

The Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal Strategy 2023 - 2033





Executive Summary

The canal in Torfaen is unique. Not only is it full of wildlife and history, but it is deeply valued by our communities. The strategic vision for the canal has been developed in partnership with the community and key stakeholders:

By 2033, a well maintained and thriving navigable waterway has been created, connecting Cwmbran Town Centre to the wider northern canal network. It is a vibrant corridor for recreation and leisure, providing investment, employment, training, and participation opportunities along its length. The canal supports the local economy and is a major contributor to quality of life in the area.

The Strategy will cover a 10-year period. It sets out the important role that the whole canal can play in supporting prosperity and wellbeing throughout Torfaen, as well as providing specific detail on the management of the canal in Torfaen’s ownership. To achieve the vision, a phased approach will guide delivery:

Phase 1 2023 – 2025 Building the Foundations
By 2025, success looks like: Five Locks Basin is developed to attract more visitors
Phase 2 2025 – 2028 Moving Towards Restoration
By 2028, success looks like: Navigation has been reinstated up to Mount Pleasant Road
Phase 3 2028 – 2033 Reaching Town Centre
By 2033, success looks like: Navigation has been reinstated to a new canal destination within Cwmbran Town Centre

There are five ‘themed’ areas of work that need to come together across all three phases to ensure we maximise the rich and varied opportunities of the canal. The themes, are integrated across all activity:

1. Sustainable Maintenance and Management
2. Destination Development, Leisure and Travel
3. Community and Partnership
4. Resilient Heritage
5. Achieving Restoration and Navigation to Cwmbran Town Centre



The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal Strategy 2023 - 2033

The canal in Torfaen is unique. Not only is it full of wildlife and history, but it is deeply valued by our communities who passionately care about it. It is also uniquely well-placed to be the spine of Torfaen linking together our attractions, our town centres and our communities. A well-managed canal brings many positive impacts to people and communities, improving quality of life and well-being.

The canal is already well used for walking, cycling, and fishing. Sections of the canal are also used by boats, canoes, and paddle boards. However, as a historic man-made structure filled with water, which runs through the heart of an urban centre, the canal is subject to a range of significant pressures.

What will the Strategy and Action Plan do?

This Strategy provides a framework for action that will support better collaboration, partnership working and co-ordination of activities. By working in partnership with our communities as well as public, private and third sector partners, this Strategy and Action Plan will ensure that the canal fulfils its potential as a link between destinations and is managed effectively, taking a balanced approach to decision making.

The Strategy will provide the platform to make effective future funding bids to Government and other funding bodies.

How has the Strategy and Action plan been developed and who is it for?

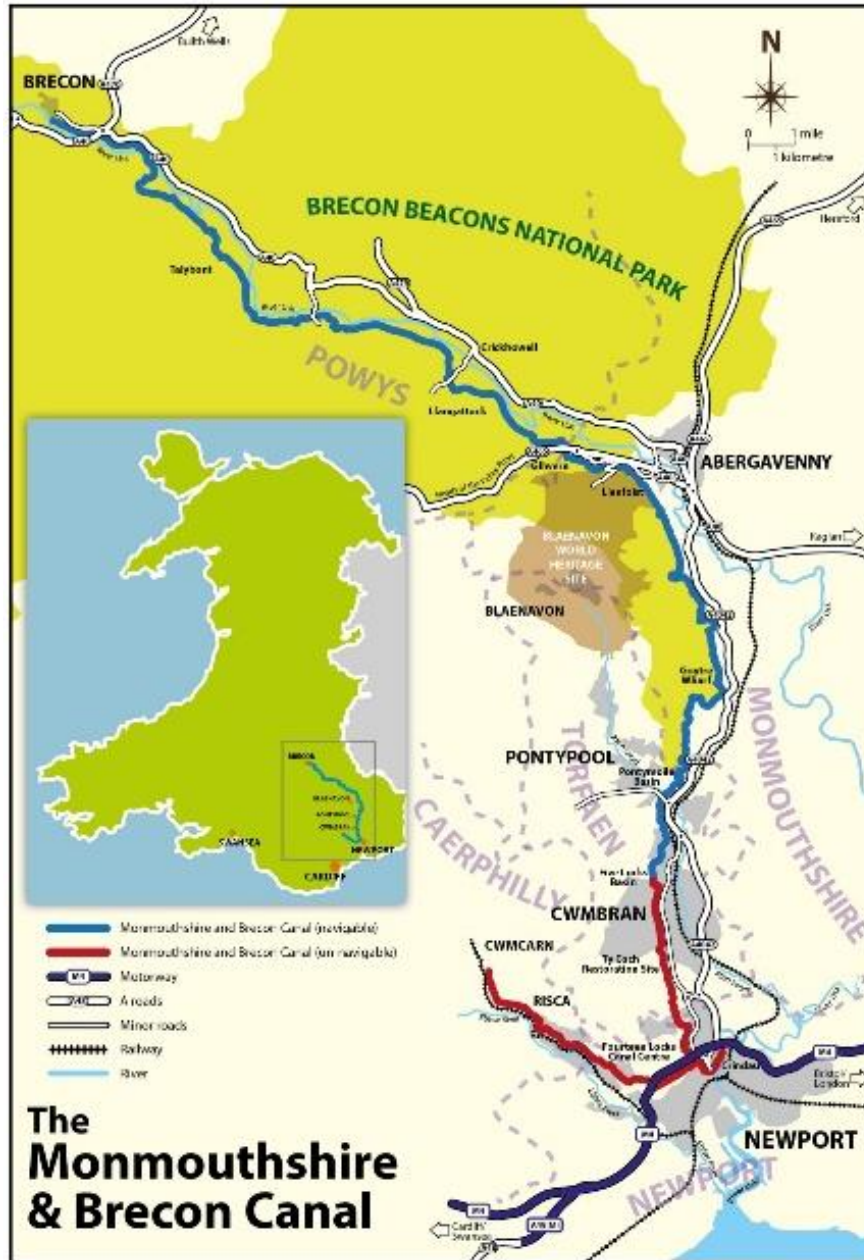
This Strategy has been prepared by Torfaen County Borough Council in consultation with a broader range of interested groups, organisations, and individuals, and reflecting over 1200 responses from the community.

The response showed overwhelmingly how much everyone cares for the canal. Biodiversity and overall management of the canal featured strongly, as well as developing the canal corridor as a recreational resource for the community.

The Strategy is supported by an Action Plan which provides the mechanism for prioritising, delivering, and monitoring activity on the canal. Delivery of the Action Plan will depend on agreement, collaboration, and long-term commitment and resources by a range of partners. Engaging with key canal partners will be critical to delivery.

The Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal Strategy 2023 - 2033

The Canal



The Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal comprises 35 miles (56km) of navigable canal from Brecon to Five Locks Basin in Cwmbran, a further 7 miles (11km) of un-navigable ('remainder') canal to Newport on the main line, and 5 miles (6.5k) to Cwmcarn on the Crumlin Arm. Widely regarded as one of the most scenic waterways in the UK, the canal is a locally important heritage asset that connects the Brecon Beacons National Park and the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site to the coast, passing through areas of both open countryside and major urban settlements.

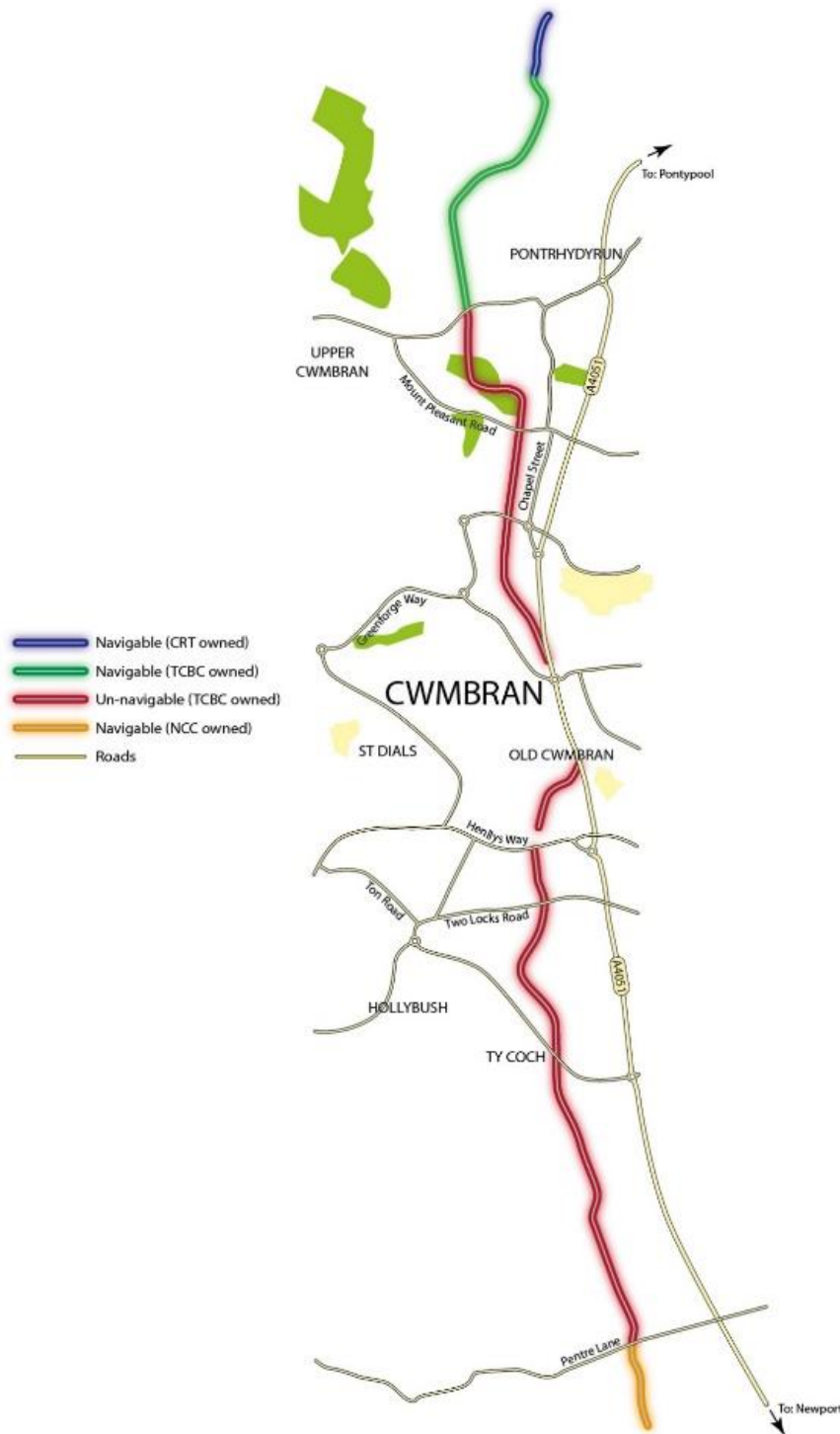
The canal has multiple owners along its length. The northern section is owned and managed by Glandŵr Cymru - the Canal and River Trust in Wales, while the section south of Pontypool is in the ownership of the respective local authorities – Torfaen, Newport, and Caerphilly. Navigation is prevented on the southern section by several road crossings built

