



In the summer of 2022, Neath Port Talbot submitted an ambitious application to the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) for the enhancement of Pontneddfechan to address existing vehicular issues and provide a sense of arrival. Ultimately being successful, this presentation documents the key aspects of the proposals, which are currently being evolved with a view to making the necessary statutory applications.

Please be aware that these proposals are currently at concept stage and are subject to change.

Scan to give feedback [Feedback can also be given by visiting www.npt.gov.uk/pontneddfechan](http://www.npt.gov.uk/pontneddfechan)

# Vision

The Waterfall Country Pontneddfechan visitor infrastructure scheme will address significant pressures being experienced by the local community by improving access to services and supporting the visitor economy through the delivery of strategic visitor infrastructure.

The project will provide the necessary capacity to accommodate existing visitors during peak times and manage the spread of visitors throughout the year. This will result in extending the visitor season and easing pressures during peak times of year. The aspiration is to mitigate negative impacts associated with visitors and create a positive visitor experience to this world class destination.

In addition to proposed low key visitor accommodation, commercial ventures will capture additional visitor spending within the local area and will create employment.

As part of the proposals a percentage of income generated through car parking will be allocated to spend on local community projects and schemes to better manage visitor impacts on the local area in future years.



The existing visitor facilities do not create an adequate gateway to the Waterfall Country.

# Analysis

**CONCLUSIONS**

**Strengths of the Site**  
Context Analysis of the development site has identified a number of strengths. There is an opportunity to consolidate and enhance these strengths through the proposals; looking in particular to harness the potential of the site to generate sustainable benefit and improvement for the local community.

**Popular Visitor Destinations**  
As a 'Gateway to Waterfall Country' the primary attraction is the Waterfall Trail but local assets include eating and drinking establishments in the village where visitors might be encouraged to stay, generating benefit to local businesses and the local economy.

**Landscape Setting**  
The back drop to Pontneddfechan is beautiful natural landscape at the edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park and Forest Fawr UNESCO Global Geopark.

**Weaknesses of the Site**  
Context Analysis of the development site has identified a number of weaknesses or issues that undermine the quality of life for local residents. There is an opportunity to address many of these issues through the proposals.

**Narrow / Non-existent Pavements**  
There is an opportunity to improve and provide new safe pedestrian routes through the proposals.

**Volume of Traffic & Parking**  
Pontneddfechan experiences a huge influx of visitors at peak times creating issues of parking throughout the village. There is an opportunity to address parking and traffic calming through the proposals.

**Under-used Key Sites**  
Key sites in the village centre are controlled by private landowners with some areas being under-used and with poor presentation.

**Unique Historic Character**  
The Angel Inn and Pontneddfechan Bridge are designated as 'Locally Important' for their historic and social value. Historic assets define a sense of place, contributing to an understanding of the village and its role in social, cultural and industrial history. This can be celebrated by improving interpretation in the village and enhancing the setting of these assets through the proposals.

**River Feature**  
The River Neath that bisects the village is a key feature that gives unique character and tells a story about the settlement origins. The river banks are overgrown with dense vegetation and views of the river are largely obscured, but there is an opportunity to reveal and strengthen connections with the watercourse through the proposals.

**Limited local services & retail**  
Previously a Post Office in the village offered some basic retail / grocery supplies but this has closed and local residents must travel to Glynneath. A new community Hub can include some basic groceries and farm shop goods.

**Inadequate Visitor Facilities**  
There is an opportunity to provide visitor facilities including washrooms, that reduce the pressure on the village whilst avoiding competition with the revenue generating opportunities of local businesses.

**Waste Management**  
At peak visitor times, the storage and disposal of a significant volume of general waste and recycling poses a challenge and generates a number of complaints in the community. The adequate management of waste can be addressed through the proposals.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the site

# Considerations



The village is dominated by parking at peak visitor periods. There is lay-by parking along Pontneathvaughan Road but this has no dedicated pavement and pedestrians must cross the road between cars. 4 free parking spaces sit alongside limited WC provision.

The proposed site is in a prominent location, simultaneously at the centre of the old village of Pontneddfechan and on the edge of open countryside.

## 1. Views

- The study has mapped key views into the site and outwards to the surrounding landscape.
- It is clear that any car parking proposals can have a significant impact on contextual landscape views and the approach to the village. Proposals will therefore seek to minimise and mitigate this impact.

