

Rhayader

Town Investment Plan

Draft Action Plan *January 2023*



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The Old Swan Tea Rooms
Ginger's Cafe 097 811060

FRESH BAKED
The Old Swan
Tea Rooms
Cafe Shop

The Old Swan Tea Rooms
Home Cooked Food
Traditional Welsh Cakes
Fresh Soup
Homemade Scones
Vegetarian Meals
Baked Pastries
Cream Tea
Homemade Buns
Desserts
Breakfast
Home Made

Home Cooked Food
Take Away
Freshly Baked Cakes
Home Made

WINNERS
Speciality Tea

1 Purpose

The purpose of this Plan is to articulate a vision and priorities for the future of Rhayader, particularly the town centre within its wider context, to help attract and shape investment and support the vitality of the town and its recovery from Covid. The Plan has a town centre focus whilst taking into wider consideration the importance and influence of the opportunities found within the wider area.

The Plan provides a focus on the town's unique challenges and opportunities and aims to realise the following:

- Develop a shared vision and strategy to give the private, public and community sectors confidence to invest in the town and support its vitality.
- Ensure investment and activity is appropriate to the individual character so it maintains and builds on its assets and strengths.
- Confirm the individual characteristics and assets are used effectively to build on the town's potential.
- Attract investment to better meet the future retailing, economic, leisure, cultural, housing and service needs of the town and local community.
- To consider good practice lessons from other towns.

An important context for the Plan is the Mid Wales Growth Deal and the role it will play in the immediate economic recovery and reconstruction considering the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another important context for the Plan is the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, with a key aim of the Act being to call on public bodies to be more agile to ensure they can respond to ever-changing economic circumstances and to maximise new opportunities for growth. Sustainable development is applied throughout, as well as new ways of working ensuring that local authorities take account of the long-term, prevent problems occurring or getting worse, take an integrated and collaborative approach and involving people.

2 Introducing Rhayader



2 Introducing Rhayader

2.0 Strategic position

Rhayader is located in the heart of mid Wales and is the oldest town in the area, dating back to the fifth century. The town is physically and economically associated with the Elan Valley area and the River Wye Valley.

Rhayader is at the junction of the A44 and the A470, about 13 miles north of Builth Wells and 12 miles west of Llandrindod Wells. The nearest train station is at Penybont (8.5 miles) on the Heart of Wales line between Shrewsbury and Swansea; and Caersws (22 mile) on the Cambrian Line. There are regular buses to Llanidloes, Welshpool and the Elan Valley as well as Llandrindod Wells and Aberystwyth and connecting services to Merthyr Tydfil, Shrewsbury and Hereford.

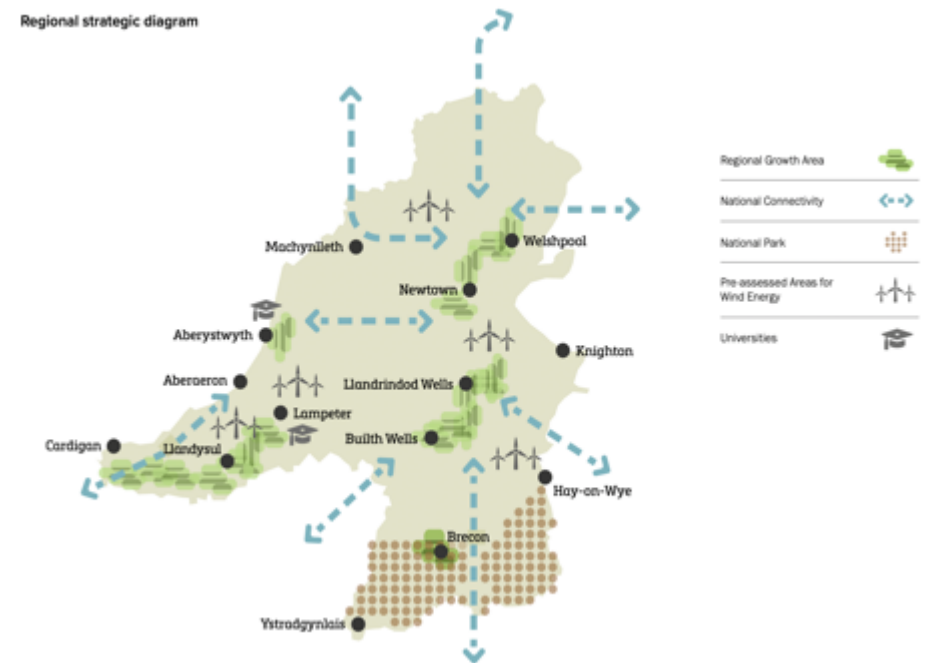
The **Future Wales – The National Plan 2040** has identified the key towns within the Heart of Wales Regional Growth Area; the nearest of which to Rhayader are Llandrindod Wells to the east and Builth Wells to the south. It is one of the most sustainable and accessible locations in the region and a key location for employment centres, strategic housing growth and services.

Regional Growth Areas are focal points for the region's social and economic activities, with a significant foundational economy.

Development in these areas will ensure they continue to provide jobs; leisure, retail and cultural opportunities; and education and health services.

The Heart of Wales towns are historically significant places, forming part of a network of market towns in Mid Wales. Rhayader is a strategically important location as the point at which two arterial roads meet.

Figure 1 - Mid Wales Regional Strategic Diagram (The National Plan)



2.1 Orientation

Rhayader is a market town in Powys within the historic county of Radnorshire. The town is 20 miles (32 km) from the source of the River Wye on Plynlimon, the highest point of the Cambrian Mountains.

Rhayader has long served as a natural stopping point for travellers. The Romans had a stop-over camp in the Elan Valley and monks travelled between the Abbey's of Strata Florida and Abbeycwmhir. Drovers used Rhayader and the Wye Valley route to head to various livestock markets.

It was in the 12th Century that a documented history of the town began with the building of Rhayader Castle in 1177 although there is evidence of settlement dating from the 5th Century.

In the 1890s the expansion of Birmingham, 76 miles east, drove the creation of a complex of dams and reservoirs in the nearby Elan Valley to provide clean water. This changed Rhayader forever, bringing many workers involved in building the water infrastructure into the area. A new railway was built connecting the Elan Valley with the main network in Rhayader although this is no longer in existence.

In more recent times Rhayader has provided a focus for visitors to the area as well as offering a retail and community hub, and operational livestock market. The town is surrounded by countryside, only four miles from the Elan Valley Reservoirs and surrounded by attractive green spaces. There are two parks and a wildlife river walk, bowling, tennis, multi-use games area, walking, fishing and canoeing facilities.

