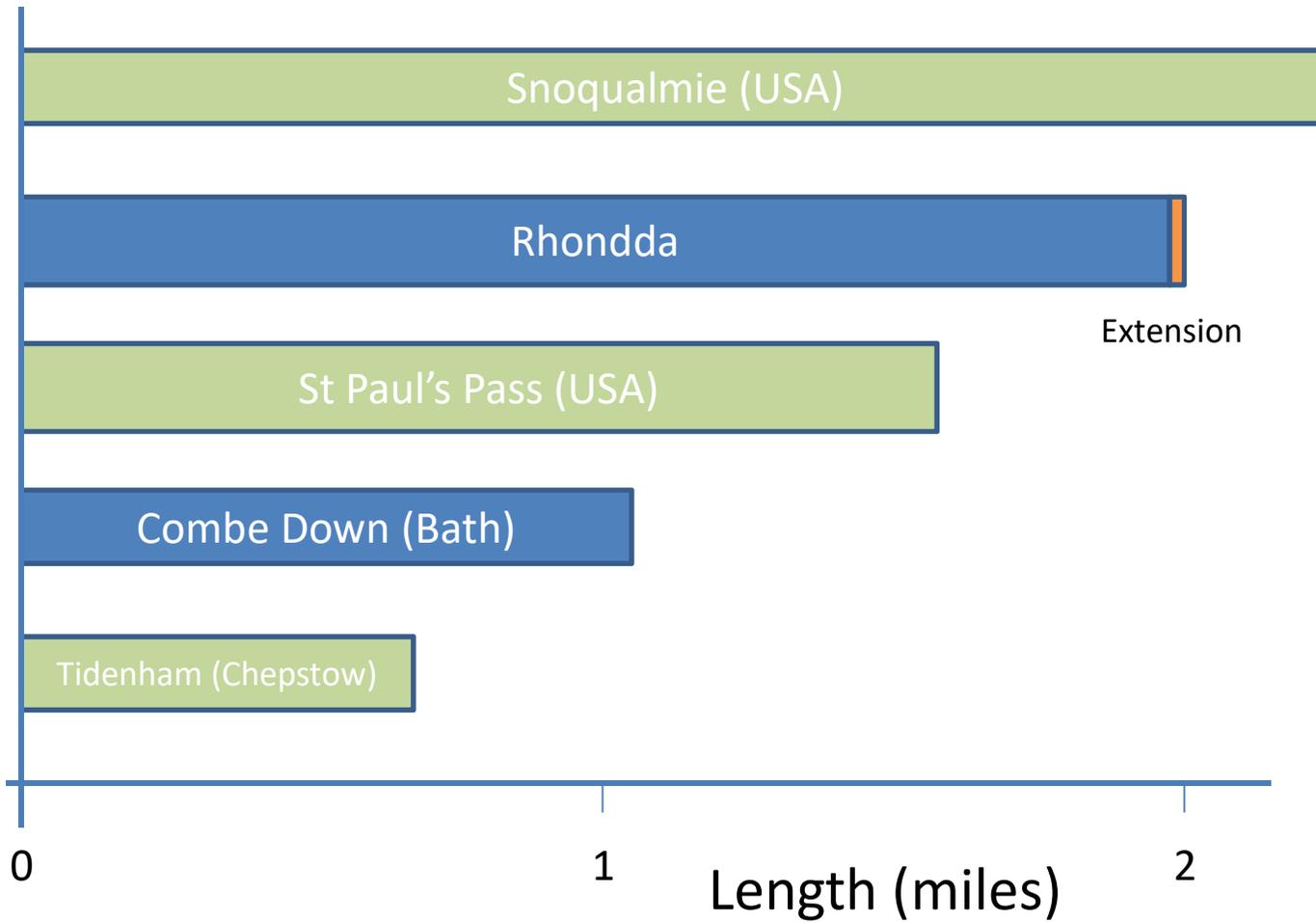
We can't let visitors feel the same about the Rhondda Tunnel



Some Long Cycling & Walking Tunnels



 Tunnels Open All Year with Tarmac Surface and Lighting



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Rhondda - An hour to walk from end to end



