



The Old Stables/Yr Hen Stablau Machynlleth

Astudiaeth bosibilrwydd/Feasibility Study



Machynlleth Town Council
Draft Report

April 2020



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Machynlleth Town Council

Prepared by Charlie Falzon and Shelagh Hourahane



Charlie Falzon Associates



Charlie Falzon & Shelagh Hourahane
Gwel y Garn
Tre'r Ddol
Ceredigion
SY20 8JS
Email: chuckenviro@gmail.com

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CRYNODEB GWEITHREDOL

Nod Cyngor Tref Machynlleth yw adfer yr adeilad hanesyddol pwysig hwn a chyfrannu at wead economaidd, amgylcheddol a chymdeithasol Machynlleth drwy gefnogi ei datblygiad fel canolfan dwristiaeth ac adeiladu ar ei henw fel cymuned gref ar ganol Biosffer Dyfi.

Ym mis Chwefror 2020, cytunodd carfan o randdeiliaid allweddol mai amcan y fenter yw:

adfer yr adeilad hanesyddol yma fel ased cymunedol er budd pobl Machynlleth gan sicrhau ei fod:

- yn atgyfnerthu gwedd cymdeithasol ac economaidd y dref
- yn ychwanegu gwerth at economi'r dref
- yn cefnogi iechyd a llesiant y gymuned
- yn cynnal nodweddion pensaernïol yr adeilad
- yn cynhyrchu digon o incwm i'w gynnal ei hun i'r dyfodol

Y cynnig yw darparu llety sydd mawr ei angen yn ogystal â chyfleusterau ategol at ddefnydd y gymuned. Ceir cyfuniad o lofftudd *en-suite* a gwelyau byncws gyda chegin a gofod cymunedol agored.

Tref hanesyddol bwysig yw Machynlleth wrth y groesfan dros afon Ddyfi. Ei phoblogaeth yw oddeutu 2,300 gyda llawer ohonynt yn siaradwyr Cymraeg. Dyma ganolbwynt i hybu Biosffer Dyfi UNESCO.

Mae'n ganolfan drafnidiaeth o bwys, gyda llwybrau bysiau'n mynd i gyfeiriad y de a'r gogledd, i'r dwyrain i Sir Drefaldwyn a Swydd Amwythig ac i'r gorllewin ar hyd yr arfordir tuag Aberdyfi a thu hwnt. Machynlleth hefyd yw'r cysylltiad rheilffordd i'r dwyrain tua chanolbarth Lloegr ac i'r de/gogledd ar hyd Lein Arfordir y Cambrian.

Mae adeilad yr Hen Stablau'n gysylltiedig â Phlas Machynlleth, cartref 5ed Ardalydd Londonderry gynt. Trosglwyddwyd y Plas i'r dref ym 1948 a pharhaodd meist'r yr helfa i fyw yn yr Hen Stablau nes iddo farw. Ar ôl hynny, parhaodd ei ferch i fyw yno tan 2007 ers pryd y mae'n wag. Mae'r adeilad wedi'i restru'n Radd II fel rhan o restru'r Plas a'i gyffiniau ar y cyd. Mae'r gerddi hefyd wedi'u rhestru'n Radd II ar restr parciau a gerddi cofrestredig Cadw er bod rhywfaint o lechfeddiant wedi digwydd.

Ar hyn o bryd, perchennog a rheolwr yr adeilad a'r tiroedd yw Cyngor Tref Machynlleth, er ei bod ar ddeall [ond heb ei chadarnhau] bod gan Gyngor Powys arwystl 90% ar yr eiddo.

Mae sawl arolwg wedi'i gynnal i asesu cyflwr a photensial yr adeilad a'r casgliad yw ei fod at ei gilydd mewn cyflwr gwael iawn ac yn annïogel gan beri risg bosibl i iechyd a diogelwch y cyhoedd.

Ceir nifer sylweddol o ffactorau sy'n dylanwadu ar y math o unrhyw gynigion a'u graddfa, gyda'r polisi cynllunio presennol yn ffactor allweddol. Mynegir hyn yng Nghynllun Datblygu Lleol Powys sy'n caniatáu datblygu yn Ardal Gadwraeth Canol y Dref '*...lle mae'n gwella bywiogrwydd a hyfywedd canol presennol y dref, a lle mae'r*

cynnig ar gyfer defnydd cymunedol sydd o fudd ehangach i'r cyhoedd ac sydd angen lleoliad ar ganol y dref.' [Polisi R3].

Dylid hefyd ystyried chwe egwyddor gadwraeth Cadw ar gyfer rheoli'r amgylchedd hanesyddol yng Nghymru.

Ceir amrywiaeth eang o weithgareddau a buddiannau yn y dref, gydag ystyriaeth gyfyngedig mewn rhai achosion i weithgareddau a buddiannau eraill a allai gyfoethogi eu rhai hwythau. Er mai mater y tu hwnt i gwmpas yr astudiaeth yma yw hwn, mae'n bwysig oherwydd dylai unrhyw gynnig anelu at ychwanegu gwerth at weithgareddau sydd eisoes yn bodoli a rhai arfaethedig mewn mannau eraill yn y dref. I'r perwyl hwnnw, rydym wedi cynnal dadansoddiad cyflym o'r gweithgareddau/buddiannau eraill. Un o'r sefydliadau amlycaf dan sylw yw Canolfan Owain Glyndŵr. Mae eraill yn cynnwys MOMA a Chanolfan y Dechnoleg Amgen. Ceir hefyd sawl menter megis y cynnig ar gyfer bandstand, syniadau ar gyfer dehongli treftadaeth ar draws y dref a'r rhaglen o ddigwyddiadau a gwyliau a ddylai fod â diddordeb yn yr Hen Stablau a'i ddatblygiad i'r dyfodol.

Mae'r dref yn dibynnu'n drwm ar dwristiaeth ac mae cryn potensial i ehangu'r cynnig twristiaeth. O ran llety, nid yw Canolbarth Cymru yn perfformio cystal â rhanbarthau eraill i'r gogledd a'r de gyda deiliadaeth gyfartalog oddeutu 50-55%.

Mae darogan y dyfodol o ran twristiaeth yn anodd dros ben. Mae pandemig y coronafeirws yng Ngwanwyn 2020 wedi cael effaith ddifafol ar dwristiaeth a theithio - rhywbeth na ellid bod wedi'i ddarogan hyd yn oed yn hydref 2019. Mae problemau eraill yn cynnwys newid yn yr hinsawdd ac ymwybyddiaeth o'r amgylchedd, demograffeg symudol, dyfodol yr economi a chystadleuaeth o ranbarthau eraill.

Agwedd allweddol ar yr astudiaeth oedd y broses ymgysylltu ac er bod pandemig y coronafeirws wedi atal ymgysylltu pellach i drafod cynigion y pensaer, credwn ein bod wedi ymdrin â'r meysydd dan sylw. Sefydlwyd rhwydwaith i lywio proses yr astudiaeth. Rydym wedi trafod y cynigion â 105 o unigolion sydd wedi rhoi eu henwau yn ogystal â 147 o bobl a ymatebodd i holiadur *Survey Monkey* a sefydlwyd ar yr adeg y dechreuwyd yr astudiaeth.

Ceir cefnogaeth gref dros gadw'r Hen Stablau ac adnabod defnydd iddynt yn y dyfodol. Mae'r cynnig mwyaf hyfyw, sef llety hyblyg gyda gofod i weithdai a digwyddiadau, wedi'i gefnogi ymhlith y bobl a gafodd eu cyfweld. Mae rhywfaint o bryder ynglŷn â'r costau, yn arbennig ymhlith y rhai sy'n cofio cau 'Celtica' yn 2007.

Buom yn asesu nifer o astudiaethau achos sydd â nodweddion neu heriau tebyg i'n hastudiaeth ni gan nodi nifer o bwyntiau i'w dysgu ganddynt. Roedd y rhain yn cynnwys materion yn ymwneud a chostau, ffrydiau incwm, rôl gwirfoddolwyr, rheoli a staffio, marchnata, iechyd a diogelwch, cyllid, llywodraethu a chynllunio.

Mae'n glir i ni mai blaenoriaeth allweddol yw sefydlu ymddiriedolaeth elusennol a chwmni buddiannau cymunedol i ddwyn pethau yn eu blaenau. O'r holl astudiaethau achos y buom yn edrych arnynt, roedd pob un ond un yn gweithredu drwy'r strwythur hwn. Rydym heb edrych yn fanwl ar gymhlethdodau cyfreithiol y broses, ond wedi darparu nodiadau cyffredinol am sefydlu corff o'r fath. Ein barn ni yw y bydd y broses o wneud cais am gymorth ariannol yn gofyn strwythur o'r fath.

Mae nifer o ddewisiadau wedi dod o'r dadansoddiad ac ymgysylltu uchod ac mae'r rhain wedi cael eu distyllu i'r dewis craidd sef darparu llety hyblyg i ganiatáu i welyau sengl neu ystafelloedd cyfan neu grwpiau o ystafelloedd gael eu llogi gan ymwelwyr ac i gynnwys lle i bobl sydd â heriau o ran mynediad. Bydd rhan o'r Hen Stablau yn cynnig lle i redeg gweithdai a digwyddiadau ynghyd â dathliadau teuluol fel partis pen-blwydd a phriodasau. Mae ein pensaer wedi cynnig cynllun sy'n darparu lle i 36 o bobl gysgu, gyda dau le ar gael i'r rheolwr o bosib.

Mae ein rhagolygon ariannol wedi'u seilio ar argaeledd 36 o leoedd gwely am £22 y pen yn 2024. Ein hamcangyfrif yw, yn y flwyddyn gyntaf, efallai na fydd mwy na 30% o'r rhain yn cael eu llenwi, gan godi i 55% erbyn blwyddyn 5, ar sail ffigurau cyfredol Twristiaeth Cymru a thystiolaeth o gyfraddau deiliadaeth sydd gynnwys ni gan sefydliadau eraill. Yr incwm ym mlwyddyn 1 fyddai £86,725.00, gan godi i £159,000.00 erbyn blwyddyn 5.

Ar sail y ffigurau hyn, rydym yn rhagweld diffyg yn yr incwm ym mlwyddyn 1 yn erbyn alldaliadau blynyddol o tua £100,000.00 gan ddechrau gwneud elw ar ôl hynny erbyn blwyddyn 3 os cynhelir y ffigurau. Mae hyn wedi'i seilio ar gyflogi dau aelod o staff, rhan-amser i ddechrau gyda'r posibilrwydd o ddod yn llawn-amser wrth i'r prosiect ddatblygu a phe bai'r angen yn codi. Mae'r ffigurau hefyd yn cynnwys costau glanhawyr.

Rydym yn credu y bydd nifer o gostau angenrheidiol cyn cychwyn y bydd yn rhaid eu cynnwys mewn cais am grant. Bydd y rhain yn cynnwys elfen o gymorth referniw i'r rheolwr a'r cynorthwyydd, £30,620.00, fydd yn lleihau'n raddol dros dair blynedd. Bydd angen dyraniad o tua £45,000.00 i brynu offer i'r gegin a'r swyddfa a swm o £14,730.00 i ddatblygu dehongli treftadaeth.

Fel dywedwyd uchod, nid oes modd rhagweld y dyfodol ac rydym wedi nodi nifer o beryglon i lwyddiant y rhaglen, o'i dechrau nes ei chwblhau a'i rheoli ar ôl hynny.

Ein prif gasgliadau yw:

- **Dylai Cyngor y Dref gymeradwyo'r cynigion yn yr adroddiad hwn.**
- **Dylai Cyngor y Dref sefydlu corff llywodraethu ar wahân i reoli'r broses o hyn ymlaen, sef cwmni elusennol cyfyngedig drwy warant.**
- **Dylid gwneud trefniadau i drosglwyddo'r Hen Stablau i'r corff llywodraethu newydd, naill ai drwy ryw fath o gynllun prydlesu neu drwy drosglwyddo asedau. Bydd angen arbenigedd cyfreithiol ar gyfer hyn.**
- **Dylid ceisio cyllid i gyflogi rhywun i sefydlu statws cyfreithiol y corff llywodraethu a dwyn rhagddi'r broses o wneud cais am grant.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of Machynlleth Town Council is to restore this important historic building and to contribute to the economic, environmental and social fabric of Machynlleth by supporting its development as a tourism hub and to build on its reputation as a strong community at the heart of the Dyfi Biosphere.

In February 2020, it was agreed among a group of key stakeholders that the objective of the undertaking is

‘to restore this historic building as a community asset for the benefit of the people of Machynlleth, ensuring that:

- It reinforces the town’s social and environmental fabric
- It adds value to the town’s economy
- It supports the community’s health and wellbeing
- It retains the building’s architectural integrity
- It generates sufficient income to sustain itself into the future

The proposal is to provide much needed accommodation, and with it to offer ancillary facilities for the use of the community. There will be a combination of en-suite bedrooms and bunkhouse style beds, with a kitchen and an open community space.

Machynlleth is an important historic town at the crossing of the Dyfi estuary, with a population of about 2,300, many of the population are Welsh speaking. It provides a focal point for the promotion of the UNESCO Dyfi Biosphere.

It is a significant transport hub, with bus routes passing north/south, east into Montgomeryshire and Shropshire, and west along the coast towards Aberdyfi and beyond. It is also the railway link eastwards into the Midlands, and south/north along the Cambrian Coast.

The Old Stables building is linked to Plas Machynlleth, formerly the home of the 5th Marquess of Londonderry. The Plas was given over to the town in 1948, and the hunt master continued to live in the Old Stables until his death. Subsequently his daughter remained in residence until 2007, since when it has been empty. The building is grade II listed as part of the group listing of the Plas and its environs. The gardens are also listed grade II on Cadw’s list of registered parks and gardens, although there has been some encroachment.

The building and grounds are currently owned and managed by Machynlleth Town Council, although it is understood [but not confirmed] that Powys Council has a 90% charge on the property.

A number of surveys have been carried out to determine the building’s condition and potential, and the conclusion is that it is generally in very poor condition, and is unsafe and a potential public health and safety hazard.

There are a considerable number of influencing factors on the type and scale of any proposals, a key factor being prevailing planning policy. This is expressed in the Powys Local Development Plan, which allows development in the Town Centre Conservation area

“...where it enhances the vitality and viability of the existing town centre; and where the proposal is for a community use which is of wider public benefit and in need of a town centre location.” [Policy R3].

Regard should also be had to Cadw's six conservation principles for the management of the historic environment in Wales.

There is an extensive range of activities and interests in the town, in some cases with limited consideration of other activities and interests that could enhance their own. Although this is an issue beyond the scope of this study, it is important, since any proposal should aim to add value to existing and planned activities elsewhere in the town. To that end we have carried out a rapid analysis of those other interests. One of the more prominent of these is the Owain Glyndŵr Centre. Others include MOMA and the Centre for Alternative Technology. There are also a number of initiatives, such as the bandstand proposal, ideas for town-wide heritage interpretation, and the programme of events and festivals, that should have an interest in the Old Stables and its future development.

