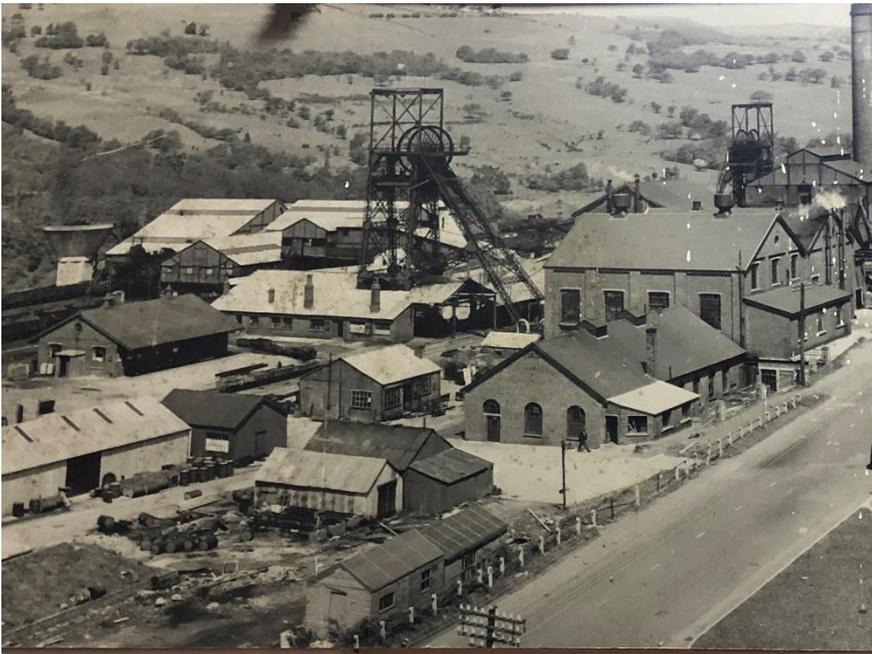


2022

# The Cefn Coed Colliery Museum : Options for the Future



Chris Delaney & Associates

# Summary of Recommendations

Chris Delaney and Associates were appointed by Neath & Port Talbot Council to produce an independent review and options study for the future of the museum at the former Cefn Coed Colliery.

## Key Recommendations

The primary recommendations coming out of the study are:

We recommend that the authority:

- Retain the Cefn Coed Museum complex and carry out an extensive maintenance programme to meet the requirements of the lease and to prevent any further deterioration of the buildings on the site.
- Commission a development and interpretative plan to start the process of taking the museum forward into a new era, that compliments, enhances and expands the present institution, so it can provide the facilities and programmes that the public and schools now expect from a museum. The plan will underpin the Heritage Strategy being developed for the authority.
- The interpretative plan needs to include more than the history of coal in the county. It should also look at other historic industries once active in the area. It should also examine the environmental and social impact of these industries. The plan needs to relate the story of coal to current issues including climate crisis, energy costs and the role of renewable sustainable energy. The plan will support learners to make progress, which is a fundamental driver for the new curriculum in Wales.
- The Heritage Strategy should extend beyond the historic environment and include all aspects of heritage, particularly museums and collections.
- The museum should remain closed for the foreseeable future and the collections should be professionally removed in the short term and stored pending the interpretative plan and then its implementation and development.
- The authority should invest in the service, providing more revenue resources, so that it can move towards an Accreditive service capable of attracting additional capital resources.
- The authority should discuss the lease, redefining the leased area to include at least access to the headframes, grant aid towards repairs to the historic fabric of the listed structures and the long-term management of the area with Cadw.
- The model railway would be incompatible with the new proposals and should not form part of the Interpretative Plan or be incorporated into any of the

existing buildings. The authority should make alternative provision for it on the site.

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# 1. Introduction

## The Brief

1. Chris Delaney and Associates, the consultancy appointed to lead this study, is based in west Wales and focuses on the museum and heritage sector. This project has been undertaken by Chris Delaney himself and he has not engaged any associates to assist him. He has undertaken similar feasibility and options appraisal studies for several authorities in Wales as well as Welsh Government. These projects involved consultation with a wide range of public, private and third sector providers and users of museum and heritage services in Wales. He has significant strategic and operational management experience of the museum and heritage sector in a local authority context. The report considers the following:

- The production of an updated SWOT analysis for the museum
- A consideration of the scale of the costs required for essential repairs to enable the museum to safely reopen to the public and consider long term maintenance of the site.
- A consideration of possible alternative uses for the buildings together with their management and long-term ownership.
- A review of existing council reports / visitor information relating to Cefn Coed supplied by officers.
- An examination of the role and contribution of Cefn Coed colliery museum as a heritage site and tourist destination in Wales and more specifically NPTC.
- A review of current and future regeneration opportunities for Cefn Coed Colliery Museum.
- An outline of alternative sources of income via grants and external funding opportunities available to develop and improve the site.
- A requirement to consult with all interested stakeholders, including Welsh Government (site owners), CADW, local communities on options for operating and developing the site.
- A consideration of a business plan assessing the potential levels of visitors and engagement, together with income generating opportunities to limit any increase to the subsidy from NPT.
- An assessment of potential opportunities for volunteers / groups on site to assist with the operation of the museum café, shop and support external events.