2.2 The Rhayader Community

Rhayader is an open, accessible and welcoming place with a clear sense of community and place. It is considered to be a good place to live and work.

Visitors, people moving to the area and new business are all welcomed into the community. Pubs and restaurants are relaxed and informal; and visitors can spend time with members of the community. Cyclists and walkers are noted to be warmly welcomed.

The town has a strong and vibrant community reflected in the diverse community groups and clubs active within the area throughout the year as well as the wide range of organised events and activities that fill each of the seasons.

Key qualities of the town are considered to be the range of things going on, the community activity, the welcome to visitors and the easy ability to enjoy the outdoor spaces and places that Rhayader forms a gateway to. Peace and quiet in beautiful surroundings are attributes often used to describe life in the town.

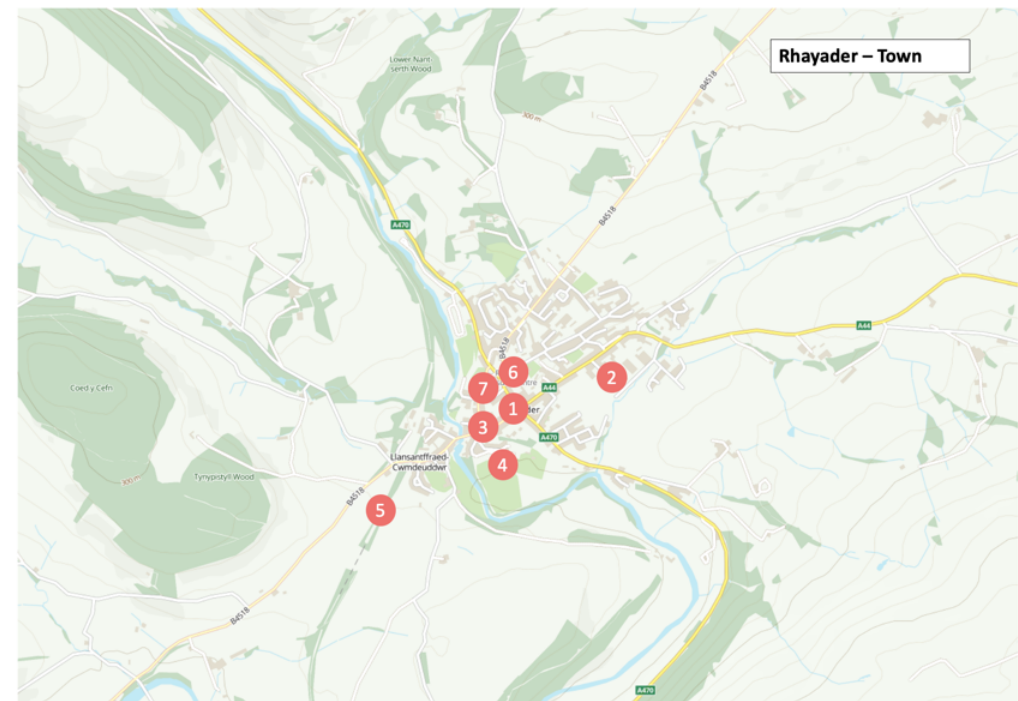
Key elements are highlighted in Figure 2 (Orientation Plan) and include:

1. Rhayader Town Centre is a key commercial, retail and cultural centre serving a rural hinterland at a strategic cross-roads position on the A44 and A470; a stopping off location for travellers passing through mid Wales on the main North / South route;
2. Brynberth Enterprise Park and East Street Enterprise Park represent the principal business parks, focus for employment land and home to a range of businesses;
3. The Lost Arc multi-purpose gallery, café and events space;
4. The Pump Track, a unique cycle short course track facility;
5. National Cycle Route (no. 81) providing dedicated cycle and pedestrian access into the Elan Valley using an old railway line route;
6. Central Car Park and adjacent Leisure Centre offering key community leisure, parking and supporting visitor infrastructure within the town centre area;
7. The Livestock Market has been at its current site for more than 100 years. The ground was left to the town in the will of its previous owner and a Trust established to manage the market. 2017 saw re-investment into the business from the market site's landlord, the Rhayader Smithfield Trust.

Overall, the town area can be considered as three areas or 'hubs':

- **North Street** including Central Car Park, the Livestock Market and car park and the town's Leisure Centre;
- **East Street** encompassing CARAD and the Brynberth Enterprise Park and East Street Enterprise Park;
- **West Street**, including the Library, the Groe, the Pump Track and the Lost Arc.

Figure 2 - Orientation Plan



3 Key Issues and Opportunities

3.0 People & the economy

The total mid-year population for Rhayader was estimated to be 3,538 in 2020, relatively stable from 3,553 in 2011.

As shown in the accompanying figure, in 2020 the town had a relatively large proportion of residents aged 30 to 44 and a high proportion of middle-aged residents, with a median age of 54 years old.

In the 2011 Census, there were 1,608 households recorded in Rhayader with an average household size of 2.2. Overall, 17% of households were occupied by pensioners living alone and 2% of households were workless with dependent children. Some 67% of houses in Rhayader were occupied by their owner and 15% were privately rented.

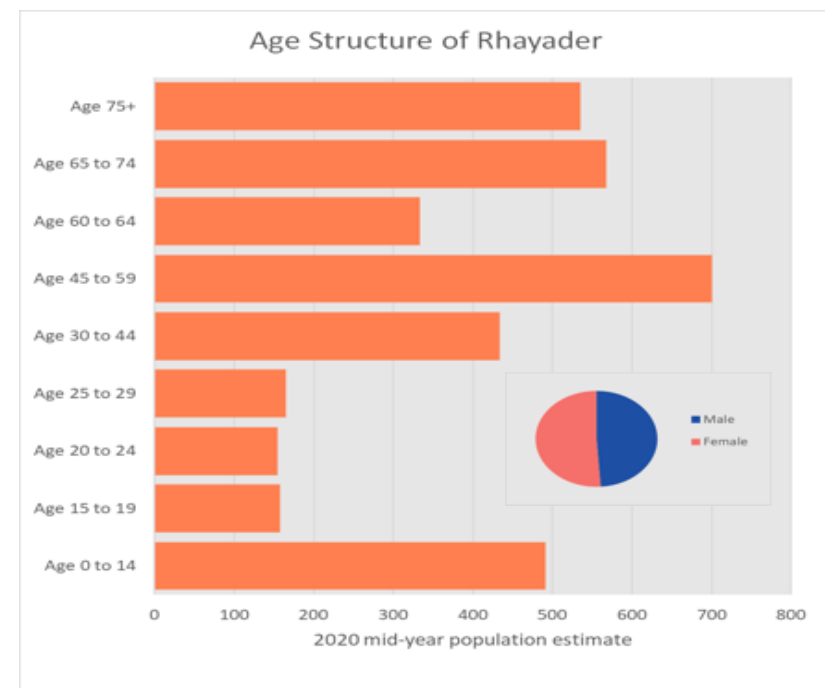
In 2011, 9% of residents over 3 years were fluent in Welsh and 5% of residents could understand spoken Welsh (but not read, write, or speak). 80% of residents had no knowledge of Welsh. Approximately 99% of residents identified as White and 3% were born outside the UK.

