



Bala Town Centre Placemaking Plan

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01. Introduction to the Placemaking Plan

01. Introduction to the Placemaking Plan

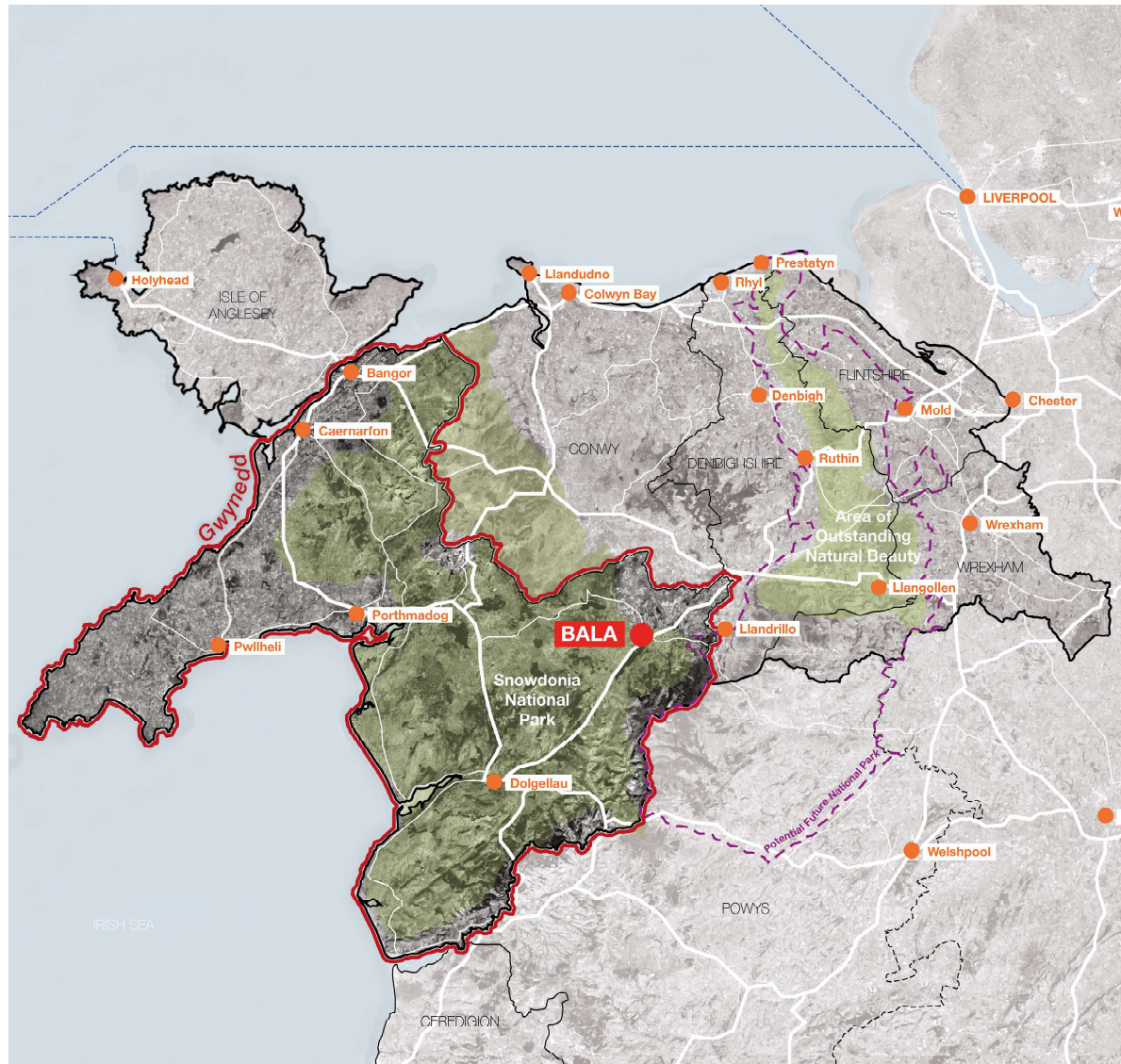
Introduction

In 2021, Cyngor Gwynedd's Regeneration Board agreed to develop a new Regeneration Framework to guide economic, environmental, social and cultural improvements across the County. The Regeneration Framework identified 13 local regeneration areas and developed Local Regeneration Plans for each of them. This includes a Local Regeneration Plan for the Bala and Pellyn Catchment Area.

Following the completion of the Local Regeneration Plan Cyngor Gwynedd and Bala Town Council has commissioned the preparation of the Bala Placemaking Plan to establish key ambitions for the town centre and a series of strategic priorities that can be pursued. The preparation of the Placemaking Plan for the town centre is complementary to the preparation of the Local Regeneration Plan identifying how the town centre can contribute to the wider economic, environmental, social and cultural prosperity of the Bala and Pellyn area.

The Bala Town Centre Placemaking Plan offers a bespoke place vision for Bala based on the shared aspirations of residents, businesses and the Cyngor Gwynedd, Snowdonia National Park Authority and Bala Town Council. It sets out the ambitions for the town centre in line with the Placemaking Wales Charter and explains the type of bespoke interventions that shall be pursued and delivered to ensure Bala remains a key destination for current and future generations.

- Legend:
- Project Location
 - City / Town
 - Road
 - Key Shipping/Ferry Routes
 - Water
 - National Park
 - County Borough Boundaries
 - Wales/England Boundary
 - North Wales Region Boundary



01. Introduction to the Placemaking Plan

Placemaking Policy

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 and Planning Policy Wales identify placemaking as the means to maximise well-being and create sustainable places. Placemaking is a holistic approach to planning and designing development that considers development opportunities holistically in the context of the local place to ensure they are appropriate to the place and best support the community. In this way, placemaking ensures the design and delivery of development that promotes people's prosperity, health, happiness, and well-being in the widest sense.

Placemaking is a statutory process in Wales and underpins decision making to ensure that new development and investment build on and enhance the sense of place of our town's and wider settlements.

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 and Planning Policy Wales requires planning, investment and development to create sustainable places. Sustainable places have the right mix of homes in the right place; include local employment and services; have excellent public transport and active travel infrastructure; and, are green. National policy defines that they also require mixed-use town centres that satisfy local needs.

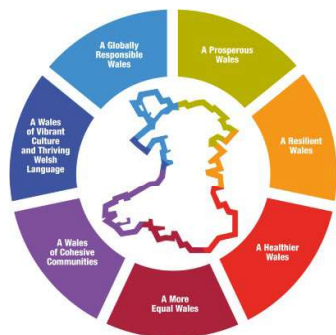
In recognition of the key role that town centres have in building sustainable places, the Welsh Government has introduced the 'Town Centre First' principle, which requires all new major commercial, retail, education, health and public service investments and proposals to be located in town centres. Further, the Welsh Government has established the Transforming Towns funding programme, to enable projects to redevelop and improve town centres and nearby areas.

In recognition of the important role of placemaking, the Placemaking Wales Charter has been introduced in Wales and reflects a commitment by those that practice in development, design and regeneration to support the development of high quality places. Further information on the Charter is provided later in this section.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act is focused on improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. It requires all public bodies to think more about

the long-term, to work better with people and communities and one another, and to work collectively to improve the wellbeing of Wales. The Act identifies seven wellbeing goals to guide action and identifies how public bodies should work.

Sustainable development is central to the Act, and is based on giving equal priority to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. Each aspect of well-being is as important as the other and it is critical that all four are improved. This approach will ensure that "the needs of the present are met without comprising those of the future". As placemaking is the process to achieve sustainable development it is central to ensuring that the delivery of the Act and ensuring the balance is struck between balancing the needs of the present while protecting the needs of future generations.



The seven well-being goals for Wales identified in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

The Environment (Wales Act) 2016 sets out the requirement for the 'sustainable management of natural resources' together with new ways of working to achieve this. The Act requires consideration of the challenges that natural resources and ecosystems face and the opportunities they can provide. This requires looking at the ways natural resources are managed and determining how the pressures on resources can be reduced. Through actions such as increasing resource efficiency or reducing pollution, the aim is to build greater resilience in ecosystems.

The Natural Resources Policy is a key part of the delivery framework for the sustainable management of natural resources established by the Act. Its focus is to improve the way we manage our natural resources. The policy sets out three National Priorities:

The policy sets out three National Priorities:

- Delivering nature-based solutions
- Increasing renewable energy and resource efficiency
- Taking a place-based approach

The Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan 2035 is a joint plan between Cyngor Gwynedd and the Eryri National Park Authority which identifies a vision and a series of principles to ensure the tourism within the area is sustainable "so that what is so unique about the area remains protected today and for future generations."

"Economi ymweld er budd a lles pobl, amgylchedd, iaith a diwylliant Gwynedd ac Eryri"
 "A visitor economy for the benefit and wellbeing of the people, environment, language and culture of Gwynedd and Eryri"

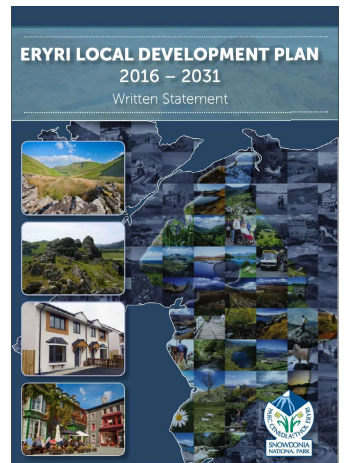
- Datbu, Parhau a Gwarchodw eia iaith, Diwylliant a Threftadaeth**
Celebrate, Respect and Protect our Language, Culture and Heritage
- Cynnal a Pharchu ein Amgylchedd**
Maintain and Respect our Environment
- Storhas bod manwlion i gymunedau yn lly nac anffanteision**
Ensure advantages to communities outweigh any disadvantages

Vision and principles of the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy 2035.