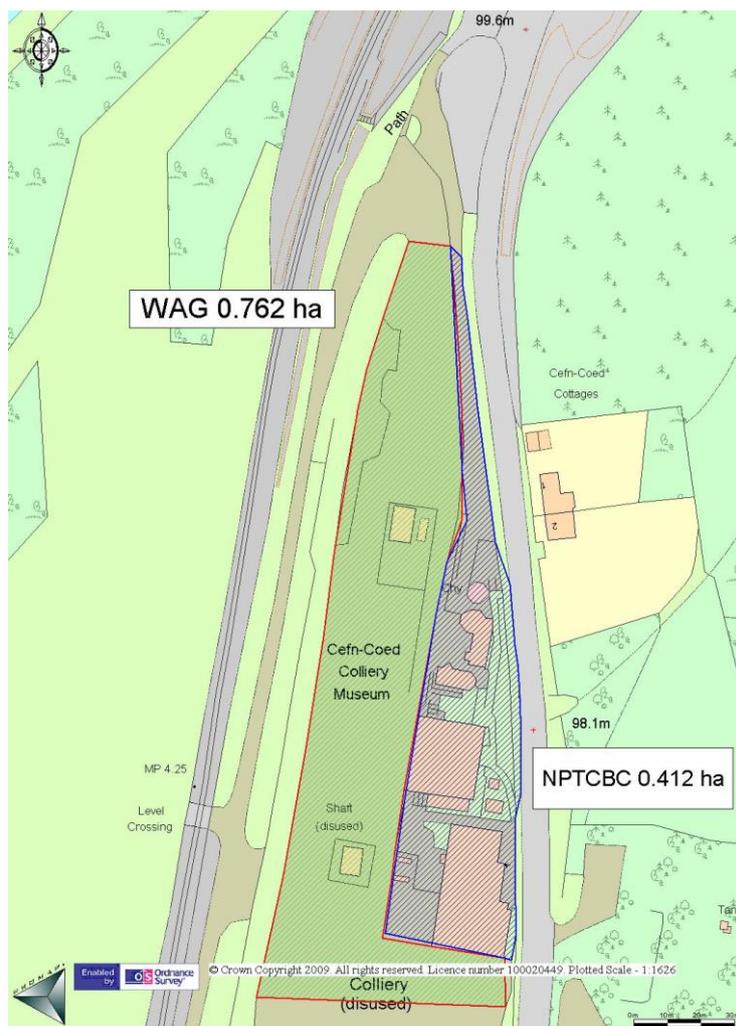
## Background



2. The museum is located near the village of Crynant in the Dulais Valley and sits within the county of Neath Port Talbot. It tells the history of mining at the former Cefn Coed Colliery, which is shown in the above photograph in around 1955. The museum has seen a substantial reduction in budget, opening times, staffing levels, coupled with a lack of investment in maintenance which has impacted on visitor figures. It has not re-opened since Covid lock down, March 2020, due to health and safety issues and other concerns
3. Cefn Coed Colliery was started by the Amalgamated Anthracite Company in 1926 and by the time coal was first raised in 1930, it was the deepest anthracite coal mine in the world. The mine ceased production in 1968. The museum now incorporates the remaining mine buildings including two head frames, the boiler house with the largest collection of steam boilers in the UK and the compressor house with the largest winding engine in Wales.

4. The museum is the surviving part of a once larger service and has lost staff and exhibition spaces and its archaeology and local history collections are in a storage facility. The service has in addition, lost its museum Accreditation status due to these austerity measures.
5. While there remains a desire by Neath Port Talbot Council to secure the future of the site and its historical features the current financial situation makes this difficult and in addition the capital requirement needed to develop the museum and create a new and innovative provision and visitor attraction is difficult to access.
6. All of the site is owned by Welsh Government. NPTC only lease an area including some of the buildings, although Cadw does give permission for the museum to use the wider area for the annual events. West Glamorgan County Council took the original 99-year lease dated from July 1<sup>st</sup>1978, which transferred to NPTC on local government reorganisation in 1996.
7. The lease for the site between NPTC and Welsh Government (Cadw) is a repairing lease and an investment of almost one million pound (December 2020 maintenance reports) would be required to bring the property into a state fit enough to allow the authority to surrender the lease, if it so desired. It could then extricate itself from the site. This may be negotiable and financially might reduce slightly. However, NPTC has been and is responsible for maintenance and repairs on the site of the leased buildings. Post Covid building costs are rising alarmingly.
8. There have been a series of reports looking at developing the site and more recently examining the safety and maintenance needs of the buildings. The earliest Options report was commissioned in 2009 from Knight Frank property consultants. A very ambitious scheme, a Masterplan, was developed in 2019. Grants of over £2.7 million were secured, but surveys indicated that the scheme needed up to £7 million for the project to be fully realised. No further funding was available, so the project was cancelled. The building review concluded that in general the majority of the structural elements assessed during the initial site visit appeared to be in a neglected, but structurally sound condition, with only a few areas showing some evidence of potential damage caused by the age of the structure and exposure to the external/ underground, damp environment.

9. The engineers recommended the most appropriate maintenance regime to prolong the life span of the structure. They also concluded that some areas were unsafe for both structural and asbestos reasons. They advised the council to consult a temporary works specialist to obtain their recommendations on how the area should be made safe and accessible ahead of any further survey or making good works. This has meant that post Covid the museum has not re-opened.
10. In addition to the building surveys undertaken in 2020, architects looked at the feasibility of converting the existing engine house into a new visitor centre. Welsh Government (Cadw) has currently invested circa £1,500,000 at the site through the restoration of the two Grade 2\* Listed pit head frames which will safeguard the future of these iconic structures.



11. Consultation with local members and the representative of the Friends has indicated strong support for investment in the museum and buildings. However, they recognise that the site's location within the authority is an issue and that there are other heritage sites in the authority that need further investment. Several voluntary groups are involved in the museum and their role needs to be reviewed.
12. We are grateful for the support and discussions with officers of the authority and Cadw who provided background information regarding the site.

## 2. Heritage Significance

### The Heritage Buildings and Structure

13. Cefn Coed Colliery is a significant survival from the coal industry in Wales and is worthy of preservation. The authority has a responsibility to ensure that the listed buildings in its care are well maintained and continue to survive. The buildings need urgent maintenance so that they do not fall into a downward spiral of decay. The significance of the site and structures is recognised by Welsh Government (Cadw) and they are protected by the legal status of Listing and most of the structures are at a significant grading level, Grade II\*. Cefn Coed Colliery was sunk in 1926-7 and at that time was the deepest anthracite mine in the world with two shafts over 732m deep. The colliery began production of high-quality anthracite in 1930, employed over 900 men in 1945 and closed in 1968. The site remained in use in association with the Blaenant Drift Mine in the valley floor to the south, which was driven in the 1960s and closed in 1990. The Cefn Coed Colliery Museum was established in 1978. Cefn Coed is recognised as a key site in the area and authority in the developing Heritage Strategy.
14. The remains include the only surviving pre-war head frames in the anthracite coal field, and one of only two sets of the once widespread lattice girder construction left anywhere in South Wales. The wording of the Cadw Listing confirms that they have important group value in relation to the adjacent preserved buildings of the Cefn Coed Colliery Museum, "forming principal landmarks of this site as a whole". As well as the headframes which are adjacent but not part of NPTC leased area, the site has within its curtilage several important monuments including the colliery's chimney, its original steam boiler house and the engine house. That range includes the compressor house, the electrical generating house and the winding house of No 2 shaft with the original steam winding engines. The associated steam capstan engine, said to be the only surviving example made in Wales, was used for the original construction of the shaft and was maintained for emergency use.
15. Even though the two lattice girder headframes for shafts 1 and 2 are not part of the museum leased area, they are a key part of the original colliery, supported and valued by Welsh Government and can be seen and interpreted from the museum buildings. One of the headframes dates to the establishment of the colliery in 1926-7 and constructed of steel lattice girders with four vertical supports and two bracing buttresses extending from the head of the tower to the ground on the winding engine side. Each support has a brick plinth at ground level. The lattice girders are joined by rivetted plates. Both structures are some 18m high, with winding sheaves still in place at

their tops, and form considerable landmarks in the valley. No 1 headframe is the more northerly of the two, and tops the upcast shaft, which was connected underground to the nearby fan house. The interior of the tower is boxed in with steel plates to control ventilation and cause air to be drawn in down No 2 shaft.

