

Abertillery's SMART Town Action Plan Reviewed by



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Review Summary

Firstly, the SMART Towns team want to thank Abertillery for completing a SMART Action Plan for their town. We consider this to be the first step to making your town SMART. In this Action Plan, the team has provided feedback and provided guidance wherever possible (all the comments are in **red**).

In addition to the comments, here is a summary of our comments and support.

- Artwork provision in empty shops – could be promoted via a (technology-enabled) tourist trail – town apps, Soundscape etc.
- Digital training for local businesses – <https://www.digitalcommunities.gov.wales/>
<https://businesswales.gov.wales/superfastbusinesswales/>
- Public transport provision – have any of the smaller towns started to look at demand responsive transport (DRT)? Looks like there is some interest across Wales for services like ArrivaClick [Bus Travel in Wales | Bus Routes & Tickets | Arriva Bus](#)
- Regarding youth engagement, there is a movement called ‘Playable Cities’
 - There is a good essay on this from Paul Wilson at the Connected Places Catapult in [the Digital High Street eBook on Smart Public Space p 38/39](#).
 - More information here [Bristol | Playable City](#)
- In terms of discoverability, especially of time-dependent and ever changing events, there is an interesting organisation called [CityID](#) . They come from a design agency/wayfinding/map making perspective but have been recently moving into the digital services space. They have a brilliant prototype called PopMap – have a look at the video here - [PopMap | Bristol+Bath Creative R&D | Watershed - YouTube](#).
 - My only caveat is that this is still a prototype, so it may be cost prohibitive for a smaller town. However, they are an amazing team and we would be more could arrange a meeting on your behalf if you wanted.
- Pop-up shops concept – you might be aware of [Appear Here](#). May not be available on such a small scale, but an interesting broker model for empty spaces.
- Consultation and community engagement seem to be on the agenda. There is [Hello Lamp Post](#) and other solutions such as [The Future Fox](#) .
- Regarding public safety and anti-social behaviour ASB, Glasgow have done some interesting projects on this [Intelligent Street Lighting | Future City Glasgow](#). Again, might be challenging to get the right scale and price point. Cardiff have also done some work in this area.
- Interest in coworking could be supported by footfall analysis and interesting business models based on data that we’ve discussed at a high level in the workshop.

Year of Smart Towns Diagnostic and Actions



Thank you for engaging with the 'Year of SMART Towns' project. Please feel free to contact us directly with any question, and we will try our best to support you.

✉ smarttowns@mentermon.com



Contact Name	Bridget Powell
Town / High Street	Abertillery
County	Blaenau Gwent
Intended Start Date of Smart project	TBC
Date of Plan	29/06/21

<p>1. Description of the Town</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting the scene • Provide an overview on past, present and future <p>The town nestles in a wooded valley where shoppers can explore the network of streets. Abertillery has a well preserved Victorian arcade linking High Street and Commercial Street. A market visits the town every Thursday.</p> <p>St Michael's church dominates the heart of the town and visitors may also spend some time exploring exhibits in Abertillery Local History Museum. Visitors may also visit the nearby Cwmtillery Lakes, Guardian – Six Bells Mining Memorial or St Illtyds Church.</p> <p>The surrounding hillsides are filled with relicts from Abertillery's proud past and there is no better way to explore this history and local folklore than taking on of the towns 9 Tyleri Trails.</p> <p>Abertillery's greatest assets revolve around its landscape setting, built heritage and cultural offerings, notably in the arts. There is the opportunity for the town centre to be a focal point of the community, providing a tight knit high street with small scale retail, café culture and some distinct cultural gems including the historic Metropole, Trinity Chapel and Kick-plate Gallery. The surrounding hills can offer access to an array of outdoor activities for both residents and visitors. There is a great opportunity to build upon and celebrate these assets in order to build a stronger identity, enhance quality of life and exploit the tourism potential of the area.</p>
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WORKSHOP 1

<p>2. Economic Aspirations</p>

- What kind of steps do you think your Town needs to make it stronger and more resilient

Make the town more vibrant and attractive to both local business owners, local community and visitors. Consider the current status of buildings and street scenes and carry out cleansing and introduction of new street furniture and greenery to make it a more inviting place.