over the line of the canal where the canal has been culverted through pipes under the roads. The first culverted section of canal is at Five Locks Road in Cwmbran and from this point south, the canal is classed as a 'remainder' canal.

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This Strategy and Action Plan relates to the 4.5 mile section of the canal owned by Torfaen County Borough Council. This includes the canal from Bridge 47 (Soloman's Bridge) in Sebastopol to the administrative boundary with Newport City Council. It covers the 'canal corridor', which includes: the water channel; the towpath (footpath running along the waterway); and the adjoining bank and boundary features. Within this section there is 0.75 miles of navigable canal to Five Locks Road and a further 3.75 miles of remainder, un-navigable canal through Cwmbran.





The Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal Strategy 2023 - 2033

The Vision

The strategic vision for the canal has been developed in partnership with the community and key stakeholders:

By 2033, a well maintained and thriving navigable waterway has been created, connecting Cwmbran Town Centre to the wider northern canal network. It is a vibrant corridor for recreation and leisure, providing investment, employment, training, and participation opportunities along its length. The canal supports the local economy and is a major contributor to quality of life in the area.

To achieve the vision, a phased approach is required over a 10-year period. The phasing is set out below, with more details in the following pages.

Phase 1 2023 – 2025 Building the Foundations
By 2025, success looks like: Five Locks Basin is developed to attract more visitors
Phase 2 2025 – 2028 Moving Towards Restoration
By 2028, success looks like: Navigation has been reinstated up to Mount Pleasant Road
Phase 3 2028 – 2033 Reaching Town Centre
By 2033, success looks like: Navigation has been reinstated to a new canal destination within Cwmbran Town Centre

It is clear from public and stakeholder engagement more needs to be done to maintain the canal as it currently is. This not only improves the asset for community use in the short term, it builds the strategic business case to attract the multimillion-pound investment necessary to achieve restoration. Due to the high level of uncertainty around cost inflation of materials, and availability of large-scale revenue and capital funding, existing plans for restoration need to be revisited and renewed so that a realistic projection of current costs can be presented which will allow identification of suitable project management and funding resource.

Strategic themes and objectives

The Canal Strategy objectives are grouped under strategic themes which capture the rich and varied values of the canal and the project opportunities that they present. These themes have been selected through public engagement and stakeholder discussions and run throughout all 3 phases of the strategy.

■ Strategic Theme 1: Sustainable maintenance and management

“Having the canal on our doorstep should not make us take it for granted.”
Anonymous, 2022 canal public engagement survey

Objective 1: *To manage the canal asset efficiently, effectively, and sustainably to provide a safe and functional waterway and tow path, with the emerging impacts of climate change and nature emergency duly considered through a coordinated management plan*

Objective 2: *To continuously improve the Canal Management Plan through regular monitoring and review*

The canal is a man-made structure and requires regular maintenance. Without this it will deteriorate. The waterway and towpath are rich in vegetation which needs careful and regular management to allow people to enjoy the canal whilst enabling wildlife to thrive. As restoration of navigation progresses, the cost of maintaining the canal will increase due to additional maintenance of the waterway for boat traffic as well as maintaining the working locks.

A Canal Management Plan has been developed which balances the requirement to maintain safe access for people and boats, protect the condition of the built features and balance the ecological significance of the canal. This will be used to guide the maintenance of the canal by the Council and our partners and volunteers.

The Council’s Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan sets out the wider ambitions for the Council to reduce carbon emissions to be Net Zero by 2030 which will bring positive sustainability impacts on canal maintenance. The impact climate change will have on the canal, particularly water management and the role the canal and its environment can play in carbon storage are considered in the Action Plan.

■ Strategic Theme 2: Destination Development, Leisure & Travel

“Let’s make it a tradition to walk the whole canal path every year!”
Anonymous, 2022 canal public engagement survey

Objective 3: *To ensure the Canal is accessible, welcoming, and safe for all through delivery of specific project interventions.*

Objective 4: *To enhance the canal's role as a link between attractions in Torfaen, and to develop the canal as a destination in its own right which attracts more people to use and enjoy it through the development of a leisure offer which integrates the waterway.*

Objective 5: *To improve the canal as a strategic travel route by increasing opportunities for people to use sustainable transport options for all or some of their journey.*

As a major gateway between Bristol and Cardiff, the canal has the potential to be a high-quality visitor destination and outdoor recreational resource. A destination in its own right, the canal can provide hubs of activity, creating off-road links with existing attractions and destinations including the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site, the Brecon Beacons National Park, Cwmcarn Forest Drive, Pontypool and Cwmbran Town Centres and Newport Waterfront.

The canal corridor provides unique opportunities for leisure activities, healthy recreation, and sustainable travel. This is not only for people who enjoy using the towpath but also for people to use the waterway for boating, and other paddle sports.

Today, the towpath is a strategic Active Travel route and public right of way, enabling walking and cycling as viable modes of travel for short everyday journeys between communities, employment sites & visitor hubs

In the 2022 public engagement survey, when asked which aspects of the canal were important to them 80% (932 out of 1164) told us the canal was a place to relax and 73.5% (855 out of 1164) told us the canal was a place to exercise. 20.3% (236 out of 1164) people told us the canal was an important route to commute.

■ Strategic Theme 3: Community & Partnerships

"It was the canal that gave our valley life, it is time the valley gave the canal its life back"
Anonymous, 2022 canal public engagement survey

Objective 6: *To support a partnership approach to implementing, delivering, communicating, and monitoring the Strategic Action Plan by implementing a governance framework*

Objective 7: *To build and improve community cohesion along the canal corridor, by engaging with diverse communities to cocreate inclusive opportunities for more people to get involved in achieving the vision of this Strategy*

Objective 8: *To build a skilled and engaged Canal Volunteer network and programme of work that supports the sustainable management of the canal corridor by taking coordinated approach to activity.*

Strengths-based strategic partnerships and meaningful community engagement are key to achieving sustainable benefits for communities, the environment, and the economy.

Effective partnerships bring together diverse skills and resources, increase credibility for projects and provide a broader range of outcomes. Demonstrating true community interest in the canal is crucial for business case development to support funding bids that will deliver the long-term vision.

Our local communities are a valued and valuable resource for the canal. We benefit from passionate and proactive community partnerships which ensures a grassroots approach to project development and delivery. These groups include Torfaen Canal Volunteers, Bridge 46 to Five Locks Canal Group, Old Cwmbran Canal Watch and more who will all be crucial to delivering the Strategy. We also benefit from close working relationships with experienced partners in canal operation and restoration including Canals and River Trust, and the Monmouthshire, Brecon, and Abergavenny Canal Trust. These valued partnerships will be crucial to delivering the strategy, particularly in developing and delivering the plans for restoration and ongoing long-term commercial operation of the canal.

The 2022 public engagement survey highlighted that 36.4% of people who responded (417 people) wanted more practical volunteering opportunities. Many people said the canal offered a place to feel part of a community and developing this 'canal community' of active and involved volunteers and interested people will be a key objective for this strategy. Many people also referenced the importance of the canal as a place to make friends and to socialise.

■ Strategic Theme 4: Resilient Heritage

*"It's a jewel in Torfaen's crown"
anonymous, 2022 canal public engagement survey*

Objective 9: *To improve the condition of all the canal's heritage by ensuring its preservation and enhancement is appropriately considered and managed.*

Objective 10: *To raise the profile of the canal's heritage significance to support greater appreciation and knowledge through community engagement and information sharing.*

Heritage comes in many forms. In the context of this Strategy, heritage includes the built historic environment of the canal corridor, the natural heritage which includes the canal's wildlife and biodiversity value and the social heritage which includes the cultural significance of the canal for the people of Torfaen. Resilience relates to the ability of this heritage to cope and recover from pressures and setbacks.