The town relies heavily on tourism, and there is considerable potential to expand the tourism offer. In terms of accommodation, Mid Wales performs less well than other regions to the north and south, with an average occupancy of around 50-55%.

Predicting the future in terms of tourism is extremely difficult. The coronavirus outbreak in the Spring of 2020 has had a devastating effect on tourism and travel – something that could not have been predicted even in the autumn of 2019. Other issues include climate change and environmental awareness, shifting demographics, the future of the economy, and competition from other regions.

A key aspect of the study was the engagement process, and although the coronavirus outbreak has prevented further engagement to discuss the architect's proposals, we believe that we have covered the ground. A network was established to steer the study process. We have discussed the proposals with 105 named individuals, as well as the 147 people who responded to the Survey Monkey questionnaire set up at the time the study was started.

There is strong support for retaining the Old Stables, and for identifying a future use. The most viable proposal, that of a flexible accommodation offer with space for workshops and events, has been widely supported among those people interviewed. There is some concern about costs, especially among those who recall the closure of 'Celtica' in 2007.

We assessed a number of case studies that had similar characteristics or challenges to our own study, and identified a number of learning points from them. These included issues around costs, income streams, the role of volunteers, management and staffing, marketing, health and safety, funding, governance and design issues.

It is clear to us that a key priority is to establish a charitable trust and a community interest company to carry things forward. Of all the case studies we looked at, all but one operated through this structure. We have not examined the legal intricacies of the process, but have provided general notes about establishing such a body. Our view is that the process of applying for funding support will need such a structure to progress.

A number of options have emerged from the above analysis and engagement, and these have been distilled to the core option of providing a dynamic offer of accommodation, ensuring flexibility to allow for individual beds or for entire rooms or groups of rooms to be hired by visitors, and to include space for people with access challenges. Part of the Old Stables will allow for running workshops and events, and will also cater for family celebrations such as birthday parties and weddings. Our architect has proposed a scheme that provide 36 bed spaces, two of which might be available to the manager.

Our financial forecast is based on 36 bed spaces being available at a rate of £22.00 in 2024. Our estimate is that in the first year, occupancy may be no more than 30%, subsequently rising to 55% by year five, based on current Wales Tourism figures, and on the evidence of occupancy rates we have from other establishments. Income in year 1 would be £86,725.00, rising to £159,000.00 by year 5.

Based on these figures, we anticipate a shortfall in income in year 1 against annual outgoings of about £100,000.00, thereafter coming into profit by year 3 provided the figures are sustained. This is based on two staff, initially on a part-time basis with the potential to rise to full-time as the project develops and should the need arise. The figures also include cleaner costs.

We think that there will be a number of necessary pre start-up costs that will have to be included in a grant application. These will include an element of revenue support for the manager and assistant, £30,620.00, tapering over three years. There will need to be an allocation of about £45,000.00 for the purchase of kitchen and office equipment, and a sum of £14,730.00 for the development of heritage interpretation.

As we stated previously, the future is unpredictable, and we have identified a number of risks to the success of the programme, from its inception to completion and subsequent management.

Our key conclusions are that:

- **The Town Council endorse the proposals in this report.**
- **The Town Council should establish a separate governing body to manage the process henceforth – this should be a charitable company limited by guarantee.**
- **Arrangements should be made to transfer the Old Stables to the new governing body, either through some kind of leasing scheme, or through an asset transfer. This will require legal expertise.**
- **Funds should be sought to employ a person to set up the legal status of the governing body and to carry forward the grant application process.**

1. Introduction - Study Structure

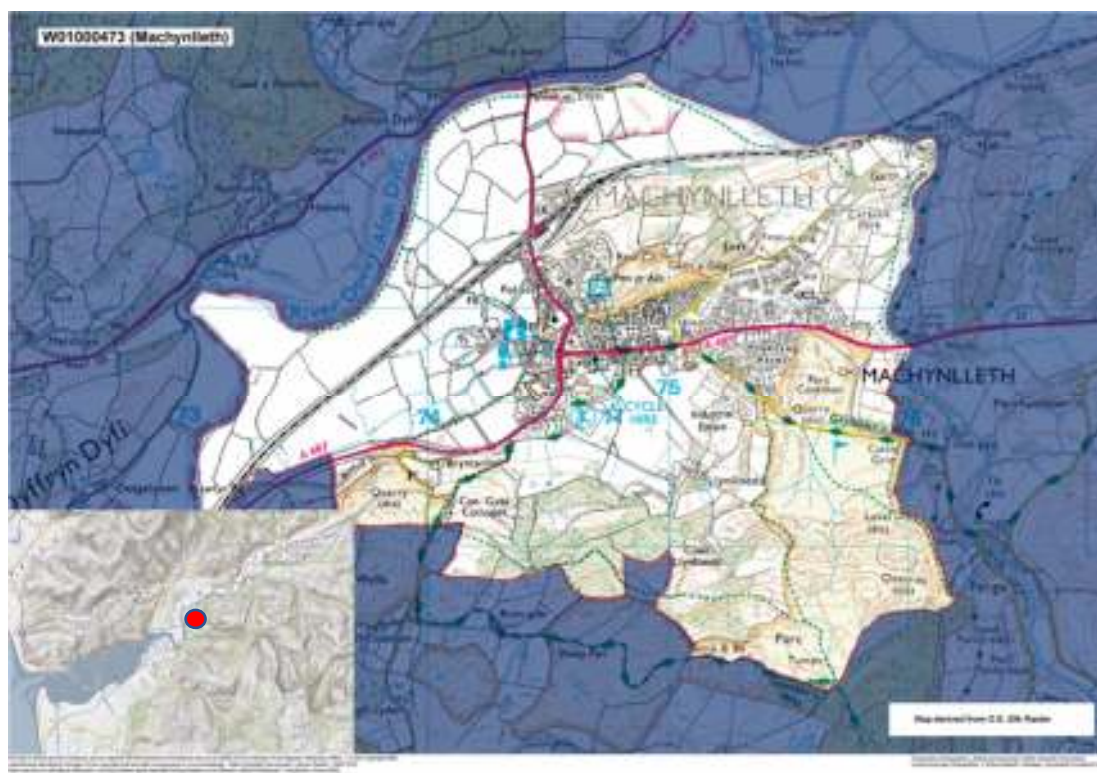
- 1.1** The Old Stables in Machynlleth is a significant community asset and an important town building. This study considers the potential for restoring and managing the Old Stables as a community enterprise. The overall intention of Machynlleth Town Council is to develop the building in an appropriate manner that reflects its position in the community and is financially sustainable, whilst retaining its character and the key features that define its Grade II listing. A number of possibilities have been discussed, which are examined in this study.
- 1.2** In carrying out this study, it has become obvious that there are a number of initiatives happening in the area, all too often without, in our view, sufficient consideration of other interests. We sense that there is a lack of co-ordination and strategic planning. Although our brief is to focus on the building itself, we think that any proposals relating to it should be set in the context of the gardens and the Town Council's wider land holding. We would also urge a 'master plan' approach for the town, that brings people together and sets a direction for its future economic, social and environmental well-being.
- 1.3** In **Section 2** we analyse the social and geographical setting within which any proposal will operate. **Section 3** summarises the historic background to the Old Stables and their relationship to the Plas. The results of baseline surveys including asbestos, ecology and structure are summarised in **section 4**. The current governance arrangements are described in **section 5**. This will cover matters such as ownership, management, and covenants or other legal constraints that may be pertinent. The broader legal, planning and guidance context is summarised in **section 6**. This section will identify the key policies that will support development proposals, elements of the law that any proposal must address, and guidance provided by key bodies such as Cadw or expert ecologists. Relevant strategies including those of Welsh Government on economic development, spatial strategies and themes such as tourism and health and wellbeing will be explored in **section 7**. All the above are important in demonstrating that a thorough examination of the proposal's context has been carried out.
- 1.4** No proposal should be made in isolation of other developments and emerging initiatives. In **section 8** we consider what else is going on, or is planned, in the area. These may have a significant effect on what is proposed, in that any proposal might potentially compete with, or support, other developments. **Section 9** analyses what is available by way of accommodation in the area, existing occupancy rates, and what influencing factors might determine uptake in the future. **Appendix B** contains a more detailed description of the bunkhouse accommodation available in the general area.
- 1.5** The results of consultation are discussed in **section 10**. A detailed description of our engagement can be seen in **appendix D**, with a list of those people engaged with in **appendix E**. Relevant case studies are reviewed in **section 11**, with a focus on what we can learn from them. These are also described in detail in **appendix A**. The case for alternative governance arrangements is made in **section 12**, and we summarise our analysis of options, as well as an assessment of risks, in **section 13**. The

architect's proposal is presented in plan form in **appendix F**. Although we conclude that visitor accommodation will be the main income generator, we have also considered how this might be compatible with other uses such as running events and workshops. **Appendix C** summarises what might be done. Our consideration of financial aspects can be seen in **section 14**. It is worth pointing out that a more detailed analysis of costs and income, together with a five-year forecast, has been produced in the accompanying **cost analysis and development plan**.

In **section 15** we recommend what we believe to be the optimal proposal[s] and arrangement[s]. We should point out that in our view there is a case to be made for a town-wide approach that considers how some of the ideas that emerged during consultations can be deployed elsewhere in Machynlleth, and can provide opportunities for collaboration. A key example is that of heritage interpretation. **Appendix G** describes how this might be considered.

2. Machynlleth and its catchment – Social Context

- 2.1** Machynlleth is a market town, standing on the River Dyfi at its lowest bridging point, at the intersection of the A487 and A489 roads. Although it is an electoral ward within the county of Powys and within the historic boundary of Montgomeryshire, it effectively lies at the junction of three local authorities, Gwynedd, Powys and Ceredigion. For census and statistical purposes, Machynlleth is referred to as Lower Super Output Area [LSOA] W01000473¹



Source: Welsh Government

- 2.2** Machynlleth is a historic town, granted a royal charter to hold a market each Wednesday since 1291. The town has strong links to the story of Owain Glyndŵr, who rebelled against the English in 1404. It is worth noting that the Owain Glyndŵr Centre is developing proposals for significant refurbishment.
- 2.3** The Pont-ar- Ddyfi Bridge was first referred to in 1533. The current bridge was built in 1809. It is a grade II* structure and a Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- 2.4** The Clock Tower is a prominent structure, built by public subscription to celebrate the 21st birthday of the eldest son of the 5th Marquess of Londonderry. Other important buildings include the Royal House and Plas Machynlleth with its adjacent stables, the subject of this report. The town's historic interest is reflected in the fact that it contains 112 listed structures.

¹ Welsh Government. Statistics for Wales: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/lsoamaps/lsoa.htm>

- 2.6** The population of Machynlleth in 2011 was 2,235, with a relatively even age profile at that time. There are currently no up to date population statistics, the next census being in 2021. The town retains a strong Welsh character. The 2011 census indicated that 67 per cent of the population had some knowledge of Welsh, with 39 per cent able to speak, read and write the language.
- 2.7** Machynlleth was the location of the first Laura Ashley store. The town is currently associated with two long established institutions: The Centre for Alternative Technology, which started in 1973; and the Museum of Modern Art, founded in 1986 as the Tabernacl gallery. It also hosts annual events such as the Machynlleth Comedy Festival, which has featured a number of well-known stand-up acts.
- 2.8** Machynlleth is a rural settlement, and agriculture plays a significant role in its economic, cultural and social life. However, at 6 per cent, farming and forestry play a

	Access to Services	Community Safety	Education	Employment	Health	Housing	Income	Physical Environment	WIMD
Berkelew	69	1,706	868	1,731	1,742	658	1,551	1,371	1,235
Forden	167	1,699	1,485	1,815	1,650	1,209	1,743	1,690	1,561
Montgomery	797	1,856	1,563	1,631	1,444	448	1,615	1,332	1,577
Trawern	30	1,835	1,279	1,709	1,685	497	1,605	1,081	1,247
Glanfrynlyn	34	1,684	1,351	1,541	1,469	489	1,396	1,167	1,067
Llanbrynmair & Banwy	8	1,792	1,443	1,154	1,340	289	1,311	1,443	882
Machynlleth W01000473	981	1,191	1,009	1,062	830	1,403	1,052	1,585	1,240
Caerwys	84	1,841	1,264	1,305	1,559	1,023	1,304	296	1,694
Llanfair Caereinion	111	1,617	1,422	1,535	1,503	361	1,288	1,418	1,199
Rhifon	52	1,851	1,282	1,758	1,759	632	1,697	1,254	1,304
Churchstoke	85	1,738	958	1,521	1,203	444	1,485	1,087	1,047
Dolforwyn	114	1,895	1,366	1,760	1,662	1,028	1,682	889	1,432
Kerry	93	1,423	1,357	1,713	1,748	383	1,478	956	1,259
Newtown East	355	31	331	428	637	681	549	660	370

relatively minor part in terms of numbers employed.

Source: Welsh Government

Between them the wholesale and retail sector, at 16.1 per cent, the public sector at 35.9 per cent, and transport and storage at 15 per cent, and the hospitality sector at 13.6 per cent, are more significant employers, though these figures do not necessarily reflect the relative economic values of these sectors. About 66 per cent of the working population is employed full-time, which means that one third is working part-time. 12 per cent of these are self-employed. In terms of multiple deprivation, Machynlleth is ranked 1,240 out of 1,909 LSOAs on the index scale², based on 1 most deprived to 1,909 least deprived. Overall, therefore, Machynlleth is above the halfway point [955] in terms of overall deprivation. Of most concern is ranking for health, although access to services, education, employment and income place it only halfway up the rankings.

² <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Welsh-Index-of-Multiple-Deprivation/WIMD-maps-2019>

<https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Welsh-Index-of-Multiple-Deprivation/WIMD-2019/welshindexofmultipledeprivation2019-by-rank-decileandquintile-lowerlayersuperoutputarea>

- 2.9** A major challenge for the outlying population is easy access to transport, although there is a regular bus service south to Aberystwyth, which can make it challenging to access services easily. But perhaps the key difficulty is the lack of economic opportunity generally. The impression is that Machynlleth is a town with many creative and enterprising people who seem to lack a platform or an outlet to develop their potential. Although there are social and economic activities available to those who seek them, there is a general lack of focus, which inhibits an easy exchange of ideas. Arguably, Machynlleth is a town of many communities, focussing on the arts, the environment, international cultural exchange, politics, the local economy, agriculture and heritage, and the sense is that these communities can sometimes be in tension with each other. It is worth reiterating that in the previous [2011] census the percentage of people with some facility in the Welsh language was 67%.
- 2.10** The town benefits from a regular railway service south to Aberystwyth, north along the Cambrian coast to Pwllheli, and east to Shrewsbury and Birmingham. It connects to the rest of Wales via the A487, which runs north to Dolgellau and east to Newtown and Welshpool. The A487 runs along the coast southwards towards Aberystwyth, Cardigan and Carmarthen. The A493 also runs west and north towards Aberdovey, Tywyn and Dolgellau. These roads converge on the historic bridge referred to above, which is a significant pinch point and is also subject to flooding. It is the Welsh Government's intention to build a new section of road upstream of the bridge, which aims to smooth the flow of traffic at the crossing of the Dyfi, but will not bypass the town.
- 2.11** Importantly, the UNESCO-designated Dyfi Biosphere is based at Machynlleth. This is the only Welsh biosphere reserve, established with the purpose of co-ordinating partnerships to work with each other to support biodiversity and its sustainable use.

