



# **Porth Town Centre Regeneration Strategy Consultation**

*Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough  
Council*

*December 2018*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report presents the findings of the consultation on the proposed strategy for the regeneration of Porth Town Centre.
- The consultation was conducted in-house. The 6 week consultation period ran from the 29<sup>th</sup> October until 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018. The approach taken included a questionnaire for members of the public and face to face engagement events.
- 139 people attended the face to face events and there were 72 responses to the questionnaire.
- The majority of respondents were supportive of the proposed strategy, welcoming the likely benefits that regeneration could bring.
- 80% of respondents to the questionnaire felt that the strategic objectives outlined in the proposals would improve Porth Town Centre although some concerns were raised about increasing current parking issues and the timeline for the project causing disruption to the area.
- The table below shows the results of respondents views on which of the Strategic Objectives they think would help with the regeneration of Porth Town Centre.

To improve connectivity with the town centre and surrounding areas through the development of a Transport Hub.	83%
To improve the key gateways into the town.	80%
To provide the conditions to strengthen employment opportunities.	77%
To create the conditions for the town to become a thriving Station Quarter.	75%
To support the development of housing.	39%

- Respondents were asked whether they thought a series of key schemes will improve Porth Town Centre. The table below shows the results of those who responded 'Yes'.

The redevelopment of existing underused, disused and derelict buildings throughout the town	90%
The development of transport Hub and Station Quarter	86%
The provision of additional long and short term parking	85%
The introduction of the Town Centre Maintenance Grant	85%
Extending the current Park and Ride provision	83%

Public realm improvements	77%
The development of Porth Plaza into a Community Hub	75%
Developing extra care housing for the elderly and vulnerable	73%
Explore opportunities to relocate Council Staff into Porth Town Centre	69%
The redevelopment of the former Porth Junior school site for residential use.	47%

- The face to face engagement events responses were mostly positive with very few negative comments being made. The majority of people were supportive of the overall strategy and particularly supportive of the proposed transport hub. Negative comments centred mainly around concerns about increased traffic and parking issues.
- Overall the consultation shows that respondents are supportive of the strategy for regeneration.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a consultation to gather public views on the proposed strategy for the regeneration of Porth town centre.
- 1.2 The strategy has the following vision for the future – “To transform Porth Town Centre into a prosperous and attractive town, which offers a wide range of opportunities for visitors, residents and businesses; anchored by Porth Transport Hub and a much-regenerated Station Quarter” and to obtain views on this strategy.
- 1.3 Section 2 outlines the background to the proposal and the proposed new changes that were consulted upon.
- 1.4 Section 3 details the methodology used.
- 1.5 Section 4 presents the consultation results.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### The Proposal

- 2.1 The proposed vision for Porth Town Centre is:

*‘To transform Porth Town Centre into a prosperous and attractive town, which offers a wide range of opportunities for visitors, residents and businesses; anchored by Porth Transport Hub and a much regenerated Station Quarter’.*

### Background

- 2.2 Enabling vibrant and enticing town centres, with a strong offer, which recognises that they are at the heart of our communities, is a clear commitment within Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council’s 2016-20 Corporate Plan “The Way Ahead”. The plan also makes a commitment that they will benefit from investment to ensure an attractive environment exists for businesses, residents and shoppers.
- 2.3 To deliver this commitment and to tackle the many challenges currently faced by our town centres, the solution requires a sophisticated and sustainable approach to regeneration.
- 2.4 As such, the Porth Town Centre regeneration strategy sets out an integrated, co-ordinated and holistic approach to town centre regeneration that takes into account the distinctive role Porth has at the heart of the community and its important location for services, employment, housing and transport functions.
- 2.5 To achieve this vision, the strategy is supported by a series of strategic objectives that will drive its delivery and translate directly into a series of projects and actions:
1. To improve connectivity with the town centre and surrounding areas through the development of a Transport Hub.
  2. To create the conditions for the town to become a thriving Station Quarter.
  3. To improve the key gateways into the town.
  4. To support the development of housing.
  5. To provide the conditions to strengthen employment opportunities.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