Originally an industrial man-made feature, the canal has naturally evolved into a thriving and well-connected wildlife corridor. It is one of Torfaen's key natural habitats, providing a home to a wealth of animal and plant life.

It shows a wide and interesting range of habitats along its length including urban and countryside, wooded and shaded, open, and sunny, with areas of open water, submerged and emergent vegetation and grass verges and hedges along its boundaries. Looking wider than Torfaen, the canal is an integral feature within the south-east Wales wetland network which includes the River Usk, streams and brooks, connecting drains and marshy areas. Its linear and continuous nature allows species to move freely through the landscape, a particularly vital function in an urban setting such as Cwmbran where roads and walls can fragment the landscape. Many species use the canal including kingfishers, bats, damselflies, and dragonflies.

The Council has a Public Bodies Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. This duty requires that public authorities 'must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and in doing so promote the resilience of ecosystems'. This influences how we manage the canal and how it will be restored.

Built over 200 years ago, the canal is also a key historical landmark within Torfaen. It has 10 listed structures along its length under the Council's ownership, with several unlisted structures also bringing a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the canal corridor. This built heritage has local and national significance, offering examples of the lengths our ancestors went to drive forward industry in the area.

The canal is a designated Conservation Area within which the Council has a duty to ensure special attention is paid to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals (2011) considers the special architectural and historic significance of the canal to be its surviving physical features of a canal network developed 200 years ago. The changing views and landscape setting which combines both rural and urban, the many canal lock flights, stone bridges, aqueducts, and milestones, are all tangible remains which express the canals heritage value and significance. Taken collectively, these important heritage assets help to create a sense of pride and place in the canal corridor.

Being a unique historical and natural landmark within the Borough, the canal has played a key part in many people's lives. Many residents will speak of their memories of the canal as children, how it was a place to relax and have fun. People remember how the canal was before it was culverted through sections of Cwmbran. It is important to record and pass on these memories as they detail social history and heritage which makes the Valley unique. These are not currently being captured or recorded in any other way.

The 2022 public engagement survey indicated that 92.6% (1079 people) of people responding regarded 'wildlife and nature' as one of the most important aspects of the canal. 71.6% (833 people) of people responding said that the history of the canal was one of the most important aspects of the

canal to them. 64.6% (753 people) of people also said they felt the canal was “part of the character of Torfaen”.

■ Strategic Theme 5: Achieving Restoration and Navigation to Cwmbran Town Centre

Objective 11: *To achieve the Vision of restoring full navigation to Cwmbran town centre by developing a business case, securing resource, and funding and creating a new canal-side destination*

Objective 12: *To enable job creation and growth within the Borough by promoting existing and attract new business and investment along the canal corridor,*

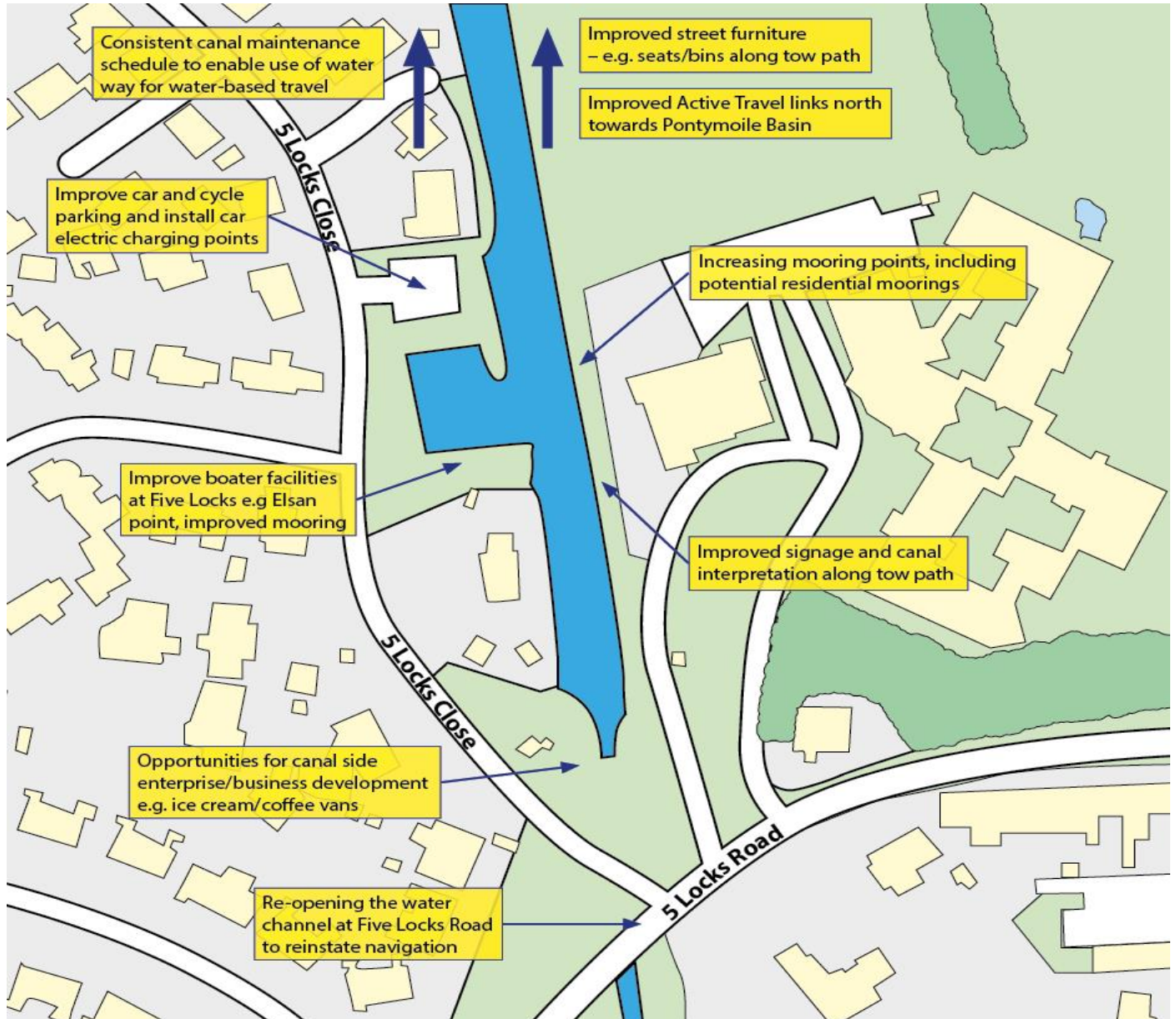
Canals can be drivers for sustainable economic growth, which increase prosperity and unlock private sector development and investment. The canal in Torfaen is well placed as a southern gateway to the tourism attractions of the eastern valley. The restoration of the canal, extending navigation south to Cwmbran Town Centre presents a major strategic opportunity to deliver significant economic, social, and environmental benefits to the communities of Torfaen, the wider South East Wales region and Cardiff Capital Region.

Investment to secure the canal’s future enables economic growth around the areas it connects building resilience into local economies. It provides cultural and recreational benefits to our communities which include some of the most deprived in Wales. A restored and navigable canal will be a catalyst to drive further economic and social regeneration, creating jobs and growth not only from increased footfall and spend, but by also attracting private sector investment.

The canal is currently only navigable from Brecon Basin to Five Locks Basin. From this point, there are several blockages preventing navigation to Town Centre, namely Five Locks Road, Mount Pleasant Road, Maendy Way and Greenhill Road. For this reason, it will be necessary to consider a step by step approach to delivering restoration and navigation works. The canal can be broken into six sections:

1. Five Locks Basin
2. Five Locks to Mount Pleasant Road
3. Mount Pleasant Road to Greenhill Road
4. Canalside development, Cwmbran Town Centre
5. Old Cwmbran to Ty Coch
6. Ty Coch to Pentre Lane