Look at filling empty shops and improving the outside façade of existing shopfronts through a grant scheme if needed. Consider placing artwork in empty property windows to reduce the negative impact and impression on the high street this has. Review the current offering in the town centre and look to provide a more diverse range of independent retail shops, hospitality and leisure.

Offer digital training to local business to help make them more resilient especially in relation to Covid19. Consider introducing measures which allow businesses to utilise the outdoor space on the high street by reconfiguring the current street scene and utilising areas that will allow outdoor trading. Invest in working with the local community and town council to identify and strengthen the town centre identify and offering. As part of this consider improving the branding in the town centre and introduce better signage.

Specific Actions to take:

Couple of resources for further support and information

Digital training

<https://www.digitalcommunities.gov.wales/>

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/superfastbusinesswales/>

Marketing /Branding

<https://businesswales.marketinginfohub.co.uk/topic-overview/branding>

Green Spaces in Urban Centres examples

<https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/what-we-do/green-spaces/urban-trees/?lang=en>

3. Convenience Aspirations

- Provide details of ideas for the Town in context of convenience

The draft Blaenau Gwent Retail and Leisure Study 2021 demonstrates there is a good range of town centre uses with a food and drink draw but highlights there is an opportunity for development of more varied A3 use class offerings including restaurants.

The experiences of 2020 have led to an increased interest/reliance on shopping more locally as well as more online shopping.

Better public transport links and a more regular bus service could increase footfall and visitors to the town centre. Alongside consider if improvements could be made to existing car parking provision.

Helping local businesses gain access to digital training and skills can help them be more resilient to change especially in light of the Covid pandemic. As part of this the Council could look to encourage local businesses to develop a digital presence in order to compete with online retailers and provide online services, restaurant booking, click and collect etc. Implementation of free town centre Wi-Fi will be beneficial for shoppers and local businesses.

The placement of hubs providing public services in our local libraries will help draw people into the town centres.

Specific Actions to take:

Feedback provided on forming hubs in your area. Consultation now closed.

<https://gweithioobellremoteworking.commonplace.is/?lang=en-gb>

4. Engaging and Relevance Aspirations

- What has been done or could be done to make the Town engaging / relevant

There is a need to consider the role of young people and how their needs can be accommodated within the high street to ensure they feel part of the community and less likely to be involved in anti-social behaviour. People could be put off visiting the town centre if they feel intimidated or scared. Improvement to public spaces and walkways is needed to make the town centre more inviting.

Consideration is needed of improvements to active travel routes and the possibility of introducing signs to the transport interchange.

In order to make the town centre more engaging we could consider introducing / bringing back community events to the town. There are plans to form an advisory board consisting of Councillors, Council officers and town centre business owners to develop strategies to revitalise the town centres.

We could work with the Tourism officer on introducing a website for the town recommending places to eat, shop and visit to raise the profile of the town. Digital screens will be introduced in the town centre to engage with shoppers, promote the high street and increase the sense of community.

Specific Actions to take:

Some ideas based on your comments:

Help engage, gain feedback on issues, and give relevance:

<https://townapps.co.uk/>

<https://www.maybetech.com/>

<https://www.hellolamppost.co.uk/>

<https://pulsesmarthub.co.uk/>

<https://nearmenow.eu/>

5. Resilient and Adaptive Aspirations

- What has been done or could be done to make the Town resilient and adaptive

There is a need to help local residents and businesses be more resilient and have access to digital technology. The Council is keen to help with this and will be introducing town centre Wi-Fi.

Consideration of uses for empty shops could be undertaken for use as pop up shops or maybe community hubs. Consider the current offering and if this meets local needs to see if there are any gaps in the market. An empty property strategy is currently being developed which will focus on a proactive approach to advertising empty shops via social media.