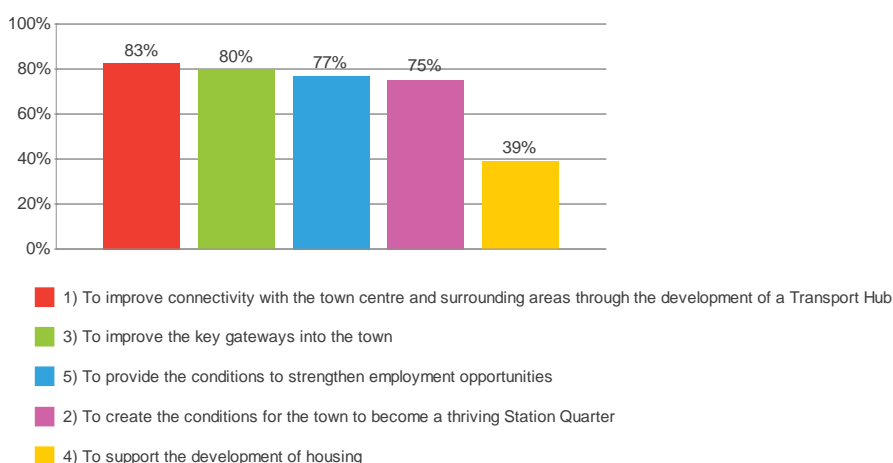
- 3.1 The purpose of the consultation was to seek views on the proposed strategy for the regeneration of Porth town centre.
- 3.2 The consultation has been conducted in-house. The consultation period ran from 29<sup>th</sup> October until 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018.
- 3.3 There were 2 public face to face events held at Porth Plaza and Morrisons and a number of smaller engagement events held at community and leisure centres. The locations of the smaller events were based on their location in relation to Transport Hub connections to communities on bus routes, without access to rail.
- 3.4 There was an online campaign with a dedicated page on the consultation webpage and social media posts created to raise awareness of the strategy and consultation events.
- 3.5 In addition to the face to face engagement, a questionnaire was produced with responses being collected either via tablet at the face to face events or being completed online.
- 3.6 Officers attended an Older Persons Wellbeing event held at Ystrad Sports Centre to raise awareness with over 70 people in attendance.
- 3.7 Two emails were received from members of the public providing their views on the proposed strategy.
- 3.8 Family members of the late Alec Jones were consulted with in respect of how the strategy may continue to recognise Alec Jones, in light of proposals to close the day centre and relocate services to the Community Hub.

## 4 CONSULTATION RESULTS

### Results Questionnaire

- 4.1 Respondents were asked ‘Which of the Strategic Objectives do you think would help the regeneration of Porth Town Centre?’ and were able to select more than one answer.

Q1 Which of the Strategic Objectives do you think would help the regeneration of Porth Town Centre?



**Figure 1**

Objective 1 – ‘To improve connectivity with the town centre and surrounding areas through the development of a Transport Hub’ received the highest response (83%) closely followed by objective 3 – “To improve key gateways into the town” (80%). The lowest response was for objective 4 – “to support the development of housing”.

Comments included:

#### Transport Hub

*“By developing a transport hub within the town centre, I would imagine this would lead to improved footfall within the town, which they need to be geared up to with the necessary support.”*

*“More central area for transport is a good thing.”*

*“This will help with development of Porth. Flow of transport to Cardiff and surrounding area.”*



## Parking

*“Parking needs to be drastically improved.”*

*“The roads are too congested going through Porth and up to Pontypridd Road, make sure it doesn’t get even more congested with buses pulling in and out of Station Street. Parking is an issue in Porth and often find myself parking in Morrisons to go to the Plaza/Pop Factory.”*

*“Get rid of the ugly job centre building and provide people that are employed on Hannah Street with somewhere to park their cars. The street is always badly cluttered with cars.”*

## Employment Opportunities

*“.....Lots of buildings are empty and businesses have left the town centre. Redevelopment would encourage business to return, and increase employment opportunities.....”*

*“Supporting businesses within Hannah St to continue trading is of vital importance to improve the current provision within the town...”*

- 4.3 Overall, the results showed respondents were positive about the objectives with many supportive comments for each proposed objective.

