



Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Partnership
Business Plan 2010 - 2015



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Introduction

Purpose of the Business Plan

The Business Plan is an important document in setting out the vision and work of the Town Centre Partnership and its role in the delivery of an agreed Action Plan. The Plan outlines the structure of the organisation and provides an overview of its achievements to date. It also identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats found within the Town Centre. These have been reviewed and are used to inform the key actions arising and will be monitored to assess the effectiveness of the Plan and the work of the Partnership in the delivery of its aims and objectives. At its heart, the town of Merthyr Tydfil is the commercial, social and retail epicentre of the County Borough and the Heads of the Valleys region. The town also has a growing role as a tourist destination, ideally placed at the heart of the South Wales Valleys with its links to Cardiff, the Capital City of Wales, Swansea and the Gower Coast, the natural beauty of the Brecon Beacons National Park and Geopark and the World Heritage Site of Blaenavon.

If you would like further information about the Merthyr Tydfil town centre or the Town Centre Partnership please either visit www.merthyrtydfil.org.uk or contact towncentre@merthyr.gov.uk or telephone 01685 725106.



Foreword by the Chair



This is the Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Business Plan for 2010, produced by the Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Partnership and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, including an updated action plan. The Plan builds on the success of the Town Centre Partnership in previous years.

Most importantly, the impetus generated by the Town Centre Partnership through collaborative working, has created a positive spirit of co-operation, and endeavours to deliver a programme of regeneration for the benefit of the community.

This year again promises to be an exciting one for the Partnership, with further phases of the Town Centre Regeneration Programme to be undertaken, including The River Taff Corridor, Pontmorlais Heritage Quarter, an opportunity to develop a Business Improvement District, and a focus on developing better facilities to attract more tourism to the area.

The Partnership, through its Business Plan, recognises the importance of genuine team work, in helping bring to fruition the vision, of establishing Merthyr Tydfil as a regional centre for the Heads of the Valleys.

Les Byard
Chair of
Merthyr Tydfil
Town Centre Partnership
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Vision for the Town Centre

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To ensure by 2020 Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre is the regional destination for shopping, business and leisure with vacancy rates below 10% and footfall further increased by 10%.

This is allied to Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's vision that 'By 2020 Merthyr Tydfil will be a safe, healthy and exciting place to live and visit. Our ambition is to become a sustainable, confident County Borough which recognises and promotes equality of opportunity where people want to achieve in all aspects of life through work, leisure and learning. Our vision is to be recognised as a vibrant, thriving regional centre for the valleys with a true Partnership approach.

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Strategic Priorities

Following the launch of the second town centre strategy 'Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Strategic Review' in November 2009 the Town Centre Partnership reviewed its membership, the role of partners and the main strategic priorities that are:

- Diversifying the economic base: the town centre should be the catalyst for encouraging the birth and growth of small businesses
- Broadening the population: the town centre should be a major attraction in retaining and encouraging new people to relocate to and remain in the area
- Extending the retail offer: the town centre should offer a full range of shops and services appropriate to its size and role
- Making the most of the towns inheritance: the town should make the most of its remaining association with the past, reuse empty space and upgrade the quality of its streets
- Securing sustainable regeneration: the town centre should encourage multiple trips and minimise car dependency.

A town to be proud of

This involves improving the places that are most frequently used, with a possible flagship project being the restoration of a key building, creation of a new civic square outside the Town Hall and Library, and a new Centre for Theatre and Arts.

- Reusing and refurbishing key buildings
- Enhancing the heritage of the town centre
- Creation of a new square and public spaces
- Public realm and street scene improvements
- Improving the street market
- A programme of building façade facelifts
- Improved infrastructure for improved access to the town centre and car parking

A well connected town centre

The upgrading of public transport needs to be combined with measures to make it easier for shoppers to park in town.

A different approach to traffic management is needed, with measures to calm traffic while making it easier for people to get around on foot and bicycle, and to improve accessibility for all.