16. Several original buildings have been demolished and lost, but the key significant elements do survive and are listed both for their original use and importance, but also their group value. The chimney was built probably in the late 1940s, to replace a metal chimney in the same position and of similar height and proportion. The colliery chimney is of red brick, mainly circular in form, slightly tapering with a convex cornice some 2-3m below the top. The base is hipped to form a wider octagonal ground plan. There is a blocked doorway on the north side with a semi-circular arch of brick voussoirs and at the rear a large iron door and control machinery. Connected to the base of the chimney at the rear is a large brick flue running N and rising from the boiler house. The chimney and flue served the six Lancashire boilers in the adjacent buildings which provided steam to run the winding engines. The chimney is listed for group value with this exceptionally complete colliery complex, rarity as a surviving colliery chimney and flue, and value as a local landmark.
17. The engine house is a range of 3 gabled buildings adjacent to the main road. The steam capstan engine situated immediately adjacent to the west side of the central building. The range is in a contiguous group: the compressor house at north end, the winding engine house in the centre, and the electrical house at the south. Each building has a gabled slate roof and is constructed in red brick. All have metal multi-pane windows with arched heads formed by concrete lintels. The windows are set into tall, recessed panels with flat heads of stepped brickwork. The winding engine house is the middle of the range faces the No 2 headframe. The south most building, the electrical house, is the largest and is slightly later, having the blocked-up windows of the winding engine house in its north wall, but conforming with the others in architectural detailing. The associated steam capstan engine, of horizontal single cylinder capstan type was made by Llewellyn and Cubitt of Ton Pentre, Rhondda, in the 1920s. It is situated immediately beyond the west gable of the winding engine house. This range is listed at grade II\* for its exceptional completeness as a group of central colliery buildings of the 1920s, and especially for the rare survival in place of a compressor and two original winding engines. Of these the steam capstan engine is a rare example of its type and may be the only survivor made in Wales.
18. The compressor house originally contained 2 compressors, supplying compressed air to power tools underground. One survives, a Bellis and Morcom compressor made in 1946. The winding engine house contains a

large horizontal twin cylinder winding engine built in 1927 by the Worsley Mesnes Ironworks of Wigan, one of the leading makers of winding engines. The cylinders are disposed either side of the winding drum and have a bore of over 80cm and a stroke of over 1.5m. The drum is some 3m wide and nearly 5m in diameter. The engine house is floored with brick pavers in herring bone patterns. The electrical building housed electricity generating equipment, the beds of which can be seen, but the interior has been cleared. A 2.4m high gallery survives along the S wall, supported by iron columns

19. The row of six Lancashire boilers, survives in excellent condition from their installation in 1926/7. The earliest of the boilers was re-used from another site and dates to 1910. Four of the six were converted in 1958 to run on methane gas brought from the mine workings rather than coal. They are of wrought iron, set in a brick plinth, and stood in the open air in this form. A modern structure now covers and protects them. They are listed at grade II\* as the sole remaining set of colliery steam boilers in Wales, and for group value with this exceptionally complete colliery complex.
20. The pump house contained steam-operated pumps to supply water to the boilers. It is a single-storey building, sunk into the ground, gabled at front and back and with five metal-framed windows down its S side. The gable ends each have double doors and a circular opening in the gable itself. It is constructed of brick with concrete lintels, like the other original colliery buildings on the site, It has an asbestos roof. Two small steam-driven pumps made by Weir survive inside the building. These were installed in c.1930.
21. The national and possible international significance of the complex is recognised by experts. Cefn Coed is a site of national significance and is part of an important Welsh industry that had a key role in the development of Wales and the industrialisation of much of the world. The complex is a rare survivor, that is exceptionally complete and has a listing status which recognises its value and significance to Welsh heritage and culture. It is in the care of the authority and the council has a responsibility and legal duty to look after it and make sure it survives for the benefit of future generations.
22. Welsh Government through Cadw have recently invested £1.5 million in the careful repair and restoration of the two listed II\* headframes. The restoration is of the highest standard and is indicative of the value that Welsh Government places on the site. The restoration reflects the government's concern for the historic environment and its role in cultural tourism and wellbeing. The contract for the restoration was committed prior to Covid and at a time when NPTC had been awarded a £2.7 million grant towards the Masterplan for the site as a significant visitor attraction. Cadw prioritised its budget to the restoration of the headframes as a contribution towards the

significant investment in the whole site by NPTC and others. Unfortunately, this has not materialised. Cadw have no proposals to interpret the headframes, as they see them as part of the museum to be interpreted with the museum. They were very positive about extending the period of the lease and would consider leasing more of the site for heritage and amenity use.

23. Cefn Coed is one of a small group, from the hundreds of collieries in Wales, that survive as distinct monuments to the industry and are accessible today as museums. In all there are four museums in this group including Cefn Coed, Big Pit, Blaenavon, Monmouthshire, Rhondda Heritage Park, Trehafod, Rhondda Cynon, Taf and Bersham Colliery, Wrexham. Together they make a very important heritage group. Only at Big Pit can you go underground via the shaft, Cefn Coed offers a significant number of surviving structures and Rhondda has structures and a simulated underground experience. Big Pit is part of the National Museum of Wales, Cefn Coed and Rhondda are managed by local authorities and while Bersham is owned by Wrexham County Borough Council it is managed by a trust, which opens the museum on special open days. Except for Cefn Coed the rest have developed with financial assistance from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
24. The three coal museums in south Wales are all located on the sites of former collieries, and all are of heritage significance. They all offer a different experience and have a key role as they are in different communities and provide for those communities, even though they are within an hour's drive of each other. While they all have a role in national tourism, Big Pit is a national museum with an underground experience, located in a World Heritage Site, has received substantial capital funding and is relatively well revenue resourced. It is a key national heritage attraction with around 150,000 visitors each year. Both Rhondda Heritage Park and Cefn Coed are local facilities attracting local and regional visitors. Rhondda Heritage Park attracts around 40,000 visitors each year. Their significance relates to identity and pride of place in community and heritage and hence well-being. As a local facility they have a key role to play in the implementation of the new curriculum in Wales. While they do serve national audiences their focus is local audiences, and their interpretation should reflect their local role offering something different within the main story line of coal. Cefn Coed prior to closure was attracting around 10,000 visitors per annum. The difference in visitor numbers between the two relate to not only location and population size. To attract around 40,000 visitors per year and give them a meaningful service Rhondda employs appropriate staffing numbers and invests resources in the site.
25. Several other museums in Wales have developed coal mining collections and some have large scale equipment. Kidwelly Industrial Museum has the