Blaengwynfi 1970s

Tunnel is deep



Blaengwynfi today

Deep hole needed to access tunnel and lots of spoil to be moved

At Blaengwynfi



Current Plan is to excavate the Approach Cutting

but

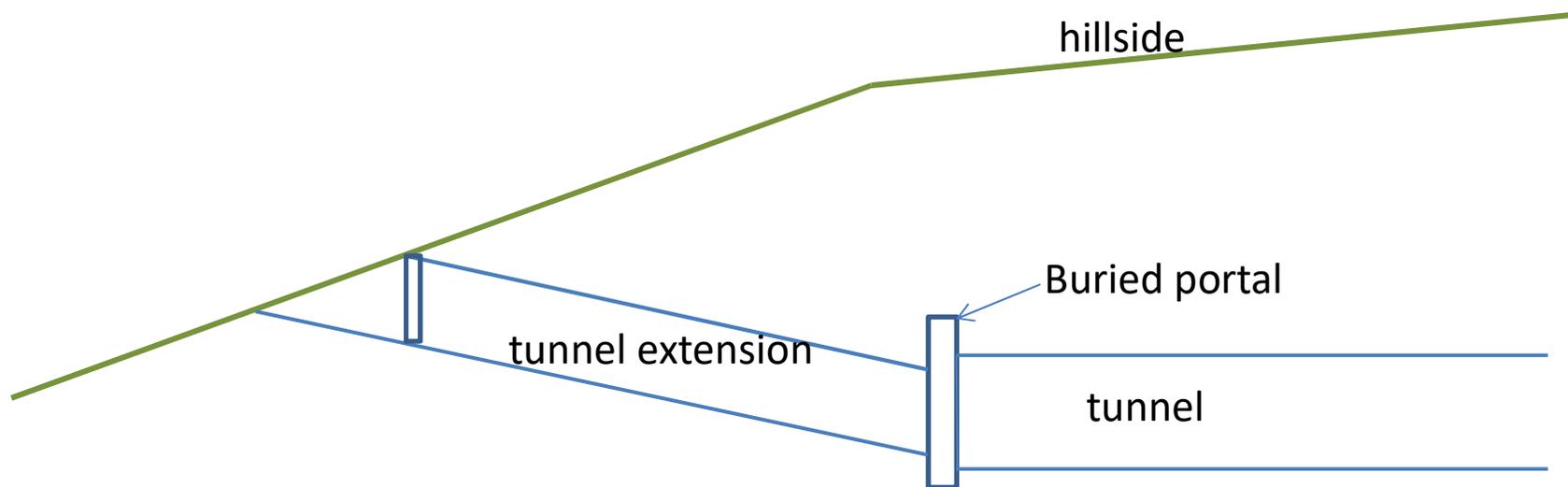
hyperTunnel have approached us with a new tunnelling technology to create an extension to the tunnel



