

DOLGELLAU TOWN CENTRE PLACEMAKING PLAN



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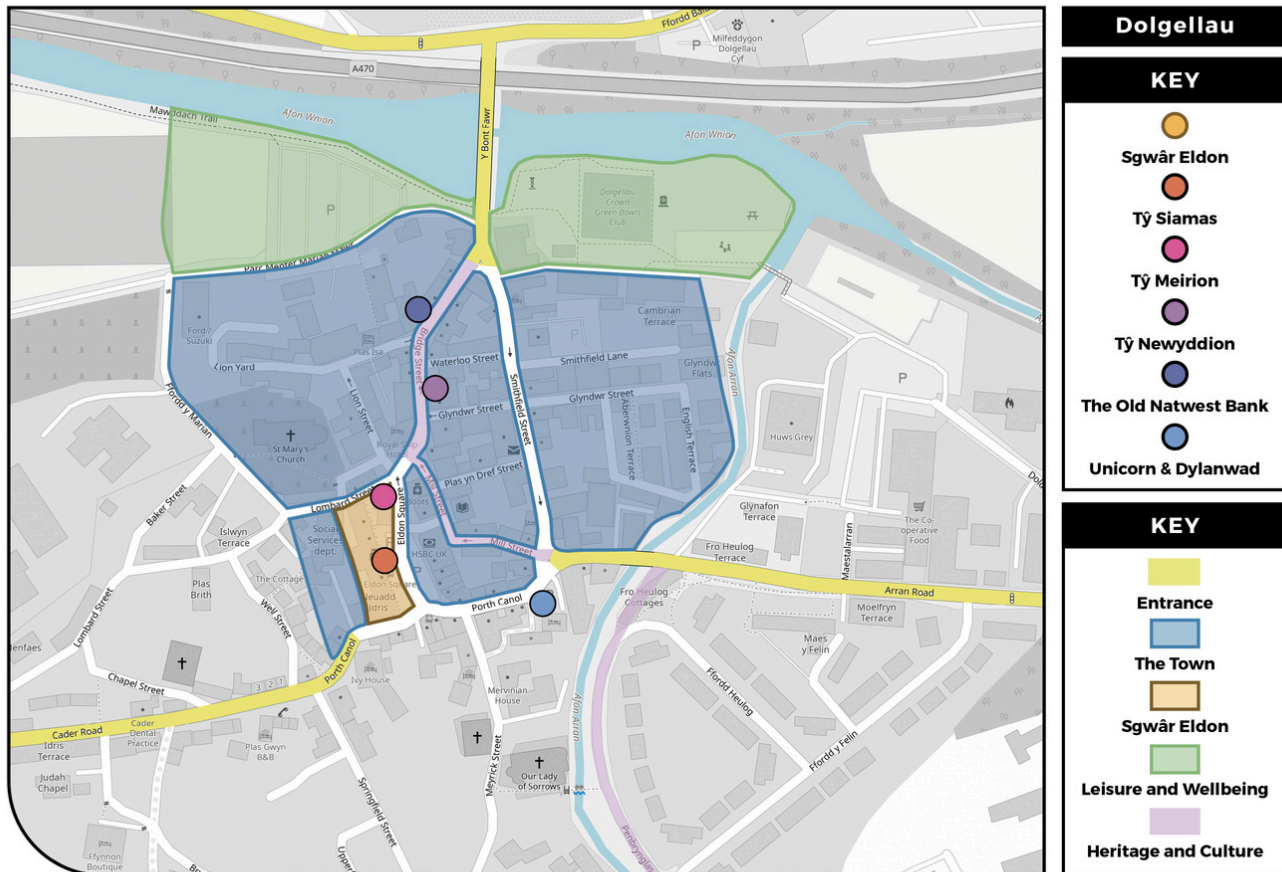


1. INTRODUCTION

➤ 1.1 History and Heritage

Dolgellau is a historic market town in Gwynedd, North Wales, renowned for its rich heritage, vibrant community, and striking natural environment. Located in the heart of Eryri National Park, it is surrounded by iconic mountain landscapes such as Cadair Idris. With its medieval street layout, traditional stone buildings, and history as a prosperous wool trading centre, Dolgellau offers a unique character that continues to attract visitors from near and far.

In addition to its long history, which dates back to 1284, Dolgellau has played an important role as an administrative and commercial hub, with the wool industry leaving a lasting imprint on its architecture and street names. Beyond its economic role, Dolgellau was an administrative centre where cantref courts, Quarter Sessions, and Great Sessions were once held. Today, the town is a popular destination for outdoor activities, offering easy access to walking trails, cycling routes, and water sports.



This Placemaking Plan builds on Dolgellau's unique assets, celebrating its historic character and natural opportunities. Its goal is to support sustainable growth, enhance the town's vitality, and strengthen community cohesion. Through a combination of conservation, innovation, and community initiatives, the plan seeks to safeguard Dolgellau's character while unlocking its potential as a model for rural regeneration in Wales.

The plan will utilise the town's existing assets in creative ways, focusing on projects offering environmental, social, and economic benefits. The strategy aims to regenerate Dolgellau's town centre, transform historic buildings and spaces, and ensure the town thrives within its current boundaries. The vision positions Dolgellau as an example of sustainability and community resilience for other towns in Wales.

➤ 1.2 Town Location

Dolgellau's location makes it ideal for tourism, cultural heritage conservation, and community development. Situated at a crossroads in the south of Eryri National Park, the A470 passes through the town, connecting the north and south of the country, while the A494 links it to the northeast and the A487 connects to the southwest. These regional connections position Dolgellau as a natural hub for collaboration and local events.



Llynau Cregennan, 9 miles from Dolgellau's town centre



Pont Penmaen, 2.5 miles from Dolgellau's town centre

Surrounded by mountains, forests, and rivers, Dolgellau is a perfect spot for outdoor activities such as walking, cycling, and water sports. Its natural beauty attracts year-round tourists, supporting a vibrant eco-tourism sector. The town's proximity to Cadair Idris and the Aber Mawddach, known for their scenic views and biodiversity, further enhances its appeal. Additionally, Dolgellau's rich heritage, with its medieval layout and stone buildings reflecting its history as a wool trade centre, contributes to cultural tourism and supports local businesses, offering opportunities to engage with the community.

This combination of natural beauty, history, and commitment to sustainable tourism offers diverse possibilities for economic development. These can be achieved through outdoor, cultural, and heritage tourism while attracting remote workers and small businesses who value the unique quality of life Dolgellau provides.

➤ 1.3 Socio-economic Profile

Dolgellau (North and South wards) has a population of approximately 2,603 (2021 Census), with the local economy largely based on agriculture and tourism.

The most populous age group in Dolgellau is 60-64 years old, comprising 9.3% of the town's population (2021 Census). *

55% of adults aged 16-74 in Dolgellau are economically active, with **2.5%** unemployed. Of the 44% economically inactive population, 28% are retired, and 5.9% are disabled or have long-term illnesses.

According to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019), Dolgellau is among the **20%** most deprived small areas in Wales based on income, employment, education, health, crime, housing, and the environment. Despite its deprivation, Dolgellau has a strong sense of community and a rich culture that shapes its unique socio-economic profile.

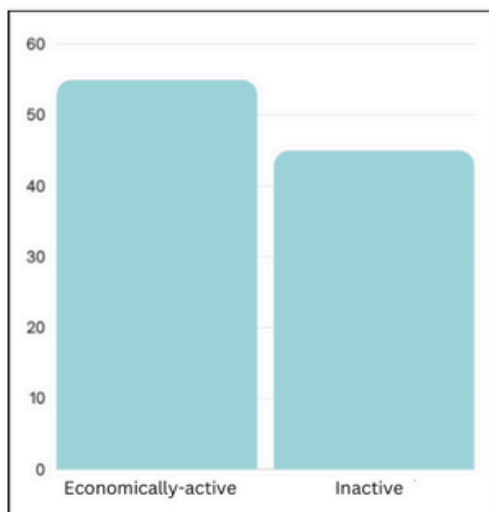
Historically, Dolgellau's economy was rooted in agriculture, wool production, and mining, making it a regional commercial hub. The decline of these traditional industries shifted the town's economic focus, with tourism now playing a vital role as visitors are drawn to the area's natural beauty, historical sites, and cultural festivals.

Today, Dolgellau faces economic challenges, including limited local job opportunities, seasonal employment, and reliance on small businesses. The number of high-value jobs in the town is low (5.77% compared to 13.6% for Wales), with many residents commuting to larger towns or cities for work, contributing to an aging population and limited youth employment access. The relocation of high-value Local Authority jobs from Penarlâg to Caernarfon has also increased commuting towards northern Gwynedd.

However, community-led heritage conservation initiatives have recently stimulated the local economy, reviving the town centre and boosting civic pride. The town's economy is gradually recovering, with growth in eco-tourism, local craftsmanship, and small-scale entrepreneurship, all aiming to preserve Dolgellau's historic character while enhancing economic resilience.

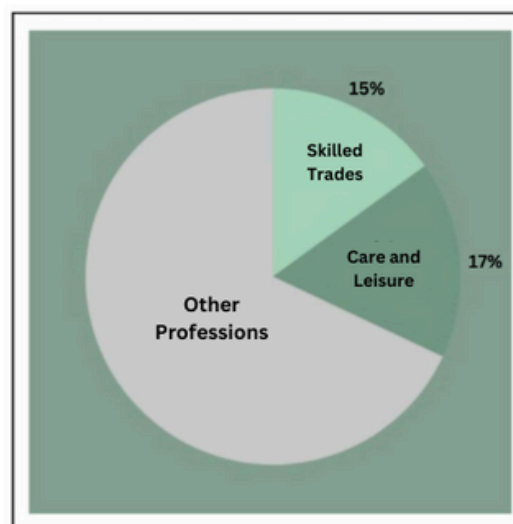
**Please note, the figures do not add up to exactly 100% due to the National Statistics Office's method of adjusting the figures for small areas to protect confidentiality).*

Number of economically active, South and North Dolgellau ward



2021 Census

Professions



2021 Census

The care sector plays a vital role in Dolgellau’s economy, reflecting the demographic and regional economic needs of the town. Like many towns and villages in rural Wales, Dolgellau has a significant ageing population, driving demand for a robust network of care services, including care homes, home care providers, and support services for elderly residents and those with specific health needs. The sector provides stable employment in a town that has limited industry, offering local jobs not dependent on seasonal tourism.

Employment in the care sector is essential, as it provides direct and indirect economic benefits. Care jobs range from entry-level jobs to specialist roles, creating opportunities for career development and building skills locally. This is essential in a community where younger residents need reasons to stay local. The presence of care services also reduces the need for residents to leave Dolgellau to access essential health and social support, helping to maintain population stability and maintain community links.

The Welsh Language in Dolgellau:

According to the 2021 census, **57%** of the population of Dolgellau District speak Welsh fluently which is 6.7% less than the average for Gwynedd of 64.4%. Dolgellau is the area that has seen the biggest drop in Gwynedd in terms of the percentage of its Welsh speakers since the previous census in 2011 (-4.4%).

