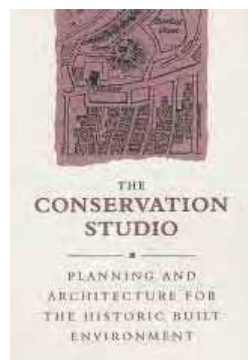




MERTHYR TYDFIL COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Built Heritage Strategy and Action Plan

August 2008



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I EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I.1 Summary of the Brief

Merthyr Tydfil retains a valuable but also a very vulnerable heritage of historic landscapes, historic towns and villages, and historic buildings or structures, many of them associated with the coal or iron-making industries of the past. The Council wishes to improve the way in which these 'heritage assets' are managed, in partnership with outside organisations such as Cadw and the Heads of the Valleys Programme, as well as the local community.

The principal objectives of the Brief for this Built Heritage Strategy are:

- To provide the Council with a costed and detailed Action Plan to protect and enhance its heritage assets, including listed and locally listed buildings, ancient monuments, and conservation areas
- To assess the Council's management of these heritage assets, and suggest areas for improvement
- To promote Merthyr Tydfil in terms of its tourism and cultural value

I.2 Summary of the Recommendations

(in no particular order – see Appendix I for full Action Plan)

Historic landscapes

- Produce a Management Plan for the Merthyr Tydfil and Gelli-gaer Historic Landscapes, including the role of tourism and funding requirements

Conservation areas

- Designate nine new conservation areas, including background documentation

Scheduled monuments

- Assist Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust in completing its Sites and Monuments Record

Listed buildings

- Assess applications for change very carefully; consider the use of statutory powers such as Repairs Notices; provide grants and detailed written guidance to owners of listed buildings



Thomas Town

Local Listed buildings

- Agree criteria; draw up new Local List; serve Article 4 Directions to protect Locally Listed family houses

Policy and Control

- Community Strategy should include references to the historic environment; include heritage policies in the forthcoming LDP; establish strong conservation policies; provide Supplementary Planning Guidance on heritage issues; ensure conservation office is in post and that enforcement action is taken when necessary; monitor change in conservation areas



Quaker's Yard

Economic issues

- Continue with Townscape Improvement Grants; make a Stage I THI application to the HLF for new Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre CA; make a Parks for People application to the HLF for Cyfarthfa Park; develop a strategy for Cyfarthfa Heritage Area; establish a fund for maintaining monuments in the Borough

Organisational issues

- Promote the local heritage; define responsibilities; establish guidelines for the Borough Council's own historic buildings; established a Heritage Forum to bring Council and community interests together; ensure that there are adequate specialised staff to deal with heritage and regeneration issues

Strategic issues

- Publish information on the heritage of the Borough including historic landscapes, conservation areas, and caring for historic buildings; appoint a Heritage Champion within the Council to provide leadership and focus; encourage the inclusion of heritage teaching within schools and lifelong learning programmes; celebrate Merthyr's heritage through interpretation, events, festivals and awards; make conservation an integral part of strategies for economic regeneration

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Brief

This Built Heritage Strategy was commissioned by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council in March 2008, and follows on from the recommendation in Policy 5.3 of the Local Plan adopted 8th May 1999 for the development of a Built Heritage Strategy to fulfil the following purposes:

- To develop strong policies to protect buildings and sites from damage and adverse effects
- To resist any further depletion in the stock of local heritage features
- To maintain up to date records
- To introduce more statutory controls via newly designated conservation areas
- To take a positive role in promoting a realistic re-use of vacant listed and historic properties
- To promote the heritage of Merthyr Tydfil on the international stage

The Brief, dated November 2007, states that the principal objective of the Built Heritage Strategy is the preparation of an Action Plan with a clear focus on project implementation and the involvement of outside organisations, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Cadw, and HERIAN.

Within the Strategy, there must also be the following:

- Using the existing Buildings at Risk survey, the preparation of advice on key buildings within the area which are in need of repair and re-use
- A review of the existing and proposed conservation areas (as recommended in the Local Plan 1999), including recommendations for further designations
- A review of the potential for grant aid
- A review of the Council's delivery and policies relating to the historic built environment, with recommendations for change

2.2 The format and status of this document

This document follows the broad framework of a heritage 'Conservation Plan', including a description of the Borough of Merthyr Tydfil and its location within South Wales; an assessment of Merthyr Tydfil's 'heritage assets', such as its historic buildings and ancient monuments; the identification of a range of problems and issues; the provision of a number of recommendations for change; and finally, based on the issues identified in the previous chapter, an Action Plan, which the Council will be able to use to improve its management of the heritage assets, encourage the involvement of outside organisations (including grant aid and tourism) and most importantly, engage the local community.

This document was considered by the **(insert name of relevant Committee)** on the **(insert relevant date)** as approved as a Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) document. It will be used by the Council to guide future actions relating to the historic built environment in the Borough.

2.3 Stakeholders and public consultation

This document was developed between March 2008 and June 2008 by The Conservation Studio under the guidance of a Steering Group established by the Council at the beginning of the contract. This Steering Group consisted of representatives from:

- Council departments, including Regeneration, Planning Policy, and Engineers
- The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)
- The Heads of the Valleys Programme
- HERIAN
- Cadw
- The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)
- The local community, including the Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust

An initial Stakeholder Consultation was held by letter with members of the Steering Group, inviting comments relating to the brief, and these early contributions were fed into the final document. The consultants and representatives from Cadw also held joint site visits

to assess some of the proposed conservation areas, in the light of the recent work on Historic Landscape Characterisation in the Merthyr Tydfil area.

Whilst researching this document, the consultants contacted the following local organisations or people:

- The Merthyr Tydfil Museum and Heritage Group (Huw Williams and Tony Moreton)
- Cadw
- The Tourist Information Office
- Communities First
- Cyfarthfa Castle and Park staff
- Hyder Consulting (David Jones)
- Glamorgan - Gwent Archaeological Trust Ltd (GGAT)

The consultants also interviewed the following Council staff:

- Gavin Lewis – Physical Regeneration Manager
- Rhian Davies – Town Centre Manager Merthyr Tydfil
- Lindsey Jenkins – Regeneration
- Mark Taylor – Head of Estates
- Norman Davies – Head of Planning
- Chris Edwards – Head of Planning Policy
- Paul Prygodzicz – Enforcement Officer
- Alison Brown – Conservation and Design Officer
- Sian Williams – Tourism

Before this document was finalised, the opinions of the Steering Group were sought on the first draft and amendments were made as required.

2.4 National and governmental initiatives

Any proposals to regenerate the Merthyr Tydfil area, or to improve the interpretation of its industrial heritage, must be seen in the light of a range of other initiatives. At the local level, these include strategies for regeneration and tourism, and work that is already being undertaken (See 2.5 below).

First, however, these actions have to be seen within the wider framework of the work being undertaken by the Welsh Assembly Government to regenerate the southern valleys of Wales, which have been adversely affected by the incremental loss of local industries such as coal mining and steel making. This involves European Union funding, the Heads of the Valleys Programme and HERIAN, a government-funded initiative to improve heritage interpretation and accessibility throughout South Wales.

World Heritage Site

The World Heritage Convention, administered through UNESCO, is responsible for the identification and conservation of sites throughout the world of outstanding cultural or natural value. Currently, there are 851 such sites worldwide with 27 in the UK. The UK also has a reserve list of 17 potential World Heritage Sites. The member countries of the World Heritage Convention are only allowed to put forward one nomination each year.

A comprehensive mix of sites within Merthyr Tydfil was nominated for World Heritage Site status by the local Heritage Trust and the County and Borough Councils in 1993. The application was not accepted, although an application for Blaenavon, to the east of Merthyr Tydfil, was accepted and has since been inscribed.

While re-submission of the case for Merthyr Tydfil is a stated ambition in the current local plan, it is unlikely that this will happen in view of the inscription of Blaenavon. Instead, the Borough Council might exploit its links with Blaenavon and the story of iron in South Wales particularly through its own Local Plan designation based on Cyfarthfa Castle, Cyfarthfa Park and the former Cyfarthfa Ironworks.

Heads of the Valleys Programme

The Heads of the Valleys (HOV) Programme was established by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2006 and has a budget of £140 million to be spent over the 15 year lifetime of the project. All of the Merthyr County Borough is within the HOV Programme area. The Programme works in partnership with both public and private investors and it is hoped that the Programme will lever a further £360 million at least from private funds and other sources.

Funding from the European Union through the Convergence Programme took effect last year (2007) and will be administered by the Welsh European Funding Office. Much of the Convergence Programme in South Wales will be delivered in the HOV area, although any schemes in Merthyr Tydfil will need to compete with other proposals such as the Valleys Park.

The aims of the Programme are to build:

- An attractive and well-used natural, historic and built environment
- A vibrant economic landscape offering new opportunities
- A well educated, skilled and healthier population
- An appealing and coherent tourism and leisure experience
- Public confidence in a shared bright future

HOV has spent over £30m in the last two years of which £5m per year has been allocated to each of the theme years:

- Major environmental (landscape-scale) projects (2006/7)
- The renewal of town centres (2007/8)
- The development of the tourism and leisure offer (2008/9)

Merthyr Tydfil has received £3m of this for improving the riverside environment through the town centre, improvements to the High Street, and for projects at Cyfarthfa Castle and Gardens. These funds have included assistance with the restoration and re-use of the former Town Hall and County Court in the High Street.



Cyfarthfa ironworks

In future, HOV spending will be prioritised through Holistic Area Regeneration Plans (HARPs). If 'Heritage' is made a priority in the Merthyr HARP, further funding could be available for projects identified in the Built Heritage Strategy. HOV has also supported the development of a THI in Rhondda Cynon Taf and would consider supporting other joint projects with the HLF.

HERIAN

HERIAN – Heritage inAction – is a unique partnership in South Wales of public, voluntary and community groups who are working together to enable local people and visitors alike to discover and enjoy the rich legacy of the area's industrial past. HERIAN is based at the Ynysfach Engine House in Merthyr Tydfil, which has been restored and converted into an exemplary resource centre for the heritage of South Wales, providing exhibitions and training facilities.

HERIAN was set up following the publication of a report 'An Interpretative Plan for the South Wales Industrial Heritage Initiative' by PLB Projects in March 2003. This built on the recommendations made in the 'Industrial Heritage Action Plan for South Wales' by L&R Management Consultants, which recognised the role industrial heritage could play as part of the economic and social regeneration of the South Wales area. HERIAN works with projects of all sizes – from larger sites, such as the World Heritage Site at Blaenavon and the Maritime Museum in Swansea, through to smaller community concerns, with a particular interest in the peoples stories.

The types of projects HERIAN are involved with are very varied but include:

- Improving public access to places where history was made and telling the stories of these sites in a more interesting way, perhaps through performances and other activities (an example is a current project to explain the significance of the Chartist Movement in South Wales, and the development of ways to commemorate the Chartism story and to encourage people to explore the contribution that our forefathers made to the lives that we now live)



Riverside improvements, Merthyr Tydfil



Town Hall, Merthyr Tydfil

- The creation of a wide network of interactive information points, including the publication of a map showing the most important historical sites in industrial South Wales
- Training programmes such as a one-day course (Welcome to our Heritage) where delegates are helped to welcome visitors from near and far and to show off their heritage assets in the best way
- The “This is our Heritage” programme works with communities to help them develop interpretation schemes for their local stories – and to seek funding. Projects implemented have included walk routes with sculptures and interpretation, memorial installations, displays within existing structures, and walk routes
- An overarching aim is to see general improvement in the interpretation of the peoples stories of South Wales – whether that is in print, art, performance, etc – and to have a community that is proud of its past

Communities First

The Communities First Programme was established by the Welsh Assembly Government to tackle deprivation in Wales through a community-led regeneration programme. This aims to support economic regeneration through a variety of local, community-based projects.

There are 22 Communities First areas in Wales. Merthyr has ten separate Communities First areas, each with its own co-ordinator and budget. The emphasis is on the promotion of social justice, a diverse culture, equality of opportunity, and the promotion of local communities. Heritage issues will form part of some of the schemes, such as those which are concerned with the care of village centres, community buildings (which may be historic) and local churches and chapels. Communities First for the Merthyr Tydfil area is based at the Voluntary Action Centre, 89-90 High Street, Merthyr Tydfil, with various out-reach offices in different areas. Unsurprisingly, the Communities First programme works very closely with Borough Council departments covering the Arts, Culture and Heritage.

Examples of proposed and existing Community First Projects in the Merthyr Tydfil area include:

Tourism-related initiatives:

- Improved signposting to various village halls, the Blue Pool, Morlais Castle and the Reservoir
- Improved signage from the Heads of the Valleys Road to various heritage sites and trails such as the Taff Trail
- Provision of car parking at heritage sites
- Development of heritage information at key sites, but also at village or town centres, explaining the history and development of each area
- The provision of heritage information at key community outlets
- Improving maintenance and upgrading historical sites to encourage tourism
- Improved marketing of the heritage of the area within and outside the Borough

Pontmorlais:

- The Temple Spiritualist Church in Pontmorlais is in need of repairs and improvements

Bedlinog:

- Possible enhancements to the central square, possibly funded by a Townscape Heritage Initiative (HLF) grant scheme
- The Baptist Chapel in the centre of the conservation area is still in use but in need of major renovation work. Communities First are in the process of setting up a formal committee with trustees for the chapel in order to look for funding

Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil (VAMT)

VAMT is a charity based in the High Street, Merthyr Tydfil. VAMT acts as the management co-ordinator for the various out-reach offices of the Communities First initiative, including liaison between WAG and the various Communities First Development Officers.

In Merthyr, VAMT offers a resource to the community and voluntary sector; a place to meet and a focus for activity. Past and present schemes include:



Baptist Chapel, Bedlinog



War Memorial, Pontmorlais

- Obtaining a £40,000 grant towards the cost of restoring the War Memorial in Pontmorlais, provided under the Heads of the Valleys Programme
- Working on improvements to the Trevethick Trail
- Organising a clean-up of the Morlais Brook
- Seeking a viable scheme, to be assisted through grant aid, to restore and convert St Margaret's Church in Lower Thomas Street, Merthyr Tydfil, into a Community Centre

2.5 Initiatives by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Over the last ten years, the Council has commissioned a number of reports aimed at regenerating the Borough of Merthyr Tydfil, the 'heritage' of the area playing a key role in the various proposals which have been put forward and have already in part been implemented. The most significant of these reports are:

The Big Heart of Merthyr Tydfil – A Town Centre Strategy Framework and Action Plan – URBED and King Sturge – 2002

This detailed report set out the following five main strategic issues:

- The need to diversify the economic base
- The need to broaden the population
- The need to extend the retail offer
- The need to make the most of the town's inheritance, including re-using empty sites or buildings, and upgrading the quality of its streets
- Securing sustainable regeneration, including minimising car use

Since this report, the Council has commissioned further work from an architectural practice (Austin Smith Lord) and landscape architects (Camlin Lonsdale) to provide layouts and details for the public realm in Merthyr Tydfil town centre. The upper High Street from the former Town Hall to Pontmorlais has been repaved using York stone, and the lower High Street is currently being repaved including the creation of a new town square adjacent to St Tydfil's Church. The introduction of high quality street lighting, street name plates, banners, railings, bollards and other features are intended to provide a cohesive, well designed streetscape in the town centre and a strong sense of local identity.

Town Centre Partnership

Following the publication of 'The Big Heart of Merthyr Tydfil' in October 2002, the Council established the Town Centre Partnership and produced a three year Business Plan. This built on a previous Action Plan which had implemented the Town Centre Objective 1 Regeneration Programme, the launch of a Fairtrade Towns Initiative, and a range of other marketing and publicity events. The Action Plan had also launched two further initiatives, the River Corridors Strategy and the Town Centre Approaches Strategy. In part these have been implemented, for instance the improvements to the river frontage by Merthyr Tydfil College.

The principal recommendations of the Business Plan were:

- Make physical improvements to the town centre, such as the reuse of key buildings
- Undertake improvements to public transport
- Make Merthyr a more attractive place in which to live, or to visit
- Improve Merthyr riverside
- Provide better marketing and promotion

A Town Centre Management Team was established in 2003, with a Town Centre Manager. This was changed a year later when the Partnership Steering Group, made up of 12 individuals from the public, private and voluntary/community sectors, was set up to guide the Town Centre Manager.

Taff Bargoed Regeneration Strategy and Implementation Plan

This report was prepared by Peter Williams Consultants in November 2006. The Strategy covers the Taff Bargoed Valley from Bedlinog in the north to Treharris in the south, including the communities of Edwardsville, Quaker's Yard and Trelewis. The report was funded by contributions from the Heads of the Valleys Programme and the Welsh Assembly Government.

The objective of the report was to provide an Action Plan to bring about the regeneration of the area through a number of separate initiatives, including those which will stimulate more tourism. These are



Improvements to the town centre are taking place (May 2008)



New street names in Merthyr Tydfil (May 2008)

specifically designed to build on the success of the Welsh International Climbing Centre and the Taf Bargoed Country Park. The report also includes a number of proposed environmental improvements and recommendations for an HLF grant scheme (Townscape Heritage Initiative) in the Cwmfelin Conservation Area in Bedlinog. Other potential areas for THI grant aid are Treharris, Pontmorlais and Dowlais.

Buildings at Risk Survey

This was prepared by the Handley Partnership in 2006 when all of the Borough's 203 listed buildings were surveyed and a report prepared using the English Heritage standard survey sheet. The survey identified 20 structures or buildings which were seriously 'At Risk' due to neglect, vacancy or poor maintenance (Risk grades 1 to 3). No use has since been made of this buildings-at-risk register to develop a strategy for repair and re-use. It was, however, used by The Conservation Studio when preparing the analysis of potential grant-aid in section 5 of this report.

Draft Heritage Strategy October 2004

This was prepared by the then Conservation and Design Officer, Alison Brown, although a detailed Action Plan was never completed due to the pressure of other commitments. It considers a wide range of issues including economic and social deprivation, the need to improve the 'tourism offer', and the role of heritage in strengthening communities and providing an impetus to regeneration. The document provides a very useful summary of the various Council departments and how they relate to each other, and the role of local amenity groups. The document also includes an analysis of various heritage schemes and describes some of the key historic buildings or structures 'at risk'.

Regeneration Strategy

The draft strategy provides a useful 'umbrella' for a wide range of connected strategies and actions aimed at:

- Raising prosperity
- Tackling economic inactivity
- Revitalising communities
- Creating a better place to live
- Marketing Merthyr

While the strategy recognises the value of the historic environment, it has yet to be promoted as a driver for regeneration providing the distinctiveness that will help the Borough to compete with other aspiring centres in a post-industrial age.

Tourism Strategy

For an area associated with heavy industry, tourism is a relatively recent concept. It is not surprising, therefore, that the draft strategy concentrates conservatively on established assets such as the landscape, a handful of heritage sites and shopping opportunities.

