



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

A Heritage Strategy for Neath Port Talbot 2024-2039



Gwnaed yn bosibl gan

**Cronfa
Treftadaeth**

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**Heritage
Fund**

Restore, Regenerate, Repurpose

Contents

01	Introduction	3
02	Executive Summary	5
03	Our Heritage & Story	8
04	Issues Facing Heritage Assets	24
05	Vision, Themes and Objectives	31
06	Policy Context	38
07	Policy Drivers	44
08	Community and Stakeholder Engagement	47
09	Theme One: Understanding Our Heritage and its Significance	50
10	Theme Two: Conserving & Investing in Our Heritage	52
11	Theme Three: Capitalising & Building on Our Heritage	55
12	Theme Four: Positive Management of Our Heritage	60
13	Theme Five: Celebrating and Promoting Our Heritage	64
14	Delivery of Action Plan	66
15	Abbreviations & Glossary	82
16	Appendix A: SWOT Analysis	85
17	Appendix B: Policies and Strategies	91
18	Heritage Gallery	93

Introduction

01

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1. Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

Executive Summary

02



02. Executive Summary

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

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

In order to achieve the County Borough's collective vision for Culture, Heritage and Tourism, an overarching Culture Strategy has been developed, which supported by the Destination Management Plan and Heritage Strategy will collaboratively deliver this goal. The three strategies capture the unique cultural strengths and spirit of the County Borough specifically its varied offer of arts, heritage and culture for residents and visitors.

In order to support this vision it is essential to set in motion deliverable measures **ensuring the conservation, protection and sustainability of Neath Port Talbot's heritage**, the vision at the heart of **Restore, Regenerate, Repurpose** (A Heritage Strategy for Neath Port Talbot 2024-2039).

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

'Heritage' means different things to different people, and in different times and places. The strategy will focus on two measures; the first is to care for our physical or 'tangible' cultural heritage, such as historic buildings and places, monuments and artefacts. This is termed the 'historic environment'. Our historic environment includes many places and settings that form part of our 'natural heritage', such as natural sites, habitats and landscapes.

* Corporate Plan 2022 — 2027

The second focus is to celebrate, promote and support the amazing people and groups who not only look after our historic environment and natural heritage, but also safeguard our language, traditions, customs, artistic expression and other aspects of human activity, namely our 'Intangible' cultural heritage. Our intangible and tangible cultural heritage unites our people and places, making Neath Port Talbot an inspiring and unique place for residents and visitors alike.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

* [Heritage \(UNESCO Definition\)](#)

Our Heritage & Story

03

3. Our Heritage & Story

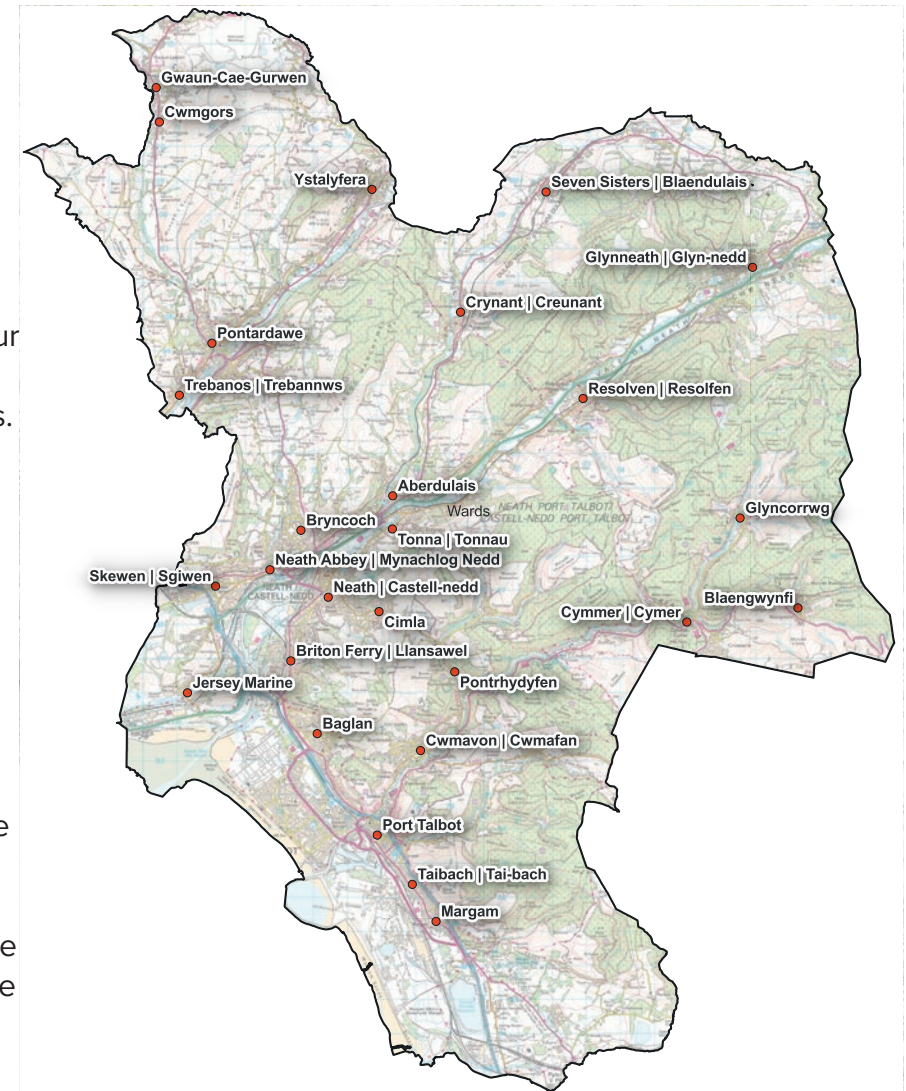
3.1 Our Place

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

Neath Port Talbot has a population of 142,300* living in our five towns (Briton Ferry, Glynneath, Neath, Pontardawe and Port Talbot) and five valleys (Afan, Amman, Dulais, Neath and Swansea) as well as in our coastal communities. 13.5% of our residents over the age of three speak Welsh*.

The Council has a legal duty under the Welsh Language Standards Regulations (No.1) 2015 to comply with a set of standards of conduct on the Welsh language. The Standards require the Council to draw up and publish an action plan, as detailed within the Welsh Language Promotional Strategy 2023-2028, to promote the Welsh language with the aim of increasing language use and the number of Welsh speakers in the county borough. The Welsh language provides us with a sense of place that distinguishes Wales from other countries. Encouraging the use of Welsh and integrating the Welsh language into the way that we tell the heritage and cultural story of our county is an important tool not only for preserving the buildings and places where Welsh is still part of daily life, but in developing the wider economic prosperity of the area.

*Census 2021.



Neath Port Talbot is a unique place full of historic character, where centuries of human activities have forged and shaped the form and fabric of our area, leaving an indelible legacy in the names, stories, and culture associated with our communities. Our historic character bestows identity, creates a sense of belonging and contributes to the quality of the places we live, work in and visit. Our historic character can be an asset for economic regeneration and tourism. Working collaboratively, we can encourage our local communities to become involved in the Place Making process to make the best use of its heritage and individuality, to bring about shared economic, social and well-being benefits for everyone.

In terms of our historic environment, there are numerous historic assets including Listed Buildings, Building of Local Importance, Canals, Conservation Areas, Historic Landscapes, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Historic Parks & Gardens, Battlefields and Shipwrecks. Historic assets should not be viewed in isolation, their 'Setting' in the surrounding environment and landscape is an important way in which historic assets are understood, appreciated and contributes to their significance, highlighting the centuries of human interaction with both the built and natural environment. These settings includes many of our protected natural historic assets and our natural environment, such as protected hedgerows, Ancient Woodlands, SSSI's and Local and National Nature Reserves. When change or development is proposed, it is important to define setting, and understand how the setting contributes to the significance of the historic assets and so measures can be set in place to protect it.

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

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

This strategy cannot give a complete account of everything that has heritage significance for the County Borough. Promoting the story of our areas is key to help improve understanding of how particular assets fit into that story and how we can harness these assets for a positive future.

3.2 Our Story

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

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

The historic development of the County Borough has left an important built legacy from all periods and eras. Our turbulent social and economic history can be read in our historic environment by the rows of terraced houses, chapels and public houses, which epitomise our close-knit former coal mining communities. Contrasted with the Georgian and Victorian buildings that sprung up around our Norman Castle and town centre medieval Churches, as centres of administration and commerce. These historic assets can all help to illustrate the story of the growth of the county borough and the changing building techniques and styles that have left a unique visual imprint on the landscapes and townscapes of the County Borough.