2. METHODOLOGY FOR DOLGELLAU TOWN CENTRE PLACEMAKING PLAN

Key methods were used to develop the Placemaking Plan for Dolgellau, focusing on broad community and stakeholder engagement:

- 1. Desk Research and Ardal Ni Framework Analysis:** Research was conducted into regeneration frameworks relevant to the town and the wider area, considering best practices and implications for sustainable community regeneration.
- 2. Stakeholder Mapping and Objectives:** A comprehensive map of key stakeholders involved in the town's development was created, including community groups, local businesses, and councils. Their roles and objectives were understood to align strategies with their individual and collaborative goals.
- 3. One-to-One Dialogues:** Meetings were held with key stakeholders to build an understanding of their perspectives, needs, and priorities for the plan. This approach ensures diverse viewpoints are considered in the development process.
- 4. Workshops:** Open workshops were organized for residents, businesses, and community members to share their ideas, aspirations, and concerns about Dolgellau's future. These workshops fostered a collaborative environment, enabling constructive discussions and participation.
- 5. Stakeholders and Subgroups:** Discussion groups were established with strategic stakeholders and subgroups representing different aspects of the town's development, such as heritage, environment, and economy. This ensures decisions align with specific purposes and support sustainable development.

These methods provide a strong foundation to ensure the Placemaking Plan responds to the needs and aspirations of the community, building on Dolgellau's existing strengths and creating a sustainable future for the town.

➤ 2.1 Ardal Ni Regeneration Framework

'To develop and support sustainable communities that are healthy, prosperous and dynamic with the confidence to venture, and with the ambition and ability to contribute their own solutions to local needs and to take advantage of new opportunities.'

In 2021, Gwynedd Council's Regeneration Board agreed to develop a Regeneration Framework aimed at ensuring proactive steps are in place to improve areas economically, environmentally, socially, and culturally. The Dolgellau Area has been an important part of this framework, and the results that come from it underpin this Placemaking Plan.

A consultation was held in 2022 as part of the framework, engaging with local residents to identify a vision and community priorities for the Dolgellau area. From this consultation, ten key priorities were identified for Dolgellau, which contributing to the development of the Dolgellau Town Centre Placemaking Plan. The framework is available on the Cyngor Gwynedd portal [Adfywio Dolgellau](#) Here are the top priorities as set out in the Framework relevant to the Dolgellau Placemaking Plan, which will inform the contents of in this report:

Rank	Key Issues / Priorities
1	Plan to strengthen health and care locally
2	Plan to secure housing to suit the needs of local people
3	Plan to create high-value work and jobs
4	Plans to support local businesses to set up and thrive
5	Greener area -renewable energy, reduced use of plastic, car charging points, tree planting schemes etc
6	Plans to respect and enjoy the environment of the area
7	Broadband substructure upgrades
8	Plans to develop the food production sector locally
9	Plans to make better use of public buildings and Penarlâg offices in Dolgellau
10	Plans to tackle poverty

3. DOLGELLAU REGENERATION STRATEGY GROUP

Throughout the consultation period feedback from the community in general and from several community groups and organisations, was that there is a lack of cohesive planning and project coordination. Resulting in duplication of small-scale projects and a general lack of large scale, forward thinking, regeneration projects. Dolgellau Partnership, first established in 2007 to implement a play park and green space project, does have the structure to fulfil this need. However, over the years it has become a community group rather than a Partnership proper. To foster cohesive engagement among the diverse community groups, organizations, businesses, and councils in Dolgellau, consider reforming the current Dolgellau Partnership and implementing a structured partnership model. Here's a suggested approach:

1. Establish/ reform a Dolgellau Regeneration Partnership Board

- **Purpose:** This board would serve as a central coordinating body that brings together representatives from small community groups, medium organizations, local businesses, the community council, and the county council.
- **Composition:**
 - Community Council Representative(s): To provide a local governance perspective.
 - County Council Representative(s): To ensure alignment with county-level policies, resources, and expertise.
 - Business Representatives: A few local business leaders or representatives from business associations to contribute a private-sector perspective.
 - Community Group Representatives: Rotating representatives from small community groups to ensure all voices are heard over time.
 - Medium-Sized Organizations: Representatives from organizations that are active in the area (e.g., housing associations, local charities). For example, Dolfeurig and Tŷ Siamas.
- **Frequency of Meetings:** Monthly or quarterly, depending on the project needs.

2. Create Specialized Working Groups or Project Specific Task Forces

- **Purpose:** To streamline project-specific efforts and allow stakeholders to focus on their areas of expertise or interest.
- **Types of Working Groups:** Examples might include groups focused on 'infrastructure & public spaces', 'environmental initiatives', 'business & tourism development', 'heritage conservation', and 'community well-being'.
- **Membership:** Each working group should include members from different sectors to provide a well-rounded perspective (e.g., one from a business, one from a community group, and one from the council).

3.3. Form a Community Consultation Forum.

Once a month the community council currently has an 'open forum' during the first 10 minutes of each meeting that could be used to implement this aspect of the Strategy Group structure. Rather than doubling up.

- **Purpose:** To ensure that the wider community has an accessible and active voice in regeneration projects.
- **Composition:** Open to all residents and community members to attend; however, to maintain order, it could be facilitated by board representatives.
- **Role:** This forum would meet regularly to review and discuss progress, gather public feedback, and ensure transparency in decision-making.

4. Appoint a Community Engagement Coordinator.

The desire for a community engagement coordinator was raised several times during the consultation period.

- **Purpose:** A part-time or full-time coordinator would act between all groups, ensuring effective communication, gathering feedback, and reporting to the Strategic Group.
- **Responsibilities:** Organising meetings, facilitating communication, managing outreach for feedback, and liaising between working groups.

5. Implement a Shared Communication and Reporting Platform.

- **Purpose:** To streamline project management, enable transparent tracking of progress, and ensure all stakeholders stay informed.
- **Features:** This could include project tracking, event calendars, meeting minutes, and document sharing.
- **Example Resources:** Consider online tools like Trello, Notion, Slack, or dedicated local council portals.

Key Benefits of this Structure:

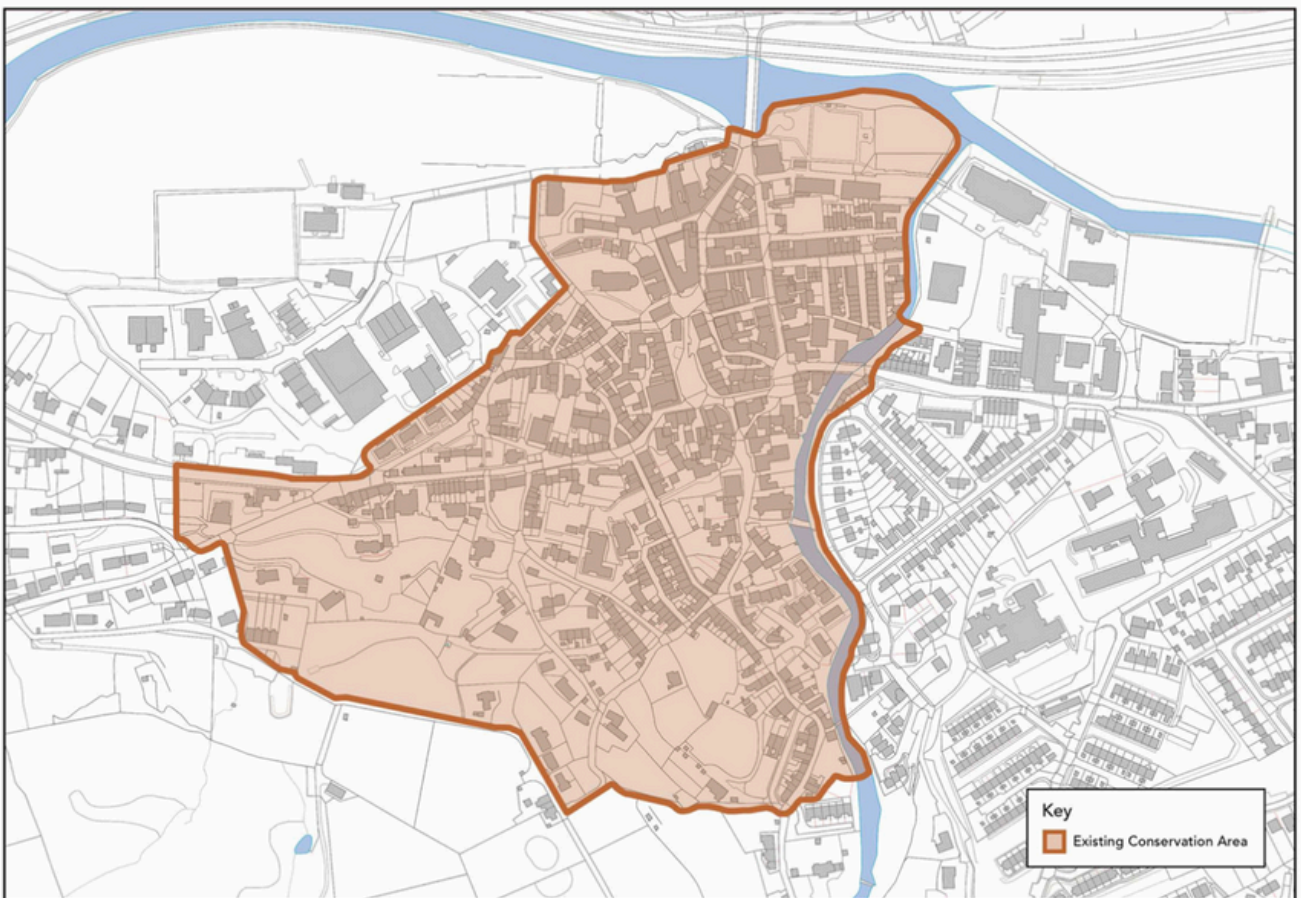
- **Improved Coordination:** Ensures that projects align with shared goals and avoid duplication.
- **Streamlined Communication:** Regularly brings all stakeholders together for updates and alignment.
- **Enhanced Community Ownership:** Offers transparent processes and avenues for residents to contribute feedback and feel part of the regeneration efforts.

By creating a Strategic Regeneration Group with this new structure, Dolgellau could foster synergy between various stakeholders, align efforts towards common goals, and enhance the impact of its regeneration projects. The adoption of this structure is essential if this Placemaking Plan for Dolgellau is to be implemented, as no current organisation could coordinate the suggested projects within the plan.

4. BUILT HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Over the past decade, Dolgellau’s town centre has benefited from significant investment through a series of Dolgellau Townscape Heritage projects.

The regeneration of the town centre should be understood within its designation as a Conservation Area, granted in May 1978. This designation makes Dolgellau the most notable Conservation Area within Eryri National Park, encompassing 19 hectares of the historic town south of the Afon Wnion and west of the Afon Aran, and including 180 listed buildings.