A future development of the strategy will be to maximise the huge potential for presenting the evidence of a significant industrial past in an exciting manner. For this, it will be necessary to challenge the appearance and 'offer' of the town centre as the essential focus of the area. However, the key to this is first to promote respect for the town within the community.

2.6 Rural Development Plan

The Rural Development Plan (RDP) is a European funded programme which seeks to:

- Strengthen the farming and forestry industries in Wales;
- Safeguard and enhance the environment and rural heritage of Wales;
- Foster competition and sustainable business and thriving rural communities.

Within Merthyr Tydfil, a Rural Action Merthyr partnership (RAM) has been established and has submitted a Merthyr Local Rural Development Strategy to the WAG, which has been approved. A subsequent Business Plan has identified three key themes within the Strategy:

- Local Food and Craft Services
- Tourism and the Outdoors
- Welsh Culture and Heritage

The Merthyr Tydfil Local Action Group, which reports to RAM, will be responsible for assessing individual projects as they come forward for submission to the WAG using criteria set out by the Assembly.

All projects must be completed by December 2010, and should identify at least 20% match funding.

Not all of the Borough is affected, the following electoral divisions having already been identified as 'rural':

- Aberfan and Merthyr Vale
- Bedlinog
- Cyfarthfa
- Vaynor

It is possible therefore that schemes which seek to improve the built heritage in the above areas may be eligible for grant-aid under the above initiative.

2.7 Local heritage groups

Merthyr Tydfil Museum and Heritage Group

The purpose of this group is to bring together people with a common interest in 'heritage' matters through organised events such as lectures, and to raise money for Cyfarthfa Castle and Museum.

Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust Ltd

The Trust was set up in 1979 'to secure the preservation and improvement of buildings, features and objects of historical interest in and around Merthyr Tydfil and also to improve, conserve, and protect the historic and built environment'. With the aid of grants the Trust has successfully restored several listed buildings, including Dowlais Stables, Ynysfach Engine House, and Joseph Parry's cottage. The Engine house is now leased in part by the Council to HERIAN as their headquarters while the basement, ground and first floors are leased by the Trust for use as a community facility.

The Trust is a member of the Association of Preservation Trusts and remains a partner with the Council in terms of applications for grant aid. The Trust has also erected a large number of heritage plaques throughout the Borough and more are proposed

The Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust has produced ten leaflets informing the public about a range of Heritage Trails throughout the Borough. The leaflets are:

1. Merthyr Tydfil – a leaflet mainly about the town centre
2. Crawshay's Trail – a leaflet about Cyfarthfa Castle, Park and Ironworks
3. St Gwynno's Trail, Vaynor – a walk from Vaynor Church to the Taf Fechan Nature Reserve
4. The Viaduct Trail – a leaflet about the viaduct at Cefn Coed Y Cymmer
5. Morlais Trail – a walk around the ruins of Morlais Castle and the former quarry
6. Guest Trail, Dowlais – a walk around the conservation area of Dowlais
7. Quaker's Trail – a leaflet about Quaker's Yard, Trelewis and Treharris
8. Gwilym Trail, Bedlinog – a walk from the Taf Bargoed Centre to Bedlinog
9. Trevithick's Trail – from Merthyr Tydfil to Abercynon, following the line of the river Taff
10. The Thomas Trail – a leaflet about Abercanaid and the Gethin Woodland Park

In addition, the Trust has produced the 'Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trails – four trails in Merthyr Tydfil'.

Merthyr Tydfil Library Service

The Library has published leaflets on:

- Edwardsville – a leaflet about the town and its development
- Merthyr Vale – a leaflet about the mine
- Trelewis – a leaflet about the mining village
- Quaker's Yard – a leaflet about the village
- Treharris – a leaflet about the village
- Deep Navigation Colliery – a leaflet about the mine, located close to the Bargoed river

Groundwork Merthyr and Rhondda

Groundwork have published a 'Walk around Vaynor' and have worked on the Taff Trail and the Trevithick Trail.



Dowlais Stables



Ynysfach Engine House

The Merthyr Tydfil Historical Society

The aim of this group, which was set up in 1972, is to promote knowledge about the history of Merthyr Tydfil through lectures, publications, and research. The Society is also committed to preserving redundant historic buildings and is active in encouraging their appropriate reuse. The Society regularly publishes the 'Merthyr Historian' containing articles of interest about Merthyr.

The Merthyr Tydfil Family History Society

This Society is a branch of the Glamorgan Family History Society and regularly assists the public in tracing their family history. The Society has received considerable grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund to record and publish Memorial Inscriptions.

Dic Penderyn Society

The purpose of this group is to promote knowledge and pride in the local heritage of Merthyr Tydfil and to annually commemorate the Merthyr Rising and the hanging of Dic Penderyn. Meetings and lectures are held at various venues.

This group is now taking on the mantle of telling the Merthyr Tydfil Chartism Story – expanding the awareness of Merthyr as an area that was involved in securing better rights for the whole population.

The Merthyr Tydfil and District Naturalist Society

This group aims to help preserve the environment around Merthyr Tydfil, including industrial remains, through education, trips and publications such as 'The Historic Taff Valleys'.

The Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter Day Saints

The Merthyr Tydfil Assembly is a national centre for family historians, and has a large library including an index of all births, marriages and deaths in England and Wales, which is available to the public free of charge.

2.8 Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT)

The Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (www.ggat.org.uk) was established in 1975 and is overseen by an elected Board of Trustees. It is one of several separate Archaeological Trusts which cover Wales. The Trust undertakes works for government and non-governmental bodies and private sector organisations. It holds the Historic Environment Record (the old Sites and Monuments Record) and provides development control advice throughout South Wales, funded by a partnership of the various Unitary Authorities and Cadw. The Trust also provides general advice through its Heritage Management Services to a variety of institutions and organisations including the Forestry Authority, CCW, Statutory Undertakers, the Environment Agency, and the Church in Wales. Through its Projects Team, the Trust undertakes site assessments, evaluations, surveys, watching briefs, building recording and excavations in South Wales. In addition, Projects staff carry out area-wide monument assessment and historic landscape characterisation, including, in association with Cadw, work on the historic landscapes in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil.

The regional HERs maintained by the various Welsh Archaeological Trusts (WAT) are part of the Welsh extended national database for Historical Environment Records including those of Cadw, the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments Wales, the National Museum and Galleries of Wales. Each of the WATs has created separate HER Charitable Trusts in which the regional record is deposited. A platform to give online access to the WAT HERs is currently being developed and it is hoped that by mid 2009 these will be accessible through the Historic Wales Portal. The HER was audited in 2006/7 as part of benchmarking work. At that point it contained 987 records pertaining to the Historic Environment interests within the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil. Analysis of the record showed that it included 170 buildings, 87 other structures, and 226 earthworks. Whilst helpful, the old SMR contained several hundred entries not yet included in the HER, and more recent Environmental Impact assessments will also need to be added.

3 THE COUNTY BOROUGH OF MERTHYR

3.1 Location

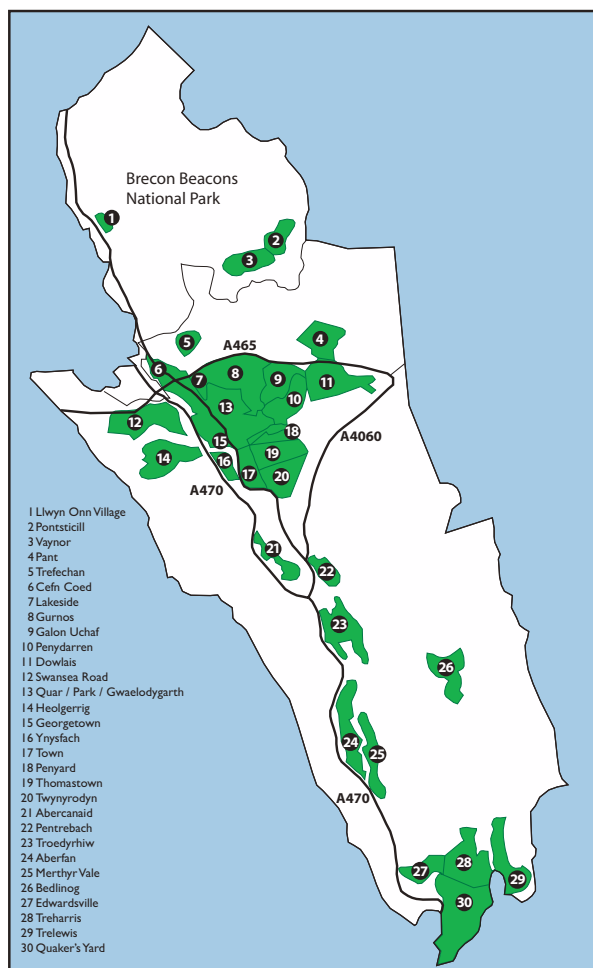
Merthyr Tydfil is located in South Wales in the area of the former County of Mid Glamorgan. It is bounded to the north by the County of Powys, to the east and south east by the County Borough of Caerphilly, and to the west and south west by Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough. Merthyr Tydfil County Borough comprises two river valleys – that of the River Taff and that of the smaller Bargoed Taff. These cover some 43 square miles (112 square kilometres), which stretch from the magnificent Brecon Beacons National Park in the north to the former coal mining heart of the region in the south.

The main Taff River Valley is long and narrow, running roughly 21 kilometres from north to south within the boundaries of the County Borough. Throughout most of its length the valley has steeply sloping sides with only a narrow valley floor. In the north the River Taff follows a sinuous course, which has been dammed to create a series of long water reservoirs, within a rural upland landscape dominated by a number of large forestry plantations. The population in this northern part of the valley is small, with only three small settlements at Llwyn Onn Village, Pontsticill and Vaynor.



Location of Merthyr Tydfil

The main focus of population in the County Borough lies further down the valley in and around the town of Merthyr Tydfil, approximately a third of the way down the valley from the northern boundary of the borough. The population of this area is estimated at approximately 40,000 persons or 71% of the total



Merthyr Tydfil County Borough

population of the County Borough. A number of distinct settlements surround the central commercial and civic core of Merthyr Tydfil, which include Pant, Dowlais and Penydarren to the north east, Gurnos to the north, Morgan Town, Cefn Coed y Cymmer, Quar/Park and Gwaelodygarth to the north west, Heolgerrig, GeorgeTown and Ynys Fach to the west and Penyard, Thomas Town and Twynyrodyn to the east and south east.

Smaller settlements form a ribbon of residential development interspersed with industrial parks running down the valley and surrounded on both sides by the steep, green valley slopes. The settlements are often paired, lying on opposite sides of the River Taff and including Abercanaid and Pentrebach, Treodyrhiw, and Aberfan and Merthyr Vale from north to south.

The narrow course of the A4060 provides a long road connection along the eastern side of the valley. It links many of the historic settlements, whilst the more modern A470 provides a faster road link, which runs along the western valley side above the settlements and forms a fast route between Cardiff in the south and Brecon to the north. The Heads of the Valleys Road (the A465) runs from east to west, just to the north of the main settlement area, and links Merthyr to Abergavenny and the A40, as well as the other valleys to the east and Neath, Swansea and the M4 to the west.

The Bargoed Taff valley is approximately nine kilometres long running up from its meeting with the Taff valley in the south of the County Borough to the southern edge of Merthyr Common (an upland plateau or saddle), just to the east of Merthyr and Thomas Town. The settlement of Bedlinog, an isolated industrial village in a rural setting, is located approximately half-way down the valley. The two settlements of Treharris and Trelewis lie approximately three kilometres further south, either side of the course of the Bargoed Taff. Trelewis lies in a valley floor location, sandwiched between the river and an industrial railway line, which is currently used to service the open cast coalmining at the head of the valley. Treharris lies on the hillside overlooking the valley.

The Bargoed Taff turns to run westwards for the last part of its course. Its meeting point with the River Taff is marked by the settlement of Quaker's Yard, a complex and sprawling settlement incorporating a number of historic settlement nuclei, as well as estates of later 20th century construction and modern housing, lying on the valley floor, sides and some ridges of high ground.

Approximately one fifth of the County Borough falls within the boundary of the Brecon Beacons National Park. The national park authority is the local planning authority for that part of the County Borough which also falls within the boundary of the National Park. In planning terms, therefore, heritage responsibilities for this area rest with the national park authority and are accordingly outside the remit of this Strategy.

The boundaries of the County Borough are largely those created in 1974 when the former County



Trelewis



River Taff at Quaker's Yard

Borough was expanded slightly to include Vaynor in the north and Bedlinog in the east. Merthyr Tydfil was constituted a County Borough in 1996, separating it from the former county of Mid Glamorgan.

3.2 Activity

The area continues to have a relatively high density of population, although this has been in decline in recent decades with a seven per cent fall in population from 59,890 to 55,980 recorded between 1991 and 2001. Recent redevelopment in the County Borough has been aimed at providing a greater mix of residential properties and employment opportunities to reduce the outward migration. The residential community is served by a number of schools and public services. Many of the former mining sites in the County Borough have been redeveloped to provide sports fields and other community facilities.

In recent years the district has seen a significant level of reinvestment, bringing new businesses to the town as well as considerable redevelopment of formerly derelict land for housing and business. There is a risk that, without discernment, such well-intentioned regeneration may detract from the heritage value of industrial landscapes associated with the historic iron industry.

The town of Merthyr Tydfil continues to act as a retail centre for the district, which has been supported by the construction of a supermarket store (Tesco) in the former railway yard, just to the east of the town centre. The town centre is notable for the high number of locally owned businesses and is not altogether dominated by national chains. Many of the other settlements also have small high streets supplying the local community. The Cyfarthfa Retail Park to the west of the town and near the A470 provides an alternative area of retail activity within its very large modern buildings.

Large scale manufacturing, including the Hoover factory, continues to provide employment in the central spine of the Taff Valley, although there is a growing trend for residents to commute to jobs outside the County Borough, particularly from the southern end of the borough where access is easiest

to Cardiff. The recent establishment of the Welsh Assembly Government's Regional Office, just outside Merthyr town centre, should reduce some of the need to commute through the provision of appropriate employment opportunities.

Despite the end of deep mining the area's extractive industry is undergoing a new phase of development through opencast mining at Ffos-y-fran.

4 HERITAGE ASSETS

4.1 Introduction

Merthyr's historical development has left a precious but fragile inheritance of historic landscapes, settlements, sites and buildings, which contribute to the unique character and identity of the County Borough and add to the quality of life of the people who both live and work within it. These heritage assets also have an economic value through their contribution to the standard of the built environment. They therefore represent a considerable financial investment, which should not be discarded lightly. Many of the assets have been recognised as being of particular historic, architectural or archaeological interest and, as such, have been designated under a number of provisions which give various measures of protection.

4.2 The historical development of Merthyr Tydfil

Until the mid 18th century Merthyr Tydfil was a quiet rural district, which may have benefited to a small extent from routes running from mid Wales through the valley to Cardiff. However, the geology of the area, which includes the South Wales coalfield and associated strata of iron stone and limestone, provided the ideal mixture for the industrial scale production of iron. This appears to have been exploited as early as the 16th century, when a small iron works is recorded in the vicinity, although early production used charcoal rather than coal or coke.

The first large scale iron working in the valley followed the foundation of the Dowlais Iron Works in 1759, which was shortly followed by the Plymouth Iron Works, Cyfarthfa Iron Works (both founded in the 1760s) and the Penydarren Iron works in the 1780s. Each iron works had quarries and mines for limestone, ironstone and coal to supply its needs, whilst many small independent workings also sprang up as entrepreneurs sought to exploit the new market for materials.

Before the end of the 18th century the Cyfarthfa Iron Works had grown to be the largest producer of iron in the world, although it was superseded by the Dowlais Iron Works in the 19th century. The demand for iron was fuelled by the need for armaments for the wars of the second half of the 18th and early 19th centuries.

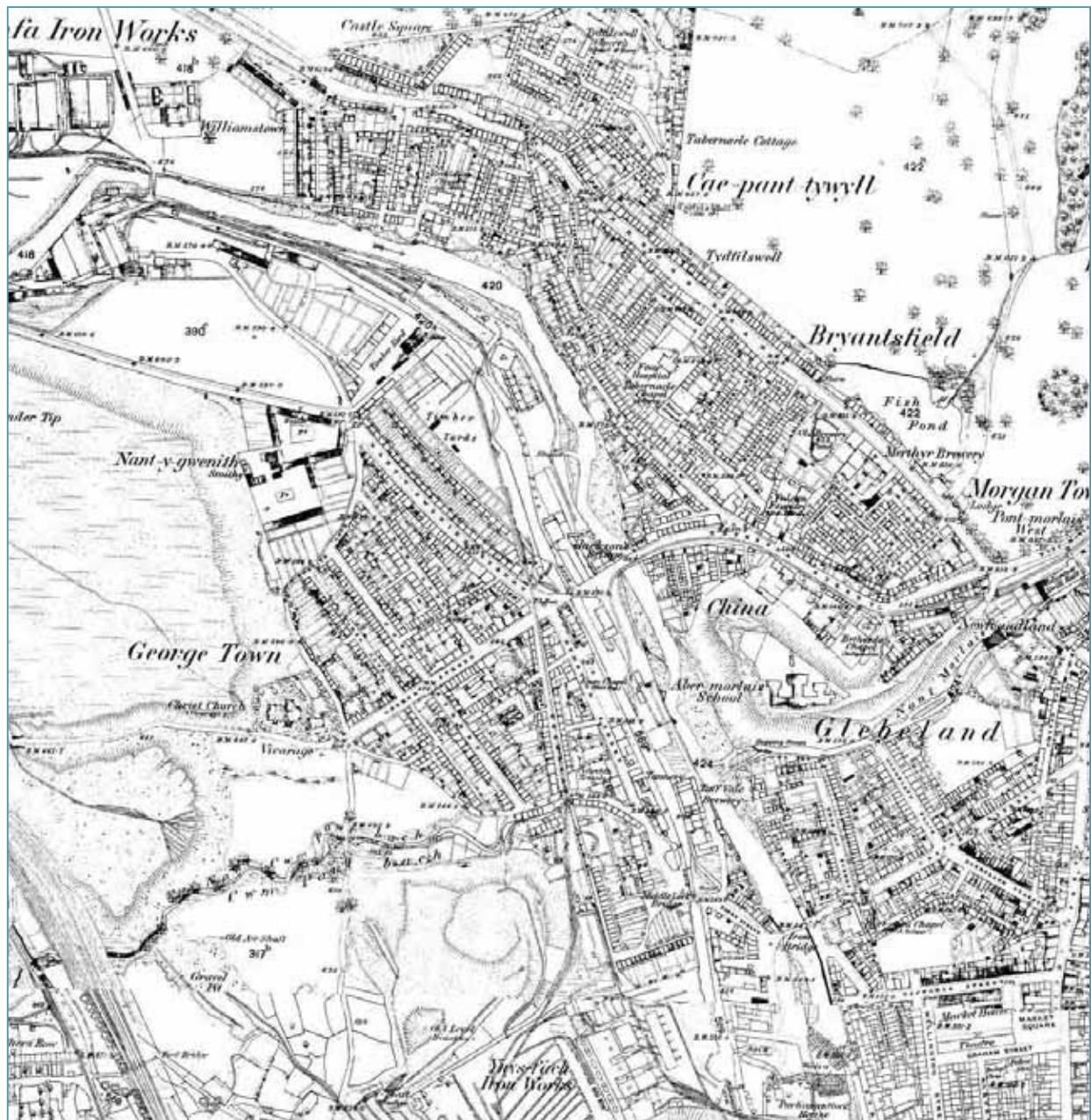


The remaining building at the former Dowlais Iron works is listed grade II



A short section of the former Glamorganshire Canal at Chapel Row, Merthyr Tydfil





Map showing the north-west section of Merthyr Tydfil including Cyfarthfa Ironworks (top left)

The railway age ensured the continued demand for iron into the mid 19th century, the Merthyr works supplying rails and sleepers for railways throughout the world including North America and the Trans-Siberian Railway in Russia.