There is the opportunity to consider building on the shop local trend which has taken place during the last year alongside the net zero agenda by introducing a local food market with locally grown produce or perhaps trialling holding a youth market with local school children. There is also an opportunity to increase the number of market stalls through a trial free rental incentive which would allow a variety of stalls and provide a diverse choice to shoppers. Feedback on the offering from the market could help identify gaps in the retail offering in the town centre.

Specific Actions to take:

Excellent ideas mentioned. Who will be active in the town to help co-ordinate and fund these ideas?
Need to bring in the town council, county officers and local college/school.

6. An Authentic Experience

- What has been done or could be done to add authenticity to the Town

This work is still being undertaken and we are looking to create the balance of a unique identity for our town centre based on the heritage and culture and the fact that Abertillery is situated in such a

picturesque area. The aspiration is to create a nostalgic place to visit, whilst also still being a modern smart town.

Specific Actions to take:

We in Cardigan set up several heritage trails and blue plaques which formed part of the town App. Perhaps mention this is something that you aim towards?

7. Improving Dwell Time for the Town

- Ideas on what could make people stay longer more often in the Town

Improving the street scene, street furniture and cleanliness of the town centre and introducing green infrastructure to make the town more inviting. Increase the night time activity providing entertainment and leisure facilities.

Consider the current offering in the town and how we build on this and fill in any gaps. Consider if a mix of uses between retail and leisure would be more complimentary.

Consider introducing benches and a green area which would encourage people to spend more time in the town centre.

Build on celebrating local industrial, social history and cultural offerings around music and arts. Consider holding local community events such as choirs, fetes and food festivals.

Capitalise on tourism potential though expanding walking and cycling option. Consider the option of creating a town entertainment programme and unique branding to create an identity for the town centre. Improve street lighting and location of CCTV cameras to increase safety and the image the town centre is a safe place to visit.

Consider creating co working spaces within the town centre.

Specific Actions to take:

Ensure you measure the impact of your changes with the footfall system you hope to employ. Use this information to feedback to town centre to show that positive changes are being achieved and get further buy-in from them.

8. Collecting Data – Measuring the Health

- What needs to be measured / recorded and analysed with your aspirations

We would like to create a digital twin of the town centre to measure footfall and key environmental factors such as:

- Footfall data which could be shared with local businesses to understand when people visit the town centre which could help determine optimum opening hours.
- Dwell time
- Frequency of visits
- Traffic counting
- Parking turnover
- Refuse levels
- Air quality
- Empty shops

This data will help us better understand the current health of our town centre and provide data to show the impact of an interventions. The data will provide useful insights that can assist in developing improvements and can also be used in future funding applications to justify the need for intervention and investment. Such as improving the night time economy and measuring pedestrian flow through the town centre.

Consultation with local businesses and shoppers needs to be undertaken to fully understand their viewpoint of the strengths and weaknesses of the town centre. This will help identify the issues and solutions that could help improve the town centre and help the community to play a part in any changes that are made.

The measurement of traffic will provide a better understanding of how the road infrastructure is currently used and how we can promote walking and cycling in and around the town centre.

Specific Actions to take:

Have a timeline on the digital twin creation. Assume the advisory board will be collecting and distributing the information (where applicable to the local businesses).

9. Build your Team

- Who?
- Resources?
- Experience?

Introduction of an advisory board / group for the town centre. Actions to set this up to be agreed.

Specific Actions to Take:

Consider arranging a meeting with the Town Council and other stakeholders to discuss your SMART Action Plan. It is possible that a discussion like this could help develop the Action Plan further and may have some resources in Abertillery that you were not aware of.

Specific Actions to take:

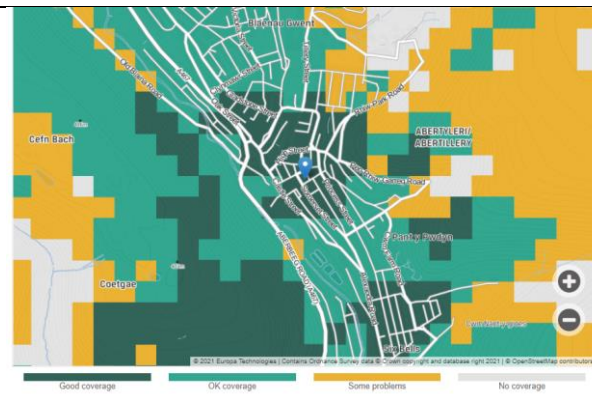
Consider performing a survey with the traders in the town center to see if there are any broadband issues. Survey could include asking business what their current internet speeds are and if they have any issues.