Whilst commemorating, interpreting and telling our story, we must be sensitive of our past history in terms of the part played by people from all over the world who have settled in Neath Port Talbot and contributed to its development over the centuries.

Our Heritage Strategy is created for everyone, reflecting the ever-changing make up of our population. It will support the implementation of the [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan](#) to ensure that everyone's experiences are valued and contribute to making a prosperous, healthier, more equal Wales with vibrant cultures and thriving languages. Our past and present is shaping a future for residents and visitors, from near and far, adding to the next rich chapter in the story of Neath Port Talbot.

3.3 Our Heritage

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

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

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

There are various provisions made for the protection of historic assets depending on their significance. The strength of protection is related to the classification status of the building or structure and therefore to its importance and significance. This ranges from the statutory protections afforded by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and other legislation, including the new Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023. To local authority policies and guidance, as outlined in the Policy Context section on pages 38-43 of this document.



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

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

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

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



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

3.4 Religious Buildings: Chapels and Churches

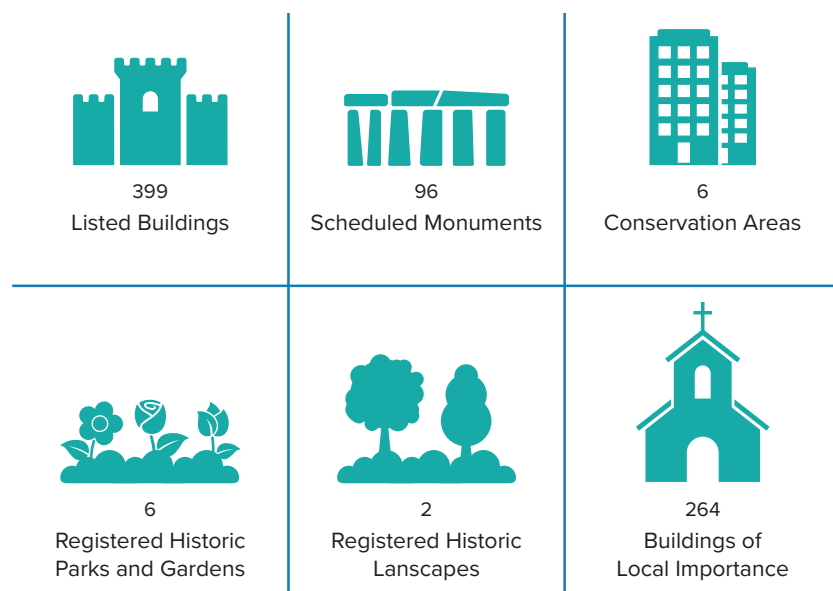
The religious evolution of the county is inseparable from our historic environment where our chapels, churches and halls have been bastions of the Welsh language and our local culture, heritage and traditions over the generations. With the demise of congregations, increasingly chapels and churches lie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

The recent review 'Taking Stock of Catholic Churches in England and Wales' has resulted in further listed buildings, including Our Lady of the Assumption in Briton Ferry and Margam Crematorium. Particular focus on 20th century buildings, architecture and their significance is only now being fully understood and appreciated.



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

3.5 Our Heritage Assets



Over 4309 sites of historic interest recorded on the Historic Environment Record (HER).

Other assets include Archives, battlefields, place names, shipwrecks and other treasures waiting to be discovered.

For more information on the heritage assets in Neath Port Talbot see Cadw's website [Cof Cymru](#).

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

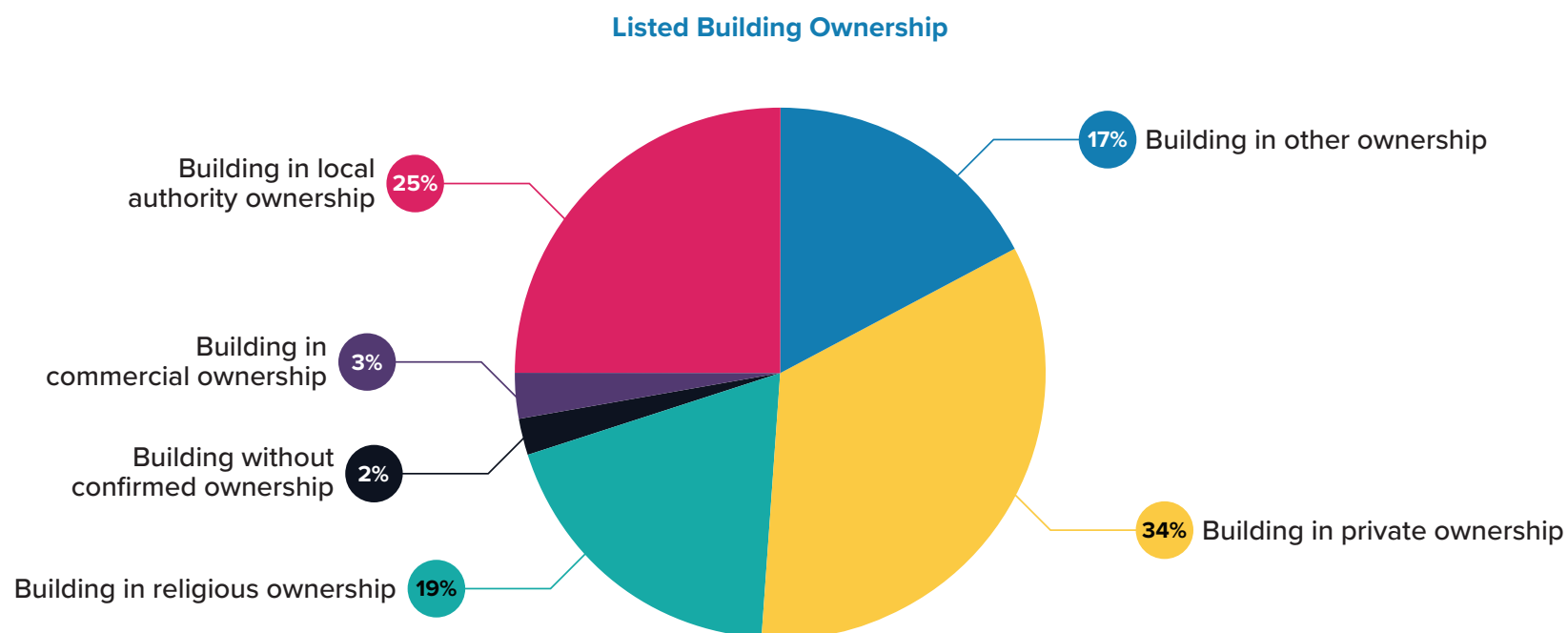
Grade I (one) is for buildings of exceptional interest.

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

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

Listed Buildings

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



| Listed Building Ownership in Neath Port Talbot.

* [Cadw: Understanding Listed Buildings 2018, P. 5.](#)

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

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

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

Scheduled Monuments

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

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



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

Conservation Areas

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

There are no Article 4 directions on any of our conservation areas, which means that a particular development cannot be carried out under permitted development and therefore needs a planning application. Article 4 direction is made when the character of an area of acknowledged importance would be threatened.

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



Cilybebyll



**Glynneath
Woolen Mill**



Llandarcy



Margam Park



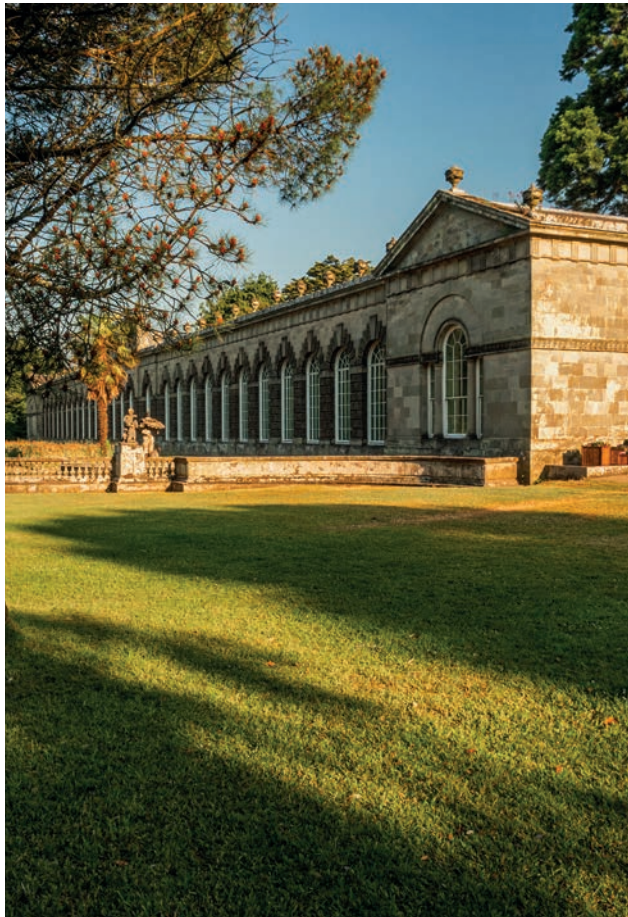
Neath Canal Depot



**Neath Town Centre
Conservation Areas**

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens (RHPG)