The rapid growth of industry in the district required investment in the transport infrastructure, first in a new turnpike road, then the Glamorganshire Canal and, soon after, the world's first steam locomotive to haul a load on rails, built by Richard Trevithick and operated for the Penydarren Iron Works. Further railways followed to provide a complex network of routes owned by a multitude of interest by the late 19th century.

In addition to a ready supply of raw materials and fuel and access to suitable markets, Merthyr's industrial boom required a vast supply of human labour and, in consequence the district's population boomed. Between 1801 and 1851 the population of Merthyr grew from 7,705 to over 46,000 inhabitants, making it the largest town in Wales at that time, with more than four times the population of Cardiff. Merthyr's sphere of influence was international, drawing labourers from as far away as Spain and Italy. The provision of housing for these workers has had a lasting impact on the historic environment of the district.

The combination of raw and rapid industrialisation with a strong tradition of dissident nonconformity produced a radical political tradition that found expression in 1831 in an armed insurrection, in the 1840s in mass support for Chartism, in the election as MP in 1868 of Henry Richard the pacifist campaigner, and in 1900 the election of Kier Hardie the leader of the the independent Labour Party.

Although Merthyr's population continued to expand until the 1860s, reaching 51,949 in 1861, the iron industry had begun a steady decline by the late 1850s, partly as a result of the town's inland location and exacerbated by the expense of converting the manufacturing facilities to new steel production technology. The Penydarren Ironworks closed in 1859 and the Plymouth Ironworks in 1880. However, development of new coal mining technology allowed exploitation of the deep but highly productive coal seams in the southern part of the district. The coal was of especially high quality, named steam coal, and was used to power ocean-going ships.



Miners' cottages in Treharris



Edwardsville

Particularly large collieries were sunk and operated at Merthyr Vale, Treharris and Bedlinog.

These works encouraged the development of further new communities in the south and east of the district. Some of these were built as planned industrial settlements by mining companies, others as speculative developments by local land owners, whilst yet others grew up more organically. As a result, each community has a distinct character and identity. The ironworks also created a distinctive extractive landscape elements of which survive although much of this is under threat from redevelopment.

By 1911 the population of Merthyr had risen to a peak of 80,990. However, by the first decades of the 20th century the iron and steel industry was in chronic decline, temporarily propped up only by the First World War. The Cyfarthfa Iron Works closed permanently in 1919. The 1920s and '30s saw an exodus of over 27,000 people from Merthyr Tydfil. Indeed, there were threats to close Merthyr in the 1930's and to relocate industry to the Usk Valley due to the terrible work and social conditions in the area.

The Dowlais Ironworks continued producing steel until 1936, although the iron foundry and engineering works at the Ifor Works continued in production and new facilities were added after 1964 and was later nationalised as part of British Steel in 1973 finally closing in 1987.

In 1948 the American-owned Hoover Company built a large factory for making washing machines at Pentrebach, just south of Merthyr town. In 1966 the collapse of a heap of colliery waste onto the Pantglas Junior School, Aberfan, caused the deaths of 144 people of whom 116 were children mostly aged between seven and ten. This horrific event triggered the reclamation of the South Wales valleys as a whole. However, the following inquest and clear-up operation was dogged by controversy, including the requisitioning of donated monies for clearing the remaining spoil heaps. In 2007 the Welsh Assembly announced the donation of two million pounds to the Aberfan Disaster Memorial Fund in compensation for the requisitioned monies and to supplement an earlier repayment of £150,000 made by the Labour Government in 1997.



Merthyr Common lies within the Myrthyr Tydfil HLW



River Taff at Cyfarthfa Iron Works

As a result of the collapse of the national miners' strike of 1984-85, Merthyr Vale colliery closed in 1989 followed by Deep Navigation in 1991 and Taff Merthyr in 1992. All of the deep mines within the district have now ceased production and the colliery buildings have been removed, although there are some shaft markers and memorials to the memory of the miners killed.

4.3 Historic landscapes

The *Register of the Historic Landscapes in Wales* was published by Cadw in 1998 and lists the historic landscapes considered to be “the best examples of different types of historic landscape in Wales”. The Register is advisory and its purpose is to inform anyone involved with land management in Wales about the significance of the landscapes contained within it. Although non-statutory, it is nevertheless a material consideration in the planning process, and information on the Register should be taken into account by local planning authorities in preparing UDPs and in considering applications for developments which are of such a scale as to have a more than local impact on an area on the Register. Cadw have also produced, in 2007, *The Guide to Good Practice on Using the Register of Historic Landscapes in Wales in the Planning and Development Process*, which helps local authorities make maximum use of the Register.

The County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil contains two landscapes recorded on the Register. The Merthyr Tydfil HLW (Historic Landscape in Wales) is a landscape of *Outstanding Historic Interest*, while the Gelli-gaer Common HLW is of *Special Historic Interest*.

Following the publication of the Register in 1998, further work is being undertaken on particular areas of historic landscape in Wales by the various Welsh Archaeological Trusts as part of a process called Historic Landscape Characterisation. The Characterisation programme, which is sponsored by Cadw, provides much greater detail than the Register, and its primary purpose is to give land owners, their agents, and the statutory authorities detailed information on landscape conservation and management. Characterisation also provides useful background information which might be helpful in the preparation of grant bids such as Townscape Heritage Initiative schemes, currently proposed for Merthyr Tydfil and Treharris.



Bedlinog



Trelewis

A detailed Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) of the Merthyr Tydfil HLW has been prepared by Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT), which has identified 79 separate 'character areas', some of whose boundaries extend beyond the shaded area in the Register. Each area is described in terms of Historic Background and key Historic Landscape Characteristics. Some Conservation and Management priorities are also given (albeit in a summary fashion), and the entries are supported by a red line plan and photographs. The individual character area descriptions are preceded by a summary of historical processes, theme and backgrounds that allows the different elements in various character areas to be pulled together. Given that a large part of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough has been characterised between 1999 and 2003 to the agreed Welsh method, it would be relatively easy to continue the process and characterise the remaining part (estimated cost c£10,000 to £30,000).

The HLC describes the special interest of this landscape:

"... Merthyr still retains its industrial landscape character as the most significant Welsh town of the Industrial Revolution. The town and its environs remain a potent example of an internationally renowned industrial landscape of the 18th and 19th centuries and a permanent reminder of man's exploitation of the landscape" (GGAT 2007).

The designated area covers a large amount of the northern part of the County Borough, apart from the area inside the National Park, and includes many of the historic settlements in this area from Cefn-Coedy-Cymmer in the north west to Dowlais Top in the north east, and down to Abercanaid and Pentrebach in the south. It also includes large areas of the surrounding countryside, parts of which are described as of national, or even international, importance as a result of their relict 18th and 19th century industrial workings and transport features. In particular these areas include the land to the west and south of Gellideg, Heolgerrig, Ynysfach and Abercanaid, which is especially rich in landscape features resulting from mining for coal and iron stone, as well as the remains of industrial transport systems and small industrial settlements such as Winch Fawr and Upper Collier's Row.

GGAT have also prepared a characterisation of Gelli-gaer Common, which states:

"... this important South Wales historic landscape ... represents an increasingly rare survival of an area of high upland moor, rich in a diverse and thematic archaeological resource of many periods and types, showing a high degree of cultural interest and continuity" (GGAT 2008).

This area includes the eastern side of the Bargoed Taff Valley and the moorland above it, as well as the historic settlements and industrial sites of Bedlinog and Trelewis.

In addition to these areas, recognised for their importance, much of the remaining area of the County Borough provides landscape areas that have been heavily influenced by the area's historic development, firstly as an agricultural region, later for iron manufacturing and finally as an important area within the South Wales Coal Field. These include continuations of the historic transport routes, including Trevithick's Tram Road and the Glamorganshire Canal.

4.4 Historic Settlements

The several phases of rapid settlement growth, described in the summary of the County Borough's historic development (see above), created a pattern of settlements, each of which has a particular character relating to the date of its creation and the activities in which its occupants were employed.

Elements of the earliest development of the area are preserved within the small farmsteads which survive in many places and particularly on the high ground in the south of the County Borough, although many of the farmhouses and buildings were replaced in the 19th and 20th centuries. A small cluster of older buildings, including The Crown Public House and The Court, represent the early nucleus of development in Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre, whilst both Quaker's Yard and Cwmfelin (Bedlinog) retain the small cores of small rural communities that pre-dated the industrial revolution.

Some of the earliest industrial settlements have been lost as a result of later 20th century redevelopment, although remains of later 18th and early 19th century

planned and informal industrial settlements, associated with the growth of iron working, are located around Merthyr Tydfil town at Morgan Town, The Quarr/Tydfil's Well, Williamstown, Cefn-Coed-y-Cymmer, George Town, Upper Collier's Row, Abercanaid, Twynyrodyn, Pentrebach and Troedyrhiw.

Small areas of settlement associated with the early transport routes, including the Glamorganshire Canal and the Penydarren Tramroad are located at Abercanaid and Upper Abercanaid, George Town and along Tramroadside North, Thomas Town.

Much of the earliest settlement at Dowlais and Penydarren was removed as a result of later redevelopment, although isolated fragments survive. Many of these settlements are characterised by short terraces of two storey cottages with low rooflines and double fronted primary elevations, often using rock faced stonework although rendered in some cases. Many of these buildings are one room's depth only and they are often without rear yards, although many notably have long front yards, and are built to form 'L' shaped developments termed 'squares'.



Terraced housing in Pentrebach dating from c.1840



Rock faced late C19 terraced houses in Penydarren

Merthyr Tydfil town centre developed rapidly in the early 19th century and significant evidence of its earliest townscape survive, despite later developments. In the mid-19th century, Thomas Town was developed adjacent to the town centre as the first middle class housing area. Thomas Town is distinct within the County Borough for the widespread use of classical style motifs, reflecting fashions for architecture in the early 19th century.

Later developments of industrial housing associated with on-going iron working and the movement of the population out of the town centre during the mid and later 19th century and even into the early 20th century, are located at The Quar/Parc, Dowlais and Penydarren, including the early social housing at Urban Street and Council Street. However, the development of coal mining in the south of the valley resulted in the creation of a number of additional settlements focused on large collieries, including Aberfan, Merthyr Vale, Edwardsville, Treharris and Trelewis, as well as the expansion of the existing settlement of Cwmfelin to become the larger mining settlement of Bedlinog.

These settlements developed very rapidly after 1870 and are characterised by two storey terraces of single fronted artisan dwellings with high rooflines and small backyards. These were built in long terraces on rigid grid iron street plans either as planned developments by the mine owners or through 'building clubs'. Interspersed with the dwellings are many chapels and churches large and small, many of which are redundant or converted to new uses.

Of a contemporary date, but markedly different in character, is the middle class development to the north of Merthyr town centre including Penydarren Park and Gwaelydogarth, which developed on the former parkland of Penydarren House, home of the Homfray family, ironmaster of Penydarren. This area was redeveloped following the closure of the ironworks in the 1870s. The area includes terraced, semi-detached and detached housing, often with front gardens, providing some separation from the street. The buildings tend to have more architectural detailing and incorporate elements of the late Victorian Gothic Revival style.

The town centre also underwent major redevelopment in the late 19th century, resulting in the loss of many older buildings, either through their demolition and replacement, or through incorporation into new structures. The character of the High Street, with its many impressive late Victorian and Edwardian civic and mercantile buildings was formed at this time.

The area saw large-scale redevelopment in the post-war period including the construction of the Gurnos housing estate and large estates at Gellideg, Heolgerrig and among the settlements running down both valleys. Redevelopment of the south western part of the town centre for a mixture of commercial and residential use in the 1960s/70s resulted in loss of a large area of earlier development, and the creation of a very modern area of townscape.

4.5 The Industrial Heritage

In addition to its historic settlements, Merthyr Tydfil's historic environment incorporates many remains of its industrial past, most of which are now obsolete and, therefore under threat, but which provide an



*Community nature park, Dowlais
(former ammonia works in background)*



Former Dowlais Railway Station

important link with the origins of the settlements and the wider area. They are a finite and irreplaceable resource, which have both a social and economic value, although often under-appreciated. Many small remains of industrial sites and processes do survive in the County Borough but it is the large scale and good state of preservation of a number of industrial sites that sets the area apart and in which the people of Merthyr Tydfil should take particular pride.

The principal remaining industrial sites are:

Dowlais Iron Works

In the mid 19th century the Dowlais Iron Works was the largest in the world, employing over 9,000 people and operating eighteen blast furnaces to produce up to 50,000 tons of rails a year. The standing remains of the buildings include the recently restored company stables building and the red brick 'Blast Engine House', which is actually believed to be an ammonia factory of early 20th century construction. The setting of the engine house, which includes part of the former ironworks site and the site of the ironmaster's house, is now a landscaped community nature park. Parts of the former iron works now form the Dowlais Conservation Area.

To the north of the former stables, the site of the Lfor Ironworks, which was founded as a subsidiary of the Dowlais Ironworks, has been cleared of many of the industrial buildings abandoned in the 1980s, although a listed red-brick engine house and a single storey gatehouse have been preserved along with some areas of rails. The 12 hectare site has recently (June 2008) been the subject of a major planning application for new housing, along with the conversion of the remaining historic buildings. The Heartlands Project is being led by a partnership of the County Borough Council and the WAG and will provide around 450 new homes.

The goods shed of the Dowlais Railway Station, which occupies a prominent high point overlooking Dowlais, has also been preserved and is used as a community centre, whilst the site of the former station is a municipal open space.

Beyond the immediate environs of the ironworks complex, the landscapes of Ffos-y-fran and Merthyr

Common to the north, east and south of Dowlais, retain significant evidence of the extractive industries, transport systems and water management technology used to supply and service the ironworks. The Ffos-y-fran area is currently in the process of opencast mining, although parts of the historic water management system, which are protected as scheduled monuments, will be retained. As part of mitigation works for the Ffos-y-fran coal mine, the agents Miller Agent will be developing a 'Heritage Park' on the site to the north of Dowlais.

Cyfarthfa Iron Works

The site of the Cyfarthfa Iron Works has survived without significant redevelopment since its closure in 1919, although the site of the adjacent rolling mills is now covered by a modern business park. The bank of the blast furnaces (a scheduled monument) provides a highly evocative landmark, visible from Cyfarthfa Park to the north east, which is framed by the long wall of the incline running up to the furnace tops. A large area of level ground to the east of the furnaces has been found to contain significant areas of buried archaeological remains associated with the ironworks, although these have been contaminated with deposits including asbestos. The vast area above the furnaces and leading off to the north also has very high potential for the presence of industrial archaeological remains of national importance.

In addition to the iron works site itself, the Cyfarthfa area provides the rare survival of the wider social and industrial landscape associated with it, including areas displaying evidence of the extractive industries needed to provide raw materials, parts of the industrial transport systems, areas of workers housing and, in contrast, the opulent residence of the ironmaster (Cyfarthfa Castle) with its surrounding parkland.

This document contains a recommendation that Cyfarthfa Castle and Park, the site of the former iron works, and the land in between, including the line of the river Taff, are designated as the Cyfarthfa Conservation Area.

Ynysfach Iron Works

Standing remains of the Ynysfach Ironworks include the furnace bank located to the rear of Merthyr Tydfil College, and the adjacent blast engine house which

is owned by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and has recently been renovated by the Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust. The building is now used to provide a heritage centre for the local iron industry, conference space and offices for the Trust and HERIAN, although the funding of the project is currently under review.

The restoration of the blast engine house has shown how the imaginative re-use of the industrial heritage of the County Borough can be used to provide practical and worthwhile resources, as well as ensuring the long term preservation of these irreplaceable structures. By contrast, the Ynysfach blast furnace bank is currently inaccessible to the public, hidden behind the college buildings and does not serve any function. Without some provision for visitor interpretation and repair its preservation cannot be assured.

Trevithick Trail

The course of the Penydarren Tramroad, used by Richard Trevithick's pioneering locomotive, provides a unique industrial heritage feature as the first railway in the world to employ a steam powered locomotive to haul goods. The route of the former tramroad passes through the centre of Merthyr Tydfil town, and is marked by a memorial at Pontmorlais, as well as artwork in the new superstore (Tesco) car park that occupies the former railway yards.

From Merthyr Tydfil town the tramroad proceeds down the length of the valley passing through many of the historic settlements including Pentrebach, Troedyrhiw, and Merthyr Vale, before following the floor of the valley to Quaker's Yard from where it continues on to Abercynon. Part of this route, from Pentrebach to Troedyrhiw, is followed by the newly developed Trevithick Trail, forming a section of a Sustrans cycle route. A further part of the route in the south of the County Borough, running from Pont y Gwaith, through Quaker's Yard to the Borough's southern boundary, is followed by the Taff Trail, another long distance walking and cycling route.

The material remains of the tramroad include the Plymouth Works' Tunnel (or Trevithick's Tunnel), which survives under the former charging bank of the Plymouth Ironworks' furnaces. However, for much of its course the tramroad's course has been used for modern roads and, as such it is less possible to gain a



Cyfarthfa Iron Works

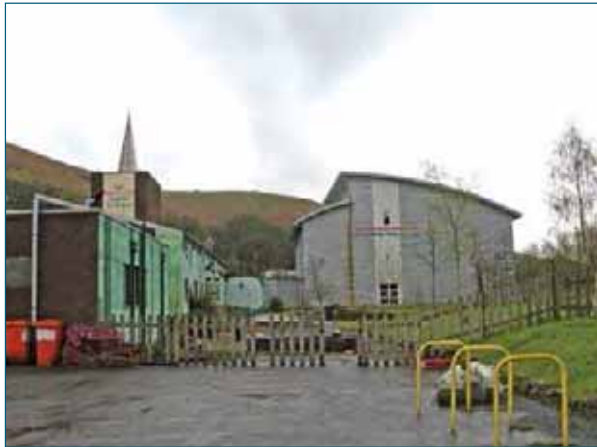


Taff Trail in Merthyr Tydfil

clear appreciation of its historic route. A branch of the tramroad ran from Penydarren, along the alignments of modern Pont Morlais and Bethesda Street, over Jackson's Bridge to the transhipment point of the Glamorganshire Canal in George Town.