The Bala Placemaking Plan has been developed in accordance with national and local policy and legislation and advances this agenda, setting out the pathway for investment and ensuring that Bala Town Centre is a sustainable place that serves the needs of its wider community.

The Eryri Local Development Plan (2016-2031) sets out the land use planning framework for Snowdonia National Park. This includes Strategic and Development Policies designed to achieve the sustainable long-term spatial vision for Eryri which provides the overarching approach to developing and assessing planning applications.

Proposals in Bala will need to comply with the Local Development Plan with a focus on protecting and improving the special qualities of the space, and fostering the economic and social well-being of local communities.



01. Introduction to the Placemaking Plan

Placemaking Plans

Placemaking plans are the means to ensure placemaking is used as a statutory process. Placemaking plans are particularly important to satisfy the Welsh Government's 'town centre first' principle to address the decline in our traditional high streets. They provide the means to set an agreed place vision for town centres that is supported by stakeholders and can be used to deliver investments that enhance diversity and resilience and increase vitality.

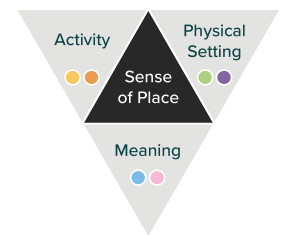
The Placemaking Wales Charter

In 2020 Welsh Government and the Design Commission for Wales, in collaboration with the Placemaking Wales Partnership, developed the Wales Placemaking Charter.

The Charter provides advice for placemaking practice that can be applied to the preparation of placemaking plans; builds on the strengthening focus on Placemaking in policy and practice in Wales and aims to provide an overview of the range of considerations that go into placemaking; it promotes the creation of vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive communities across Wales by focusing on the quality and design of the places where people live, work, and play.

The Bala Placemaking Plan has been prepared around each of the Charter Principles, with each informing the analysis of Bala town centre today, the ambitions for the future and the type of projects that will be pursued to deliver change.

To help shape practice, the Charter introduces six placemaking principles: People and Community; Movement; Public Realm; Location; Mix of Uses; and Identity. The Placemaking Plan has been prepared in accordance with these principles. The principles are reported below and have been used to structure this document.



The diagram above shows how the placemaking principles, identified in the Wales Placemaking Guide (2020) document, collectively contribute towards the creation of a better sense of place and high-quality environment for all.

WALES PLACEMAKING GUIDE PRINCIPLES

ACTIVITY

PHYSICAL SETTING

MEANING



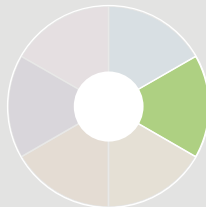
Movement

Walking, cycling and public transport are prioritised to provide a choice of transport modes and avoid dependence on private vehicles. Well designed and safe active travel routes connect to the wider active travel network and public transport stations and stops are positively integrated.



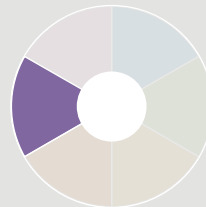
Mix of Uses

Places have a range of purposes which provide opportunities for community development, local business growth and access to jobs, services and facilities via walking, cycling or public transport. Development density and a mix of uses and tenures help to support a diverse community and vibrant public realm.



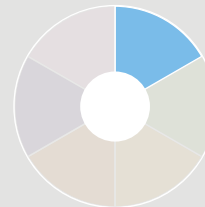
Location

Places should grow and develop in a way that uses land efficiently, supports and enhances existing places and is well connected. The location of housing, employment and leisure and other facilities are planned to help reduce the need to travel.



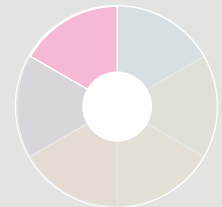
Public Realm

Streets and public spaces are well defined, welcoming, safe and inclusive, with a distinct identity. They are designed to be robust and adaptable, with landscape, green infrastructure and sustainable drainage well integrated. They are well connected to existing places and promote opportunities for social interaction and a range of activities.



People and Community

The local community is involved in the development of proposals. The needs, aspirations, health and well-being of all people are considered at the outset. Proposals are shaped to help to meet these needs as well as creating, integrating, protecting and/or enhancing a sense of community and to promote equality.



Identity

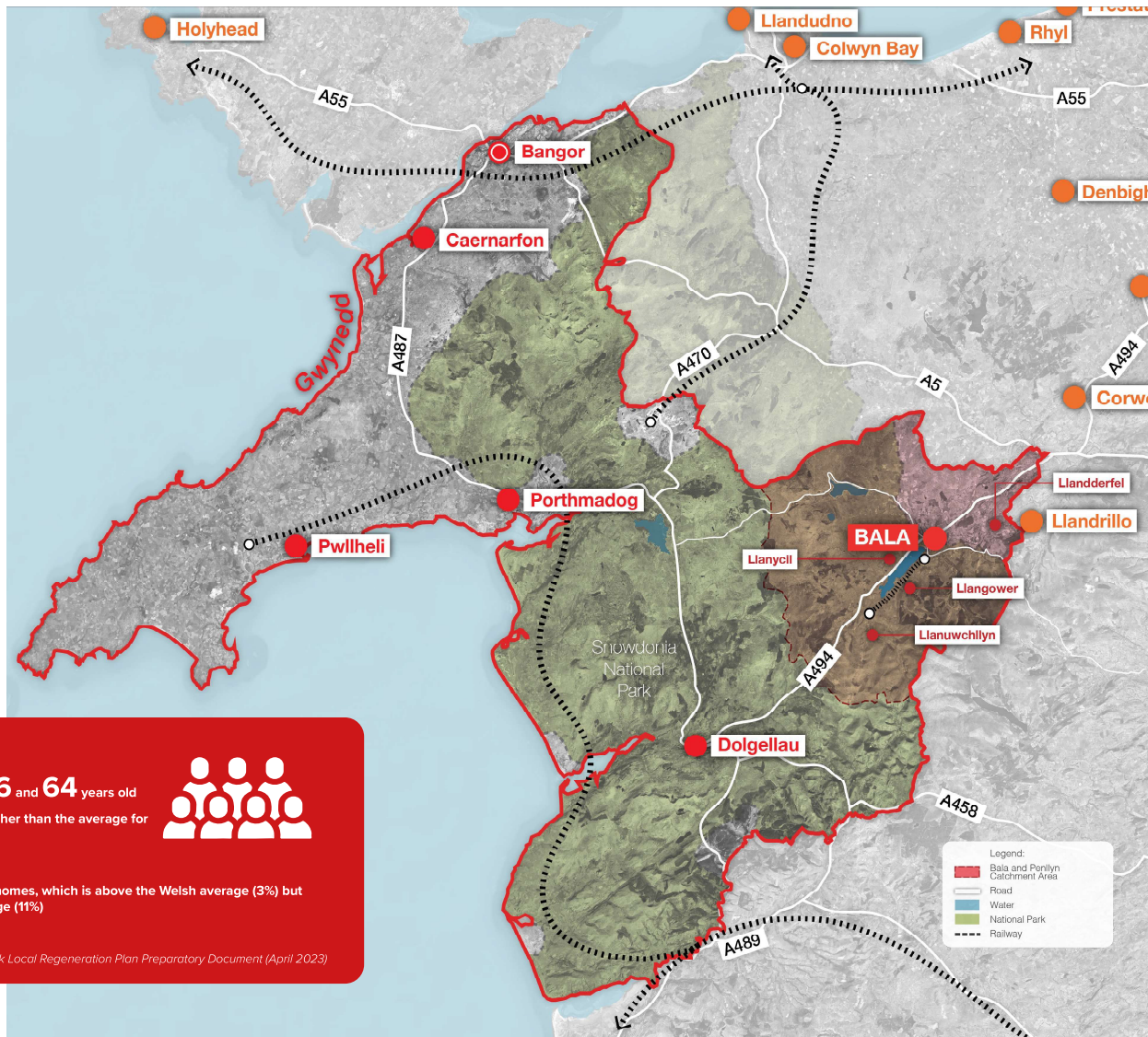
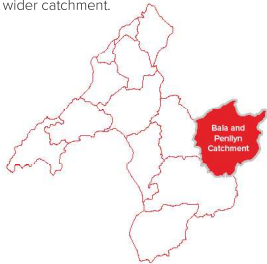
The positive, distinctive qualities of existing places are valued and respected. The unique features and opportunities of a location including heritage, culture, language, built and natural physical attributes are identified and responded to.

01. Introduction to the Placemaking Plan

**Our Area / Ardal Ni
Regeneration Framework**

The Regeneration Framework divides the County into 13 Local Regeneration Areas and action plans have been created for each of the areas. Bala is part of the Bala and Penllyn Catchment Area. This is located in the eastern part of the County, with the town of Bala at the centre of the area. The catchment area includes the communities of Bala, Llandderfel, Llanuwchllyn, Llangywer and Llanycil.

As part of the regeneration framework Cyngor Gwynedd held a series of engagement events, which identified Bala as a key settlement for the area able to provide services and retail offer to the wider catchment.



BALA AND PENLLYN CATCHMENT AREA

4,503 population

60.3% of the population is between **16** and **64** years old

76% can speak Welsh which is higher than the average for Gwynedd (65%) and Wales (19%)

7% of houses are holiday homes, which is above the Welsh average (3%) but less than the Gwynedd average (11%)

Source:
Our Area / Ardal Ni, Regeneration Framework Local Regeneration Plan Preparatory Document (April 2023)

01. Introduction to the Placemaking Plan

Bala and Penllyn Catchment Area Today

During the engagement work of Ardal Ni, the residents of the Bala and Penllyn Catchment area were asked for their opinion from a point of view

- What is good about the area?
- What's not so good about the area?
- What changes would you like to see happen in your area during the next 15 years, will I make your area a better place to live in?

