

Town Centres Unique Places



Town Centres - Unique Places



A greener place to live, work and visit



Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg, ac mewn ieithoedd a fformatau eraill ar gais.
This document is available in Welsh, and in other languages and formats on request.



Caerphilly



Blackwood



Bargoed



Risca



Ystrad Mynach

Town Centres Unique Places

Town centres are playing an increasingly important role in shaping the communities they serve.

These unique places not only meet shopping and service needs, but they also provide valuable ways for people to stay connected to their community.

What is their appeal and why should we regard town centres as unique places?

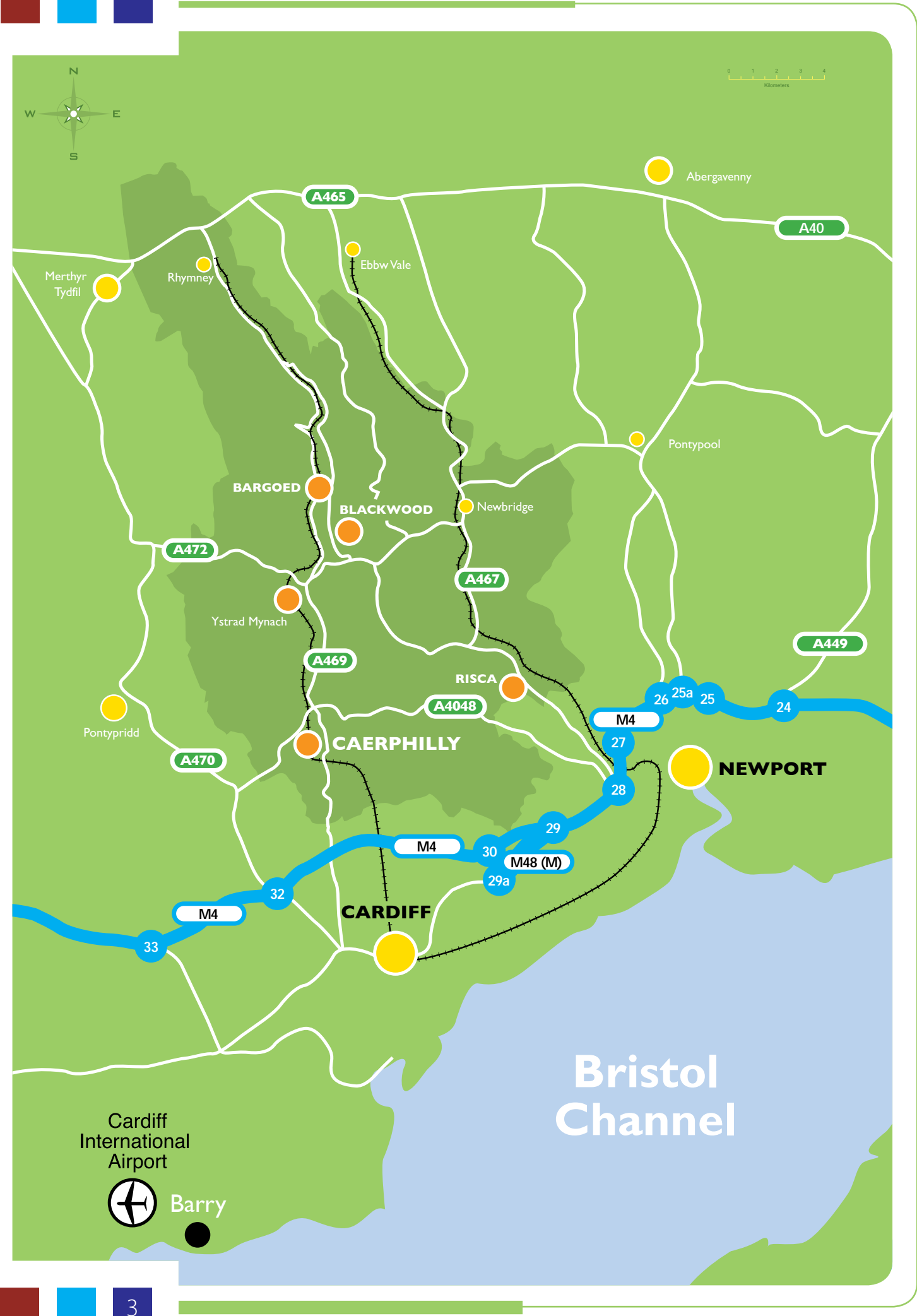
The retail offer in town centres is a broad one, mixing familiar high street names with smaller independent retailers. This combination gives the customer a distinctive shopping experience. Successful local retailing caters for everything the customer needs, not everything they want – there is a difference.