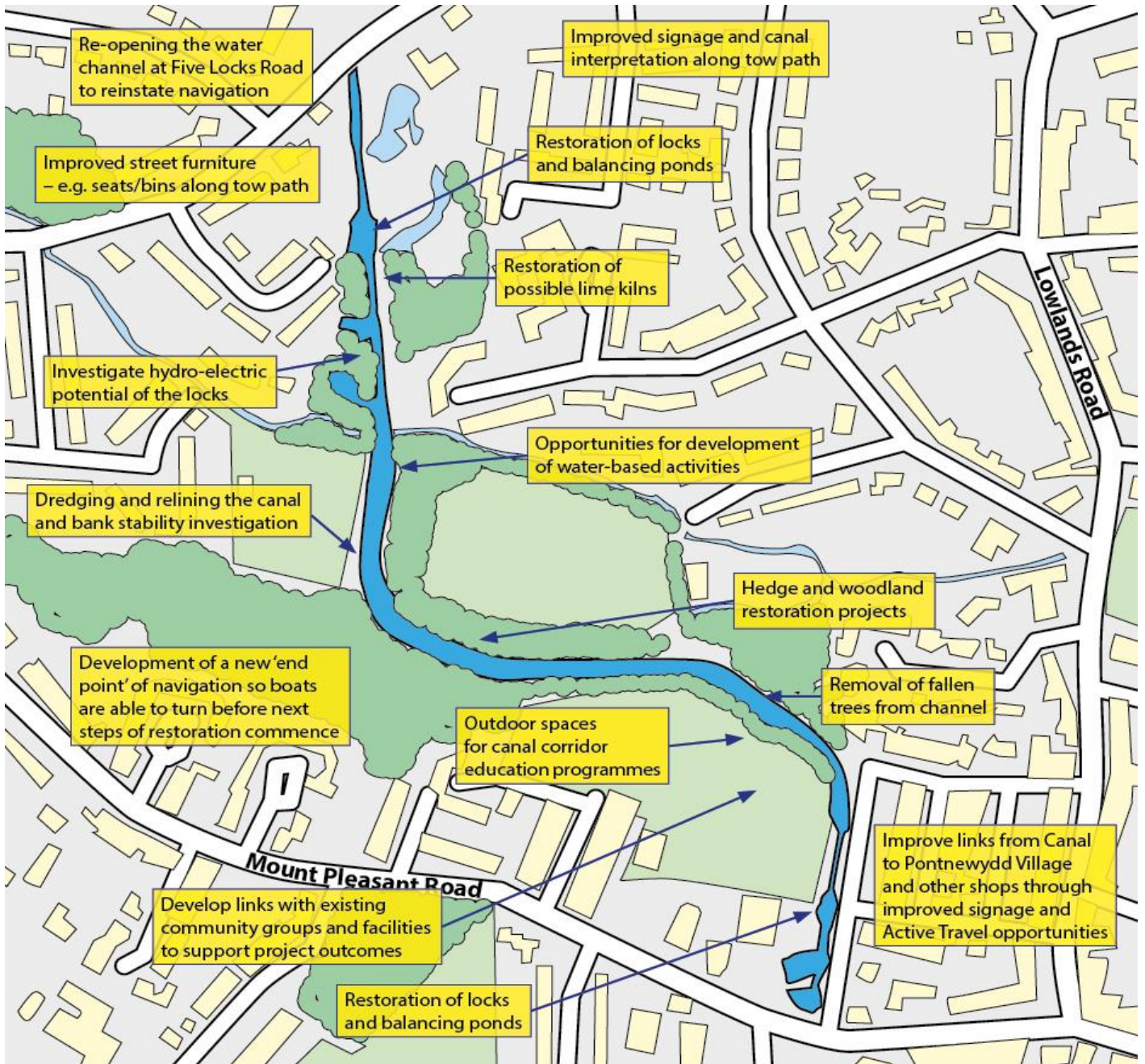
1: Five Locks Basin



Located approximately 1 mile to the north of Cwmbrian Town Centre, Five Locks Basin is the current southern terminus of navigation. Positioned in a largely residential area, the Basin currently offers limited facilities to attract visitors and overnight canal users. There is little incentive for those people enjoying existing visitor hubs and water-based activity on the northern canal to extend their visit south to Five Locks Basin.

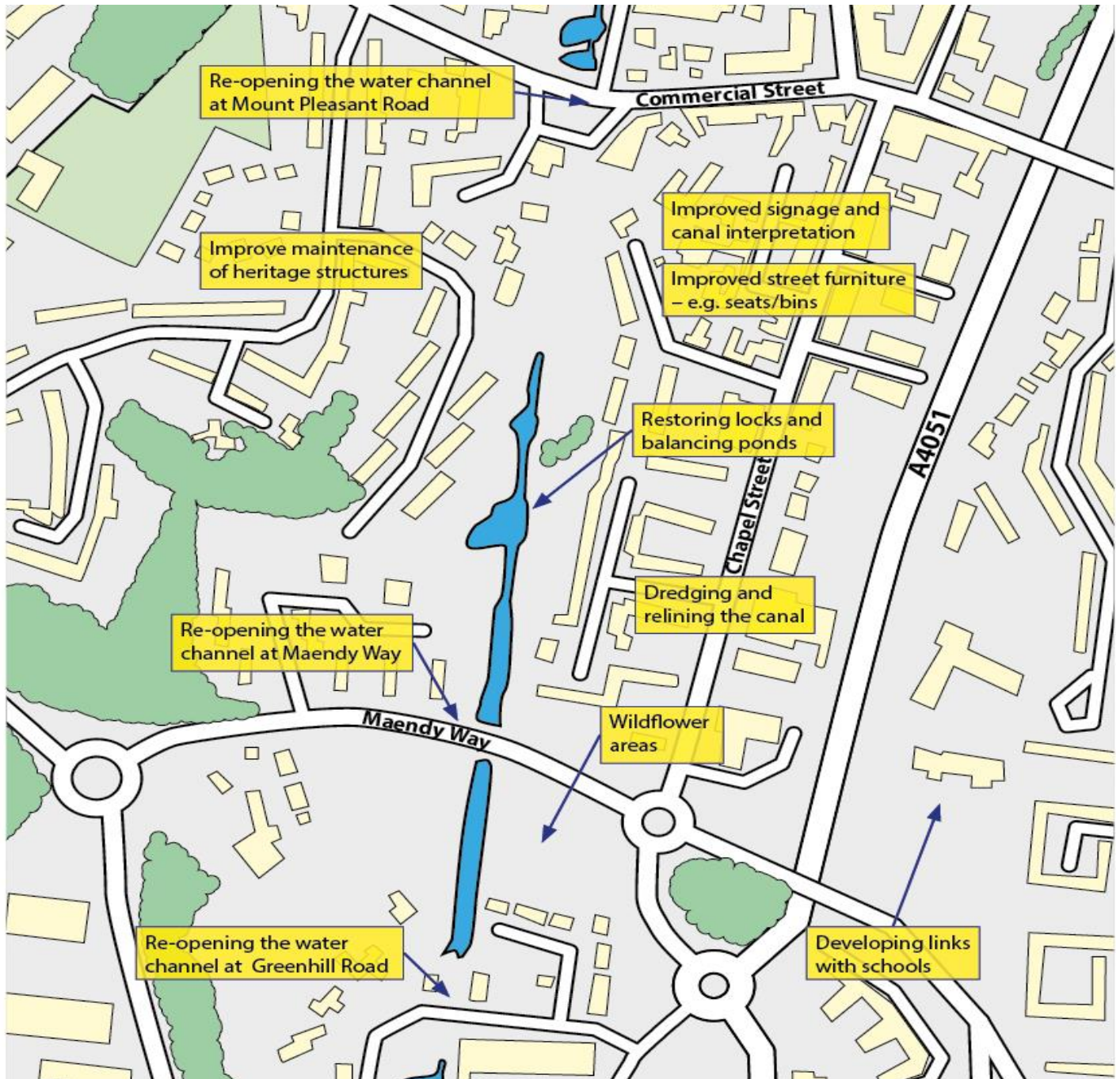
There is potential to enhance the leisure and recreational potential of the Basin to position it more positively as a destination to visitors and wider canal users. As the current terminus to navigation, it provides a natural point from which to build a destination. An established and vibrant destination at Five Locks Basin will support applications for funding to extend navigation southwards.

2: Five Locks to Mount Pleasant Road



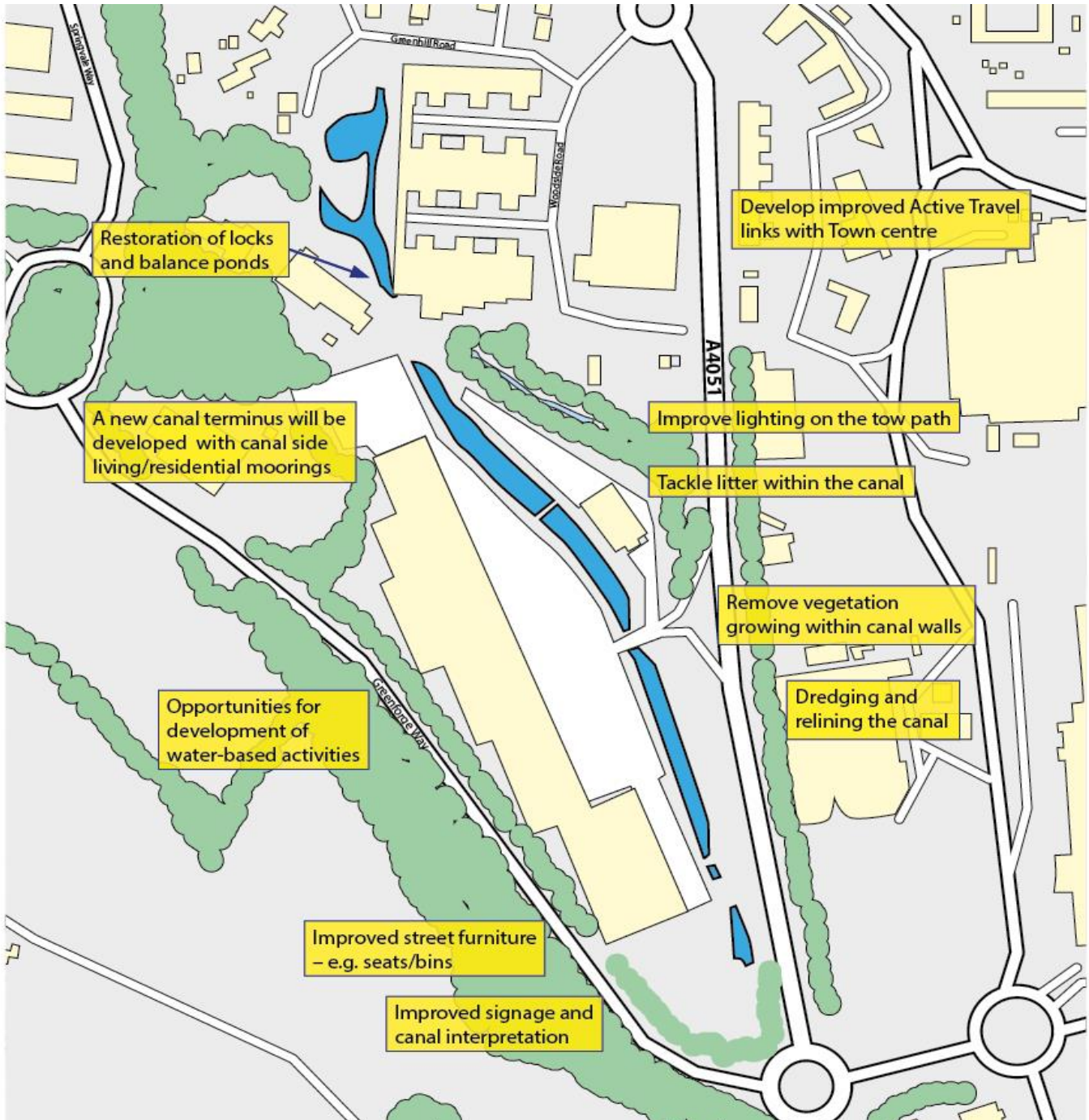
This section of canal will be the first area for major restoration works that reinstate navigation. It is surrounded by a largely residential area with connections possible on foot and by bike to Pontnewydd Park and Village. The area includes the Five Locks flight of locks each in need of restoration and repair as well as some balancing ponds. The area also includes important biodiversity which creates a green corridor through this largely urban area. There are several heritage interest points on this section which could be better promoted to attract more visitors, especially from boaters staying at Five Locks Basin.