Having details on your town's fibre broadband will facilitate any future digital plans that rely on broadband.

If the results of the Survey indicates that are several options are available on the Welsh Government's Broadband in Wales portal.

10.2. Digital Infrastructure - Mobile

- What is the mobile coverage like?
 - Future coverage plans



Specific Actions to take:

No actions.

10.3. Digital Infrastructure - Wireless

- What is the wireless system planned or already installed?
 - Further work needed/when?

Town centre Wi-Fi has been installed and is due to go live shortly.

Specific Actions to take:

Installing a town Wi-Fi system that has location analytics, such as Cisco Meraki (MR86) will allow Abertillery to estimate footfall, average dwell time for the town and visitor rates. Location analytics is a

feature of the system that is independent on user connection, meaning that anonymous data will be collected regardless of people connecting to the internet.

You may also consider using the Wi-fi system also to provide public internet access. By activating this feature, you could consider asking a range of questions on the 'log-on' page to understand how people have accessed your town and from where. You could also ask for people's e-mail addresses for marketing purposes pending of your Privacy Policy and acceptance of the Terms and Conditions.

To support your public Wi-Fi initiative the 'Year of SMART Towns' are putting together a guidebook.

10.4. Digital Infrastructure - LoRaWAN

- Is there LoRaWAN coverage for the town or planned
 - Further work needed / when?

LoRaWAN gateway installed providing coverage in the town centre and sensors roll out planned. The sensors will cover bin levels, footfall counters in key anchor shops and businesses, air quality sensor and traffic counter on main access point to the town. Once installed we will look to share the data with local businesses and use the data to see how well future attractions and services are performing and impact of any future trials to drive up footfall.

Specific Actions to take:

'Year of SMART Towns' are going to be arranging webinars to demonstrate potential use cases for Town. However, there are some resources on the [Business Wales website](#).

If you plan to create a LoRaWAN/IoT infrastructure to monitor weather and parking, then you need to consider your LoRaWAN network coverage. This network is supported by LoRaWAN/IoT Gateways. For information of your current LoRaWAN coverage visit: <https://ttnmapper.org/>

To use LoRaWAN sensors you will also need to create a dashboard for capturing LoraWAN/IoT sensors – look at Tago IoT as an example

[Cloud IoT Platform | Internet of Things - TagoIO](#)

Here are some examples of IoT sensors to that can be used in dashboard for:

Temperature and humidity example :

<https://www.alliot.co.uk/products/sensors/environment-sensors/netvox-r712/>

Parking sensors

<https://www.alliot.co.uk/products/sensors/parking-management-sensors/bosch-lorawan-parking-sensor/>

Bin sensors

<https://www.brighterbins.com/request-a-sample> (set-up instruction video: [watch here](#))

10.5. Digital Infrastructure – Other technology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there other digital infrastructures being considered or already in place?
Not at the moment. The focus is currently on existing trials in place.
<p>Specific Actions to take:</p> <p>Consider asking business in the town what current data that they are collecting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it possible to find out from the business what social media platforms work best? • Are SMEs willing to share they transactional data? • Do business have bespoke apps that collect data that can be shared?