*“They are all good ideas especially targeting vacant buildings.”*

*“We would like Porth to be a busy town again.”*

*“Well done with the question, my answer is yes to all 5.”*

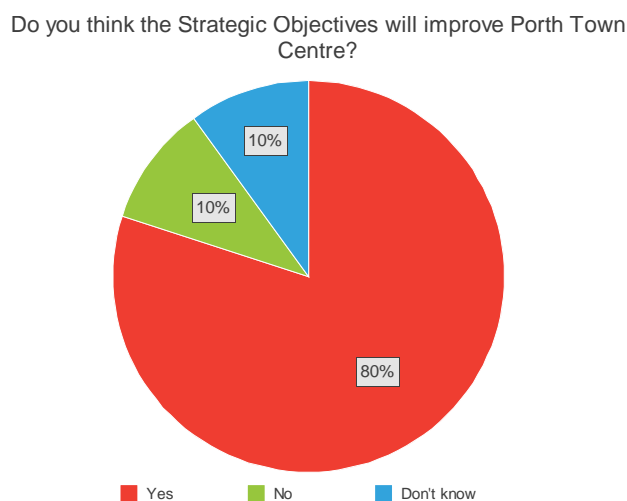
- 4.4 Of the few negative responses, concerns were raised regarding the possible downsides of the objectives not providing the desired outcome.

*“Additional housing will not necessarily increase footfall within the town centre as shopping habits are very much individual to a person’s needs. Additionally, more housing specifically where it has been suggested could significantly add to the already congested areas around the schools.”*

*“One of my concerns is that the Station Quarter could degenerate into an area of fast food outlets, set up to cater for the increasing needs of traveller for food and drink.”*

#### 4.5 Respondents were also asked 'Do you think the Strategic Objectives outlined in Q1 will improve Porth Town Centre?'

Results show that the majority of people who responded (80%) agreed that the objectives would improve Porth Town Centre.



**Figure 2**

Of those who answered 'Yes' some of the positive comments included:

*"This is a great opportunity for businesses and residents that could see a vast improvement in the town centre, compared to how it has declined over recent years. Promotion of any opportunities for businesses/residents to get involved in this process should be undertaken and there is a vital need to highlight the benefits these objectives can bring to them."*

*"Yes this will improve Porth which is really needed."*

*"Any help would be greatly appreciated."*

*"The developments look positive and important. I hope work will be able to begin soon."*

*"Centralised services will make Porth a more attractive town to commute from and visit ..."*

*"Better connectivity. Integrated transport connections, and positive encouragement or people to transfer to Public Transport options."*

#### 4.6 Of the small number who responded 'No' some comments included:

*"Redevelopment on the suggested scale would disrupt the economic social use of the town for a long time."*

*“Unless Porth is made accessible for driving customers then this initiative will not work. A transport hub will cause more traffic therefore people will avoid going into Porth.”*

**4.7 Respondents were then asked whether they thought a series of key schemes would improve Porth Town Centre.**

The results show that the majority of people agreed with all of the schemes outlined in the questionnaire.

**1. The development of a modern quality Transport Hub and Station Quarter that efficiently links commercial development with residential areas.**



**Figure 3**

Comments included:

*“Transport networks are the key to regeneration. People will only shop in Porth if there are shops, centre is worth coming for. Support for traders etc. is essential.”*

*“The business strategy has many facets to it and needs dividing and consulting individually. For example, business and residential should complement each other not have one to the detriment of the other.”*

**2. The development of Porth Plaza into the Community Hub for Rhondda South.**



**Figure 4**

*“...Also thought needs to be given to which are the most relevant services needed in the community hub based on the demographic of the area and also the levels of poverty experienced by residents.”*

**3. The provision of additional long and short term parking to accommodate the future regenerated Porth Town centre.**



**Figure 5**

*“Extra parking for what purpose? .....Unless you attract major retail brands, you can build all the car parks you want, won't help, same with transport, won't help.”*

*“When such a good sustainable transport hub is proposed I don't agree that spending on car parking is a compatible proposal. Traffic reduction (actual reduction in the number of vehicles) would enhance the visual and environmental attractiveness of Porth as a destination, particularly as a sustainable hub centre that doesn't require the car to get to it.”*

**4. Extending the current Park and Ride provision within the town centre.**



**Figure 6**

There were a number of comments made in relation to parking and the Park and Ride provision concerning effects on residents and traffic levels.