Glamorganshire Canal

As a result of recent redevelopment in the vicinity of George Town, Ynysfach and Rhydycar, the course of the Glamorganshire Canal in this part of the County Borough has been built over and can no longer be followed except for short sections like the restored example in front of Chapel Row. However, to the south of Rhydycar the Taff Trail follows the line of the canal for approximately seven kilometres, until its course is covered over by the modern A470. This represents a significant stretch of the waterway, which played an important role in overcoming Merthyr's separation from the coastal ports.



Welsh National Climbing Centre



Former colliery engine house, Upper Abercanaid

Railways

In addition to the Penydarren Tramroad, the County Borough was formerly accessed by a number of railways, including Isambard Kingdom Brunel's Taff Vale Railway, remains of which include the GWR Hotel at Edwardsville, and the low railway viaducts which dominate approaches to Merthyr Tydfil along the A4054 from the south. The Cefn Coed Viaduct, which was built in 1860 to carry the Brecon and Merthyr Railway across the Taff valley, is the most dramatic symbol of the railway engineering in the Borough and now forms part of the Taff Trail. The disused railway tunnel running from Edwardsville to the Cynon Valley to the west also represents a significant feat of engineering as does the earlier broad gauge Abernant Tunnel.

Mining

As heritage features to be appreciated, the remains of former mines, including shafts and levels, as well as their attendant buildings, plant and waste tips, are problematic given the need to maintain a safe environment. All of the large colliery sites within the County Borough have now been extensively redeveloped, including the removal of buildings, the capping of shafts, and the landscaping of the grounds. Often this has been done to provide community resources, such as a sports fields, or the sites have been built over with new business parks. The Taff

Merthyr Colliery site, for example is now home to the Welsh National Climbing Centre, as well as a new wetland created to remediate contaminated mine water as part of the Bargoed Taff Community Park. Where small remains of mining related buildings and infrastructure do survive, which serve to illustrate the past industries and development of the district, they are therefore of even greater importance, despite the relatively recent end of the industry. The crumbling remains of the colliery engine house at Upper Abercanaid is a particular example, although there are many of these small features throughout the district.

4.6 Statutory and local designations

Many of these heritage resources described above have received official recognition through designation as statutorily protected scheduled monuments, listed buildings or as locally listed buildings, protected by policies in the Local Plan. In addition to these individual site designations, wider areas have been recognised as significant due to the presence of important features or the past use of an area for a particular purpose that has left remains of special interest.

Such areas in the County Borough have been already designated as statutorily protected 'Conservation Areas', which provide the Council with greater control than that afforded by the Registered Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales (HLWs). Currently there are only three conservation areas in the Borough, although this document contains recommendations for extensive further designations.

Scheduled Monuments

Monuments are scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. They are statutorily protected by law and works affecting them, including excavation, filling or flooding, as well as removing material from the site, is prohibited unless permission is first granted by the Welsh Assembly Government as represented by Cadw. Cadw's Field Monument Wardens regularly visit Scheduled Monuments to assess their condition and report on any potential threats. Because there are no County Council-based archaeologists in

Wales, the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) provides further archaeological support and technical advice to Cadw, as well as assessing all planning applications in Merthyr County Borough. GGAT is also a consultee to Cadw on all Scheduled Monument Consent applications.

All Scheduled Monuments are considered to be of national importance and, as such, the presumption with regard to proposals for developments affecting them is to ensure that they are preserved in-situ.

The County Borough contains a total of thirty Scheduled Monuments, although a number of these are duplicate entries for linear features that run through two or more parts of it. Twelve of these monuments are of Prehistoric origin, mostly located on the high ground, running along the ridge of the hills framing the valleys. These include six sites of round cairns and one site of round barrows, a dyke, and an earthwork at Garn Las on the western boundary of the Borough. Two Prehistoric earthwork enclosures are located within the part of the Borough inside the Brecon Beacons National Park. A section of Roman road on Gelli-gaer Common is the only scheduled Roman site in the Borough.

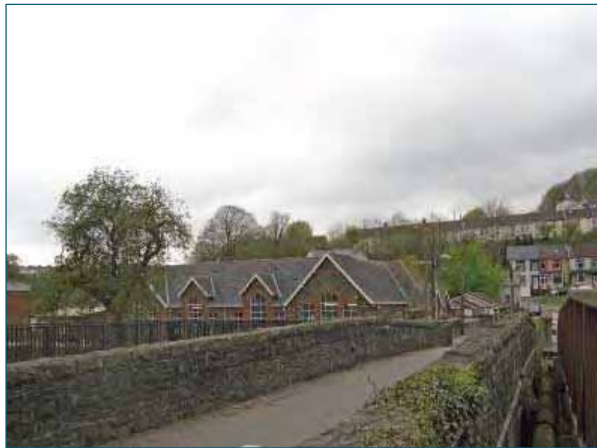
Scheduled Monuments of medieval date in the Borough include an inscribed stone, now kept within St John's Church at Cefn Coed, the site of medieval house platforms just to the north of Bedlinog, the remains of Morlais Castle, and a smaller castle or motte located just inside the National Park at Vaynor.

In accordance with the Borough's importance as an historic industrial centre, a large number of Scheduled Monuments relate to significant industrial sites. Principal among these are the two ironworks sites at Cyfarthfa and Ynysfach, including the blast furnaces and surviving subsidiary buildings and structures, as well as the abandoned mining village at Ffos-y-fran with the nearby ponds and watercourses running across Merthyr Common.

Two iron bridges are also included as Scheduled Monuments, including the canal bridge from Rhydy-car which has been re-sited at Chapel Row, and a second which is awaiting re-erection (it is thought that little



Cyfarthfa Ironworks



Scheduled Bridge at Quaker's Yard

remains of this latter example). A section of the course of the Penydarren Tramroad, running from Mount Pleasant to Quaker's Yard, is recorded as a Scheduled Monument, including bridges at Quaker's Yard and Edwardsville. Sections of three other Tramroads at Heolgerrig, Gurnos Quarry and Pont y Cafnau (where a Tramroad bridge survives) have been designated as Scheduled Monuments. A short section of the Cyfarthfa Canal Level just to the west of Rhydycar is also scheduled. Leats, providing water for the canals and ironworks, including one at Tai Mawr and a second at Gurnos, have also been designated. The Local Plan also states that an early iron furnace at Blaencanaid was formerly scheduled, but has since been de-scheduled. An air shaft at Cwmdru, the haystack boiler at Abercanaid and a group of iron ore scours at Abercanaid, represent further scheduled monuments which are associated with extractive industries.

Given the importance of their development it would be desirable to consider other elements of the Penydarren Tramroad (particularly the Plymouth/Pentrbach Works Tunnel), and the Glamorganshire Canal from Rhydycar to Edwardsville, for statutory scheduling as ancient monuments.

Overall, there are a large number of known sites and monuments in the County Borough and it is important to note that there are policies to safeguard these in the Merthyr Tydfil Local Plan. As previously noted, the Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust is in the process of compiling a complete list of historic sites and buildings (not necessarily either Scheduled or Listed) to create a local Historic Environment Record (HER) for Merthyr Tydfil.

Listed Buildings

Listed buildings are protected under the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* to preserve their special historic and architectural interest. It is an offence to undertake works of demolition or alteration to a listed building, including subsidiary structures within the building's curtilage, which would affect its special character or appearance without first gaining consent.

Listed Building Consent is required from the local authority for all private applications but, if the authority is minded to grant consent, all applications (apart from those affecting the interior of grade II buildings) have to be notified to the Assembly Government so that it can consider whether the issues raised by the application warrant it being 'called in' for determination by the Assembly Government rather than the local authority. Local authority applications for listed building consent have to be determined by the Assembly Government.

The County Borough contains approximately 160 listed building entries, of which one is listed grade I, thirteen are listed Grade II*, and the remaining are all listed grade II. Many of the listed building entries comprise more than one property, including several terraces of houses and, as such, the number of listed properties is somewhat higher at around 200.

It is of great concern that the Borough formerly contained far more listed buildings, but the Local Plan confirms that in the period up to 2000 a large number (138) of the listed buildings had been demolished. The Local Plan also made provision for the de-listing of a further 28 listed buildings, including three rows of terraced houses in Abercanaid, and several buildings that had previously been demolished, such as Dowlais House.

Cyfarthfa Castle is listed grade I and, as such, is considered the most important historic building in the Borough. In addition to the main castle (which was built as a private house in the 19th century), a number of other structures are also listed grade II, including the fountain in front of the castle, the gate piers and railings at the main entrance to its grounds, and the park walls flanking the railings.

A number of other large houses, belonging to works owners and prosperous merchants, have been designated as grade II listed buildings. These include Pentrebach House (plus an associated garden wall), Gwaelodygarth House, Upper Abercanaid House with its garden walls and gate piers, and Llywn yr Eos House in Abercanaid. The Court House on Court Street stands out from this group of larger houses because of its greater age. It is known to be at least of 16th century origin and possibly even including



Cyfarthfa Castle east elevation



The Court House



Former YMCA Building, Pontmorlais



Barclays Bank, High Street

remains of an earlier 12th century structure. This building might be considered worthy of a higher level of listing than its current Grade II listing, although a thorough archaeological evaluation would be necessary. The Crown Inn, High Street, Merthyr Tydfil, stands out as the only listed public house in the Borough.

Forty-one of the Borough's listed buildings are residential buildings, which are all listed grade II. These include the terraced rows in Nightingale Street, Abercanaid, which particularly illustrate the double-fronted single room depth cottages that typify the late 18th and early 19th century developments of workers' housing built in the area. Whilst many of these properties reflect the industrial development of the County Borough, only 18 buildings have been listed which relate to agricultural activity, including farmhouses at Aberfan Fawr, Hafod Tanglwys Isaf, Pandy Farm, Ffrwd Uchaf and Grawen Farm, as well as a number of barns, stable blocks and other subsidiary buildings.

Grade II* listed religious and former religious buildings include the ruined Chapel of Ease at Chapel Row, George Town, and the former Synagogue in Thomas Town, as well as the former Wesleyan Chapel in Merthyr Town Centre. The former Miners' Hall on Church Street, which was gutted by fire and remains as a shell, is believed to have been designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, and should probably deserve greater than its current Grade II designation. A further 38 religious buildings in the Borough are listed, partly reflecting the proliferation of religious institutions created by the area's diverse working population during its industrial heyday.

In addition to religious buildings the Borough contains 19 listed public buildings, which include the former Town Hall and County Court, Dowlais Public Library, the Guest Memorial Hall, the entrance to St Tydfil's Hospital, the former YMCA building, the Carnegie Library and Treharris Public Library. Six War Memorials are also designated as listed buildings along with three other memorials to prominent individuals. The War Memorial in Pontmorlais was sculpted by L S Merrifield and shows St Tydfil standing on a sacrificial alter with garlands of bays, supported by Tudor roses. An adjoining statue of a miner and his wife represents the men and women of Merthyr past and present who died or who suffered in the Great War.

Listed buildings with commercial uses located in the Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre include Lloyds Bank and Barclays Bank on High Street, Flooks Jewellers on Upper High Street, and the Theatre Royal with the attached Thespian House.

Some of the most visible listed buildings are those relating to the Borough's industrial past. These include the Grade II* Ynysfach Engine House, which has recently been restored, as well as the Dowlais Blast Engine House (also listed Grade II*). They also include more humble buildings and structures, such as the ventilation shafts of the Morlais Tunnel, disused lime kilns near Cefn Bridge, and the base of a chimney at Cwm Pit. Twenty two bridges and viaducts have been listed in the Borough including the spectacular Cefn Railway Viaduct, the Pontsarn Railway Viaduct and the Pont-y-Cafnau (all listed Grade II*). Quaker's Yard contains an important focus of these historic bridges including two viaducts forming part of the Trevithick's Penydarren Tramroad (Victoria Bridge and Greenfield Bridge) and the Quaker's Yard Railway Viaduct of the Taff Vale Railway, which are all Grade II* listed.

Conservation Areas

Three historic areas within the County Borough have been designated as conservation areas, namely Thomas Town and Dowlais (both in Merthyr Tyfil), and Cwmfelin (in Bedlinog). These are protected under the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*. Any proposals for development that would require demolition of a building in a conservation area must first secure Conservation Area Consent. In addition, the Borough Council must pay special regard to the protection of the special historic character and appearance of the conservation area when determining applications for development within, or on the edges, the conservation area.

The Thomas Town Conservation Area

The Thomas Town Conservation Area represents the first middle class suburb built in Merthyr Tydfil from about 1850 in response to the town's industrial and population boom. The buildings share many stylistic qualities and architectural details, such as use of stucco and moulded, arched door surrounds, which provide an indication of their age and create a strong



Thomas Town Conservation Area



Dowlais Conservation Area



Cwmfelin Conservation Area

sense of uniformity. The area also includes a number of prominent civic and public buildings including the former Miners' Welfare Hall and the Synagogue.

The Dowlais Conservation Area

The Dowlais Conservation Area preserves a collection of significant buildings erected in association with the Dowlais Ironworks, including the company's former stable building, St John's Church and the Guest Memorial Hall, erected in 1863 as a memorial to Sir John Guest (one of the most significant ironmasters of Dowlais). Other buildings include the Ivor Chapel (built by workers of Dowlais Ironworks), the Carnegie Library and the Dowlais Blast Engine House, which is now the only standing building belonging to the former Dowlais Ironworks. In addition to these structures the conservation area contains a number of locally listed and unlisted buildings that represent some remaining fragments of the early phases of the industrial settlement at Dowlais, including the east side of Market Street, the Constitutional Club, and houses on Dowlais High Street which belonged to important officials of the ironworks, including the company surgeon. The conservation area also includes open spaces of particular importance including St John's Field next to the church, the former site of the Market Hall, now a public garden, and part of the site of the ironworks, now a community nature reserve.

The Cwmfelin Conservation Area

Cwmfelin represents the oldest focus of settlement in Bedlinog and is centred around the Bedlinog Inn, which was a watermill prior to its conversion to a public house in the 18th century. The conservation area provides an example of a small rural settlement that retains some of its pre-industrial character, alongside examples of industrial workers' housing that sit well in the rural setting. It is centred on the small village square and contains a late 19th century Salem Baptist Chapel, as well as Commercial Street, a development of well preserved miners' housing built in the 1860s. It also includes several small fields surrounding the housing which are important in maintaining the settlement's rural character. Proposals to extend the existing conservation area boundary are included later in this document.

Proposed conservation areas

In addition to the three designated conservation areas, a further seven areas have previously been proposed for designation within the Local Plan. As part of the review undertaken for this Built Heritage Strategy, the remainder of the Borough has been considered and a further ten areas have been identified. Some of these, such as the Cyfarthfa area, require urgent designation, but others are of lesser quality and it is recommended that further assessment of their special interest is made subject to resources being available. These existing and new conservation areas would, together, provide a thorough representation of the areas where Merthyr Tydfil's nationally important history has made a contribution to the character and appearance of the area and where this has remained sufficiently well preserved to be capable of preservation and enhancement for the future.

The seven previously proposed new conservation areas comprise:

- Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre*
- Morgan Town and Parc*
- Chapel Row, George Town*
- Williamstown and The Quar*
- Quaker's Yard*
- Abercanaid
- Upper Abercanaid*

The ten newly proposed conservation areas, based on the survey undertaken for this study, comprise areas within the following settlements:

- Cyfarthfa*
- Trelewis
- Treharris*
- Troedyrhiw
- Aberfan
- Merthyr Vale
- Edwardsville
- Cefn-Coed-y-Cymmer*
- Tai Bach Cottages, Pentrebach
- Urban Street and Council Street, Penydarren

* Priority areas

The 'priority areas' have been identified by the Borough Council as those areas which need to be

considered for conservation area status as a matter of priority. The other areas will be reviewed in due course, subject to resources.

Brief descriptions of the special interest of the existing and proposed conservation areas, and maps for each, are provided in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.

Building and Structures of Local Architectural and Historic Merit

Building and structures of local architectural and historic merit in the Borough of Merthyr Tydfil (usually referred to as 'Locally Listed Buildings') are protected by policies in the Local Plan, which require the Council to have special regard to the need to preserve the character and appearance of these buildings when determining applications for development that would affect them. There are currently 154 entries of locally listed buildings as described in the Local Plan, although some of these include more than one building including "all remaining railway lines", several facades running along street frontages, and entire residential streets outside current conservation areas.



Plaque provided by the Merthyr Heritage Trust

5 ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 An audit of the historic environment

Introduction

Merthyr Tydfil retains many elements of great historic significance including industrial landscapes, historic towns and villages, scheduled monuments, and various historic buildings, some listed and some locally listed. Additionally, there are many settlements, which although perhaps not of the architectural quality which would usually merit designation as a conservation area, have significance due to their historical development, social histories, and past uses. The survival of some early housing, relating to the industrial development of the two valleys of the Taff and Bargoed rivers, and dating to the early or mid 19th centuries, is also of note. Some of this is listed, some of it locally listed, and some not recognised by any designation whatsoever. Overall there is little interpretation of either historic buildings or historic places, part from some interpretation panels and plaques provided in some locations by the Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust, some of which require improvement.

Interwoven with the more visible features of landscape and buildings, are smaller features reflecting the remains of Merthyr's industrial heritage, such as the remaining sections of the Glamorgan Canal. The wholesale demolition of most of the buildings associated with the coal mining industry, once the collieries had closed, and the general lack of maintenance of the few surviving features of the iron-making industries, may in the future be regretted as it has left little to remind the us of why Merthyr was so important in the late 18th and the 19th centuries. The purpose of this section of the Built Heritage Strategy is to consider in turn the various elements of the historic built environment, and to make recommendations for improvement, better understanding and greater accessibility for both visitors and the local communities in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil.

Historic landscapes

The Historic Landscape Characterisation of the Merthyr Tydfil area was carried out in 2002/3. It covers a large part of the northern part of the Borough, apart from the area inside the National Park. These landscape areas are especially rich in landscape

features resulting from mining for coal and iron stone, as well as the remains of industrial transport systems and small industrial settlements such as Winch Fawr and Upper Collier's Row. The Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales (HLW) identifies the Merthyr Tydfil HLW as a Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest and the Gelli-gaer Common HLW as being of Special Interest.

These designations are non-statutory and unlike scheduled monuments, conservation areas, and listed buildings, the management of these landscape areas is not controlled by legislation. Much of this landscape surrounds the proposed new conservation areas discussed elsewhere in this document. Apart from Local Plan policies, and national guidance, these areas have little specific protection. The Countryside Commission for Wales is currently producing management proposals for some of these historic landscapes.