3. Plas Machynlleth - Historical Context

- 3.1** The estate on which the Plas was established was formerly known as Greenfields. Its significance dates from the 1840's when it was developed by Sir John Edwards. His daughter, Mary Cornelia, married into the Vane-Tempest family, who owned extensive land and property, including the Durham coalfield. Much work was subsequently carried out to extend and improve the building. It is understood that the stables and kennels date from 1853, although the Plas Machynlleth foxhounds were established in 1900.
- 3.2** The Old Stables appear to have undergone a change of structure at some time in the mid to late 1800's although this may be down to poor mapping. The apportionment record for the area's tithe map is dated 16th February 1893, although the map itself may be decades earlier, as the Cadw gardens register refers to a tithe map of 1845 [see below]. The map shows an array of buildings substantially different to that shown on the 1900/1902 Ordnance Survey six-inch map.
- 3.3** The Plas was visited by Royalty on a number of occasions, notably by the Prince of Wales in 1896, and by King George V in 1911.
- 3.3** It was used as a school during the Second World War, and was presented to Machynlleth Urban District Council on behalf of the people of Machynlleth in 1948. In the 1970's the Plas, its grounds and the Old Stables were conveyed to Montgomeryshire District Council, and subsequently to Powys Council. Between 1996 and 2006 the building was used as a multi-media exhibition about the Celtic culture, and having failed, was taken on by Machynlleth Town Council in 2008, together with a substantial amount of land and other buildings including the Old Stables.
- 3.4** The hunt master and his family lived in the Old Stables building until 2007, since when it has stood empty. It has been used for storage by various groups, but has become dilapidated and has also been subject to vandalism and theft, despite being fenced off.



Sources: National Library of Wales &
National Library of Scotland

4. Baseline surveys

4.1 Plas Machynlleth Gardens.

The Welsh Historic Gardens Trust [WHGT] is the Welsh body specifically concerned with the conservation of gardens such as this one. It comprises a single body with county branches, and seeks to monitor planning applications on a voluntary basis, and to respond, although it is a non-statutory body.

The gardens are described on RCAHMS's Coflein site as *“an important survival of much of an attractive Victorian park, in a fine natural setting, on the edge of Machynlleth.”*³

The gardens are shown on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey 25-inch map of Montgomeryshire XXV, sheet 12 (1901), which includes a quarry, isolated geometric copses, possible formal garden, lodge, parkland, quadrangular enclosure, kennels and walk.

The gardens were registered grade II on Cadw's register of Parks and Gardens in about 2000. A full description of the gardens' history can be found on the register.⁴ Briefly, the earliest record of the gardens as a park dates to a map of 1828, and appears to have developed partly as cleared ground from the medieval period, and partly from the piecemeal acquisition of land from the nearby substantial farmhouse called Llynllloedd, which subsequently became the home farm for the Plas.

The gardens appear to have been laid out from the 1840's, and a kitchen garden with glasshouses was established at about this time. The kitchen gardens were apparently maintained during the Second World War by the girls' school that occupied the Plas, but subsequently fell into disuse. Much of the periphery of the original gardens has been developed since this time.

It should be noted that there is no statutory protection for gardens of this sort, and consultation on planning applications affecting such gardens is voluntary, although the most recent *Planning Policy Wales* [PPW 2019] now states that the effect of a proposed development on a registered park or garden or on its setting *should* be a material consideration. This is an advance on the word *'may'* in the previous PPW. Cadw is the statutory consultee on applications where the planning authority decides that an application 'is likely to affect the site of a registered historic park or garden or its setting'.⁵ It is perhaps worth noting that Cadw is not in a position to formally object to proposals, but may only comment and advise.

Local planning authorities must 'take account' of such gardens in their local development plans, and 'should' develop policies to protect and enhance them. Where registered gardens are associated with listed buildings, there is a strong case

³ <https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/265185/details/plas-machynlleth-garden-machynlleth>

⁴ <http://orapweb.rcahms.gov.uk/coflein/C/CPG342.pdf>

⁵ Planning Policy Wales [2019] p13.

for applying policies to protect and enhance them, as is the case with Machynlleth Plas, the Old Stables and the associated gardens. There is an argument for taking the opportunity to improve the gardens as part of any scheme for the Plas and the Old Stables.



4.2 Listed building record

The Old Stables is Grade II listed. According to the listed building report, the coach house, stables and kennels date to about 1840.

'They are ranged around a U-shaped courtyard and are of grey rubble stone, with low slate hipped roofs. A two-storey accommodation range lies against the north boundary wall, set between stables and tack rooms, with a central octagonal bellcote on the roof. On the south the stables are enclosed by a high stone-capped wall, creating the yard, partly surfaced in old bricks in a herringbone pattern, to the south of which an earth bank rises through a small scrub woodland to one of the...car parks.'

A small iron gate leads into the yard near the north-east corner. The north range of the stables [was] used as a house and [was...] lived in by the daughter of the last huntsman who looked after the Londonderry hounds. The other ranges are partly derelict and the south part of the yard has been turned into a simple garden.

A service entrance connects to the stables off the main Pentrerhedyn road (A487) about 60m down the boundary wall from a new entrance to the north of the house. The wall connects to two tall and narrow pyramidal stone capped piers which are set back by about 1m off the road side pavement. There are no gates. The gateway enters a narrow lane, enclosed on the south by a high stone wall. To the west are the stables and to the east the narrow lane continues to the west side of the house. A new wing on the north of the house blocks the passage of this lane which used to run as a service drive towards the walled kitchen garden and the Plas Drive. At the west of the house a branch breaks off the lane to the south-east to enter a small staff car park.

4.3 Measured architectural survey

The upper floors appear to have been largely domestic, with the exception of room 1, which is an open space that clearly housed the coaches. On the ground floor there are another 8 rooms or spaces, some of which appear to have been stalls for horses, prior to being converted into domestic spaces. Rooms 7 and 8 have retained their original stalls.



4.4 Structural survey

The structural survey is based on a preliminary investigation and on photographic evidence that was available after restrictions were imposed on carrying out a full survey. A more detailed survey and an addendum will be prepared once the restrictions have been lifted, and therefore the current report is for information purposes only, and to enable completion of this feasibility study.

The report describes the generally poor condition of the building, and the need for urgent work to remediate some priority concerns. The report can be summarised thus:

“The roof finishes and rainwater goods are in poor condition and water ingress is causing progressively more damage to the fabric internally and externally. The large areas of ivy growth may be causing damage to the fabric and should therefore be carefully removed or poisoned if found to be rooted into the walls.

Repointing of the walls should in any case be carried to using an appropriate lime mortar mix. The wall should be assessed for potential voids to ascertain if grouting is required.

Water ingress through the walls could potentially cause washout of fines creating voids or settlement of the rubble core causing the wall to bulge. Cavities or loss of mortar can then be exacerbated by root growth. This is more likely to occur if ivy is cut off at the base without being killed further up the wall.

Extensive top growth of ivy/established vegetation can also cause wind rocking leading to dislodging of masonry blocks and it is therefore advised to cut back top growth.

It is likely that the flashings covering the stone copings to the gables however well-meaning are causing further damage to stone underneath as moisture is being trapped and not being allowed to disperse to atmosphere. The damage to the copings therefore should be investigated further to determine, if possible, the cause of the original deterioration.

Internally the timber structure appears to be in reasonable condition particularly in the two cross ranges, but some areas in the central range have suffered from collapse, probably caused by rot (Rooms 11,12 and 19). A specialist timber survey is recommended to check for rot or insect infestation. Particularly vulnerable are wall bearings of beams trusses and rafters. These should be checked by utilising specialist micro drilling or similar to determine whether timber that appears to be sound on the surface is actually hollow and rotted at the core. Micro drilling is an acknowledged conservation technique and should ensure as little of the grade II fabric as possible is damaged during the investigation.

The Demolition Asbestos Survey carried out by West Environmental Ltd has highlighted several areas where asbestos is present. Before any further access is allowed in the building it is recommended that the building is cleared and certified by

a licensed asbestos removal company, and that any other recommendations in West Environmental report are fully acted on.

After many years of neglect, and as the building has been unoccupied for a relatively long period of time, it is unlikely that the external drainage is in working order. This is evidenced by water staining and vegetation growing in the rainwater goods. A drainage survey should be carried out to determine the routes of the foul and storm water drainage and the condition. The rainwater goods should be renewed to ensure they are working effectively, and the underground drainage jetted and or renewed as necessary to ensure storm and foul water is effectively disposed of.

We understand that vandalism and theft in the building has occurred since the walk around visit in March 2019 it is recommended that the building is adequately secured to prevent further intrusion. It is important to note that any security system should incorporate adequate cross ventilation provision of the structure.”

4.5 Ecological survey

The main focus of the survey is to confirm the presence of bats and to identify their species. It should be noted that all bats are protected, and the management of any site in which they are present requires a licence.

It is not possible to carry out an appropriate survey as required by the relevant regulations within the timespan of this study, as such a survey has to be carried out between May and September. It has been agreed that the consultant will provide a full report as an appendix to this study.

However, it can be assumed that a number of bat species are likely to be present, and as such, a number of issues need to be addressed.

4.6 Asbestos survey

The purpose of this survey was to locate and identify the presence of any materials that might contain asbestos, ascertain any associated risk, and to provide recommendations. The survey was carried out by West Environmental Ltd on 5th March 2020.

A full report of the survey is available alongside this feasibility report. In summary, asbestos was found to be present in a number of locations inside the building, and although some spaces were inaccessible, asbestos must be presumed there as well. This applies particularly to much of the first floor of the building.

The asbestos survey describes the building thus:

“Very old stone barns, in very poor condition, a lot of areas where access is limited due to safety, old windows containing smashed glass, lath plaster ceilings throughout, brambles causing limited access to the external grounds.

Roof areas are in very poor condition, containing netting for safety. Stone floor and wooden floor boards. There is some vinyl flooring in area, lath and plaster walls, building in general in poor condition and in need of major refurbishment.

External areas also in very poor condition, roof areas are a hazard and are containing netting to stop tiles from falling off, brambles and shrubbery very overgrown throughout the external areas. Some stone areas are also in bad condition and possibly a hazard, building has been broken into as far as can be seen who have caused even worse damage.” [page 5]

4.7 Condition statement

In conclusion, the building is now unsafe, and is a hazard to public safety. It is currently structurally sound, but will undoubtedly deteriorate further in the near future. The next few years represent both a threat to the future of the building and an opportunity to develop its potential in line with the emergence of Machynlleth as a tourism and enterprise hub.

The notes taken from the asbestos and structural surveys provide a useful summary of the building's poor condition.

5. Current governance arrangements

- 5.1** Town councils enjoy a wide range of powers, including for instance to acquire or accept land for public recreation, including allotments, and to make by-laws on that land. They also have powers to provide and equip buildings for use by educational, social and athletic clubs.

The capacity to employ such powers depends, among other things, on the amount that can be raised by precept – a form of local taxation as a proportion of council tax. In 2020, for instance, Machynlleth Town Council has raised this element of council tax by almost 10 per cent. Such increases are often based on the need to address urgent matters, such as tree safety, or increases in operating costs.

The Old Stables are currently owned by the Town Council. The Town Council comprises 12 elected councillors, served by a clerk paid part-time. The next election will be in 2022. There is no dedicated sub-committee or joint committee of user groups and councillors to oversee the broader management aspects of the Plas.

There are five staff in the Plas, none of whom are full-time. Currently, the staff comprise two caretakers, a marketing supervisor, a cleaner, a facilities manager, and administrative and finance officer, and the clerk to the council.

- 5.2** Powys Council apparently has a ninety per cent charge on the sale of the Old Stables, although this is unclear. It is not known how much this may incentivise the sale of the building.

6. **Planning, legal and advisory context**

6.1 There is a wealth of regulation, legislation and advice that is relevant to this proposal, and must be taken into account. Some of this is a statutory requirement in law, e.g. planning processes, including environmental standards; and laws pertaining to institutional arrangements. Some of the legislation requires its objectives to be met, e.g. the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. Other law provides opportunities, e.g. the possibility of partnerships or community interest companies, or delegated responsibilities. There is also considerable advice, and whilst it may not be a legal requirement to follow such advice, a failure to do so may result in proposals not proceeding. The following section describes the key statutory and non-statutory issues relating to the proposal. Whilst it is in no particular order, the narrative attempts to indicate its importance and relevance to any proposal.

6.2 Powys Local Development Plan^{6 7}

This defines the planning policy context. Decisions about any proposal are taken primarily in the light of the plan's policies. In our view, the relevant policies are the following:

- **Policy R3** – Development within Town Centre Areas. This policy permits new development within the defined Town Centre, where it enhances the vitality and viability of the existing town centre; and where the proposal is for a community use which is of wider public benefit and in need of a town centre location.
- **Policy TD1** – Tourism Development. This policy permits proposals for tourist accommodation, facilities and attractions within settlements where commensurate in scale and size to the settlement.
- **Policy C1** – Community Facilities and Indoor Recreation Facilities. This policy permits such facilities within or adjoining a settlement, where no suitable facility exists nearby which could appropriately accommodate the proposed use; and the appropriateness and feasibility of multi-use has been considered.



⁶ <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/4898/Adopted-LDP-2018>

⁷ See also Powys Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance 'Conservation Areas' Consultation Draft 2019. <https://powys.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s41536/CONSULTATION%20DRAFT%20Conservation%20Areas%20SPG%20July%202019.pdf>

- **Policy DM13** – Design and Resources. Requires development proposals to demonstrate a good quality design, having regard to the qualities and amenity of the surrounding area, local infrastructure and resources. This is particularly pertinent in the context of Machynlleth’s conservation area⁸, which includes the Plas, the Old Stables and the gardens.
- **Policy SP7** – Safeguarding of Strategic Resources and Assets. States that proposals must not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the resource or asset and its operation. Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, Listed Buildings and their curtilages, and Conservation Areas are identified as strategic resources and assets.

6.3 It is worth noting that new development is not necessarily new build. A significant change of use may be viewed as new development. The above policies are not exhaustive, and a planning application will need to consider other policies in the development plan, including requirements to carry out ecological and species surveys.

6.4 Given the listed status of the property, it will fall within the ambit of the **Planning [Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas] Act 1990**. There are a number of provisions that may be relevant.

Any proposal will require an application for listed building consent [s10], as well as the normal planning application made under the Town and Country Planning Act.

Section 26L of the Act allows for the creation of Heritage Partnership Agreements by a local planning authority. This may be with the owner of the building; any other interests; anyone involved in its management; and any other person who has relevant knowledge. The Welsh Minister may create such a partnership, in order to provide for granting listed building consent in respect of specified alteration works, together with conditions. The agreement may specify works that would, in the view of the partners, affect the character of the listed building, and it can also make provision about the maintenance and preservation of the building. It can restrict access to or use of the building. It can also provide for the relevant local authority or the Welsh Ministers to make payments towards the costs of works provided for under the agreement.