Comments included:

*“If your to increase parking for Park and Ride residents around that that live next to the station would like permits as most days it's a struggle to park near our home and frustrating.”*

*“When such a good sustainable transport hub is proposed I don’t agree that spending on car parking is a compatible proposal. Traffic reduction (actual reduction in the number of vehicles) would enhance the visual and environmental attractiveness of Porth as a destination, particularly as a sustainable hub centre that doesn’t require to car to get to it.”*

*“I don’t see many people using the park and ride for its specific use (to park and ride the train). I see lots of people parking there just to go to the shops in town or to the Rheola or the Dr’s Surgery. Why make it bigger if people don’t use it for its intended use anyway?”*

**5. The redevelopment of existing underused, disused and derelict buildings throughout the town to create housing, office and retail accommodation.**



**Figure 7**

*“..... I am not convinced of the argument creating more housing will automatically lead to more expenditure in the Town centre.”*

**6. Explore opportunities to relocate Council Staff into Porth Town Centre.**



**Figure 8**

There were a few comments provided in relation to these questions in support of the proposals and acknowledging the issue of derelict buildings and the benefits to be gained from relocating Council Staff. However there were a small number of comments that questioned the potential for negative impacts on businesses as a result of relocation.

Comments included:

*“From my past experience in leafleting in Rhondda I have been shocked by the number of empty derelict properties.”*

*“Closing the council offices in Bronwydd will reduce the number of people visiting Hannah Street each day and keeping trade alive.”*

*“I think it’s a great idea to bring people from the Council into the Town as they have the opportunity to engage more with businesses. It also gives them the opportunity to pop out on their lunch and buy lunch in the town’s shops and cafes. As long as they don’t get relocated near Morrisons as that will take away business from the town shops again.”*

**7. Public realm improvements.**



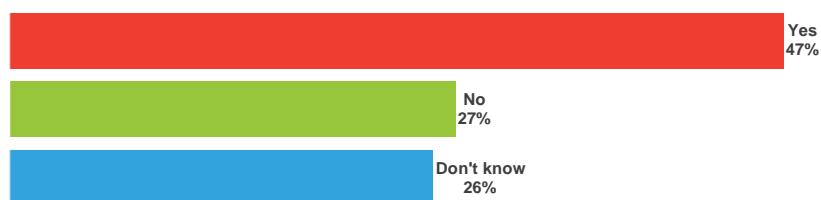
**Figure 9**

**8. The introduction of the Town Centre Maintenance Grant to provide financial support to town centre traders / landlords (including vacant properties) to undertake minor improvements and maintenance works which will improve the external front elevation of town centre properties.**



**Figure 10**

**9. The redevelopment of the former Porth Junior school site for residential use.**



**Figure 11**

A number of comments were made in relation to the redevelopment of Porth Junior School with an even split of both negative and positive comments on this proposal.

Comments included:

*“Under no circumstances should Porth Junior School be used for housing when the council finally realises that super schools DO NOT WORK we will need these schools to re-open to give our children the best start to their educational life which they haven’t got currently with the new super school initiative.”*

*“Creation of residential accommodation within Town Centre could provide more encouragement for better use of facilities. However it is important that as residential presence grows, so must community facilities, such as shops, recreational facilities, service facilities (eg Libraries. Community Centres. Doctor Surgeries etc.)*

**10. Developing extra care housing for the elderly and vulnerable.**



**Figure 12**

Comments included:

*“Extra care housing and care support will provide more options for people, not leading to full residential care.”*

*"I originally come from a place which had an initiative to provide more extra care housing for elderly residents and now most are surplus to requirements. It's a business model that only makes sense to the developers as they make money but usually the initiative falls flat."*

- 4.8 Finally, respondents were asked 'Do you have any views on the development or content of the implementation plan? And they were also given the opportunity to provide further comments'

37% of people who responded to this question answered 'yes', with a theme emerging in the comments concerning the timeline for the strategy and possible disruption caused.