3: Mount Pleasant Road to Greenhill Road



This section of canal is a key travel route between Five Locks Basin and Cwmbran Centre. It includes three remnant locks and adjoining balancing ponds and holds high heritage value due to these features. After Mount Pleasant Road, this area will be the next focus for restoration. It is adjoined by small areas of relatively open grassland giving it a more open feel in places than other sections of the urban canal. There is little integration of the canal with the townscape and, due to the culverted section after Mount Pleasant Road, the canal here feels isolated. There are opportunities to improve connectedness of the canal through better signage and maintenance to improve the canal condition.

4: Canalside, Cwmbrian Town Centre



The vision for this Strategy Area is aligned to the policy direction presented within the adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) (2013) which allocates land to the west of Cwmbrian Town Centre for the development of a distinctive new Town Centre quarter focused on an active and vibrant canal side destination. This supports a high-quality mixed-use development, with the canal at its heart, incorporating waterside living, leisure activities, commercial development, cultural uses, and biodiversity enhancements.



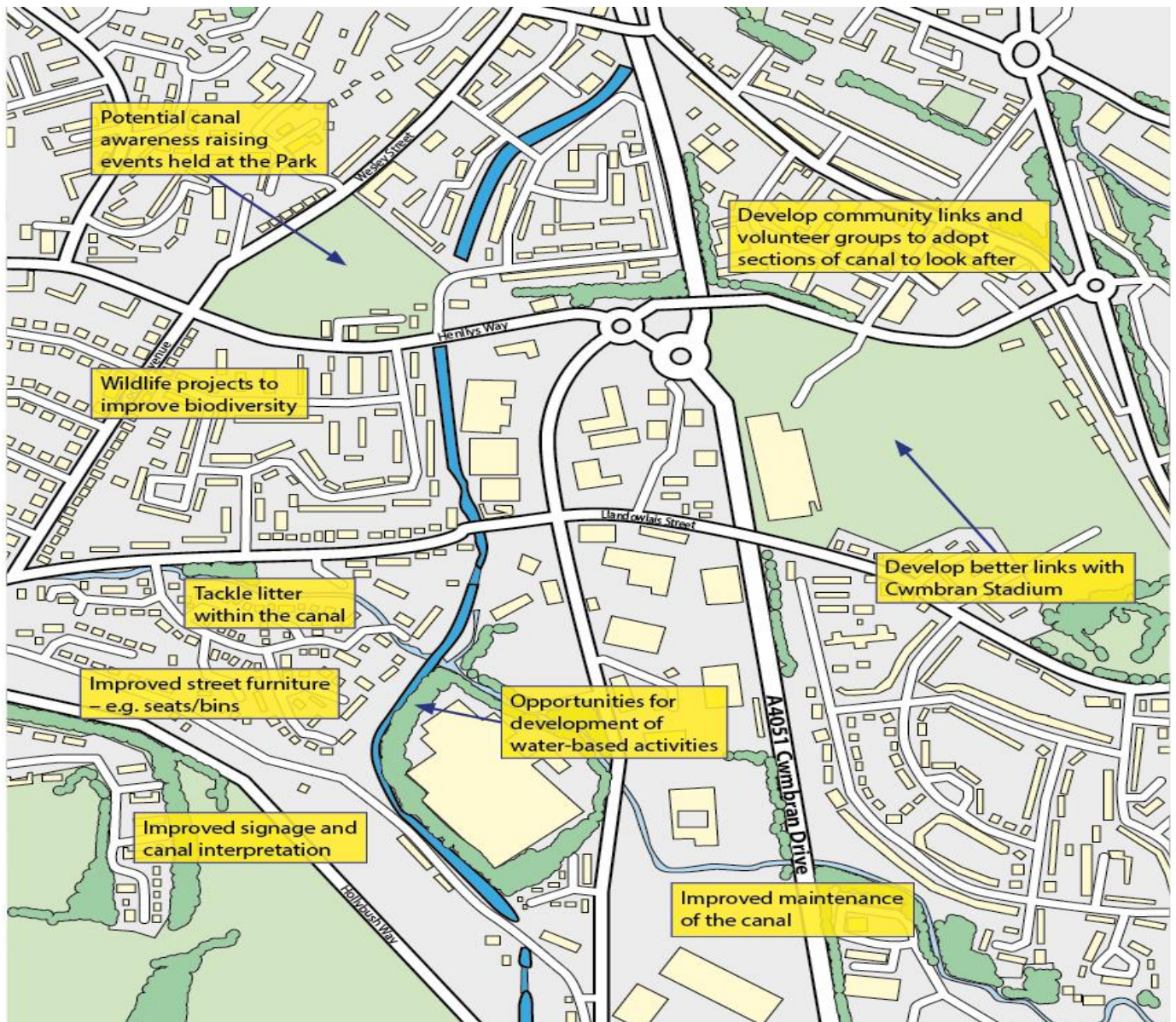
The ambition and redevelopment opportunities for Canalside will be addressed through the Cwmbran Place making Plan.

The canal is currently a detached and underutilised asset of the Town Centre. Creating better physical and visual linkages between the canal and the Town Centre has the potential to deliver significant economic, social, and physical benefits uplifting the appearance and appeal of the canal as a visitor destination. The proximity of the site to Cwmbran Town Centre offers the opportunity to create a mixed-use development that complements the existing retail and leisure offer of the town potentially developing a café culture and evening economy. The development will provide a southern terminus for navigation and a high-quality destination for residents, visitors to the Town Centre and users of the canal corridor.

An emerging Placemaking Plan for Cwmbran Town Centre will identify this Canal-side development as a key Intervention Area highlighting project opportunities that will seek to better integrate it with Cwmbran Town Centre. It is essential that delivery of this Strategy aligns with the Placemaking Strategy once agreed.

Taking forward the delivery of this will require private sector development partners and investment. Similarly, it will be necessary to work closely with the owners of Cwmbran Town Centre.

5: Old Cwmbrian to Ty Coch



This section links Cwmbrian Centre with Ty Coch. It is the first visible section after the long canal culvert which runs alongside Cwmbrian Drive. This length of canal is valued for leisure purposes including fishing and wildlife watching. It passes over the Dowlais Brook providing good connectivity for wetland wildlife. The tow path is well used by residents and is an important Active Travel route. Within the scope of this strategy, major restoration works to reinstate navigation through culverted sections are not planned here. Opportunities will focus on improving the condition and maintenance of the canal, as well as improving its function as an Active Travel route for all users. There is potential for development of small-scale projects to bring small craft onto the canal (such as a trip-boat, canoes, and rowing boats) to raise awareness of the canal and to develop its leisure offer.

6: Ty Coch to Pentre Lane



As the southern-most section of canal in the Council's ownership, this section is in the most rural and includes the Ty Coch site which is currently leased to the Monmouthshire, Brecon, and Abergavenny Canal Trust. Features of the canal here demonstrate the age, style, and materials characteristic of the Canal corridor; many of the larger structures such as the bridges are listed buildings. Sensitive management of the tree line and hedgerows along the towpath here could present a good opportunity to maximise the potential of this section as a quiet, rural space for wellbeing and wildlife. The Ty Coch Restoration site offers significant heritage value as the canal and locks have been restored and are an example of what can be achieved in the other strategy action areas. Opportunities here include developing the Restoration site as a venue to teach specialist canal heritage skills that will support restoration of the northern stretches. It also provides a venue for community engagement events which raise awareness of the canal and take advantage of this unique setting within the Council owned section.

Delivering the Strategy: The Phases

Phase 1: 2023-2025 Building the Foundations

During Phase 1, Five Locks Basin will be developed to attract more visitors and encourage increased footfall and water-based activities further south, whilst supporting momentum for restoration. Additional data will be gathered during this phase including condition assessments of the built and natural heritage of the canal. Alongside this, a review of the existing design proposals, required surveys and costs that deliver restoration and navigation work to Cwmbran Town Centre is required. This information is key to informing the design of future restoration project interventions and funding bids at phase 2.

There are many economic, social, and environmental benefits that can be achieved on the canal without implementing restoration and navigation works. Small scale community-based projects will be developed and priorities that enhance the entire length of canal within the Council's ownership.