The perception may be that town centres are just about shops, but their appeal is far wider with service provision being equally as important as retail. Having access to a wide range of services in one place encourages people to visit on different days of the week for a variety of reasons. Services available in town centres include: Post Offices, Opticians, Pharmacies, Estate Agents, Banks, Building Societies, Dentists, Hairdressers and Credit Unions.

Town centres have a long tradition of being places to socialise in cafés and restaurants. The increasing popularity of a more European lifestyle has led to the emergence of a café culture. As coffee shops and cafés place their tables and chairs out onto the pavements, towns have developed a more continental atmosphere prolonging dwell time.

Other important components of town centres are the community facilities that they offer. Libraries, places of worship, clubs and societies all play a significant role in the life of a town and its people.







To understand why town centres are unique you need only visit them and look around at the buildings that make up their fabric. These tell of a rich local heritage that links visitors with the town's cultural as well as its historical past. The evolving story of a community is told through a town centre's architecture, public art & landmarks.

These celebrate successes and achievement, but also remember times of hardship and even moments of loss. The emotions people feel by being part of a community are very difficult to define and virtually impossible to replace. Town centres encourage people to have a feeling of ownership and belonging about the place where they live.

In conclusion, town centres remain at the heart of the community. They combine a diverse offer of shops and services in one convenient location, providing a connection between the many separate elements that make up a community. It is these qualities, which make our town centres unique places and are the cornerstones on which a successful future will be built.

Town Centre Management

In recent years, there has been a renewed focus on town centres with a number of reports, articles and television programmes all drawing attention to the plight of Britain's high streets. There has also been an increasing recognition of the importance of place management.

As a result, there is now a far greater appreciation and understanding of the different challenges that face both the public and private sector in regenerating town centres. However, whilst there has been a great deal of strategic thinking about the future of town centres, there has been less emphasis on how to effectively manage them.

Caerphilly County Borough Council has developed its own model of Town Centre Management called 'Unique Places', which operates in the County Borough's principal town centres - Caerphilly, Blackwood, Bargoed, Risca and Ystrad Mynach. The model aims to focus existing Council resources on the town centres at no additional charge to businesses.

'Unique Places' model of Town Centre Management works on two separate levels, firstly operational and secondly promotional.

Operational

In order to address the operational issues surrounding maintaining the town centres two key delivery tools are used: Town Centre Management Groups and a Town Centre Improvement Group.

1 Town Centre Management Groups (TCMG)

The Town Centre Management Groups meet quarterly and consider operational as well as strategic issues, which impact on the town centre. The Groups consist of key stakeholders, constituted groups from the town centre community, representatives from the Town or Community Council and Local Councillors. Importantly, they also act as consultation bodies in the Council's decision making process.

2 Town Centre Improvement Group (TCIG)

The Town Centre Improvement Group is an officer based working group, which meets every eight



week's. It's primary objective is to resolve maintenance issues in five managed towns which are the Councils responsibility. The Group is made up of representatives from various Council departments including: Highways, Planning, Cleansing, Environmental Health, Parks and Regeneration.

The managers who attend the Town Centre Improvement Group have staff and budgetary responsibility enabling them to make key decisions within the meetings. The sector Police Inspectors and the Chairs of the Town Centre Management Groups also attend the meetings, which revolve around an Environmental Audit for each town. The audit process, coordinated by Town Centre Management, ensures that the Council's commitment to maintain, enhance and develop each town centre is conducted in an accountable and transparent way.

Promotional

The second aspect of the 'Unique Places' model is promoting the town centres as both shopping destinations and business investment opportunities. This is undertaken using several different marketing platforms.