The Register, and the characterisation work that followed from it, provide a vital resource of valuable information that should underpin planning management and practice. While Planning Policy Wales (Paragraph 6.5.23) makes it clear that this information is a material consideration, it is less clear that it is being used to full advantage in developing land management strategies for Merthyr Tydfil.

Recommendation:

- Subject to the content of the CCW Conservation Plan, the production of a Management Plan for the Merthyr Tydfil HLW and the Gelli-gaer Common HLW which would address:
 - The condition of the surviving industrial features
 - Methods of repair and consolidation
 - Identification of priorities and funding
 - Interpretation to improve local understanding, the role of tourism and protection from inappropriate development
- Adoption of measures to take full account of the registered landscapes and their characterisation in the formulation of planning policy, strategies and frameworks

Historic settlements and conservation areas

Local authorities are required by law to periodically review their district or borough to see whether an area is of 'special architectural or historic interest', and decide whether designation as a 'conservation area' is appropriate. Planning law does not state how often local authorities must exercise their statutory duties, but the Audit Commission has established that a five-year cycle is appropriate for conservation area review.

Once designation has taken place, the planning authority must take conservation area status into account when determining planning applications and reject any that do not 'preserve or enhance' the conservation area.

There are currently just three conservation areas in Merthyr Tydfil Borough, and although seven more were identified in the Local Plan none have been designated. As part of the survey work for this Built Heritage Strategy, a rapid characterisation of the whole Borough was undertaken, using historic maps and other background information, and potential conservation areas were identified and surveyed. This resulted in a further ten historic settlements or locations being identified for designation as conservation areas. A list of the existing and proposed conservation areas, including a short description of each and a map, is enclosed at Appendix 2 and Appendix 3. Of these, the County Borough Council has identified nine settlements requiring urgent designation as is detailed below:



Proposed conservation area in Morgan Town, Merthyr Tydfil

Recommendation:

- Following full public consultation, designate the following as conservation areas:
 - Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area
 - Upper Abercanaid Conservation Area
 - Morgan Town and the Parc Conservation Area
 - Chapel Row, George Town
 - The Quar and Williams Town
 - Quaker's Yard Conservation Area
 - Cyfarthfa Conservation Area
 - Cefn Coed-y-Cymmer Conservation Area
 - Treharris Conservation Area
- Prepare Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans for each conservation area
- Prepare a publicity leaflet for each of the existing and the proposed conservation areas
- Prepare Article 4 Directions for each of the proposed and existing conservation areas as considered appropriate
- Review the list of conservation areas on a regular basis (at least every five years) including the remaining eight settlements identified as part of this review

Scheduled Monuments

The various scheduled monuments referred to in section 4.6 are monitored by the County Borough Council and Cadw. Applications for Scheduled Monument Consent may be considered in the first instance by the local authority, in association with the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, but they are determined by the Welsh Assembly Government. The Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust has been developing a sites-and-monuments record for these, and other similar sites, which will feed into the Historic Environment Record maintained by GGAT. Currently there do not appear to be any major issues concerning the condition of these monuments (which are inspected regularly by Cadw), although there may be so in the future. Some of these monuments may also form a potential tourist attraction (if interpreted and presented effectively) although as some are in private ownership visitors may not be welcome.

Recommendations:

- Working in association with Cadw, the scheduled monuments within the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil should be carefully monitored by the County Borough Council
- Ensure that the Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust has completed its sites and monument record, which could form the basis for wider tourism-related list of sites
- Working with owners, the County Borough Council may be able to open up some of the sites for visitors, if only occasionally and subject to appropriate arrangements for interpretation and safety

Listed Buildings

‘Listed Buildings’ are buildings of special architectural or historic interest and have statutory protection. It is a criminal offence to alter or demolish a listed building without first obtaining permission from the County Borough Council and/or Cadw. One of the Borough Council’s top priorities must be to protect listed buildings from unsympathetic alterations or demolition, and to provide guidance and advice to owners and their agents. It is therefore surprising that the 1999 Local Plan for Merthyr Tydfil provides a list of the listed buildings which have been lost to demolition or delisting. This details 28 listed buildings (some of which are multiple entries, such as a terrace) or structures, including such ‘iconic’ local buildings as Dowlais House. Whilst there are policies in the Local Plan to protect listed buildings and their settings, many have been allowed to fall into a state of acute disrepair and the County Borough Council has been unable or unwilling to take enforcement action to ensure that these buildings are properly maintained.

Recommendations:

- The County Borough Council will in future ensure that all applications for Listed Building Consent are carefully assessed by a trained professional and that works carried out subsequently are checked on site

- The County Borough Council will serve Enforcement Notices where listed buildings have been altered illegally
- The County Borough Council will use Urgent Works Notices or a full Repairs Notice with accompanying use of a Compulsory Purchase Notice, where it considers that a listed building is under threat from neglect
- The County Borough Council will set aside funds to draw on if funds are required for the above
- The County Borough Council will establish a line of responsibility to ensure that action is taken to protect listed buildings from neglect, including providing training where necessary
- The County Borough Council will establish a Listed Building grant system to help the owners of listed buildings
- The County Borough Council will provide detailed guidance to property owners on the following:
 - Listed buildings;
 - Living in a Conservation Area;
 - The use of traditional materials (e.g. lime and stone);
 - Traditional details (windows, doors, roofs, etc);



The Theatre Royal, a listed building-at-risk (Pontmorlais)

Locally Listed Buildings

'Local Listing' has no statutory protection although Policy BH5 in the Local Plan does seek the preservation and enhancement of Locally Listed buildings. Locally Listed buildings are important in that they are of local significance and provide a link to the past, often, in the case of Merthyr Tydfil, in connection with its industrial development.

The Borough currently has 154 entries in its Local List, some of them multiple entries. Despite Policy BH5 in the Local Plan, it has been noted during the survey work for this document that many suffer from unsympathetic alterations such as the insertion of plastic windows. There are currently no agreed criteria for inclusion on the Local List, and the quality of the current designations vary. Additionally, the local List has not been reviewed for some time and the quality of the existing entries appear inconsistent. The adoption of an agreed 'Local List' criteria by the Council is urgently required, as is a systematic and thorough review of the whole Borough.

Recommendations:

- Agree new criteria for local Listing (suggested criteria are include at Appendix 4)
- Review the Local List in the light of the new criteria, and include local amenity groups and the local community in the choice of buildings or other features
- Consider serving an Article 4 Direction to control unsympathetic alterations on all Locally Listed buildings in use as single family dwellings

5.2 Policy and control

There is strong support nationally for policies to protect the historic environment. In *Planning Policy Wales (2002)*, the stated objectives of the Welsh Assembly Government include:

- Preserve and enhance the historic environment, recognising its contribution to economic vitality and culture, civic pride and the quality of life, and its importance as a resource for future generations

- Ensure that conservation areas are protected and enhanced, while at the same time remaining alive and prosperous, avoiding unnecessary detailed controls over businesses and householders

Further commitment is expressed in the Wales Spatial Plan (2004) and the Environmental Strategy for Wales (2006).

Circular 61/96 states that local authorities should 'ensure that conservation policies are co-ordinated and integrated with other planning policies affecting the historic environment'.

These messages were reinforced in March 2007 with the publication of *The Welsh Historic Environment: Position Statement 2006*. This was produced by Historic Wales, the new joint voice of the Welsh Assembly Government's heritage agencies. Central to the report is the acknowledgement that:

'There is an increasing realisation too of the contribution the historic environment can make to the wider Welsh Assembly Government aims, expressed in 'Wales: A Better Country', to environmental improvements, social cohesion, economic regeneration and lifelong learning. In a study undertaken in 2002, for example, it was estimated that the contribution the historic environment makes to the economy of Wales supported over 22,000 jobs, and had a total spending impact of £780 million per year at that time.'



The former Labour Exchange in Pontmorlais, a locally listed building

The Heritage Protection Review

Following wide consultation on the *Review of Heritage Protection in Wales* in 2003, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Department for Culture Media and Sport published a joint White Paper in March 2007 called *Heritage Protection for the 21st Century*. The White Paper acknowledges that primary legislation is currently shared by Wales and England but that important parts of the system are managed differently in Wales. Accordingly, secondary legislation will provide that the changes can be applied differently if wished to suit Welsh circumstances and practice.

As with England, it is recognised that there is scope for greater coordination, clarity, openness and accountability in the system. It is proposed to unify the designation of ancient monuments, listed buildings and registered parks and gardens into a single Register of Heritage Assets for which new principles of selection will be prepared.

In March 2008, the Heritage Protection Bill was published as a consultation draft. It confirms the principles of the review, but there is clearly a need to develop extensive guidance on the implications for policy and implementation.



Former miners' hall in Merthyr Tydfil

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Community Strategy (Undated)

The Welsh Assembly Government's over-arching policy and guidance should cascade down to Merthyr Tydfil's development plan through the Community Strategy. Accordingly, the Welsh Assembly Government has produced a *Guide to good practice for the promotion of the historic environment in community strategies*.

The Community Strategy for Merthyr Tydfil notes its partners' aspirations for a borough 'where the built and natural environment is improved and protected'. It includes *culture* and *heritage* in its core values and it includes 'effective protection of the environment' under the definition of sustainability.

Nonetheless, despite the national guidance and despite its reliance on the historic environment for illustration, the strategy is silent on heritage issues in its seven themes and key strategies.

Merthyr Tydfil Borough Local Plan 1999

Although the plan period was only intended to run until the end of 2006, the Local Plan still remains the current formal development plan. In Section 5, the Local Plan set an ambitious agenda for designation, control and promotion of the historic environment. This has included the local designation of a Cyfarthfa Heritage Area to unite a series of sites that 'should be considered as a single interrelated comprehensive entity'

Unfortunately, resources do not appear to have matched the ambitions that were to be realised within the plan period:

- The Cyfarthfa Heritage Area has not been promoted in a comprehensive manner
- Proposals for a World Heritage Site have not been pursued and have apparently been overtaken by the subsequent inscription of the Blaenavon World Heritage Site
- Conservation areas have not been designated
- Conservation area appraisals and management proposals have not been formulated
- The promotion of new uses for vacant listed buildings is failing to bear fruit in many prominent cases

The local plan details the 138 listed buildings that were demolished prior to the current plan period and it points to the refusals of consent for the demolition of the YMCA and the Miners Hall as evidence of a stronger stance. However, nine years on, the continuing deterioration of those buildings does not build confidence in the survival of the remaining 200 listed buildings in the borough.

Local Development Plan (LDP)

A Preferred Strategy for the Local Development Plan was published in April 2007 and is currently under review. It recognises the contribution that townscape makes to local distinctiveness and the first of its Primary Objectives is, *'to ensure the continued protection and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment'*.

The preferred strategy is for *'Enhanced Growth'* with the town centre as the lynchpin for regeneration. However, the sustainability appraisal warns that there is a potential conflict between enhanced growth and the historic environment which, if unchecked, could cause permanent and irreversible damage. Appropriate safeguards will, therefore, be necessary in the form of strong conservation policies particularly in respect of the setting of heritage assets.

The intention is that the draft Local Development Plan will be published in September 2008 with a view to adoption in 2011.

Supplementary planning guidance (SPG)

The County Borough Council currently has non-statutory policy and advice relating to shopfronts, parking standards, householder extensions, garages and listed buildings, although not all of these are readily available. It is intended that this guidance will remain current until after the adoption of the Local Development Plan. Interim planning guidance on affordable housing was also adopted in 2007.

It is not currently envisaged that any further advice will be issued while the LDP is being prepared, but the LDP process does need to consider the scope for additional SPG to be drafted after adoption in 2011. The Preferred Strategy document suggested that

priority topics will be design, affordable housing, and planning agreements. However, the SPG programme will be developed in response to stakeholder consultation.

In practice, it may be possible to accelerate the process where the preparation of SPG is critical to gaining external regeneration funding, such as the Townscape Heritage Initiative, or where opportunities arise out of the Heritage Protection Review.

Development control

Development control is clearly under pressure and suffering staff shortages. A re-organisation that sees the move of a post from Policy may help, but this does beg the question of responsibility and skills for dealing with heritage cases.

Currently, listed building consents are progressed through the Policy division. However, with the retirement of the conservation post-holder, the processing of applications will revert to Development Control leaving Policy to provide advice albeit with no specific expertise. This means that decision-making will be entirely reactive and largely uninformed, although some continued input can be expected from the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust who maintain an archaeological advisory service to the Council.

This situation is in complete contradiction of government policy stated in Circular 61/96:

'Authorities should ensure that they have appropriately qualified specialist advice on any development which, by its character or location, might be held to have an effect on any sites or structures of the historic environment.' (Paragraph 9)

Enforcement

The Council is in the process of signing up to the Cabinet Office *Enforcement Concordat*, which sets out best practice principles for enforcement, such as openness, consistency, proportionality and responding to complaints. However, the Council has no strategy for enforcement. An enforcement strategy would:

- Explain the scope of planning enforcement
- Openly define priorities
- Set measurable standards for service delivery
- Explain how investigations are carried out
- Explain enforcement procedures and enforcement actions

At present, enforcement staff are responsible for monitoring compliance with planning conditions. This process, which is triggered by commencement notices under the Building Regulations, is effective but it leaves mainstream enforcement as a purely reactive practice best described as fire-fighting. This situation has been made worse by the legislation on high hedges, which produces the most vociferous complaints.

An enforcement strategy would make it clear that the need to ensure public safety will always come first, but then enforcement in relation to heritage assets should generally have the next highest priority because so much historic fabric is irreplaceable. However, active enforcement in the historic environment does require the input of specialist skills.

The lack of pro-action in enforcement means that the Council is not making use of highly effective planning tools, such as Repairs Notices, Urgent Works Notices and Amenity (S215) Notices. A strategy should explain the circumstances when the Council would exercise these powers and exploit the deterrent effect that an expressed commitment to enforcement would communicate.

It has been suggested that the Council has not made use of these powers because it has no default budget. However, it should be noted that, in some cases, costs are fully recoverable and there are also opportunities for grant aid and for back-to-back guarantees from end users, such as building preservation trusts. If a conservation budget is established for the stewardship of Council-owned structures, as is recommended here, its remit could be broadened to provide a 'safety net' for repairs action. It should also be noted that research has shown that, in the large majority of repairs action cases, the issues are resolved without formal notices having to be served (See R Kindred report for the Institute of Historic Building Conservation).

It is important to have an objective understanding of change so that informed responses can be made. In conservation areas a photographic survey should be undertaken as a baseline record for measuring change, monitoring building condition and to provide evidence for enforcement. For the latter, however, it is important that the record is updated every four years because breaches more than four years old cannot be enforced against.

Recommendations:

- Acknowledge the significance of the historic environment to the future well-being of Merthyr Tydfil Borough in future updating of the Community Strategy
- Ensure that heritage policies are prominent in the forthcoming Local Development Plan in order to underpin the importance of culture as a driver for tourism and economic regeneration in the post-industrial age
- Establish strong policies to resist the erosion of heritage assets and their settings within a strategy of enhanced growth
- Produce supplementary planning guidance on the management of heritage assets at the earliest opportunity in order to:
 - Explain the importance of the historic environment
 - Demonstrate the Council's commitment to conservation
 - Support external funding opportunities
 - Anticipate the reforms of the Heritage Protection Act
- Provide conservation training to councillors and council staff, including site visits to discuss specific issues
- Ensure that the Council has access to adequate heritage skills to provide an adequate development control and advice service, and to pursue active heritage-led regeneration (i.e. at least one full time conservation officer and one full time project officer)

- Develop a strategy for enforcement that acknowledges the priority of safeguarding irreplaceable heritage assets
- Establish a system for monitoring change, such as five yearly photographic surveys of conservation areas

5.3 Economic issues

The evidence of economic decline is clear from the statistics of social deprivation, but it is perhaps most readily apparent in vacant and derelict buildings. In heritage terms, the evidence is provided in the buildings-at-risk survey, which found that the survival of some 10% of listed buildings is seriously at risk and some have been in poor condition for many years. Added to this is the likelihood of a similar proportion of unlisted historic buildings in need of repair and many more that have suffered poor quality alterations.

The need for grant aid

Clearly, this evidence is symptomatic of widespread market failure leading to the negative or neutral values that remove the incentive to develop. It is also indicative of a low level of pro-action in local environmental management. An injection of public funding is necessary to overcome negative perceptions and to stimulate the market.

Investment in public infrastructure, such as paving, lighting and street furniture, may start the process of regeneration, but ultimately the economy relies on the productive use of buildings. It is important, therefore, to encourage building repairs and creative reuse and there are programmes of grant aid to assist this. Research has shown that public investment in the repair of historic buildings can achieve a fivefold dividend (See, for instance, English Heritage – *The Heritage Dividend* – 2002).

Resources

The BAR summary estimates provided at Appendix 5 indicate that cost of repairing the eleven listed buildings most at risk in the town centre would be almost £2.9m to which can be added further costs for full refurbishment, enhancement and external works.

The repair of unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the town would more than double the figure.

Outside the town centre, there are an additional ten listed buildings seriously at risk for which the cost of repairs would be about £1.5. Again this figure could easily double when the needs of notable unlisted buildings are taken into account.

The stark facts are that the resources are not available locally to achieve these repairs and nor is the economic incentive. As important is the fact that the Borough Council does not have the human resources to force the issue and yet it can hardly afford not to. The employment of two posts to draw in external funding, with access to specialist skills, would make a huge difference.

Funding opportunities and priorities

The Welsh Assembly Government's Townscape Improvement Grant (TIG) has made some impact on Merthyr Tydfil High Street and the indications are that the initiative will shortly migrate to Treharris.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has expressed interest in funding projects in the Borough. Merthyr Tydfil is seen as one of four areas in Wales where the HLF is under-represented. There is clearly scope for a major Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) to tackle



Buildings like these in Merthyr Tydfil High Street could benefit from a focused grant scheme

the town centre including parts of Morgan Town and Thomas Town. This would address listed buildings-at-risk, repairs to other significant buildings, the re-use of upper floors, craft skills training and community learning projects.

There are further possibilities for THIs at Treharris and Troedyrhiw. Cyfarthfa Park should also be considered for funding under the Heritage Lottery Fund's Parks for People programme, which would allow some funding for works to the castle too.

Lottery budgets require match funding, which the Borough cannot easily afford, but there are opportunities to make use of external sources such as the European Convergence Fund and the Welsh Assembly Government's Heads of the Valleys programme. HOV has, for instance, supported the development of a THI in the adjoining borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

A more difficult project will be funding for the enhancement of the Cyfarthfa Heritage Area (recommended for conservation area status), which may have to be achieved through development opportunities and planning agreements. Similarly, the Council has ownership of many other structures and monuments that are not capable of productive use but nonetheless require maintenance. For these the Council should establish a separate fund in partnership with Cadw.