The top five themes identified during the engagement are reported opposite.



What is good about the Bala and Penllyn Catchment Area?

- The natural environment and proximity to mountains, Llyn Tegid and the countryside
- A good place to raise a family
- The Welsh language and culture
- Community spirit and camaraderie
- Good local health and care service and provision



What is not so good about the Bala and Penllyn Catchment Area?

- Lack of suitable and affordable housing for local people to buy or rent
- Lack of high paying and full time jobs
- A high number of second homes and summer homes in the area
- Geographical distance from facilities and services
- The public transport network in the area is inadequate



What changes would you like to see happen in the Bala and Penllyn Catchment Area over the next 15 years that would make the area a better place to live?

- Plans to ensure housing that meets the needs of local people
- Plans to maintain and develop public footpaths and cycle paths and develop green spaces
- Develop plans to meet the needs of young people in the area
- Plans to support local businesses and enterprises and promote local products it would also attract more businesses which will create high value jobs for the area
- Plans to develop a local public transport network that is accessible, integrated and suitable for the needs of the area



01. Introduction to the Placemaking Plan

Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement is essential for the development of successful Placemaking plans. It is critical to fully understand and deliver on the Community and Identity placemaking principles of the Placemaking Charter; and is also essential to ensure shared ownership and enable all stakeholders involved in shaping the character and vitality of towns to work together to deliver investments.

Stakeholder engagement has shaped the preparation of this Placemaking Plan. The engagement strategy drew upon the Placemaking Wales Charter (PWC) throughout the engagement process; utilising the six key placemaking principles to guide and structure how information was captured, disseminated, and utilised with the local community and key stakeholders. This approach ensured all stakeholders consider the challenges associated with the themes for each of the principles and that the Placemaking Plan is in line with PWC. The engagement will continue to shape the delivery of the projects identified through the Placemaking Plan.

The engagement process carried out for Bala is summarised opposite and consists of an interactive site visit; a workshop event; and one-to-one online engagements.

The materials used for the engagements are reported at the end of the document, together with the summary of the collected feedback.



1. SITE VISIT AND PRELIMINARY ENGAGEMENT

Attendees:
Cyngor Gwynedd
Town Members and
Councillors

The design team met in Bala with the client and key local stakeholders and spent time in the town centre to visit key sites and buildings to identify possible opportunities and challenges. The site visit covered the High Street and town centre, the sports provisions and community assets on Castle Street, the former primary school, the new waterfront promenade and leisure centre, the new railway station site and more. Important information was gathered during this first event and provided useful insights that helped to frame future engagement events.

2. VISIONING WORKSHOPS

Attendees:
Cyngor Gwynedd
Town Members and Councillors
Local Groups Representatives
National Park Officer
Business Owners

An in-person visioning workshop was held in Canolfan Henblas Y Bala with key stakeholders. The workshop was structured in three parts and identified key challenges and opportunities - including priorities for growth and regeneration options - and key drivers and ambitions to underpin the future of the town.

3. ONLINE ENGAGEMENTS

Attendees:
Bala Railway Trust
Highway
Councillors
Snowdonia National Park

To ensure an inclusive and thorough engagement, one-to-one online engagements were also held with key stakeholders that couldn't attend the visioning workshop, or as follow up engagements to collect feedback on the draft core ambitions and identified placemaking interventions.

4. ONLINE WORKSHOPS

Attendees:
Cyngor Gwynedd and
Bala Town Council

The meetings aimed at collecting feedback on the draft Placemaking Plan with a particular focus on the core ambitions and the identified placemaking projects. The collected information allowed to refine the Placemaking Plan and ensure that all key opportunities and work-in-progress initiatives are captured within the Placemaking Plan.

Design team and key stakeholders during the site visit in Bala.

Pictures of the in-person engagement workshop held in Canolfan Henblas Y Bala with key stakeholders.

02. Bala Town Centre Today

02. Bala Town Centre Today

Introducing Bala

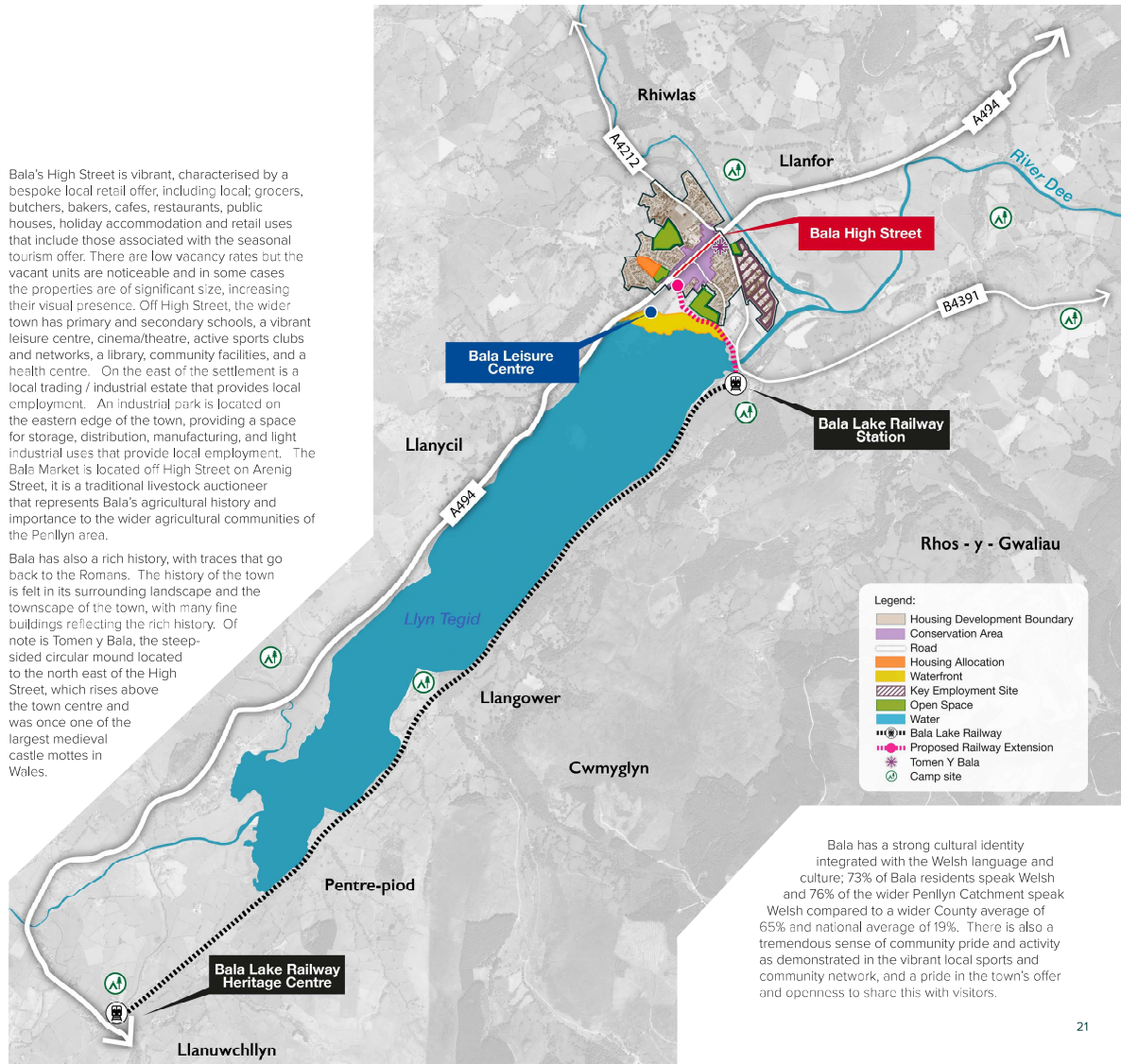
Bala is a historic market town located in the east of the County Borough; it is located near the administrative boundaries of Denbighshire and Conwy. Bala is part of the Snowdonia National Park and the landscape surrounding the town and the famous lake is designated as an Historic Landscape. As a historic market town, Bala is a key settlement for the County, serving residents but also a wider catchment of rural agricultural communities. It is designated as a local service centre in the Eryri Local Development Plan, reflecting its status as a strategic retail and service destination as well as a place for leisure and employment.

Bala has good connectivity via the strategic highway network to other key settlements in the County, including Dolgellau, Pwllheli, Porthmadog, Bangor and Caernarfon. Due to its location in the east of the County Borough, it has also excellent connectivity to other key settlements in adjacent Local Authority areas of Denbighshire, in particular the settlements of Corwen, Llangollen, and Conwy. The town is served by the A494 which provides a strategic west/east connection through North Wales between Dolgellau and Chester. The A494 connects to the A470 in the west which is the strategic highway network to South Wales and the M56 in the east, which provides access to the north of England. The town is served by bus services which operate westbound to Barmouth via Dolgellau, and eastbound to Wrexham via Corwen and Llangollen. Services are limited, however, meaning that the use of private vehicles is the dominant mode of travel for residents of the town.

The town is situated on the north end of the famous Bala Lake, which is the largest natural lake in Wales; it is approximately 3.7 miles long and 0.5 miles wide. The lake blends seamlessly to the Penllyn mountain landscape and the ranges of Aran, Arenig, and Berwyn, which are equal to wider ranges in the Snowdonia National Park, but are typically less busy. Given the strategic highway connections and stunning landscape and visual character, the lake is a significant leisure and tourism asset and attracts thousands of visitors every year, with the summer being particularly busy. The Bala Lake Railway also operates at the Lake, running along the southern shore from Llanuwchllyn to the edge of Bala town, but a planning application has recently been submitted to extend the railway into the town centre.