Compared to Powys as a whole, the socio-economic status of Rhayader confirms a higher percentage of small employers and own account workers, and a slightly lower percentage of residents in lower managerial occupations.

Rhayader had a working age population (16-74) of 2,535 in 2011. Overall, 68% of working age adults were economically active, just below the

average in Powys (70%). Out of this total, 39% reported working full-time, 22% worked part-time and 32% were self-employed. 5% of economically active residents were unemployed and 2% were students. The primary reason for economic inactivity was retirement.

Table 1: Age Structure of Rhayader



Rhayader had a significantly higher percentage of residents with no qualifications than the rest of Powys in 2011, and slightly more residents with apprenticeships.

With respect to occupation, the largest concentrations of employment in Rhayader for residents (aged 16 – 74 years) were health and social work (15% of employment); agriculture, forestry and fishing (13%); wholesale and retail trades (12%); construction (8%); and accommodation / food services (8%). Professional, scientific and technical occupations and administrative / support services represented some 3% and 4% of resident jobs respectively.

3.1 Employment, sites & premises

The Rhayader industrial market provides important but more localised industrial functions. Demand for industrial uses are for small to mid-sized units, including 200-500 sq. m units and 1,000-2,000 sq. m units. However, requirements/interest that has been cited in consultations with property stakeholders has included some demand for larger units (5,000-10,000 sq.m) confirming the need for sufficient flexibility in the market to support such requirements.

The office market in Mid Wales is overwhelmingly comprised of smaller occupiers. The volume of the office market is smaller than the industrial market both in terms of number of units transacted and the size of the individual units. The demand for office space in Mid Wales is for small units, typically less than 200 sq.m.

Occupancy rates are high in Mid Wales as a whole for industrial and office units. In particular, industrial units in Powys have very high occupancy levels suggesting that businesses looking to enter the market would have difficulty finding appropriate premises. This is corroborated by the evidence gathered from the commercial agents who report a lack of available stock limiting the market across Powys.

Viability of commercial development projects in Mid Wales is a major constraint to development including in Rhayader. Commercial projects are not being progressed by the private sector as development costs are considered to outweigh the potential income generated by the schemes.

The East Street Enterprise Park (originally delivered by the Development Board for Rural Wales) provides workshops / business units of varying size including detached and smaller terraced units in the range circa 74 sq.m (800 sq.ft) to 278 sq.m (3,000 sq. ft). The site provides a mix of industrial units occupied by local firms with good levels of occupancy. In addition, the adjacent Welsh Government Brynberth Enterprise Park accessed from East Street (A44) provides a good mix of more modern, larger units (5,140 sq.ft to 28,790 sq.ft /478 – 2675 sq.m). The units have all been sold by Welsh Government who confirm that the remaining land plots (Plot C2, 0.49 Ha and Plot C3 1.64 Ha) remain available with no interest reported.



Quality of the existing floorspace, in terms of stock condition, layout, energy efficiency and size of units was raised by local agents as factors requiring attention to support lettings and use in future in Rhayader.

Rhayader was allocated 3.7 Ha of new employment land for the period 2011 – 2026 in the existing Powys Local Development Plan. The additional land was allocated to the south and east of the Brynberth Enterprise Park as a planned extension (ref: **PA52 EAI**). The allocated land is still available

at the time of writing and agents indicate a lack of market demand in this location compared to available land / sites elsewhere.

3.2 Agriculture



Agriculture is a big part of the local economy with some of the highest densities of sheep farming found in the world.

Livestock Market

The market has been at its site for more than 100 years. The ground was left to the town in the will of its previous owner, consequently the trust was set-up to manage the market, giving the people in the area a way to buy and sell livestock. 2017 saw re-investment into the business from the market site's landlord, the Rhayader Smithfield Trust, in the form of new sheep pens with the capacity to pen 3,000 prime lambs.

Rhayader regularly attracts 800 to 1,500 lambs and 500 to 1,000 cull ewes each week, with numbers reaching in excess of 3,000 lambs and 1,500 ewes during peak season. Store cattle, cows and calves and TB tested barren cattle are sold monthly on Wednesdays throughout the year with store and breeding sheep sales held monthly on Saturday's throughout later August to October. Rhayader is renowned for its October breeding ewe sale which sees in excess of 6,500 Welsh and Hard Speckle ewe and ewe lambs selling to buyers from as far as Devon and Cornwall.

More widely, Rhayader is within 20 minutes' drive of the Royal Welsh Show held at Llanelwedd near Builth Wells. Rhayader is within the sphere of influence for the Show as it helps support visitors through the provision of accommodation and food services.



3.3 Town Centre

Character

Rhayader is a high quality town centre which is largely within a designated Conservation Area and with a pre-dominance of older properties along each of the four main axis roads (North, East, South and West Streets) alongside the war memorial and clock tower as a key central points within the Town Centre. The Town Centre is characterised by examples of 19th and early 20th Century commercial buildings with attractive and well maintained frontages / shopfronts and a distinctive and unique varied streetscape.

The public realm is of mixed quality in terms of the space available for pedestrians and the up-keep of the pavements, etc. however the overall appearance is generally good.

There are no significant out-of-town retail facilities in Rhayader.

The defined town centre area of Rhayader is focused around the crossing of the four principal roads leading into the town. The boundary is tightly drawn and the main primary shopping frontage is limited to commercial premises on West Street and East Street. The overall town centre definition is of a tight, nucleated centre with the primary retail and commercial focus on a linear east-west axis.

Diversity

Overall the range and diversity of town centres uses and activities is reflective of Rhayader's role and function as a key District Centre in its local

hinterland. The town centre comprises a strong mix of mainly independent commercial uses, a positive feature of the centre. These include:

- A range of cafes, public houses, hot food takeaways and small restaurants;
- Post Office;
- Two larger convenience retail stores (Co-op and SPAR);
- Doctors surgery and dentists;
- Pharmacy (Rowlands Pharmacy);
- Hardware store (Haford Hardware) which is a well known 'destination' retailer with a substantial social media presence;
- IT and computer sales / repairs (Rhayader Computers);
- Various professional services (hairdressers, estate agencies, laundrette);
- Other shops include butchers, electrical outlet, gift shops, off-licence, newsagents, pet supplies, florists, clothing;
- Cycle sales, E-bikes and repair stores;
- Royal Welsh Crystal;
- Community hub at The Arches (Rhayader & District Community Support); and CARAD on East Street.