- A new accessible bus station
- New multi-storey car park
- Additional short-term shopper parking
- Improved traffic management system
- Hiker biker trails
- Upgraded access to railway stations and train services
- New river crossing
- Development of a parking strategy

An attractive place to visit and live in

Merthyr Tydfil is positioned as the regional centre for the Valleys - at the centre of a population of 300,000. Merthyr Tydfil has changed enormously for the better and with it are changes in the way people look at Merthyr Tydfil. For the first time in many decades, the population of Merthyr Tydfil has ceased to decline and has risen for 2 consecutive years.

As the regional centre it offers people locally and regionally a range of attractions, including :

- A new leisure centre with pool
- A multiplex cinema
- An international climbing centre
- Orbit Business Centre
- WAG Offices
- Regenerated High Street
- River Taff Corridor Improvements
- Rail frequency improvements
- New housing developments
- Community Theatre and Welsh Language Centre at Soar

Merthyr Learning Quarter

A new state of the art tertiary based centre has been approved by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. The aim of the centre is to radically improve learning and employment opportunities for the whole population of Merthyr Tydfil and the Heads of the Valleys. The Merthyr Learning Quarter will provide improved opportunities for post 16 students to access a broad range of academic subjects, work-based training and vocational courses designed to improve the students learning experiences and better equip and prepare them for further or higher education and employment



Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Partnership Key Objectives

- Attract and increase inward investment
- Enhance the physical environment of the town
- Liaise with service providers to improve standards
- Promote and publicise the town centre and the Partnership
- Reduce crime and fear of crime
- Progress major town centre enhancement schemes
- Co-ordinate the activities of all town centre interests
- Produce and monitor town centre statistics
- Create a clean, safe and accessible town centre
- Prepare and implement a business plan and action plan
- Monitor and review progress of the business plan on a regular basis

Overall aim

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The overall aim of the Partnership is to provide a forum for the promotion and delivery of a range of town centre projects and initiatives that will enhance the vitality, viability and vibrancy of Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre.

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Partnership Achievements to date

Since the Town Centre Partnership was formalised in 2004 the Partnership now has 15 members representing the public, private and 3rd sector. The Partnership now has a small TCM team that aims to coordinate and focus the efforts of all town centre users and to help publicise and inform the public about Partnership activities.

The Partnership has been instrumental in assisting the delivery of a number of projects throughout the last 6 years. These include:

- High Street Public Realm Improvements
- Café Quarter Enhancement
- Themed Markets, including a monthly Farmers Market
- A town centre website
- Annual events calendar
- Town Centre Guides
- New signage and Interpretation scheme
- Free Storenet radios for independent businesses
- Town Centre Ambassadors
- River Corridor improvements
- Enhanced street cleansing
- BID feasibility



Town Centre Profile

Merthyr Tydfil is located in the Heads of the Valleys, South Wales and borders three local authorities: Rhondda-Cynon-Taff; Caerphilly and Powys.

Merthyr Tydfil is ideally suited to take advantage of both business and leisure activities - with one fifth of Merthyr Tydfil's administrative area lying within the Brecon Beacons National Park. It also boasts a strategic road network that allows easy commuting to major towns and cities across South Wales and beyond.

Transport Links

Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre is easily accessible by both public and private transport:

- A470 and A465 allows easy access to the M4 for East and West Wales
- Southern Gateway to the Brecon Beacons
- Town Centre within commutable distance and travel time to the 3 Welsh Cities:
Cardiff 24 miles, 34 minutes
Newport 32 miles, 39 minutes
Swansea 31 miles, 44 minutes
Severn Bridge 49 miles, 58 minutes

Demographic Profile

Merthyr Tydfil has a population of 55,981, for the first time in many decades the population of Merthyr Tydfil has ceased to decline and has risen for 2 consecutive years. The Town Centre is ranked 298th in Britain and 9th in Wales in terms of shopping centre indexes. (Experian Retail Ranking 2008). Merthyr Tydfil has also been rated the eighth Highest Rented Welsh Centre, and the second Highest Performing Welsh Centre over ten years (Colliers CRE In Town Retail Database 2005)

Key Issues

The Partnership has identified a list of impacts on the Town Centre, which are seen as important in defining priorities for action. These impacts have been listed in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.



Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT)

Strengths

NEW OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY SOAR PROJECT

HERITAGE PRODUCT

ONE FIFTH OF COUNTY BOROUGH IN NATIONAL PARK

GOOD QUALITY ACCOMODATION STOCK (SERVICED)

TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

EXCELLENT N/S AND E/W ROAD LINKS, GOOD LINKS (S/E & W IN PARTICULAR), AND REGULAR RAIL SERVICE

PARTNERSHIPS

AWARENESS

RESTAURANT & CAFÉ STOCK

MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

GENEALOGY

LITERATURE PRODUCTION /DISTRIBUTION

EVENTS PROGRAMME

POLITICAL & SOCIAL HISTORY

INVESTMENT IN THE AREA

Weaknesses

RESTRICTED RESOURCES WITHIN MTCBC

IMAGE

CYFARTHFA FURNACE SITE

BELIEF BY SOME THAT MERTHYR HAS DESTROYED MANY KEY ASSETS

COMPETITION

LACK OF SUITABLE NIGHTLIFE

ISSUE OF VISITOR DISSATISFACTION WITH EXISTING TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Opportunities

CYFARTHFA PROJECT

CYCLE/GREEN TOURISM

MORE JOINT PROJECTS WITH NEIGHBOURING ATTRACTIONS

RETAIL/LEISURE DEVELOPMENT

(Trago Mills, Cyfarthfa Retail Park and the Rhydycar Leisure Project and Business Enterprise Centre)

GENEALOGY (SEE STRENGTHS)

Develop Merthyr Tydfil as a centre of excellence.

EVENTS PROGRAMME

Need to be more developed

WORK MORE WITH ARRIVA TRAINS TO PROMOTE MERTHYR TYDFIL IN CARDIFF

Also use major hotels in the capital for literature distribution, and work with Cardiff marketing to target visitors in Cardiff.

POTENTIAL OF WELSH LANGUAGE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

To attract more Welsh speaking visitors.

RESTAURANT / CAFÉ STOCK

RANGE OF GRANT AID FOR POTENTIAL DEVELOPERS.

HEADS OF THE VALLEYS FUNDING

TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

Threats

IMAGE

REDUCTIONS IN PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

NIGHTLIFE

COMPETITION FROM OTHER VALLEYS AREAS FOR HERITAGE MARKET

LACK OF LOCAL NETWORKING



Town Centre Action Plan 2010-11

Key Priority 1 - Safety and Security

To develop close working relationships between all security agencies to ensure a safe and secure town centre environment. To reduce the fear of crime and create a safe town centre environment.

Project	Action	Estimated Cost	Target Date	Lead Body
Business Crime	Partnership approach to tackling crime in the town centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support & promote the Store Net system • To liaise with the local PACT for short term initiatives • Re-establish the business crime partnership to deliver further initiatives • To tackle areas of anti-social behaviour • To reduce perceived fear of crime 	Nil – Projects will need to be grant assisted	On-going	SMT/ SWP/ St.Tydfil's/ MTCBC/ CoT
Design out crime	All new projects and developments to be consulted on by SWP architect to design out crime.	Nil – Covered by SWP	On going	SWP/ St Tydfil's/ MTCBC/ CNC/ MTHA/WW
Ambassadors	Support for the Future Jobs Fund Town Centre Ambassadors in their role. To look at continuing the roles beyond the Future Jobs Fund	£75,000 approx	September 2011	SMT/ MTCBC/ St. Tydfil's/
Street Trading	To continue to assist the licensing department in the implementation of street trading consents. To assist with the delivery of the table and chair permit scheme	MTCBC Licensing	On-going	MTCBC/ SWP
Street Lighting	To continue to upgrade the town centre street lighting to ensure it is effective, efficient and low energy.	Included in individual projects	On-going	MTCBC
CCTV	To continue upgrading the CCTV in the town centre and to incorporate additional CCTV in all future developments	Included in individual projects	On-going	MTCBC/St Tydfil's
Crime Figures	To continue the quarterly monitoring of crime figures in the town centre and being responsive in action against those crimes that escalate.	Nil	On-going	SWP

Key Priority 2 - Retailing and Trade

To improve the retail performance of the town centre, while supporting existing businesses and encouraging new enterprises to locate in the town centre.