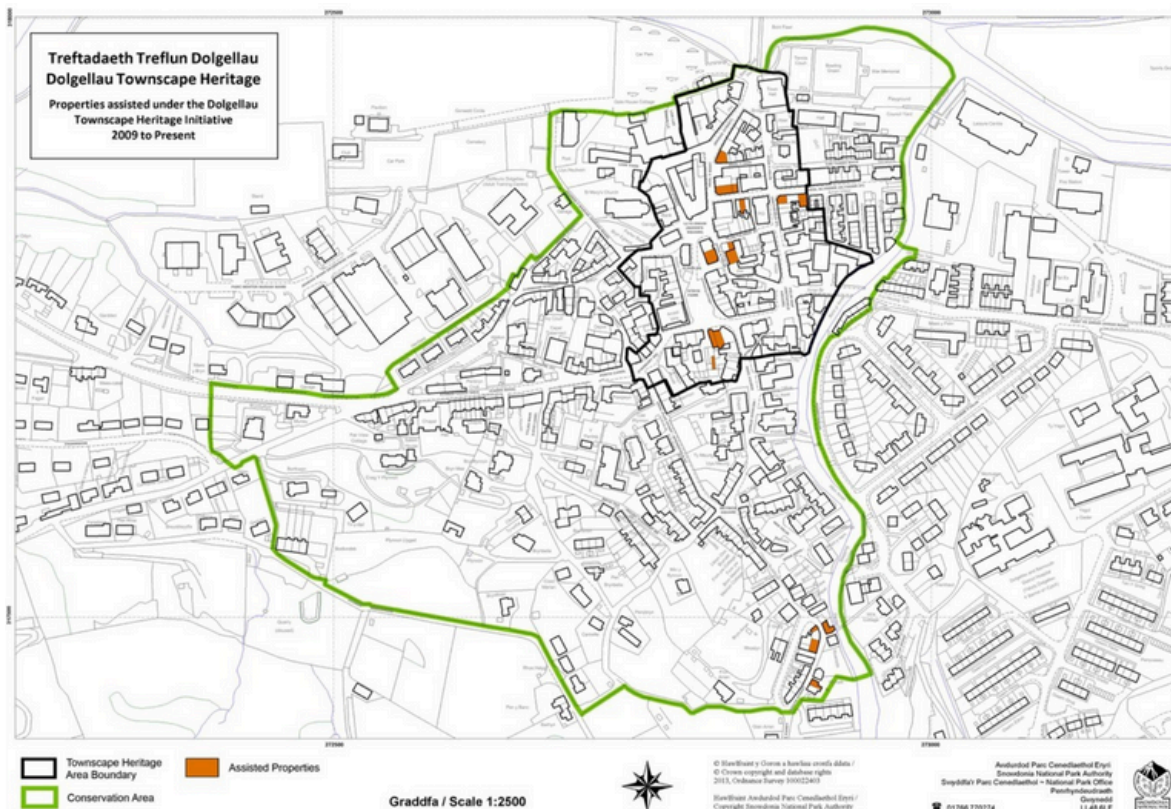


Existing Conservation Area
1:4000 @ A4

02 Plan of the Conservation Area (© Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey 100022403)

Map of Dolgellau town conservation area, Dolgellau Townscape Heritage Plan, Eryri National Park Authority

The town centre’s buildings are integral to Dolgellau’s unique historical character, showcasing its industrial heritage and cultural influences. Between 2014 and 2024, two Townscape Heritage Schemes were implemented, prioritising the preservation of historic buildings within their context, improving access to Dolgellau’s cultural heritage, and fostering awareness among both locals and visitors of the town’s distinctive built environment.



Summary of the achievements of the Dolgellau Townscape Heritage Scheme:

The sensitive and traditional restoration of shopfronts using local materials such as slate and lime mortar has significantly improved the town's appearance, safeguarded the historic character of the buildings, and fostered pride among residents and business owners. This has attracted more visitors, supported the local economy, and drawn in new businesses. The use of traditional methods has increased property value, encouraged further investment, and transformed vacant buildings into flats and shops, attracting new residents and creating jobs.

The work has also boosted civic pride and appreciation of local history through heritage projects, exhibitions, and community events, strengthening connections between generations. The initiative spurred volunteering, conservation skills, and collaboration between local groups and authorities, regenerating buildings for commercial and residential use, strengthening the local economy, and promoting tourism.



J P & Sons Shop, Dolgellau,
 renovated through the Dolgellau
 Townscape Heritage scheme

➤ 4.1 Historic Building Conservation

Despite the investment made through both projects in the scheme THI1 and THI2, this Plan and the Cultural Heritage department at Eryri National Park have identified several buildings in need of conservation, particularly their external appearance. Three buildings have been prioritised for immediate attention:



1. Tŷ Meirion - Sgwâr Eldon
2. Y Chinese - Heol Glyndŵr
3. Former Natwest - Heol y Bont

During the Round 2 survey of the Dolgellau Townscape Heritage Scheme, repair costs for Tŷ Merion were estimated at over £600,000 (2015 prices). The Chinese was not included in the previous survey and requires updated assessment. Currently vacant, the former Natwest Building presents an opportunity for redevelopment into homes or apartments, addressing a need identified during consultation.

Updated surveys are recommended for all three buildings to reassess repair costs. While grants from Eryri National Park are expected to be modest and focused on specific elements such as window repairs and shopfront restoration, there is potential for a new project to build on the success of the THI schemes.

Future plans by the National Park aim to broaden the scope of conservation efforts by incorporating:

- Mitigate the effects of climate change
- Nature restoration
- Decarbonisation
- Improving the efficiency of traditional buildings.

➤ 4.2 Traditional Skills in Dolgellau

Traditional skills are essential for preserving Dolgellau's architectural heritage, particularly within its conservation area. These skills, rooted in native building techniques, significantly contribute to the town's visual and cultural identity. However, the scarcity of traditional skills and limited training opportunities threaten the continuation of these methods, jeopardising the authenticity and integrity of Dolgellau's built environment.

For years, regeneration projects in Dolgellau have aimed to preserve its built and cultural heritage. Nevertheless, there is a lack of interest and a lack of awareness of the importance and benefits of traditional skills which often hinder the effectiveness of such efforts. Without ongoing local commitment and a culture of respect for these techniques, the authenticity of the historical character of Dolgellau is at risk.

To address these challenges, it is crucial to promote the value of traditional methods and create accessible training opportunities. This approach will ensure the long-term preservation of heritage buildings, provide local employment opportunities, and strengthen Dolgellau's economic and cultural identity.

The next steps:

1. Organising a Skills and Heritage Event:

- **Objective:** Raise awareness of the importance of traditional skills and promote apprenticeship opportunities in traditional construction techniques.
- **Invitees:** Representatives from key organisations such as: APCE (Eryri National Park Authority); CADW (Historic Environment Service for Wales); CPAA (Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings); CMAA (Sustainable Building Masters Association); CCA (Institute of Historic Building Conservation), Architects, Conservation Officers, Surveyors, and local contractors.
- **Key Stakeholders:** Representatives from local colleges and contractors who support apprenticeship schemes.

2. Establishing Partnerships with Local Colleges: Develop accredited courses in traditional building techniques such as stone masonry, lime plastering, and timber frame restoration.

3. Collaborating with Regeneration Projects: Incorporate on-site training opportunities, ensuring that local craftspeople gain experience while contributing to conservation efforts.

4. Encouraging Local Businesses: Promote the adoption of apprenticeships and the mentoring of young trainees in traditional crafts, supported by incentives such as funding or tax breaks.

5. Community Engagement and Education

- Host workshops and public talks to highlight the benefits of preserving traditional skills for Dolgellau's character and economic resilience.
- Develop educational programs for schools to inspire interest in heritage and traditional crafts from a young age.

6. Creating a Traditional Skills Register

- Compile a database of local craftspeople, contractors, and specialists in traditional techniques to serve as an accessible resource for conservation projects.
- Collaborate with APCE and CADW to maintain and update the register.

7. Integrating into Policies

- Include clauses in regeneration and conservation project contracts that prioritise the use of traditional skills and techniques.
- Advocate for the adoption of heritage skills as a key element in all development proposals within conservation areas.

By fostering traditional skills training in the town, Dolgellau can cultivate a sustainable culture that values heritage, strengthens local employment, and ensures the preservation of the town's unique character for future generations.

5. THE ENVIRONMENT

The exciting and creative challenge for the Welsh designated landscapes is to find a way to cut emissions in line with current science, and be leaders in land stewardship and planning while simultaneously creating better places for people to live, work and visit.

- Decarbonising the Welsh Designated Landscapes (Llywodraeth Cymru, 2023)

➤ 5.1 Dolgellau: Embracing Sustainability

Dolgellau, like any town in Wales, must be considered within its broader landscape context. Located within Eryri National Park, it forms part of one of Wales' Designated Landscapes. As such, Dolgellau is subject to emissions reduction commitments outlined in the Welsh Government's Environment Act 2016, updated in 2021 to include legal obligations to achieve net zero territorial emissions by 2050.¹

In July 2023, the Welsh Government published a report on Decarbonising Wales' Designated Landscapes, which highlights opportunities for Dolgellau to address climate and ecological challenges in partnership with environmental organisations and Eryri National Park Authority. Key themes include:

- Reducing energy-related emissions from buildings, traffic, and industry.
- Minimising the carbon footprint of local food consumption and agriculture.
- Initiating ambitious projects to restore semi-natural habitats, including woodlands and wildflower meadows.
- Engaging the visitor economy to reduce its environmental impact.
- Educating the public on how to reduce their own carbon footprint.

11. Energy: Reducing Emissions from Buildings and Industry

- **Energy Efficiency:** Encourage insulation upgrades and installation of efficient heating systems in residential and commercial properties. Provide grants or incentives for investment in renewable technologies such as solar panels.
- **Local Energy Production:** Develop community energy projects, such as Dolgellau Energy, a community benefit company established in October 2023. The company focuses on energy efficiency projects, sustainable heating systems, electricity generation, and a hydroelectric project on the Afon Aran.
- **Sustainable Industry:** Collaborate with local businesses to adopt low-carbon production methods.

1. CONSULTING, S. W. Gorffennaf 2023. Decarbonising Wales' Designated Landscapes; Greenhouse gas emissions assessment and recommended targets for Wales' designated landscapes.: Welsh Government.

2. Sustainable Travel for Visitors and Residents

- **Green Transport Infrastructure:** Develop cycling and walking routes linking the town centre to key landmarks such as Cader Idris and nearby lakes. Improve accessibility of electric vehicle charging points, with two currently available at Y Marian car park (one installed by Transport for Wales, the other by Gwynedd Council). Gwynedd Council is addressing connectivity issues with one of these chargers.
- **Public Transport:** Improve bus and community transport services connecting Dolgellau with nearby villages and the wider Eryri area. Feedback from consultations indicated that the bus service is effective, and the Flexi service by Transport for Wales provides valuable connections for rural and older residents.

3. Local Food and Drink

- **Local Markets:** Revive the monthly farmers' markets, which were previously popular in the square but are now held at The Ship Hotel. There is strong demand to bring the market back to the square.
- **Local Businesses:** Encourage hospitality businesses to use local produce and reduce food waste, aligning with the National Park's plastic-free initiative.
- **Education and Community Links:** Develop programs to educate the public on how buying seasonal and local food reduces emissions.

4. Local Goods and Waste Management

- **Community Repair Centre:** Establish a space where people can repair clothing, tools, and goods instead of discarding them.
- **Improved Recycling Systems:** Expand recycling facilities in the town centre and introduce reuse stations for unused items.

5. Restoring Natural Habitats

- **Local Woodland:** Develop tree-planting projects in nearby areas such as Coedydd Aberneint to enhance carbon storage. Collaborate with organisations like Coed Cadw and Natural Resources Wales, which manage surrounding woodlands and are keen to work with community groups like Grŵp yr Aran on such initiatives.
- **Wildflower Meadow Restoration:** Organise community projects to plant wildflower meadows, boosting biodiversity. As an urban town, Dolgellau could introduce more flower beds in the square and encourage residents to plant wildflowers in their gardens or along grassy edges.
- **Partnership Work:** Work with the National Park Authority, Coed Cadw, and Natural Resources Wales to maintain and expand natural habitats along popular walking routes, with Dolgellau Strategic Group as a key collaborator.

6. Community Education and Engagement

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Develop educational programs on how residents can reduce their carbon footprint, such as using public transport and minimising waste. The National Park’s Ambassador Scheme is a natural fit for this, provided a local partner, such as Dolgellau Partnership, can collaborate with schools and young people. The local school, Ysgol Bro Idris, often participates in community projects.
- **Climate Awareness Events:** Host local events focusing on climate change and sustainable living practices.