Morlais Colliery, Llangennech headframe and winding engine, while the South Wales Miners Museum, an independent trust museum displays a relocated winding engine. However, they hold other collections and are not located on a former colliery site.

## The Museum and Collections

26. The Accredited museum service, formally operated by NPTC, has been profoundly affected by the austerity measures that have been applied to local government over a sustained period. Budgets have been reduced and staffing levels have shrunk. One museum has permanently closed, opening hours have been reduced for the other. The latter, Cefn Coed, now remains closed post-Covid due to H&S issues stemming from a lack of building maintenance. The service has lost its Accreditation status and is struggling to meet public expectations for a modern museum service. There are currently two staff members, a Heritage Education Officer in the library and a Building Manager based in Cefn Coed. The Heritage Education Office also looks after important archaeological and community history collections which are in storage and as there is no museum display facility, these key collections are not available to the public. The important coal collections are at Cefn Coed, but no longer accessible as the museum is closed.
27. It is useful for this report to identify and distinguish two collections. These are the coal industry collection and the archaeology and social history collection. Both are significant and should be on display to the community. The interpretive Plan recommended should also consider whether the archaeology and community history collections should be accommodated in the Cefn Coed Museum. This would place these important collections on display to their community and broaden the scope of the museum, providing more opportunity for a variety of learning experiences for schools and visitors as well as broadening the visitor base.
28. Accreditation is a recognised UK wide standards system for museums. It is managed in Wales by the museum team in the Culture Division of Welsh Government. There are approximately 106 Accredited or working towards Accreditation museums in Wales of around 120 who meet the core criteria and definition of a museum. Accreditation brings a service not only status and recognition that it meets national standards but also gives access to additional funding streams and resources for museums. The current definition of a museum is “A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ICOM Conference August 2022

29. Eighteen local authorities in Wales operate Accredited museum services, three do not operate or support museums, and one NPTC manages an unaccredited service. The authority needs to develop its museum into an Accredited service.
30. At the present time Cefn Coed cannot re-open. Even if it was possible to open safely, without any maintenance and upgrading and investment in displays and interpretation, the museum is not in a fit state to open to the public. The 2009 the Knight Frank report commented; "It is clear from the site that there is a potential lack of funding given that there are a number of repairs and marketing initiatives which need to be carried out." At the time the operational budget for Cefn Coed was £80,000. It is now £60,000. In the thirteen years since the report the budget and its purchasing power has declined by 25%, and the buildings have gone into a downward spiral of decay. The same is true of the displays which are no longer fit for purpose. The galleries and displays are old, dirty, cluttered, and show material that is irrelevant to the community's heritage. They could be seen as an embarrassment to the authority and should not be re-opened until there has been a major investment in buildings and interpretation. If more people were aware of the situation, the reputational damage that could be inflicted on the authority is considerable.
31. If the authority follows this course of action and closes the site while plans are developed and finance is secured, there needs to be an interim plan for temporarily displaying and interpreting the collection, so that it can move towards Accreditation, meet the learning needs of schools and provide access to the community's heritage. This could be achieved by utilising space in an existing building off site for exhibitions and learning opportunities.
32. The operational budget for the museum service is currently around £100,000. While several councils do not operate any heritage services, for those that do, this is the lowest revenue spend by a county authority in Wales, operating museums. Ceredigion with a population of around 50% of that of NPTC spends £214,000 and Merthyr £234,430. Swansea City Council through Swansea Museum and the Glynn Vivian spend £1,108,499 on museum services. These figures are taken from the 2020 Spotlight on Museums data report and Welsh Government population statistics. On average local authorities in Wales spend around £221,000 on each museum they operate.
33. Spotlight 2020 records that Rhondda Heritage Park was awarded the Sandford Award by the Heritage Education Trust in recognition of their outstanding education programme. The judges said "The activities, interpretation, and facilities at Rhondda Heritage Park: A Welsh Coal Mining Experience are of a very high quality. The learning team provides an

outstanding learning experience that delivers both an in depth understanding of the science and history of the coal industry of the Rhondda Valley and a deeply moving insight into life underground and the wider social and political issues that affected the community. The learning programme also has the capacity to reinforce local children's sense of their roles as global citizens and their community's important contribution to the world."

34. Museums are services that not only contribute to the preservation of heritage, particularly portable heritage, but also to learning, economic growth, tourism, citizenship, the Welsh Language, community identity, a sense of place but also wellbeing and the goals of the programme for government. For a very small annual investment the returns for the community are substantial. In its present state Cefn Coed does not contribute to any of these goals.

## The Policy and Strategic Framework for Museums and Heritage

35. It is important to understand the legislative, strategic and policy framework that museum and heritage services operate within. This framework enables authorities to provide and run services, meet organisational and government goals, and set targets and standards of delivery. Within the authority's Local Development Plan 2011-2026 is the Historic Environment Supplementary Planning Guidance 2019, which gives an overview of the historic environment of Neath Port Talbot Council and outlines the planning policy protections that are in place to safeguard and conserve the historic assets of the County Borough. Statutory protection has been afforded to the most significant buildings and Structures such as Cefn Coed for many years through the scheduling of important ancient monuments and the listing of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. In addition, specific areas or neighbourhoods are designated as Conservation Areas, and Registers of Historic Parks and Gardens and Historic Landscapes have been compiled.
36. Recently the Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution, introduced the [Historic Environment \(Wales\) Bill](#) into the Senedd Cymru. This Bill — part of the Welsh Government's programme to improve the accessibility of Welsh law — reorders and restates Wales' historic environment law, so that it is contained in a single piece of legislation, is expressed in modern and understandable language and is fully bilingual. The current legislation protecting Cefn Coed will be enshrined in the Act.
37. 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. This allows buildings or structures that have architectural, historic, or local community significance (but have not met the criteria for formal listing or scheduling) to be identified and included on a local list for protection under local planning policy. The LDP supplementary guidance on the historic environment is there to protect the very buildings, listed at Cefn Coed, that the authority is failing to maintain.
38. The LDP is a planning document but, is the only strategic document that refers to the authority's heritage. It deals with protection but does not discuss the value of heritage in terms of current national strategies and policies such as wellbeing, a sense and pride of place, identity and diversity. This option appraisal should have been undertaken within the parameters of a heritage strategy for the authority. Within that strategy there should be a strategy for museums and portable heritage. Unfortunately, it does not exist. However, the new Corporate Plan includes and recognises that a review of leisure,