Project	Action	Estimated Cost	Target Date	Lead Body
St Tydfils Shopping Centre	To engage with the new owners (Rockspring) of the shopping centre and discuss options for further enhancing the centre offer	Unknown	On-going	St Tydfil's/ Rockspring TCP
Best Practice	To continue working with Lisburn City Centre Partnership to assist us in our development and follow their examples of best practice	Unknown	Ongoing	JC/TCP

Business Club	To support the development of a business club within the county borough. To engage and consult with businesses for future developments. To support the annual Merthyr Tydfil Business Awards	£0	September 2011	JC/TCP
Fairtrade Town Status	To continue the Fairtrade Town Status in conjunction with support for the borough wide status. Continued promotion, support and recruitment of new and existing businesses.	£1,000	Ongoing	Fairtrade Steering Group/ MTCBC/ TCP
Retail Monitoring	Continuation of retail monitoring of the town centre, including footfall, vacancy rates and yield.	£1,500 p.a.	Ongoing	MTCBC/St Tydfil's/ SWP
Markets Initiative	To monitor and review the current markets held within the town centre to ensure high standards are met. To promote the markets held within the town centre as a key attraction.	£2,500	Ongoing	MTCBC/ TCP
Business Improvement District	To continue the development study to see the prospect of developing a BID. To hold a number of consultation events on business needs from a potential BID. Development of a manifesto. BID ballot.	£30,000	December 2011	TCP

Key Priority 3: Leisure and Tourism

To improve the current offer of educational, heritage and tourism activities and attractions available for all existing and new town centre users.

Project	Action	Estimated Cost	Target Date	Lead Body
Arts Centre	To assist in the proposed development of an Arts Centre within the town centre.	£8.5 million	December 2011	MTHA/TCP
Castle Cinema Site	To investigate the future use of the site, including a new build and public space	£7 million	December 2010	MTCBC/ University of Glamorgan
Merthyr Learning Quarter	Promotion of the facility as part of a comprehensive redevelopment package which would introduce major benefits to the western bank of the Taff.	£33 million	September 2011	MTCBC/ University of Glamorgan
Wayfinding & Linkages	To build on the current way finding strategy within and around the town centre. To further improve linkages to edge of town facilities including Cyfarthfa Castle & Park, & the Trego Mills development.	£30,000	April 2011	MTCBC/ C1st
Town Centre Guide	To investigate the costs of installing map dispensers at all car parks within the town centre.	£30,000 approx	March 2012	MTCBC
Public Art	To continue to build on the success in developing public art projects within the town centre.	Unknown	ongoing	C1st/ MTCBC
Soar Project	To support the development of the project and ensure its consideration in any future plans for the development of Heritage, Arts and Cultural Projects within the Town Centre.	£1.5 million	December 2010	Canolfan a Menter Gymraeg Merthyr Tudful

Key Priority 4: Environment

To enhance the overall appearance of the town centre as a preferred location for new private sector investment

Project	Action	Estimated Cost	Target Date	Lead Body
Built Heritage Strategy	To continue to develop the actions for the town centre for this financial year as set out in the strategy and action plan	Individual project costs	April 2015	MTCBC/ MHTT/ Property Owners CADW HLF
Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)	Recruitment of a THI Officer to develop the Pontmorlais Heritage Quarter application to implementation stage. The development of a Conservation Management Plan for Pontmorlais	£97,000	July 2011	MTCBC/ MHTT/ C1st CADW HLF
Building Enhancement Grants	To promote and assist with the application and development of grant assistance for external works that is in keeping with the building style within the town centre. Specifically targeting key buildings.	50% Grant	Ongoing	MTCBC/ WEFO
River Taff Corridor Phase 4	To continue the improvements to the river Taff corridor for pedestrians and cyclists from the Orbit Centre, North Rhydydar Phase 1 and Avenue De Clichy Phase 2	Phase 1 £1 million Phase 2 £1 million	April 2011/12 April 2014/15	MTCBC/ WEFO
Living Over The Shop Initiative	To continue to promote the town centre as a place to live and encourage an evening economy and self surveillance. To investigate funding to assist retailers in developing the upper floors of their properties as living accommodation.	Grant assistance required	Ongoing	MTHA/ St Tydfil's/ WW/ CNC/ C1st /MTCBC
Town Approaches Phase 4 & Gateways Phase 2	To continue to develop the approach points to the town centre, including signage, landscaping and lighting of key entry points. Joseph Parry Way, Cyfarthfa Retail Park, Pontmorlais Circus, Masonic Street.	£950,000	July 2012	MTCBC WEFO
Convergence Programme Funding Application	Implementation of the programme over the next 5 years with our extensive communication plan.	£21 million	August 2011 – March 2015	MTCBC WEFO HOV TMF