By integrating these initiatives, Dolgellau can embrace its role as a sustainable town within Eryri National Park, ensuring that its natural and cultural heritage thrives for future generations.

➤ 5.2 Sustainable Tourism

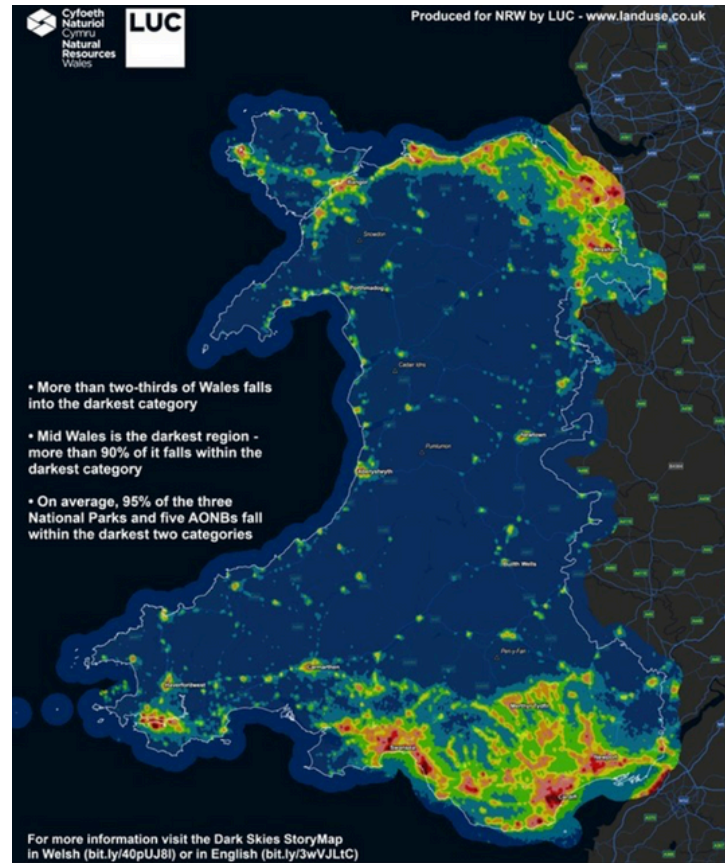
The *Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan 2035* is a sustainable strategy aimed at balancing the economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits of tourism in the region. The plan’s goal is to protect the communities, language, and heritage of Eryri while supporting the economy and offering an improved visitor experience.

By establishing a local entity comprised of partners and stakeholders, specific projects could be developed to contribute to the objectives of the Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan. These objectives include maintaining the environment, supporting local communities, and encouraging tourism that sustains the Welsh language and culture. A local entity in Dolgellau could focus on the following:

1. **Developing Local Ambassador Courses** – Increasing awareness and local training about the area’s culture and language to promote sustainable tourism. Grŵp yr Aran is looking to develop similar courses and would be a natural partner for the Eryri National Park Authority (ENPA).
2. **Improving Green Infrastructure** – The Mawddach Trail is extremely popular and a major attraction for visitors to the town. During consultations, many suggested the possibility of extending the trail towards Bala, following the old railway line. Although Gwynedd Council and the ENPA have explored this idea in the past, challenges were encountered near the Bala area. Opening parts of the trail to connect with popular caravan sites in Brithdir and Rhydymain could help draw more visitors to the town centre on foot or by bike.
3. **Supporting Local Enterprises** – Promoting the use of local businesses and products while offering support to businesses to provide unique experiences for tourists.
4. **Collaborating with Cleanup Teams** – Maintaining the cleanliness and tidiness of the area through cleanup initiatives and raising local awareness. The Town Council has identified several locations where litter and overgrowth are creating an untidy appearance.

➤ 5.3 Dark Skies

Eryri National Park Authority's commitment to being Dark Sky-friendly brings a range of valuable benefits to the environment, biodiversity, and the historic surroundings of Eryri's towns. By reducing light pollution in towns, it helps preserve the natural night sky, supporting local wildlife by maintaining natural light cycles essential for nocturnal species. Birds, bats, insects, and other wildlife rely on darkness for feeding, navigation, and reproduction. Reducing interference from artificial light improves their natural behaviors, thereby contributing to biodiversity.



Environmentally, limiting light pollution in Dolgellau would reduce energy consumption, align with sustainable practices, and lower the town's carbon footprint. This environmentally conscious approach supports broader conservation efforts within Eryri National Park and offers an opportunity to promote Dolgellau as a destination prioritising ecological balance.

Dolgellau's historic environment would also benefit from Dark Sky initiatives. Softer, controlled lighting would highlight the architectural features of historic buildings without overwhelming them, preserving the town's unique character and enhancing the atmosphere of its historic sites at night. This approach could attract visitors interested in both heritage and stargazing, combining cultural and ecological tourism in a way that promotes sustainability and appreciation of the natural world.



An example of the Dark Sky lighting modifications at Loggeheads Country Park, Rhuthun

Eryri National Park is a Dark Sky Reserve, and complying with light pollution reduction requirements is a responsibility for the town of Dolgellau. Light pollution is known to impact health, biodiversity, and safety. Using lighting that is sensitive to Dolgellau's historic environment can:

- Create a sense of place and enhance cultural heritage.
- Attract Dark Sky tourists during the off-peak season, providing commercial benefits.
- Help residents and visitors navigate the town.
- Support biodiversity to thrive.
-

Dolgellau is currently recognised as one of the worst towns in Eryri for light pollution, with levels increasing rather than decreasing. There is concern that light pollution from Dolgellau and Abermaw (also identified as a high-pollution town) will worsen and merge.

The Eryri National Park Authority (ENPA) is eager to begin addressing this issue immediately, with funding available for short-term action. Priority will be given to adapting outdoor lighting at the Eurospar and the Police Station in Dolgellau.

A robust communication plan will be essential to implement the plan's recommendations, as a mix of authorities, enterprises, and private businesses will be responsible for delivery. Funding for many of the report's recommendations will come via the ENPA Dark Sky Officer.

Achieving Dark Sky Town status for Dolgellau would strengthen its identity as a town that values its environmental and historical assets, fostering pride and sustainability.

Partners in Dolgellau's Dark Sky Town Plan: Eryri National Park Authority (NPA); Dolgellau Partnership; Gwynedd Council (Highways Department).

6. ECONOMY, TOURISM & BUSINESS

Dolgellau is a small market town in Gwynedd, with a local economy shaped by its rich history, cultural heritage, and natural environment. The high street is bustling with small independent businesses, including retail shops, cafes, and restaurants, catering to both locals and visitors alike.

➤ 6.1 Tourism and the Visitor Economy in Dolgellau

Natural Attractions: Dolgellau is located in the southern part of Eryri National Park, a major attraction for tourists seeking outdoor activities such as hiking, cycling, and climbing. The town sits at the foot of Cader Idris (a popular mountain destination), and its location provides convenient access to other exceptional local natural attractions such as the Cregennan Lakes, Coed y Brenin, and the Mawddach Trail.

Cultural Tourism: The town’s historic architecture and its connections to the Quakers and the wool industry make it appealing to visitors interested in cultural history.

Events and Festivals: Local events, such as the annual music festival Sesiwn Fawr and the mountain race Ras y Gader, contribute to the local economy by attracting visitors.

The visitor economy plays an important role in the economy and community of Dolgellau. In 2022, the Dolgellau area attracted 310,000 tourists, generating an income of £62.7 million for the area [STEAM]. However, this contribution needs to be balanced and sustainable, considering the impacts of tourism on the community, environment, language, and culture of Dolgellau to ensure their protection for future generations.

According to the 2021 census, 57% of the population in the Dolgellau area speaks Welsh fluently, which is 6.7% lower than the Gwynedd average of 64.4%. Dolgellau is the area that has seen the largest decline in Gwynedd in terms of the percentage of Welsh speakers over the decade between the 2011 and 2021 censuses (-4.4%).



"A visitor economy for the benefit and well-being of the people, environment, language and culture of Gwynedd and Eryri"- Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy 2035

There is an opportunity here to integrate the **Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan 2035** into the development of the Dolgellau Place-Making Plan, by collaborating with key partners across the community, private, and public sectors to achieve common goals and an Action Plan that ensures Dolgellau's visitor economy is balanced, sustainable, and resilient, benefiting the town's communities and businesses.

The **North Wales Skills and Employment Plan 2023-2025** identifies the following when discussing work in the tourism and hospitality sector:

Challenges:

- One of the most difficult sectors to fill employment gaps in. 37% of people in the sector report difficulties in filling jobs.
- Retaining staff in the sector is challenging, as there are not enough people interested in these jobs, and wages are lower compared to other sectors.

Opportunities:

- The sector shows high future employment opportunities and has seen consistent growth since 2016, with growth expected beyond 2025.
- There is a need to raise the profile of the sector in the future as a career option.
- Employers need to be encouraged to invest in their staff to retain them.
- There is also a need to promote apprenticeship opportunities within the sector.

There is an opportunity here to address the challenges above and take advantage of the opportunities to offer quality employment opportunities for local people.



Recommended Actions to Unlock the Potential of Dolgellau's Visitor Economy for the Benefit of the Local Community:

1. Sense of Place: Highlight Dolgellau's Unique Attractions

- **Outdoor Adventures:** Market the region as a hub for outdoor activities such as hiking, cycling, and climbing. Promote nearby attractions like Cader Idris and the Mawddach Trail and emphasise Dolgellau's central location and convenient transport links for exploring Southern Snowdonia. Achieving Dark Sky Town status for Dolgellau would extend the town's appeal to eco-tourists and stargazers.
- **Cultural Heritage:** Showcase Dolgellau's rich history, including its role in Welsh gold mining, connections to the Quakers, the wool industry, and the Court of Great Sessions. With 180 listed buildings in Dolgellau's conservation area, the town's architecture is an attraction in itself. Continuing conservation efforts to renovate the town's buildings will ensure Dolgellau retains its appealing historical character. There is an opportunity to develop heritage interpretation work, extend heritage trails, and use the town's architectural features to guide pedestrians around the town (see point 6.1 of this plan).
- **Local Events:** Develop and promote annual events that celebrate Welsh and local music, food, and crafts, such as the Dolgellau Sesiwn Fawr, Dolgellau Carnival, Tŷ Siamas Events, the Monthly Farmers' Market, and consider Dolgellau Town Council's wish for local partners and businesses to collaborate in establishing a food festival in Dolgellau.

Potential Partners: Eryri National Park; Visit Wales; Eryri Mynyddoedd a Môr; Natural Resources Wales; Cadw; Dolgellau Town Business Forum; Sesiwn Fawr Dolgellau; Grŵp yr Aran; Amgueddfa Cymru; Dolgellau Town Council; Cyngor Gwynedd; Dolgellau Partnership

2. Collaboration with Local Businesses

- **Local Crafts:** Encourage local artisans to create products specific to Dolgellau, such as handcrafted jewellery inspired by Welsh gold, and locally themed souvenirs.
- **From the Field to the Plate:** Partner with local farms, butchers, bakeries, shops, and restaurants to offer Welsh food and products to visitors, made with local ingredients. Explore the possibility of expanding the monthly farmers' market and relocating it back to the Square.
- **Accommodation Partnerships:** Promote local bed and breakfast businesses, hotels, and caravan parks as responsible accommodation options.

