

PLAN FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS BOARD MEETING

26th Of September 2025 @ 2.30PM

MINUTES

Present:

Present	Apologies
Board Members	
Paul Gray (PG) –Chair	Sharon Richards (SR)
MP Gerald Jones (GJ)	Lis Mclean (LM)
MS Dawn Bowden (DB)	Geraint Williams (GW)
Councillor Brent Carter (BC)	Daniel Jones (DJ)
Councillor David Jones (DJ)	
Karen Courts (KC)	
Elizabeth Bedford (EB)	
Simon Evans (SE)	
Robert Davies (RD)	
Board Advisors	
Ellis Cooper (ES)	Steven Jones (SJ)
Craig Flynn (CF)	Zoe Thomas (ZT)
Laura Willcox (LW)	Paul Lewis (PL)
Michelle Conquer (MC) *In replacement of Steven Jones	Ceri Dinham (CD)
	Victoria Parry (VP)
Guest Presenter	
James Brown (JB)– the urbanists	

Items Discussed

Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

PG welcomed all attendees and introduced James Brown (The Urbanists), who was part attending the meeting to present work undertaken to date on the Regeneration Plan, to board.

A round of introductions was undertaken by all attendees

Apologies for absence were noted as above.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting: Inc Actions

The Board approved the minutes from the previous meeting held in August.

LW run through the Aug Board meeting actions. Actions that remain live are as follows:

Action from August Meeting	Status / Update	New Action Owner
Collect outstanding pen portraits from board members for website profiles	Outstanding. A final follow-up email is needed. Once all information is received, it will be sent for translation and then uploaded to the public webpage.	LW to send follow-up email.
Advertisement of the new Programme Manager role	Scheduled. The post is due to be advertised the week ending Friday, October 3rd.	N/A
Secure a suitably experienced board member for Health and Wellbeing coverage	In Progress. The Board will be updated on the progress of identifying and recruiting this key member at the next meeting.	N/A

Action: LW to circulate email reminder to board members on Pen portrait information

UK Government Strategic Updates

GJ provided an update on the newly announced UK Government funding and programme evolution – Pride in Place Programme. Key updates included:

- The amended programme was announced on Thursday, September 25th, 2025. The 'Pride in Places Programme' is the evolution of the former 'Plan for Neighbourhoods programme' (which was itself an evolution of the Long-Term Plan for Towns).
- This change marks a potential Phase 2 for the wider UK initiative, expanding from the original 75 towns (including 5 Welsh towns) to an additional 169 towns (including 9 more in Wales).

As objectives and timescales currently appear to be unchanged, the Board agreed that the Programme will continue to use the 'Plan for Neighbourhoods' (PfN) programme name in all current external communications for consistency.

LW highlighted concern over the programme name change. Specifically, that the new 'Pride in Place' name could have a negative impact on community awareness and recognition, as all consultation to date has been conducted under the PfN banner, potentially undermining the public's understanding of the work achieved so far.

GJ also provided an update on the new Pride in Place Impact fund. Outlining,

- The UK Government has announced a separate £1.5 million 'Pride in Place Impact Fund' to be allocated to each Local Authority.

GJ noted that details on this fund are extremely limited, including whether a bid submission is required, and who will be responsible for its management/delivery.

Action: GJ to update Board when more information from UK gov is available

The Urbanists Update

JB from the urbanists presented an update on the public consultation activities previously conducted under the Long-Term Plan for Towns (LTPFT) and the current phase under PfN.

Key Findings and Feedback: JB outlined

- **Consistency of Issues:** The general themes of community feedback remain consistent with issues raised in earlier consultation phases.
- **Wider Scope:** The wider remit of the current PfN programme, compared to the initial LTPFT, should allow for greater scope in intervention and implementation.
- **Alignment with Issues:** It was noted that the areas of improvement voiced by the community are aligned with the general issues that the LA/organisation has received more generally (DB & GJ agreed, based on communications they have received directly).

JB then ran through specific Community Concerns (Bus Services):

- It was highlighted that bus services are viewed as a significant problem, primarily due to services having not returned to their pre-COVID timetables.
- DB raised the current legislation progressing through the Senedd regarding transport and questioned the board on the community's awareness of this legislation and how the Programme can manage the difference between public perception versus reality regarding bus service issues. EC stressed the need to "get under the skin" of this issue.

Post-Meeting Reflection: Following the discussion, LW suggests that contact should be made with respondents who have provided email addresses to have a more in-depth conversation about the bus service issue.

Consultation Uptake and Data:

- RD asked about community uptake, and LW responded that attendance at events was varied, but engagement was achieved across a varied range of demographics.
- EB requested the current response rates (LW provided the figures).
- DB asked whether there was a demographic data gap. JB stated that once all consultation feedback is received, if a significant gap is identified, focussed engagement sessions could be undertaken to address it.

ACTION: JB to provide LW with information and proposed next steps for any demographic data gap

GJ asked for a copy of the presentational slides to be sent to all attendees

ACTION: LW to circulate the full slide deck on the consultation findings to the Board.

Community Boundary Awareness:

- LW outlined the critical need to ensure communities are aware that even if their specific area falls outside the Programme's defined boundary area, they can still benefit from related events and improvements. DB reinforced this message
 - GJ outlined the importance of actively seeking alternative funding streams to support positive community spirit and targeted improvements for areas outside the Programme's core boundary.
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Dashboard Report

LW ran through the dashboard report, highlighting key delivery milestones. Key takeaways include:

- The new Delivery Lead contact (Natalie Nolan) from the UK Government has been confirmed. Natalie will be the point of contact for Merthyr.
- Since September Board, the urbanists (in liaison with sub-consultant Per Consulting) have been formally appointed. They will support the public consultation, the creation of the Regeneration Plan, and the 4-Year Investment Plan, ensuring a community-led approach.
- Public consultation is live
- A risk and opportunities register has been drafted, and the top 3 risks were communicated to board

PG suggested that once the Regeneration Plan is in draft format, the Board should be divided into smaller groups to review key thematic areas.

ACTION: LW to request board members indicate which thematic review group they would prefer to sit on.

Decision Items

There were no formal decisions required of the Board at this meeting.

AOB

There were no other AOB

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for **Friday October 24th at 1:30pm.**

Summary of Actions

1. LW to circulate email reminder to board members on Pen portrait information
2. GJ to update Board when more information from UK gov is available on Pride in Place Impact Fund
3. JB to provide LW with information and proposed next steps for any demographic data gap
4. LW to circulate the full slide deck on the consultation findings to the Board.
5. LW to request board members indicate which thematic review group they would prefer to sit on