*"It would be better done seamlessly than in bits."*

*"It appears that the strategy will be delivered a small part at a time and this could mean delays in completing the whole plan."*

*"As long as it doesn't take too long. I think the timing allocated for each project in the plan is far too long. Porth has struggled enough so why not give them what they deserve sooner rather than later? Businesses have struggled enough so the least the council can do is move it a little quicker."*

*"Provide timely updates for the residents of Porth and Cymmer area. Least disruption. Quick wins."*

*"Great concept and plans, however, as Porth resident I am concerned of potential traffic congestion during the building/construction of the hub and surrounding areas."*

- 4.9 Some of the respondents were keen to be involved in the ongoing regeneration plans, as they develop.

*"A plan that grows with the project is preferable to a rigid one. This is a good idea"*

*"that for this implementation plan to succeed, then I believe a strong focus should be on advertising how businesses and key stakeholders can be involved - not just the usual few."*

*"I think that the implementation plan would need contribution from local representatives from the community. Key stakeholder organisations have been mentioned above which understood is important, however it is the people who use the town centre on a daily basis who should be consulted. Representatives from organisations will likely have an overarching view in terms of numbers and figures, however decisions shouldn't be made solely by representatives who don't have day to day involvement in the town."*



*“All plans should have public opinion it adds to public buy in of the plan and makes it easier to deliver.”*

- 4.10 Further positive comments in support of the proposals were provided at the end of the survey, including the following;

*“I think it's a great plan and I hope it's carried through.”*

*“I think this is really positive for Porth and I commend the plans”*

*“Really positive for Porth”*

*“It should happen sooner than later.”*

*“Very clear and easy to understand”*

*“Will look forward to Porth being developed. It will certainly bring more customers to the shops and build a lovely high street to visit.”*

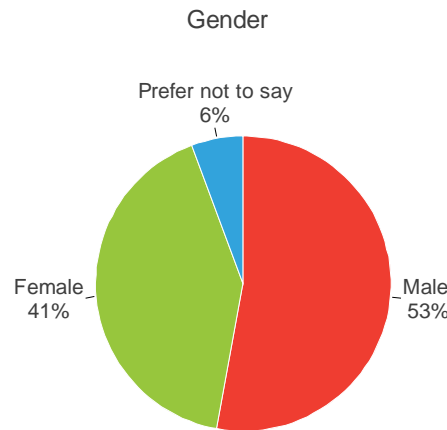
*“Support the plans”*

*“Hope this happens and gets the funding needed”*

Respondent Profile

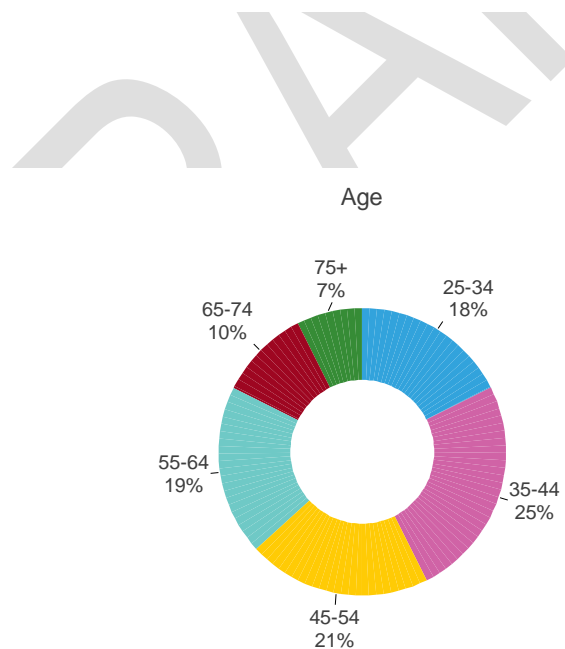
4.11 In total 72 people took responded to the questionnaire. The breakdown by type of respondent is shown below.