Key Priority 4: Marketing and Promotion

To actively promote and publicise the town centre, in partnership with other key stakeholders

Project	Action	Estimated Cost	Target Date	Lead Body
Advertising Campaign	To actively promote the improved town centre regionally in key publications and encourage visitors to the town centre.	£5k	Ongoing	MTCBC/ St Tydfil's
Website	To ensure that the design and content of the websites www.merthyr.gov.uk and www.merthyrtydfil.org.uk and www.merthyrfarmersmarket.org.uk are kept up to date.	£1k	Weekly	MTCBC

Newsletters	Continued development of the Update newsletter to all retailers and stakeholders within the town centre. Informing them of key projects, contacts and other relevant information.	£1k	Quarterly, with special additions involving key projects.	MTCBC
Events	To hold key high profile events throughout the year as an added attraction to town centre visitors.	£20k	Dec 2009	MTCBC/ St. Tydfil's/ C1st
Town Centre Forums	To consult with the public on new projects and developments	£2k	September 2011 and ongoing	MTCBC
Roller Shutter Doors	To investigate promotional artwork on vacant stores within the town centre.	Grant assistance required	March 2011	C1st

Key Objective 5: Accessibility

To improve and develop accessibility to and within the town centre for all town centre users.

Project	Action	Estimated Cost	Target Date	Lead Body
Shopmobility	To continue to support the Shopmobility scheme and actively promote its services.	£10k	March 2011	MTCBC/ Shop-mobility
Cycling	To continue to improve the trails within the town centre. To promote the attractions located along the trails and to improve facilities for cyclists with the town centre.	Included in individual project costs	April 2010	MTCBC/ St Tydfil's
Rail	To maximize on the proposed increased services to and from Cardiff, and promote the usage of the Integrated Transport Facility. To improve access to the station from the High Street.	£0	Ongoing	MTCBC
Bus Services	To promote the use of the fifteen minute bus services to and from the town centre to Cardiff. To work with Stagecoach in the re-development of the bus station	£0	Ongoing	Stage-coach/ MTCBC
Bus Station Master-plan	To revise and develop the bus station Master-plan. Including consultation, delivery and an implementation action plan.	Unknown	Ongoing	MTCBC/ Stage-coach/ St Tydfil's/ CoT/C1st

Implementation

The Plan has highlighted the need for genuine partnership working between different organisations to ensure that the overall objectives of the Plan are met.

Delivery of the Action Plan will be the primary responsibility of the Partnership Steering Group in progressing individual projects.

Review and Monitoring

Monitoring of the Plan's performance will be undertaken by the TCM Team reporting to and making recommendations to the Partnership Steering Group.

Performance of priority actions will be measured against agreed Key Performance Indicators and will be the subject of a six monthly review. This will provide an opportunity to update and revise individual actions within the Action Plan during the course of the year. It is also recognised that changes to the agreed programme will occur as new opportunities arise or in response to particular issues. Health Checks will be reproduced annually to gauge progress and to assist in developing future Action Plans.

Membership of the Town Centre Partnership

Fountain Dental Care
 Chamber of Trade
 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
 Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Society
 Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association Wales and West Housing Association
 Safer Merthyr Tydfil
 South Wales Police
 Stagecoach in South Wales
 St. Tydfil's Shopping Centre
 Tydfil Training Consortium Ltd
 Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil
 Cytun
 Communities First Town and Park
 Canolfan e Menter Gymraeg Merthyr Tudful
 Merthyr Tydfil Local Health Board

Advisors to the Partnership

Visit Wales
 CNC Properties
 Groundwork Trust
 Huw Lewis AM
 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
 Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Management
 Welsh Assembly Government; Regeneration Department

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