Potential Partners: Dolgellau Partnership; Dolgellau Town Business Forum; Dolgellau Town Council; Cyngor Gwynedd (Business Department)

3. Developing Green Tourism

Adopting Sustainable Practices: Promote Dolgellau as an eco-friendly destination. Develop initiatives such as bike rentals and guided mountain tours and raise awareness of local public transport options that reduce environmental impact. (More on good eco-friendly tourism practices in the 'Environment' section of this plan). Recommendations to widen pavements, change road surface areas, and introduce pedestrian-focused signage (see 'Mobility' section of this plan) would also encourage walking and reduce car traffic in the town centre.

Potential Partners: Eryri National Park; Natural Resources Wales; Dolgellau Town Council; Cyngor Gwynedd (Highways Department)

4. Improving Marketing and Online Presence

Develop a Website for Dolgellau: Create an easy-to-use website showcasing attractions, and local businesses, and sharing information with both residents and visitors to Dolgellau. The website should be bilingual, accessible, and sensitive to local issues. Dolgellau Partnership offers itself as a natural partner to coordinate the content of the new website.

Local Networks: Utilise existing marketing channels to share information locally, such as Facebook groups like 'Dolgellau Events', 'People of Dolgellau', and 'Meirionnydd'; and the local paper 'Llygad y Dydd'. There is also an opportunity to start a conversation with Golwg and Llygad y Dydd to discuss setting up a local website for the Idris Circle - 'Idris360' (similar to 'Tegid360' in Bala), allowing locals to share stories and events in Welsh online.

Local and External Influencers: Collaborate with local photographers and influencers to share authentic experiences that promote the town to a targeted audience.

Potential Partners: Dolgellau Partnership; Llygad y Dydd; Bro360 (Golwg); Eryri Mynyddoedd a Môr; Visit Wales; Prynu Lleol Gwynedd

5. Offering Unique Visitor Experiences

Guided Tours: Develop specialised tours focusing on local history, folklore, and nature, such as the Pilgrims' Path, the Aran Wool Trail, and The Path of Legends. Consider collaborating with local businesses to package guided tours that combine the town's history with tasting sessions of local produce at various shops, cafes, and restaurants in the town.

Workshops and Classes: Offer workshops in crafts, cooking, or Welsh language lessons for tourists.

Adventure Packages: Create packages combining outdoor activities, cultural tours, and local food.

Potential Partners: Eryri National Park; Dolgellau Business Forum; Y Ganolfan Dysgu Cymraeg; Grŵp yr Aran; Tŷ Siamas; Coleg Meirion Dwyfor; Gwynedd Archives; Menter Iaith Gwynedd; Arloesi Dolgellau

6. Strengthening Community Engagement

Tourism Training: Provide training for local residents to work in tourism-related roles, ensuring that community members benefit directly. Encourage locals to become local ambassadors by following programs like the Snowdonia Ambassador Scheme. Host workshops for schools to raise awareness of job opportunities within the local tourism and hospitality sector.

Local Guides Program: Employ local people as tour guides to offer authentic experiences and share personal insights about the area.

Community Events: Organise events where tourists and locals can interact, such as food fairs or storytelling evenings.

Potential Partners: Local groups and organisations; Eryri National Park; Visit Eryri (Eryri Mynyddoedd a Môr); Tŷ Siamas.

7. Investment in Infrastructure

Accessibility Improvements: Raise awareness of public transport routes to Dolgellau and improve signage for local attractions in the town. Consider adding interpretive plaques to iconic buildings in the town.

Potential Partners: Dolgellau Town Council; Cyngor Gwynedd; Grŵp yr Aran; Cadw; Eryri National Park

8. Promoting Off-Peak Tourism

Winter Activities: Develop attractions outside the busy summer season, such as winter guided tours, cosy retreats, or festive markets.

Discounted Packages: Offer special deals for visits during quieter months (October-March) to maintain a steady flow of tourists throughout the year.

Potential Partners: Local groups, organisations and businesses; Visit Eryri (Eryri Mynyddoedd a Môr)

➤ 6.2 Dolgellau Town Business Forum

Establishing a business forum for Dolgellau business owners offers several key benefits, supporting individual initiatives and the overall economic development of the town.

1. Networking and Collaboration

- **Sharing Information:** Business owners can exchange insights, challenges, and best practices.
- **Collaboration:** Create a platform for local businesses to partner on projects, events, or marketing efforts, fostering cohesion across industries.
- **Supply Chain Connections:** Encourage connections among local suppliers, producers, and service providers, which could reduce costs and improve efficiency.

2. Advocacy and Unified Voice

- **Unified Representation:** The forum can represent business interests to local government, advocating for policies, incentives, or infrastructure improvements.
- **Policy Influence:** Helps shape local policies and initiatives that directly impact the business community, such as business taxes, town planning, and tourism development.
- **Community Engagement:** Provides a structured way for businesses to work with community leaders, influencing decisions that affect the Dolgellau economy.

3. Economic Growth and Resilience

- **Promoting Local Spending:** By encouraging collaboration and local purchasing, the forum can strengthen Dolgellau's economy, increasing money circulation locally.
- **Tourism Initiatives:** Help develop unified tourism strategies, market Dolgellau as a destination, and support businesses connected to tourism.
- **Business Retention:** Create a support system that helps retain businesses, reduce the risk of closures, and maintain economic stability.

4. Community and Social Benefits

- **Enhanced Community Engagement:** Businesses united through the forum can support local causes, initiatives, and events more effectively, strengthening community ties.
- **Increased Resilience During Crises:** During economic downturns or other challenges, a business forum provides a platform for a quick response, allowing members to support each other and navigate challenges together.

5. Long-Term Vision for Dolgellau

- **Strategic Planning:** The forum can work on long-term plans to improve Dolgellau's business landscape, aligning with regeneration projects and ensuring continued economic growth. Establishing a business forum in Dolgellau will nurture a stronger, more resilient, and interconnected business community, with lasting benefits for the town's economic health and vitality.

However, we are aware that a business forum has already existed but was dissolved for unresolved reasons. For example, a lack of coordination and shared vision between businesses, difficulty in attracting new voices to the forum, and a lack of structure and planning. We therefore recommend looking to establish the forum in partnership with the Dolgellau Strategic Regeneration Group (see point 3 of this plan), working together with Community Support Service Officers, the Economic and Community Department of Cyngor Gwynedd.

➤ 6.3 Arloesi Dolgellau

Arloesi Dolgellau CIC has been established to operate from Tŷ Newyddion, a building in the centre of Dolgellau that received significant investment from the Dolgellau TH Scheme. It has a 5-year plan to develop local skills and entrepreneurship related to emerging digital technologies, as well as providing a sustainable community resource for learning and creativity.

Objectives and Aims:

The goal of Arloesi Dolgellau is to stimulate digital and economic growth in Dolgellau through a centre focused on knowledge, creation, and innovation. It will operate as a multifunctional space that promotes skills, supports local businesses, and fosters community engagement.

The main objectives are:

1. **Knowledge:** Promote STEM learning through coding clubs, AI skills development, and digital technology workshops to equip all ages with digital and technological skills.
2. **Making:** Develop a Maker Space funded by Menter Môn, equipped with 3D printer, laser cutter, and crafting tools. It will support product design, craftsmanship, and local businesses, honouring Dolgellau's heritage, including the wool industry.
3. **Application:** Implement and use IoT devices within local Smart Town initiatives and more, supporting projects in monitoring, agricultural technology, and data-driven innovation.

Engaging with the Community and Business:

The project will engage with schools, businesses, and the community. It will provide resources for new businesses, workshops, networking, and workspace for local professionals. Local businesses can benefit from services such as printing, photocopying, and hot desk availability. Additionally, Dolgellau Innovation will include a Repair Café, community events, and maintain a connection to its history with newspapers and magazines available for the public.

Impact on Revitalisation and Development of Dolgellau:

By offering innovative technology resources, skill building, and support for innovation, the goal of Dolgellau Innovation is to revitalise the town's economy, improve community cohesion, and make Dolgellau a regional leader in digital and circular economy initiatives. This will attract new talent, support local artists, and create opportunities that align with broader technological and environmental goals

Recommendations:

The project currently employs a part-time coordinator, but to succeed, Arloesi Dolgellau will need support in marketing its events and resources locally. The initiative would benefit from coordination with other community groups in the town and should have a voice on the Dolgellau Strategic Group.

6.4 SMART Towns

The infrastructure for a Smart Town has been established in Dolgellau by Menter Môn as part of the Cyngor Gwynedd initiative, 'Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig.' In addition to free Wi-Fi in Dolgellau town centre, SMART technologies are collecting various types of data that will be commercially beneficial to the town.

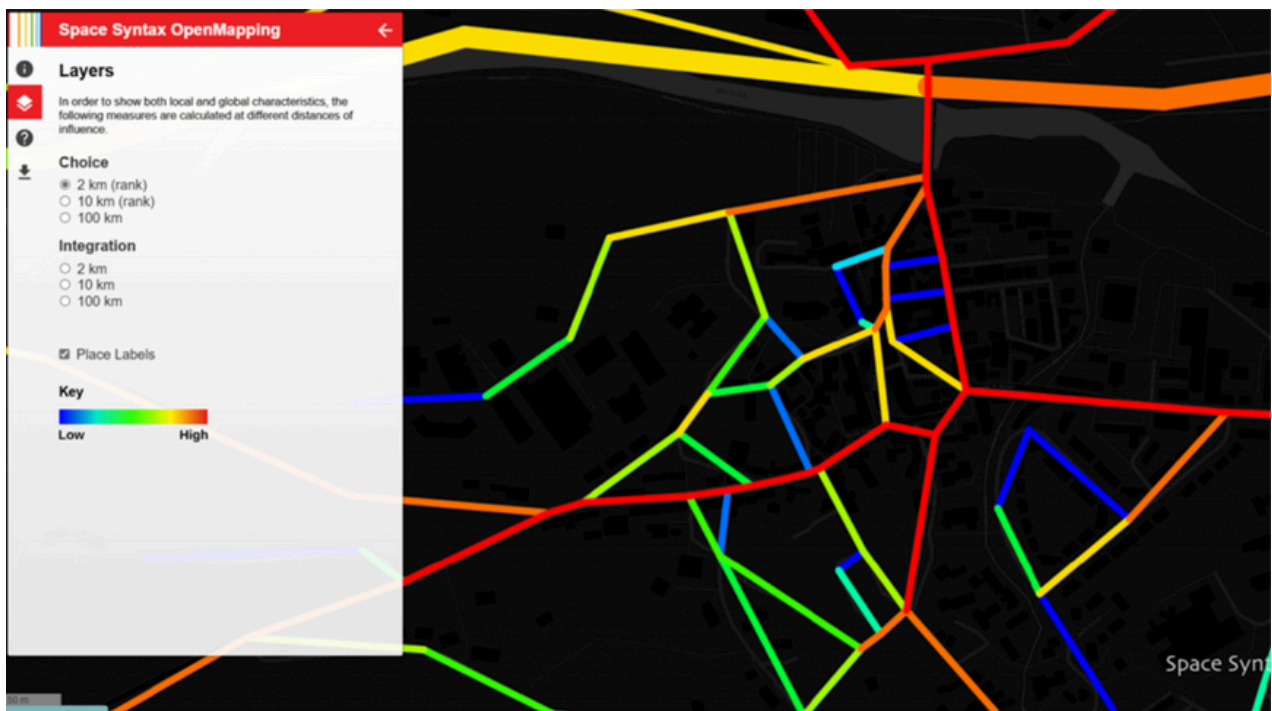
The data collected includes:

1. The number and dwell time of visitors with a smart device in the Wi-Fi area for more than 5 minutes.
2. Demographic data showing who logs into the Wi-Fi system and answers the following questions: age, gender, purpose of visit, postcode, and language.
3. Email addresses for those who consent to marketing campaigns.
4. Levels of particulate pollution and pollen, as well as temperature/humidity.

7. MOBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY

➤ 7.1 Creating an Accessible and Inclusive Town

The medieval layout and 19th-century historic buildings of Dolgellau create navigation challenges within the town, particularly when travelling from the Marian car park to Sgwâr Eldon, the town's main commercial hub. Traffic flow through the town is heavy, and the pavements are generally very narrow.



Syntax Map showing traffic density in Dolgellau

To make Dolgellau a more pedestrian-friendly town, several changes could be implemented to improve walkability, safety, accessibility, and the overall pedestrian experience. The historic layout of Dolgellau, along with its location within a scenic landscape, offers significant potential for pedestrian-focused enhancements. Here are some specific suggestions:

1. Improving Pedestrian Infrastructure

Wider Pavements: In areas with heavy foot traffic or where pavements are too narrow, consider widening them to accommodate more pedestrians. This is particularly important in the town centre, where historic buildings limit available space. However, widening pavements on certain streets, such as from the base of Y Bont Fawr along Ffos y Felin, would impact traffic flow. In such cases, introducing a shared surface—where pedestrians and vehicles share the same space but cars are restricted to walking speed—should be considered as an alternative solution.

Ffos y Felin



Heol Glyndŵr



Heol y Dŵr



Car-Free Zones:

Establish pedestrian-only areas in key locations, particularly Sgwâr Eldon, where people can walk safely without concerns about traffic. This could be a permanent measure or limited to peak times, such as weekends, holidays, or the summer season.

During consultations, feedback from event organisers, including Sesiwn Fawr, Ras y Gader, and Dolgellau Carnival, indicated that closing Eldon Square was both costly and overly complicated.

However, closing the square during events like Ras y Gader would have benefitted residents and competitors, creating a much safer environment given the volume of traffic and the number of children sharing the space.



Ras Y Gader 2024, Sgwâr Eldon

Transform Underutilised Spaces: Repurpose unused areas into public plazas where pedestrians can gather, relax, and socialise. These spaces could include seating, greenery, and pedestrian amenities like water fountains and public art. The two key locations for this are Sgwar Eldon and the area at Wtra Plas Coch.

By extending the pavement into the road at the square, a natural space would be created to allow businesses to expand their services onto the street. Public plazas are excellent for small businesses as they create vibrant, high-traffic areas that attract both locals and tourists. The increased footfall generated in these spaces enhances visibility and can boost sales for nearby shops, cafes, and vendors. Moreover, the open, social environment encourages people to linger, shop, and engage with local businesses, fostering stronger community connections and customer loyalty. Additionally, many of the buildings around the square are inaccessible to some due to steps and narrow doorways, which highlights the importance of improving accessibility as part of these developments.



Concept design of Sgwar Eldon, Dolgellau

Wtra Plas Coch – During the COVID-19 pandemic, the space at Wtra Plas Coch was shared between the businesses of Porth y Farchnad, allowing customers to sit and enjoy products from nearby businesses, such as The Unicorn, Gwin Dylanwad, and Popty'r Dref. However, the space has since reverted to being four parking spaces—narrow and difficult to use. The businesses would like to see this space used once again as a public area for the community.



Public Transport: Public transport in Dolgellau is primarily provided through bus services. The long-distance TrawsCymru T2 and T3 services (Lloyd’s Coaches) connect Dolgellau with other towns and cities across Wales, including Bangor, Aberystwyth, Abermaw, and Wrexham, and operate regularly.

The Flexi Bus service (Transport for Wales) works well in Dolgellau, particularly for the elderly population and for transporting people from rural communities into the town centre. However, there is still work to be done to raise awareness of this relatively new service locally.



The Bus Exchange on Sgwâr Eldon

It became clear during the consultation period that the bus station, currently located on the High Street, is causing concerns. In towns such as Caernarfon and Aberystwyth, the bus stations are located towards the edge of the town centre, which helps ease traffic flow through those commercial hubs. In Dolgellau, up to five buses wait in the small square for up to 10 minutes every two hours, often with their engines running.

While it is important to maintain a bus stop in the Square to transport and attract people into the town centre, the priority is to relocate the bus exchange from the High Street. Several consultations have been held to find a new location for the bus station, with Marian Mawr being discussed as a potential option.

2. Traffic Calming Measures

Although the speed limit in town centres across Wales has been reduced to 20 mph, there are no 20 mph signs at the entrance to the town at the top of the Y Bont Fawr or at Finsbury Square – the two main entry points to the town centre. During the consultation, several people expressed concerns about the speed of traffic in the town centre, particularly as the pavements are narrow and pedestrians are often forced to walk in the main road.

3. Signage

The current wayfinding signs are now outdated, and there is a need for a new signage strategy for the town. It would be beneficial to see more clear and attractive directional signs to help pedestrians navigate Dolgellau. These signs could include walking maps, distances to key locations, walking times from one point to another, and information about historical or cultural sites.



4. Street Furniture and Heritage Interpretation.

There are several benches, resting areas, and sheltered spots around the town, particularly along popular walking routes such as the Mawddach Trail and in the Square. Well-placed seating encourages people to walk more by offering comfortable places to rest. However, there is room for improvement in the use of seating and resting areas in the town to enhance the sense of place and promote the town's heritage.

Incorporating heritage interpretation into street furniture enriches urban spaces by connecting people with local history and culture in appealing and accessible ways. This presents an opportunity to foster community pride, improve learning, and offer unique, interactive experiences that attract tourists, benefiting the local economy. Additionally, it beautifies public spaces, promotes social interaction, and raises awareness about cultural conservation.



Concept design by a local stone mason of possible interpretation work on benches in Sgwâr Eldon (top right, and bottom left) and in Wtra Plas Coch (bottom right), including a map of the town, local lore, and the Cader Idris mountain range.

8. WELSH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN DOLGELLAU

8.1 The Welsh Language in Dolgellau

Promoting the use of Welsh is one of Gwynedd Council's improvement goals, with the Council's Strategic Plan stating that the aim is to see "the people of Gwynedd taking advantage of opportunities to use Welsh in the community, the workplace, and when accessing public services." This vision of promoting and increasing the use of Welsh locally is part of their commitment to contributing to national language strategies and legislation, including the goal of seeing "Wales and a vibrant culture where Welsh thrives" (Well-being of Future Generations Act) and achieving a million Welsh speakers (Welsh Language Strategy 2050).

According to the 2021 census, 57% of the population in the Dolgellau area speak Welsh fluently, which is 6.7% lower than the Gwynedd average of 64.4%. The Dolgellau area* has experienced the largest decline in the percentage of Welsh speakers in Gwynedd since the previous census in 2011 (-4.4%).

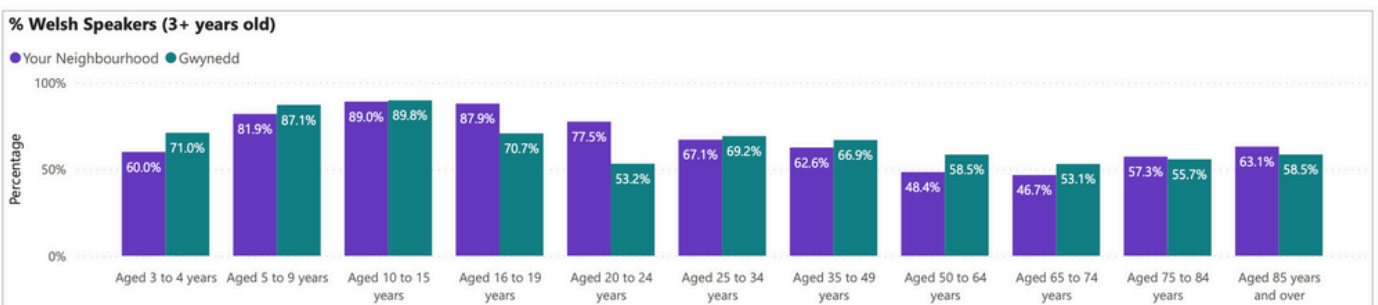
In the southern part of Dolgellau (which includes the town centre), the percentage of Welsh speakers is 61.3%, which is 4.3% higher than the average for the Dolgellau area (57%). However, Southern Dolgellau has seen a larger decline in the percentage of Welsh speakers compared to the area average (-5.8% between the 2011 and 2021 censuses in the Southern Dolgellau area, compared to -4.4% in the Dolgellau area).



Map: Southern Dolgellau ward

Welsh Speakers

Welsh speakers (3+ years old)	Number	As %	% Gwynedd
Can speak Welsh	843	61.3%	64.4%
Cannot speak Welsh	532	38.7%	35.6%
Total	1,375	100.0%	100.0%



The number of Welsh speakers in Southern Dolgellau compared to Gwynedd (2021 Census Analysis, Gwynedd Council website)

The Dolgellau area includes the villages of Aberangell, Arthog, Bont Ddu, Brithdir, Corris, Dinas Mawddwy, Dolgellau, Ganllwyd, Llanelltyd, Llanfachreth, Llanymawddwy, Mallwyd, Penmaenpool, and Rhydymain.

A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.

- Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Llywodraeth Cymru, 2015)

Opportunities for Socialising through the medium of Welsh in Dolgellau:

There are opportunities for socialising through the medium of Welsh in Dolgellau via community organizations and groups such as Merched y Wawr, Clwb Gwawr, Grŵp yr Aran, Dolgellau Literary Society, bilingual Sports Clubs, and occasional events like the Dolgellau Sesiwn Fawr and the cultural events program at Tŷ Siamas. However, most of these sessions appeal to the older generation. There is also work to be done to highlight opportunities for new Welsh speakers and to make Welsh more visible in the town centre.

Children and Young People:

The Welsh-language Cylch Meithrin and the Dechra'n Deg office are located at the Dolgellau Family Centre (Canolfan Deulu) for children aged 6 months to 4 years, with immersion sessions from Cymraeg i Blant and Ti a Fi also held at Dolgellau Library. The 3-16 year old school, Ysgol Bro Idris (the first of its kind in North Wales), has two of its six campuses located within Dolgellau town (Dolgellau Site and the Main Campus of Ysgol Bro Idris). According to the 2021 census (North and South Dolgellau wards), 84.4% of 3-16-year-olds in Dolgellau can already speak Welsh, and the schools are committed to the objectives of the Welsh Language in Education Strategy 2022-2032, Cyngor Gwynedd.

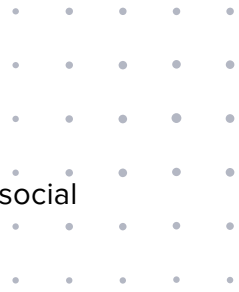
However, there is no clear continuity of language use once students leave education. Ensuring new opportunities for enjoying Welsh in a social context would foster pride and increase language use, helping to establish language habits among Dolgellau's young people that extend beyond education.

Menter Iaith Gwynedd has recently appointed a Development Officer for Meirionnydd in the second half of 2024. It would be great to see local initiatives collaborating with MI Gwynedd to map current Welsh-language activities for young people in Dolgellau; identify gaps and act to offer taster sessions or new clubs; provide support for current club leaders to feel more confident using Welsh; and forming a seasonal program of activities for children to be promoted through the Ysgol Bro Idris and Dolgellau Cylch Meithrin networks.