4.12 Gender



**Figure 13**

Age



**Figure 14**

4.11 Under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. Respondents felt the proposal would affect them because of age and disability characteristics, the following are a small selection of the comments received:

*“More disabled parking is a must.”*

*“I am a disabled person so would want suitable access to all parts of the town after regeneration completed.”*

*“As I get older, I will be looking closer to home for the facilities that I need both on a practical level and socially.”*

- 4.12 Under the Welsh Language Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on the Welsh Language. The following are a selection of the comments received:

*“All services and signage should be offered bilingually and should be promoted as such by all stakeholders. Both languages should be treated as equals.”*

*“I am a Welsh learner I would welcome more Welsh language opportunities in the area, specifically any way to practice with other learners/Welsh speakers.”*

*“More use of Welsh throughout the communication hub.”*

*“The Welsh language doesn’t appear to be supported anywhere in Porth.”*

*“Positive effect would be to give people the option to learn Welsh through promoting Welsh valley culture.”*

*“Encourage use and jobs offering the Welsh language as an option.”*

## Results - Face to Face Engagement

- 4.13 There were a number of face to face engagement events held during the course of the consultation with 139 people actively engaging with officers during these events.

The events provided an opportunity for a mixture of residents, business owners, traders and staff affected by the proposed strategy to provide their views.

Overall, the responses to the consultation were largely positive with only a few minor concerns being noted.

Some positive comments included:

*“Anything to improve Porth is a positive thing.”*

*“I’m so glad something is being done.”*

*“Bronwydd site is a good location for the extra care facility.”*

*“Overall it’s fantastic to see the Council being creative in improving Porth Town Centre.”*

- 4.14 There were some concerns raised regarding parking and suggestions for additional regeneration ideas, including the provision for young people and tourism.

*“Why don’t we purchase the land at the rear of upper cuts to provide a car park for Porth Farm Surgery?”*

*“Why can’t each Community Hub house a Tourist Information Centre?”*

*“What is tourism doing to link in with businesses about their products/services and how these can boost tourism?”*

*“Turning Porth Plaza into a Community Hub is only for the older generation and to downgrade a vital council run service. Where are the plans to improve things for the younger generation so they can have access to community hubs/youth clubs? These plans should be for the benefit of everyone to attract the local community but more than that make Porth a better place to live not a place where you have to survive.”*

- 4.15 Of the few negative comments, these included:

*“I don’t like the coffee shop idea within the transport hub as it takes away business from the other coffee shops.”*

*“The extra care facility on Bronwydd site is not suitable for the elderly as it is located on a hill and is too far from the town, would be better to locate it in the old offices/flats in town where the area is more flat and central.”*

*“What Porth needs is to be regenerated for the present day and more importantly for the future. The regeneration should be for the community of Porth and not about attracting visitors from elsewhere. There isn’t currently anything in Porth to attract the local community let alone anyone else! The town centre needs much more variety in local shops, community buildings and services and not more takeaways and hairdressers.”*

- 4.16 There was some level of concern expressed by the local food businesses in the area. They felt that if Porth Plaza were to include a café/dining area, that this may affect their trade and would be unwelcome competition. The businesses did however express an interest in working with the Council to come up with an appropriate solution and possibly provide the hot meals themselves.
- 4.17 Comments were also made regarding the Transport Hub and concerns regarding safety of this proposal.

*“The new station quarter where buses pull into the station and reverse out is hazardous to pedestrians walking behind the vehicles when reversing. It should be a pull in, drop off and drive straight out layout so buses don’t have to park and reverse out.”*

*“The route for the buses to get in and out of the bus station will become dangerous. Turning from Station Street to Pontypridd Road is difficult now as many people think it’s a one way street as well as the parked cars plus no one lets the traffic out from Station street. This will inevitably cause delays. The whole idea of a ‘Transport Hub’ is to make it easier to travel by public transport.”*

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