The arrival of the internet and the expansion of supermarkets have radically changed consumer spending patterns. In order to encourage people to shop locally, the Council created the 'Choose the High Street' brand.

Through a series of initiatives the brand promotes the importance of shopping locally and supporting independent retailers.

Website

The Choose the High Street website acts as a one stop online portal for town centre business support. The site features news stories and information about businesses in the County Borough's five managed town centres. It also carries a range of details about the work of Town Centre Management to support businesses in the town centres.

www.choosethehighstreet.com

PAST & PRESENT

The 'Past & Present' initiative seeks to reconnect people with their local town centre emotionally, socially and economically.

As part of this, a series of historic photographs of each town centre has been uploaded onto www.choosethehighstreet.com



In order to utilise vacant units in the town centres, agreement has been sought from landlords and property agents to place temporary displays of photos and artwork in shop windows. The 'Pop Up Galleries' initiative is designed to improve the visual amenity of the street, generate footfall and make the vacant units more appealing to potential tenants.

Choose the HIGH STREET

Town Centres - Unique Places

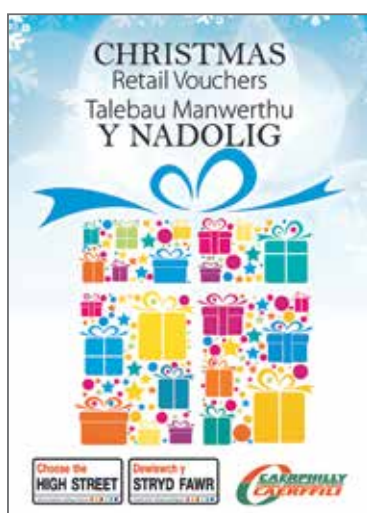


Another initiative developed is called 'Stories'. The project tells the stories of the people behind the shop fascia with 'stories' posted on the 'Choose the High Street' website. The idea is to focus on individuals and their business story to highlight the diverse range of shops across the five town centres. It is also hoped that these stories may inspire people who may be thinking of starting their own business.

Christmas Retail

Each year in the lead up to Christmas, the Town Centre Management team produce a Christmas Voucher Booklet. The aim of the scheme is to provide businesses with an opportunity to capture consumer spend during the Christmas period and market the diverse retail offer contained in the town centres.

The Voucher Booklets, which contain offers from local businesses, are distributed in local supermarkets and libraries.



Business Opportunities

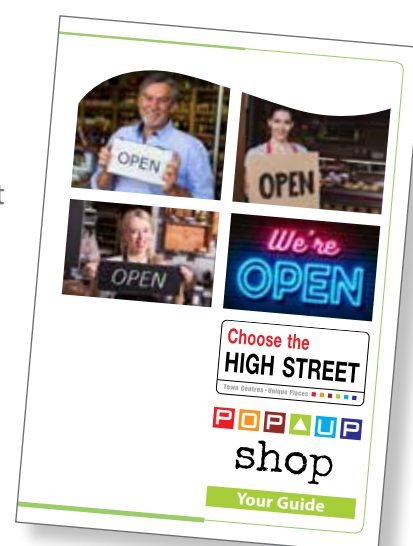
One of the ways to highlight town centres as business investment opportunities is to provide new business enquires with as much information as possible when they make their initial enquiry.

A part of this, an online 'Property Directory' has been developed listing every property for sale or let in each town. The online resource provides the agent's details and a photo of the shop which can be viewed on the Council's Choose the High Street website.

Potential new businesses also have access to information that will assist them in choosing a suitable town and securing funding. This includes CACI reports, drivetime maps and footfall data, all of which are provided by the Council to encourage investment in the town centres.

Pop-Up Shops

To help in the setting up of pop-up shops or community projects in vacant units, a 'Pop-Up Shop Guide' has been produced which explains the concept and outlines the process to set one up.