At the end of this stage we will be able to demonstrate that:

- the navigable section of canal within the Council's ownership attracts increased use.
- Five Locks Basin is developed to attract more visitors both on the waterway and towpath.
- A clear understanding of the revenue and capital resource requirements for delivery of phases 2 and 3 with a fundraising strategy developed to enable activities.

Phase 2: 2025-2028 Moving towards Restoration

Building on the momentum from developing Five Locks Basin as a destination, this phase will focus on unlocking navigation southwards towards Cwmbran Town Centre. To unlock navigation, it will be necessary to identify private sector partners and investors and will require a fully resourced project team to deliver this. To progress restoration proposals, the Strategy identifies six sections of canal as the basis for a step by step approach to achieving navigation to Cwmbran Town Centre. Funding will be sought to deliver the necessary programme management, surveys, permissions and works required to restore navigation from Five Locks Road to Mount Pleasant Road (section 2 of the canal), although opportunities to extend navigation through sections 3 and 4 will be taken should the right funding opportunity appear.

As well as focusing on restoration, project interventions to benefit the entire canal within the ownership of the Council will continue to be implemented during this time.

At the end of this stage we will be able to demonstrate that:

- The works to restore navigation to section 2 of the canal from Five Locks Road to Mount Pleasant Road have secured funding and been delivered.



- A clear plan will have been developed for funding the management and delivery of restoration to a new destination within Cwmbran Town Centre.

Phase 3: (2028-2033) Reaching the Town Centre

PHASE 3 Reaching Town Centre (2028 – 2033)

Actions during this phase focus on completing the last restoration work packages to allow boats to reach the Town Centre. Activity will link with a comprehensive mixed-use development in line with the Cwmbran Placemaking Plan and Local Development Plan, to create a new vibrant destination to the West of Cwmbran Town Centre.

Extending navigation beyond the Town Centre is not within the scope or timeframe of this strategy although partnership activity to develop these next steps will take place which will include developing the potential of Ty Coch Restoration site as the next canal destination.

Governance and Management

The objectives set out in Part One will be met over the next ten years and beyond by the implementation of the wide range of activities and projects presented within this Strategy and Action Plan. Partnership working with a variety of agencies, authorities, private investors, and community groups will be key to successful delivery.

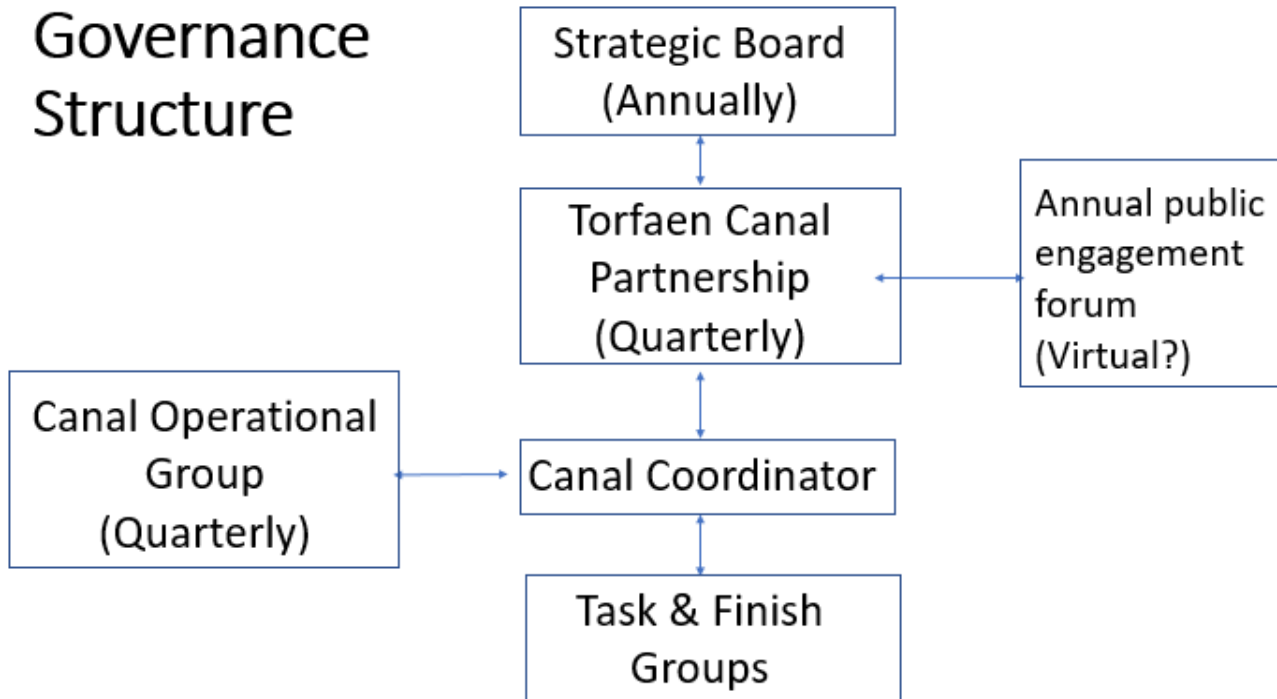
Most actions will require a collective approach whilst other actions will fall to a single body to implement. Although projects may stand alone, each should contribute to achieving the vision for the Torfaen Canal. Projects will be managed and monitored to ensure control and delivery of standards.

Risk, such as the impact of large-scale development on the canal and operational changes by Canal and River Trust on their section of canal, will be managed in line with the Council's Risk Management processes.

A management and governance structure to achieve this is set out below.



Governance Structure



Strategic Board (Elected Members, and Senior Officers of TCBC and partner organisations)

The role of the Strategic Board is to oversee the Strategic actions and endorse the work of the Torfaen Canal Partnership. The Board will meet annually with annual update reports prepared by the Canal Coordinator setting out progress achieved over the current year, any proposals for the following year and identifying any clear issues for consideration. The Board will be required to agree the annual programme of works for the Torfaen Canal Partnership and decide on any issues arising.

Torfaen Canal Partnership (Officer representatives from partner organisations, Voluntary organisations)

The role of the Torfaen Canal Partnership is to deliver and monitor the actions of the Strategy. It will be responsible for deciding the annual programme of works to be agreed annually by the Strategic Board. The Partnership will be responsible for identifying and resolving any issues. Meetings will be held quarterly and will be arranged by the Canal Coordinator.

Canal Operations Group (TCBC Officers)

Council Officers with technical expertise and responsibility for managing the canal will meet to review and address operational issues emerging on the canal. The heritage significance of the canal, risk management and drainage duties will be considered and managed appropriately. The Canal Coordinator will update the Group on the progress of strategic actions and report any issues. Meetings will be held quarterly and will be arranged by the Canal Coordinator.

Annual public engagement forum (all)

The purpose of the annual engagement forum is to provide our communities with the opportunity to become involved with the implementation of the Strategy and wider activities on the canal. The meeting will provide an opportunity to update members of the public on activities and to gather feedback. The annual forum will be arranged by the Torfaen Canal Partnership and may take place virtually or in person.

Task and Finish Groups

The development of projects, detailed technical work and funding arrangements will be carried out by a series of Task and Finish groups. The duration and frequency that these groups meet will be project specific and the groups will be time limited i.e. they will continue to meet until the task in hand is completed. Task and Finish Groups identified for the first phase of activity include:

Task & Finish Group: Five Locks

This group will focus on actions to develop Five Locks as the best destination it can be to attract increased use, including increasing the number of boats visiting.

Task & Finish Group: Volunteering

This group will focus on developing the necessary framework for safety, skills development and operational issues surrounding developing a robust volunteer network to support the aspirations of the strategy.

Task & Finish Group: Access

This group will focus on actions that will improve access and enjoyment for all users on the tow path including a review of the street furniture.

Glossary

Active Travel - means walking and cycling, including the use of mobility scooters and aides, for everyday journeys. This includes journeys to school, to work, to the shops or to access services, such as health or leisure centres.

Built heritage – manmade structures with local and national historical significance.

Business case - provides justification for undertaking a project. It evaluates the benefit, cost and risk of alternative options and provides a rationale for the preferred solution. It is used to attract investor funding.

Canal corridor – the section of canal which includes all related canal features including the waterway, tow path, and boundary hedges and fences on both sides.

Culvert - a structure that channels water past an obstacle. Typically embedded to be surrounded by soil, a culvert may be made from a pipe, reinforced concrete, or other material. A culverted canal section means the canal water has been channelled through a culvert.

Listed building / structure - a building which has been designated as being of special architectural or historical interest. The rights of an owner to deal with the property are restricted depending on the importance of the listing.

Local Development Plan (LDP) - sets out a local planning authority's proposal for future development and use of land in their area.

Natural heritage – native ecological and natural features with local and national significance.

Placemaking Plan – A plan for an area which involves working collaboratively across sectors and disciplines to comprehensively consider the future development of distinctive and vibrant places.

Social and cultural heritage – this includes the stories and memories of people.

Towpath – the footpath which runs along the length of the canal.

Waterway – the section of the canal which contains water.

Torfaen Canal Action Plan

The following table presents actions to achieve the objectives in each Phase. Delivery of some actions is dependent on additional funding and resourcing being identified.

The action plan is 'a living document' which will be monitored and updated during the life cycle of the strategy. The first review and update will take place May - June 2024.