tourism, heritage, and culture is a priority for NPTC. Consultants have been appointed to develop a new culture and heritage Strategy for NPTC. This references a heritage strategy which is supported with funding from the NLHF.

39. The Heritage Strategy referred to is being developed through the Environment Directorate who obtained the funding for a Heritage Strategy Officer and Community Heritage Officer as part of a wider project. It is envisaged that the Heritage Strategy will 'ensure the protection and sustainability of our built heritage, culture and historic environment for future generation [...] identify and categorise the buildings, monuments, landscapes, archaeological remains/physical features, their importance and value, and what can be done to protect them. [and] focus on the future enhancement of our historic and cultural heritage features in the County Borough'. While Cefn Coed Colliery falls into this strategy as part of the historic environment and is protected as a listed building, there is no reference to historic collections, artefacts, museum collections. The approach is not holistic and is concerned with the historic environment, not portable and intangible heritage. The authority should ensure that the Heritage Strategy extends beyond the historic environment and includes all aspects of heritage, particularly museums and collections.
40. The authority needs financial assistance to maintain and develop its museum buildings, collections and services, but it needs to demonstrate to funders that it cares about museums and heritage. It needs to do this not only by having strategies and policies in place but by implementing those policies. If it wants to run a museum service, it should do it properly through investment and best practice. The authority should build a museum service that commits to meeting the Accreditation standards. By starting an investment programme with its own resources, it will be able to draw down funds from other sources and forge partnerships with other heritage providers.
41. As a priority NPTC should start working towards Accreditation, through investment in staff and building maintenance, and policy development to provide a framework for future planning. It should discuss this with the Museums Team in the Culture Division at Welsh Government and make the first steps to becoming an Accredited museum again.
42. A museum strategy would include discussion about the scale and nature of the service, relevant to population size and distribution, geographical area and infrastructure. If the authority was to invest over a million pound in Cefn Coed to meet the authority's obligations in terms of listed building legislation and its lease, then the site would be appropriate for an industrial museum focusing on coal extraction. The authority would then need to decide whether

to base its museum service on the Cefn Coed site to display both its industrial heritage and the rest of its heritage collections. NPTC has a Roman and significant medieval heritage where should this be displayed – at Cefn Coed?

43. Currently both NPTC and Cadw, who own the whole site, are apparently working independently on the same site. The authority needs to develop with Cadw a strategy for the whole site, but within an overarching holistic Heritage Strategy for the whole authority.
44. We would recommend that for NPTC the priority is to start a maintenance programme to stop any further deterioration of the Cefn Coed buildings but does not start to develop any new museum facilities until there is a vision for heritage and museums across the whole authority.
45. In addition to the Historic Environment Bill, Welsh Government has provided a framework of legislation and policy that museums and heritage sit within. Authorities should demonstrate through their service provision their contribution to these policy outcomes. The Well-being of Future Generations Act gives authorities the ambition, permission and legal obligation to improve social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being. The Act requires public bodies in Wales to work better with people, communities, and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals and the listed public bodies must work to achieve all the goals, not just one or two. They are: a Prosperous Wales, a Resilient Wales, a More Equal Wales, a Healthier Wales, a Wales of Cohesive Communities, a Wales of Vibrant Culture & Thriving Welsh Language, a Globally Responsible Wales. A modern museum service can help authorities meet several of these goals.
46. The Welsh Government's "Programme for Government" includes specific references to museums as well as more generic statements that would include museums and heritage. The specific goals include; engage with the arts, culture and heritage sectors to develop a new culture strategy, invest in our theatres and museums, including establishing the Football Museum and the National Contemporary Art Gallery.
47. This year Welsh Government is rolling out a new Curriculum for Wales to primary and secondary schools, focused on skills development and sophistication of understanding, creativity and a sense of belonging, rather than covering an ever-growing body of content. The museum education charity GEM has been funded to provide training and support to Welsh museums to create useful learning opportunities within the new structure. The curriculum is built around four purposes, creating: ambitious, capable young people able to learn throughout their lives; enterprising, creative contributors at work; ethical, informed citizens and healthy, confident

individuals. NPTC needs a museum service that can support the introduction of the new curriculum.

### 3. Exploring the Brief

#### SWOT

48. The 2009 Knight Frank report outlined<sup>2</sup> the options for the museum site and these have not changed significantly since then, other than there are now safety issues and the building and displays have deteriorated further. Currently the museum is not fit for purpose and the temporary closure will remain permanent until something is done. It cannot be re-opened in its present state. The 2019 Cefn Coed Masterplan<sup>3</sup> stated: “Maintenance of the listed and other structures is an ongoing issue and cost. Some of the spaces e.g. the toilets and tearoom, appear dated and in need of refurbishment. Apart from the Underground Gallery, the interpretation on offer, particularly information boards, is dated and does not meet the changing expectations of visitors. Signage is poor and doesn’t provide a clear orientation of the site. There is a need for significant investment to create an engaging experience,”.
49. Essentially both reports identified two main options for the site, which we agree with, but will add a third Option. Option A utilises the whole former colliery site including the museum buildings for non-heritage use, Option B used the site as a heritage facility, but with several sub options ranging from minimal investment and use through to injecting a large investment to create a major visitor destination and attraction. Option C would negotiate a favourable surrender of the lease and then remove the collections into store and let Cadw decide on the future of the site.
50. Both reports looked at utilising the rest of the area owned by Welsh Government for housing, retail, and commercial development. This is Option A and includes possibly developing the listed buildings for non-heritage use. However not only are the buildings listed, but their internal structures are also listed. These are not empty structures that might easily convert to residential or office accommodation or even light industrial use. They do not have any non-heritage potential use. In the group of colliery buildings there are several small units which are used as toilets, café, shop or stores to support the museum facility, but are not substantial and are ancillary to the main buildings not stand-alone independent structures. There was consideration of the financial contribution these developments could possibly make to the capital and revenue operations of a developed museum on the site. This of course would require a completely new lease and private/public investment and is not considered in this option appraisal. Any changes to the lease for museum purposes would relate to Option B, the inclusion of the

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<sup>2</sup> Future Use Options Report, Cefn Coed Museum for Neath Port Talbot CBC, March 2009

<sup>3</sup> Cefn Coed Masterplan, Enhancing the Visitor Experience 2019, Planning Solutions Consulting Limited

headframes in the interpretation and a review of landscaping and parking to improve the immediate museum environment and access.