Bala's High Street is vibrant, characterised by a bespoke local retail offer, including local grocers, butchers, bakers, cafes, restaurants, public houses, holiday accommodation and retail uses that include those associated with the seasonal tourism offer. There are low vacancy rates but the vacant units are noticeable and in some cases the properties are of significant size, increasing their visual presence. Off High Street, the wider town has primary and secondary schools, a vibrant leisure centre, cinema/theatre, active sports clubs and networks, a library, community facilities, and a health centre. On the east of the settlement is a local trading / industrial estate that provides local employment. An industrial park is located on the eastern edge of the town, providing a space for storage, distribution, manufacturing, and light industrial uses that provide local employment. The Bala Market is located off High Street on Arenig Street, it is a traditional livestock auctioneer that represents Bala's agricultural history and importance to the wider agricultural communities of the Penllyn area.

Bala has also a rich history, with traces that go back to the Romans. The history of the town is felt in its surrounding landscape and the townscape of the town, with many fine buildings reflecting the rich history. Of note is Tomen y Bala, the steep-sided circular mound located to the north east of the High Street, which rises above the town centre and was once one of the largest medieval castle mottes in Wales.



02. Bala Town Centre Today

Bala's History and Culture

Bala has a long and rich history with recorded activity data back to Roman Britain. Over its history, the town has had consistent strategic importance and an established administrative centre. In recognition of its importance, it was a fortified medieval settlement and in the early 13th century a Norman Borough was established beside it. At this time the town was granted a charter and permission to create the role of mayor. Tomen Y Bala was also created during this time.

Bala is a renowned stronghold of Welsh language and culture; 73% of the local town residents are Welsh language speakers while in the wider Penllyn area, 76% are Welsh language speakers. This is higher than the County average at 65% and noticeably higher than the national average at 19%.

Bala has had a major impact on Wales and its reach has proudly extended across the UK and the wider world. In the 18th century, Bala was at the centre of a vibrant local wool industry that enabled it to become a specialist location for the manufacturing of flannel, stockings and hosiery. The town was particularly famous for the knitting of socks, even King George III favoured socks from the town to help treat rheumatism. The manufacturing of these



Flag of the Welsh colony in Patagonia.

products was key to the local economy providing key employment alongside the agricultural sector.

Bala was at the centre of the Welsh religious revival which led to the establishment of the British and Foreign Bible Society by a group including the renowned theological writer, Rev. Thomas Charles, a resident of Bala. It is recorded that the Rev. Thomas Charles was inspired to advocate for the foundation of the society by Mary Jones, who saved for 6 years and then at 15 years old walked 25 miles from her home village of Llanfihangel-y-Pennant to purchase a Bible in Bala.

Betsi Cadwaladr who worked with Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War was a resident of Bala and her name is now synonymous with the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, which is the biggest Health Board in Wales and covers the Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham Local Authority areas.

Michael D Jones is another famous resident who was a Welsh Congregationalist Minister and principal of the renowned Coleg y Bala theological college. He was also one of the founders of the Welsh settlement in Patagonia, Y Wladfa, and is recognised as one of the creators of modern Welsh nationalism.

On the northeastern end of the High Street stands a monument to commemorate Thomas Ellis, a Liberal Member of Parliament for Meirionnydd. It was in Bala that he delivered his famous speech calling for a Welsh Parliament.

Bala has a strong association with the National Eisteddfod, hosting the event in 1967, 1997, and 2009. The 2009 event was notable as the chair was not awarded to any of the entrants as the standard was deemed too low. In 2014 Bala hosted the National Eisteddfod for the Welsh League of Youth.

Along with Welsh language and culture, the landscape has been a key part of the town's history. It has provided the setting for the local agricultural sector that has provided important employment for centuries a defined sense of community and strong social and cultural networks that still operate in Bala and the wider Penllyn area. More recently the landscape and its designation as part of the Snowdonia National Park has created tourism and leisure opportunities, another source of employment and business for the town and its community.



View of Bala from Bala Lake.

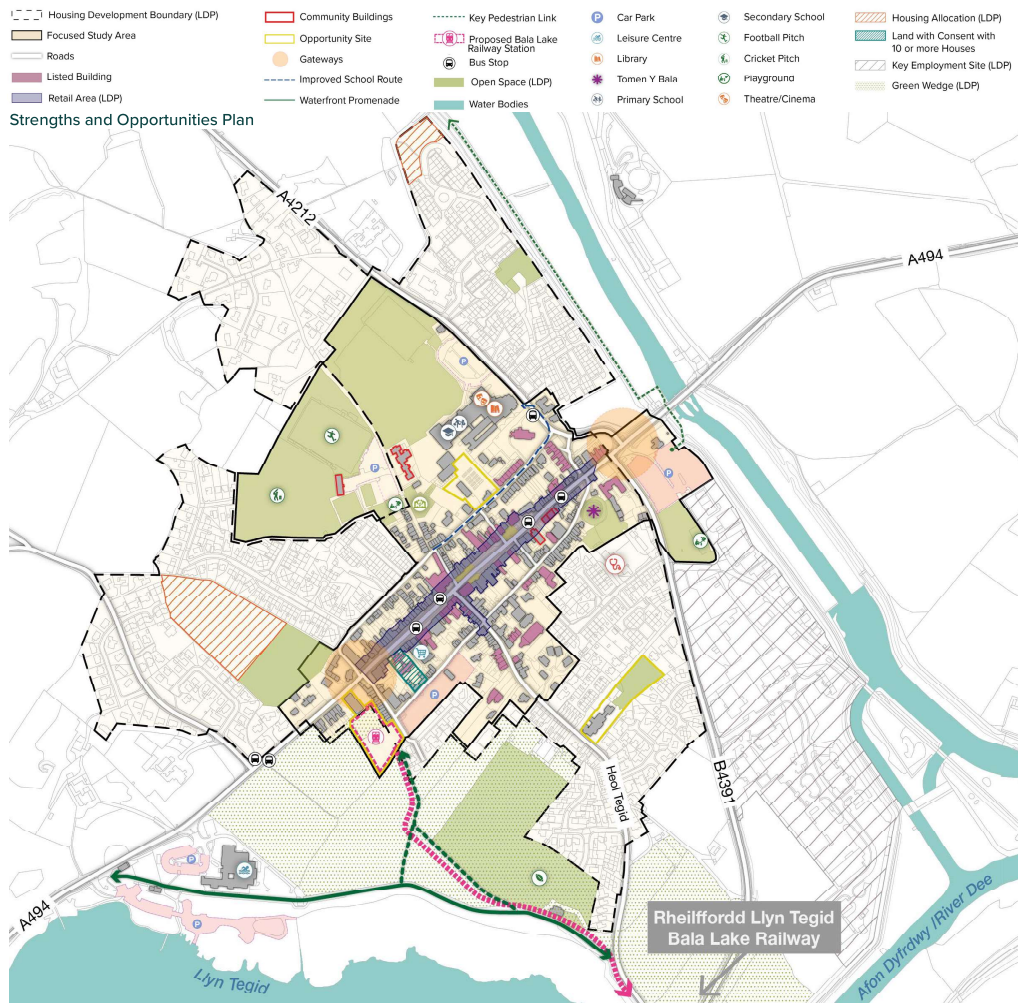
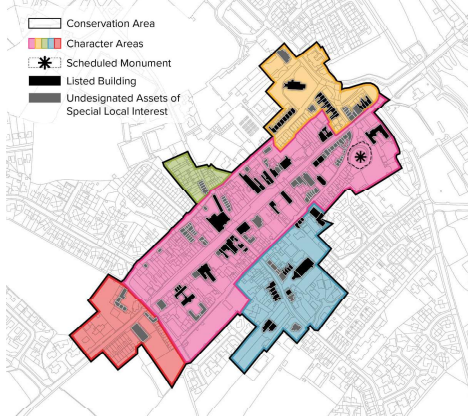
02. Bala Town Centre Today

Town Centre Analysis

To identify the issues and opportunities for the placemaking plan to pursue a place review was undertaken of the town centre. The review was undertaken collaboratively with the stakeholders identified in Section 1 and was based on a walk around the town and then a workshop where key findings were discussed. The place analysis is visualised in the following analysis drawings of the town and presented below using the Placemaking Charter principles via a summary SWOT analysis. The full feedback provided by stakeholders is included in the appendices.



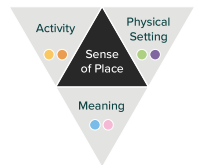
The main public space along the High Street.



02. Bala Town Centre Today

Strengths and Opportunities Overview

An overview of the key Strengths (S) and Opportunities (O) emerged during the place analysis and stakeholder engagement is reported below by Placemaking Principle.



ACTIVITY

Movement

- S - Bala's strategic highway connections mean it is well-visited.
- S - The promenade along the lake has been upgraded and is popular.
- S - Good parking numbers in the town, including designated bays on High Street.
- S - Bala Lake Railway is a great asset for the town.
- O - Improve the existing pedestrian link running next to the proposed railway to better connect Bala Lake and the town centre.
- O - Provide more electric charging points.
- O - Provide better public transport connections.
- O - Regenerate targeted areas along the High Street to provide a better environment for pedestrians.
- O - Enhance cycle routes and provide central storage and rental facilities.
- O - Introduce improved wayfinding and signage appropriate to the town's character.
- O - The extension of the Bala Lake Railway is proposed to connect the town centre

Mix of Uses

- S - High Street has a strong representation of independent local retailers.
- S - The town has a strong mix of everyday facilities including, community places, a health centre, a theatre/cinema, schools, bank and post office, library, a leisure centre and good outdoor spaces.
- S - The foundations are in place for a good night-time economy through the existing pubs and cafe/restaurants.
- S - There is a low number of vacant commercial units on the High Street.
- O - New residential development allocated south of the town centre off High Street will create new homes for local people in easy walking distance of the centre.
- O - Key vacant properties along and near to High Street include the former Bala Cinema, the former School House, Ship Inn, and Neuadd Y Cyfnod. These could be redeveloped or refurbished to help create distinctive entry points to the centre and introduce new uses.
- O - The former 'red' school is vacant and could be redeveloped to create new homes for the local community or a series of employment spaces, while the playing field could be used to provide green space.
- O - Targeted restoration and support of properties along High Street to create a consistently high-quality commercial frontage.
- O - Provide 'spill out spaces' along High Street for local retailers to benefit and create outdoor commercial spaces that create interest and activity.