PHASE 1: (2023-2025) Building the Foundations					
Action	Lead	Partners	Dependencies	Relevant Section/s of Canal	Theme
Objective 1: To manage the canal asset efficiently, effectively, and sustainably to provide a safe and functional waterway and tow path, with the emerging impacts of climate change and nature emergency duly considered through a coordinated management plan					
Establish the "Canal Operations Group" (attended by key TCBC operational Officers) to meet quarterly to review and address operational issues emerging on the canal to improve cross team collaboration by July 2023.	TCBC Canal Operations Group	-	None	1-6	
Agree a joint maintenance approach with the Canal and River Trust to deliver efficiencies on maintenance of the navigable canal by August 2023.	TCBC Operations Group	CRT	Funding	1	
Undertake effective condition monitoring and risk management of the waterway, towpath and built assets.	TCBC Operations Group	CRT	None	1-6	
Develop the Call Torfaen 'Canals, Rivers, and Culverts' report form to capture more meaningful data about issues reported on the canal to increase understanding and target action by December 2023.	TCBC Canal Coordinator	TCBC Operations Group	None	1-6	
Mobilise 10 volunteers to support sustainable asset maintenance and fundraising.	TCBC Canal Coordinator	TVA	Funding	1-6	
Objective 2: To continuously improve the Canal Management Plan through regular monitoring and review					

Identify and agree monitoring criteria for the Canal Management Plan by October 2023	TCBC Canal Operations Group	-	None	1-6	
Install monitoring equipment by December 2024 that supports greater understanding and awareness of how the canal is used enabling active and effective management and maintenance.	TCBC Canal Coordinator	-	Funding	1-6	
Objective 3: To ensure the Canal is accessible, welcoming, and safe for all through delivery of specific project interventions.					
Work with businesses, partners, and officers to install 10 items of replacement or new canal street furniture, prioritised based on the condition of street furniture along the canal.	Task & Finish Group (Access)	Torfaen Canal Partnership, Canal Operations Group	Funding	1-6	
Secure funding to resurface and widen the tow path where identified as a priority	Task & Finish Group (Access)		Funding	1-6	
Support 10 community volunteers to undertake canal litter picks as part of the Council's Litter and Fly-tipping Strategy.	TCBC Litter and Fly-tipping Prevention Officer	TVA	Funding	1-6	
Produce an education campaign to reduce litter and dog fouling on the tow path by December 2024.	TCBC Canal Operations Group	Keep Wales Tidy TCBC Comms	Funding	1-6	
Identify hot spots of antisocial behaviour and deliver an awareness raising campaign by December 2024	Task & Finish Group (Access)	Gwent Police, TCBC Community Safety	None	1-6	
Objective 4: To enhance the canal's role as a link between attractions in Torfaen, and to develop the canal as a destination in its own right which attracts more people to use and enjoy it through the development of a leisure offer which integrates the waterway.					
By December 2024, deliver marketing campaign in canal communities to promote the opportunities for local people to participate in canal opportunities as well as seeing the canal as a place to visit.	TCBC Canal Coordinator	Torfaen Canal Partnership	Funding	1-6	
Install 3 community art features to enhance the sense of place for local communities	TCBC Canal Coordinator	Torfaen Canal Partnership Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre Coleg Gwent	Funding	1-6	

Finalise the masterplan by September 2023 to inform development of Five Locks Basin as a visitor and community canal hub	Task & Finish Group (Five Locks)	Torfaen Canal Partnership TCBC Strategic Regeneration Team.	Funding	1	
Implement projects identified in the agreed Five Locks Masterplan: possible projects include Elsan point installation, new toilet/shower room, mooring improvements, better signage, more seating areas, and electric vehicle charging points by December 2024.	TCBC Canal Coordinator	Torfaen Canal Partnership TCBC Strategic Regeneration Team. TCBC External Funding Team Funding partners.	Funding	1	
By September 2023, develop a brand for the Canal destination which will be used in all social media/print/literature/street furniture/exhibitions etc.	Task & Finish Group (Access)	-	None	1-6	
Develop opportunities with 3 boat hire companies which will result in an increase in the number of their customers visiting the Torfaen owned section of canal.	Torfaen Canal Partnership	-	Company engagement	1	
Replace all the missing canal bridge number plaques within the Torfaen owned section of canal by December 2024	TCBC Canal Coordinator	Torfaen Canal Partnership	Funding	1-6	
Objective 5: To improve the canal as a strategic travel route by increasing opportunities for people to use sustainable transport options for all or some of their journey.					
Improve facilities for cycle parking at 2 key access points and in public car parks on and adjacent to the canal.	Task and Finish Group (Access)	-	None	1-6	
Develop and promote a walking route to link Pontymoile Basin with Pontypool Town Centre, taking advantage of the new Levelling Up Fund Town centre improvements.	TCBC Canal Coordinator	TCBC Strategic Regeneration Team TCBC Active Travel CRT	Funding	Pontymoile	
Promote existing walking and cycling routes linking the canal to the Sustrans Pontypool to Blaenavon Cycle Route 49 to encourage	TCBC Canal Coordinator	TCBC Strategic Regeneration Team	Funding	Pontymoile and north	

footfall through Pontypool Town Centre and other existing walking routes to the Blaenavon World Heritage Site.		TCBC Active Travel CRT			
Promote availability of local facilities (shops, toilets, doctors etc) to people visiting by boat at key areas including Pontymoile Basin and Five Locks (and mooring points in between) by providing updated information to boat hire companies and improving wayfinding.	TCBC Canal Coordinator			Pontymoile 1-6	
Objective 6: To support a partnership approach to implementing, delivering, communicating, and monitoring the Strategic Action Plan by implementing a governance framework					
Establish the governance structure with schedules of meetings prepared and shared a year in advance	TCBC Canal Coordinator	-	None	1-6	
Develop and update Terms of Reference by July 2023 to support the Governance Structure to define clear roles and responsibilities and feedback mechanisms	TCBC Canal Coordinator	-	None	1-6	
Prepare and implement Communication Plan by July 2023 to agree a shared approach to communication with key partners and the public.	TCBC Canal Partnership	-	None	1-6	
Objective 7: To build and improve community cohesion along the canal corridor, by engaging with diverse communities to cocreate inclusive opportunities for more people to get involved in achieving the vision of this Strategy					
Establish an annual programme of community engagement sessions and events and ensure these are advertised on TCBC corporate website and Connect Torfaen and through partner social media and websites.	Torfaen Canal Partnership	TCBC Operations Group	Funding	1-6	
Objective 8: To build a skilled and engaged Canal Volunteer network and programme of work that supports the sustainable management of the canal corridor by taking coordinated approach to activity.					
Establish a Canal Volunteer Programme by August 2023 to identify which tasks volunteers can undertake highlighting training requirements, health and safety considerations, equipment, and facilities requirements for volunteers and to identify funding requirements.	Task and Finish Group (Volunteers)	Torfaen Alliance MBACT	Voluntary None	1-6	

Objective 9: To improve the condition of all the canal's heritage by ensuring its preservation and enhancement is appropriately considered and managed.					
Train 6 members of the Torfaen Canal Partnership or local community members to enhance heritage expertise. By December 2024, create a built heritage asset register to prioritise repairs for built structures on the canal and to identify opportunities for community participation.	Torfaen Canal Partnership	Cadw, NLHF, CRT, MBACT	Funding	1-6	
Undertake full ecological survey of the canal (navigable and remainder sections) by December 2024 to gather baseline data for biodiversity within the channel and along the canal corridor to inform ongoing management and to inform future restoration/navigation feasibility and design work	TCBC Operations Group TCBC Ecologists	NRW, NLHF	Funding	1-6	
Arrange volunteer 'Balsam Bashing' days to tackle the invasive Himalayan Balsam from the Torfaen canal.	TCBC Canal Coordinator TCBC Ecologist	Keep Wales Tidy	None	1-6	
Objective 10: To raise the profile of the canal's heritage significance to support greater appreciation and knowledge through community engagement and information sharing.					
Develop and install a local history and wellbeing trail on the canal towpath.	Bridge 46 to Five Locks Canal Group	TCBC Operations Group	Funding	1-6	
Link with 3 schools within walking distance from canal to develop opportunities to use the canal to support the curriculum.	Torfaen Canal Partnership		School engagement	1-6	
Develop and deliver species identification training and workshops for communities e.g. Amphibian identification workshops, canal wildflower identification walks, bat surveys	TCBC Canal Operations Group	TCBC Canal Coordinator	Funding	1-6	
Objective 11: To achieve the Vision of restoring full navigation to Cwmbran town centre by developing a business case, securing resource, and funding and creating a new canal-side destination					
Ascertain ownership and access rights for land required for restoration scheme and contact any individuals affected by the plans.	TCBC Canal Coordinator	Torfaen Canal Partnership TCBC Asset Management	None	1,2,3,4	
Produce a comprehensive report for each canal Strategy Area that outlines all practical tasks required for restoration and navigation	TCBC Canal Coordinator	TCBC Canal Operations Group	Funding	1,2,3,4	

including which surveys (e.g. flood risk and water management), which plans, and which permissions are required. To include indicative timescales, associated costs to commission the surveys and plans, and the further resources required for bid development and delivery.	TCBC Strategic Regeneration Team.	Torfaen Canal Partnership External design/engineering/cost consultancy services.			
Develop a Fundraising Strategy by December 2024 to fund the step by step restoration work packages.	TCBC Canal Coordinator TCBC Strategic Regeneration Team.	TCBC External Funding Team Funding partners. External design/engineering/cost consultancy services.	None	1,2,3,4	

Objective 12: To enable job creation and growth within the Borough by promoting existing and attract new business and investment along the canal corridor,