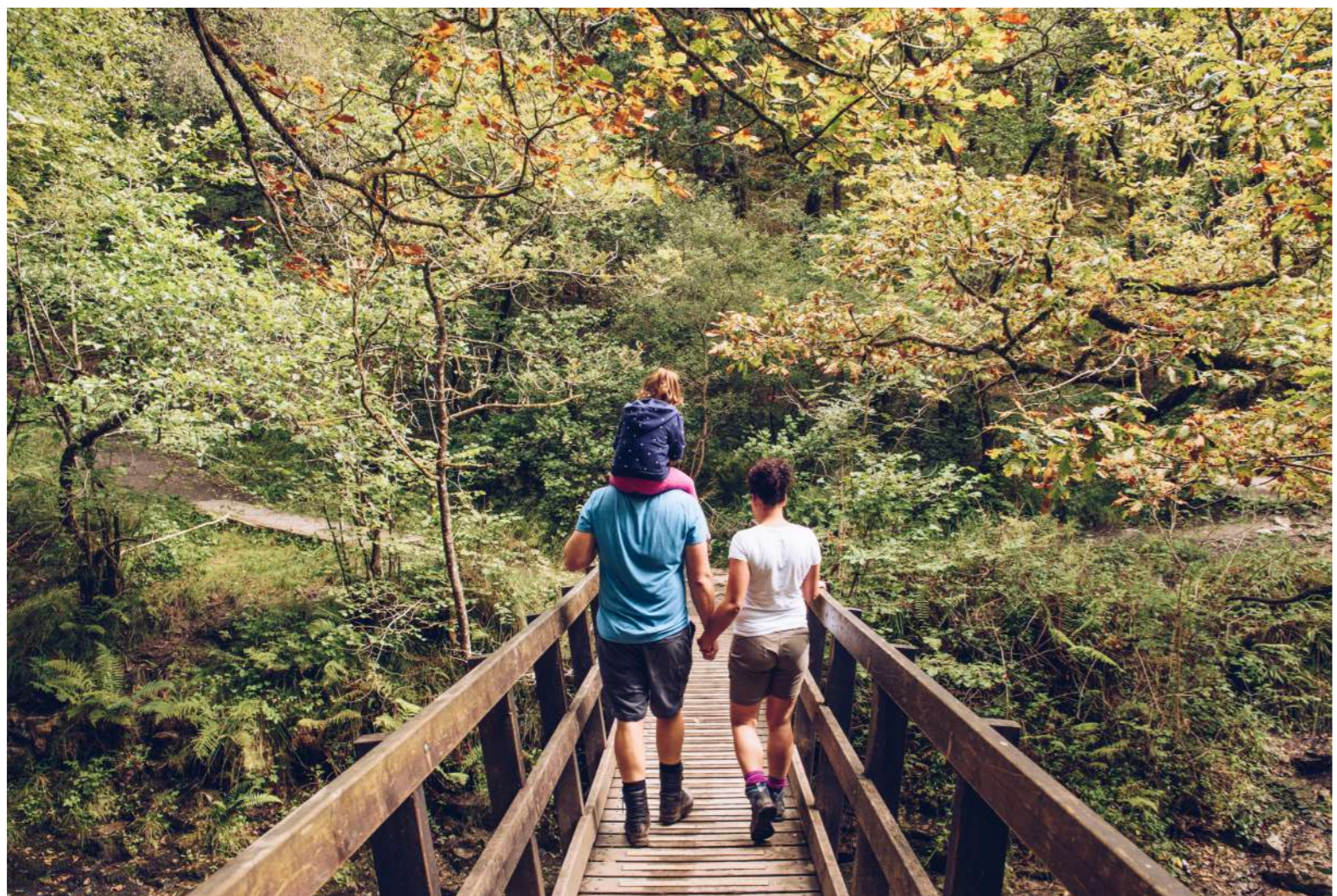
## 2. Car Traffic and Parking

- There is currently a limited capacity of car parking with visitors frequently parking inappropriately. In addition, existing facilities on Pontneathvaughan Road require visitors to exit onto the highway and cross the road.
- Pavements do not align with accessibility guidance and are not suitable for wheelchair or pushchairs when considering the volume of pedestrians and traffic speeds frequently reached along the carriageway.