**47. Option A. Alternative Commercial use of the Site and Buildings.**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iconic restored headgear and chimney stack which are landmark features helping to create a WOW factor</li> <li>• Established heritage attraction on known site</li> <li>• Accessible to M4 and A465 Heads of the Valleys</li> <li>• Council and community support for investment</li> <li>• Relatively large areas of land are available which could be developed for both museum and other use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listed status of main building would restrict some future uses/ alterations</li> <li>• Would require a new lease with substantial financial implications</li> <li>• Would require substantial investment or a third party to develop the site</li> <li>• The council still has all the historic buildings</li> <li>• In the present circumstances is there a market for new housing or light industry?</li> <li>• The repairing lease requires substantial funding</li> <li>• Additional funding is required for the museum buildings and interpretation</li> <li>• The museum service is not Accredited and is not eligible for lottery and other significant funding</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• partial development of the site could provide income to develop the heritage and museum facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to secure investment and development</li> </ul>

#### 48. Option B Developing a Museum Heritage Facility

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iconic restored headframes and chimney stack, landmark features, create a strong visual presence</li> <li>• Established heritage attraction located in a significant heritage site with high level listed building status</li> <li>• Good track record of hosting large-scale events</li> <li>• Accessible to M4 and A465 Heads of the Valleys</li> <li>• Council and community support for investment</li> <li>• Relatively large areas of land are available which could be developed for both museum and other use</li> <li>• Significant coal collections as well as archaeology and community heritage collections</li> <li>• Other heritage attractions nearby and located in, historic landscape and accessible attractive landscape with the Brecon Beacons National Park close by</li> <li>• The community sees a return on the maintenance spend of £1,000,000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not located in an established tourist destination</li> <li>• Dated visitor experience in poorly maintained buildings in need of substantial investment in buildings and interpretation</li> <li>• Lack of online presence</li> <li>• The repairing lease requires substantial funding</li> <li>• Additional funding is required for the museum buildings and interpretation</li> <li>• The museum service is not Accredited and is not eligible for lottery and other significant funding</li> <li>• Located away from population centres</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant parts of the ‘collection’ held by the Council are in storage (10,000 items) and could now be displayed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unable to secure funding and political support for maintenance and investment in new enhanced offer</li> <li>• Potential lose of key historical elements of time and place</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The museum is eligible for Accreditation, which raises standards and gives access to funding</li> <li>• Allows for a phased development as funding becomes available</li> <li>• Allows for a future vision articulated in the Masterplan, which sees the museum as a destination and gateway to the heritage and natural attractions of the area</li> <li>• Meets the requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the current Programme for Government</li> <li>• Removal of the model railway facility to a new on-site location</li> </ul>	
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**49. Option C Negotiate a Favourable Surrender of the Lease**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removes direct responsibility from the council for the operation of the site</li> <li>• Removes any ongoing revenue implications other than repayments and interest on any borrowing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welsh Government may require full repayment estimated at around £1,000,000</li> <li>• Potential for substantial reputational damage for NPTC</li> <li>• £1,000,000 is a substantial amount of money with nothing to show for the investment</li> <li>• The coal collections will need to go into store and at some stage a new museum site will need to be identified and developed</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new site for the county’s collection in a more central location could be identified</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The listed buildings are restored but not accessible and threatened by neglect and vandalism. There is very negative reaction from the community, pressure groups and the media</li> </ul>

50. If the authority chooses Option C, it needs to start discussions with Cadw regarding the work that needs to be carried out to meet the authority's obligations in terms of both the legislation and the lease. This work needs to be carried out in the short term to secure the building from further decay. If the work is not carried out soon the costs will increase dramatically. At a time when the authority is developing its own Heritage Strategy, this would be unfortunate. The condition reports and costings carried out in December 2020 give an indicative cost of just under £1,000,000 to carry out the necessary work to the structures. Building costs have risen dramatically since 2020 and the final figure will exceed this amount.
51. Once the work has been carried out the authority could surrender their lease to Welsh Government (Cadw) and hand the buildings and surrounding land back. This option of course does not solve the problem. It merely passes it on to another tier of government and the public purse. The site is still of significant heritage value to the community and to the nation. Cadw have already invested nearly £1.5 million in the site restoring the headframes on the basis that the authority was going to carry out a major investment through the creation of a heritage attraction. This action would be a PR disaster and cause NPTC major reputational damage.
52. Option C is not recommended as there are still substantial financial implications which may not actually solve the issue for the authority.
53. The group of listed colliery buildings does not have any alternative use. This was recognised in the 2009 Knight Frank Report, which concluded that the best use for the buildings was as a museum. They also concluded that there was the potential to develop the non- museum parts of the site, but additional land was required for parking, events and interpretation of the headframes. We agree and while the authority may wish to explore a small part of the site for residential or other use, the majority of the site should be for museum and associated attraction use.
54. Option A is not recommended, as there is not any real alternative use for the site.
55. Option B is the recommended option. This involves a phased development of the site. The first action is to professionally remove the museum collections to storage and require the various societies involved to remove all their material off site. This need to be done immediately, so that urgent repairs and maintenance can be undertaken, to prevent any further deterioration of the fabric of the buildings. This will allow time for an integrated set of plans and priorities for the site to be developed. The authority could also engage with

Cadw to examine options for extending the lease and also leasing the whole site. Cadw have already invested £1.5 million in the site so financial assistance may be a possibility. In the short term the buildings might be opened following repair, but this might be on a site only basis with minimal interpretation and no collections on display or ancillary activities, such as a café. The concept would be a phased move towards using the majority of the site as per the Masterplan to create an attraction and destination focused on the museum, but also as a gateway to the surrounding area for recreation, wellbeing and learning. There would be a substantially lower level of investment and the museum and supporting buildings would be improved to form a museum and visitor attraction. Further attractions could be added to the site over time as financial opportunities arose.