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



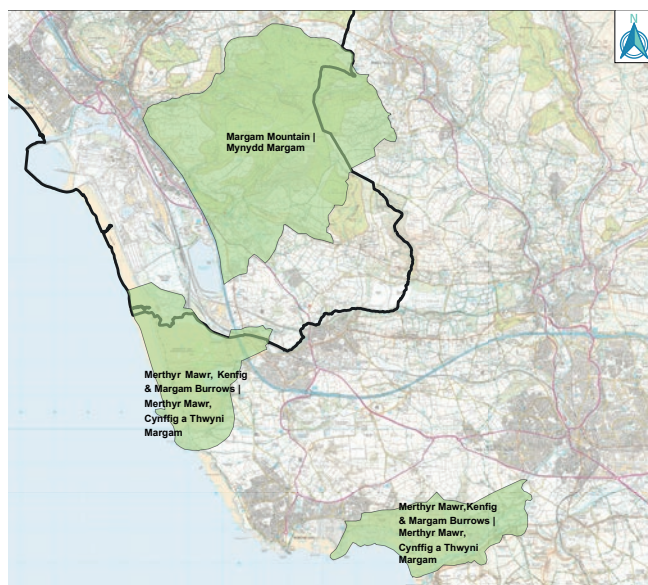
| Margam Park (Grade I), The Gnoll (Grade II*), Jersey Park (Grade II), Victoria Gardens (Grade II), Talbot Memorial Park (Grade II), Rheola (Grade II).

Registered Historic Landscapes

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

The majority of 'Margam Mountain Historic Landscape' lies within Neath Port Talbot and 'Merthyr Mawr, Kenfig and Margam Burrows Historic Landscape' straddles into the neighbouring Bridgend County Council administration.

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



| Registered Historic Landscapes.

Buildings of Local Importance

Heritage Assets of Special Local Importance are locally identified and designated buildings (and other historic assets) that may not meet the requirements to be included on the statutory list of buildings of architectural or historic importance or the schedule of monuments, but are considered to be important within the local context and therefore to be worthy of conservation. The Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (LDP) adopted in January 2016 including a policy affording protection to 'Buildings of Local Importance' (BLIs) (Policy BE2). This allows buildings or structures that have architectural, historic or local community significance to be identified and included on a local list for protection under local planning policy. These buildings are identified in Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) published in April 2019: The Historic Environment SPG, Schedule of Buildings of Local Importance (SPG); Schedule of Designated Canal Structures.

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

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

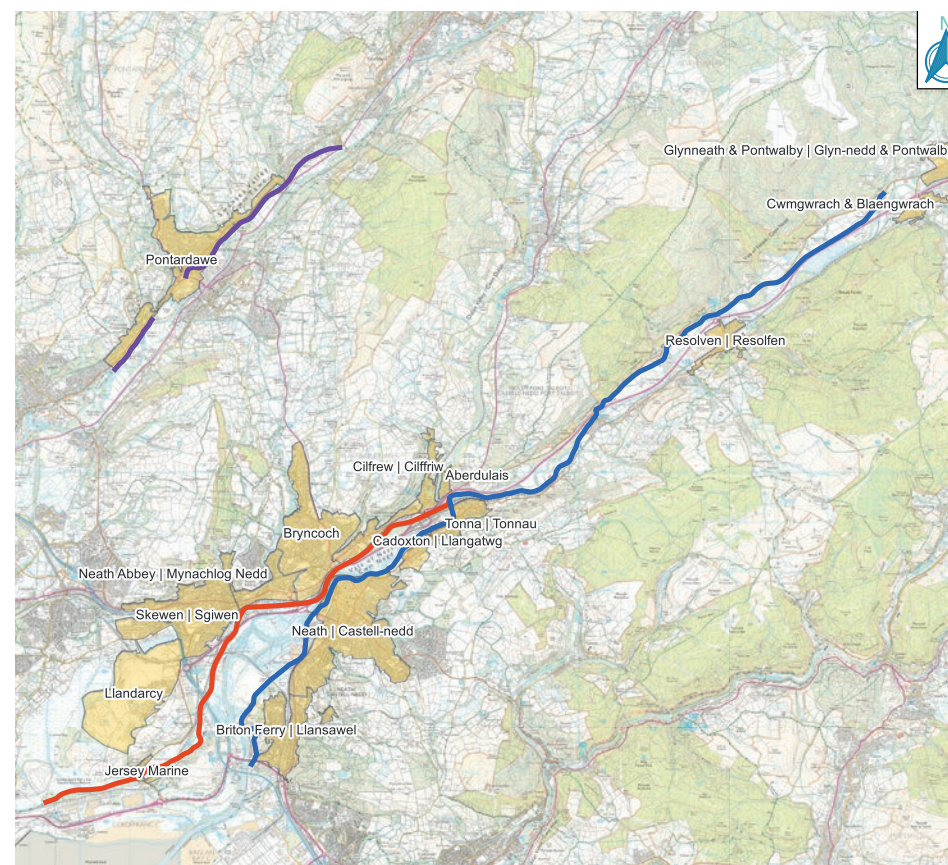
Neath Port Talbot Canal Network

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

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

Due to their significance and importance to the area the buildings or structures on the three canal systems that have architectural, historic or local community significance are identified and included on a local list for protection under local planning policy.

[SPG Schedule of Designated Canal Structures.](#)



- Neath Canal
- Tennant Canal
- Swansea Canal

| The Neath, Tennant and Swansea Canals.

Issues Facing
Heritage Assets

04

04. Issues Facing Heritage Assets

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



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



Neath Abbey Ironworks (Graffiti).
Parish Church of St Illtyd, Neath (Stolen ancient slab stones).

4.1 Heritage Crime

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

Improving understanding helps people to value assets. Valued assets are less likely to be vandalised or subject to heritage crime. Therefore it crucial to get the public on board, to value their local heritage place and to take steps to monitor, report and prevent this needless crime.

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

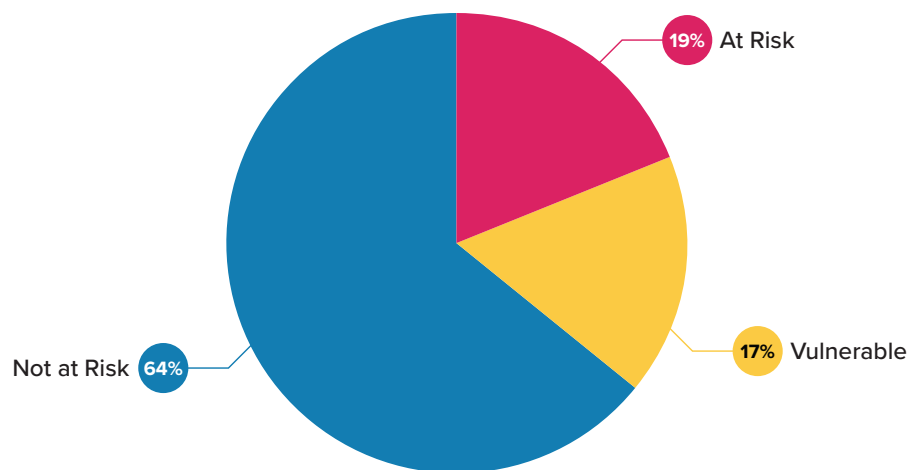
Neath Abbey Ironworks suffered a spate of graffiti, working in partnership with Cadw soda blasting ensured the sensitive removal of the graffiti from the heritage site.