## 3. WC Facilities & Visitor Information

- Although presenting an exceptional local economic opportunity, the current scenario has a negative impact on quality of life and limited economic benefit to the existing community.
- There are a number of successful local commercial establishments popular with both locals and visitors. However the local economy and infrastructure is put under great stress with peak demand. This is particularly evident with WC facilities and disposal of waste. There are a number of gaps in the current local offer to compliment and relieve existing businesses.

# Response



Pontneddfechan is a key gateway to the Waterfall Country.

An initial study has produced a concept design for Lower Pontneddfechan which includes:

- Landscape proposals for the public realm including highways improvements and traffic calming, dedicated car parking (including EV charging and accessible coach/ minibus provision), improved routes and public spaces; visitor information and sustainable drainage proposals.

The car parking will provide the necessary capacity to accommodate existing visitors during peak times with the support of traffic controls to remove current inappropriate parking. The improved facilities will also encourage visitors during off-peak times, extending the season and providing a more consistent demand.

- Architectural proposals for a highly sustainable Visitor Hub and public visitor facilities including proposed low-key visitor accommodation and community commercial opportunities.

The Visitor Centre will provide an enhanced visitor gateway to welcome visitors to this important natural resource. It will also provide new employment opportunities and services for the local community.



# Overview



The built elements are composed as a collection of pitched roof 'barn-like' volumes connected by a lightweight external colonnade which will provide shelter and opportunities for interpretation.

# Public Realm



Gaps between built elements provide gateways for pedestrian movement from parking areas to the village square. The openings also align with key views from the car park towards the village square or out from the square towards open countryside.

Context Analysis of the development site has guided a design response comprising:

**Traffic calming measures** making Waterfall Country more accessible for visitors and helping to reduce congestion and CO2 emission.

**New Car parking provision** located on the land adjacent to the river and south of the village centre to the rear of the existing Sgwd Gwladys bistro and agricultural buildings:

- To minimise its visual impact within the landscape the parking is on topography that slopes downwards to the south;
- The introduction of trees and broad hedgerow planting will contribute to nature conservation, increase wildlife corridors and filter views of the hard standing areas. In bringing the tree line forward, the scheme is screened to the southwest side to reduce visual impact in long distance views across the valley basin;
- Sustainable drainage will be incorporated to control and manage surface water whilst also contributing to a strong landscape framework that will enhance the visitor experience;
- The new car park will be unlit, except for the accessible parking area. Path routes linking with the courtyard and visitor hub square will have low level bollard lighting, and will include EV charging.
- The siting respects the flood map with all works located outside of flood zones 2 and 3. It will safeguard the river and the associated riverbank habitat enhancing this area for refuge and foraging of birds, mammals and amphibians.

**Public realm improvements** comprising:

- The creation of two connected public squares in the village centre either side of Pontneathvaughan Road will provide breakout space from the visitor hub and provide connections to the Elidir Trail, offering opportunity for a wide variety of events including farmers' markets.
- The creation of a viewing platform adjacent to the river at the entrance to the Waterfall Trail, takes advantage of important views of the old Pontneddfechan bridge;
- A soft landscaped courtyard to the rear of the proposed low-key accommodation forms part of a safe pedestrian route from overflow and lay-by parking to the village centre.
- A pedestrian path following the edge of the river from the car park will create quiet spaces with seating and picnic areas.

# Visitor Hub

## A Visitor Hub & Accommodation, for tourists and the community

- The visitor hub/accommodation provision forms the south-east edge of the new public square in the centre of the village, providing a gateway building for visitors and simultaneously screening the carpark from view within the village.
- The linear Visitor Hub is divided into two built elements:
  - A community/farm shop, associated stores, a warden office and light refreshments shop (focussed on local produce, basic groceries, and some tourism related retail)
  - A much improved public washroom provision, alongside external dog & boot wash down, with appropriate waste disposal.
- Overnight accommodation to complement the existing offer provided by Sgwd Gwladys and local businesses to directly generate an income stream for the longer term sustainability of the proposals, and to encourage visitors to stay in the area.
- A large communal area is designed as a flexible space available for community use or private hire for occasional events.

The hub and accommodation is linked by a covered colonnade providing shelter and areas to collect, with integrated local and visitor information telling the story of Pontneddfechan and the Waterfall Country.



View along the colonnade that forms the edge of the public square