It is important to note that a heritage partnership agreement can only apply to the members of the partnership – it cannot impose any obligations or liability, or confer rights to any third parties.

Other sections relate to urgent works to preserve listed buildings. For example, section 54[2] allows for the Secretary of State to intervene to execute works that appear to be necessary for the preservation of a building. Section 80[2] furthermore allows the Secretary to make grants for defraying all or part of the cost of repairing *any* building in a conservation area, or which it appears to him to be of architectural or historic interest.

⁸ See <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/5860/Conservation-area-boundaries>

- 6.5** The **Historic Environment [Wales] Act 2016** makes changes to two main UK level laws in relation to the management of the historic environment – the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It contains provisions for addressing listed buildings that have fallen into disrepair. Section 56A of the Act sets out the process for notifying the owner of such a building, specifying works that must be carried out to secure the building's preservation. This may apply if the Old Stables falls into a significant state of disrepair, which may be problematic for a property under the control of a public body such as the Town Council.
- 6.6** The **Wellbeing of Future Generations [Wales] Act 2015** is a significant factor in any proposals. The Act places a duty on each public body to carry out sustainable development, which is defined as a process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. It is assumed that Machynlleth Town Council is not defined as a public body^{9,10}. However, any proposals it might make will be subject to scrutiny by Powys Council, and also by Natural Resources Wales.

The guidance issued by Welsh Government is important¹¹. For example, it states [page 4]:

“One of the fundamental approaches advocated by the Act is a shift in focus from gains in service output to a stronger link between the actions of public bodies and the outcomes that enhance the quality of life of citizens and communities both now and in the future. The Act is founded on Outcome Based Accountability which encourages a focus on the difference that is made, rather than just the inputs and processes that an organisation has. Success in the context of this Act is seeing positive action drive a positive contribution to the achievement of all the well-being goals through individual or collective action.”

Although Machynlleth Town Council is not directly subject to the provisions of the Act, the Government's statutory guidance recommends it to consider what contribution it may be able to make towards meeting the local objectives adopted for its area.

- 6.7** There are a number of key policy and advisory documents, which will be material in determining any proposal for the Old Stables. These include:
CADW Best Practice, Conservation Principles and guidance
Technical Advice Note [TAN] 24: The Historic Environment¹²
Planning Policy Wales [PPW] [9th edition 2016] Chapter 6 'Historic Environment
- 6.8** A number of relevant points are raised in the Welsh Government's Technical Advice Note [TAN] 24, which is the statutory guidance to local planning authorities on how they should approach development issues in the context of the built heritage including parks and gardens.

⁹ See Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 section 6[1]

¹⁰ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-02/spsf-4-collective-role-community-councils.pdf>

¹¹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-02/spsf-2-individual-role-public-bodies.pdf>

¹² <https://gov.wales/technical-advice-note-tan-24-historic-environment>

6.9 Cadw's best practice guidance refers to the six **Conservation Principles for the Management of the Historic Environment in Wales**¹³, which owners, developers and public bodies should use to consider the implications of proposals. These are:

- Historic assets will be managed to sustain their values
- Understanding the significance of historic assets is vital
- The historic environment is a shared resource
- Everyone will be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment
- Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent and consistent
- Documenting and learning from decisions is essential

It is not possible to go into detail here, but it is worth noting the following statements, taken from the Conservation Principles, in relation to any proposals for the Old Stables:

"Conservation...is about revealing and sharing the significance of historic assets and ensuring that their special qualities are protected, enhanced, enjoyed and understood by present and future generations." [page 9]

"To be sustainable, investment in the conservation of the historic environment should bring social and economic benefits. On the other hand, investment in social and economic programmes should bring environmental benefits." [page 9]

"The conservation of the historic environment must recognize and respect associated natural environmental values. This will be achieved by an integrated approach to conservation that has identified both the natural and historical values of each asset." [page 10]

"Heritage regeneration through the reuse or development of historic buildings or other historic assets can ensure the sustainability of a local community. The potential benefits of such regeneration proposals need to be tested against the conservation principles." [page 32]

6.10 **Technical Advice Note [TAN] 24** reminds us that there are inextricable links between the natural and historic environments, especially, in the context of the Old Stables, the presence of roosting bats. Hence the need for an ecological survey.

It should be noted that a heritage impact statement must accompany applications for listed building consent. This presents the results of a heritage impact assessment, designed to ensure that the significance of the building is taken into account in the development and design of proposals for change. Heritage impact assessment should be proportionate both to the significance of the listed building, and to the degree of change proposed, and the statement should provide enough information to allow the

¹³ https://cadw.gov.wales/sites/default/files/2019-05/Conservation_Principles%20for%20the%20sustainable%20management%20of%20the%20historic%20environment%20of%20Wales.pdf

local planning authority to judge significance and impact when considering applications for listed building consent.

Two important considerations in the case of the Old Stables are:

- The contribution of curtilage and setting to the significance of the building, as well as its contribution to the local scene, and
- The extent to which any proposed works would bring substantial community benefits, for example by contributing to the area's economy or the enhancement of its local environment.

Finally, TAN 24 makes important points about historic gardens and parks, and the need to ensure that any proposal is sensitive to its setting. In the case of the Old Stables, it is recommended that an opportunity is taken to enhance the character of the gardens within which it is set.

6.11 Planning Policy Wales [PPW]¹⁴ makes reference to the historic environment in chapter 6, where links are made between heritage assets and the Wellbeing goals. For example, it states that:

“A Prosperous Wales can be realised by valuing the quality of our...historic environment as important for tourism, business, local employment, locally sourced building products, in attracting inward investment and to be accessed, used and enjoyed by local communities.” [page 118]

Paragraphs 6.1.5 – 6.1.19 refer to listed buildings and their settings, to conservation areas and to historic parks and gardens.

The government's position can best be summarised by the following statement:

“It is the responsibility of all those with an interest in the planning system, including planning authorities, applicants, developers and communities, to appropriately care for the historic environment in their area.” [page 124]

6.12 National development framework

This is the successor document to the Wales Spatial Plan, and will be published in September 2020. All local plans must conform with it, and its purpose is to provide strategic direction to local planning authorities.

The NDF sets out four goals for ‘Sustainable places’:

- distinctive and natural places;
- productive and enterprising places;
- active and social places; and
- prosperous, distinctive and diversified regions.

¹⁴ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/planning-policy-wales-edition-10.pdf>

Policy 3 in the draft NDF states:

“We will work with all public land owners and investors to ensure that new development of a significant scale is located in town and city centres which are accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. Strategic and Local Development Plans should review publicly owned land, both redundant and in current use, to identify potential sites for development and re-development, including for mixed use and affordable housing developments that will support the creation of sustainable places.”

It goes on to say:

“Policy P3 applies to major trip-generating developments, such as public service facilities, sport stadia, cultural venues and exhibition spaces which have the potential to drive regeneration and often rely on public funding.”¹⁵

6.13 Conclusion

An application for funding from the Welsh Government will have to demonstrate how its proposal will support the principles of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. It will also need to show how it supports the vision and the proactive policies set out in national policy statements, and how it reflects the planning management policies in Powys’ local development plan. Finally, it must demonstrate its understanding of key legislation on heritage, and the underpinning guidance from organisations such as Cadw.

¹⁵ See <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2019-08/Draft%20National%20Development%20Framework.pdf>

7. Relevant strategies

7.1 Tourism

The 2011 Mid Wales Tourism Strategy referred to the region as the ‘Cinderella’ of the four Welsh tourism regions. It went on to say that

“...the Region has the capacity, scope and attributes to capitalise on the growth markets of the future and that it performs relatively well given the inherent constraints.”

The strategy saw these constraints as limited access, relative remoteness, a smaller resident population and a less well-developed tourism infrastructure¹⁶ [page 3]. However, it stressed the importance of tourism to local prosperity and quality of life, and also emphasised the extent to which tourism supports a wide range of services including transport, shops, food production and cultural and heritage facilities.

The Welsh Government’s 2013-2020 strategy – Partnership for Growth – presented a number of aspirations for 2020, including well managed places people want to visit¹⁷ [page 10].

It refers to five areas in which Wales can offer a competitive advantage, and these are particularly relevant to Mid Wales generally and to Machynlleth in particular: natural environment, heritage and culture, activities and adventure, events and festivals, and distinctive destinations. [page 12]

The strategy also seeks to promote Wales’ outdoor activity product, such as the Wales Coast Path, which passes through Machynlleth. This would support the wider Welsh Government interventions to improve the well-being and health of the nation, and to realise the economic, social and cultural benefits of Wales’ built and natural environments.

It states that

“...it will be important to improve the visitor appeal of tourism destinations throughout Wales...our major destinations, cities and hub towns will require a particularly focussed approach...to fully exploit opportunities to maximise economic growth...regeneration schemes that can promote associations with local culture can help to support tourism and also instil local pride and identity.” [pages 24/25]

The recently published strategy Welcome to Wales¹⁸ seeks to build on the previous strategy, with an approach that delivers “high quality year-round experiences that are good for visitors and host communities”. [page 7]. It sees “unique accommodation” as a core offer.

¹⁶ The Tourism Company [2011]: Mid Wales Tourism Strategy. Tourism Partnership Mid Wales. 53pp

¹⁷ Welsh Government [2013]: Partnership for Growth. Wales Government Strategy for Tourism 2013-2020. 30pp

¹⁸ Welsh Government [2020]: Welcome to Wales: Priorities for the visitor economy 2020 – 2025. 44pp

Importantly, the strategy identifies a gap in high-quality accommodation in many parts of Wales, stating that *“We are looking for more than a basic bedroom – a place to stay would be a memorable and distinctive experience too.”* [page 17]

The Welsh Government’s current position on tourism destination development and promotion is different from its previous approach. It will now proactively identify the projects and activity required to deliver on its ambitions and procure these projects directly. [page 20].

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this feasibility study to address this, it highlights the critical importance of the wide range of interests identified in section 8 to collaborate in developing an overall strategy for the town, within which any proposal for the Old Stables will sit.

7.3 Mid Wales Growth Area

In February 2019, AECOM produced a document entitled ‘Strategic Economic Priorities for Mid Wales’¹⁹ on behalf of the Mid Wales Growth Partnership. The document stated:

“There are significant opportunities to build on the uniqueness of Mid Wales to drive tourism and grow the economy...There are further opportunities to build on the work of the region’s destination partnerships and exploit initiatives...to sell Mid Wales to a wider audience by packaging its key tourism assets and facilitating opportunities to develop higher profile visitor attractions in the region. All of these issues will be addressed via strategic tourism packages of investment and a co-ordinated place marketing campaign for Mid Wales.” [p24]

It went on to say:

“There is also potential to roll out the procurement approach to the tourism sector (e.g. accommodation providers, restaurants, attractions and events) to provide a distinctive Mid Wales tourism offer.” [p32]

7.5 Conclusion

The development of tourism is key to developing the Old Stables for accommodation. The links between tourism development and support for the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the area are a critical factor and need to be recognised and stated in any proposal for development.

The Old Stables project is in a strong position to support the wellbeing priorities of the Welsh Government as identified in the latest tourism strategy, as well as in strategies to develop the economic potential for the region.

¹⁹ AECOM [2019]. Strategic Economic Priorities for Mid Wales. Growing Mid Wales Partnership. 43pp

8. Influencing factors - local interests

8.1 Introduction

It is important to take into account the interests and agendas of other groups and facilities. Failing to do so can frequently lead to tensions, and may undermine the aspirations of others within the immediate and wider community.

This section reviews those other community interests and enterprises, and considers how the regenerated Old Stables may avoid tensions, and may support them and create synergies. It is not intended to be exhaustive, but provides a digest of providers of spaces and the kinds of activities and interests that exist in and around Machynlleth.



There are a number of established enterprises in the area, most of which are housed in buildings and which offer community space or cultural and leisure services. Other community initiatives include the Gerddi, Mach Maethlon, and the local vegetable box scheme. Some members of the community have an interest in developing a bandstand in the Plas gardens, which may also be relevant. More generally, the Cambrian Mountains Initiative and its partners are seeking to raise the profile of the local uplands, particularly in the context of the post-Brexit settlement with landowners.

Canolfan Owain Glyndŵr

The Owain Glyndŵr Centre [OGC] is owned and managed by a company limited by guarantee. It is built on the site of the famous parliament held in 1404 at which Owain was crowned Prince of Wales. Part of the building is Grade I listed.

There are some interesting parallels between the ownership history of this building and Plas Machynlleth [and adjoining Stables]. It was donated to Machynlleth Urban District Council by Lord Davies of Llandinam in 1912. The Plas was itself donated to Montgomeryshire District Council, in 1947.

By the early 1970's, the Centre became indebted to the bank to pay for necessary repairs, and the decision was taken in 1974 to sell the building. Similarly, the option to sell the Old Stables has been, and is, under consideration. In the case of the Owain Glyndŵr Centre, this led to protests and the establishment of a new management committee.

In 1998, a company was incorporated to take on the management of the Centre, followed in 1999 by the registration of a charity. In the case of the Old Stables, this is something we recommend.

The Centre currently lets out space, part of which is occupied by Caffi Alys. It also hosts events, and has an exhibition on the life and times of Owain Glyndŵr. The current management committee is in the process of developing proposals to refurbish and upgrade the Centre.

There is considerable emphasis on the Welsh language and culture, and it is anticipated that the Centre will become an important location for Welsh cultural events. There is a strong case for working closely with the OGC, especially as some of the proposals that have come forward for the Old Stables might be better located here. Furthermore, the Old Stables will be in a position to offer accommodation to participants at future OGC events.

Bowling Club

The club house hosts an active club that competes in league matches. It is sited at the opposite end of the town to the Old Stables. The Clubhouse has a bar and there is a separate, sizeable function room and kitchen, which are used frequently by some of the community. Events have included whist drives, charity nights, and bingo, along with children's dancing lessons, cooking evenings and open mike nights. The annual Comedy Festival uses the function room for stand-up sessions.

The University of the Third Age has held monthly meetings at the Bowling Club. Mach Maethlon uses the kitchens to prepare food for sale at the weekly market.

The Bowling Club is an important community facility, and a recognised venue for events. The kitchen is a useful facility for preparing food and for running cooking courses. For this reason [and others] it may be inappropriate to establish a kitchen for this purpose at the Old Stables.

MOMA Machynlleth

Opened in 1986, the former Wesleyan Chapel known as the Tabernacl now houses a major art collection and gallery spaces for national and international exhibitions. There is a small café and bar in the ground floor gallery.

MOMA Machynlleth hosts an annual festival of music every year in August, during which time it also exhibits selected entries from the Tabernacl Art Competition. The annual William Condry Memorial lecture takes place in October.

The Auditorium is ideal for chamber and choral music, drama, lectures and conferences. A Steinway grand piano has been purchased. Translation booths, recording facilities and a cinema-screen have been installed; the oak-beamed Foyer has a bar; and extensive access for the disabled has been made possible by a lift.