The guide is available on request as a PDF by emailing retail@caerphilly.gov.uk, it is also downloadable at www.choosethehighstreet.com



TOWN CENTRE Gazette

Town Centre Gazettes

Retaining businesses is also seen as an important part in reducing vacancy rates and to support retailers a 'Town Centre Gazette' is produced regularly. The newsletter, which is bespoke to each town centre, is mailed to each business and keeps them updated on issues affecting their town and the others across the County Borough.



Footfall Counters

Caerphilly County Borough Council collates electronic pedestrian data through footfall counters which are installed at prominent locations in each town centre. The counters are provided by PFM FootFall Intelligence and measure the number of people on the main shopping street 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Weekly reports from PFM FootFall Intelligence show how this count compares against the previous week, the corresponding week in the previous year and a National Town Centres benchmark figure. A summary of the weekly footfall data is emailed out each week using the GovDelivery system to anyone who has registered via the Council's website.

Promotional Sites

Designated promotional spaces have been created in the town centres, some with its own power supply. These sites provide the Council

with a way to actively manage businesses and charities who want to use town centres to promote their activities. The sites are booked through Town Centre Management email: towncentres@caerphilly.gov.uk

Events

The Council has a year-round events programme to help and support retail businesses and showcase the County Borough to visitors. Many of these events involve full road closures of the main shopping streets and feature street markets in the newly created pedestrian space.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act

The Act which has been introduced by Welsh Government aims to make a positive impact upon the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of local communities in Wales. Town centres form a key focal point for the delivery of the seven Well-being Goals set out in the Act.



The Council has played a role in establishing a Place Management Forum. This is an informal networking group comprising of place managers & practitioners from local authorities, BID companies and Welsh Government officers. The group uses the geographical boundary of the Cardiff Capital Region to show a willingness to work regionally. Its quarterly meetings consider issues relating to town and city centres in South Wales.



Caerphilly

Caerphilly is the largest town in the County Borough, and a sub-regional centre.

The catchment area for the town includes Senghenydd, Abertridwr, Llanbradach, Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen, and Rudry, Waterloo and Draethen. This area has a population of approximately 53,000.

Caerphilly is a popular tourist destination, due to the presence of Caerphilly Castle, which is the second largest fortress in Europe and located in the centre of the town. Caerphilly has two shopping areas, each providing a distinct type of shopping offer.

The Castle Court Shopping Centre, located directly opposite the castle, is home to a wide variety of multiple retailers including: Morrisons, Argos, WH Smith, Boots and Costa Coffee. Whilst Cardiff Road is a more traditional shopping area featuring many of the town's independent retailers, interspersed with familiar high street names including: Peacocks, Superdrug, Sports Direct and Iceland.

Local residents and visitors have benefited from a new library and community facility in the heart of the town centre. This modern, multi-million pound facility has been part funded by the Council and Welsh Government and enables ease of access to a wide range of Council services in addition to a modern library.

Caerphilly's close proximity to the northern suburbs of Cardiff allows the town to be marketed to a much wider customer base and its historical character makes it a real alternative to the big city experience.



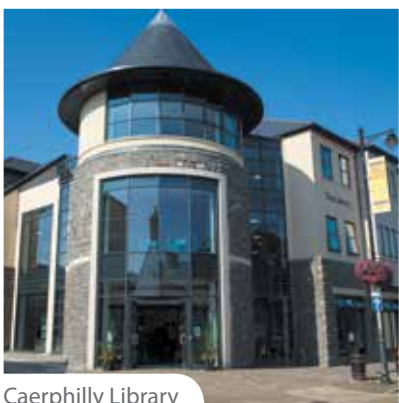
Castle Court Shopping Centre



Caerphilly Castle



Cardiff Road



Caerphilly Library



Caerphilly Town & Castle

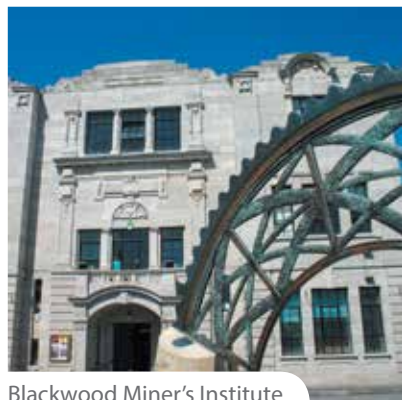




Maxime Cinema



High Street



Blackwood Miner's Institute



High Street

Blackwood

Blackwood is the second largest town in the County Borough and is one of two sub-regional centres.