4.2 Heritage “at Risk”

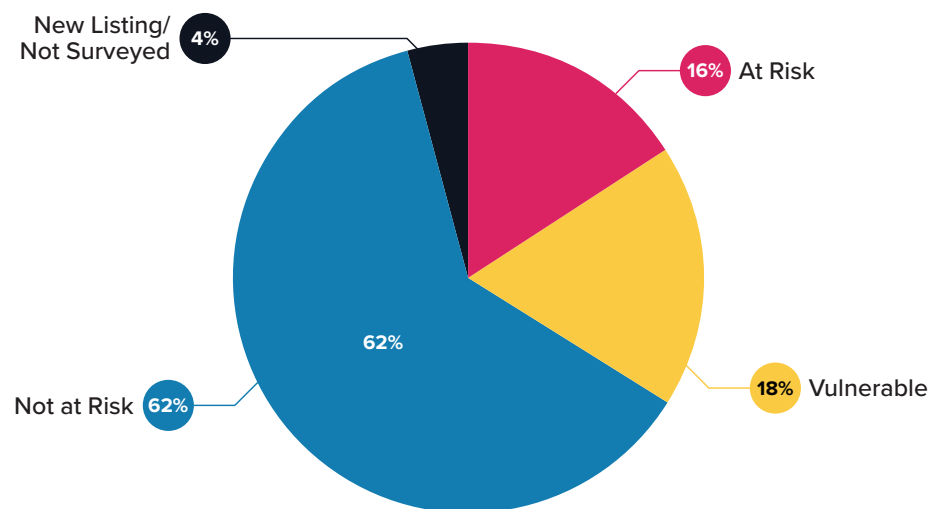
A proportion of Neath Port Talbot’s designated built heritage assets have been formally identified as “At Risk”.

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

Condition of Listed Buildings in 2016



Condition of Listed Buildings in 2022



| Condition of Listed Buildings in 2016 and 2022.

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

NPTCBC has an important role in the protection and conservation of the historic environment, working with owners and custodians of listed buildings to find solutions when buildings are at risk or vulnerable. Where positive support fails, the Council should be ready to draw upon the statutory powers available under Section 54 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990) Article 4 Direction should be put into effect to ensure that works necessary to safeguard the significance of listed buildings are carried out in a timely manner. Also to utilise other statutory notices, aimed at securing the condition of listed buildings at risk, including Section 215 notices. There are other powers that the Council can execute to ensure the protection of heritage assets and their setting in our landscapes and townscapes. Such as Tree Preservation Orders (TPO), ensuring that trees with a value to a heritage asset or setting are protected. Designated Special Landscape Areas, can deter development that has an adverse impact on the features, character and significance of these protected landscapes.

4.3 Climate Change and Nature Recovery



Nature Resources Wales and Cadw are currently working on guidance which seeks to explain how the historic environment can be integrated into nature recovery and vice versa.



4.4 Local Distinctiveness

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

4.5 SWOT Analysis Top Findings

The SWOT Analysis will inform the actions to be implemented and will support the five themes enabling the vision of the Neath Port Talbot Heritage Strategy to be delivered. Below are top findings. For the full analysis see Appendix A on Pages 92-97.

Strengths 	Weaknesses 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing levels of awareness of the importance of heritage and historic environment as demonstrated by local and national governments. Proactive volunteers who work with the council to secure additional funding to conserve and preserve key heritage sites within the borough. The Council's proven track record successfully securing funding and delivering exemplar heritage-led regeneration projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constraints on heritage resources, including no Building Conservation Officer and no Listed Building enforcement budget. The need for an expanded Heritage at Risk Register to identify buildings and sites within the historic environment that are most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development. Heritage regeneration schemes normally need lots of money and time to complete, as we are rich in heritage assets there is internal pressure to inevitably, prioritise which heritage projects are taken forward.

Opportunities 	Threats 
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To provide a heritage focused community grant scheme (National Lottery Heritage Fund) and assist groups to develop heritage and culture projects for delivery across the borough.• To use this strategy to identify and agree objectives, priorities and actions to ensure the council and stakeholders deliver effective and efficient management of its heritage and the historic environment.• Utilise Planning Enforcement as an effective tool to control and ensure the pro-active management of the historic environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The potential conflict between development pressure and ensuring the significance of the historic environment is preserved and enhanced.• Continued limitations on available funding for maintenance and improvements to public and privately owned heritage assets, which can perpetuate a lack of investment.• Loss of staff or resources at key stakeholder organisations, which includes accumulated knowledge and localised knowledge.

Vision, Themes and Objectives

05

05. Vision, Themes and Objectives

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

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



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

Themes and Objectives

Theme One: Understanding our heritage and its significance.

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

Theme Two: Conserving & Investing in our heritage for future generations.

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



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

Theme Three: Capitalising & Building on our heritage.

- **Promoting** our rich heritage, our culture and our high quality historic environment as part of the council's visitor facing place branding: '[The Dramatic Heart of Wales](#)'.
- **Encouraging** suitable development that respects our historic environment, use it as a stimulus for quality imaginative design, and delivers the six place making principles.
- **Maximising** opportunities to secure funding to deliver heritage-led projects for key heritage buildings. See 'Place Making Charter' on page 46.

Theme Four: Positive Management of our heritage.

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

Theme Five: Celebrating & Promoting our heritage.

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



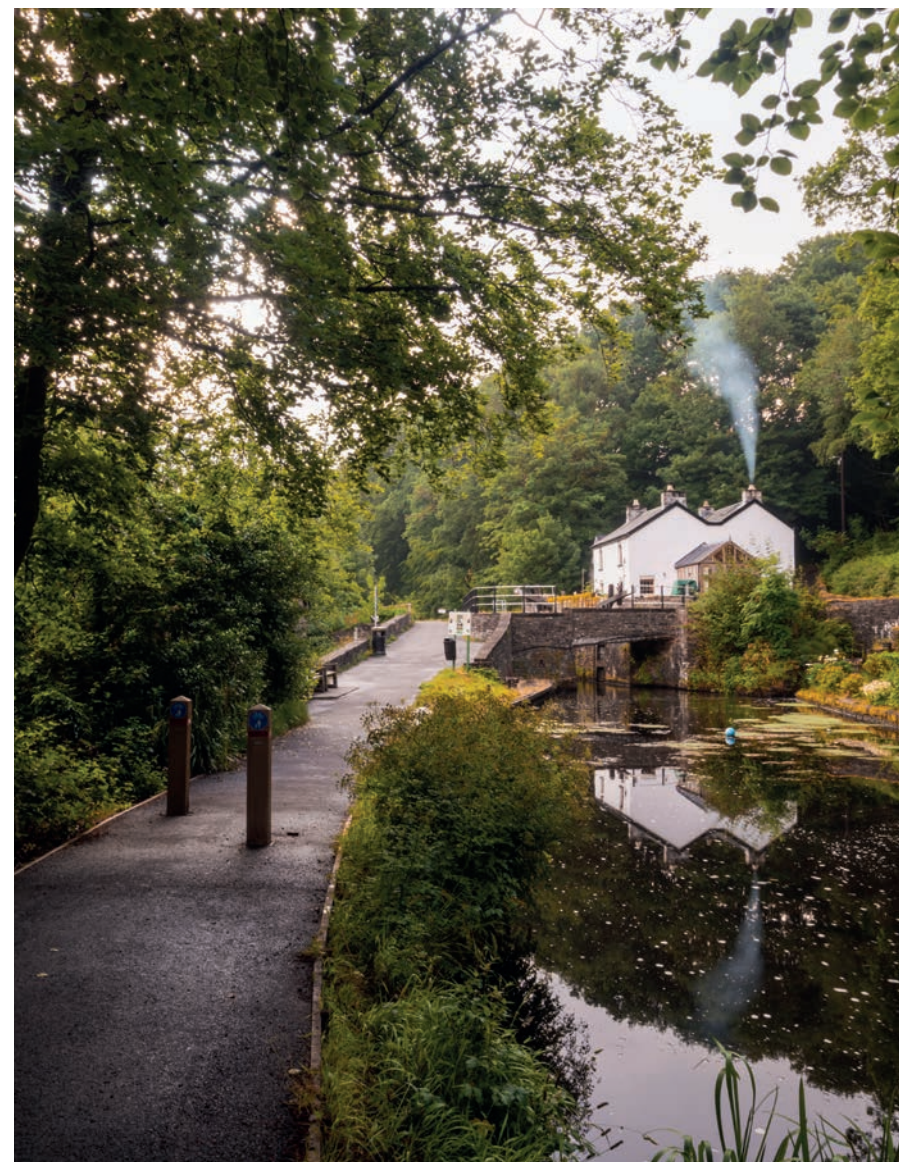
| Llandarcy Conservation Area.

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

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

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

The three strategies will capture the unique cultural strengths and spirit of the County Borough, specifically its varied offer of arts, heritage and culture for residents and visitors.



| Neath Canal, Tonna.