St Peter's Church

In 2015 a major restoration project was undertaken, which involved repair to the church and bell tower, and the creation of a new mezzanine floor, which provides a community facility with a kitchen. There is a ground floor meeting room at the rear of the church. There is also an exhibition area which displays the history of the church and the local area, and provides an information point for visitors, as well as the work of local artists.

As well as being a popular focus of worship, the Church hosts Mother's Union meetings as well as coffee mornings and mothers and toddlers' group. The church also hosts a food bank.

The Leisure Centre

The leisure centre is built within the grounds of the Plas. There may be plans to relocate it in the future, but this is currently unconfirmed. The centre is operated by a private leisure company, in partnership with Powys Council, and provides a wide range of sport and fitness facilities and classes. The building contains a swimming pool. These are used regularly by children from local schools.

There is a café on site, and a meeting room for hire.

Centre for Alternative Technology

Established in a former slate quarry in 1973, the Centre is presented as a showcase for sustainable living. CAT is an educational charity dedicated to researching and communicating positive solutions for environmental change. CAT runs courses to degree and MSc level in aspects of sustainability; schoolchildren are hosted to educate the importance of action on climate change. There is a café, visitor centre with a shop and several meeting facilities. Volunteers and students can be accommodated on site, but there may be scope for expansion in the future, both in terms of numbers of students requiring accommodation and outreach training workshops.

Cafes and Pubs

There are a number of facilities in Machynlleth that offer refreshments, and in some instances, spaces for performances. Among them might be singled out the **Wynnstay Arms and Caffi Alys**.

The owner of the Wynnstay Arms is keen to promote the facility as a location for the St David's Day event held annually in the town. There is a space in the rear of the pub

for entertainment. Caffi Alys is an important venue [though not exclusively] for Welsh speaking locals. It is located within the Owain Glyndŵr Centre [see above], and will feature in any new development in the building. It also provides space for performances, especially from visiting musicians and singers from overseas.

The Plas

The Plas leases out a number of office spaces. Currently there are 19 such spaces, of which 16 are leased out. Of the three offices that are not on long term lease, two are used as hot desking offices and one is used as a conference room/ welsh lesson room.

There are also two dedicated conference rooms on the ground floor, as well as the community hall. There is a wide range of space on offer, from a six-person meeting room to the main hall, which can seat 250 people.

The Plas also offers a variety of support services, from printing and photocopying to Wi-Fi, all available at reasonable cost.

There is also a popular café on the ground floor, which is currently managed in house.

Other local groups and activities

There is a wide range of activity in the town, including the scouts and guides, cadet force, football and bowling clubs. Some of these are likely to express an interest in the Old Stables development.

Some groups are strongly linked to organic growing, for example **Gerddi Bro Ddyfi**, whose gardens are based in the Plas grounds. The garden is permanently open to the community. Gerddi Bro Ddyfi Gardens provides and promotes a therapeutic community wildlife garden for all people in the Bro Ddyfi area, and especially those at risk of social exclusion.

Sessions for adult volunteers are held each Tuesday and Thursday. Edible plants grown are available free to the growers. The Gardens are involved in the Dyfi Valley Seed Savers and the Welsh Vegetable Projects, protecting heritage plant species and sharing their seeds.

Another organisation linked to sustainable growing is **Edible Mach Maethlon**, a community organisation that creates public spaces for growing edible foods with the support of local volunteers. The crops are free for anyone to pick. Two other related initiatives are **Dyfi Landshare**, which links landowners and growers, and offers support in managing land agreements; and **Green Isle Growers**, a growers' co-operative. They have several growing sites and produce sustainable, chemical free food. They offer residents a weekly healthy, local vegetable bag from June to December.

These groups meet regularly at the Plas and at the Bowling Club.

An interesting proposal has been made for a **bandstand** in the Plas grounds, which could be hired to event organisers and groups. An appropriate design that would reflect the character of the grounds and the Plas could enhance its historic nature, and could be a useful community asset, complementing development at the nearby Old Stables building.

Events and festivals

Machynlleth is fast becoming recognised as a venue for annual events. Perhaps the most widely known of these is the **Machynlleth Comedy Festival**. This is a four-day event, partly funded by the Welsh Government, in early May, which attracts comedy acts and visitors from all over the UK and beyond. Venues for the comedy acts are located in many of the places described here. The Plas grounds accommodate a large beer tent and a wide range of food vendors and craft stalls.

There are also children's workshops such as mask making and circus skills.

The influx of visitors to this internationally recognised event means a high level of up-take of accommodation. Some camping has been available in the past, and local people with room to spare are invited to offer accommodation during the festival period.

Frequently coinciding with the Comedy Festival, the **Dyfi Enduro** has been running since 2000. It is a mass start mountain bike endurance ride around the Dyfi Forest, which has been attracting keen mountain bikers from around the UK and beyond.

El Sueno Existe is a biennial festival that celebrates the music and politics of Victor Jara, a musician and theatre director who was part of the New Song movement in Salvador Allende's Chile.

Unsurprisingly, it is a festival of music, politics and arts which aims to develop opportunities and ideas for cultural expression, social justice and human rights. The festival is based around the grounds of the Plas and it regularly attracts visitors from across the UK and South America. Each festival has a theme, for example 2019 Mexico and Women of South America. Festival organisers ask local people for help in accommodating visitors and some camping has been provided.

Gŵyl Y Pethau Bychain/St. David's Folk Festival was established in 2018 to celebrate St David's Day in early March. Its title is based on a saying by St David, 'The Festival of Little Things'.

Each August the **MOMA Music Festival** is held over a week. It attracts eminent artists from all classical musical genres to perform in Machynlleth and visitors from the UK and beyond. Concerts are mainly held in the MOMA auditorium. The Wynnstay Hotel in the town also hosts musical events in partnership with MOMA.

The festival begins with a sing-along of sacred hymns, the Cymanfa Ganu. Special features include the Hallstatt Lecture on some aspect of Celtic culture. The Glyndwr

Award for an Outstanding Contribution to the Arts in Wales is given during the festival. The Festival also has its own Fringe festival involving local musicians.

The Plas was to have hosted a **Ska and Punk Festival** in May 2020, but this has had to be cancelled because of the Coronavirus outbreak.

Braich Goch and Corris Youth Hostel

Braich Goch, located about 6 miles north of Machynlleth, is a 26-bed bunkhouse with bar and kitchen facilities. It also provides a base known as Corris Sanctuary, for a collective of individuals from diverse backgrounds working towards social justice.

Their aim is to benefit individuals, community-based groups and organisations that are seeking to find ways to work together to combat the sources and effects of inequality, poverty, discrimination and oppression. The collective is especially committed to working with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, and supporting them to develop networks, access opportunities, and equip them with new skills and knowledge to tackle the injustices they face. The building is suitable for gatherings, residencies, performances and meetings.

Formerly a Youth Hostel, Corris Hostel is now an Independent Hostel located in the Old School, Corris Uchaf. It provides a 40+ bed venue for group activity and family celebrations.

Wildlife Centre Gors Dyfi

Located at Cors Dyfi, about 4 miles south of Machynlleth, the centre is owned by Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust. It opened in 2010 as the Dyfi Osprey Project.

Since that time, it has developed significantly with the building of a 360-degree observatory, currently attracting over 40,000 visitors per year.

In 2020 the centre is expanding further, with a new Wildlife Centre, which will comprise a Reception area, interpretation area (screens and panels etc), four toilets (two disabled), two staircases, a wheelchair lift, a kitchen and cafe area for around 40 people, a shop.

On the first floor there will be a 100-seater venue and exhibition centre called "The Gallery" comprising 50% of the upper level, volunteer and staff office and a large classroom. The car park capacity will double to around 50 vehicles. The centre will offer a venue for weddings.

This is a significant development that may attract visitors who may require accommodation.

The Bike Park, Pantperthog

Located some three miles north of Machynlleth, this facility offers 650 acres of mountain bike trails, designed by a professional racing cyclist and former British mountain biking champion. The trails are open at weekends only, and coaching and training courses are provided to suit all levels of experience.

Conclusion – influencing factors

This section provides an indication of the range of activities and groups that may have an interest in the Old Stables development for a number of reasons – it may provide accommodation to people wishing to participate in their events; it may provide custom for their products; it may provide additional space for meetings and workshops; and it may provide grounds for activities. In summary, an appropriate proposal for the Old Stables, based around the provision of accommodation, will complement many of the activities described above.

That apart, it will be a useful facility for anyone wishing to explore and enjoy the town and its offer, and the wider coast and countryside.

9. **Accommodating Visitors**

9.1 **Introduction**

Tourism is a critical contributor to the Welsh economy. According to the Wales Tourism Alliance it contributes over £6.2 billion to Welsh GDP, and provides over 172,000 jobs²⁰. According to the last census, hotels and restaurants alone provided 13.6% of all employment in the Machynlleth area.

The Mid Wales tourism strategy [2011] stated that there was spare capacity in most types of provision, partly because of over-supply, and partly to do with quality, which can inhibit re-investment. The overall occupancy rate was 40%. Since the time of the strategy, bed occupancy has risen, in some cases significantly.

9.2 **Occupancy rates**

The room occupancy rate for **hotels** across Wales 2018 was 66%, consistent over the last five years. Occupancy in Mid Wales has risen from 52% to 59% since 2014, though this is still the lowest occupancy rate for Wales. In terms of revenue, Wales underperforms owing to fewer upper end hotel facilities. The overall revenue²¹ for 2018 was £52.57 per room. The occupancy trends also reflect high seasonal fluctuations. In the case of **guesthouses and bed & breakfast** as with hotels, there was a slight decline in occupancy levels in 2018 [35% room occupancy] compared to 2017 [38%].

In 2018 the annual **self-catering** average unit occupancy for all cottages and apartments was 55%, down from 58% in 2017. However, Mid Wales performs slightly below the average levels at 49%. Consistent with previous years, self-catering accommodation continued to demonstrate high levels of occupancy during peak periods, with an average unit occupancy 70% for the period May to October, unchanged from 2017. For the month of August, occupancy levels were 90% in 2018. This has been a growing market, with 2017 levels the highest rate in the previous nine years.

The average occupancy rate for **static caravans and holiday homes** for the reporting period (May to October 2018) was 88%. The summer month of August saw the largest unit occupancy across the months under review (97%) for caravan holiday homes, followed by June (92%).

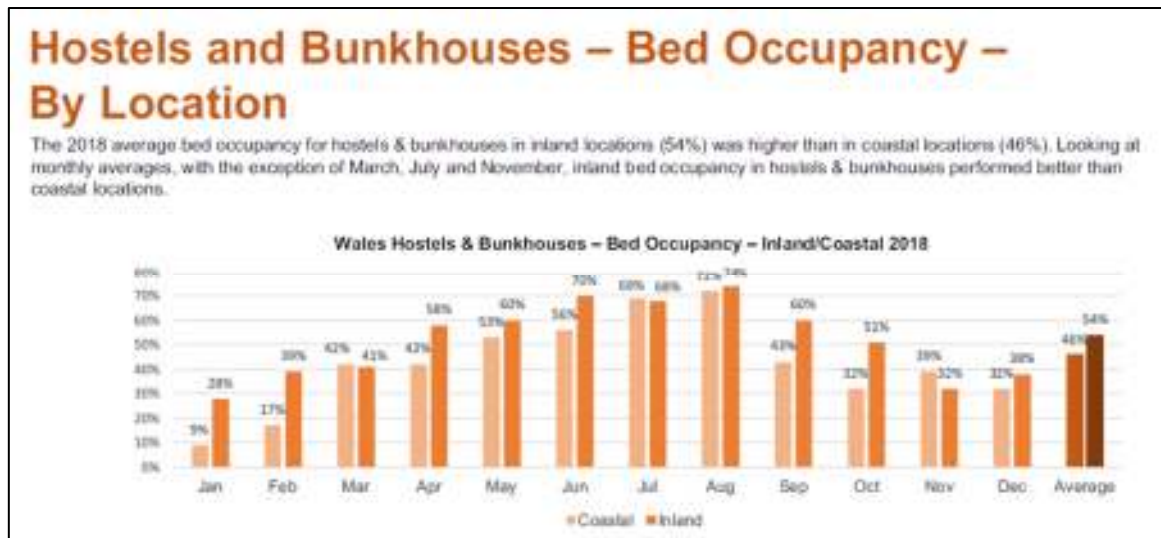
In the case of **camping pitches and touring caravan pitches**²², the 2018 average pitch occupancy for the reporting period (May to October) was 46%, an improvement on pitch occupancy rates seen in the previous four years. August saw the largest pitch

²⁰ Wales Tourism Alliance <https://www.wta.org.uk/>

²¹ Calculated as RevPAR – revenue per available room – dividing overall revenue by the rooms available rather than sold.

²² <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Tourism/wales-tourism-accommodation-occupancy-survey/tourismaccommodationoccupancyrolling12monthaverage>

occupancy across the months under review (69%) for touring caravan and camping pitches, followed by July (57%). The early part of the season saw moderate levels of occupancy (in May at 39%), whereas the end of season pitch occupancy only achieved 21%.



Between 2014 and 2018, there was an average 7% increase in the average occupancy rate for **hostels & bunkhouses**. The annual average bed occupancy in 2018 was 53%, unchanged from 2017. The rate peaked in August at 73%, with slightly more levels of occupancy in inland establishments. Arguably, Machynlleth enjoys both a coastal and an inland environment.

9.3 Provision in and around Machynlleth

An online survey revealed a wide variety of visitor accommodation in the area around Machynlleth. This includes bunkhouses, guest houses, hotels, Air B&B and other more unusual types of accommodation. The aim of this part of the study is to understand the need for more accommodation and to establish that Old Stables accommodation (llety) would not be in direct competition with other providers.

Our survey has identified 12 places that are described as **Bed and Breakfast** or **Guest Houses** and which are within about 10 miles of Machynlleth. Only one is in the town itself, others being situated in villages, which are mostly not on bus routes. Prices range between £50 and £130 a night for a room, usually a double or family.

The Centre for Alternative Technology is an important contributor to Machynlleth's character and probably to its economy. CAT brings students to residential courses and other visitors to the area. As well as its 2 eco cabins with 18 beds each, it has 24 single and shared en-suite rooms at a cost of £80 per room. The rooms are in the WISE Building with some garden terraces.

The largest category of visitor accommodation is **Airbnb**, which appears to be growing rapidly. It offers a wide range of types of accommodation, some of which are unusual in character and therefore can be marketed as giving a special type of experience.

The total number of Airbnb properties recorded within about 10 miles of Machynlleth is 142. There are 15 properties in central Machynlleth providing 48 bed spaces. The radius of search included Corris, Pennal, Eglwysfach and Cemmaes Road. The price asked is on average about £59 per night. Many stipulate that the property must be rented for a minimum number of nights (2-3) and there are often service charges in addition, ranging from £9 to £31 per rental period.

In Machynlleth the Tiny House with 1 bedroom and 2 beds can be rented for £43 per night and a service charge of £15. A twin room in Snowdon House costs £23 per night. Outside Machynlleth one of the most expensive rentals is Capel Ebenezer at Ceinws, which has 4 bedrooms for 8 guests costing £170 per night in low season and £275 per night in high season. A shepherd's hut with a sauna at Abercegir has 1 bedroom but is advertised for 4 guests and costs £70 per night with £45 service charge.