The catchment area has a population of approximately 34,000 and includes Argoed, Cefn Fforest, Penmaen, Pengam, Pontllanfraith and Ynysddu. There are a number of multiple retailers present in Blackwood town centre including: Argos, Wilko, Costa Coffee, Peacocks, Boots, Iceland, B&M Bargains, Superdrug and Poundland, in addition to the five screen Maxime Cinema.

The town also offers shoppers a wide choice of independent retailers, making the strength of its appeal the range and diversity of its retail offer.

Within the last few years Blackwood has dramatically improved its transport infrastructure with the construction of Sirhowy Enterprise Way and the iconic Chartist Bridge. The road links the town centre with Oakdale Business Park and the communities of Pen-y-Fan and Oakdale, opening up the town to an extra 5,000 potential customers.

Blackwood has long been an interchange for bus routes from all over the South East Wales Valleys and the construction of the award winning Interchange Bus Station increases the accessibility of the town to people from the surrounding area. These new investments make Blackwood an attractive option for investors looking to locate in the South East Wales Valleys.

Private sector development of two retail parks, located at either end of the town centre, has created new opportunities for retailers looking for a presence in the South East Wales Valleys area.

Chartist Bridge





Hanbury Road

Bargoed

Bargoed, located in the Rhymney Valley, is the most northern of the six main retail centres.

It is the third largest town behind the sub-regional centres of Caerphilly and Blackwood and is the largest of the four district centres. The catchment area for the town includes Rhymney, Fochriw, Pontlloftyn, Abertysswg, Deri, New Tredegar, Aberbargoed and Gilfach and has a combined population of over 26,000.

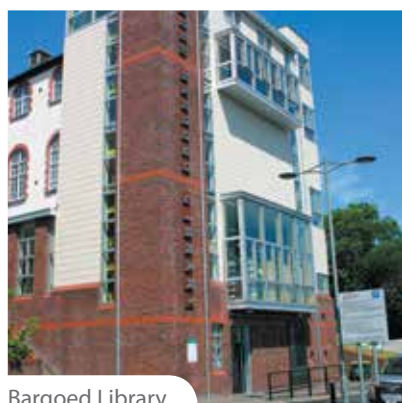
This former mining town has a number of multiple retailers including: Original Factory Shop, Poundworld, Peacocks, Dorothy Perkins, Burtons, Greggs and Subway, as well as a good range of small independent businesses.

In recent years the Council has undertaken an ambitious regeneration project in Bargoed called the 'BIG Idea'. This comprised of several different elements including a £25 million road - Angel Way - built in 2009 and a new bus station and park & ride facility next to the existing train station.

Another part of the 'BIG Idea' was the conversion of Hanbury Baptist Church into a library, local history resource unit, Customer First facility and worship space. This award-winning project was a partnership between the Council and United Welsh Housing Association.

Throughout the town centre a comprehensive public realm scheme has transformed the town using the concept of 'shared space' to create a contemporary shopping environment, which balances full vehicle and delivery access with the need for greater pedestrian freedom.

Finally, a new retail plateau was constructed and a Morrisons store built which links the existing high street and Lowry Plaza retail scheme. This comprises of eight new retail units set on a new public square, tenants include Poundworld, Greggs and Subway.



Bargoed Library



Lowry Plaza



Hanbury Square

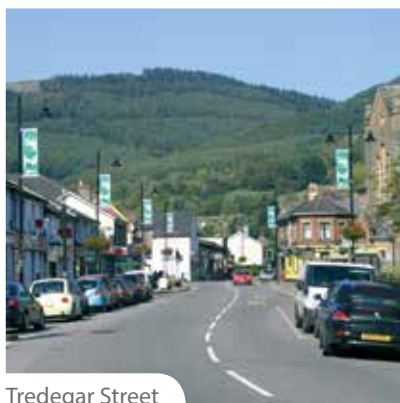


Royal Square





Tredegar Grounds Park



Tredegar Street



Risca Palace Library



Commercial Street

Risca

Risca is situated in a beautiful location in the south east of the County Borough.