PHYSICAL SETTING

Location

- S - Bala sits within the Snowdonia National Park attracting many tourists, and increasing footfall in the town. The area has a unique combination of stunning waterside and mountain setting that is also more tranquil than some other areas of the Park. Bala's eastern position at the edge of Park means it is the most accessible part for many day visitors.
- S - Bala Lake is a major tourist attraction.
- S - Bala has an extensive conservation area with numerous listed buildings and the old Theological College sitting on the hilltop.
- O - Build on Bala's accessibility to diversify the tourism offer and make it a year-round destination. To include indoor leisure and recreational opportunities and a regular programme of events.
- O - Express Bala's rich history and association with the Welsh language into the physical fabric of the town and create a cultural year-round tourism offer that promotes respect for Bala's cultural distinctiveness.
- O - Reinforce Bala's role as a strategic town for the Penllyn rural communities and a centre for the agricultural communities. The Bala Market could be relocated to a more sustainable location.
- O - Build on the digital foundations that are in already place and strengthen Bala's brand and online presence so that the wider world can find the unique Bala offer.

Public Realm

- S - Good maintenance of the High Street, and mostly high-quality buildings throughout.
- S - High Street has a strong green character with mature trees.
- O - Parts of the High Street public realm offers opportunities for social and commercial activity.
- O - Improve public space quality and wayfinding towards historic buildings, provisions and amenities outside of the High Street.
- O - During Covid, several parking spaces were successfully used to provide spill-out space for local businesses causing traffic to slow down and people to hang within the town centre. Explore bringing these back.
- O - Extend and activate public spaces wherever possible.
- O - Reclaim areas on the High Street to introduce more greenery and better seating areas.
- O - Improve pedestrian links by enhancing/providing new paths and integrating wayfinding with a priority towards key spaces.
- O - Develop a green space plan to invest in the existing play facilities and provide new ones to provide inclusive outdoor spaces for children and young people.
- O - Improve waste management during the tourism season.

MEANING

People and Community

- S - Good health service.
- S - There are strong local community organisations and assets in place. For example, community gardens, library, leisure centre, active Town Council and Bala and Penllyn Community Association. ...
- S - There is strong local leadership and community empowerment with local people delivering local change.
- S - There is a thriving grassroots sporting scene, not to mention a League of Wales football team that promotes the town nationally and across Europe.
- S - Bala has a strong business community and High Street.
- S - Bala and its residents has shaped modern Wales
- O - Work with the community to change and transform the town.
- O - Support local businesses to prosper and community groups to sustain and expand their services
- O - Develop a sustainable tourism strategy that safeguards the needs of residents while welcoming visitors.
- O - Promote and sustain Bala's role as key centre for the wider Penllyn communities.
- O - Improve accessibility to information and activities provided by the local community social enterprise.

Identity

- S - Characterful townscape and urban structure with an extensive conservation area and numerous listed buildings.
- S - Strong Welsh culture and sense of identity with 73% of the population speaking Welsh.
- S - Rich and proud history integrated to the creation of modern Wales
- S - Unique natural landscape.
- O - Create a museum or information centre and restore and protect the historic buildings.
- O - Promote Bala's association with Welsh language and culture.
- O - Develop a historic/natural trail with physical elements and virtual QR codes.
- O - Promote Bala as an adventure destination and build on the existing natural assets (landscape, lake adventure, etc)
- O - Promote the local agricultural sector through the town and market and sell local produce in the town.

02. Bala Town Centre Today

Town Centre Analysis
Threats and Weaknesses Overview



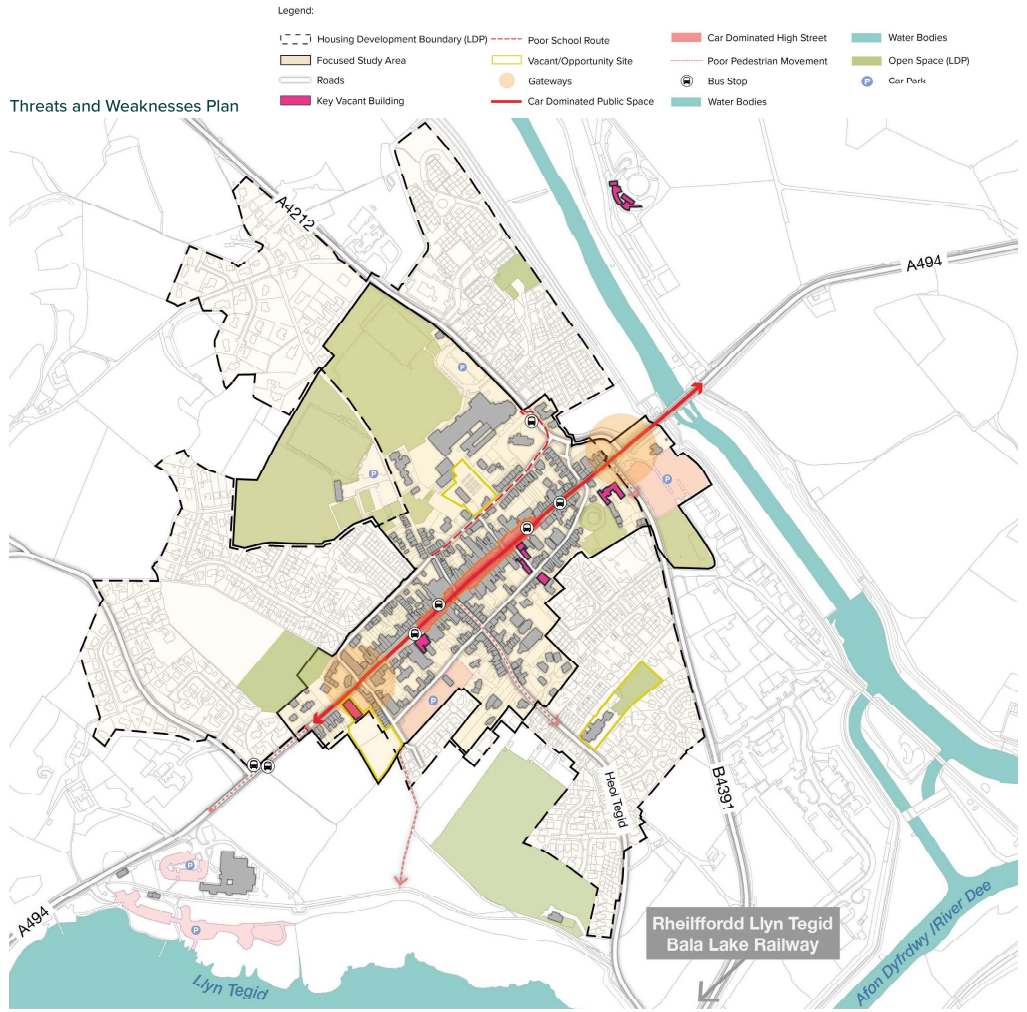
High street. Road infrastructure and parking bays dominate the public space.



Former cinema building.



Former school.

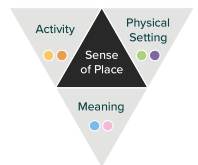


02. Bala Town Centre Today

Town Centre Analysis

Threats and Weaknesses Overview

An overview of the key Threats (T) and Weaknesses (W) emerged during the place analysis and stakeholder engagement is reported below by Placemaking Principle.



ACTIVITY

Movement

T - High Street is the A494 which means it is heavily trafficked which detracts from the pedestrian environment. As a Trunk Road there are specific highway design requirements that are not in the Council's control and which reduce opportunities to improve the footways and Pedestrian areas along High Street.

T - Public transport connectivity is limited (one bus every two hours).

W - Parking bays and loading bays on both sides of the High Street can detract from the pedestrian experience.

W - The pedestrian and cycle connections between the town centre and Bala Lake could be improved.

W - Limited cycle routes and storage.

W - Signage and wayfinding does not reflect Bala's heritage and cultural character.

W - Key pedestrian routes between High Street and key public spaces like the school, sports grounds and the Pavilion could be improved.

W - Accessibility could be improved along High Street so that the physical environment is inclusive for all town centre users.

W - Lack of enforcement of parking along High Street results in short-term bays being used by a single vehicle for long periods.

Mix of Uses

T - Lack of affordable housing for the local community (especially young and older people).

T - The future of banks in the town is uncertain, only HSBC remains, with others having closed.

T - Lack of diversity of uses along High Street and wider town center can result in the town being quiet for long periods of the year.

T - Limited new housing being built in the town and wider area for residents.

T - Limited year-round local employment for young people.

W - While vacancy rates are low some of the vacant properties are large or grouped together. For example, the former Bala Cinema, Neuadd Y Cyfnod, the Former School House and Ship Inn (and rear buildings on Berwyn Street). Outside of the centre Yr Hwb Bala is also vacant.

W - The footways are too narrow for some cafes and restaurants to have adjacent spill-out space to expand commercial activity.

W - Limited choice in national grocers means many people travel out of the local area to do an affordable shop for everyday uses that cannot be purchased with independent local retailers.

PHYSICAL SETTING

Location

T - The convenient location of Bala in proximity to great natural assets can result in unsustainable tourism levels that don't respect the culture of the town. .

T - Limited access to employment as local opportunities are limited.

W - Key spaces are little fractured by distance and limited cycle and pedestrian connections.

W - There is no route (cycle or walking) around the lake.

W - Bus stops are spread out along the High Street however the bus service fails to connect to places and activities within the surrounding areas.