Languages:

Welsh, English and the varied Languages of Our County Borough

People:

Club Members, Community Groups, Residents, Visitors and Volunteers

Places:

Communities, Towns, Valleys and Villages

Policy Context

06



06. Policy Context

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

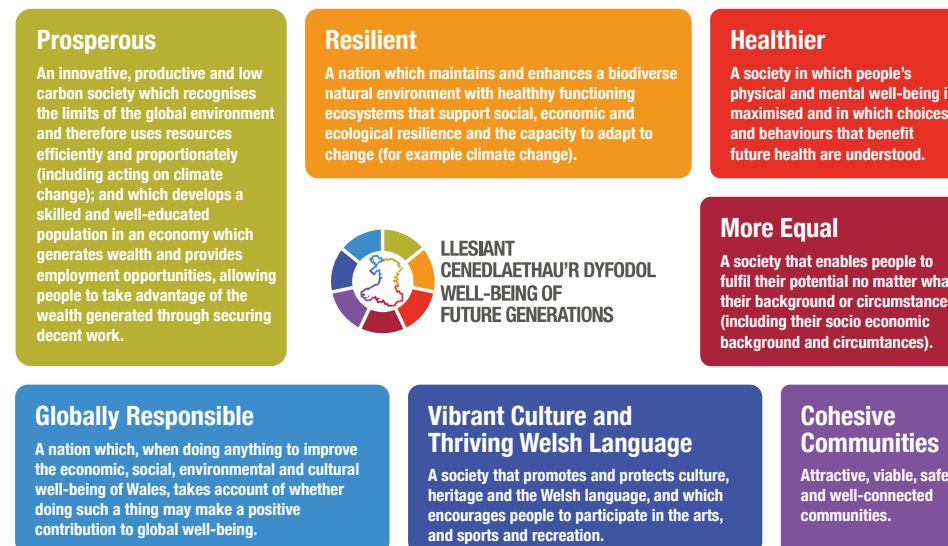
6.1 Legislation

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

The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty on public bodies (including Welsh Ministers) that they must carry out sustainable development. “Sustainable Development” means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving well-being goals. [Planning Policy Wales \(PPW\): Edition 12, P.7.](#)

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

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



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

The Historic Environment (Wales) Act (2023)

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

The three main aims of the 2016 Act are:

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

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



| Milepost at Margam Park entrance.

6.2 National Policy & Guidance

Future Wales – The National Plan 2040

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

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 12 (2024)

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

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

PPW guidance supports the delivery of the 'Distinctive and Natural Places' theme that focuses on 'fostering and sustaining a sense of place through the protection and enhancement of the natural, historic and built environment and allows for supporting uses and activities which provide for creative and cultural experiences'.

[Planning Policy Wales: Edition 12, P.126.](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cadw Guidance

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

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

For all Cadw information on the Historic Environment, see Appendix B on Page 98 to 99 and see [Cadw: Policy, advice and guidance](#).

6.3 Local Level Policy

Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan 2011-2026

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

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

'The historic environment can only be maintained as a resource for future generations if the individual historic assets are protected and conserved'. [Planning Policy Wales \(PPW\): Edition 12, P.130](#).

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

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

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

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

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

Policy Drivers

07



Policy/Strategy	Focus	Historic Environment Reference
<p>Llwybr Newydd – The Wales Transport Strategy 2021 Llwybr Newydd – The Wales Transport Strategy 2021 (Pages 36 & 58)</p>	<p>A transport system that supports the Welsh Language, enables more people to get to arts, sports and cultural activities, protects and enhances the historic environment.</p>	<p>Well-being ambitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Former railway lines and other redundant transport infrastructure are safeguarded for the future, or for re-use or as cycle paths, footpaths or footways. More people can use walking and cycling to enjoy Wales’ historic sites and monuments, national parks and landscapes and coastal areas.
<p>Neath Port Talbot Public Service Board – Well-Being Plan Neath Port Talbot Public Service Board Well Being Plan (Page 20)</p>	<p>Well-being Objective 3: Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage engagement and participation in cultural activities and the celebration and preservation of our cultural assets.
<p>Recover, Reset, Renew NPTCBC Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 Recover, Reset, Renew Corporate Plan 2022-2027 (Page 42)</p>	<p>Well-being Objective 3: Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People actively conserve, improve and enjoy our stunning natural environment, treasure the Welsh language and are actively engaged with the rich sporting, cultural and industrial heritage of the area.
<p>Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers</p>	<p>Increase the number of Welsh speakers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the use of Welsh in the community and workplace (Heritage sector and Community volunteering). Creating favourable conditions – infrastructure and context (Accessible interpretation and signage in the Historic Environment).

Policy/Strategy	Focus	Historic Environment Reference
Place-making Charter Place Making Charter	Through the application of the six place making principles, the planning system should aim to create high quality development and public spaces to promote prosperity, health, happiness and well-being in the widest sense.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Development supports and enhances existing places. • Identity: The positive, distinctive qualities of existing places are valued and respected. The unique features and opportunities of a location, including heritage, culture, language and built and natural physical attributes are identified and responded to.
Neath Port Talbot Economic Recovery Plan (2022) Neath Port Talbot Economic Recovery Plan (2022) (Page 35)	Quality and Connected Places: Components of ‘Value of place’ and ‘Quality life assets’.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrating our natural and built assets, where NPT’s natural environment and heritage assets have the potential to contribute to the growth of the visitor economy.
Neath Port Talbot Destination Management Plan (2023-2038) (Page 15)	Vibrant Communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers exceptional experiences based on our rich heritage, culture and stunning coast and countryside, which fully deliver on the ‘Dramatic Heart of Wales’ promise.
Historic Environment and Climate Change Sector Adaptation Plan (Welsh Government) Historic Environment and Climate Change Sector Adaptation Plan	Increase the resilience of the Historic Environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase our knowledge and understanding of the threats and opportunities for the historic environment from changing weather and climate in the short, medium and long term. • Increase our capacity by developing the awareness, skills and tools to manage the impacts of climate change on the historic environment. • Build the resilience of the historic environment by taking action to adapt and respond to the risks, reduce vulnerability and maximise the benefits.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

08

08. Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The Council carried out a 'Let's Talk' public consultation campaign over the summer of 2021, which fed into the new Corporate Plan 'Recover, Reset, Renew'. The result of the campaign showed a strong support for our culture, heritage and the environment. This led the Council to commission a Culture Strategy in 2022.

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

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

The Action Plan has been updated to include the analysis of the consultation on the heritage strategy.

* NPTCBC Culture Strategy Consultation March 2023: Page 27.



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

The consultation process on the draft Heritage Strategy ran from 9th October to 5th November 2023. Consultees were able to participate by:

- Attending a Stakeholder and Community Heritage Group face-to-face workshop.
- Submitting individual feedback on behalf of their organisation.
- Completing a consultation questionnaire (a digital or paper copy).

The top priorities from the Consultation are as follows:

Stakeholders	Community Heritage Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a Conservation/Heritage Team. • Priority list for project delivery. • Building long-term resilience of people and places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support with accessing funding, and it to be spread across smaller projects than always going to larger projects/sites. • More support from the Council for volunteers. • Build networking & interpretation to 'Tell Our Story'.

For more information on the findings, see The Heritage Strategy Consultation Report.