Although located outside of the defined Town Centre on Bridge Street, the Lost Arc (also known as the Old Drill Hall, or 'The Mace'), is an entertainment venue, café and arts centre offering a wide mix of activities and entertainment opportunities. The main space in The Old Drill Hall is

dedicated to music, film and theatre. The extent and range of events and activities is impressive and the Lost Arc helps support the visitor and evening economy as well as the social and community strength of the town.

There is notable lack of banking facilities in Rhayader other than ATM cash machines in West Street, Cross Street and at the Co-op and Spar stores and some banking facilities provided through the Post Office.

Leisure facilities in the town centre include Rhayader Leisure Centre and Swimming Pool in North Street within the town centre offering gym, swimming, group exercise classes, activity and facility hire spaces. The facility offers an extended mix of uses which is beneficial for the local community and also attractive to visitors to Rhayader town centre (particularly during evenings, shoulder and off-peak seasons). The Leisure Centre has been at the heart of the local community for many years. The Centre is therefore an important facility for the health and wellbeing of residents and a key local employer. The provision of function rooms support social activities and community well-being and it has a strong existing role in the sense of place and vibrancy of Rhayader.

CACI data indicates some churn in retail and commercial units (change in use of some 14 units) over the period from 2016 – 2022 but very few units that could be identified as long term vacancies.



Spending patterns

Annual spend in Rhayader town centre is £1.1 million with a further £0.5 million spent online by people living within the town's catchment area according to analysis by CACI in March 2022.

Residential spend accounts for 70% of the £1.1 million spent in the town centre, with tourist and worker spend accounting for 15% each. The proportion of tourist spend is slightly higher than in other similar sized towns in Powys.

The town's shopper population is estimated to be 500 people whose spending is in line with the regional average (base)

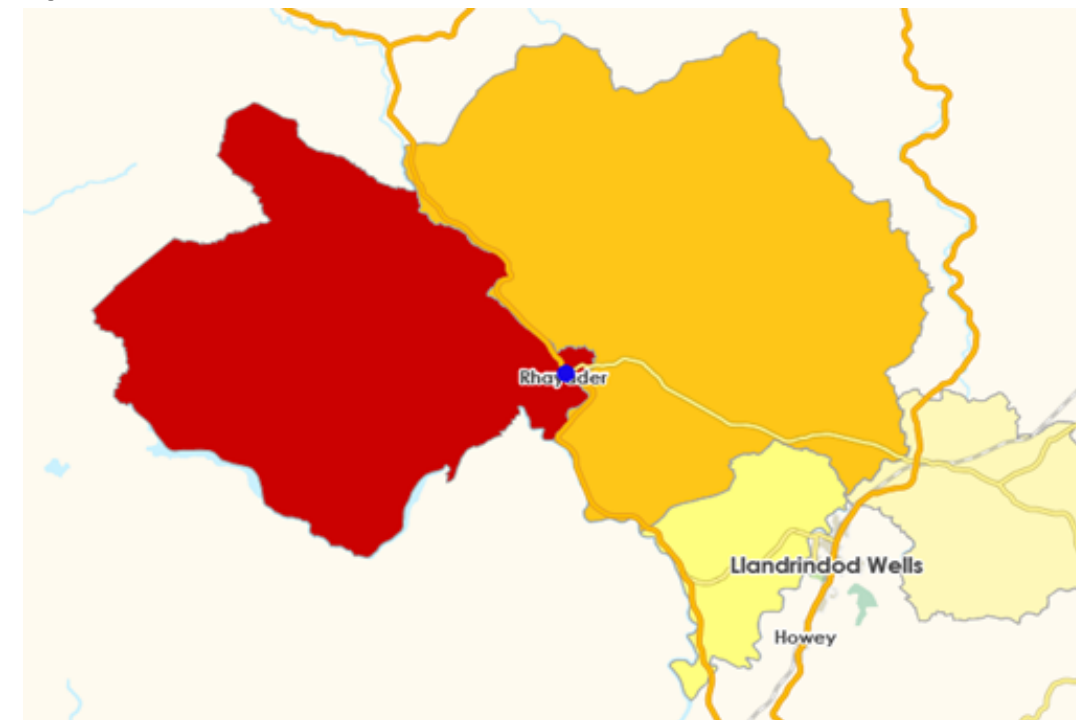
Infrastructure

The town centre environment is influenced by through traffic movements on the strategic road network, particularly at the central cross-roads where there is very limited road space for larger vehicles (including HGV's) to turn around the war memorial clock.

The traffic dominance is a physical barrier to pedestrians particularly those on East Street, North Street and South Street where pavements are of variable width. The Town's overall layout based on the central cross-roads is however easily legible for pedestrians and for vehicular traffic. Routing signage for vehicles to the Town Centre's public car parks as well as for through-routes is reasonable. Some of the visitor signage (the Brown Signs) are dated however and no longer reflect the town's current offer. These require update investment.

Other town centre infrastructure includes two public car parks (Rhayader Central car park and the Market car park). The Market car park is free of charge when not in use for the Livestock Market. There is also free parking available at the Lost Arc. There are public WC facilities including baby changing provision.

Figure 2 - Map of Rhayader's retail catchment



■ Primary catchment – 50% of shoppers

- Secondary catchment – 25% of shoppers
- Tertiary catchment – 15% of shoppers
- Quaternary catchment – 10% of shoppers



3.4 Visitor economy

Rhayader's location at the crossroads of mid Wales, main 'gateway' to the Elan Valley, accessibility and within easy reach of several major centres of population, means it is well placed to welcome visitors looking for day visits, weekend breaks and longer holiday stays. The town is an important visitor and tourist centre.

Within Rhayader the following key attractions draw visitors into the centre:

- The Lost ARC café, gallery and events space which provides a multi-purpose facility and attraction of local people and visitors;
- The Pump Track Wales cycle facility, a distinctive purpose-built split sprint track facility within the town;
- The town's Leisure Centre and Swimming Pool which offers a wide range of leisure activities and classes located within the town centre area;
- CARAD, an independent charity promoting participation in arts and heritage activity for Rhayader and the surrounding area. CARAD provides a creative hub supporting local and town-wide events and includes opportunities for visitors to learn more about the Rhayader area (including through the 'Timescape Rhayader' visitor attraction scheduled to open in Spring 2023);
- The Elan Valley National cycle route (81), Wye Valley Way and riverside walk that link into the Town Centre area;

- The range of visitor hotel, B&B and other self-catered accommodation within the centre;
- The built-heritage and visitor retail, food and beverage and leisure offer situated within the Town Centre;
- The Rhayader Carnival - an annual week long series of carnival events and attractions in the town that has been running for many years. (<https://www.rhayadercarnival.co.uk/index.php>).