W - The livestock market is a key asset but perhaps not located in the optimum location for its operation and growth.

W - While there are good facilities they are not all centrally located, for example the library.

W - Visit Bala website needs improving and rebranding.

W - Bala is not located close to other main settlements, which in combination with limited bus services means it can feel isolated for people with no private vehicles.

W - Bala Lake Railway is a great asset but the station is located too far from the town centre.

Public Realm

T - The A494 trunk road has an overbearing impact on the operation of adjacent public spaces, and the ability to change the adjacent public realm for worthwhile uses or to improve the operation of the town.

T - There is a lack of inclusive outdoor spaces and provisions for children and young people to hang out.

W - The public realm could be improved. There are only a few public spaces and seating areas for people to engage and socialise in.

W - Waste management is poor in peak tourism periods.

W - Conservation area controls have little teeth, and architectural features have been lost on many non-listed buildings

W - Although trees are integrated along the High Street, there is limited greenery and green spaces within the town centre.

W - The public spaces on the High Street are quite fragmented and constrained by the road and parking bays.

MEANING

People and Community

T - Unregulated and uncontrolled tourism can be a threat to the local community if the town's infrastructure is not invested in to support visitor numbers.

T - The leisure centre is popular and has attracted investment, but it's an ongoing challenge to keep attracting people to use the facility.

T - Some local businesses find it difficult to access grant support.

T - Local GP is of retirement age and no dentist.

T - Some visitors do not respect Bala and the local people, they see it as a playground to use and then leave.

T - Local community organisations undertake essential work and are successful but it's a challenge to attract investment to sustain the much-needed services they provide.

T - Future prospects for young generations with limited employment choices and affordable places to live.

T - Recent years have witnessed a decline in the Welsh language.

W - The local community social enterprise provides a lot of clubs and events for different groups. However, accessibility to their information can be improved.



Leisure centre.

Identity

T - The increased use of 'modern' materials and style is a threat to the town character.

T - The last years saw a decline in the number of Welsh speakers.

T - Increasing development in and around the Conservation Area is not of the best standards.

W - The core identity of Bala lies within its history and the Welsh language. However, the rich history of the town is not reflected within the town centre.

03. Place Ambitions and Strategy

03. Place Ambitions and Strategy

Placemaking Ambitions

Following the completion of the place analysis, a series of core place ambitions have been prepared to provide a future vision for the town and frame the type of investment and projects that will be pursued. The ambitions respond to the place and SWOT analysis and the stakeholders' key feedback.

The core ambitions are presented below by each of the Placemaking Charter Principles.



ACTIVITY

A CONNECTED AND ACCESSIBLE TOWN

...with excellent pedestrian routes connecting the High Street, Bala Lake and key local destinations; with frequent and reliable bus services; numerous and convenient car parking spaces; and high-quality cycle infrastructure that establishes the town as a base to explore the wider landscape.

MOVEMENT

A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND VISIT

...with a choice of high-quality new homes, accessible jobs and support for start-ups, and access to a wide range of services and unique leisure and sports provisions.

MIX OF USES

PHYSICAL SETTING

A SUSTAINABLE TOURIST DESTINATION

...built upon the rich Welsh heritage and history, the excellent local produce and the unique natural landscapes of the place providing an unrivalled leisure and recreational offer.

LOCATION

A UNIQUE AND RESILIENT TOWNSCAPE

...punctuated by listed buildings and characterised by a green and vibrant High Street, with attractive public spaces able to support social interactions and a strong sense of community.

PUBLIC REALM



A COMMUNITY WITH A HEART

...to support and serve the local residents, businesses and groups, as well as the surrounding rural communities.

PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY

A BEACON OF THE WELSH CULTURE AND IDENTITY

...that celebrates Bala's rich heritage and history through curated public art, cultural events and dedicated spaces.

IDENTITY

MEANING



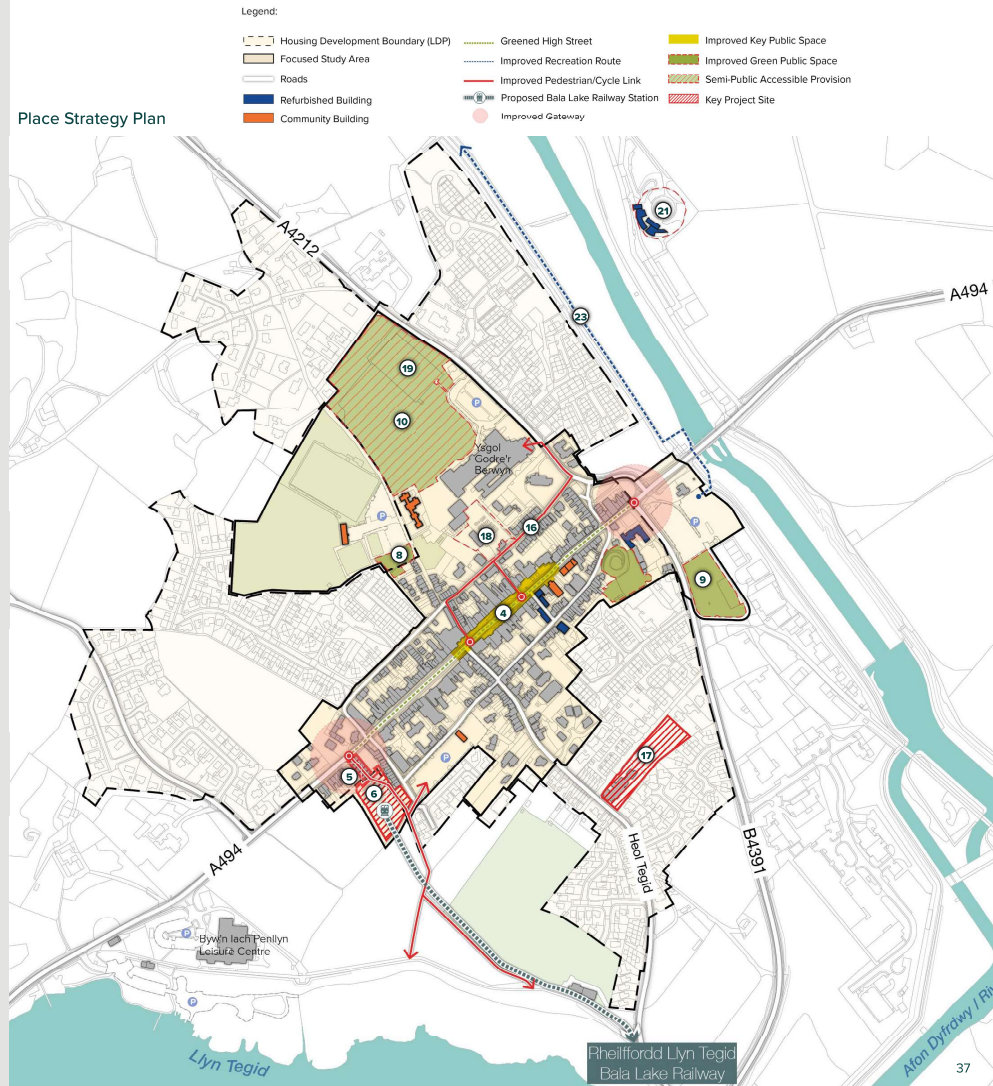
Place Strategy and Intervention List

1. Develop a digital brand and marketing for the town.
2. Develop a community transport scheme to improve the town accessibility.
3. Develop a sustainable tourism strategy for Bala underpinned by the Welsh heritage and natural assets and the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy 2035. Develop a programme of events to extend the tourism season.
4. Regenerate the High Street for an improved pedestrian experience. Integrate greenery, expand the pavement and break down the car park bays in targeted areas to provide spill-out spaces for local businesses. Explore delivering a flat kerb paved surface treatment along the core stretch of the High Street to reduce vehicle speed and prioritise pedestrian movement. Develop a programme of events to activate the public space throughout the year.
5. Regeneration of the former Cinema building and site.
6. Create a new southern entrance that improves the connectivity between the waterfront promenade and the High Street and integrate the proposed Bala Lake Railway Station, pedestrian and cycle links and provisions, signage and wayfinding, public art and lighting. Explore the refurbishment of the former cinema building and site with the introduction on new community uses as part of a phase two of the project.
7. Invest in and support the existing community facilities: Bala and Penllyn Community Pavilion; Heritage Centre; Canolfan Henblas; Capel Hefin; Ysgol Beuno Sant; Heol Frydan Theatr; Byw'n Iach Penllyn; Canolfan Bro Tegid.
8. Improve the existing green public space in front of the community gardens and provide inclusive outdoor spaces for teenage girls and boys.
9. Improve the existing green public space at the north end of the town to provide better and more inclusive facilities.
10. Explore the use of the school ground and sports provisions for public use outside of school hours.
11. Develop a consistent wayfinding strategy for the town.
12. Provide an active travel route around the whole lake to support the local leisure offer.
13. Identify opportunities to combat increasing shopping costs while also supporting the local independent shops (e.g. loyal card schemes, grants, etc).
14. Develop a physical and digital historic trail using QR codes, public art and information boards connecting key elements, buildings and spaces (e.g. Tomen Y Bala) within the town allowing visitors to discover the area's rich history. Explore the opportunities to open a museum or hold a permanent exhibition within existing community premises.
15. Improve accessibility to information regarding local services and activities.
16. Improve pedestrian connectivity to the school.
17. Redevelop/refurbish the former school site. Explore uses such as new homes for the local community and accessible green public space or the regeneration of the site to provide a satellite unit of the decarbonisation hub Ty Gwyrddfa'i in Penygroes to provide training and apprenticeships for local people.
18. Vehicle access to the livestock market has become more constrained with the development of the town. Engaging with the livestock market owner to explore ways to improve the access to the market.
19. Improvement of the all weather pitch within the school ground.
20. Introduce a periodical farmer market that sells local produce.
21. Reopen the former adventure building outside the town (Yr Hwb) and provide a cafe and indoor play and leisure facilities for all ages.
22. Refurbish vacant buildings and deliver new uses where appropriate, such as new residential units, accommodation premises, community uses and retail.
23. Regenerate the old Bala to Trawsfynydd railway line leisure route.