Treharris would benefit from a THI grant scheme

Recommendations:

- Continue to support the programme of Townscape Improvement Grants for the Borough
- Make a Stage I application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Townscape Heritage Initiative for the town centre in the next available round – i.e. by the end of November 2009
- Make a Stage I application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Parks for People grant for Cyfarthfa Park at the earliest opportunity (date not yet confirmed)
- Seek match funding opportunities for the Lottery bids
- Develop an economic strategy for promoting and enhancing the Cyfarthfa Heritage Area
- Establish a continuing fund for the maintenance of non-productive monuments in the Borough

5.4 Organisational issues

Managing the historic environment

It is important that the Council as a whole should recognise and promote the value of its heritage as a driver for economic regeneration as well as for the cultural wellbeing of its communities. This should be clearly expressed through the Community Strategy and all the policy and strategy documents that cascade from it.

If the Council is to demonstrate leadership, conservation must not be seen as a minority interest, but rather as the collective responsibility of a range of stakeholding departments. There are those who identify and define heritage, those who make policy provision for heritage, those who safeguard heritage, those who promote heritage, those who fund heritage and those who have ownership responsibilities for heritage. Supplementary Planning Guidance on the management of heritage assets will make those responsibilities clear.

While much of the responsibility lies with the Planning and Regeneration departments, the practice of devolved budgeting means that ownership of the Council's own portfolio of historic buildings and structures is fragmented. As a result, there are no common standards for the quality or frequency of maintenance and, like so many of the Council's duties, it tends to be addressed in a purely reactive manner.

Crisis management is not, of course, best practice. It is suggested that there should be a central register of the Council's own historic buildings to record regular regimes of inspection, the repair needs, budgetary implications and the actions taken. Owning departments can then be held to account through an internal heritage forum set up to demonstrate leadership by example.

Given that there are about 200 listed buildings throughout the Borough, it would not be difficult in time to extend the register concept to co-ordinate information about all historic buildings.

Conservation and design skills

There is a strong expectation from central government that proper expertise should be brought to bear on heritage issues. Circular 61/96, for instance, states:

'Authorities should ensure that they have appropriately qualified advice on any development which, by its character or location, might be held to have an effect on any sites or structures of the historic environment.' (Paragraph 9)

A significant reason for the Borough Council's passive approach to heritage, which has allowed decay and disfigurement to go unchecked, is the lack of specialist conservation skills. And yet there are increasing references in Council publications to Merthyr Tydfil's 'rich heritage'. Pride in the historic environment requires stewardship. However, it is not sufficient to rely, as presently happens, on occasional favours from Cadw staff who are not tasked with providing a local authority service. Advice can be brought in by using consultants, but it is more usual for local authorities to employ a conservation officer.

A conservation officer would be able to fulfil the Council's statutory duties, raise the quality of decision making in relation to listed buildings and conservation areas, and take forward most of the issues proposed in this strategy. Far from being a luxury, a conservation officer will be a necessity if significant funding is to be attracted from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Once established, any THI scheme will require a dedicated project officer, and the likely size of the potential THIs in Merthyr (for Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre, Treharris and possibly Troedyrhiw) suggests that a separate full-time manager is the least that will be required in addition to a conservation officer. However the project officer's post could be funded through the THI.

Community engagement

The importance of partnership with communities and the promotion of community aspirations through a Heritage Forum is set out in the next section below.

The role of outside organisations

It is noticeable how keen organisations such as Cadw, HERIAN, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Heads of the Valleys Programme, are to assist in a renaissance of Merthyr Tydfil. The Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust also maintains a strong presence in the Borough and provides excellent archaeological advice. Every opportunity should be taken to harness these various interests by forging new partnerships and learning from their experiences elsewhere.

Recommendations:

- Recognise and promote the value of its heritage as a driver for economic regeneration
- Make clear the widely shared responsibilities for managing the historic environment
- Establish common standards for the maintenance of the Council's own historic buildings
- Set up a register for the management of the Council's own historic buildings

- Establish an internal heritage forum to demonstrate leadership by example
- Extend the register concept to co-ordinate information about all historic buildings
- Ensure access to specialist heritage skills, by employing a dedicated conservation officer
- Learn from heritage management practice in other local authorities

5.5 Strategic issues

There is evidence of a local pride in the past reputation of Merthyr Tydfil for its innovations in the iron and steel industries, its role in global trade, and its radical political history. However, local pride is less apparent in the surviving evidence of the reasons for Merthyr's existence. This is understandable, as the natural response to severe economic decline has been to secure employment at all costs. However, it is important to recognise that conservation and development are not mutually exclusive and, indeed, the distinctiveness of a rich past is often the key to post-industrial prosperity.

Raising awareness

It is important to communicate an understanding of the elements that give Merthyr Tydfil a distinctive character. The Historic Landscape Characterisation gives an admirable overall picture, but its complexity and levels of detail limit accessibility for all. There is scope, therefore, for spin-off publications.

Local character should also be promoted through conservation area character appraisals published by the Council. An understanding of local distinctiveness and the links between heritage and sustainability might, for instance, have offered an alternative treatment for the town centre than coloured granite imported from China. The designation of 17 new conservation areas, as recommended elsewhere in this document, will raise the profile of conservation in the Borough and provide a focus for new initiatives and stronger controls for the historic environment.

Guidance on aspects of conservation is vital if the Council's expectations for best practice are to be delivered. Supplementary Planning Guidance will provide the formal position, but there is a need for practical advice on best practice for, for instance, repairing listed buildings (using traditional materials), living in conservation areas, or conserving energy without spoiling heritage.

It is important that the Council is seen to take a lead in the stewardship of the historic environment. This should start with training for Council members so that decisions are made on an informed basis. Then it is necessary for the Council to be able to set the example by ensuring that listed buildings and ancient monuments in its own ownership are well repaired and used. However, heritage needs a more universal voice across the whole of the Council's undertakings. The role of Heritage Champion is more popular in England than Wales, because English Heritage provides a specific support programme. Nonetheless, there is a case for a lead Councillor to act as an advocate for the historic environment.

Involving communities

It is vital that awareness of heritage issues should start in schools so that the next generation is equipped to care for its past. There is now a growing body of experience to demonstrate the value of making use of the historic environment within the national curriculum.

Education should not, of course, stop at school level. There is a popular interest in finding out more about local history that can be catered for through lifelong learning programmes. The Workers' Education Association and HERIAN, for instance, have strong track records in developing community history projects, and the Communities First Programme in the Borough already includes many projects which seek to involve the younger generation.

Circular 61/96 asks local authorities to consider setting up conservation area advisory committees. In the case of Merthyr Tydfil, there would be little to be gained by having advisory committees for each conservation area because some of the areas will be relatively small. However, there is a strong case for a Borough-wide Heritage Forum that would unite Council and

community interests in conservation in the common cause of understanding, promoting and enhancing heritage assets. The involvement of the local amenity societies, such as the Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust, is crucial to the success of such an organisation.

It is important that the inheritance of Merthyr is seen as something to celebrate. This can be achieved through interpretation, events and festivals to mark important historical characters, anniversaries or other aspects of local history. An awards scheme is a simple way to give recognition to particular conservation efforts. The effectiveness of this could be enhanced by the Council working in Partnership (as it already does) with organisations such as Cadw, HERIAN, the Communities First Programme and the Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust.

Appropriate maintenance of homes in historic areas is a significant issue for private owners and occupiers. The publication of accessible guidance has a major part to play, but help is also provided by the organisation Maintain Britain's Heritage and by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) National Maintenance Day, both of which can be harnessed for community events once conservation areas have been designated.



Rebranding Merthyr Tydfil as a visitor centre is already taking place

The role of heritage in tourism, jobs, and regeneration

All too often, heritage is seen as a luxury add-on to be indulged in when resources permit. However, in the 21st century, it is equally often the case that heritage is the only solid asset that survives. There is no reason, therefore, why Merthyr Tydfil should not benefit from the 22,000 jobs supported by the historic environment provided steps are taken to avoid squandering the resource.

Evidence suggests that heritage-led regeneration has a longer lasting effect because it provides a sense of place that is marketable through its imageability. Places now have to use their distinctiveness to compete with each other for business and visitors. So, it is no accident that the Council's Community Strategy and other promotional literature make much use of Cyfarthfa Castle and other historic sites in their illustrations.

Strategically, therefore, it is important that conservation is an integral part of all efforts to improve the local economy, employment prospects, environment and facilities.

Joining up the thinking

If the historic environment provides a common thread for much of the Council's activity, it is necessary to follow the connectivity by linking initiatives and strategies. In this way, the whole has a chance of being greater than the sum of the component parts.

A recent example is the draft Tourism Strategy that celebrates the attractions of the rural landscape, a handful of historical sites and then out-of-town shopping facilities. It addresses the need to improve the availability of visitor accommodation but, despite the spatial implications, this is not linked to planning policy. Nor does the strategy address the urgent need to present the town centre better as a distinctive focus for visiting.

The buildings-at-risk survey has demonstrated that there is a crisis in the management and repair of listed buildings. But this has not followed through into a strategy that establishes priorities, provides advice, encouragement and funding opportunities, that

identifies the need for urgent works and repairs action, and ultimately advocates compulsory purchase.

If an enforcement strategy was in place, this would provide an effective context for resolving the problems of buildings-at-risk alongside financial inducements and improvements to infrastructure.

Clearly the challenge for a regeneration strategy is to unite separate initiatives so that they work in a common cause.

Recommendations:

- Recognise that conservation and development are not mutually exclusive
- Publish accessible information that will build interest in the Historic Landscape Characterisation
- Prepare and publish a character assessment for each conservation area
- Publish guidance on practical aspects of conservation
- Provide conservation training for Councillors
- Lead by example in the conservation of the Council's own historic estate
- Appoint a lead Councillor to champion the historic environment across the whole of the Council's undertakings
- Encourage heritage teaching within the schools curriculum
- Include heritage education within lifelong learning programmes
- Establish a Heritage Forum to bring Council and community interests together
- Celebrate Merthyr's heritage through interpretation, events, festivals and awards
- Make conservation an integral part of strategies for economic regeneration

6 Action Plan

6.1 Principles

Taken together, the recommendations form a daunting task. However, the current state of the historic environment in Merthyr Tydfil demands action on a broad front if it is to achieve the potential of stimulating change rather than being seen as an obstacle to progress. It will then provide a major contribution to the distinctiveness that will enable the Borough to compete for the economic advantages of investment, employment, tourism and sustainable communities.

It is important that the strategy for future management should be more than a 'wish list'. In addition to a series of proposals, the strategic aspect must include timescales and responsibilities. These are provided in the Action Plan at Appendix 1, which establishes a programme that will enable a managerial approach to the conservation of heritage assets.

While much of the onus for implementation rests with the Regeneration and Planning departments, the historic environment impacts on most aspects of local life. It is clear, therefore, that everyone has a part to play in developing a success culture. Success will require commitment by all Council services and their partners to ensure the sensitive exercise of controls, such as planning permissions, building control, fire regulations and highways standards. Likewise, it is important that when resources are deployed, they should be coordinated to ensure that the investment is in the best interests of the historic environment. This is why an inter-service forum is suggested.

It is important that 'ownership' of the strategy should not be restricted to a single Council service. But it will take strong leadership to develop support in all quarters, including local communities. This is why a Heritage Champion at the political level is proposed.

6.2 Programme

The Action Plan spreads the load by assigning actions to the short, medium and long term timescales in each of the five groups of issues. Long term actions may only be aspirations at present, pending the development of resources, but it is important for Merthyr to have ambitions.

Resources, however, are not the issue for the most immediate actions. Spending decisions are constantly being made and the challenge is to ensure that those investments are made in ways that benefit the historic interest of the borough. Similarly, there are areas of decision making where the exercise of discretion, such as planning controls, can have a major affect without any additional cost.

While significant and visible advances can be made by implementing grand projects for building repair and enhancement, these are heavily dependent on funding. More fundamental and of lasting value will be action to secure the basic foundations of sound policy and guidance. Policy development is already happening with the forthcoming Local Development Plan – the need is to secure an appropriate emphasis on the historic environment as a driver for quality, social cohesion and economic stability. The Heritage Lottery Fund have made it clear that these foundations are necessary for significant funding to be attracted because they expect the effect of their investments to be maintained and protected into the future.

The programme suggests the creation of two new posts – a conservation officer and a heritage regeneration officer. The priority for them will be to pave the way for new investment by introducing quality systems and by safeguarding the buildings-at-risk from further decay pending the resolution of their problems.

6.3 Exemplars

There is now a large body of experience across the UK in the creative re-use of historic buildings. These are highlighted in:

- The Civic Trust Awards
- The RICS Awards
- The awards of the British Urban Regeneration Association (BURA)
- The annual report of the Architectural Heritage Fund
- The annual report of the Association of Building Preservation Trusts

A major focus for heritage-led regeneration is in the Heritage Lottery Fund's Townscape Heritage Initiatives (THIs). Many of these initiatives are only

too willing to share their experiences of mobilising funds and expertise for the repair of buildings and the involvement of communities. Notable THIs in the South Wales region include:

- The Bridgend Town Centre THI
- The Lower Dock Street THI, Newport
- The Maesteg THI, Bridgend
- The Pembroke Dock THI
- The Rhymney THI, Caerphilly

A THI is also being developed currently by Rhondda Cynon Taff for Aberdare.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council has recently undertaken a critical review of its conservation areas and of its own heritage service delivery. A benchmarking exercise carried out in connection with this review found that a sample of six authorities in Wales have an average of 24 conservation areas each and an average conservation team of four staff. Three of the Councils have a Conservation Area Advisory Committee and all provide the means for members and non-conservation staff to gain an understanding of heritage issues.

6.4 Immediate/short terms actions

Based on the list of recommendations in the Action Plan at Appendix I, the following are considered to be the most urgent priorities which should be implemented within the **next 6 months**:

- Appoint a Heritage Champion
- Establish a Heritage Forum to oversee the implementation of this Built Heritage Strategy
- Appoint a Conservation Officer and a Heritage Regeneration Officer
- Consider enforcement action to ensure that the former Town Hall is repaired
- Designate three conservation areas - Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre, Treharris and Cyfarthfa (Tranche 1)
- Agree criteria for Local Listing
- Ensure that strong heritage policies are included in the LDP

Based on the list of recommendations in the Action Plan at I, the following are considered to be the next most urgent priorities which should be implemented within the **next 12-18 months**:

- Produce a Management Plan for the Merthyr Tydfil and Gelli-Gaer Historic Landscapes
- Commence designation of six further conservation areas – Upper Abercanaid; Cefn-Coed-y-Cymmer; Quaker's Yard; Morgan Town and Parc; Chapel Row, George Town; Williamstown and The Quar (Tranche 2)
- Complete record of historic sites with the Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust, in association with GGAT
- Local List – commence production of new list in collaboration with local amenity groups
- Establish strong policies to protect heritage assets and agree an Enforcement Strategy
- Seek match funding for new grant schemes
- Commence work on the Merthyr Tydfil Townscape Heritage Initiative grant scheme application to HLF
- Commence work on the Cyfarthfa Park Parks for People application to HLF

Other actions are medium term (within three years) and long term (more than three years) and are also set out in the Action Plan at Appendix I.

7 Monitoring and review

7.1 Outputs and indicators

It will be important, as an early task, to develop indicators for monitoring progress. These may include:

- Staff appointed
- Conservation areas designated
- Buildings added to the statutory and local lists
- Conservation area appraisals published
- Guidance publications issued
- Interpretation provided
- External funding achieved
- Buildings repaired and enhanced
- Floorspace brought back into productive use
- Buildings removed from the risk register
- Community conservation events held
- Article 4 directions designated
- Repairs action taken
- Photographic records established
- Preparation of bids for THI and Parks for People grants

In addition, progress will be defined by a range of single events that are less quantifiable but are nonetheless important milestones such as adopting policies, appointing a Heritage Champion or establishing a Heritage Forum.

7.2 Review cycle

While the Action Plan assigns responsibilities and timescales to the projected tasks, the management aspect will only be meaningful if the programme is subject to regular review in order to ensure that the actions are included in the work plans for nominated individuals and to evaluate progress. To begin with, it is recommended that reviews should be undertaken on a quarterly basis, although the frequency of the cycle may relax when individual projects develop programmes of their own.

The review cycle for this Built Heritage Strategy will be triggered by its adoption in autumn 2008. The next review will follow three months later during the winter of 2008/09. The enactment of the proposed Heritage Protection Bill in late 2009 or early 2010 is likely to have a major impact on Heritage Management

in Merthyr Tydfil Borough and so further changes/ updating to this Built Heritage Strategy is likely to be required.