In addition, there is a recently installed digital interactive sign at the town centre's crossroads that creates a positive engagement with visitors, it provides visitors with an interactive touchscreen containing pages of Google maps, local business and accommodation directories; up to date what's on' and information about nearby attractions. The facility is centrally located at West Street offers an information 'gateway' to Rhayader.

More widely, the Elan Valley offers a fantastic visitor destination resource for walking, cycling, hiking and for the dark skies. The visitor centre offers an exhibition, audio-visual show and a café. There are also All Ability bike hire with electric bikes, a hand cycle and a side-by-side tricycle facilities.

There are five Elan Valley Reservoirs which offer 500 acres of high quality wild brown trout fishing experiences in Wales, which are noted as key drivers of visitor attraction. Year round fishing is available in the rivers Wye, Elan and Marteg and the local Angling Club has a stocked lake at Llyn Gwyn.

Wider walks and routes include the Wye Valley Walk north to the river's mountain source or south to Chepstow. There is also the Gwastedyn Church Trail, a 36-mile pilgrimage route linking seven historic churches.

Other attractions near to Rhayader include the Gilfach Nature Reserve; the Girgin Farm Red Kite Feeding Centre; the Cwmythig Hill Race Circuit; and the Royal Welsh Crystal factory and shop. There is also a notable visitor economy link between the town and the Royal Welsh Show at Llanelwedd near Builth Wells.

One of the main issues for Rhayader is how to enhance links between the town and its surroundings, especially the Elan Valley to maximise the benefits arising from visitors passing through the area or choosing to come to stay. It is essential for strong links to be established between relevant stakeholders involved in supporting the town's visitor economy with the Elan Valley as a key driver. There is a significant mutual opportunity for both Rhayader and the Elan Valley in this regard.

The town could also make more of its heritage and the prominence and interpretation of key heritage assets could be improved to add further depth to the visitor offer and cultural context of the town.

First impressions for many visitors are created by the volume of through traffic and size of vehicles moving through the town centre particularly at the main cross-roads by the clock tower memorial. This reflects the gateway nature of Rhayader within its surroundings but there is undoubtedly an impact on the character of the centre and the quality of the pedestrian environment but the through traffic also brings significant economic benefits from passing visitor, business and resident traffic.

Accommodation - There is a reasonable range of visitor accommodation providers within Rhayader and the wider surrounding area, including traditional B&B's, hotels (such as The Crown, Eagles Inn, Ty Morgan, Elan Hotel and The Bear), self-catering lodges, camping and caravan parks (including the Wyeside Caravan and Camping Park), cottages and Airbnb's. There is however a need to consider how the range of visitor accommodation and higher quality choice and price points could be expanded.

Electric Vehicle Charging – there is electric vehicle charging facilities (a Tesla destination charger understood to be located at the Horseshoe Guest House in Church Street and four new EV charging points in the Central Car Park) available within Rhayader. This will be of critical importance for the visitor (and local community) economy in future as the UK moves towards sustainable and zero carbon travel.

Future Marketing Strategy - Rhayader 2000 working with Rhayader Town Council have published a Marketing Strategy and Delivery Plan for Rhayader (September 2020). The purpose of the Strategy is to better promote the town and immediate surrounding area as a tourist and visitor destination and represents an important package of projects and actions to support the promotion of the visitor economy in the town.

With a stated vision for Rhayader of promoting the town as being at the heart of Wales' outdoors, "*the outdoors capital of Wales*", the Strategy notes that the town can claim a lead position in the lucrative outdoor recreation and visitor market.

A two phase marketing and delivery strategy is proposed.

Phase 1 – Refreshing the Town Centre – encompasses a range of actions to revitalise and update the town centre's offer for visitors and is considered to be an initial phase of activity to bring the business community and approach to welcoming visitors together.

In Phase 2 – Empowering Businesses – the Strategy proposes a range of actions and interventions to encourage local businesses to support longer visitor dwell times and expenditure.

3.5 Movement

Rhayader forms a key location at the meeting of the A44 and A470 strategic roads in the town centre. The strategic road network focuses traffic into the centre of Rhayader (intersecting in the heart of the town itself) given the town's historic position within the Wye Valley and the Elan Valley area. The town's position on the strategic road network affords it a good level of road connectivity.

Rhayader is not served by a rail line with the nearest stations being in Llandrindod Wells and Pen-y-Bont to the east. Bus services are limited but operate between Rhayader and other main centres including Llandrindod Wells and longer distance including to Shrewsbury (X75) and X47 to Aberystwyth. Rhayader and District Community Support provides services for residents in Rhayader (and more widely in mid-Powys) to help access shops, hospitals or other services.

Rhayader is connected via a number of important National Cycle Network trails (nos. 8, 81 and 825) which intersect within the town centre and offer good access into the Elan Valley, towards Builth Wells and northwards along the Wye Valley. Cycle access and facilities are noted to be important elements attracting visitors to the town and the wider surrounding area.

3.6 Digital infrastructure

Residential areas in the north and west have fibre broadband and plans are under review for the provision of fibre broadband in residential areas in the south and east. There is no fibre broadband currently in the Town Centre area and no identified plans to expand coverage or to create a town-wide public Wi-Fi facility.

In terms of mobile connectivity, Rhayader benefits from 4G coverage by all four of the main telecoms providers. There is not, at the time of writing any 5G coverage in Rhayader. Connectivity in the wider rural area is less reliable.

Rhayader and Nantmel have appointed Broadway and are applying to the DCMS for funding for a community broadband scheme. There is a LoRa gateway in place at Rhayader CIW School. There is limited evidence of the use of 'smart' infrastructure and data capture to inform and shape place management and visitor strategies

3.7 Education infrastructure

Primary education is supported within Rhayader through the Rhayader Church of Wales Primary School. There is no Secondary education provision within the town and the nearest Secondary schools are in Llandrindod Wells, Llanidloes and Builth Wells. The nearest Further Education provision is at Brecon Beacons College and at Newtown College. Stakeholders have identified the importance of education provision and good connections to larger centres where such provision is

available; this is considered to be an important driver for encouraging / retaining working-age families and younger people in Rhayader.

3.8 Development & constraints

The Local Development Plan identifies residential development sites (5.3 hectares) for up to 114 new dwellings on four sites. Additional employment land development is identified in the Plan for expansion of the Brynberth Business Park.