Potential Partners: Menter Iaith Gwynedd; Cymraeg i Blant; Dechrau'n Deg; Canolfan Deulu Dolgellau; Mudiad Meithrin; Ysgol Bro Idris; Tŷ Siamas; Sesiwn Fawr Dolgellau; Local organisations and groups.

New Welsh Speakers:

Considering the aging population of Dolgellau, it is essential to ensure that there are opportunities at every stage of life for the people of Dolgellau to learn Welsh, supporting the Welsh Government's goal of reaching one million Welsh speakers by 2050.



Welsh tutors from the Canolfan Dysgu Cymraeg hold Welsh learning sessions locally, but social opportunities for Welsh learners to practice are limited.

One option could be to collaborate with Menter Iaith Gwynedd and volunteers from local associations to implement a buddy system for New Welsh Speakers. This would involve fluent Welsh speakers volunteering to converse with learners, allowing them to practice their new language skills in a social environment.

There is also an opportunity to encourage local businesses to participate in the ‘Hapus i Siarad’ campaign, run by Menter Iaith Cymru and the Welsh Learning Centre, which offers learners the chance to practice Welsh in local small businesses that are happy to converse in Welsh with their customers.

Potential Partners: Menter Iaith Gwynedd; Canolfan Dysgu Cymraeg; Nant Gwrtheyrn; Local Organisations.

Welsh in Business

It is important for Welsh to be visible in the town—on signs, promotional materials, and in local businesses—to encourage local ownership of the language, create new opportunities to use Welsh, and raise language awareness among visitors. Greater use of Welsh by local businesses would also encourage young people in Dolgellau to recognise Welsh as a business language with value beyond the classroom.

There are several benefits for local businesses in using Welsh, including stronger community engagement and loyalty, improved customer experience, brand differentiation, and access to grant opportunities.

While many businesses in the town operate bilingually, and attitudes towards Welsh or the desire to incorporate Welsh into their businesses are generally strong, there is work to be done in raising awareness of the support available to businesses for this, such as translation services like Helo Blod, language training for staff, and the use of Welsh signage.

Potential Partners: Menter Iaith Gwynedd; Mentrau Iaith Cymru; Business Wales; ARFOR; Cyngor Gwynedd (Economy); Canolfan Dysgu Cymraeg; Dolgellau Town Business Forum.

6.2 Tŷ Siamas – Arts Centre

➤ 8.2 Tŷ Siamas - Arts Centre

A workshop was held with the directors of the centre early in the consultation period to assess the status and needs of the centre. The main challenges identified were:

- Structural problems in Neuadd Idris, owned by Cyngor Gwynedd.
- Lack of interest in events from new audiences.
- The need to update facilities, resources, and the interior vision of the building.
- The need to attract new volunteers.
- Financial challenges from 2020 to 2024.



The centre was closed for a period from 2022 to 2023 due to roof issues. A grant was received from Cyngor Gwynedd to cover 75% of the roof repair costs, but the need to fund the remaining 15% was a heavy blow to the community interest company through a guarantee. With rising energy costs and less income coming into the centre, there are concerns about the future of the company.

The centre now requires substantial funding to update several resources. It is noted that the original design of Tŷ Siamas was intended for a different building and was hastily adapted to fit Neuadd Idris, a modification that is not suitable for the building. The proposed renovation recommendations include:

- Structure and Composition of the Building: The lift, which is faulty, is located at the back of the shop and is not accessible to visitors with accessibility difficulties.
- Exhibition: The information and design are outdated and have broken in some places.
- The Bar: The design is old-fashioned with several issues (such as the beer pumps and washing machine) that are outdated.
- Recording Studio: Once a valuable asset to the organization, today, many artists record from home or through their labels, so there is a need to rethink the use of the space where the studio is located.
- Rebranding: The directors are eager to update the brand, which is now nearly twenty years old, to develop a more contemporary brand that will reflect the changes in the proposed new business plan and the new program of activities that will arise from it.

Incorporating the above elements would be a significant project. The Siamas Cyf. company is keen to receive advice from officers in the Community Support Service (Economy and Community Department of Cyngor Gwynedd) to identify funding sources for any capital work, including support to identify opportunities for funding a marketing and development plan for Tŷ Siamas. Siamas Cyf. has also contacted an architect to review the building's layout.

Potential Partners: Siamas Cyf.; Arts Council Wales; Community Support Service, Economy and Community Department, Cyngor Gwynedd.

➤ 8.3 Developing Space and the Impact of Events on Sgwâr Eldon, Dolgellau

Sgwâr Eldon is an important social and commercial hub in Dolgellau, and the principles of place making are key to developing its potential to host a vibrant community life. This means creating public spaces where residents can connect, reducing the need for private vehicle travel, and creating areas that enable people to socialise and build community connections.

Throughout the year, particularly between May and August, a variety of events are held in the town that attract visitors and strengthen the community. These include a family carnival, a youth football festival, the Ras y Gader, and the summer highlight for many in the town, the Sesiwn Fawr Dolgellau – a folk festival with a significant economic contribution to the area.

Sesiwn Fawr Dolgellau



The Sesiwn Fawr Dolgellau, held on the first weekend of the summer holidays, is a folk festival that started over 30 years ago and has grown into a significant annual event. In addition to providing musical and artistic entertainment, the festival plays a key role in promoting Welsh culture and the Welsh language in Dolgellau by giving Welsh a platform as a living, social language, nurturing

Welsh-speaking and local artists, and normalizing Welsh as a medium for artistic expression, making it accessible to broader audiences. Data from the free Wi-Fi users in Dolgellau (Patrwm) shows that over 61% of visitors to Dolgellau over the weekend of the Sesiwn Fawr selected Welsh as their language of choice during the festival weekend, 18-21 July 2024.

The festival is also a major economic driver, with local pubs and businesses benefiting significantly from the increase in trade and visitors to the town during the event. In 2022, the festival attracted over 3,000 visitors to the centre of Dolgellau, and it was estimated that the festival contributed £210,000 to the local economy.

The Sesiwn Fawr is run by a local volunteer committee and is reliant on grant funding from the Arts Council Wales, with the main costs of the festival being spent on free events on the Saturday. However, the increase in costs has led to discussions about raising ticket prices to help sustain the festival for the future.

Challenges and Barriers for Event Development on Sgwâr Eldon:

In consultation with the organizers of the Sesiwn Fawr Dolgellau, several barriers were highlighted when organizing an event of this size in the town centre, including:

1. **Cost of Closing Sgwâr Eldon:** Funding is required to safely close the square, with current closure arrangements costing approximately £3,500.
2. **Parking Issues:** The parking spaces provided are only for short periods, and more long-term parking options are needed to better support visitors.
3. **Accessibility:** There are accessibility challenges for disabled attendees, families with young children, and the elderly, particularly regarding mobility around the Square and the town, with many of the town's buildings being inaccessible to wheelchair users.
4. **Public Infrastructure:** The public facilities need improvement to effectively host events and meet the needs of attendees.

For the Ras y Gader event, which was held without closing the square, there were health and safety risks as cars were driving through the area while children and visitors filled the space.

Recommendations for Improvement:

To improve event arrangements and public safety, the following is recommended:

- **Official Closure of the Square:** The Town Council should take responsibility for obtaining a license to officially close the square for large events.
- **Long-term Parking Options:** Consider extending the duration of short-term parking to long-term parking during events such as the Sesiwn Fawr.
- **Improved Walkways and Accessibility:** Implement recommendations for a 'shared surface' to improve mobility and accessibility for all.
- **Better Data Collection:** Gather information to measure the economic impact of events and understand how visitors move around the town. This will help guide future plans and ensure that economic benefits are fully realized.

These recommendations are crucial to strengthening the role of Eldon Square as a community and economic hub, ensuring that the town benefits from its potential to attract visitors and promote local trade.

Potential Partners: Dolgellau Town Council; Cyngor Gwynedd; Sesiwn Fawr Dolgellau; Ras y Gader.

10. COMMUNITY ASSETS

➤ 10.1 Y Llyfrgell Rydd / The Free Library

Following investment from the Dolgellau Townscape Heritage Scheme, the building was upgraded for community use in 2021, including the installation of a kitchen and a lift to the first floor. Currently, the Free Library is used by community groups such as Brownies, Yoga Sessions, the Community Hub Y Lle'n y Dre, Dolgellau Town Council meetings, and exhibitions by community groups. However, the building is not yet being used to its full potential. There are offices on the first floor of the Free Library that have been adapted into flexible co-working spaces (hot desks) but have not yet been utilised.

By marketing the space better, it would be possible to generate more income for the Town Council.

Potential Partners: Dolgellau Town Council; Local organisations; Dolgellau Town Business Forum; Community groups and clubs

➤ 10.2 Canolfan Deulu Dolgellau

Canolfan Deulu Dolgellau is a limited company, not-for-profit, managed by a committee of volunteer directors. The building is owned by Cyngor Gwynedd.

The Centre is currently home to Cylch Meithrin Dolgellau, Dechrau'n Deg officers, the Health Visitor, and serves as a hub for social services. The Centre is an important asset to the community, as the Dolgellau South Ward is a Dechrau'n Deg area, with everyone eligible for the program currently receiving support. The Canolfan Deulu is registered with Care Inspectorate Wales to accommodate 48 children at once, but the demand for daycare services for children aged 6 months to 4 years is much higher. There is also a demand for after-school care for primary school children, but this service is not currently offered.

Consultation has taken place, and a "Childcare Needs Report" was published in 2023 by the Strategic Childcare Officer, with an action plan expected.

Urgent maintenance is required on the small garden, painting work, and financial assistance is needed to commission an architectural survey for the building's roof.

Potential Partners: Canolfan Deulu Dolgellau; Cyngor Gwynedd; Mudiad Meithrin; Health Board; Park Committee.



➤ 10.3 The Park and Playground

The park is a regularly used asset by Dolgellau families. It is a green space with good facilities. Currently, the park is managed by Dolgellau Partnership and overseen by a small committee of volunteers. During the consultation, the committee expressed that the maintenance costs of the resources are problematic, especially when equipment is damaged due to antisocial behaviour.

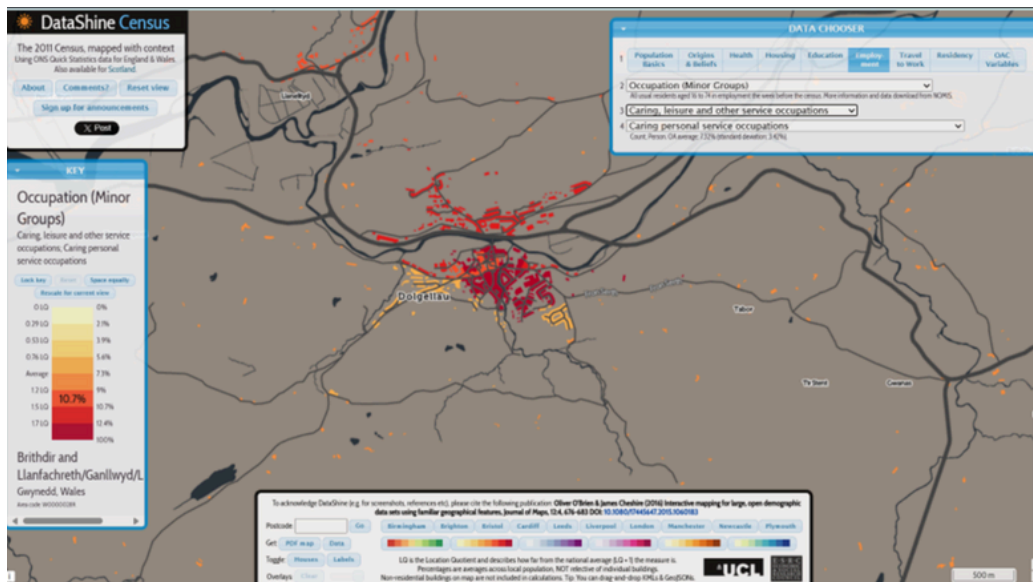
➤ 10.4 The Skate Park

The Skate Park was established in place of a swimming pool at a time when skating was popular. However, the skate park has had to be cleared due to lack of use and safety concerns, leaving an unused space. Reinstalling the skate park would cost around £150,000 for the Town Council due to its concrete construction. They are currently seeking a grant to contribute to these costs. There is little information available about the level of demand for a skate park within the community, so further consultation is needed to assess the need and make a decision on how best to redevelop this space for the benefit of the community.