Responsibility for conducting the review, in the first instance, is with the Regeneration Department, although there is a joint corporate responsibility for ensuring the implementation of this Strategy.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1	ACTION PLAN
Appendix 2	EXISTING AND PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREAS
Appendix 3	MAPS FOR EXISTING AND PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREAS
Appendix 4	LOCALLY LISTED BUILDINGS - SUGGESTED CRITERIA
Appendix 5	SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF THE BUILDINGS AT RISK ASSESSMENT
Appendix 6	REFERENCES AND SOURCES

Theme 1. Audit of the historic environment

	Action:	Achieved by:	Responsibility:	Timescale ¹ :	Cost:
<u>Landscapes</u>	1 Safeguard historic landscapes	Production of a management plan	CCW, GGAT, MTCBC	Short term	Unknown
<u>Historic settlements</u>	2 Safeguard historic settlements #1	Designate three conservation areas - First tranche	Planning	Immediate	N/A
	3 Conservation area publications #1	Appraisals and management plans for 3 existing CAs and 3 CAs in first tranche (6 CAs in all)	Planning, with local communities	Short term	£30k
	4 Conservation area publications #2	Six publicity leaflets for existing and first tranche CAs	Planning	Short term	£6k
	5 Safeguard historic settlements #2	Designate six conservation areas - Second tranche (6 CAs)	Planning	Medium term	N/A
	6 Conservation area publications #3	Appraisals and management plans for second tranche (6 CAs)	Planning, with local communities	Medium term	£30k
	7 Conservation area publications #4	Six publicity leaflets for second tranche	Planning	Medium term	£6k
	8 Conservation area protection #1	Prepare a programme of Article 4 directions as necessary, including photographic survey - 12 CAs	Planning, Legal	Medium term	£12k pa over two years and in-house resource
	9 Conservation area protection #2	Secure improvements through Amenity (S215) Notices	Planning	Medium term	N/A
	10 Conservation area review	Quinquennial review of designations and appraisals	Planning	Long term	N/A
<u>Scheduled monuments</u>	11 Audit monuments	Complete record of sites	MT Heritage Trust	Short term	N/A
	12 Monitor condition	Systematic survey	Planning, GGAT, Cadw	Medium term	N/A
	13 Improve access	Negotiate access to monuments on private land on Heritage Open Days	Planning, Regeneration	Medium term	N/A
	14 Interpret archaeology	Erect signs and publish guidance	MTCBC, HERIAN	Medium term	£5k pa
<u>Listed buildings</u>	15 Raise quality of assessment	Ensure specialist skills for considering all applications involving listed buildings	Planning	Immediate	See Theme 4.
	16 Protect listed buildings #1	Serve enforcement notices where LBs are altered illegally	Planning, Legal	Short term and onwards	N/A
	17 Protect listed buildings #2	Subject to funding, address neglect with Urgent Works Notices, Repairs Notices and ultimately Compulsory Purchase	Planning, Legal, Estates	Short term and onwards	N/A
	18 Listed building publications	Publish guidance on history, use of traditional materials and detailing	Planning, HERIAN, Regeneration	Medium term	£5k
	19 Listed building funding	Establish a grant scheme for the repair of listed buildings	Regeneration	Long term	N/A

Locally listed buildings

20	Re-establish local list #1	Agree new local listing criteria based on those provided in Appendix 2	Planning	Immediate	N/A
21	Re-establish local list #2	Review local list and add new entries through community involvement	Planning	Short term	N/A
22	Protect locally listed buildings	Serve Article 4 directions on local list buildings in single family use	Planning, Legal	Medium term	

Theme 2. Policy and control

Action:	Achieved by:	Responsibility:	Timescale:	Cost:
23 Heritage skills	Ensure that the Council has adequate access to heritage skills for policy, development control and for heritage-led regeneration	Planning, Regeneration	Immediate	See Theme 4
24 Heritage policy	Ensure that heritage policies are prominent in the forthcoming Local development Plan	Planning	Immediate	N/A
25 Heritage protection #1	Establish strong policies to resist erosion of heritage assets and their settings	Planning	Short term	N/A
26 Heritage protection #2	Develop an Enforcement Strategy that acknowledges the priority of irreplaceable heritage assets	Planning	Short term	N/A
27 Update the Community Strategy	Take the earliest opportunity to acknowledge the significance of heritage to the future of Merthyr	MTCBC	Medium term	N/A
28 Supplementary Planning Guidance	Produce guidance on the management of heritage assets	Planning	Medium term	N/A
29 Monitor change	Establish a baseline survey to inform the need for policy and enforcement	Planning	Long term	N/A

Theme 3. Economic issues⁵

Action:	Achieved by:	Responsibility:	Timescale:	Cost:
30 Townscheme Improvement Grants	Continue to support the TIG programme within the borough	Regeneration	Immediate	N/A
31 Parks for People	Make a Stage 1 application to the HLF (c£2m) in the next round	Regeneration	Short term	£50k
32 Townscape Heritage Initiative	Make a Stage 1 application to the HLF (c£2m) in the 2009 round	Regeneration	Short term	£50k

33 Match funding	Seek match funding opportunities for the lottery bids (at least £2m)	Regeneration	Short term	N/A
34 Cyfarthfa Heritage Area	Develop an economic strategy for promoting uses and enhancing	Regeneration, Planning	Medium term	N/A
35 Conservation fund	Establish a fund, with other partners, for the maintenance of non-beneficial monuments in the borough	Regeneration	Medium term	£20k pa

Theme 4. Organisational issues

Action:	Achieved by:	Responsibility:	Timescale:	Cost:
36 Staff resource	Appoint a Conservation Officer and a Heritage Regeneration Officer	Planning, Regeneration	Immediate	£80k pa
37 Best practice	Learn from heritage management practice in other authorities	Planning, Regeneration	Short term	N/A
38 Recognise heritage	Promote the value of heritage as a driver for economic regeneration	All property-owning departments	Short term	N/A
39 Recognise social heritage	Establish links between physical, social and political history	Museum service, HERIAN	Short term	N/A
40 Responsibility for heritage	Understand the shared responsibility for maintenance and enhancement	All heritage stakeholders	Short term	N/A
41 Internal forum	Establish an internal forum to address cross-cutting heritage issues	All property-owning departments	Short term	N/A
42 Maintenance standards	Establish standards for maintaining council owned historic property	Estates, Planning	Medium term	N/A
43 Buildings register #1	Set up a register for the management of council owned historic buildings	Estates	Medium term	N/A
44 Buildings register #2	Extend the register concept to co-ordinate information about all historic buildings	Planning	Long term	N/A

Theme 5. Strategic issues

Action:	Achieved by:	Responsibility:	Timescale:	Cost:
45 Heritage champion	Appoint a lead councillor to champion the historic environment across the whole of the council's undertakings	Chief Executive, Cabinet	Immediate	N/A

46	Strategic fit	Recognise that heritage and development are not mutually exclusive by including a conservation dimension in other strategies, such as Regeneration and Tourism	Regeneration and all other strategic departments	Short term	N/A
47	Heritage forum	Establish a forum to bring council and community interests in heritage together	All heritage stakeholders	Short term	N/A
48	Heritage education #1	Provide heritage training for councillors in order to improve understanding and decision making	Regeneration	Short term	N/A
49	Heritage education #2	Encourage the inclusion of heritage education within the schools curriculum	Education	Medium term	N/A
50	Heritage education #3	Encourage the inclusion of heritage education within lifelong learning programmes	Education	Medium term	N/A
51	World heritage	Establish links with the World Heritage Site at Blaenavon to exploit mutual interest and economies of scale	Regeneration	Medium term	N/A
52	Celebrate heritage	Develop interpretation, events, festivals and award schemes to celebrate Merthyr's heritage	Regeneration, HERIAN, Communities First	Medium term and onwards	N/A
53	National Park	Extend the Built Heritage Strategy into that part of the borough within the National Park	Planning, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority	Long term	N/A

Notes:

1. Timescales are expressed as:
 - Immediate (within the next 6-12 months)
 - Short term (within the next 12-18 months)
 - Medium term (within three years)
 - Long term (more than three years)

2. First tranche: Merthyr Tydfil Town, Cyfarthfa, Treharris

3. Second tranche: Upper Abercanaid, Cefn-Coed-y-Cymmer, Quaker's Yard, Morgan Town and Parc, Chapel Row Georgetown, Williamstown and The Quar

4. Costs for repairing all of the listed buildings-at-risk are provided at Appendix 5

APPENDIX 2 - EXISTING AND PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREAS

Existing Conservation Areas

- 1 Thomas Town Conservation Area (designated 1978)
- 2 Dowlais Conservation Area (designated 1998)
- 3 Cwmfelin (Bedlinog) Conservation Area (designated 1973)

Proposed Conservation Areas from Local Plan 2000

- 4 Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area*
- 5 Upper Abercanaid Conservation Area
- 6 Abercanaid Conservation Area
- 7 Morgan Town Conservation Area*
- 8 Chapel Row, George Town*
- 9 The Quar and Williams Town*
- 10 Quaker's Yard Conservation Area

Proposed New Conservation Areas (Additional to the Local Plan Recommendations)

- 11 Cyfarthfa Conservation Area*
- 12 Cefn Coed y Cymmer Conservation Area
- 13 Aberfan Conservation Area
- 14 Merthyr Vale Conservation Area
- 15 Edwardsville Conservation Area
- 16 Treharris Conservation Area*
- 17 Trelewis Conservation Area
- 18 Urban Street and Council Street, Penydarren, Conservation Area
- 19 Tai Bach, Pentrebach, Conservation Area
- 20 Troedyrhiw Conservation Area

* **Priority areas**

EXISTING CONSERVATION AREAS

I Thomas Town Conservation Area (designated 1978)

Summary of Special Interest

One of the largest groups of late Georgian and Early Victorian style buildings in Wales forming a middle class suburb of early and mid-19th century Merthyr Tydfil, retaining the original grid iron street pattern. Many of the facades are unified and include prominent classical elements. Rows of smaller cottages alongside the former tram road represent the early development of an industrial transport hub in Merthyr. Many chapels and other religious buildings are also included in this area reflecting the spiritual history of the area. A large number of listed buildings are included in this area and a number of prominent structures including the former Miners' Welfare Hall, formerly the Shiloh Welsh Wesleyan Chapel and tentatively attributed to Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the former Synagogue and the entrance lodge of St Tydfil's Hospital. The area benefits from many views across Merthyr town centre to the west and forms an important route to the parkland to the north east.

Summary of Issues

- Prominent landmark buildings and several listed buildings are considered to be at risk, including imminent loss of significant historic fabric. The Miners' Welfare Hall is a particularly prominent example, although the poorly maintained listed buildings on Newcastle Street and the former Synagogue are also of concern
- The buildings of St Tydfil's hospital to the north east incorporate the structures of the Merthyr Tydfil Union Workhouse, first built in 1853 and rebuilt in the Gothic style in 1870, whilst the former burial ground now provides a small public park to the west of the hospital. These structures and spaces form an area of special historic interest, relating to the administrative and social history of the borough, which provides a very different aspect to the contemporary middle class housing in the conservation area
- The gradual spread of pebbledash and grit render is replacing the more historically interesting stucco facades throughout the conservation area

- Some buildings have lost their historic architectural detailing including door mouldings and schemes of fenestration, which make a particularly significant contribution to the special architectural character of the area

Recommendations

- Immediate works to prevent further deterioration of the Miners' Welfare Hall and consideration for reuse of the remaining structure
- Expand the conservation area to include the most significant elements of St Tydfil's Hospital and burial ground and buildings on the south side of Alma Street
- Consider enforcement to prevent further deterioration of listed buildings
- Consider using an Article 4(2) direction to control use of render and other alterations to facades



Thomas Town Conservation Area

2 Dowlais Conservation Area (designated 1998)

Summary of Special Interest

The Dowlais Ironworks was at one time the largest iron works in the world and played a very significant role in the urbanisation of Methyr Tydfil through the development of Dowlais as a settlement, as well as instigating projects like the Penydaren Tramroad and many of the surrounding mines. A group of buildings were constructed to commemorate Sir John Guest, iron master of Dowlais from 1807, which survive as a historic core including the company stables, the Guest Memorial Hall and St Johns Church. Other surviving structures include the Dowlais Ironworks 'Engine House' (actually an ammonia manufactory), and the Ivor Chapel, built by Dowlais' English speaking Congregationalists in 1860. The close association of these buildings creates an area with a distinct historical identity, whilst a single street of the accompanying 19th century housing on Market Street provides a last glimpse of the Victorian housing that formerly packed the surrounding area.

Summary of Issues

- The poor condition and lack of use and maintenance of St John's Church has a significantly negative impact on the appearance of this conservation area. Given the loss of Dowlais House (the home of Sir John Guest and the later Dowlais Iron Masters, this building provides the strongest link back to the upper levels of the society of early industrial Dowlais
- The site of the former market hall is now a public garden which is, apparently not well used but has been a location for anti-social behaviour including drug taking
- The surrounding modern developments have a strongly intrusive impact on special historic character of the conservation area. There is little linkage between this area and surrounding historic areas including the Ivor Iron Works and Dowlais village to the north and west and Dowlais Top to the north east

Recommendations

- Explore options for securing the preservation of St Johns Church
- Consider strengthening the historic identity of the area by using signage and better links with surrounding historic areas
- Consider the most appropriate reuse of the derelict land to the east of the library car park



Dowlais Conservation Area

3 Cwmfelin (Bedlinog) Conservation Area (designated 1973)

Summary of Special Interest

The current conservation area contains the hub of the 18th century settlement of Cwmfelin, which later became part of the larger settlement of Bedlinog. This provides a particularly well preserved pre-industrial settlement, which has retained much of its rural feel, with links to surrounding farmland along winding lanes. The village inn retains parts of an earlier watermill, converted in the late 18th century. The conservation area also illustrates the colonisation of rural areas by miners' housing in the early and mid 19th century. The cottage rows on Commercial Street date from the earliest industrial developments in Bedlinog between 1820 and 1840, and many retain much of their original appearance, including the particularly characteristic double fronted design used on many early colliers and miners cottages within the district.

Summary of Issues

- Parts of the conservation area unkempt and of poor visual amenity, particularly in the north east of the town square, including a garage building and dismantled public urinal
- The Bedlinog Inn would benefit from improved maintenance and restoration, which would have a wider beneficial impact on the appearance of the whole area
- The adjacent church hall is also in poor condition
- Buildings and spaces relating to the early development of Bedlinog as a mining community elsewhere in the village are not included in this conservation area. These include Colley Row, The Mariah Chapel, Station Row and the Station Hotel, Bedlinog Primary School, Salem Chapel and Upper Bedlinog Terrace and adjacent green
- The area suffers from poor public realm, intrusive overhead cables and uninviting public spaces including the lane to the rear of the High Street

Recommendations

- Expand the conservation area to include detached areas elsewhere in Bedlinog reflecting its early development from a small village to a working class industrial settlement
- Invest in the restoration of the Bedlinog Inn, Church Hall and Salem Chapel
- Promote opportunities for redevelopment of the Club and garage sites in the north east of the village square and specify design guidance for this



Cwmfelin Conservation Area

PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREAS

FROM LOCAL PLAN 2000

4 Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area

Summary of Special Interest

Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre, formed by the High Street from just south of St Tydfil's church as far as Pontmorlais, including many of the streets and spaces radiating off this route, provides the historic commercial and administrative focus of the main urban area of Merthyr Tydfil. This developed from a small rural village into the most densely populated urban area in Wales in the early 19th century. The town centre retains many of the large 19th and early 20th century commercial, civic and religious buildings including examples with significant landmark value such as the former Town Hall, St Tydfil's church and the building forming the corner of High Street and Glebeland Street. A number of earlier buildings have also stood the test of time, including the offices of the Merthyr Gas Company, built in 1836, and the 18th century Crown Inn. The Borough Council is currently repaving all of Lower High Street using Chinese granite, the Upper High Street having already been subject to a comprehensive repaving scheme using York stone.

Summary of issues

- Effect of Tesco Supermarket on viability of smaller shops
- Upper High Street is struggling economically and there are many examples of under-used and poorly maintained buildings
- Several seriously 'At Risk' listed buildings, requiring large amounts of funding for repairs and conversion to viable uses
- Cluster of these in the town centre give the proposed conservation area a poor image and do not foster confidence in the viability of the town centre
- A current Town Improvement Grant (TIG) scheme, administered on behalf of WAG by the Borough Council, has had a poor take-up despite offering 50% grant rates
- Shortage of car parking – footbridge link to College Car park requires upgrading

- 1960s development is now seriously out of date and requires upgrading or even complete replacement
- The existing pedestrian flows through this part of the High Street are poor, with the popular market suffering from being at first floor level and located in a cul-de-sac
- Further improvements needed to public realm such as street lighting, street furniture, litter bins, signage and information boards

Recommendations

- Explore the possibility of a Townscape Heritage Initiative grant scheme to cover all of the proposed Town Centre Conservation Area and selected buildings in the proposed Morgan Town Conservation Area and the existing Thomas Town Conservation Area
- Discuss proposed signage with Communities First to ensure a corporate house style and coherent message to visitors and locals
- Consider a Pedestrian Strategy to improve pedestrian movement across the High Street area
- Consider the provision of 'safe' multi-storey car parking to serve the town centre
- Improve control over shopfronts and provide Design Guidance



Proposed Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area

5 Upper Abercanaid Conservation Area

Summary of Special Interest

This area preserves a small and rare canal-side colliery settlement, comprising buildings of late 18th and early 19th century construction, including the listed buildings of Quay Row and Abercanaid House. Quay Row, in particular, preserves the strong association between the buildings and the adjoining surviving section of the Glamorganshire Canal. The majority of buildings are low, two storey terraced houses, built around small squares divided into yards, which are particularly characteristic of the buildings constructed in Merthyr in the late 18th and early 19th century. Most of the buildings are lime washed, creating strongly uniform white facades, which are also unusual in the area. A small area of surviving cobbling on the footpath along Chapel Square is an extremely rare survival in Merthyr Tydfil of an original 19th century surface and provides an added sense of history to the settlement. The proposed conservation area also includes the remains of a small engine house associated with a shaft of the Upper Abercanaid pit, with which the settlement was associated.



Proposed Upper Abercanaid Conservation Area

6 Abercanaid Conservation Area

Summary of Special Interest

Abercanaid represents the best preserved area of planned settlement associated with the Pentrebach Ironworks (part of the Plymouth Ironworks) and the Glamorganshire Canal. A highly uniform style of construction was used, with low, double fronted two

storey terraced cottages, which survive particularly well on Nightingale Street, where four blocks of houses have been listed, as well as continuing along Gethin Street and at Canal Row. The Llwyn yr Eos public house is one of the few surviving canal-side public houses. The link with the Plymouth Ironworks is particularly well articulated by the alignment of Cardiff Street, running down to the bridge over the River Taff, which creates a sight-line directly across to Pentrebach House, the residence of the ironmaster to Pentrebach Works. The proposed conservation area includes all of the surviving housing recorded on the 1875 Ordnance Survey map, as well as the attendant public houses, chapel and school and a long section of the Glamorganshire Canal's course.

Summary of Issues

- Demolition of some of the most significant streets of early 19th century terraced workers' housing has resulted in a significant loss to the historic environment - the surviving streets are now even more precious
- Alterations to the windows and doors are incrementally removing the uniformity of frontages and double fronted style
- Use of render over original stonework, rather than repairing and repointing
- Some particularly bad examples of raised weather-struck pointing, out of keeping with the historic character



Proposed Abercanaid Conservation Area

- Removal of some of the chimneys
- Prominent satellite dishes on many of the buildings

Recommendations:

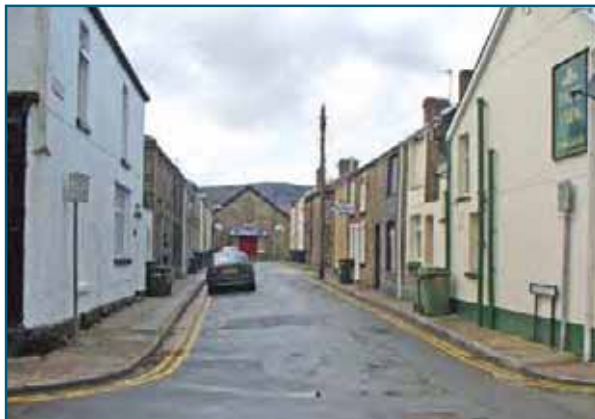
- Consider an Article 4 Direction and possible grant scheme to encourage the use of traditional materials and details

7 Morgan Town Conservation Area

Summary of Special Interest

The proposed conservation area contains two areas of interest. The first is the early 19th century development of the intersecting rectangular street grids of low, two storey terraced housing in rock-faced stone, creating a particularly unusual and historically evocative space with a strong sense of enclosure and seclusion. The adjacent Vulcan Brewery buildings also provide a rare survival of industrial structures associated with an industry other than iron or coal, which relate to a documented use of the site going back to the early 19th century.