There are 57 **hotel rooms** in and near Machynlleth, of which 39 are in Machynlleth town centre. Hotel prices start at £43 per person per night and range to about £115, depending on the type of room and the season. Ynyshir Hall is about 6 miles from Machynlleth and is exceptional in being a top-quality hotel costing people between £300 and £400 per night to stay there.

The type of accommodation that can be described as a **bunkhouse or llety** varies widely in the standard of bed spaces and the facilities provided. Some places cater primarily for groups and they are often of the more traditional type, with fairly basic beds and several beds to a room. Other bunkhouses have taken on the demand for rather more comfortable accommodation, often providing double-bed en suite rooms with modern kitchens and spacious communal spaces.

The only bunkhouse accommodation actually in the centre of Machynlleth is Toad Hall Guest House, which has 3 rooms (a double and a twin) with self-catering. The charge is currently £18 per person per night. There is bunkhouse accommodation within an 8-mile radius of Machynlleth. This ranges from the intimate family style of Llwyn at Penegoes to the group type accommodation offered in the Centre for Alternative Technology's eco-cabins that each have 18 beds currently at £15 a night and Corris Hostel, which has 43 beds at £20 per night.

Further afield there is bunkhouse space at Aberystwyth 18 miles south of Machynlleth on the University campus and at Plas Dolau Country House. There is also a hostel affiliated to the Youth Hostels Association at Borth, about 16 miles south of Machynlleth. In Dolgellau, 16 miles north of Machynlleth, the Old Lombard Bank has been converted into a bunkhouse. Current prices average at £20 to £25 a night per

person, although there are rooms that cost less as well as those that are more expensive.

Appendix B provides details of bunkhouse provision in the area.

9.4 Predicting the future

Future patterns of tourism in Mid Wales will be partly determined by what happens on the ground but also influenced by economic, demographic, social and other factors beyond local control. These might include:

- **Uncertainties around overseas travel**

There is some uncertainty among the UK population about the effect of Britain's exit from the European Union. This might include concerns about a wide range of inconveniences and costs, such as cross border security, passport requirements and currency exchange costs, as well as the costs of mobile phone use. Taking holidays at home might become an increasingly attractive option in the future. Conversely, there might a decline from foreign visitors. The value of the pound may influence decisions about travel overseas – depending on whether the pound's value is high compared to other currencies, or vice versa.

- **Economic futures**

The pace of economic growth is forecast to be slow in the near to medium future. The region relies heavily on public sector employment, as well as agriculture and tourism. There is still considerable restraint on public spending after a decade of austerity measures, which is unlikely to be alleviated significantly in the near future. This has an impact on local authority budgets and the resources available for destination management, marketing and infrastructure.

- **Environmental awareness**

Younger people in particular appear to be more aware of issues such as climate change, which may reflect their decisions when it comes to making choices as consumers. However, there appears to be limited evidence that this translates into action, and in fact older generations are as likely to make ethical or environmentally positive choices as any other – and in some cases they have the disposable income to follow through. This may translate into opting for a number of short breaks throughout the year rather than one long break to exotic locations.²³ Such people are likely to seek authenticity and distinctive destinations.

At the same time. Government policy towards public transport will be a factor – support for improved public transport networks may determine which places people choose to visit.

²³ See <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/sgees/about/staff/pdf/Morrisonand-BeerConsumptionandenvironment.pdf> and Ballew, M., Marlon, J., Rosenthal, S., Gustafson, A., Kotcher, J., Maibach, E., & Leiserowitz, A. (2019). *Do younger generations care more about global warming?* Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.

- **Demographics**

The UK population is ageing, with a significant increase in over-65-year olds. Traditionally this age group enjoys breaks at home. There are more single households, reduced disposable income in some cases, with people working longer to fund their retirement. They are likely to be discerning about value for money, and are seeking experience that are dependable and, in some ways, predictable.

There is also a strong market for niche activity holidays among people in their thirties and forties, including mountain biking and general outdoor experiences. The area around Machynlleth is ideally suited to deliver on this potential.

- **Competition**

Within the UK there are a number of competing destinations seeking to exploit the domestic tourism market. Simply keeping position and retaining market share becomes a challenge let alone breaking into new markets and developing new business.

Wales has a relatively limited share of UK inbound tourism. It is hard to predict what the overall numbers are likely to be in the future, depending on Government policy on promoting the UK as a tourist destination, on the value of the pound, and on the UK's image around the world. It will also depend on the extent of Government support for the tourism industry and for ancillary development.

- **Climate change**

This has already begun to have an effect on the climate of Wales, with warmer, wetter winters and dry summers with storm events. This will have an impact on the landscape and on biodiversity. Unpredictable weather patterns are likely to be a feature.

Images of flooding and transport links cut off because of severe conditions may have a negative effect on holiday choices in Wales.

- **Epidemic/pandemic diseases**

As the recent coronavirus outbreak has demonstrated, such outbreaks can have a devastating effect on the travel and tourism industry. Although the Spring 2020 outbreak is perhaps exceptional, similar outbreaks have occurred in the past in other places, and diseases such as foot and mouth disease have had significant impacts on UK rural tourism in the past.

- **The internet**

Social media plays an important part in determining where people choose to go. Third party recommendations are relied on, through sites such as TripAdvisor.

The internet is the preferred route for booking and information collection for many people. New ways of accessing and sharing information through social networking sites are by-passing traditional routes and information can now be accessed more readily on the move via mobile phones.

9.5 Conclusion

A conclusion drawn from our local accommodation study is that there is a shortage of low to medium cost accommodation in Machynlleth itself. For some visitors, especially those who are on a walking or cycling trip, it is important that they can access services in the evening. This is also a factor in encouraging more people to travel to their destinations by train or bus. Machynlleth is well placed for people who want to take this kind of a holiday and there is a strong argument to say that more accessible and affordable holiday accommodation in the town would be valuable and sustainable.

In terms of pricing, we consider that £20-£25 for a bed in a well-appointed bunkhouse, and £55-£60 for a double room, would be about the right level at 2020 prices. This would entail a mix of provision with a high degree of flexibility.

There is no certainty regarding future patterns of tourism. Restrictions, for whatever reason, on overseas travel may facilitate more trips and stays within the UK, but may also result in a loss of overseas markets. Unpredictable weather patterns may draw people to the coastline or deter them. An ageing population might prefer not to travel far, although a particular cohort with plenty of disposable income might choose to travel further afield.

The assumption, based on trends, is that there will be an increase in visitor numbers to the area, and therefore there is scope for increasing and improving on the accommodation.

10. Engagement with the public and with stakeholders

10.1 It is worth noting that prior to this study, members of the town council carried out a survey²⁴ that asked the following questions:

- 1) What do you think about converting the Stables into a bunkhouse for walkers and cyclists?
- 2) Do you have any alternative suggestions for its use?
- 3) Would you be willing to donate some time in helping to work on the site e.g. clearing vegetation?
- 4) Should the town council sell this building?

There were 147 responses to the questionnaire, and there was considerable support for its retention for the benefit of the community. Of those who responded to the fourth question, 71% did not wish to see it sold.

Surveys of this kind are valuable in getting a sense of people's general opinions, but unless there is an appropriate level of awareness raising, debate and analysis, they can be limited. For instance, had people been informed during the survey that most of the proceeds of the sale would be lost to the town, perhaps more than 71% would have supported its retention by the town council.

There was a wide range of opinions and suggestions, many of which were unrealistic or inappropriate for the Old Stables, though they might be commendable. A lack of space for young people was flagged up, as was the need to provide sheltered housing. An arts centre was suggested, as was a crafts centre, low cost accommodation and well-being centre.

The results of the survey are in appendix D.

10.2 In carrying out this feasibility study, we engaged with local people in a number of ways. As well as discussions with individuals within the town who have a particular interest, we ran market stall discussions during the Machynlleth market days on 13th November 2019; 22nd January 2020, and 11th March 2020.

We asked shoppers whether they knew about the Old Stables and what they would like to see done with them, and to put their thoughts onto post-it sheets.

There was wide agreement that they are a valuable asset to the community and should be retained.



²⁴ [<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/9RKDTLL>]

One person said:

"I really want to help save this lovely building. Use the restoration to make use of probation services to use and train those in/leaving prison to learn traditional building restoration skills."

Another endorsed this, stating:

"We need to preserve what we have left of our heritage. This building is in a prime position on entry to Machynlleth and well worth preserving."

Another local shop owner said:

"It is so strange. I was only thinking about that building the other day. I have always been interested in abandoned buildings."

10.3 When asked what might be done, a number of possibilities emerged. These might be grouped around the following:

- Some kind of craft/making and mending/repair workshop, possibly linked to a Men's shed. A 'making and fixing' community space.
- Some kind of food centre that would include the use of a rentable kitchen space to prepare produce for sale locally and for training, linked to a produce exchange and distribution outlet – a 'Real Food Centre' for mid-Wales.
- Re-use of the stalls, linked to an emerging pony trekking centre.
- Accommodation – bunkhouse and/or self-catering.
- Heritage interpretation
- A recording studio
- Children's play area

Others suggested running a range of specialist workshops and courses, including gardening, organic growing, dry-stone walling, food and baking, green chairmaking, charcuterie, and woodland management. There appeared to be particular enthusiasm for the running of 'left field' specialist courses such as shoe, guitar and canoe making.

10.4 As part of our engagement we were able to use a video produced by a local resident in 2014 and kindly offered to us²⁵. We used the video on one of the market stall days, and also during our key consultation workshop in February with the stakeholder group.

10.5 We held discussions with staff at Denmark Farm near Lampeter, and with volunteers at Y Dolydd, Llanfyllin Old Workhouse, on the challenges of running hostel accommodation. With Denmark Farm we also discussed the logistics and practical details of organising courses and workshops.

²⁵ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dYrmQS4C5o&t=73s>

We also engaged with a number of accommodation providers. Overall, there was positive support for the proposal. The manager of a local hotel stated:

“This could be an interesting project and would be timely because there is a big shortage of accommodation in Machynlleth town. There is a definite need for something that caters for younger people who are on a limited budget. People do call at the Wynnstay looking for bunkhouse accommodation and refer to the previous bunkhouse in the town. It would be good for the town and for the wider economy. It will have wider consequences than simply providing accommodation”.

Another, a guest house owner, stated:

“There isn’t enough tourism accommodation in Machynlleth. A bunkhouse would be the best way to provide this. There is a need for a bunkhouse in Machynlleth”.

A nearby hostel representative seemed to reflect these views:

“In regards to the stables being converted into bunkhouse accommodation, we have no problem with it or perceive it as a threat...We do provide bunkhouse accommodation for hikers or countryside enthusiasts, when we haven’t groups staying with us. But I don’t think having extra bunkhouse in the area will harm us”.

Importantly, we were advised by someone in the hotel business that an historic building requires continuous maintenance costs. They thought that the Old Stables project would need to have an interesting slant in order to attract younger people and that it will need top-class marketing to be successful. They estimated that it takes at least five years to establish a business in the correct niche market.

- 10.6** This appeared to be at odds with the views of representatives of Mid Wales Tourism, who argued that existing accommodation providers were already unable to attract enough business. It is worth noting that MWT represents a wide range of providers on a regional, rather than on a local basis.

However, MWT did make a number of important suggestions, some of which are beyond the scope of this report but are significant. These include the idea that the Old Stables would be an ideal centre for a town-wide interpretation project, which should tell the story of Machynlleth from its earliest days through to recent developments, such as the story of CAT and its influence on the town and recent activities in relation to the Climate Crisis and localism.

Key sites in the town, such as the Plas, the Old Stables, MOMA, Canolfan Glyndwr should be brought together in an overall interpretation plan and linked to a central interpretation hub. The latter could be the Old Stables or the Plas itself. Appendix G describes how this might be considered.

It was suggested that we should be looking at the whole of the area around the Plas, to include the gardens and the linking the Plas itself with the Old Stables building. It

would also be appropriate to include the fields and woodland and to promote short local walks from the Plas/Old Stables.

- 10.7** Importantly, MWT pointed that it is not the role of a town council to run a commercial bunkhouse and that there could be opposition if such an enterprise is publicly funded. It was also pointed out that *Cultivate* in Newtown had encountered problems over the issue of competition. This confirms the idea that an independent organisation, probably a social enterprise, should be established to take ownership of the Stables and to manage the project.



- 10.8** Having collected, analysed and formulated initial thoughts, we ran a key stakeholder workshop in two halves on 5th February 2020, which was attended by twenty-one invited people. We presented a number of options, focussing on the proposal for some form of bunkhouse accommodation, and we then explored the compatibility of this with options to provide space for some kind of food hub, repair and share workshop, and a kitchen for training in food preparation.

The general consensus was that there are already some spaces in Machynlleth that might be developed to cater for these activities, that they were not necessarily compatible with the principal proposal, and that they might undermine the potential for income from visitor accommodation. Some new suggestions included the idea of a living and working/studio space for an individual worker.

We further explored the costs and potential revenue from accommodation, with a view to optimising the potential for a mix of family rooms and bunk spaces.

The results from this event have provided the basis for the architect proposal in this report.

- 10.9** In order to alert people to the Old Stables and to its potential, we produced a flier and a briefing sheet which were distributed around the town and were given to individuals with whom we engaged. These included 13 local outlets whom we thought might have an interest.



There was a range of responses, largely supportive, but in some cases with a degree of concern, best expressed by one person who said he did not want to see something fail that ratepayers would have to pay for.

10.10 Unfortunately we were unable to develop our engagement further, due to the impact of the coronavirus outbreak. One of the bodies to whom we would have made a presentation was Machynlleth Town Council. We have been able to discuss the proposal with Cadw, who are not in a position at this stage to make specific comments, but reminded us that from its perspective it is important to understand the nature of an historic building and that changes need to be appropriate to that building. It is important to emphasise that Listing does not mean that no changes can take place but that they must be considered and appropriate.

An example might be the use of secondary glazing rather than double glazing or retaining existing floor surfaces if possible. Cadw supports the restoration of historic buildings in order to give them a new use. In this context, some future uses might have a lighter touch than others, and would thus be preferable.

Whilst Cadw would welcome the opportunity to engage with discussions, it is for the local planning authority to determine any application. If minded to approve, the authority will notify Cadw of its intention, at which stage Cadw may scrutinise the application.

It is therefore important to engage with the appropriate local authority officer at an early stage in the process. We are currently awaiting a response from the officer to our request for a discussion on the broad proposal, and therefore cannot assume that the proposal outlined below is acceptable. However, it is likely that negotiations are likely to be on matters of materials, design and other matters material to the listing, rather than on the broad principle of the proposal or its feasibility.

10.11 We have maintained our contact with our network and key stakeholders, and we believe that we have engaged sufficiently to enable us to conclude this stage of the process.