Potential Partners: Dolgellau Town Council; Byw'n Iach.

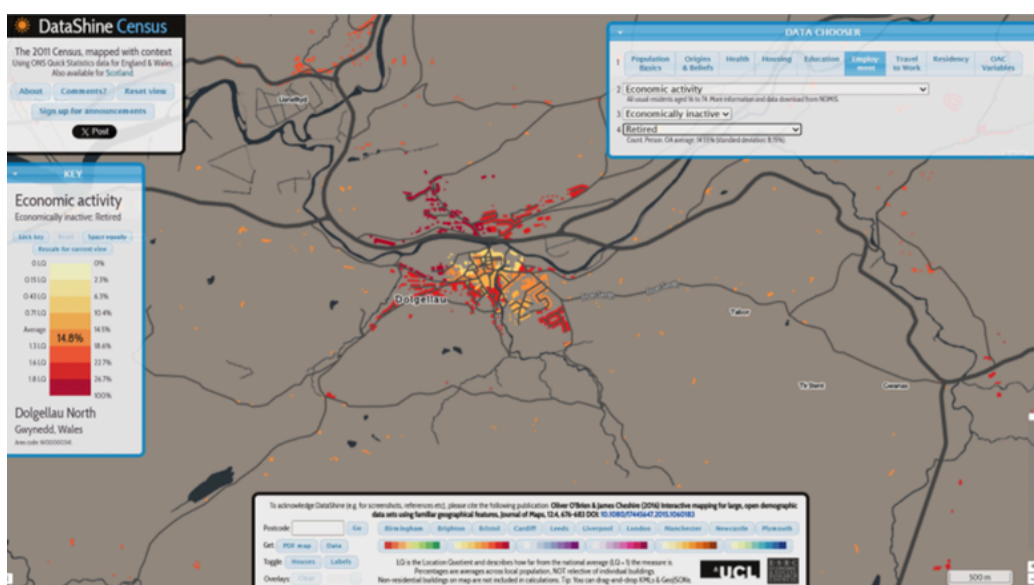
11. HEALTH

Care services are very important to the employment sector in the area, with a high percentage of the town's workforce relying on careers in this field (16.4% of the economically active population of Dolgellau, according to the 2021 census).



Numbers of retired people and where they live in Dolgellau (Census 2021)

The 2021 Census statistics also show that 27% of the population of Dolgellau is economically inactive, with many already retired. The town lost its care home for the elderly when Llwyn was closed, and now only Cefn Rodyn is available. This has led to an increase in the number of people receiving care at home, and those numbers are expected to rise in the coming years. We know that care costs in Gwynedd are currently at their highest ever.



Number of people who work in the care, leisure and services service in Dolgellau (Census 2021)

➤ 11.1 Dolfeurig Day Centre

The Dolfeurig Centre, which provides day support for people with learning disabilities, is embarking on an ambitious development project to rebuild the centre to better reflect the services expected in the field today. The aim of the development is to adapt the building and operating model to become a central part of the community, rather than remaining separate. They will adjust the current model to align with the **North Wales Supported Employment Strategy**, where some individuals will require intensive support (more traditional provision), but Dolfeurig will also be a location for training and skill development to help users gain employment.

Dolfeurig will provide training opportunities for its users, such as kitchen work, catering, money handling, firewood sales, and car washing, with the hope of securing paid local work. One of its objectives is to connect with the local college and provide a suitable site/environment for educational classes for individuals who cannot attend the college. They are keen for the building to become a local hub where local nurses can hold clinics and share office space.

The **North Wales Supported Employment Strategy** aims to empower people with learning disabilities by creating structured support pathways to help them access paid employment. Recognising the significant barriers these individuals face—such as low expectations, the complex effects of welfare benefits, and limited support—the strategy emphasises a multi-stage employment model with support. This model provides tailored job training, career development, and partnerships with employers, improving access to the workforce. The vision is to enable personal growth, economic independence, and inclusion in North Wales communities, aligning with legislative frameworks to ensure individual rights and promote fair opportunities for meaningful employment.

The Dolfeurig team has expressed their desire to be an integral part of the town and engage with community groups. It is recommended that they be invited to be part of the Dolgellau Strategic Group. Located close to the Marian, Dolfeurig Centre looks to engage with the Marian Trustees, specifically to discuss access routes to the Centre.

Potential Partners: Cyngor Gwynedd (Adran Gofal); Canolfan Dydd Dolfeurig; Coleg Meirion Dwyfor (ILS - Life Skills and Employment)

➤ 11.2 Tŷ Meurig

Tŷ Meurig is a new acquisition for the Gwynedd Council Care Department. The vision is to adapt the former home of one of the town's historical figures into flats for people experiencing difficulties living independently. As the building is listed, they are seeking advice on how the building can be adapted to improve accessibility.

Potential Partners: Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board; Cyngor Gwynedd (Care Department); Tŷ Meurig; Adra Cyf.

➤ 11.3 Plas Brith

Currently, the building is used for mental health care by the Health Board. Developing the building is a priority, especially internally, as it is not yet conducive as a setting that takes trauma into account for its users.

When creating a "trauma-informed" environment in a mental health care facility, it is essential to ensure an environment that promotes healing, safety, and confidence. Individuals in mental health care often have a history of trauma that can deeply affect their mental well-being and how they respond to care. A trauma-aware environment ensures that every aspect of the setting—from physical design to staff training and operational protocols—prioritises safety, reduces the potential for re-traumatisation, and promotes positive therapeutic outcomes.

Potential Partners: Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board; Cyngor Gwynedd (Care Department); Plas Brith

➤ 11.4 Dolgellau Hospital

During the consultation, the Health Board expressed the need to develop the current Dolgellau Hospital and make better use of the facility, including looking at providing Family Doctor training on-site. There was a recognition of the need to specifically develop the parking area to facilitate this.

Potential Partners: Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board; Cyngor Gwynedd (Care Department)

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

This plan outlines the regeneration projects that have already commenced or are in the development stage. However, this placemaking plan takes a holistic approach to the town's regeneration, with each point in the main report serving as a potential project opportunity.

Key Issues	No.	Project	Lead	Potential Partners
3. Strategic Entity For Dolgellau	3	Develop a Strategic Group for Dolgellau or reform the Dolgellau Partnership.	Cyngor Gwynedd (Economy)	Partneriaeth Dolgellau; Dolgellau Town Council; Local Businesses; Community Groups; Medium-sized Organisations
5. Environment-development efficiency energy and Tourism Sustainable	5.1	Resolve connection for charging points on Y Marian.	Cyngor Gwynedd	N/A
	5.2	Create 'Local Ambassadors' course	Grŵp yr Aran	Eryri National Park; Local groups and organisations; Cyngor Gwynedd Tourism Department.
		Establish a 'Keep Dolgellau Tidy' group.	Dolgellau Town Council	Partneriaeth Dolgellau; Caru Eryri (Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri); Cymdeithas Eryri
	5.3	Dark Skies – Work towards 'Dark Sky Town' status.	Eryri National Park (Conservation)	Dolgellau Partnership; Cyngor Gwynedd (Highways)
6. Economy, Tourism & Business	6.3	Hwb Arloesi Dolgellau - Tŷ Newyddion	Arloesi Dolgellau	Partneriaeth Dolgellau; Dolgellau Town Business Forum; M-Sparc
7. Mobility and Connectivity	7.1	Install or refurbish street furniture.	Dolgellau Town Council	Grŵp yr Aran; Eryri National Park
	7.3	Plan a Signage Strategy for walkers in the town centre	Cyngor Gwynedd	Cyngor Tref Dolgellau

Key Issues	No.	Project	Lead	Potential Partners
8. The Welsh Language and Culture	8.1	Coordinate a series of events for children and young people to socialise in Welsh.	Menter Iaith Gwynedd	Urdd Meirionnydd; Tŷ Siamas; Dolgellau AFC; Dolgellau Rugby Club; Dolgellau Cricket Club; Mudiad Meithrin; Cymraeg i Blant; Ysgol Bro Idris; Coleg Meirion Dwyfor
		Encourage a buddy system for Welsh Learners.	Menter Iaith Gwynedd	Canolfan Dysgu Cymraeg; Nant Gwrtheyrn;
	8.2	Regenerate Tŷ Siamas	Siamas Cyf.	Cyngor Gwynedd; Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru; Cyngor Gwynedd
	8.3	Develop Sesiwn Fawr Dolgellau	Sesiwn Fawr Dolgellau Cyf.	Dolgellau Town Council; Cyngor Gwynedd; Arts Council of Wales; Local Businesses and Organisations
Discuss the possibility of transferring the license for Sgwâr Eldon to Dolgellau Town Council		Dolgellau Town Council	Cyngor Gwynedd; Sesiwn Fawr Dolgellau; Ras y Gader; Carnifal Dolgellau; Dolgellau Business Forum	
9. Leisure	9.1	Develop the Dolgellau Pavillion Project	Marian Mawr Trustees	Dolgellau Town Council; Cyngor Gwynedd (Economy and Community); NRW; Eryri National Park; Dolgellau AFC; Dolgellau Cricket Club
10. Community Assets	10.1	Advertise office spaces available at the Free Library	Dolgellau Town Council	Cyngor Gwynedd (Economy)
	10.2	Maintenance work at the Canolfan Deulu – the garden, roof and painting.	Canolfan Deulu Dolgellau	Cyngor Gwynedd; Health Board; Mudiad Meithrin; Dolgellau Park Committee

Key Issues	No.	Project	Lead	Potential Partners
10. Community Assets (cont.)	10.2	Establish an after school club in response to the need recognised in 'Childcare Needs Reports' by Cyngor Gwynedd	Cyngor Gwynedd	Canolfan Deulu Dolgellau; Ysgol Bro Idris
	10.4	Dolgellau Skate Park	Dolgellau Town Council	Byw'n Iach; Cyngor Gwynedd
11. Health	11.1	Dolfeurig Day Centre Development	Cyngor Gwynedd	Y Matian Trustees; Coleg Meirion Dwyfor (ILS)
	11.2	Tŷ Meurig	Cyngor Gwynedd	Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board; Eryri National Park; Tŷ Meurig; Adra cyf.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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- Deddf Llesiant Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol (2015)<https://www.futuregenerations.wales/cy/about-us/future-generations-act/>
- Gwasanaeth Ymchwil a Gwybodaeth, Cyngor Gwynedd. Data Cyfrifiad 2021, Gogledd Dolgellau.
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