The listed building of Vulcan House represents a surviving element of the Vulcan Foundry, one of the few surviving 19th century foundry buildings in the Borough, the yards surrounding both these industrial complexes retain many small subsidiary buildings and interesting spaces with historic association. Vulcan House was also the home of Matthew John, a prominent Merthyr Chartist. It was, therefore, a centre of Chartist activity in the 1840s.



Proposed Morgan Town Conservation Area

The northern part of this proposed conservation area includes an especially well preserved part of the middle class development covering the former park of Penydarren House. This includes terraces of late 19th century housing including the particular good example of Park Terrace, as well as a number of larger semi-detached properties and Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church. Incidental detailing of particular note in this area is the use of waterworn limestone copings to boundary walls.

8 Chapel Row, George Town

Summary of Special Interest

Chapel Row provides the last surviving element of the early 19th century settlement of George Town, which was otherwise entirely redeveloped in the late 20th century. This small area has a strong connection with the Glamorganshire Canal's Cyfarthfa Terminus and includes part of the former transshipment area, which now forms a broad area of municipal grassland. A small area of the canal is preserved along with the relocated iron bridge, made from Merthyr cast iron. The listed remains of a very unusual circular chapel building, now reduced to only two sides are located at the end of the row of cottages, which take their name from the structure. No. 4 Chapel Row was the birth place of the eminent Welsh composer Joseph Parry and is now run as a museum dedicated to his life. The terraced cottages are particularly well preserved in their detailing, including traditional timber framed sash windows, Welsh slate roofs, retained chimney stacks and whitewashed stone garden walls.



Vulcan House

9 The Quar and Williams Town Conservation Area

Summary of Special Interest

An area of mixed late 18th/ early 19th century workers' housing and later 19th century housing associated with the Cyfarthfa Ironworks. Development includes informal ribbon development along Brecon Road, including short terraces of late 18th century workers' cottages, as well as a planned street grid of short terraces of early 19th century date, including Pleasant View Street, Grawen Terrace, Margaret Street and Cross Margaret Street, Church Street and Mount Street. Williamstown and Castle Square provide two larger, set-piece developments each of long terraces set at a slight angle to each other and creating semi-enclosed squares of front yards, which are a particularly unusual survival.

These terraces of early workers' housing have maintained their integrity without significant loss and many retain an authentic appearance, including some limited survival of traditional timber framed sash windows. The low, double fronted design of the buildings is a particular characteristic of the early housing for iron foundry workers in Merthyr, although much of this has been lost to redevelopment. Later 19th century terraced houses added to some of these streets represent an expansion of the settlement rather than replacement of earlier buildings.

The proximity of these rows of modest workers' cottages to the opulent structure and setting of Cyfarthfa Castle provides a particularly important contrast and illustration of the social stratification of early industrial Merthyr Tydfil. If it is decided to designate the Cyfarthfa Conservation Area, this area should be included within it.



Terraced housing in Williamstown

10 Quaker's Yard Conservation Area

Summary of Special Interest

Quaker's Yard stands at the confluence of the River Taff and the Bargoed Taff. Many of the early communication and transport routes were forced to pass through this narrow space in the circuitous meander of the valley. To the east of the rivers the settlement appears to be little changed since, at least, the 1870s. The space is dominated by the two public houses (The Quaker's Yard Inn and the Glan Taff) both of which are locally listed, as well as the short terraces of later 19th century cottages. The quiet and secluded area on the old turnpike road to the east of the Bargoed Taff, which has since been bypassed, now provides a beneficial setting for the two inns and a scattering of surrounding mid and late 19th century buildings. The small road bridge crossing the Bargoed Taff is considered to be of 18th century date and is important as an element of the Toll Road that was constructed to allow transport of goods down the valley to Cardiff. School Bridge is a later structure, which was built in the 1890s to replace a ford across the river Taff. The stone built arches provide a landmark on the river, whilst the narrowness of the carriageway creates a dramatic entrance to the village to the west. The former Quaker burial ground, used between 1669 and 1891, lies on the short peninsula between the two rivers, south of the bridges, and is now partially covered by the A4054. The large brick built village school and rows of contemporary terraced housing between the river and the former course of the Penydarren Tramroad to the east, creates an area of particularly strong late Victorian and Edwardian character.



Proposed Chapel Row, George Town Conservation Area

PROPOSED NEW CONSERVATION AREAS (ADDITIONAL TO THE LOCAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS)

11 Cyfarthfa Conservation Area

Summary of Special Interest

This proposal covers the whole of Cyfarthfa Park, the former Cyfarthfa Ironworks, a section of the river Taff, and other architectural and landscape features including part of Williamstown. This area is currently designated 'The Cyfarthfa Heritage Area' in the Local Plan, where specific policies are provided for the protection of the area.

Cyfarthfa Castle is the only grade I listed building in the Borough and although the garden is a Registered Historic Park and Garden, the designation of the park and some of land which affects its setting, is considered to be a vital to reinforce its significance and to open up possibilities for grant aid through designation as a conservation area.

The Cyfarthfa Iron Works was founded in the 1760s and by the end of the 18th century had become the largest producer of iron in the world, although it was superseded by the Dowlais Iron Works in the following century. Between 1801 and 1851 the population of Merthyr grew from 7,705 to over 46,000 inhabitants, making it the largest town in Wales at that time, with more than four times the population of Cardiff. Cyfarthfa Castle was built by the ironmaster William Crawshay in 1824 and has been called 'the most impressive monument of the Industrial iron Age in South Wales'.



Cyfarthfa Castle (school on left)

The Castle became a school in the early 1900s when it was taken into public ownership, the Cyfarthfa Iron Works closing permanently in 1919. The Castle is now owned by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and part of the building is also a Museum and Art Gallery, with adjoining Tea Rooms. The Heads of the Valleys Programme have offered £850,000 towards improvements to the park, to be completed this financial year (2008/9), and Hyder Consultants are currently preparing some proposals. The Taff Trail runs along the edge of the river.

Summary of Issues

- Possible relocation of school in the next 5-10 years means that a new use for the Castle must be found
- Improvements are needed to the Park to allow better visitor facilities
- The Council's maintenance depot may need to be resited
- The former ironworks site is little visited and the present Interpretation Boards are in poor condition
- A Parks for People grant application should be made to the HLF

12 Cefn Coed y Cymmer Conservation Area

Summary of Special Interest

This area developed during the early years of Merthyr Tydfil's rise as an internationally important centre for iron founding, and represents the best preserved area of informal settlement in contrast to the formalised settlements developed on the estates of the ironmasters. The settlement also provided a focus for drovers entering the valley from the north and, as a result includes a large number of public houses.

The lack of formalised planning has resulted in a townscape of small clusters of historic buildings on numerous side and back streets, either side of the ribbon of development along High Street. To the north of the modern Heads of the Valleys Road lies an area of more affluent 19th century housing, including a number

of grand 19th century residences, including Fronheulog, Holford House and Bryncerddin. St John's Church, Tabor Chapel and Carmel Capel provide landmarks as prominent historic buildings, whilst the listed Cefn Viaduct creates a dramatic backdrop to views out of the proposed conservation area in the west.

The Unitarian chapel Hen Dy Cwrdd, dating from 1747 but rebuilt in 1894, is significant for its connection with leading radical families in the 18th and 19th centuries.



Proposed Cefn Coed y Cymmer Conservation Area

13 Aberfan Conservation Area

Summary of Special Interest

The village of Aberfan developed within an area of small agricultural estates following the sinking of the Merthyr Vale Colliery in 1869-1875. The proposed conservation area includes those areas of terraced housing which retain architectural details and form an area of particular character, including Coronation Place, Hoy Road, Cotrell Street, Wingfield Street and Mackintosh Street. These represent an important stage in the Borough's development from steel production to coal mining, resulting in the growth of the central and southern parts of the Borough as locations for industry and settlement. Parts of Bridge Street and Aberfan Road, where historic buildings survive and retain significant architectural detail, are included in the conservation area reflecting the importance of this area as the focus of the settlement. A number of significant buildings, including The Aberfan Public House, Capel Aberfan (built 1876), and Smyrna Chapel (built 1877), are also included. The upper Street of Moy Road also forms the setting for the Aberfan Garden of Remembrance, which

is proposed for designation as a Registered Garden of Special Historic Interest.



Proposed Aberfan Conservation Area

14 Merthyr Vale Conservation Area

Summary of Special Interest

Rows of well preserved late 19th century terraced housing either side of the A4054 create an important point on the historic route up the valley, which relates to the development of settlement associated with the sinking of the Merthyr Vale Colliery in 1869-1875, although the steep slope of the valley side to the east provides a more rural setting to the industrial housing. The Colliery grew to be one of the largest and most successful in South Wales and continued in production until closure in 1989. Sadly, it was the spoil from this colliery that avalanched down onto Aberfan on 21st October 1966, killing 144 people, of whom 116 were children. The colliery, which occupied the level ground in the valley bottom is now gone, leaving the associated housing perched on the valley-side above.



Proposed Merthyr Vale Conservation Area

15 Edwardsville Conservation Area

Summary of Special Interest

This is a settlement of well preserved late 19th century terraced housing, overlooking the course of Trevithick's Penydarren Tramroad and Brunel's Taff Vale Railway and including a former GWR railway hotel building. The site's two significant railway viaducts, which crossed the valley, lie to the west. There are important views across the valley to the 'Giant's Bite', a quarry excavated for stone to build the viaducts, and forming a prominent landmark on the western horizon. The settlement lies on the course of the old A4054, which runs up the valley and lies next to the Quaker's Yard Station, which served the area west of Treharris after the sinking of the Deep Navigation Mine between 1873 and 1879.



Proposed Edwardsville Conservation Area

16 Treharris Conservation Area

Summary of Special Interest

Treharris developed extremely rapidly as a planned settlement to serve Frederick William Harris' Navigation Colliery, later known as the Deep Navigation Pit. Up to the early 1870s the area remained as a largely rural landscape with a number of winding lanes, which survive as Commercial Terrace, Cardiff Road and The Park. The newly laid out settlement comprised a strongly geometrical street grid which was to some degree contained by the surrounding railways infrastructure, but paid little heed to the underlying topography. The proposed conservation area includes

the civic and commercial core of the settlement on Perrot Street and Fox Street, including shops and the Navigation Hotel, as well as the Free Library, Post Office and Police House, Community College, Chapels and the Royal Hotel, Thomas Street. The naming of Fox Street, Fell Street, Penn Street and Webster Street reflects the involvement of F.W. Harris' family in the Quaker movement during the 19th century.



Proposed Treharris Conservation Area

17 Trelewis Conservation Area

Summary of Special Interest

Trelewis developed rapidly in the late 19th century in response to the founding of Harris' Navigation Colliery, later known as Deep Navigation. It appears to represent a speculative development by a local landowner (William Lewis) who owned the limestone quarry which lay to the north east of the village and Pont-Newydd Colliery, the site of which lies at the east end of Ebenezer Close. The proposed conservation area includes the streets where the housing retains the late 19th century character, including good architectural detailing, and includes a number of locally listed terraces, the Old School House, St Mary's Church, and the Bontnewydd Hotel, built circa 1886. The terraced housing provides a pleasing uniformity of style and detailing, which is well preserved, whilst the use of varying render and paint on facades accentuates the vertical division and rhythm of the terraced housing along Bontnewydd Terrace. Many of the terraced Houses on the High Street and Railway Street have preserved their original rough stone finish, which also helps to reinforce the historic feel of Trelewis.

The conservation area particularly includes the housing that was constructed between 1878 and 1901, as well as Bontnewydd Farmhouse, the home of the Lewis family who oversaw the development of the village.



Proposed Trelewis Conservation Area

18 Urban Street and Council Street, Penydarren, Conservation Area

Summary of Special Interest

These two streets, completed in 1903, represent the earliest examples of Council housing in Merthyr Tydfil. They signify a stage in the planned expansion of the Penydarren estate using a formal street grid set at right angles to the earlier ribbon development to the south east. The two streets formed of nine blocks of terraced housing were built with rough stone surfaced elevations and lintels. These buildings have retained a high degree of uniformity, including the use of a very limited pallet of colours for painting of the brick jambs of doors and windows. Satellite dishes are almost entirely absent from the main frontages, whilst the views down the alleys to the rear of the rows confirm that very few buildings have been extended to the rear creating a strong rhythm of form and an excellent retention of the original shape and appearance of the structures. The names of Urban Street, District Street and Council Street record the brief existence of the Merthyr Tydfil Urban District Council between 1895 and 1903, when this housing was built. They form an important element in the material evidence of Merthyr Tydfil's social history, as well as creating an area with particular aesthetic value.



Proposed Penydarren Conservation Area

19 Tai Bach, Pentrebach, Conservation Area

Summary of Special Interest

This 'L' shaped arrangement of houses in two small terraces was constructed circa 1840 and provides an excellently preserved example of early industrial housing, which was associated with the Plymouth Iron Works and stood on the south side of its feeder canal. The houses were sensitively renovated by the Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association in 1988 – 1989 and have remained in the management since. The renovation work maintained a strikingly consistent appearance between the properties, as well as bringing out their characteristic features, which includes the double-fronted design that is a particular character of the very early terraced housing in the Merthyr Tydfil area. The enclave now also benefits from an attractive community garden that forms a positive setting for the buildings.



Proposed Pentrebach Conservation Area

20 Troedyrhiw Conservation Area

Summary of Special Interest

This area includes housing built by Anthony Hill, ironmaster of the Plymouth Ironworks, including the streets of locally listed buildings at Church Street, Hill Street and Windsor Street. The principal street, with its mixture of houses and local shops, bends beneath the bridge which carries the railway line to Cardiff. Issues include the current condition of some of the buildings, and the dominance of traffic. The possibility of the grant scheme should be explored, such as a Townscape Heritage Initiative (an HLF grant scheme).



Proposed Troedyrhiw Conservation Area

APPENDIX 3 MAPS FOR EXISTING AND PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREAS

APPENDIX 4 LOCALLY LISTED BUILDINGS - SUGGESTED CRITERIA

1. Purpose of a Local List

Buildings that are listed nationally are protected by law. They tend to be buildings of higher quality and generally date from before 1840. The purpose of a Local List is to identify locally significant buildings and other features which may not be considered eligible for statutory listing.

2. The effect of local listing

The protection of buildings or other features which are Locally Listed can be achieved through policies in the Local Plan, or in Supplementary Planning Guidance, though this will change once the emerging Local Development Plan . The identification of these special buildings or features is also best achieved through consultation with local communities, giving them 'ownership' of the Local List and helping to inform and enlighten local knowledge.

Although there is no statutory protection for such buildings, local listing can be a material consideration to be taken into account in determining planning applications.

3. Principles of selection

Locally listed buildings or structures are those which make a special contribution to the history, appearance, character, and cultural value of the Borough of Merthyr Tydfil. They could include the following:

- Buildings which have qualities of age, style, materials and detailing
- Well detailed historic shopfronts
- Historic structures such as walls or railings
- Historic street furniture including post boxes, bollards, or street lighting
- Historic sites (where scheduling as an 'Ancient Monument' is not appropriate), such as tramroads and other features of Merthyr Tydfil's industrial development
- Other features which have historical or cultural significance, perhaps by association with a famous person or event

They should all survive in a clearly recognisable form, with their historic features and layouts still present.

Some selection of the better examples of these buildings or structures will be necessary, so in some cases the most authentic and interesting of a group of buildings may be Locally Listed, rather than the whole group. It is likely that most of the entries will date from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century, but recent buildings of outstanding quality could be considered.

4. Categories

In summary, the Local List for the Borough of Merthyr Tydfil could include the following categories:

(i) BUILDINGS

These may include:

- Buildings designed by a particular architect or designer of regional or local note
- Good examples of well designed domestic buildings which retain their original details and materials
- Good examples of educational, religious or community buildings which retain their original details and materials
- Landmark buildings or structures of notable design
- Buildings or structures of which contribute to our understanding of the industrial development of the area

(ii) STRUCTURES

These may include:

- Notable walls or railings
- Street lighting
- Bollards
- Street surfaces
- Post boxes

(iii) HISTORIC ASSOCIATION

These must be well documented and may include:

- Any building or structure which has a close association with famous people or events
- Any building or structure which has a close association with an important local feature including statutorily protected sites or buildings

APPENDIX 5 SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF THE BUILDINGS AT RISK ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT OF MERTHYR TYDFIL BUILDINGS-AT-RISK

Those in categories 1-3 (most at risk)

A. Buildings-at-risk in Merthyr Tydfil town centre

No.	Name	At Risk Score
1	Former Miners' Welfare Hall, High Street, Merthyr	2
2	Town Hall, High Street, Merthyr	3
3	Former County Court, High Street, Merthyr	3
4	Zoar Chapel Vestry, Pontmorlais	3
5	Gates and gatepiers to Zoar Chapel, High St, Pontmorlais	3
6	Theatre Royal, Penydarren Road, Merthyr	3
7	Thespian House at Theatre Royal, Penydarren Road, Merthyr	3
8	Former YMCA/County Council Offices, Pontmorlais	1
9	Vulcan House, Morganstown, Merthyr	1
10	Rear range to Vulcan House	3
11	Garden gate to Vulcan House	3

Total cost for Group A:	£
First priority work	971,500
Second priority	1,918,500
Total	2,890,000

B. Buildings-at-risk outside Merthyr Tydfil

No.	Name	At Risk Score
1	Rhyd-y-car Canal Bridge, Rhyd-y-car	3
2	Industrial buildings at former Ivor Works, Dowlais	3
3	Church of St John, Dowlais	3
4	Gwaelodygarth House, Gwaelod-y-Garth	1
5	Outbuilding at Hafod-tanglwys-isaf, Aberfan	3
6	Timber aqueduct over former Taff Bargoed Railway, Cwmbargoed	3
7	Blaen Canaid Farmhouse – outbuilding, Blaen Canaid	1
8	Base of chimney at Cwm Pit, Blaen Canaid	3
9	Gethin Tramway Bridge, Abercanaid	3
10	Limekilns south of Cefn Bridge, Cyfartha	3

Total cost for Group B:	£
First priority work	616,000
Second priority	889,500
Total	1,505,500

APPENDIX 6 REFERENCES AND SOURCES

National Guidance

Draft Guide to Good Practice for the Promotion of the Historic Environment in Community Strategies
(Welsh Assembly Government, April 2005)

Environment Strategy for Wales
(Welsh Assembly Government, 2006)

Heritage Protection for the 21st Century – White Paper
(Department for Culture Media & Sport / Welsh Assembly Government, March 2007)

The Wales Spatial Plan
(Welsh Assembly Government, 2004)

Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings & Conservation Areas, Circular 61/96
(Welsh Office, December 1996)

Planning Policy Wales
(National Assembly for Wales, April 2002)

Planning Policy Wales: Compendium Guide
(Welsh Assembly Government, June 2006)

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