The town nestles in a wide valley surrounded by steep forested hills. It is located close to the Cwmcarn Forest, which offers something for all the family and can be explored by car, bike and on foot.

It is bordered by the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal on one side and the River Ebbw on the other. The town benefits from its close proximity to the M4 and has good rail links. A new railway station has been constructed at Risca following the re-opening of the Ebbw Valley Railway line for passenger transport and now provides commuters with an hourly service into Cardiff city centre.

The shops are predominately small independent retailers, giving Risca the feel of a market town. There is a Lidl food store located in the town centre and a Tesco supermarket built on a former brownfield site. This store is linked to the town centre by a footbridge over the River Ebbw.

In recent years, there has been significant new investment in the town with the former Palace Cinema building undergoing a complete redevelopment. The reconfigured building preserves the historic façade of the original cinema and now contains a library with Customer First facility.

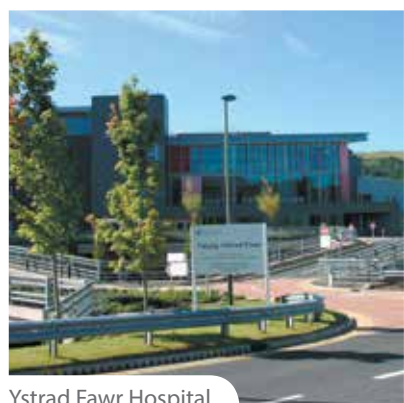
Risca town centre has the advantage of having Tredegar Grounds Park located at its heart providing a children's play area and also a purpose-built event site, which can be used by the local community to stage events.

Tredegear Grounds Park





Jones Arcade



Ystrad Fawr Hospital



Bedwlwyn Road



Penallta Road

Ystrad Mynach

Ystrad Mynach is affectionately known locally as 'the village' and draws on a catchment area which includes the communities of Ystrad Mynach, Maesycwmmmer, Llanbradach, Gelligaer and Hengoed.

One of the greatest qualities that Ystrad Mynach possesses is its sense of place. The configuration of the streets create a clearly defined retail hub, consisting of small independent retailers, mixed with services including banks, hairdressers, a library, churches and a Post Office. Situated on the edge of the town centre, with good pedestrian links are two supermarkets Lidl and Tesco.

The vicinity around Ystrad Mynach has in recent years seen a number of key projects completed that have transformed the area. The main offices of Caerphilly County Borough Council are now located on a former industrial site close to the town centre as part of Tredomen Business Park.

A new hospital Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr and a Centre for Sporting Excellence have both been built to the south of the town, close to the college campus of Coleg y Cymoedd which has 13,000 students. As part of these developments, significant investment has been made in the highways infrastructure which opens up the town to a much wider catchment area.

Parc Penallta Country Park is located adjacent to the town and covers over 180 hectares of land. The park hosts a wide variety of outdoor activities and special events including music festivals and outdoor theatre productions.

The Pierhead Buildings





Funding

The 'Unique Places' model of Town Centre Management operated in Caerphilly, Blackwood, Bargoed, Risca and Ystrad Mynach is funded in its entirety by Caerphilly County Borough Council. To address maintenance issues, provision is made for a town centre maintenance budget, which is allocated annually. This money is used to ensure that the environment in the principal towns reflects their status as shop windows of the County Borough. In addition, a small budget is allocated annually to promote the towns as business opportunities and visitor destinations.

Town Centre Management

The importance of town centres in terms of employment and service provision to the wider regional economy of Caerphilly County Borough is clearly understood by the Local Authority.

The aim of the Town Centre Management service is to enhance, maintain and promote the County Borough's five principal town centres as unique places. This is achieved through addressing the strategic and operational needs of the town centres in a coordinated and accountable way through the Council's 'Unique Places' model of Town Centre Management.

In the future, it is recognised that town centres will need to continue to adapt to an uncertain economic climate. The key to their survival and longevity is that they remain relevant to the communities they serve and the people who use them.

Town Centre Management

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