○ Project under development

■ Supported core place ambition(s)

Place Strategy Plan



04. Action Plan

04. Action Plan

Action Plan

The following table outlines how the proposed range of interventions can be brought forward by identifying the impact, the timescale and the lead stakeholder(s) for each project. The projects are reported by highest impact order. A working file of the table below has been issued to Cyngor Gwynedd so to be used as a flexible live tool to track the state of the projects.

□ * Key spatial projects
 ■ ** Quick win.

Timescale
 Short term: commencement within 1 year
 Medium term: commencement 1-5 years
 Long term: commencement beyond 5 years

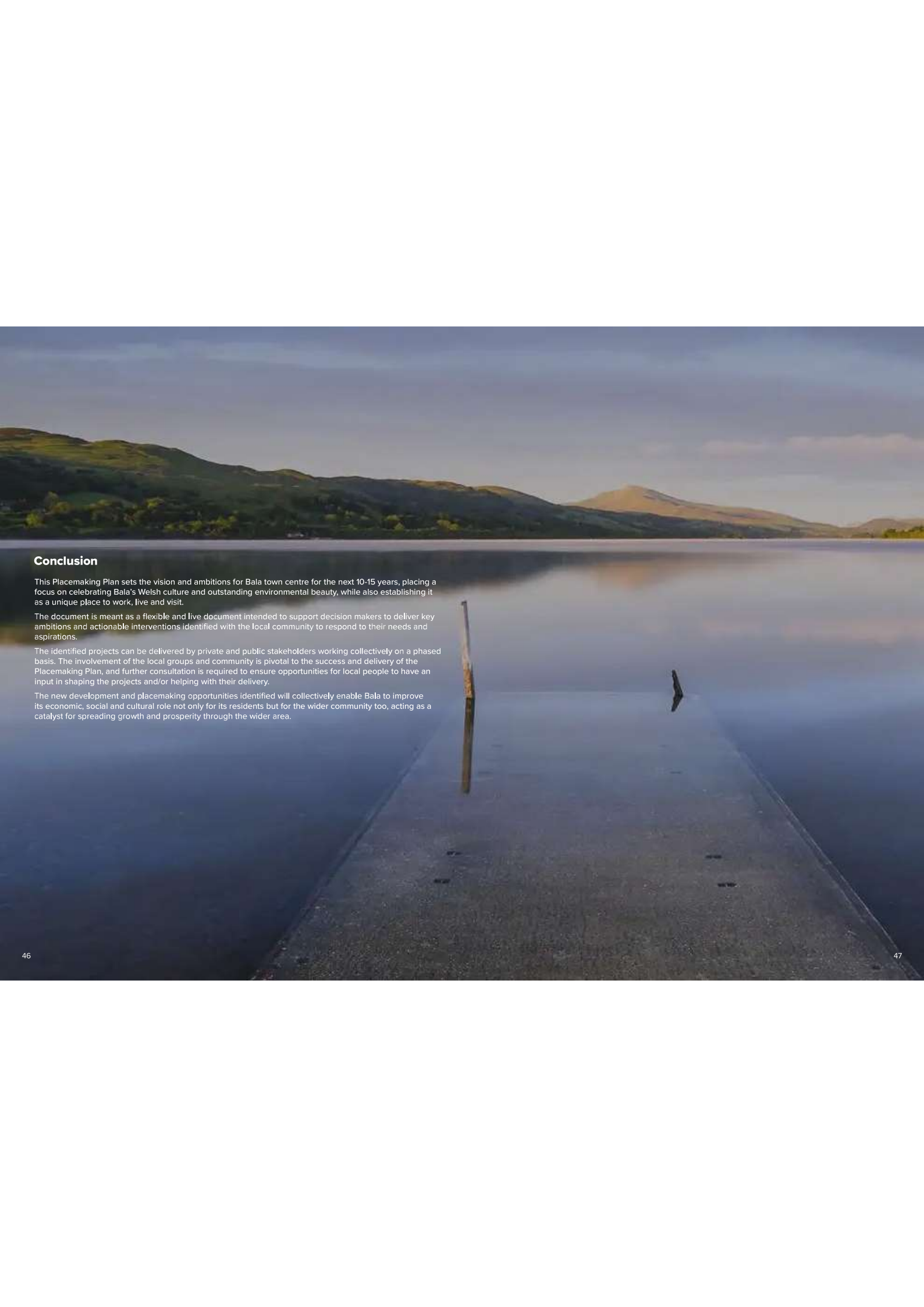
N.	List of Projects	Impact	Timescale	Action	Lead Stakeholder(s)
		Low/Medium/High	Short/Medium/Long Term		
1	Develop a digital brand and marketing for the town.	High	Short	Project already under development with Bala Town Council.	Bala Town Council with support from Cyngor Gwynedd
2	Develop a community transport scheme to improve the town accessibility.	High	Short/Medium	CTPP are currently in detailed discussions with the Community Transport Association (CTA) with the intention of running a Transport Service (probably two electric people carriers together with charging facilities). The intention is to run a service which would provide a personal taxi service (for shopping and medical appointments etc) and fill the gap between public transport and private taxis.	Cwmni Pum Pwy Penllyn (CPPP) is a company limited by guarantee which was established around 10 years ago to develop community projects in the five town and community council areas around Bala.
3	Develop a sustainable tourism strategy for Bala underpinned by the Welsh heritage and natural assets and the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy 2035. Develop a programme of events to extend the tourism season.	High	Short/Medium	Cyngor Gwynedd, Bala Town Council and Eryri National Park to develop the sustainable tourism strategy.	Cyngor Gwynedd, Bala Town Council and Eryri National Park
4	Regenerate the High Street for an improved pedestrian experience. Integrate greenery, expand the pavement and break down the car park bays in targeted areas to provide spill-out spaces for local businesses. Explore delivering a flat kerb paved surface treatment along the core stretch of the High Street to reduce vehicle speed and prioritise pedestrian movement. Develop a programme of events to activate the public space throughout the year.	High	Short/Medium	Apply a partnership and tactical urbanism/meanwhile strategy approach to the project. - Have an engagement conversation with the Highway authority. - Explore the opportunity to develop a temporary intervention scheme to test ideas such as the introduction of parklets, planters, expanded pedestrian areas, etc. Engage with the local community and stakeholders and explore co-designing the scheme. - Deliver the temporary scheme and programme of events and collect data for six months (3 months low-season and 3 months high season). - Analyse the collected data and use it to inform the next stages of the project (revert/amend/permanent scheme). Also consider: - Develop a programme of events to activate the public space. - Develop a strategy to raise awareness among residents and visitors about legal and responsible parking and tackle bad parking behaviours. Gwynedd's Civil Parking Enforcement to engage with the community to identify hot spot areas and times the GPS team should focus their efforts on.	Gwynedd and Welsh Government Highways, Bala Town Council, Town Businesses
5	Regeneration of the former Cinema building and site.	High	Medium	Identify financially sustainable new uses for the building. Prioritise community uses, such as workshop, art and cultural hub, start-up incubator, etc. Consider the integration of the site with the new Bala Lake Railway Station if the planning application of this is approved.	CPPP/Private Investors, Cyngor Gwynedd
6	Create a new southern entrance that improves the connectivity between the waterfront promenade and the High Street and integrate the proposed Bala Lake Railway Station, pedestrian and cycle links and provisions, signage and wayfinding, public art and lighting. Explore the refurbishment of the former cinema building and site with the introduction of new community uses as part of a phase two of the project.	High	Medium/Long	Phase 1 - Bala Lake Railway extension: The Bala Lake Railway Trust has developed a proposal to extend the railway from the existing Pely/Bont Station to the town centre. The Bala Lake Railway Trust have submitted a planning application to Eryri National Park Authority (Snowdonia National Park) in April 2024. With key land acquisition already progressed, the railway extension has the potential to be delivered within a few years. Phase 2 - Former Cinema Building/Neuadd Buddug site regeneration: (Depending on approved planning application, the availability of the building at the time of phase two, and the support from the local community) The integration of the former cinema site as part of the regenerated southern gateway add an extra level of complexity to the project. However, the benefit in using the site to connect the train station to the High Street is significant and we recommend to integrate the regeneration of the site and building with the extension of the Bala Lake Railway if possible.	Phase 1: Bala Lake Railway Trust, and pedestrian link Land Owners Phase 2: Local Community/Bala Lake Railway Trust/Cyngor Gwynedd Neuadd Buddug CK/Bala Town Council