Less disruption & much less spoil

We are also looking at a “Cut & Cover” alternative

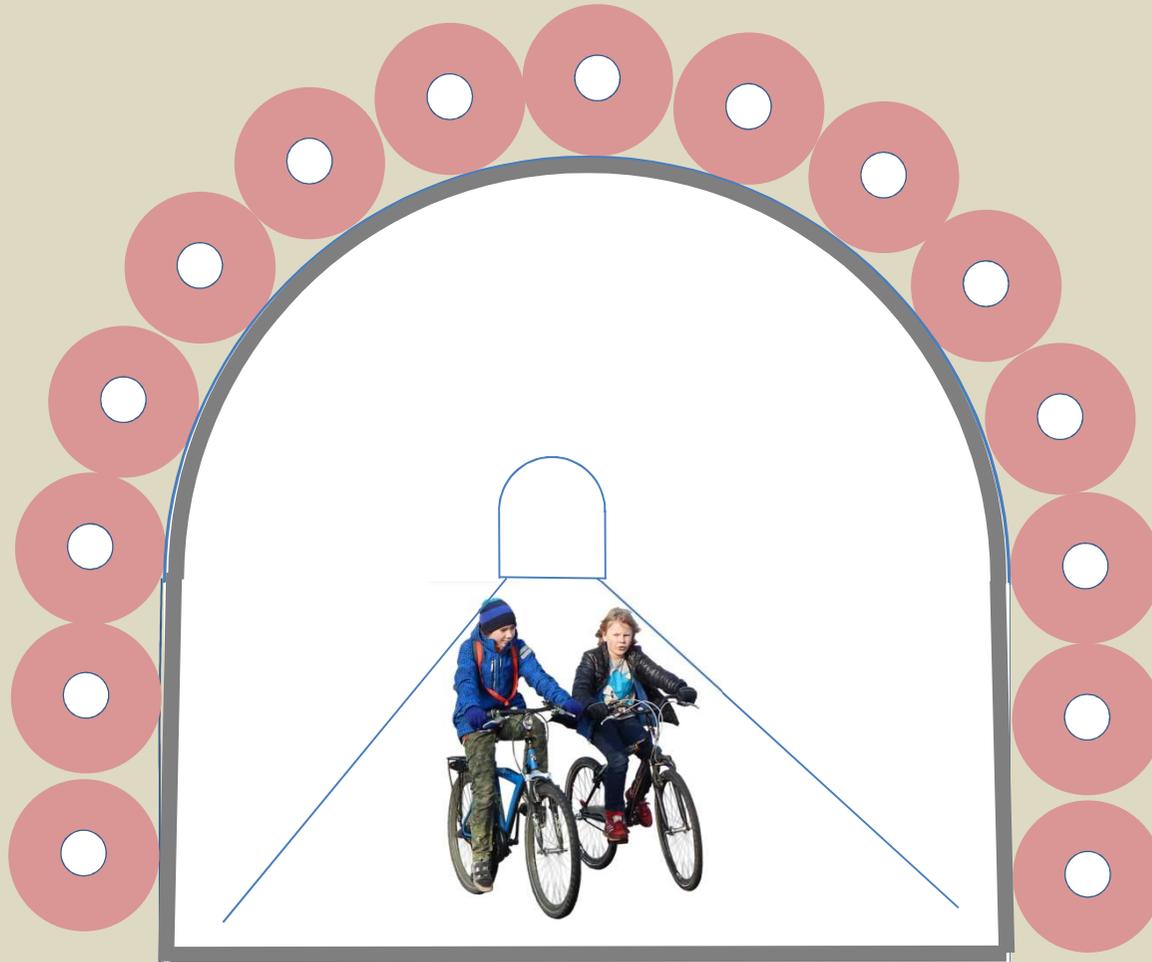
Blaengwynfi



hyperTunnel



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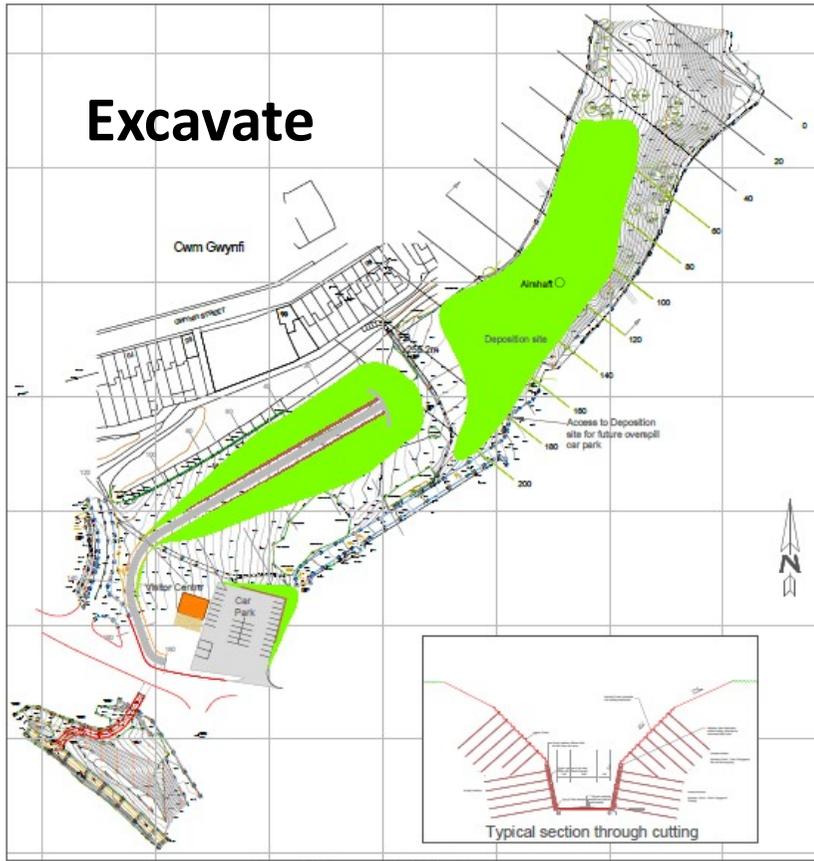