Understanding Our Heritage and its Significance

09

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conserving & Investing in Our Heritage

10

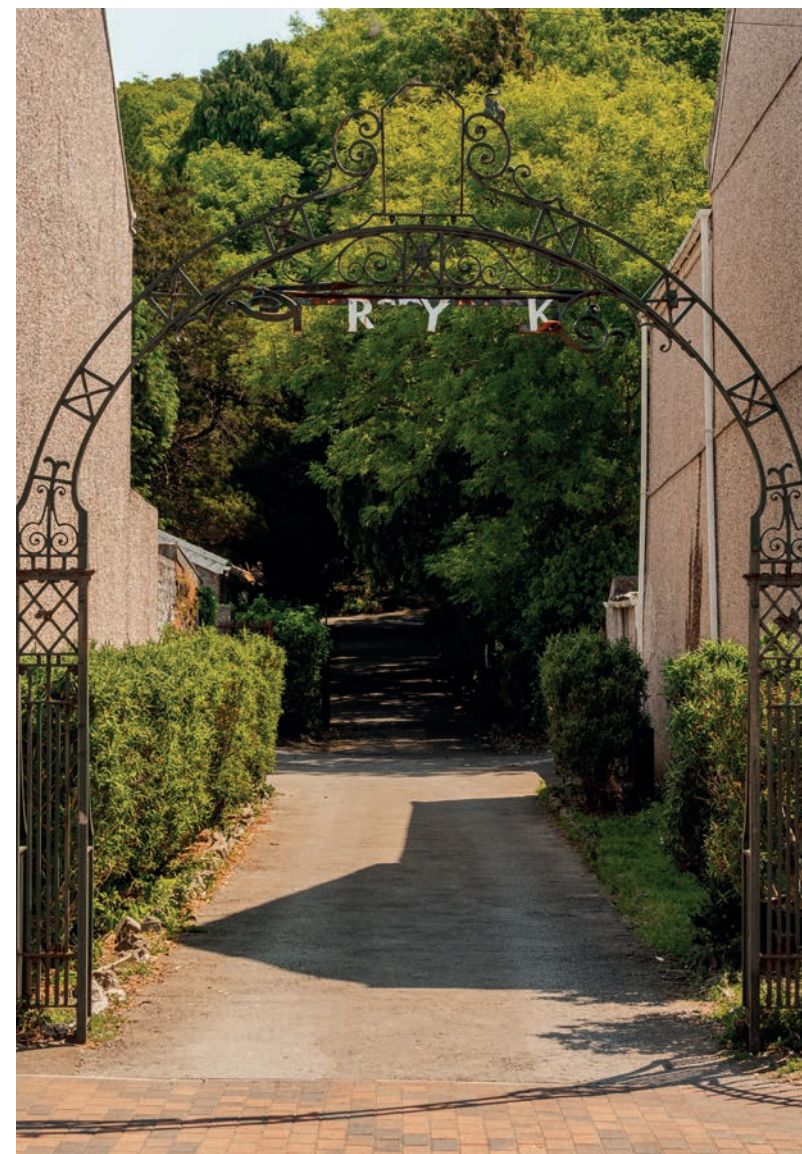
10. Conserving & Investing in Our Heritage (Theme Two)

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

* NPTCBC Culture Strategy March 2023, page 24.

Capitalising & Building on Our Heritage



ALLAN LEONARD LEWIS

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Visitor Economy (Tourism)

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

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

Film and the Creative Industries

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

By promoting awareness of our rich historic, industrial and natural environment and its versatility for film and television productions, Neath Port Talbot can position itself as desirable film location and attract more production companies to film in the county.

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

Workforce Development and Local Trade

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

11.2 Our Heritage & Physical & Mental Well-being

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

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

Engagement

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

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

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

Communities

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

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

Volunteers

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

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

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



Yoga inside Margam Castle (Grade I Listed Building).

Positive Management of Our Heritage

12

12. Positive Management of Our Heritage (Theme Four)

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

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

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

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

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

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

The establishment of a beneficial work programme for the appraisal, maintenance and management of heritage assets and sites is essential. Progressive working relationships with stakeholders are required, as well as management measures to ensure that the status of the area's assets are assessed and monitored, ensuring they do not become "At Risk" of further deterioration. In order to add to the layers of protection and regulation for our historic environment, tools for the delivery of positive management include Action Plans, Conservation Management Plans and Supplementary Guidance (CMPs).

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

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

Resources and the Historic Environment

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



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

Partnerships

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

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



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

Celebrating and Promoting Our Heritage

13

13. Celebrating and Promoting Our Heritage (Theme Five)

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

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

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

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

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

Delivery of Action Plan

14

14. Delivery of Action Plan

14.1 Resources and the Historic Environment

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

14.2 Heritage Action Plan

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

Ref	Name/Place	What to do	When to do it	Theme	Objective	By when
1	Aberdulais Tinworks & Waterfalls	Provide training to enable St Giles beneficiaries to become ‘Tour Guides’ at site.	Short term	1	To promote information about our historic environment.	2026
2	Aqueducts & Bridges	Reinstate Newbridge Road Bridge, Margam & Sandfields.	Medium term	2	To commit investment to maintain our historic environment.	2027-2032

Ref	Name/Place	What to do	When to do it	Theme	Objective	By when
3		Repair work to Ystalyfera Aqueduct.	Medium term	2	To commit investment to maintain our historic environment.	2027-2032
4	Accessibility	Improve access to sites owned by NPTCBC, Other owners and Private owners.	Short term/ medium term	4	To improve access to our historic environment.	2026/ 2027-2032
5		Develop an Accessibility Strategy for NPTCBC owned and managed Heritage sites.	Short term/ medium term	4	To improve access to our historic environment.	2026
6	Blue Plaques	Launch a Blue Plaques Scheme.	Short term/ medium term	5	To support the discovery, enjoyment and exploration of our heritage and historic environment.	2026/ 2027-2032
7	Brunel Docks	Improve access; improve interpretation.	Short term	4	To improve access to our historic environment.	2026
8		Extend Scheduled Monument boundary.	Medium term	4	To raise awareness of threats to our historic environment.	2027-32
9	Bryncoch	Reinstate 'Finger Posts' to create a heritage trail around the village.	Short term	4	To support the discovery, enjoyment and exploration of our heritage and historic environment.	2026

Ref	Name/Place	What to do	When to do it	Theme	Objective	By when
10	Canals	Commission an 'Options Appraisal' for the Neath and Tennant Canals and its long term sustainability.	Short term	3	To maximise funding opportunities for project delivery.	2026
11	Cefn Coed	Protect Listed Buildings.	Short term/ medium term	2	To commit investment to maintain our historic environment.	2026/ 2027-2032
12		Find an alternative use for the museum.	Short term/ medium term/ long term	3	To maximise funding opportunities for project delivery.	2026/ 2027-2032
13	Climate Change	Prepare Climate Change Risk Assessments (CCRAs) for heritage assets and sites to monitor ongoing risks to our historic environment (including biodiversity).	Short term/ medium term	4	To develop the delivery tools for sustainable conservation and protection of heritage assets and sites.	2026/ 2027-2032
14	Coast & Marine Environment	Working towards becoming a formal partner of GGAT's Arfordir Coastal Heritage Project.	Short term/ medium term	2	To commit investment to maintain our historic environment.	2026/ 2027-2032
15		Identify ways to salvage and preserve Lightship LV72 on River Neath, Neath Abbey.	Medium term/ long term	3	To maximise funding opportunities for project delivery.	2027-2032/ 2033-2039

Ref	Name/Place	What to do	When to do it	Theme	Objective	By when
16	Conservation Areas (CA's)	Evaluate/Assess existing CA's and consider other areas to include.	Medium term	4	To review Local Development Plans, Supplementary Planning and National Policy on Heritage Conservation.	2027-2032
17	Craig Gwladus	Develop training programmes in traditional heritage skills with partners.	Short term	2	To improve access to heritage skills training courses to aid the conservation of our historic environment.	2023
18	Crynant	Repurpose a former Chapel into Welsh language Childcare setting.	Short term/ medium term	3	To maximise funding opportunities for project delivery.	2026/ 2027-2032
19	Digital Resources	Create a Historic Environment web page with links to NPTCVS and Heritage Education web pages/ web sites.	Short term	1	To promote information about our historic environment.	2026
20		Create a Database and corresponding map of Interpretation/signs across heritage sites in NPTCBC.	Short term	1	To promote information about our historic environment.	2026
21		Heritage Strategy Summary document (digital copy).	Short term	1	To promote information about our historic environment.	2026

Ref	Name/Place	What to do	When to do it	Theme	Objective	By when
22	Enforcement	Identify needs for Article 4 direction and implement.	Short term/ medium term	4	To review Local Development Plans, Supplementary Planning and National Policy on Heritage Conservation.	2026/ 2027-32
23		Identify heritage at risk, and issue Repairs notices and / or Urgent Works notices (Sections 54 & 215) as part of the council's statutory duties.	Medium term	4	To review Local Development Plans, Supplementary Planning and National Policy on Heritage Conservation.	2027-2032
24	Filming	Develop a leaflet to promote the borough's assets as a film location.	Short term	3	To maximise funding opportunities for project delivery.	2026
25	Gnoll Country Estate	Reinstate Heritage assets to add value to the leisure offer.	Short term/ medium term	2	To commit investment to maintain our historic environment.	2026/ 2027-2032
26	Heritage Crime	Extend Paws on Patrol scheme to cover reporting of Heritage Crime.	Short term	4	To raise awareness of threats to our historic environment.	2026
27		NPTCBC to sign up to ARCH (Alliance to Reduce Crime against Heritage).	Medium term	4	To raise awareness of threats to our historic environment.	2027-2032