04. Action Plan

Action Plan

N.	List of Projects	Impact		Timescale		Action	Lead Stakeholder(s)
		Low/Medium/High	Short	Medium/Long Term	Short		
7	Invest in and support the existing community facilities. 1. Bala and Penllyn Community Pavilion 2. Heritage Centre 3. Canolfan Herblas 4. Canolfan Bro Tegid 5. Ysgol Beuno Sant 6. Heol Frydan Theatr 7. Byw'n Iech Penllyn	Medium/High	Short			- Assessment of existing facilities and services to identify possible gaps and opportunities to rationalise the use of the physical spaces. Engage with local communities and groups. - Identify priorities and fundings to deliver these.	1. Bala and Penllyn Community Pavilion - Bala and Penllyn Community Association 2. Heritage Centre - TBC 3. Canolfan Herblas - CPPP 4. Canolfan Bro Tegid - CPPP 5. Ysgol Beuno Sant - TBC 6. Heol Frydan Theatr - Theatr Derek Williams Cym 7. Byw'n Iech Penllyn - TBC
8	Improve the existing green public space in front of the community gardens and provide inclusive outdoor spaces for teenage girls and boys	Medium/High	Short			Engage with local teenagers to identify the space requirements and co-design the space. Carry out focused group engagements with girls and other groups that are usually designed out from public spaces to ensure the design of inclusive spaces. Opportunity to involve the school and co-deliver the regeneration of the space with the community.	Local Community, sport associations, football club
9	Improve the existing green public space at the north end of the town to provide better and more inclusive facilities.	Medium/High	Short			Engage with different groups of the local community to identify the space requirements. Opportunity to involve the local community to co-design and co-deliver the regeneration of the space.	Local Community, Bala Town Council
10	Explore the use of the school ground and sports provisions for public use outside of school hours.	Medium/High	Short			Bala Town Council to engage with the school and deliver the project.	Bala Town Council, Cyngor Gwynedd (Ysgol Godre' Berwyn and the Governors)
11	Develop a consistent wayfinding strategy for the town.	Medium/High	Short/Medium			The strategy is going to be informed by the branding. Explore involving local artists to integrate public art within the town.	Cyngor Gwynedd, Bala Town Council
12	Provide an active travel route around the whole lake to support the local leisure offer.	Medium/High	Long			Commission a feasibility study for delivering the last section of the cycle loop around the lake. The cycle route around the lake is almost completed with the exception of a small section that has constraints on both sides. Delivering the cycle path here is challenging but it would unlock a great asset for the town.	Cyngor Gwynedd, Bala Town Council and Eryri National Park, Welsh Government Highways, Private Landowner(s)
13	Identify opportunities to combat increasing shopping costs while also supporting the local independent shops (e.g. bond card schemes, grants, etc).	Medium/High	Medium/Long			Engage with the local community and local businesses to identify possible options. Commission feasibility studies to identify the better option to tackle this.	Bala business forum/CPPP with the support of Cyngor Gwynedd
14	Develop a physical and digital historic trail using QR codes, public art and information boards connecting key elements, buildings and spaces (e.g. Tomen Y Bala) within the town allowing visitors to discover the area's rich history. Explore the opportunities to open a museum or hold a permanent exhibition within existing community premises.	Medium	Short			An heritage trail with the use of QR code is under development for the Bala Charter 700 event. Bala Town Council to support this and ensure that the heritage trail is advertised and consistent with the town branding.	CPPP, Bala Town Council
15	Improve accessibility to information regarding local services and activities.	Medium	Short			Assess existing online and physical information channels and identification of possible gaps and improvements.	Bala Town Council, CPPP
16	Improve pedestrian connectivity to the school	Medium	Short			The improvement of the link that connects to the school is already under development as part of the Safe Path to School.	Cyngor Gwynedd
17	Redevelop/refurbish the former school site. Explore uses such as new homes for the local community and accessible green public space or the regeneration of the site to provide a satellite unit of the decarbonisation hub 'Y Gwyddfa' in Pen-y-groes to provide training and apprenticeships for local people.	Medium	Short/Medium			Commission a feasibility study to identify a preferred regeneration option.	Cyngor Gwynedd, Bala Town Council, Adra (Tal) Cyfngedig, CPPP
18	Vehicle access to the livestock market has become more constrained with the development of the town. Engaging with the livestock market owner to explore ways to improve the access to the market.	Medium	Short/Medium			Bala Town Council and Eryri National Park to engage with the owner of the market to explore ways to better manage the access to the market and ensure it does not clash with the Safe Path to School initiative.	Bala Town Council, Livestock Market Operator
19	Improvement of the all weather pitch within the school ground.	Low/Medium	Short			Project under development.	Cyngor Gwynedd (Ysgol Godre' Berwyn and the Governors), Hockey Club
20	Introduce a periodical farmer market that sells local produce.	Low/Medium	Short/Medium			Engage with the local community and local businesses.	Bala business forum with the support of Cyngor Gwynedd
21	Reopen the former adventure building outside the town (Yr Hwb) and provide a cafe and indoor play and leisure facilities for all ages.	Low/Medium	Long			The building is in private ownership and currently advertise for office spaces, however it has been identified as an important building by the community.	Bala Town Council and Yr Hwb Owner
22	Refurbish vacant buildings and deliver new uses where appropriate, such as new residential units, accommodation premises, community uses and retail.	Low/Medium	Short/Medium			To be led by private investors, but Cyngor Gwynedd, Bala Town Council and Eryri National Park to engage with private owners to ensure correct use of building and support possible community uses when appropriate.	Cyngor Gwynedd, Bala Town Council and Private Investors/CPPP
23	Regenerate the old Bala to Trwysfnydd railway line leisure route.	Low/Medium	Short-Long			Cyngor Gwynedd to commission a regeneration scheme for the leisure route. Phase 1: Short-Medium Phase 2: Long. Land acquisition from private landowners required.	Cyngor Gwynedd, Bala Town Council and Eryri National Park

05. Conclusion



Conclusion

This Placemaking Plan sets the vision and ambitions for Bala town centre for the next 10-15 years, placing a focus on celebrating Bala's Welsh culture and outstanding environmental beauty, while also establishing it as a unique place to work, live and visit.

The document is meant as a flexible and live document intended to support decision makers to deliver key ambitions and actionable interventions identified with the local community to respond to their needs and aspirations.

The identified projects can be delivered by private and public stakeholders working collectively on a phased basis. The involvement of the local groups and community is pivotal to the success and delivery of the Placemaking Plan, and further consultation is required to ensure opportunities for local people to have an input in shaping the projects and/or helping with their delivery.

The new development and placemaking opportunities identified will collectively enable Bala to improve its economic, social and cultural role not only for its residents but for the wider community too, acting as a catalyst for spreading growth and prosperity through the wider area.

Appendix

Appendix A

Stakeholder Engagement Feedback - 1/3

To help inform an understanding of the town centre today, engagement was undertaken with local key stakeholders, including Local Members and Town Council Members, local businesses and community groups. The method of how engagement was undertaken was described in Section 1. The engagement used each of the Placemaking Charter principles to get the insights of local stakeholders. A summary of the collected feedback is below by each placemaking principle.

MOVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus frequency is every two hours limiting accessibility and connectivity to the town. For people who don't drive, local taxi's are very expensive. • The 20mph speed limit is appropriate for the town centre, but traffic does build up along the High Street especially in the peak tourism seasons. • Illegal parking is a problem, especially during high tourism periods. • There are good parking numbers, but often people don't stay longer than an hour. • Better and consistent strategic signage and wayfinding needs to be delivered across the town. • Limited provisions for pedestrians and cyclists. • Safe Schools route initiative is funded and in progress. • There is a lot of illegal parking across the town, especially during high season. Lack of enforcement. • Complete the active travel route around the lake to provide a safe and attractive walkway and cycleway around our Llyn Tegid to support well-being and attract visitors.
MIX OF USES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The High Street is full of independent shops, with a very low vacancy rate. However, the supermarket offer is very expensive and so the community would like to see a cheaper alternative. During the peak tourism season, shelves are often emptied by visitors leaving little for the locals. • There is potential for health services to draw people into the town. • No opportunities for new builds in Bala for housing as no land is available and there is phosphates problem. However could Ysgol Bro Tegid be used for possible housing development. • Opportunity to increase leisure uses in the town centre. Most people go straight to the lake and so footfall in town suffers. Potential for a climbing wall and soft play in town. • Theatre is a big asset to the town and is well used by the community. • Camper vans cause a nuisance in the summer, and an increase in Airbnbs push up house prices and demand. • The library is currently in the school - works well for elderly users from Cwsgod y Coleg and Awel y Coleg. Not much appetite to move it although is a bit far from the town. • Extend tourism season through a curated programme of events. • Some businesses utilise their parking areas to create usable spill-out space, showing demand for external space and 'pavement culture'. • Many camper van sites in the area. Find a way to capitalise on these. • Potential for health services to draw people into the town. • The theatre is a big asset to the town and is well used. • All industrial units are full. There is demand for small industrial units and to support the local entrepreneurial spirit.

Appendix A

Stakeholder Engagement Feedback - 2/3

LOCATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bala serves the whole Penllyn area. It is a strategic location not just for tourism but also for agriculture and other community services. This also creates a challenge as there is a small population but a big catchment. • The community would like to see a better and more affordable food offer as they have to travel to Llangollen or Ruthin at the moment for this. At the same time supermarket development in the town would damage small shops which support the local economy and are key to the character of the town. • Develop sustainable tourism. • The Lake can take away from the town centre - better synergy between the two is needed. Especially in the summer months when it is hot, people flock to the lake neglecting the town. • Use Wi-Fi and IoT to understand the use of the public space and collect footfall data. • Gentrification is a threat to the town. • The town website is obsolete. There is need of improved social presence and better branding. • Bala is strategically located within an hour from key destinations. • Bala has a health centre but not a hub. • Explore building Bala as a sustainable natural tourism destination linked to south of Snowdonia. Opportunities to develop south Gwynedd for walking - currently undiscovered compared to yr Wyddfa. Berwyn mountains easier and more accessible than rugged north. • Explore possibility for Bala to become a dark sky town.
PUBLIC REALM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited green space within the town centre. Investment is needed in the existing play facilities. More flowers and green infrastructure would be great but more revenue is needed for the upkeep. • Improved wayfinding needed. Signage in car parks currently confusing. • Opportunities for pavement culture. This worked well in lockdown, but the pavements are not wide enough, making access difficult to wheelchair users. • Investment needed for paths. • Main vehicle movement is on the A494 through the High Street creating a vehicle dominated environment, with high levels of congestion. Due to ownership, the council does not have much control over the High Street. • Waste management should improve, especially during peak periods. • Develop a Green Space Plan to invest into the existing and new play facilities. • Remove stone pillars on pavements - hazards for parking.

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