Development opportunities are however constrained by significant areas at risk of flooding on each side of the River Wye where it runs through the town. There are also core constraints associated with local sewage capacity and phosphates in the River Wye which has adversely impacted on development activity.

Heritage protection through the Town Centre Conservation Area designation also forms a key consideration for future development including for any re-development or infill opportunities. More widely new development would need to carefully consider the quality of the landscape and characteristics of the form and layout of Rhayader within its wider rural setting. Access and movement, including traffic generation where it may impinge on the town centre are also important development constraint considerations.

4 Priorities

From understanding Rhayader as a place and listening to the view of its stakeholders, we have come to a draft set of priorities and themes that will guide the Town Investment Plan.



VISITOR ECONOMY

Encouraging further support for the visitor economy as an all year round experience



EMPLOYMENT & ENTERPRISE

Encouraging workspace provision for start-ups and business expansion and supporting independent services and facilities



MOVEMENT & TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC REALM

A better connected town centre with enhanced public realm and improved links within the centre and to the wider area



TOWN CENTRE RESILIENCE AND VITALITY

Supporting the role and function of the town centre to ensure resilience and vitality of businesses and services

Town Centre
 Creation of shared workspace / managed workspace in the town centre
 Traffic management & pedestrian space improvements including visitor and direction signage
 Hospitality/accommodation offer
 Continue Rhayader 2000 marketing & promotion
 Heritage interpretation for Conservation Area and heritage assets
 Support for The Arches community resource

Leisure Centre
 Promotion of Leisure Centre as venue for all-weather facilities for visitors

CARAD
 Support and promotion of CARAD facility including signage and prominence

Brynberth Enterprise Park
 Improvement of small and medium employment workspace opportunities
 Accessibility improvement and promotion
 Business start-up support

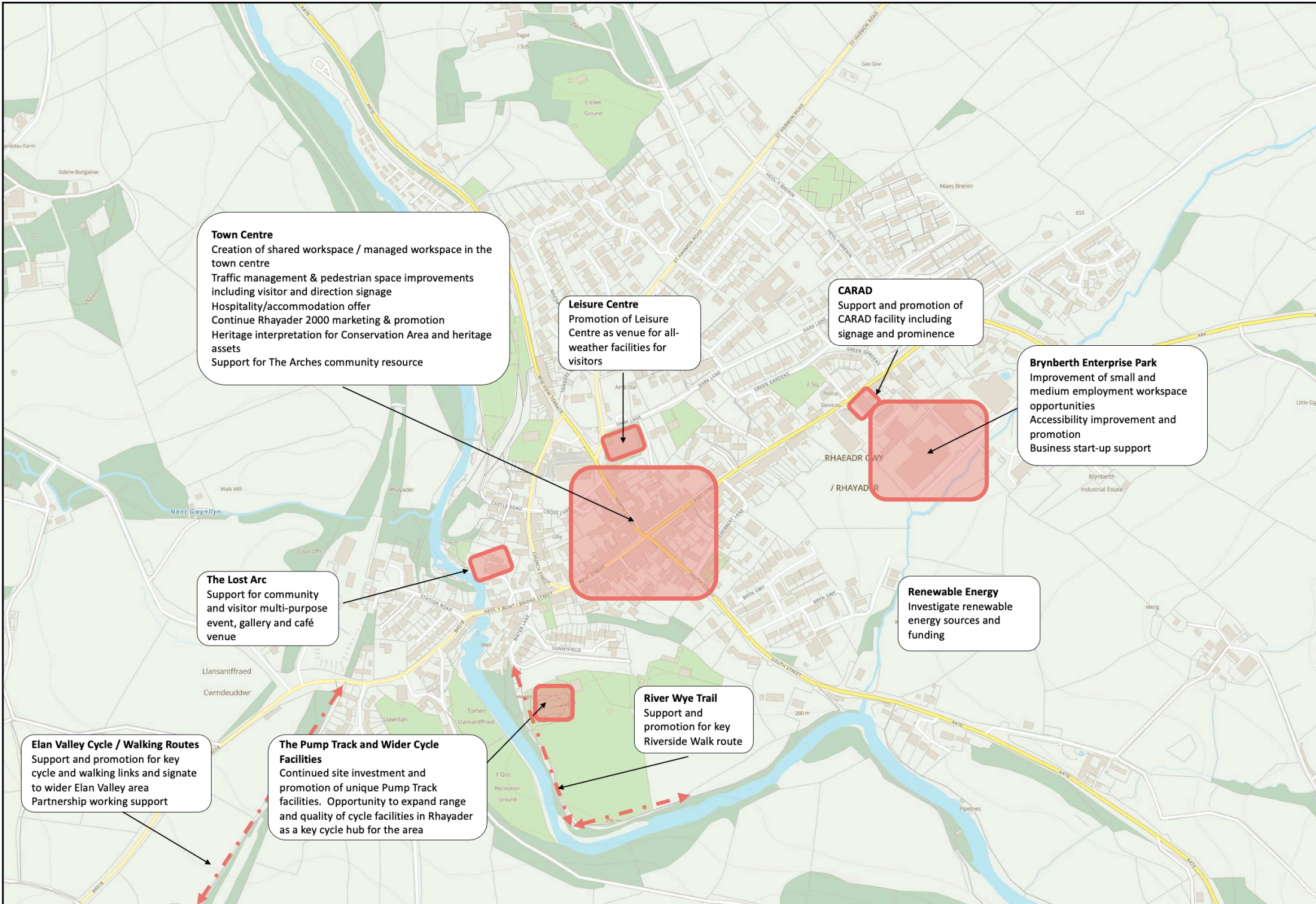
The Lost Arc
 Support for community and visitor multi-purpose event, gallery and café venue

Renewable Energy
 Investigate renewable energy sources and funding

Elan Valley Cycle / Walking Routes
 Support and promotion for key cycle and walking links and signate to wider Elan Valley area
 Partnership working support

The Pump Track and Wider Cycle Facilities
 Continued site investment and promotion of unique Pump Track facilities. Opportunity to expand range and quality of cycle facilities in Rhayader as a key cycle hub for the area

River Wye Trail
 Support and promotion for key Riverside Walk route



5 Proposed Actions

5.0 Visitor Economy

The key opportunities for Rhayader are to draw on its strengths of history, links with the surrounding natural environment of the Elan and Wye valleys, existing events and significant existing visitor brand identity. The product can be refined and expanded to help the town and surrounding area continue to position itself as the Outdoor Capital of Wales with a higher profile year-round visitor destination and opportunity to secure greater visitor spend. The enhancement and promotion of local facilities also helps to provide venues capable of supporting facilities and activities for the young and youth in the local area.