Ref	Name/Place	What to do	When to do it	Theme	Objective	By when
28		Create and promote a user friendly information leaflet on Heritage Crime.	Short term	4	To raise awareness of threats to our historic environment.	2026
29	Heritage Skills & Training	Develop a community heritage training plan that includes conservation, bio-diversity and GI (Green Infrastructure) considerations for heritage sites.	Short term/ medium term	2	To improve access to heritage skills training courses to aid the conservation of our historic environment.	2026/ 2027-2032
30		Create a training programme for stewardship of heritage assets and sites.	Short term/ medium term	2	To ensure that heritage skills are retained to aid the conservation of our historic environment.	2026/ 2027-2032
31		Strengthen the partnerships with contractors and colleges regarding apprenticeships in the heritage skills sector.	Medium term	2	To ensure that heritage skills are retained to aid the conservation of our historic environment.	2027-2032
32	Heritage Team	Sustain the Heritage NPT Project Team, to implement the heritage strategy and undertake the council's statutory duties.	Short term	2	To safeguard our historic environment.	2026

Ref	Name/Place	What to do	When to do it	Theme	Objective	By when
33		Appoint a Conservation Officer to implement statutory regulations and heritage protection.	Short term/ medium term	2	To safeguard our historic environment.	2026/ 2027-2032
34	Hydro-accumulator Tower (Brunel Docks)	Include in Open Doors programme 2024.	Short term	5	To support the discovery, enjoyment and exploration of our heritage and historic environment.	2026
35	Jersey Park, Briton Ferry	Improve interpretation of the Scheduled Monument site, history of Brunel Railway.	Short term	5	To explain our heritage and its significance through innovative bilingual interpretation.	2026
36		Repair historic features within the park: Shelter area, pond, Magnolia crescent, woodland paths and drainage channels.	Medium term	2	To commit investment to maintain our historic environment.	2027-2032
37		Reinstate the entrance gateway.	Short term	2	To commit investment to maintain our historic environment.	2024
38	Living in and owning a heritage asset	Create Heritage Design Guides, Do's and Don't leaflet, Run a series of information events for owners in CA's.	Short term/ medium term	1	To promote a better understanding of our historic environment.	2026/ 2027-2032

Ref	Name/Place	What to do	When to do it	Theme	Objective	By when
39	Manage a Community Grant Fund for the Community groups	Offer grant funding to community groups to deliver local heritage projects.	Short term	5	To assist community groups to access funding to sustain their work and activities.	2026
40	Mapping	Maintain systems including a GIS list of locally based heritage assets.	Short term/ medium term	4	To develop the delivery tools for sustainable conservation and protection of heritage assets and sites.	2026/ 2027-2032
41	Margam Castle	Emergency works to falling masonry.	Short term	2	To commit investment to maintain our historic environment.	2026
42		Make it water tight.	Medium term	2	To commit investment to maintain our historic environment.	2027-2032
43		Find a new purpose/use for the building.	Long term	3	To maximise funding opportunities for project delivery.	2033-2039
44		Improve interpretation of the castle and Talbot family.	Short term	5	To explain our heritage and its significance through innovative bilingual interpretation.	2026

Ref	Name/Place	What to do	When to do it	Theme	Objective	By when
45	Margam Park	Establish a Heritage Partnership Agreement (HPA) for Margam Park.	Medium term	2	To commit investment to maintain our historic environment.	2027-2032
46	Margam Park (Orangery)	Orangery Fountains – repair fountains, fountain pools and replace missing fountain sculpture.	Medium term	2	To commit investment to maintain our historic environment.	2027-2032
47		Replace inappropriate Orangery window panes with approved glazing.	Medium term	2	To commit investment to maintain our historic environment.	2027-2032
48	Margam Park (Vine House)	Repair and restore the dilapidated Vine House.	Long term	3	To maximise funding opportunities for project delivery.	2033-2039
49	Merchandising	Pilot specific heritage related merchandising for Margam Park and Gnoll Country Estate.	Medium term	5	Publicising the positive image and identity of the borough to increase heritage related tourism, heritage-led regeneration and inward investment.	2027-2032
50	Mechanics Institute, Neath	Include in Open Doors programme 2024.	Short term	5	To support the discovery, enjoyment and exploration of our heritage and historic environment.	2026

Ref	Name/Place	What to do	When to do it	Theme	Objective	By when
51	Monitoring Condition	Review condition of Listed Buildings in HHA (Historic Asset Assessment) base and identify structures for investment.	Short term/ medium term	4	To develop the delivery tools for sustainable conservation and protection of heritage assets and sites.	2026/ 2027-2032
52	Neath Abbey	Capital works to the Abbey.	Short term/ medium term	2	To commit investment to maintain our historic environment.	2026/ 2027-2032
53		Develop car parking facilities at the site.	Short term/ medium term	3	To maximise funding opportunities for project delivery.	2026/ 2027-2032
54	Neath Abbey Ironworks	Commission a Neath Abbey Ironworks Conservation Management Plan (CMP).	Short term/ medium term	4	To develop the delivery tools for sustainable conservation and protection of heritage assets and sites.	2026/ 2027-2032
55		Emergency works to falling masonry.	Short term	2	To commit investment to maintain our historic environment.	2026
56	Neath Castle	Include in Open Doors programme 2024.	Short term	5	To support the discovery, enjoyment and exploration of our heritage and historic environment.	2026

Ref	Name/Place	What to do	When to do it	Theme	Objective	By when
57	Old Neath Library	Repurpose to possibly provide mixed uses such as creative and exhibition spaces for creative industries.	Medium term	3	To maximise funding opportunities for project delivery.	2027-2032
58	Place Plans	Collaborate with communities to produce heritage focused Place Plan including: King George V Park, Pontardawe; Neath Riverside Park, Dyfed Road Baths, Neath.	Short term/ medium term	3	To ensure suitable working collaboratively with communities and stakeholders.	2026/ 2027-2032
59	Repurposing Buildings	Find a new purpose/use for vacant/unused buildings including: Bethany Chapel & St Mary's Church, Port Talbot, Y Tabernacl, Cwmgors; St Baglan's Church, Baglan; Soar Maesyrfhaf, Neath; St David's Church, Margam.	Short term/ medium term/ long term	3	To maximise funding opportunities for project delivery.	2026/ 2027-2032/ 2033-2039
60	Review Action Plan	Carry out annual review of Action Plan.	Ongoing	4	To monitor the condition of our historic environment.	
61	Staff	Introduce mandatory Heritage Induction training for NPTCBC staff.	Short term/ medium term	1	To promote a better understanding of our historic environment.	2026/ 2027-2032

Ref	Name/Place	What to do	When to do it	Theme	Objective	By when
62	Talbot Memorial Park	Repair stone entrance and iron gates.	Medium term	2	To commit investment to maintain our historic environment.	2027-2032
63		Repair bandstand.	Medium term	3	To maximise funding opportunities for project delivery.	2027-2032
64		Regenerate the park to support local needs.	Short term	5	To support the discovery, enjoyment and exploration of our heritage and historic environment.	2026
65	Talks & Walks	Our History/ Our Heritage community lectures/talks programme.	Short term/ medium term	5	To support the discovery, enjoyment and exploration of our heritage and historic environment.	2026/ 2027-2032
66		Diocese's Pilgrim's Way, Annual Guided Heritage Walk Festival.	Short term/ medium term	5	To support the discovery, enjoyment and exploration of our heritage and historic environment.	2026/ 2027-2032
67	Twyn yr Hydd	Include in Open Doors programme 2024.	Short term	5	To support the discovery, enjoyment and exploration of our heritage and historic environment.	2026

Ref	Name/Place	What to do	When to do it	Theme	Objective	By when
68	Volunteering	Organise an Our Heritage Place event annually to showcase community heritage groups and their work.	Short term	5	To promote the activities of our community heritage groups.	2026
69		Supporting community groups with 1-2-1 Appointments for funding advice and support.	Short term	5	To assist community groups to access funding to sustain their work and activities.	2026
70		Support community groups to arrange their own volunteer recruitment open days, annual volunteers week activities.	Short term/ medium term	5	To promote the work of groups and inspire people of all ages and abilities to join heritage groups.	2026/ 2027-2032
71		Run annual funding and recruitment events for community heritage groups.	Short term	5	To promote the activities of our community heritage groups.	2026
72	Well-Being	Develop a programme of Family Fun Days that promote well-being at heritage sites.	Short term/ medium term	5	To support the discovery, enjoyment and exploration of our heritage and historic environment.	2026/ 2027-2032

14.2 Resources

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

The Education and Environment Directorates deliver heritage actions, allocating resources and staff. The Heritage Team from these directorates deliver Culture, Heritage and Destination Management activities and services. In order to deliver the Heritage Strategy, a specialist Conservation practitioner is essential for dealing with the enforcement and regulation of Article 4 direction. A resource and staffing plan will be created to establish a multi skilled team of existing staff with a dedicated allocation of time to deliver the Strategy's Action Plan, with supplementary staff to deliver major projects this could be delivered through funding and permanent staff.