## Finances

56. In December 2020 inspections and surveys were carried out to assess the condition of the buildings and the maintenance requirements. Tourism and visitors. Indicative costings were also supplied. The reports are obviously technical and are reported here on a factual not interpretive basis. The main consultants were Faithful and Gould and published their report<sup>4</sup> including other reports as appendices in January 2021. The executive Summary is included below for information.
57. “Faithful+Gould were instructed by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (The Council) to undertake a due diligence exercise to establish the viability of the Museum’s regeneration scheme, taking into account the available funding, and any known and anticipated constraints, risks and liabilities. This is to include any matters associated with the Council’s responsibility for repairs and maintenance on the site, as well as any reimbursement due to the Welsh Assembly Government upon termination of its lease. The due diligence exercise is to include a review of all building and external assets within the Council’s demise associated with the current lease. As part of this review, Faithful+Gould undertook a full condition survey including a planned, preventative maintenance (PPM) schedule of these assets. The purpose of this Condition Survey is to record the current condition of the visible, accessible building fabric for the relevant parts of the premises. The Schedule of Condition may also be attached to the future lease for the premises and is to be used to guide the standard of repair required at the end of the lease. During our inspection an asbestos and structural survey of the site was also undertaken. The asbestos survey was undertaken by

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<sup>4</sup> Cefn Coed Colliery Museum, Condition Survey, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Faithful & Gould, Members of the SNC Lavalin Group 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021

Tetra Tech and the structural survey was undertaken by CB3 Consult Ltd. Independently from the structural survey undertaken by CB3, a visual structural survey of the Engine and Winch House's basement and undercroft was undertaken by Tetra Tech. These reports can be found within the appendices of this report. The buildings on the Council leased site comprise industrial buildings of the former colliery. These are listed as the following:

- Block A – Engine and Winch House
- Block B – Boiler & Pump House
- Block C – Classroom
- Block D – Shops & Toilets
- Block E – Site

Many of the structures which stand on the the Council leased site are Listed Structures and some are graded 2\*. Faithful+Gould undertook a full condition survey which includes a written description, as well as a planned, preventative maintenance (PPM) schedule of the above assets. The survey was carried out on Wednesday 9th and Thursday 10th December by Gary Adams and Joe Morris of Faithful+Gould in Neath. The site also comprises a chimney stack, a culvert; an experience tunnel, subway (under A4109), and large retaining wall, which were all assessed as part of the structural assessment appended to this report. This assessment contains recommendations for any removal, strengthening measures and / or repair work required. Due to the complexities of these recommendations, any cost allowances within the planned, preventative maintenance (PPM) schedule applied to these works must be treated as indicative only.”

58. The report also included indicative costs for carrying out the planned predicative maintenance schedule identified in the reports.

<b>Year 1 backlog</b>	<b>Years 1-4</b>	<b>Years 5-10</b>	<b>Years 11-50</b>	<b>Total</b>
£138,240	£636,750	£83,793	£336,054	£1.194,838

59. The above figures relate to the surrender of the lease. In the short term should the authority accept Option B and retain and develop the site the authority would need to spend around £858,783 on planned preventive maintenance, over a shorter period. The site needs to be re-opened in order not to appear to be a building site for a decade.

60. The Architectural Report<sup>5</sup> on the Engine House looked at converting the building into a visitor centre, while retaining the listed contents. The centre

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<sup>5</sup> Cefn Coed Colliery Museum, Initial Architectural Report 3 December 2020, DB3 Architecture

would include not only the displays but also the operations such as shop, café and learning space carried out in the varied ancillary buildings on the site. The concept included a new build extension for the café and small adaptations to the building. This needs to be put on hold while an interpretative plan and vision for the whole site is developed. The report does not include any indicative costs.

61. The table of costs below is taken from the Masterplan published in February 2019. The total expenditure was estimated at £5,273,100 and the grant offered was £2,700,000.

Expenditure	Medium Range
<b>Phase One 1 to 3 years</b>	
Landscaping including entry road, car parking (est)	1,220,000
Build cost visitor centre @ £2,500 per sqm	650,000
General fit out of visitor centre @ £500 per sqm	130,000
Café (servery, kitchen, furniture etc)	85,000
Tensile cover and patio area	80,000
Interpretation plan	15,000
Interpretation within Discovery Zone in visitor centre	180,000
Retail fit out including graphics (small area within café)	12,000
Office (included above)	
Sense of welcome signage (including entry signage) from car park through to visitor centre (signage, orientation maps)	20,000
Reconfigure existing visitor centre - retail space, office and toilets into staff and volunteer welfare facilities and Bathhouse to be repurposed for Model Railway Club	50,000
Investing in the heritage interpretation (phase one - Engine House Underground Gallery and wider site interpretation)	437,500
Semi covered outdoor play	350,000
Barefoot walk	80,000
Miners' landscape feature / sculpture	50,000
Lighting of headstocks and chimney	30,000
Offsite trails / linkages (not costed)	
Website (pre-opening)	10,000
New brand identity (pre-opening)	4,000
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>£3,403,500</b>
<b>Second phase 3 to 5 years</b>	
Distinctive activity adventure hub*	40,000
Investing in the heritage interpretation (phase two - Boiler House)	62,500
Accommodation stock*	100,000
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>£202,500</b>
<b>Third phase 5 years plus</b>	
Science play	250,000
Amphitheatre (landform and lighting. No cover)	50,000
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>£300,000</b>
<b>Indicative costs</b>	<b>£3,906,000</b>
Professional fees @ 15%	585,900
Contingency @ 20%	781,200
<b>Indicative total</b>	<b>£5,273,100</b>

62.