1 – Continued support to the Rhayader 2000 Strategy – focus on providing ongoing support (potentially including via dedicated Town Champion) to deliver the visitor marketing, activation and development actions laid out in the Rhayader 2000 strategy including:

- Visible and interactive signage and clear interpretation of areas and activities within the Town Centre.
- Enhancing the network of paths for walking and cycling and promoting historical routes through signage and interpretation that help connect visitors between Rhayader and the area's landscape including the Elan Valley cycle and walking trails.

- Enhanced signage, promotion and interpretation (including digitisation of the town trail) of built heritage assets, with work to provide greater identification and promotion of Rhayader's long history in terms of key structures (including the remains of the motte and bailey 12th Century Castle), connections to the Elan Valley hinterland and wider agricultural and industrial history inter-linked with change over time.

Case study - Promoting local and visitor economy events Orange Pip Market, Middlesbrough

Artisan food and drink market in the heart of Middlesbrough focused on Baker and Bedford Streets. Featuring the best in local and regional food as well as live music and creative activities, Orange Pip Market is one of the highlights of Middlesbrough's social calendar bringing artisan food and drink from local makers. The market events are influenced by a range of world-class markets such as Borough, Maltby Street and Broadway in London, Brooklyn Flea and Smorgasburg in New York City as well as the food producers at farmers markets throughout the region coupled with performance events from local artists and venues.





2 - Supporting promotion of cycle activities – There is potential to support and grow the use of cycle facilities in and near to Rhayader (as part of the programme to deliver 'Rhayader as the Outdoor Capital of Wales'). This includes work to further promote utilisation of the dedicated Pump Track (for example the Pump & Jump Jam) and also ensure better orientation, signage and support for cyclists using the longer distance Elan Valley and Wye Valley trails. There is further potential for the town to benefit from more and better located cycle infrastructure related to secure cycle stands, cycle cleaning and the installation of street pumps for cycle tyres as well as electric bicycle charging points within the town centre area, the Pump Track and within the main town centre car park. This is in order to better respond to current and future cyclists requirements.

3 - Events – The Rhayader Carnival is a distinct visitor and cultural attraction as well as providing a focal event for Rhayader's local communities. Work is needed to continue support and promotion of the scale and quality of the Carnival, including opportunities to enhance its economic impact in the Town Centre and ensure its long term sustainability. Exploration of providing additional events to offer a greater variety and scale, including scope for a unique distinctive event e.g. round the lakes, could be co-ordinated as part of a region-wide event calendar. By growing the events calendar (supported by a suitable local events committee) provides great opportunities for the wider visitor economy through post- or pre-event exploration of Rhayader and the surrounding area.

4 - Culture – There is a need to ensure continued support and growth / promotion of the cultural offer and venues (including CARAD's forthcoming

'Timescape Rhayader' attraction) in Rhayader to ensure there is a year-round cultural offer and greater opportunities for indoor attractions in poor weather and in the evenings. The role and promotion of venues such as the Lost Arc and the town's leisure centre facilities are important in this respect.

5 - Support for Year Round Facilities – The Outdoor Capital of Wales marketing and branding strategy needs to be facilitated by the provision of year round and wet weather facilities that will encourage visitors to come to Rhayader in every season. The role and function of the Leisure Centre already plays a role in this respect (and could also do more in relation to supporting Youth Club provision) and the venue could be a focus for continued public support and investment working in parallel with other existing indoor facilities and spaces such as CARAD and the Lost Arc.

5.1 Employment & Enterprise

The economic performance of the town and surrounding area could be enhanced by introducing greater quality, choice and flexibility into the existing employment property market. If Rhayader is to grow and sustain its local economy the opportunities need to be taken to address:

- investment to regenerate existing employment units / stock and to bring commercial premises up to modern standards and energy efficiency levels;

- commercial viability issues which have resulted in the lack of development of commercial properties by the private sector;
- promotion of workspace and land opportunities at Rhayader linked to the wider marketing of the town i.e. a place to visit, explore and do business especially related to green industries and net zero



carbon sectors;

- identifying a supply of flexible shared workspaces particularly for start-ups and small enterprises.

To tackle these challenges, the following proposals have been identified Rhayader:

1 - Promotion and Improvement of Brynberth and East Street Enterprise Park Employment Units – There is the need to plan work to improve the marketing collateral, prominence and quality of the condition of existing employment units located off East Street and the Brynberth Business Park. The project would include better promotion / marketing and visibility for leasing the existing, available units and improvement works for building environmental performance (in accordance with Non-Domestic Energy Performance Certificate and letting requirements). The work could also look at opportunities for renewable energy generation on site (solar PV on rooftops) and retrofit building energy enhancements.

2 - Repurposing and modernising existing premises – Businesses are increasingly looking to repurpose surplus space and modernise premises to meet the needs of the local economy; this includes sub-dividing existing spaces and enhancing the flexibility of business units and floorspace. Additionally, businesses are looking to reduce their carbon footprint, driven both through regulations / policies of governments, rising energy costs and consumer expectations.

Businesses should be supported to bring underutilised and modernised town centre commercial and employment use property forward that is more energy efficient and to create small scale workspace opportunities.

3 - Developing a flexible and shared workspace offer – There is a need to support work to develop a flexible and shared workspace offer in Rhayader town centre. This would support town centre vitality as well as

reflecting current business start-up and grow-on needs for modern, flexible workspace with low cost points of entry. Properties, particularly within Rhayader town centre that can address the need for additional workspace and help secure the vitality of the centre should be encouraged. Several buildings have been identified through the research and stakeholder discussion that could support investment and conversion to create new workspaces including as part of an expanded community hub offer. The library is an example.

4 - Addressing business skills deficits – Businesses are reporting that skills deficits are a significant barrier to recruitment and have led more to hire by word of mouth and social media rather than via formal job postings. The Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership (RSL) reports that the skills deficits are impacting businesses across all sectors in the region, in line with national trends. Local businesses and stakeholders are reporting that challenges with recruitment are affecting hospitality businesses in particular.

The RSL has engaged and surveyed businesses who reported that the lack of work readiness in the workforce is the key issue. This is followed by the need for soft skills (including communication) and customer service skills. Similarly, young people are reporting that they lack the confidence to engage with businesses.

To address these intertwined issues, there is an opportunity to engage local businesses, particularly in target sectors, to create more work experience opportunities. This will make it easier for young people to engage with employers and open up more pathways to employment.