Develop a canal investment prospectus with small- and large-scale opportunities for businesses to invest directly in the canal – e.g. sponsor a bench, sponsor 1km of tow path, rent a pitch for a mobile café, lease of moorings	TCBC Canal Coordinator TCBC Strategic Regeneration Team	Local businesses TCBC Economic Development Team	None	1-6	
Develop links and explore interest and opportunities with small businesses, focusing on the canal's Strategic Action areas to encourage integration of the canal in market and business planning.	TCBC Regeneration	Local businesses Canal partners.	None	1-6	

PHASE 2: (2025-2028) Moving Towards Restoration

Action	Lead	Partners	Dependencies	Relevant Section/s of Canal	Theme
Objective 1: To manage the canal asset efficiently, effectively, and sustainably to provide a safe and functional waterway and tow path, with the emerging impacts of climate change and nature emergency duly considered through a coordinated management plan					
Identify opportunities to improve the management of green spaces on and around the canal.	TCBC Operations Group	-	None	1-6	

Investigate the potential contributions the canal can make towards achieving the Council's target to be net zero carbon by 2030 e.g. opportunities for renewable energy including micro hydro-electric power.	TCBC Canal Coordinator	-	Funding	1-6	
Objective 2: To continuously improve the Canal Management Plan through regular monitoring and review					
Update the Management Plan at each key large-scale restoration phase.	TCBC Canal Operations Group	-	None	1-6	
Objective 3: To ensure the Canal is accessible, welcoming, and safe for all through delivery of specific project interventions.					
Review of opportunities to increase lighting on the towpath in line with wider TCBC lighting policies. Deliver based on outcomes of review.	TCBC Canal Coordinator	Task and Finish Group	Funding	1-6	
Objective 4: To enhance the canal's role as a link between attractions in Torfaen, and to develop the canal as a destination in its own right which attracts more people to use and enjoy it through the development of a leisure offer which integrates the waterway.					
Develop opportunities to introduce boats to sections of the remainder canal – e.g. canoe, paddle board, rowing boats. Include a review of storage, access, safety facilities.	TCBC Canal Operations Group	-	Funding	2-6	
Objective 5: To improve the canal as a strategic travel route by increasing opportunities for people to use sustainable transport options for all or some of their journey.					
Implement and deliver Active Travel Road crossing improvements programme.	TCBC Active Travel	-	Funding	1-6	
Objective 6: To support a partnership approach to implementing, delivering, communicating, and monitoring the Strategic Action Plan by implementing a governance framework					
Review Governance Structure to ensure it is fit for purpose for delivering anticipated large-scale restoration projects, explore delivery models and legal frameworks for delivery and ongoing operational activity.	TCBC Canal Coordinator	-	None	1-6	
Objective 7: To build and improve community cohesion along the canal corridor, by engaging with diverse communities to cocreate inclusive opportunities for more people to get involved in achieving the vision of this Strategy					
Undertake an annual public engagement session will be arranged for people to ask questions about the delivery of the strategy.	Torfaen Canal Partnership	-	None	1-6	

Objective 8: To build a skilled and engaged Canal Volunteer network and programme of work that supports the sustainable management of the canal corridor by taking coordinated approach to activity.					
Develop and seek funding for a volunteer skills and development project which will continue to build the base of volunteers and increase skills. Volunteer activity will be guided by the built heritage asset register and ecological opportunity mapping. To include, where possible, a Volunteer Supervisor post to lead the project.	Task and Finish Group (Volunteers)	Torfaen Voluntary Alliance MBACT	Funding	1-6	
Objective 9: To improve the condition of all the canal's heritage by ensuring its preservation and enhancement is appropriately considered and managed.					
Objective 10: To raise the profile of the canal's heritage significance to support greater appreciation and knowledge through community engagement and information sharing.					
Develop an oral history project to capture spoken history of the Torfaen canal to save for future generations and to share with communities. Seek funding to deliver.	Torfaen Canal Partnership		Funding	1-6	
Develop exhibition of canal heritage.	TCBC Canal Coordinator	Torfaen Museum, Community, NLHF	Funding	1-6	
Objective 11: To achieve the Vision of restoring full navigation to Cwmbran town centre by developing a business case, securing resource, and funding and creating a new canal-side destination					
Prepare a business case including economic / social / environmental case for investment to support funding bids that deliver restoration and navigation works from Five Locks to Cwmbran Town Centre.	TCBC Canal Coordinator TCBC Strategic Regeneration Team.	Torfaen Canal Partnership External socio-economic consultancy services.	Funding	1-4	
Prepare full design and cost work packages for each canal Strategy Area to enable step by step/full delivery of navigation to Cwmbran Town Centre.	TCBC Canal Coordinator TCBC Strategic Regeneration Team.	TCBC Canal Operations Group Torfaen Canal Partnership	Funding	1-4	

		External design/engineering/cost consultancy services.			
Commission a Water Management and Resources study to consider: - Potential demands on water - Flood risk/management - Potential sources of water - SUDS	Torfaen Canal Partnership	TCBC Canal Operations Group	Funding	1-6	
Seek private sector investment and delivery partners to support the development of Canalside in line with Policy SAA 2 of the Torfaen Local Development Plan (2013).	TCBC Canal Coordinator TCBC Strategic Regeneration Team.	Torfaen Canal Partnership	None	4	
Seek funding for implementing Strategy Area project packages according to the Fundraising Strategy.	Torfaen Canal Partnership		Funding	1-6	
Objective 12: To enable job creation and growth within the Borough by promoting existing and attract new business and investment along the canal corridor,					

PHASE 3: (2028-2033) Reaching the Town Centre					
Action	Lead	Partners	Dependencies	Relevant Section/s of Canal	Theme
Objective 1: To manage the canal asset efficiently, effectively, and sustainably to provide a safe and functional waterway and tow path, with the emerging impacts of climate change and nature emergency duly considered through a coordinated management plan					
Consider the long-term plans for commercial operation of the canal within Torfaen.	TCBC Operations Group	-	None	1-6	
Objective 2: To continuously improve the Canal Management Plan through regular monitoring and review					
Continue to undertake an annual review and update of the Canal Management Plan.	TCBC Canal Operations Group	-	None	1-6	

Objective 3: To ensure the Canal is accessible, welcoming, and safe for all through delivery of specific project interventions.					
Work with neighbouring canal owners to develop a consistent approach along the length of tow path.	TCBC Canal Coordinator	All LAs All Canal Partners	None	1-6	
Objective 4: To enhance the canal's role as a link between attractions in Torfaen, and to develop the canal as a destination in its own right which attracts more people to use and enjoy it through the development of a leisure offer which integrates the waterway.					
Continue to develop wider connections with local and national organisations and schemes to promote the canal as a "destination."	Torfaen Canal Partnership	Canal and River Trust MBACT Blaenavon World Heritage Site Partnership	Funding	1-6	
Objective 5: To improve the canal as a strategic travel route by increasing opportunities for people to use sustainable transport options for all or some of their journey.					
Consider opportunities for integrating the canal and tow path within wider transport strategies particularly plans for greener transport options linking the canal with the wider borough.	All	-	Funding	1-6	
Objective 6: To support a partnership approach to implementing, delivering, communicating, and monitoring the Strategic Action Plan by implementing a governance framework					
Develop links with Newport City Council and Caerphilly Borough County Council as part of future planning for continuing restoration further south.	Torfaen Canal Partnership	-	None	1-6	
Objective 7: To build and improve community cohesion along the canal corridor, by engaging with diverse communities to cocreate inclusive opportunities for more people to get involved in achieving the vision of this Strategy					
Objective 8: To build a skilled and engaged Canal Volunteer network and programme of work that supports the sustainable management of the canal corridor by taking coordinated approach to activity.					
Continue to develop links with community groups along the canal to explore opportunities to integrate the canal into their medium- and long-term individual project aspirations e.g. Friends of groups	TCBC Canal Coordinator	-	None	1-6	

Objective 9: To improve the condition of all the canal's heritage by ensuring its preservation and enhancement is appropriately considered and managed.					
Review and update existing Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals	TCBC Planning	Cadw	Funding	1-6	
Develop Design Guidance for the Canal Conservation Area as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Replacement Local Development Plan to assist management of the canal and inform the development of restoration/navigation design proposals.	TCBC Planning	Cadw	Funding	1-6	
Through the activities to restore navigation to the canal, the condition of the canal's heritage will be improved long term.	All	-	Funding	1-6	
Objective 10: To raise the profile of the canal's heritage significance to support greater appreciation and knowledge through community engagement and information sharing.					
Objective 11: To achieve the Vision of restoring full navigation to Cwmbran town centre by developing a business case, securing resource, and funding and creating a new canal-side destination					
Complete restoration work packages to a new canal destination in Cwmbran Town Centre.	TCBC Canal Coordinator TCBC Strategic Regeneration Team.	Torfaen Canal Partnership	Funding	1-4	
Explore feasibility to further develop the Ty Coch Restoration Site.	TCBC Canal Coordinator TCBC Strategic Regeneration Team.	Torfaen Canal Partnership	Funding	6	
Work with Newport City Council and Caerphilly County Borough Council to develop long term aspirations for restoring navigability further south.	Torfaen Canal Partnership	Newport City Council Caerphilly County Borough Council	None	6	
Objective 12: To enable job creation and growth within the Borough by promoting existing and attract new business and investment along the canal corridor,					
Work with private sector investment partners to develop a new canal-side destination to the west of Cwmbran Town Centre.	Torfaen Canal Partnership	Private sector development partners. Owners of Cwmbran Town Centre.	Investment Partners	4	

The Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal Strategy 2023 - 2033