63. We have extracted from the above table the estimated costs associated with the interpretation of the heritage buildings and the new road, landscaping, and car park. The total with professional fees at 15% is around £2,000,000 at 2019 costs. The footnote to the table of costs states that the figures exclude any investment in the fabric of the heritage building and the issues with the underpass. The largest cost element is the proposed new road and car park which is on land that currently does not form part of the lease.
64. The key question is how the authority would finance the necessary repairs to the building and associated improvements to both buildings and interpretation to provide a viable museum service. This would focus on the buildings currently leased to the council with financial responsibility for the rest of the site remaining with Welsh Government through Cadw. In the current climate NPT would require substantial grant assistance to finance any project. Welsh Government through its Culture Division provides a capital grant scheme of up to £300,000 for Accredited museums. The main source of substantial capital funding for Accredited museums is the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). In recent years the NLHF has provided substantial capital grants to Brecon, Swansea, Penmaenmawr, Bangor and Holywell. The partnership funding for heritage lottery funded projects has come from a variety of trusts, smaller grant programmes and other departments of Welsh Government. The Federation of Museums and Art Galleries of Wales with the support of the Culture Division of Welsh Government has funded Accredited museums to undertake a range of policies and strategies, including interpretative plans, feasibility studies and access strategies, that assist museums in applying for capital grants.

## Tourism and Visitors

65. The Masterplan calculated an increase in visitors from the average annual numbers visiting of 8432 to 37,870 after 5 years. This was based on a substantial investment offering more onsite attractions and developing the site as a gateway to the Valleys. It was calculated in the context of a growing tourism market in Wales and the population figure within an hour's drive time from Cefn Coed. The figures were realistic and compared with Rhondda Heritage Park which operates with between 40,000 and 50,000 visitors, were achievable. As just a museum site, with retail and catering, linking to other facilities and walks in the area, the figure of 37,870 would appear to be optimistic. However, in the context of growing local tourism market, the requirements of the new curriculum, an event strategy and a dynamic engaging Accredited museum service a visitor base of between 25,000 and 30,000 is achievable.

## Business Planning & Volunteers

66. Again, this was explored in the Masterplan, which concluded that although there would be income streams from retail, catering, and attractions there would still need to be a financial input from the authority. All of the 19 local authority museum services in Wales generate income streams, but all require additional funding to operate. They are a public service and in the context of community wellbeing, identity and belonging, the aspirations of the government's "Programme for Government", life-long learning, the new curriculum for Wales and economic development through tourism are a vital service offered by any authority.
67. The current revenue spend per year on the service is around £100,000 which should be increased to around £220,000 to be in line with what other authorities spend. This will allow for the employment of a professional museum officer and demonstrate that the authority values its museum service. It will assist in the move towards an Accredited service, which in turn will assist the service in obtaining grants. As the service develops, so will income streams from trading services and grants.
68. The data collecting exercise Spotlight 2020 asked museums to supply information about their workforce. The figures indicated that the museum workforce has increased due to growth of the volunteer base. This is not only in terms of the number of people involved but also the hours they contributed. 4235 volunteers form 72% of the workforce, up from 66% in Spotlight 2015. 404,676 hours were contributed by volunteers in 2020 a considerable increase from 177,815 hours in 2015. It is important therefore, that a revitalised museum develops a volunteer strategy and a large volunteer base. This would be in addition to a Friends organisation that acts as an advocacy and fund-raising organisations. Any volunteers do not need to be members of the Friends. Volunteers can assist museum staff in a range of activities to provide additional capacity across the whole range of museum activities and operations. They must be organised and managed by permanent staff and receive appropriate training.

## Funding Sources

69. The main funding sources for Accredited museums in Wales are the National lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and Welsh Government through Cadw, Visit Wales, and the Museums Team in the Culture Division. The Federation of Museums and Galleries in Wales also provides grants with grant schemes funded from various organisations and trusts. NHLF will fund Accredited

museums and is funding the NPTC's Heritage Strategy and associated projects. NPTC is seen as a priority area for grant spend by NLHF in Wales.

70. Cadw will sometimes fund repairs to listed buildings and this should be part of discussions with them.

## 4. Recommendations

The primary recommendations coming out of the study are:

We recommend that the authority:

- Retain the Cefn Coed Museum complex and carry out an extensive maintenance programme to meet the requirements of the lease and to prevent any further deterioration of the buildings on the site. The planned predictive maintenance schedule must be put in place.
- Commission a development and interpretative plan to start the process of taking the museum forward into a new era, that compliments, enhances and expands the present institution, so it can provide the facilities and programmes that the public and schools now expect from a museum. The plan will underpin the Heritage Strategy being developed for the authority, which sees Cefn Coed as a key site.
- The interpretative plan needs to include more than the history of coal in the county. It should also look at other historic industries once active in the area. It should also examine the environmental and social impact of these industries. The plan needs to relate the story of coal to current issues including climate crisis, energy costs and the role of renewable sustainable energy. The plan will support learners to make progress, which is a fundamental driver for the new curriculum in Wales.
- The Heritage Strategy should extend beyond the historic environment and include all aspects of heritage, particularly referencing museums and collections.
- The museum should remain closed for the foreseeable future and the collections should be professionally removed in the short term and stored pending the interpretative plan and then its implementation and development.
- The authority should invest in the service, providing more revenue resources, so that it can move towards becoming an Accredited service capable of attracting additional capital resources. It should employ a museum officer to move the service towards Accreditation and the development of the new museum.
- The authority should discuss the lease, redefining the leased area to include at least access to the headframes, grant aid towards repairs to the historic fabric of the listed structures and the long-term management of the area with Cadw.
- The model railway would be incompatible with the new proposals and should not form part of the Interpretative Plan or be incorporated into any of the existing buildings. The authority should make alternative provision for it on the site.

## Selected Bibliography

### Documents consulted to date

Various Lease Agreements

Future Use Options Report, Cefn Coed Museum for Neath Port Talbot CBC, March 2009

Cefn Coed Masterplan, Enhancing the Visitor Experience 2019, Planning Solutions Consulting Limited

Cefn Coed Colliery Museum, Condition Survey, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Faithful & Gould, Members of the SNC Lavalin Group 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021

CB3 Structural Report December 2020

Cefn Coed Colliery Museum, Initial Architectural Report 3 December 2020, DB3 Architecture

A Museum Strategy for Wales Welsh Government 2010

**<https://gov.wales/topics/culture-tourism-sport/museums-archives-libraries/museums/strategy/?lang=en>**

Expert Review of Local Museum Provision in Wales 2015

**<https://gov.wales/topics/culture-tourism-sport/museums-archives-libraries/museums/review/?lang=en>**

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

**<https://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/?lang=en>**

Museum Accreditation.

**<https://gov.wales/topics/culture-tourism-sport/museums-archives-libraries/museums/accreditation/?lang=en>**

New Curriculum for Wales

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>

<https://gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>

<https://gem.org.uk/gem-cymru-the-new-curriculum-for-wales/>