14.3 Implementation and Monitoring

The Heritage Strategy monitoring framework will align and deliver against the Corporate Plan's Well-Being Objectives and the RLDP's strategic objectives. This framework will evaluate and monitor the benefits for individuals and organisations as well as measuring the economic and societal impacts for Neath Port Talbot. Methodologies for capturing and evaluating both benefit and impact indicators will ensure that positive outcomes for communities, residents and heritage are realised. These are listed:

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

14.4 Partnership and Delivery Structures

Governance

Our Governance structure, Heritage NPT Partnership will be made up of representatives from National Lottery Heritage Fund, Cadw, NPTCVS and NPTCBC Officers. To add to this collective, we can draw in other partners for specific projects and will evaluate and monitor project delivery against the impacts and outcomes outlined in the Implementation and Monitoring section of the Strategy on page 87. The function and form of the Partnership will be stated in its Terms of Reference, with all partners agreeing to its purpose and opting in to be a partner.

The lead partners of the Heritage NPT Partnership, working with the private, public and third sector will ensure the timely, appropriate and practicable implementation and delivery of the Strategy's Action Plan.

Potential Partners may include:

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

Abbreviations & Glossary

15

15. Abbreviations & Glossary

Active Travel	'Active Travel' refers to everyday journeys made by walking, cycling or wheeling (using a wheelchair or mobility scooter).
ACW	Arts Council of Wales.
Biodiversity Duty Plan	Neath Port Talbot Council (NPTC) has a legal duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity, and in so doing, promote the resilience of ecosystems under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. This plan demonstrates how we will fulfil that duty and will act as a driver for conservation activities throughout Neath Port Talbot (NPT).
Cadw	Cadw is the historic environment service of the Welsh Government and part of the Tourism and Culture group.
CPG	Commercial Property Grant (NPTCBC).
Cynefin	Cynefin is a Welsh term defined by Curriculum for Wales as “the place where we feel we belong, where the people and landscape around us are familiar, and the sights and sounds are reassuringly recognisable”.
GIS	Geographic Information Systems.
GWR	Great Western Railway.
Historic Asset	An identifiable component of the historic environment. It may consist or be a combination of an archaeological site, an historic building or a parcel of historic landscape. Nationally important historic assets will normally be designated.
Historic Environment	“All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and deliberately planted or managed”.
Historic Environment Record	A public, map-based data set, primarily intended to inform the management of the historic environment. In Wales, these are maintained by the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts. GGAT (Glamorgan Gwen Archaeological Trust) covers Neath Port Talbot.
HTCE Fund	Heritage, Tourism, Culture & Events Fund (UKSPF) (NPTCBC).



Local Planning Authority (LPA)	Local Planning Authorities: prepare development plans; consider planning applications and give planning advice. Our LPA is Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.
Local Development Plan (LDP)	The LDP sets out each local authority's proposals for future development and use of land in the area.
NLHF	National Lottery Heritage Fund.
NPTCBC	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.
NPTCVS	Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service.
NRW	Natural Resources Wales look after the environment for people and nature.
RAMSAR Site	RAMSAR Sites are wetlands of international importance that have been designated under the RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands. (RAMSAR in Iran).
RCAHMW	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.
Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP)	The RLDP sets out each local authority's proposals for future development and use of land in the area.
SAC Site	Special Area of Conservation Site, they are protected and support important plant and animal species.
Setting	Setting refers to the surroundings in which a historic asset is understood, experienced and appreciated, including present and past relationships to the surrounding landscape. The importance of setting lies in what it contributes to the significance of your historic asset.
SSSIs	Sites of Special Scientific Interest — SSSIs are the most important sites for Wales' natural heritage.
Supplementary Planning Guidance	Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is produced to provide further detail on certain policies and proposals contained within the Local Development Plan. SPGs help ensure that certain policies and proposals are better understood and applied effectively.
SW Police	South Wales Police.
V&V Prosperity Fund	Valleys & Villages Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) (NPTCBC).
WATs	Welsh Archaeological Trusts.

Appendix A: SWOT Analysis



16





16. Appendix A: SWOT Analysis



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



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

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

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

Opportunities 	Threats 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To use this strategy to identify and agree objectives, priorities and actions to ensure the council and stakeholders deliver effective and efficient management of its heritage and the historic environment. • To promote existing heritage assets. • Utilise Planning Enforcement as an effective tool to control and ensure the pro-active management of the historic environment. • To increase the number and types of heritage assets that are accessible and open to a wider range of people. • To support and develop means of training and learning to develop heritage skills, knowledge and employment opportunities. • To improve traditional heritage skills education and training. • To support the Culture Strategy, that helps to align heritage with other aspects of culture as an important part of the area's identity and presents opportunities to gain access to funding as partners for our heritage projects as part of a coherent whole. • To promote a shared understanding of local character and distinctiveness and provide protection and management through appropriate means. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The potential conflict between development pressure and ensuring the significance of the historic environment is preserved and enhanced. • A continued shortage of skilled quality craftspeople, which has the effect of increasing the cost of conservation works or reducing the quality of appropriate work. • Limited building conservation, planning expertise and resources within the Council. • An inability to effectively address Heritage at Risk through management techniques leading to the threat of heritage being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development. • Continued limitations on available funding for maintenance and improvements to public and privately owned heritage assets, which can perpetuate a lack of investment. • Reliance on external funding and short term contracts of heritage staff at the council. • Loss of staff or resources at key stakeholder organisations, which includes accumulated knowledge and localised knowledge. • Threat of Climate Change: Risks to Building Fabric, Risks to Cultural heritage, Risks and opportunities to landscape character and Risks to people, communities and buildings from flooding, are relevant to the Culture, Heritage Sector and the Historic Environment.

Opportunities 	Threats 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a heritage focused community grant scheme (National Lottery Heritage Fund) and assist groups to develop heritage and culture projects for delivery across the borough. • Identify other sources of funding and investment opportunities to assist with the conservation of our heritage assets and sites. • To deliver heritage projects, heritage-led regeneration and public realm enhancements. • To identify under-utilised and vacant heritage assets that can be repurposed as high quality accommodation. • Build on the existing and explore the potential of expanding the borough's heritage-led tourism offer. • To improve connectivity between heritage assets and develop destinations as part of the heritage visitor offer. • To promote innovative and interactive built heritage projects at Gnoll Estate Country Park and other key sites for example Neath Abbey, Neath Abbey Ironworks, Margam Country Park, etc., to raise the heritage profile. • Re-use and Repurpose heritage assets in our town centres and settlements for mixed use to improve long-term sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure any that proposals for the voluntary sector to assist in the delivery of the council's heritage services are realistic, appropriate, rewarding for participants and there is not an over-reliance on this sector. • The risk of heritage crime happening to our heritage assets and sites.

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

Appendix B: Policies and Strategies

17

17. Appendix B: Policies and Strategies

Policy and Strategy	Link
Cadw: Conservation Principles for Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales	Conservation Principles for Sustainable Management
Cadw: Policy, advice and guidance	Policy, advice and guidance
Curriculum for Wales	Curriculum for Wales
Future Wales The National Plan 2040	Future Wales The National Plan
Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023	Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023
How to improve energy efficiency in Historic Buildings in Wales	Improving Energy Efficiency
Local Development Plan (NPT 2011-2026)	Local Development Plan
Place Making Charter	Place Making Charter
Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 12 (2024)	Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 12 (2024)
Recover, Reset, Renew (NPT Corporate Plan 2022-2027)	NPT Corporate Plan
Supplementary Planning Guidance: The Historic Environment	Historic Environment SPG
Supplementary Planning Guidance: Designated Canal Structures	Canal Structures
Supplementary Planning Guidance: Development and the Welsh Language	Welsh Language
Supplementary Planning Guidance: Schedule of Buildings of Local Importance	Buildings of Local Importance
Technical Advice Note 24 (TAN 24) The Historic Environment	Technical Advice Note 24
Well-Being of Future Generations Act (2015)	Well-Being of Future Generations

Heritage
Gallery

18

18. Heritage Gallery

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