10.12 A full list of people with whom we engaged is included in Appendix E.

11. Case studies – issues and learning points

11.1 The following case studies have been selected because they are similar to the Old Stables in the following ways:

- An historic building, which has been at the centre of a community, and in some cases has listed building status
- Community take over ownership
- A mix of uses
- A sustainable income from some, if not all, of those uses
- Offers services to the local community
- Employs local people and contributes to the economy

11.2 The case studies selected were **Llanfyllin Old Workhouse, Y Fron, Denmark Farm, and Mid Wales Food and Land Trust, Newtown**. A full description of the case studies is given in appendix A. The table below summarises some of the key issues and our learning points.

Lessons Learned			
	Key Points	Lessons	Actions
Y Dolydd, Llanfyllin Old Workhouse	Deviation from original Conservation Management and Development Plan	Essential to keep to plan to maintain direction. Important for funding bids.	<i>Write a strong and exhaustive development plan.</i>
	Core income from business rental of units.	Essential to have a core income for continued life of the project.	<i>Concept allows for enough accommodation to guarantee income.</i>
	Income not sufficient to maintain paid staff.	Revenue must be included in financial budget. Paid staff essential for continuity of project.	<i>Funding application to include start-up revenue.</i>
	Initial loan to secure building. A subsequent mortgage has been taken as funding option for building work and development.	Puts strain on income and additional risk. Essential to obtain full grant funding.	<i>Financial strategy not to include loan or mortgage.</i>
	Runs skills courses in conjunction with unit businesses.	Can work well – uses accommodation and catering.	<i>Include courses in plan.</i>
	Has had special events e.g. Annual Arts Festival.	If successful- brings in high income. Collaborate with Machynlleth event organisers.	<i>Develop relationship with event organisers.</i>
	Has a Heritage/ Interpretation Centre	Adds value for community and visitors, especially schools.	<i>Include interpretation element in plan.</i>

	dealing with the story of the building.	Old Stables will benefit from similar.	<i>Press for Machynlleth wide Interpretation Plan.</i>
	Unclear relationship to local community Possibly some friction.	Important to work <u>with</u> other local projects.	<i>Maintain links with community projects.</i>

Lessons Learned			
Y Fron, Nantlle	Key Points	Lessons	Actions
	Clear Development Plan and one-off funding	Enables project to make a quick start. Enables all major build work to be done at same time.	<i>Lottery and other funding bids to be pursued.</i>
	Community asset transfer of building	Saves on purchase price. Confirms community ownership. Need for early definition of relationship with Powys and Town Council.	<i>Clarify with Powys/Town Council.</i>
	Open all year	Important for income stability and for marketing profile. Old Stables need to be attractive to all-year round market.	<i>Ensure good marketing budget and develop a marketing strategy.</i>
	Accommodation is complementary to community facilities	Strong link with community. Supports income from bed-space.	<i>Continue to explore inclusion of community use within Old Stables project</i>
	High end of bunkhouse market	Helps to bring in year-round visitors.	<i>Design rooms and facilities to suit this market</i>
	Flexible catering – self-catered or via kitchen	Provides flexibility. Enables groups/course to be catered.	<i>Include kitchen area</i>
	Community spaces available for course/conferences/events	Provides flexibility. Enables additional income source.	<i>Design main community space and facilities to enable. courses/workshops/meetings/events.</i>
	Has full facilities – wet changing room/equipment store/Wi-Fi	Important to attract visitors from outdoor activity market.	<i>Include outdoor activity facilities.</i>

Lessons Learned			
Denmark Farm, nr Lampeter	Key points	Lessons	Actions
	Established in 1987 by the Shared Earth Trust, in response to the national decline in wildlife habitat and biodiversity of farmland.	Valuable to identify clear purpose, need and objectives at start.	<i>Establish a vision for the project.</i>
	Governance is currently by 2 bodies, a Trust and a Limited Company, currently revising.	Need for a strong and appropriate governing structure from start.	<i>Set up a governance structure as soon as possible.</i>
	Initial 8 years capital and revenue grant from Big Lottery.	Value of start-up revenue funding.	<i>Funding application to include start-up revenue.</i>
	Farmhouse rental provides a core income.	Value in having a reliable core income.	<i>Core income to be bunkhouse.</i>
	Funding demands have led to a mortgage on part of property.	Importance of strong & regular financial management.	<i>Business plan to guide financial strategy.</i>
	New eco-lodges provide high quality and flexible accommodation – popular for family events and groups.	Value of high quality and flexible accommodation. Important to be attractive for the celebration/group holiday market.	<i>Include flexible room space and accessible space.</i>
	Initial marketing in magazines not successful. Recent marketing online and through www.groupaccommodation.com is paying off.	Importance of good marketing from start of project. Worth spending on correct marketing. Importance of targeting a market.	<i>Ensure good marketing budget and develop a marketing strategy.</i>
	Run variety of courses including rural skills, environmental and craft skills. Use their land and its management as a basis for field work. Most courses are 1 day, non-residential and attract local people. Run 80+ each year with profit of about £100 a course.	Demand for this mix of courses. Value of having associated woodland/cultivated areas. Probable value of running longer, higher end courses that use accommodation.	<i>Pursue possible course/workshop ideas. Explore market for this.</i>
	Accommodation is mix of bunk-dormitory, eco-lodge flexible including accessible rooms.	Mixture and flexibility of bed spaces is an advantage.	<i>Plan for mixed accommodation offer.</i>

Lessons Learned			
Mid Wales Food and Land Trust, Newtown Market Hall	Key points	Lessons	Actions
	Building put up for sale by Powys but Trust persuaded Powys to make a Community Asset Transfer with a 99-year lease on condition of raising enough money to refurbish the building	Key importance of Community Asset Transfer. Key importance of having a governance body in place at start.	<i>Clarify with Powys/Town Council. Clarify with Powys/Town Council.</i>
	A not-for-profit Trust run by voluntary Board of Directors	Difficulty of keeping directors on long-term basis.	<i>Set up a governance structure as soon as possible.</i>
	Purpose of project to provide space for local growers and producers to have market space.	Depends on support and viability of enough local food businesses.	<i>Not relevant.</i>
	Staffing: 2 full time office-based staff and a part time member of staff based in the Market Hall.	Need to plan for adequate staff. 2 part-time staff or 1 full and 1 part time is necessary.	<i>2 staff to be appointed well before opening date.</i>
	Worked fairly well for first few years but problem that many stall holders lacked business skills and business plans. Has largely become a venue for conventional traders. Community spaces on upper floor bring in small income but no charge for community groups and reduction for charities.	Importance of research into stability of businesses involved. Argument to caution on local food centre proposal. Value of community space Low contribution to overall income.	<i>Expect community uses to be low in income contribution.</i>
	Project affected by relatively low value of Newtown as a tourism destination. No tourism boost for local produce businesses.	A project needs to respond to specific local tourism market and needs.	<i>Be part of a buoyant Machynlleth tourism offer. Identify niche markets.</i>

12. Governance issues

- 12.1 Whilst it is impossible to make direct comparisons, our research into eight establishments that contain elements of interest to us shows that they all, apart from one, are charities and companies limited by guarantee.

NAME	CHARITY?	NUMBER	COMPANY?	TYPE	NUMBER
Llanfyllin Y Dolydd Building Preservation Trust	YES	1091097	YES	SIC Limited by guarantee	04322101
Denmark Farm	YES	1004002	YES	Limited by guarantee	07462134
Canolfan Y Fron			YES	Limited by guarantee	10033243
Ty Newydd [Taliesin Trust]	NO		NO		
Nant Gwrtheyrn	YES	1078543	YES	Limited by guarantee	03865538
Plas Glyn y weddw	YES*	1070495	YES	Limited by guarantee	02994771
Tabernacle Trust	YES	517426	YES	Limited by guarantee	01999409
Canolfan Owain Glyndwr	YES	1076059	YES	SIC Limited by guarantee	03660300

- 12.2 Our view is that the management of the Old Stables should be conveyed to a body with charitable status, operating as a community interest company. Whilst the town council is the democratically elected representative of the community, and is a powerful advocacy body for its community, it has a number of social and economic challenges, including local health and transport, as well as amenity and environmental priorities. As well as having limited capacity to manage such an enterprise, it is questionable that the town council is politically the most appropriate body to do so. The town council may also be vulnerable to liabilities that may better be borne by a charitable trust and community limited by guarantee, which is also better placed to seek funding.

- 12.3** In order to provide some focus, we have suggested the following objective for a new body:

To restore this historic building as a community asset for the benefit of the people of Machynlleth, ensuring that:

- **It reinforces the town's social and environmental fabric**
- **It adds value to the town's economy**
- **It supports the community's health and wellbeing**
- **It retains the building's architectural integrity**
- **It generates sufficient income to sustain itself into the future**

This is simply a draft working objective. It is not suggested that it is definitive. However, we feel that the formulation of such an objective is critical for underpinning a unity of purpose.

12.4 Forming a charity

In order to be registered as a charity, a body must demonstrate that it is for the benefit of the public, and must fall within one or more of 13 categories of purposes defined by the Charities Commission. The terms *benefit* and *public* in particular need to be carefully considered.

The 13 categories of purposes are:

[a] the prevention or relief of poverty

[b] the advancement of education

[c] the advancement of religion

[d] the advancement of health or the saving of lives

[e] the advancement of citizenship or community development

[f] the advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science

[g] the advancement of amateur sport

[h] the advancement of human rights, conflict resolution or reconciliation or the promotion of religious or racial harmony or equality and diversity

[i] the advancement of environmental protection or improvement

[j] the relief of those in need, by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage

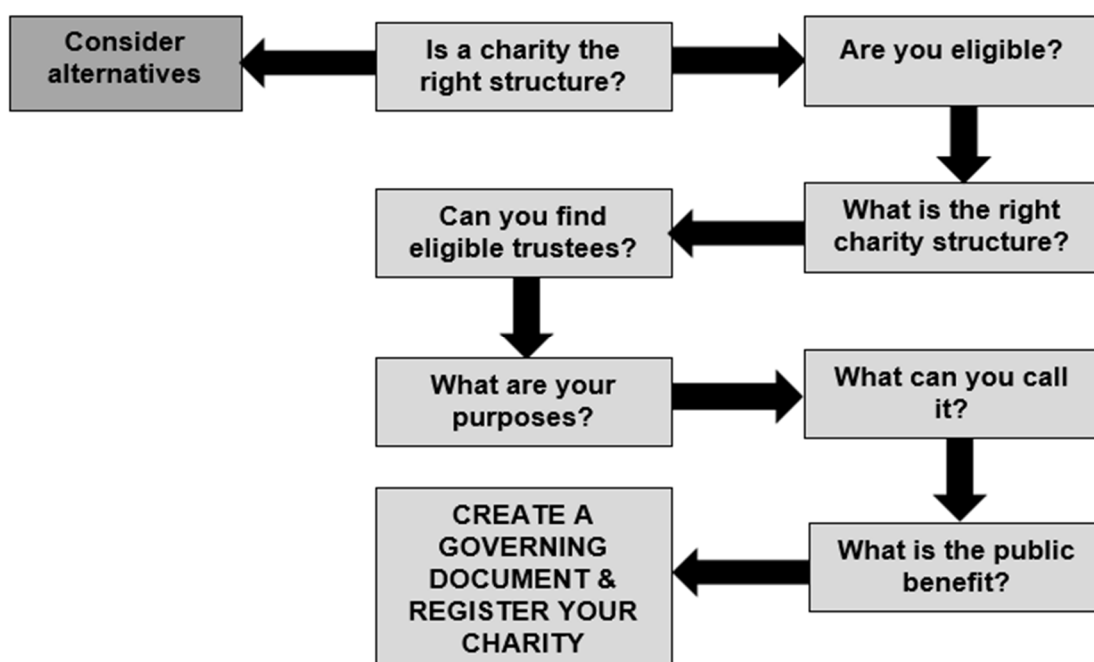
[k] the advancement of animal welfare

[l] the promotion of the efficiency of the armed forces of the Crown, or of the efficiency of the police, fire and rescue services or ambulance services

[m] any other purposes currently recognised as charitable or which can be recognised as charitable by analogy to, or within the spirit of, purposes falling within (a) to (l) or any other purpose recognised as charitable under the law of England and Wales

We believe that proposals for the future management of the Old Stables is likely to fall into categories [e], [f] and [i] shown in bold.

A body would need to show *what* is the charitable purpose that is being advanced; *who* would be the beneficiary of the purpose; and *how* will the body advance the charitable purpose.



The following example, taken from Llanfyllin Workhouse, provides a useful illustration:

To preserve for the benefit of the people of Llanfyllin and district and of the nation, the historical, architectural and constructional heritage that may exist in and around Llanfyllin in buildings of particular beauty or historical, architectural or constitutional interest.

To provide community facilities for recreation and other leisure and cultural activities in the interests of social welfare with the object of improving conditions of life for the people of Llanfyllin and district.

To advance education for young persons by the provision of facilities for training

The Charities Commission publish a number of advisory documents on the criteria and processes for setting up charities²⁶. The process might be summarised as follows:

12.5 Forming a company limited by guarantee

A company limited by guarantee is usually formed by non-profit organisations. Such a company does not issue shares or have shareholders, but is owned by *guarantors* who agree to pay a set amount of money towards company debts. Although profits can be made, they should be re-invested to help promote the non-profit [and charitable where relevant] objectives of the company.

²⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/set-up-a-charity>

Importantly, the personal finances of the company's guarantors are protected. Their liability extends to the maximum level of their guarantees, which is normally a few pounds.

The following points should be noted:

- A company must be registered with Companies House²⁷.
- A company limited by guarantee must have at least one director and one guarantor. It is possible for a single person to be both. Usually there are a number of directors and guarantors, especially where a company is also a charity. Information about these people is available on public record.
- All such companies must have a company address. This is the registered, publicly recorded, full postal address.
- A company needs to supply up to four Standard Industrial Classification Codes. There are currently 732 of these. Youth hostels, for example, are SIC code 497.²⁸
- Information about People with Significant Control (PSCs) in the business should be provided. Normally, the directors and guarantors will be PSCs.
- A company must possess a Memorandum of Association and adopt Articles of Association during the company formation process. The Memorandum states the name of each owner (guarantor) and their agreement to set up the company and become members. The Articles outlines the rules and regulations the company has to follow.
- A company must file accounts and tax returns to the same deadlines as a company limited by shares but share capital will not appear on the balance sheet and different terminology is typically used, alongside a note that the company is limited by guarantee. 'Profit' should instead be termed 'Surplus' and 'Shareholders Funds' should be replaced by 'Reserves'.

A charitable company must file annually with both Companies House and with the Charities Commission.

We do not have the necessary expertise to advise on the legal complexities around the transfer of property from the town council to a constituted trust, especially since Powys Council holds a significant charge on the sale of the Stables. This will require engagement with legal experts. We would suggest that an application for funds includes a sum to buy out the charge on the property, to facilitate such a transfer.

²⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/topic/company-registration-filing/starting-company>

²⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standard-industrial-classification-of-economic-activities-sic>

13. Options analysis and risk assessment

- 13.1** The proposal to do nothing is not an option in this study. Nor is the proposal to sell the property. The option to accommodate a pony trekking centre using the Old Stables, and to an extent restoring part of the building to its former use, is highly appealing, but we consider it incompatible with other, more realistic uses. It is inadequate, and would not attract anyone willing to venture into this at this time. In our view, renting out office or workshop space may not attract enough custom to justify the cost of restoration, and other spaces exist or are more appropriate. Exchange and repair, and a major food hub are attractive but may require too much space in their own right to be manageable here. These are analysed and summarised in the table below. The other options are described more fully here.

13.2 Accommodation

As described in section 9, Machynlleth has the advantage of offering a wide range of opportunities, being both coastal and inland in character. It is situated on the Wales Coast Path, as well as on the Glyndwr Trail. It occupies a space between significant areas of upland to the north and south, and is situated at the western end of the narrowest part of Wales, bringing it relatively close to Shropshire. It is also at the rail junction between Birmingham and the Cambrian Coast. Given the increasing overall upward trend in hostel and bunkhouse occupancy, and in the development of local events, the town is in a particularly good position to offer good quality accommodation of this type.

There are a number of websites that promote the Wales Coast Path, and provide information on accommodation. They seem to indicate that there is generally a lack of suitable accommodation of the type envisaged by this study. One such website for instance identifies just four facilities.²⁹

There has been a shift away from basic provision towards comfort. This is perhaps partly because erstwhile steady incomes from schools, local authorities and youth organisations have dried up, and some organisations, such as the Youth Hostels Association, have sought new markets. We have learned from our visits to other bunk house operators that well-designed accommodation will win us business. High standard facilities will help to attract similar 'grey pound' markets.

The most recent architect proposal suggests 36 beds in 11 units, mainly en-suite, with an option to house a manager in one of the units. The proposal is for a flexible system that would allow for individual beds or bunks to be sold, or for family units, and includes space for people with access challenges.

The proposal also suggests using the large vaulted area to be used as a kitchen/lounge/ dining area that could be used for teaching or workshops.

²⁹ <http://www.walescoastpath.info/meirionnydd-accommodation.html>



**INITIAL CONCEPT SCHEME PLAS STABLES,
MACHYNLLETH**

PENSIEN / ARCHITECTS CYF		Author / Revision 1	
18/100		5X 91	
18/100		18/100	
18/100		18/100	

13.3 Craft skills workshop

The Old Stables has the potential to become an ideal place for running a range of courses that would bring an income, involve local people with skills to offer and make use of the bunkhouse accommodation. This is based on research into similar situations elsewhere, where a variety of courses and workshops are run successfully, often in conjunction with accommodation.

Research has shown that skills learning can be offered at several levels of the cost spectrum. Day and weekend courses are often not residential and rely on fairly local participants, who will pay a day rate that may include refreshments. An example that demonstrates average prices is the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT), which charges £70 for a day course and between £650 and £750 for a five-day course with full board. Some venues target a niche market and specialise in areas such as rural skills and crafts; gourmet cooking and baking; writing and the arts and crafts

The Old Stables Project could be an ideal centre for running specialist courses in Mid Wales. The attraction would be linked with the opportunity to explore and experience the town and the area around Machynlleth and to stay in an exciting traditional building that has been tastefully renovated. Skilful marketing would offer opportunities for economic advantage to individual skills practitioners and to the town in general.

There are a number of local skills-based businesses that might be involved. These include Artist Blacksmithing, Shoemaking, Felting, Slate Craft, Bag Making, Creative Writing, Cooking, Baking and Food Growing. There is no evidence that this option would put the Old Stables in competition with nearby CAT, as the latter tend to run courses that relate to their core teaching interests in sustainable building skills.

Our research has identified a significant interest in growing and producing fresh and local food in the Machynlleth area. While the Old Stables would probably not be suitable for developing as a commercial kitchen centre for these businesses, it might be appropriate for running courses and workshops associated with the activities of Mach Maethlon and Gerddi Bro Ddyfi Gardens and Green Isle Growers, as well as other local green or environmental activities.

13.4 Kitchen and Real Food outlet

The Food Society Wales website argues for more community-based food strategies, where community interests, health bodies, local food producers and local authorities work together. In researching for this feasibility study information was obtained from relevant organisations on how they operate.

These included the Mid Wales Food and Land Trust based in Newtown and Cultivate, an organisation that manages community gardens in the Newtown area.

During consultation we became aware of a number of Machynlleth based groups and activities that focus on growing food locally and in selling it in the area. These include the community food organisation, Mach Maethlon and the Green Isle Growers vegetable box scheme. A key idea that emerged was that of a food hub that could serve as a distribution point for these businesses. However, this concept would require

a significant amount of space including a set of closed boxes installed to house vegetables ready for the weekly distribution. This would not be a practical option to include because it would jeopardise a large proportion of the potential bed space available for regular use.

The idea of a community kitchen has also been discussed. This type of project enables food producers to process food in a registered kitchen that conforms to all food hygiene standards. Examples researched included the Llanidloes Community Kitchen project and Detroit Kitchen Connect. There was also discussion about the possibility that when the new secondary school is built, there might be a need to a commercial type kitchen to cater for their food and for teaching. Although this could be a valuable facility to have in Machynlleth, it does not appear to be a sensible option for the Old Stables because it would also compete with the core option of providing sufficient accommodation and with the use of the kitchen to cater for courses and events.

13.5 Options appraisal

The table below summarises our analysis of the options discussed with the stakeholders and members of the public.

Option	Analysis	Outcome/Issues	Conclusion
Do nothing	<i>The building will continue to deteriorate. It will become very unsafe and will have to be demolished. Town Council may have to pay to stabilise it.</i>	Loss of historic building to the town Loss of a valuable resource for community Significant cost to Town Council Loss of potential income to the town	Not an option
Sell	<i>Building will be sold off to a developer.</i>	Building will be demolished. Loss of an historic attraction Loss of capital to Machynlleth Town. Town Council may only have 10% of sale income. Powys CC could retain 90%.	Not desirable
Accommodation – basic	<i>Option to provide more bed spaces. Mainly attract group bookings. Could have a seasonal impact on bookings – less low season Less attractive to middle age group (25-40) and to older people.</i>	Could succeed financially. Other places nearby provide this type of accommodation. Could undermine their income. Might not provide type of accommodation sought by perceived market e.g. event attendees, walkers and mountain bikers. Would be less attractive as an additional draw for visitors to the town.	Possible but not the best option?

		Might not bring in so much out-spend to other town businesses.	
Accommodation – higher end	<i>Less bed spaces but better facilities with more flexibility. Attractive to middle age group and to older people and families. Potential for conference and workshop/course accommodation.</i>	Should succeed financially. Should attract visitors with higher spend power which will benefit the town in general. Complementary to idea of running residential courses.	Significant potential. Reflects the character of the building. Best option.
Rent out office spaces	<i>Office space would leave less space for accommodation. The demand for office space isn't proven. Would depend on a regular and continuing demand.</i>	Less easy to market the overall facility. Might be in competition with the Plas. Other spaces in the town might be better suited. Need for a town-based survey of demand.	Not a good use of the space?
Community kitchen	<i>There is a sector that has an interest in this idea but there isn't firm evidence of extent of demand. Would be difficult to combine with use of kitchen space for residents and for occasional courses.</i>	This idea needs further research to verify demand and precisely how it would be used. The idea should be part of a town wide assessment of business needs and the use of redundant or under-used spaces.	Could be compatible. But not enough space?
Exchange/repair space	<i>There is a sector that has an interest in this idea but there isn't firm evidence of extent of demand. Repair workshops are run in the town and it isn't clear if there would be demand for a permanent space. Repair and share projects would both need quite extensive space and a paid person to manage and maintain.</i>	This idea needs further research to verify demand and precisely how it would be used. The idea should be part of a town wide assessment of business needs and the use of redundant or under-used spaces. There wouldn't be sufficient space at the Old Stables to have a permanent workshop as well as a viable accommodation offer.	Probably not appropriate.
Cultural activities	<i>Machynlleth already has a range of good and varied spaces for cultural events. The communal space would be a valuable additional venue for events such as the Comedy Festival and Gwyl Pethau Bychain. Opportunity to interpret and tell the story of the building and to link with that of other venues around the town.</i>	Important to avoid competition with existing spaces. Advantage of having an intimate space that could be used for limited activities, including those linked to courses at the Stables. Key venue in a town-wide interpretation project. Would form part of the	Compatible, desirable.

		tourism offer for Machynlleth.	
Workshops/courses	<i>There is evidence for a demand for day and residential courses held in attractive venues. The combination of accommodation and a flexible workshop space is an advantage. There are local people with skills who would welcome the opportunity to offer courses.</i>	CAT runs a full programme of courses, some of which are residential. It would be important to complement rather than to compete. Courses in low season periods would boost use of the bed spaces. Opportunity to increase economic advantage to the town and specific businesses.	Compatible, desirable.
Pony trekking centre	<i>An historic connection with horses could make this idea attractive. The Cambrian Mtns is an ideal and probably underused trekking area. There are no existing trekking businesses in the Machynlleth area</i>	Stabling & managing horses would not mix with accommodation/food because of health/hygiene issues. Horses need a lot of space and open 'turn-out' space – fields. An unsuitable space for a new business to start up. Uncertainty about the demand – takes time to build.	Incompatible, though attractive.
Family celebrations/weddings	<i>There is a demand for unusual heritage venues for family events/weddings. The Stables could offer a Victorian theme or simply an attractive space. The communal area plus the courtyard space would be well-suited to this type of event. Catering could be offered in conjunction with the Plas café or another caterer.</i>	Most other suitable venues are outside the town. The Stables would not be competing with other town centre venues. Appropriate for celebrations when accommodation for a largish group is required. Provides an opportunity for local catering business.	Compatible, desirable.

13.6 Risk analysis

There is no such thing as a risk-free enterprise, and it is inherent in this particular proposal. Risk is also an evolving matter, not static, and therefore needs to be regularly reviewed. It can be mitigated by anticipating its likelihood and its impact, and planning how to respond.

A risk register should be established and circulated on a regular basis, initially among the client and stakeholder group. There needs to be a person responsible for updating the risks and alerting colleagues, especially where likelihood and impact are high, so that a clear and agreed response can be adopted.

The table below is an analysis of the risks that we perceive. They are not all relevant at this time, but all of them need to be considered as the project evolves.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Response
Fail to achieve Heritage Lottery funding			Ensure application is high quality, well evidenced, open to critical analysis, and responds directly to questions.
Fail to achieve supporting funds			Ensure high quality, well evidenced applications; ensure that applications are well targeted towards funder concerns, policies and priorities. Seek bank loan if necessary.
Unable to recruit experienced board members			Raise project profile early on. Provide funds for training. Set out clear descriptions of duties and responsibilities. Maintain a list of potential members. Discuss widely.
Lack of community support			Raise project profile through social media; stress its value to the community. There is a high degree of support currently.
Fail to recruit appropriate manager			Advertise widely. Ensure that the job specification is clear and robust. Ensure clarity about the profile of the person required.
Fail to recruit support staff			Advertise widely. Ensure that the job specification is clear and robust. Ensure clarity about the profile of the person required.
Builders fail to complete			Ensure that builders have the means to manage cash flows, and that they are suitably qualified to carry out the work. Tendering process critical – manage with architects.
Delays in completion			Weather unpredictable. Ensure that there is a programme of works in place. Do not recruit managers or purchase equipment until the process is well advanced.
Economic downturn			Moderate risk. Ensure that prices are competitive, promote widely, work with partners to raise the profile of the area as a desirable venue. Adjust outgoings is necessary.
Disease outbreak prevents travel			Moderate risk over the timescale. Ensure that appropriate measures are in place to respond appropriately.
Accommodation numbers not achieved			Unlikely but possible given the previous two concerns. Analyse the causes. Promote and market. Adjust outgoings. Identify alternative options to mitigate financial impact. Move to full-time employment based on demand.
Running costs exceed expectations			Unlikely but possible. Outgoings based on annual 2% interest. Adjust outgoings by identifying where savings might be made.
Staff relationship issues			Unlikely but possible. Ensure that dispute processes are in place and that there is clarity in procedures. Ensure that equalities, H&S and other policies are in place and understood. Board member to act as critical friend to management team.
Criminal action – assault, robbery etc			Possible. Ensure that procedures are in place strictly adhered to. Have a system in place for alerting police and appropriate board member.

14. Financial issues³⁰

14.1 Introduction

We have based our figures on an analysis of outgoings from a number of establishments, mainly by interrogating Companies House and the Charity Commission annual returns. These figures should be treated with some caution, as they are often accounted for in different ways, and there is limited detail in such returns. It is therefore extremely difficult to derive costs in a precise way.

14.2 Projected expenditure

The accompanying cost and development plan sets out in more detail the likely costs of managing the Old Stables over a five-year period from start up.

We estimate that the overall annual outgoings will be approximately £97,000.00 in year 1, rising to approximately £100,000.00 in year 5, based on a 2% incremental rise in interest rate.

14.3 Projected income

On the basis of current evidence, we estimate that occupancy levels will be 30% in year 1, rising consistently over the following years to achieve optimal [55%] occupancy thereafter. Based on a 36-bed provision, an overall average charge of £22.00 per bed in 2024 and not increasing, we estimate the following income:

Year 1	£86,725.00	Year 4	£144,540.00
Year 2	£115,631.00	Year 5	£159,000.00
Year 3	£130,086.00		

We anticipate a small income from hirings, which will rise from £1,500.00 in year 1 to £3,000.00 in year 5.

We anticipate a shortfall of approximately £10,000.00 in year 1, assuming the figures are about right. This could be met by maintaining 75% of full-time in the first year. Alternatively, revenue support might be sought for the first three years, tapering from 50% to 25% to 10% in the third year. This would be £18,600.00 in year 1, £9,300.00 in year 2 and £3,720.00 in year 3.

14.4 Pre start-up

We refer to 'start-up' as the point at which customers begin to book accommodation and to stay. We anticipate that this will be in the Spring of 2024. There will be a number of activities and related costs prior to start-up. The cost and development plan explains this in detail. We calculate that the pre start up period will be from September 2020 until, say, March 2024. This period will include the transfer of assets or alternative legal arrangement; the building programme; recruitment on a part-time basis of the manager; purchase of IT; marketing campaign; purchase of white goods, bunks and bedding; and the setting up of appropriate management systems.

³⁰ Note that all costs are at 2020 prices.

The latest costs [21st April 2020] we have for the build programme itself are shown in appendix F. In total, it is estimated that the build costs will be **£1,677, 384.94** exclusive of VAT.

Items not included in the build programme come to a total of **£22,610.00**. These are also shown Appendix F.

There will be a requirement for 100% revenue funding for six months prior to start-up, based initially on a 75% full-time post rising to full-time if necessary, at this stage. This would cost **£27,900 – £34,875.00** pro rata.

Marketing will be critical in the lead up to the opening of the facility. We estimate that this would cost **£3,600.00**.

Consideration should also be given to the costs of acquiring full title of the Old Stables, which may require any new body to pay off the charge that Powys has on the property, should that be necessary. This is likely to be in the region of **£150,000.00**.