11. SMART Technologies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What technologies are in place or will be adopting based on the dialog in Section 8 ? • What use is being made / When is this being enabled?
Town centre Wi-Fi has been installed and will go live shortly and the LoRaWAN roll out has started and will take a couple of months to complete. It is anticipated that the data captured from sensors will be used by internal departments who will have access to the dashboard to help with staff resources
<p>Specific Actions to take:</p> <p>Excellent initiative in Abertillery, would be great to follow your progress. Consider appointing someone to be responsible for creating a newsletter to the business with a breakdown of relevant data. Consider performing a survey with business to see what additional data they would find useful.</p>

12. Barriers to manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Barriers if any? • How will they be managed?
<p>Cost is a barrier for local businesses and the lack of digital skills. There is a lack of investment and knowledge of what to do and where to find the expertise required. We have carried out engagement with local businesses in other town centres and there is a big demand for digital skills and training and willingness to take part in any potential training workshops.</p> <p>Cost of digital banking service to enable businesses to take payment by card.</p> <p>During Covid19 whilst local businesses embraced digital technology this was a shift to using Facebook rather than creating websites for their businesses with online ordering.</p>

Council officers are actively seeking training opportunities through Business Wales and are still awaiting a response in terms of support.

Specific Actions to take:

Digital training links:

<https://www.digitalcommunities.gov.wales/>

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/superfastbusinesswales/>

Marketing /Branding link:

<https://businesswales.marketinginfohub.co.uk/topic-overview/branding>

Green Spaces in Urban Centres examples:

<https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/what-we-do/green-spaces/urban-trees/?lang=en>

13. Digital Skills

- What digital skills will be necessary based on plan so far, what are the gaps?
- How to plug the gap? Who will upskill?

There is a lack of digital skills and knowledge across local businesses in the borough and Council officers are actively seeking support to see if we can facilitate training sessions. The intention is that once one group has taken part they can pass on their knowledge to other local businesses in their community to make them self-sustaining in future. This will hopefully build on the community resilience and allow everyone to have same level of training and ability.

Specific Actions to take:

Create a survey to what skills members of the SMART Town Action Team have and what training is needed?

Arrange training sessions for the town centre stakeholders and members of the SMART Town Action Team. For more support on developing digital skills, visit the [Business Wales website](#) for free courses and one-to-one tailored support.

Action Plan from Workshop 2

Action	Timescale	By Whom

WORKSHOP 3

14. SMART Objectives

- With the town's aspirations and a measures and technology in place. What are your SMART objectives moving forward?
 - e.g., measure an event?
- Increase dwell time on Saturdays to 1-hour average within the next 6 months?

Specific Actions to take:

Set some specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely objectives as suggested in the workshop. Base them on what you highlighted as aspiration for the town centre in workshop 1 – getting more people into the town centre, to stay longer in the town centre and make it easier for them to get there ?

You need to set some objectives around the technology you've already mentioned you intend to install. Ideally these objectives need to be SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, (sometimes agreed), realistic (or relevant) and time-bound, (or timely) so for example with footfall :

To achieve a 15% increase in footfall between June and September 2022 compared to the equivalent period in 2021.

15. Analytics / Interpretation

- What tools are you going to employ gather the data?
- Will you adopt a standard approach?
- Who will be doing the work to collect the data and analyse?
- How is it going to be presented with trends and recommendations?

Specific Actions to take:

- The Cisco Meraki Wi-fi system offer comes with a 10-year licence which provides access to a cloud-based dashboard that captures location analytics.
- For LoRaWAN/IoT technology look at Tago IoT as an example [Cloud IoT Platform | Internet of Things - TagoIO](#)

Delegate people within your SMART Town Action to take on some responsibilities. From your digital skills survey it is possible that you might have people skills, including analysing data, producing infographics and gathering insights from data sets.

Is this council officers, member of the advisory group or are you looking to employ someone as a town or maybe employ a professional company to be contracted to provide the insights.

e.g. <https://www.capventis.com/>

16. Collaboration / Dissemination

- What collaboration opportunities can you identify?
- Who will receive the information from the analysis?
- How often will be sent?
- What is your process for specific request from individual businesses or organisations?

Specific Actions to take:

Consider appointing someone to be responsible for creating a newsletter to the business with a breakdown of relevant data. Additionally, consider performing a survey with business to see what additional data they would find useful.

Create an internal document whereby for all the SMART Town Team and stakeholders to encourage and share digital project ideas. Alternatively, consider creating an informal online discussion group on social media platforms.

Action Plan from Workshop 3

Action	Timescale	By Whom