1. Pilot hole(s)
2. Holes outside the planned tunnel wall
3. Inject grout (liquid cement)
4. Dig out centre
5. Spray concrete wall

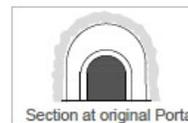
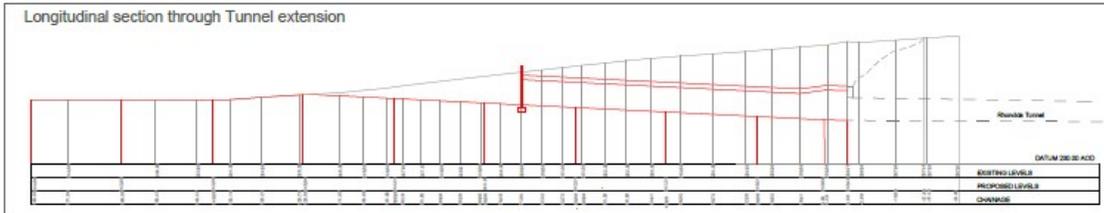


Green – Spoil removed and deposited

Excavate



Extend



| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Rhodda Tunnel | |
| Blaengwynfi Portal | |
| Tunnel Extension Alternative | |
| Date | 26 July 2021 |
| Scale | 1:1000, 1:500, 1:250 @ A1 |
| Drawn by | RLW |
| RTS 4001 | |



NOTES



NPT-owned land

Line of tunnel

NPTCBC ownership



PROPERTY & REGENERATION
 Gareth Nutt B.Sc (Hons), M.Sc., DMS, FRICS
 Corporate Director of Environment
 THE QUAYS, BRUNEL WAY, BAGLAN ENERGY PARK
 NEATH SA11 2GG
www.npt.gov.uk

Project

Drawing Title

Land at Visitor Centre and Car Park
 Rhondda Tunnel Project
 Blaengwynfi

Scale A3 @ 1:1250

Drawing No. 17-0813A
 Rev.

Extension will be entirely in NPT Land – Independent of Westminster or Welsh Govt.



Rhondda Tunnel Society has been campaigning since 2015

Huge political support, but endless reports and delays

We want to see if we can raise the funds for a Blaengwynfi Extension independently of public funding

The air shaft could be opened for abseiling to bring visitors

Create a huge momentum to finish the job!

Tentative offer of some funding already;

Could provide the “Match Funding” essential for most bids

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SCRUTINY
FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

March 2021 – 2022

Regeneration and Sustainable Development Scrutiny Committee (All starting 10am unless otherwise stated)

| Meeting Date | Agenda Item | Contact Officer |
|----------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| 2021 | | |
| 16 th April | Trends in Domestic Abuse | Claire Jones/Elinor Wellington |
| | | |
| 14 th May | Update Report on Active Travel | Ceri Morris |
| | | |
| 5 th June | Please see Cabinet Board FWP for Items | |
| | | |
| 30 th July | Please see Cabinet Board FWP for Items | |
| | | |
| 10 th September | Meeting moved to the following week (17 th September) | |
| | | |
| 17 th September | Update on the Audit Wales NPT Action Plan | Simon Brennan |
| | | |
| 22 nd October | Community Benefits | Simon Brennan / Claire Roach |
| | Rhondda Tunnel Society Presentation (Deferred to 3 rd December) | Mr Tony Moon and Mr Stephen Mackey |

| | | |
|--------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| 3 rd December | Asset Sponsorship – Update on progression | Andrew Griffiths |
| | Rhondda Tunnel Society Presentation | Mr Tony Moon and Mr Stephen Mackey |
| 2022 | | |
| 14 th January | Destination Marketing Campaign – Follow up | Simon Brennan / Karleigh Davies |
| | Burrows Yard Update | Simon Brennan |
| 4 th March | Street Names – Policy and Procedures | Joy Smith / Ross Williams |
| | Update on Regeneration Projects | Simon Brennan |
| | Update on European Funding, Levelling Up Fund and Shared Prosperity Fund | Simon Brennan |
| 8 th April | Items to be confirmed | |
| | | |

To be confirmed:

- Update on the Rail Centre Development
- Land Asset Management

Additional:

- Invite S&E Scrutiny Members to 4th March meeting