Case study: Developing Hebden Bridge Town Hall for workspaces and civic activities

Hebden Bridge Town Hall has been converted to form a community-owned and operated town hall space within a Grade II Listed building. Hebden Bridge Community Association took on the space and operation from 2008. The community has transformed an under-used and dilapidated building into a vibrant mixed use civic and community

This will also need to be accompanied by engagement with local schools to ensure that these opportunities are communicated to students and that the right students are encouraged to apply - in particular, those who are not pursuing further or higher education.

5.2 Movement & Town Centre Public Realm

Rhayader town centre maintains a good level of vitality with a significant mix of independent and national retailer and commercial representation. Given the overall size of the centre, the diversity and range of services / facilities for the local community and for visitors is positive, however there is a need to secure further enhancements and improvements to the town centre public environment, including to mitigate the impact of through traffic and the legibility of the key offer in the centre.

There is an opportunity to support the creation of a 'stickier' street environment with a high quality feel that encourages people to stop and to dwell for longer. This would support the actions identified in the Rhayader 2000 strategy.

The following areas of key action are identified:

1 - Improved pedestrian environment – Work to deliver further, incremental improvements to Town Centre pedestrian public realm including road crossing points and pavements (there is the potential for development of a shared spaces approach to the public realm along part of West Street (further away from the War Memorial Clock area) to address pavement widths in that part of the Town Centre's core retail and commercial area). This action would link to the delivery of Rhayader 2000 strategy project recommendations. These improvements would also help support and encourage individual businesses and property owners to improve the quality and cleanliness of commercial frontages.

2 - Enhanced Visitor Gateways and signage – Gateway signage of the services, activities and routing for visitors is an essential part of building the Rhayader Outdoor Capital branding. Dated and partial visitor signage (missing key information and visitor symbols requires updating, co-ordination with Rhayader 2000 branding and marketing and extension along the key routes coming in to the town and surrounding area.

The Central Car Park is a key, initial focal point for many visitors and it is used as a 'comfort break' for many people travelling north / south. This provides a significant opportunity to enhance the Car Park area as a gateway facility, engaging more effectively with potential visitors and demonstrate the range of local offer in terms of facilities and services including links with the Elan Valley area. Information signage (including digital displays), EV charging (as implemented) and visual signage information are important elements in this key location.

3 - Enhancing the town's public spaces and public realm – Work (in conjunction with Actions 1 and 2 above) to investigate and deliver further enhancements to public realm infrastructure and public spaces including potential improvements to the three town sub-areas or 'hubs', particularly the Millennium Monument area, the key gateway entrances to the town (including the Central Car Park – as above), the area at the entrance to Brynberth Enterprise Park and CARAD, the Groe Park and Pump Track and potentially (through investigation / discussion with the owner and operator) the appearance of the Smithfield livestock market / car park.

4 - Improved and extended facilities for cycle and motorcyclists – Provision of more co-ordinated public realm environment and prominent facilities for cyclists and for motorcyclists supporting Rhayader's role as a

gateway and cross-roads within the Elan Valley area. This action would include the development of more secure cycle and motor-cycle parking / storage together with appropriate signage.

5 - Electric vehicle charging – Provision of electric vehicle charging facilities is an increasingly important component to support a low carbon future and sustainable transport. There is a need to ensure Rhayader has an adequate level of public EV charging points and facilities within the Town Centre area (on-street and situated in public car parks) that will support the centre’s resilience and vitality for the local community and visitors alike. There is some existing provision of EV charging in the town (including recent new charging point installations) but this will need to be extended and expanded to future-proof the range of public EV facilities available locally.

5.3 Town Centre Resilience and Vitality

Supporting the future role and function of Rhayader town centre will help ensure business resilience and vitality for the existing services and facilities as well as nurturing the strong visitor economy offer.

Potential key actions are:

1 - Promoting the retail and courier click and collect hub – Greater promotion of the click and collect point to become a hub and courier drop-off location within the Town Centre. This could be co-located within

the existing premises or form part of an expanded offer as part of a new Community Hub.

2 - Expanding Rhayader’s digital infrastructure, presence and footprint

– This action area encompasses work to continue to evolve and expand the town’s existing, high quality, web presence over time. It also includes specific interventions to assess and then roll-out SMART town measures to improve digital infrastructure connectivity (in area of Rhayader that currently have poor connectivity) and use of Lora-WAN technologies to allow active management and measurement of key Town Centre activities (pedestrian footfall / flows; traffic flows; parking; recycling and refuse collection; enhanced public Wi-Fi provision, etc.).

3 - Supporting Town Centre promotion and activity through a Town Champion role

– Creation of a key, dedicated Town Champion role (linked to the work of the Council Development Officers) to enable and co-ordinate delivery of all the Action Plan projects / interventions and ensure close facilitated working with key stakeholders, third sector and local community organisations in Rhayader.

4 - Enhancing the visitor accommodation offer

– Work to review and assess the potential to support a broader range (quality, type and price points) of visitor accommodation as part of a programme to optimise the advantages of Rhayader’s position at the gateway to the Elan Valley and linked to the Elan Valley growth programme.

5 - Investigation of the Potential for Community Renewable Energy generation

– Stakeholders have identified the importance of engendering

a green economy and development of renewable energy infrastructure for Rhayader, particularly using hydro (from the River Wye) and ground / roof-top solar voltaic systems. A detailed analysis and investigation of potential community renewable energy systems is proposed potentially through support from Community Energy Wales (a not for profit membership organisation that has been set up to provide assistance and a voice to community groups working on energy projects in Wales) that allows for the provision of green energy as well as the possibility of creating a revenue stream for local community projects.

Investigation of renewable energy opportunities should also extend to understanding the potential for and mechanisms to deliver renewable energy generation facilities into existing buildings and public facilities such as the town's Leisure Centre. The benefits of such community-led renewable energy generation offer a significant tool for promotion of the town as an exemplar for the green economy and work towards a zero carbon, more environmentally friendly future.

Case study - Poynton Shared Highways Spaces

Highways intervention at Fountain Place to change the rework the junction layout focused on a Shared Space design concept that gives equal priority to all high street users from pedestrians to vehicles and cyclists. Incorporating wide pavements, narrower carriageways, slow vehicle speeds and easy crossing to provide a friendly, safe and vibrant environment for all visitors. New planting, lighting and street furniture added to create incremental enhancements to the pedestrian environment and facilities for cyclists.



Case study - Ynni Ogwen Cyf Community Renewable Energy Company

Ynni Ogwen Cyf is a community benefit company operating for the environmental and social benefit of Dyffryn Ogwen. The principal objective is the production of electricity from hydro-power, a sustainable source of renewable energy generation from Afon Ogwen.

Surplus income generated from the energy production is transferred to a community fund which can then be used to support other environmental and social / community projects within Dyffryn Ogwen.



