

Llansteffan Action Plan

Consultation Draft

September 2022



ELEMENT
URBANISM



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This project has received funding by Grwp Cefn Gwlad, the Local Action Group for Carmarthenshire who is the responsible body for the LEADER programme in Carmarthenshire. The LEADER 2014 – 2020 programme is funded through the Rural Development Plan for Wales (RDP) as part of the Welsh Government and European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

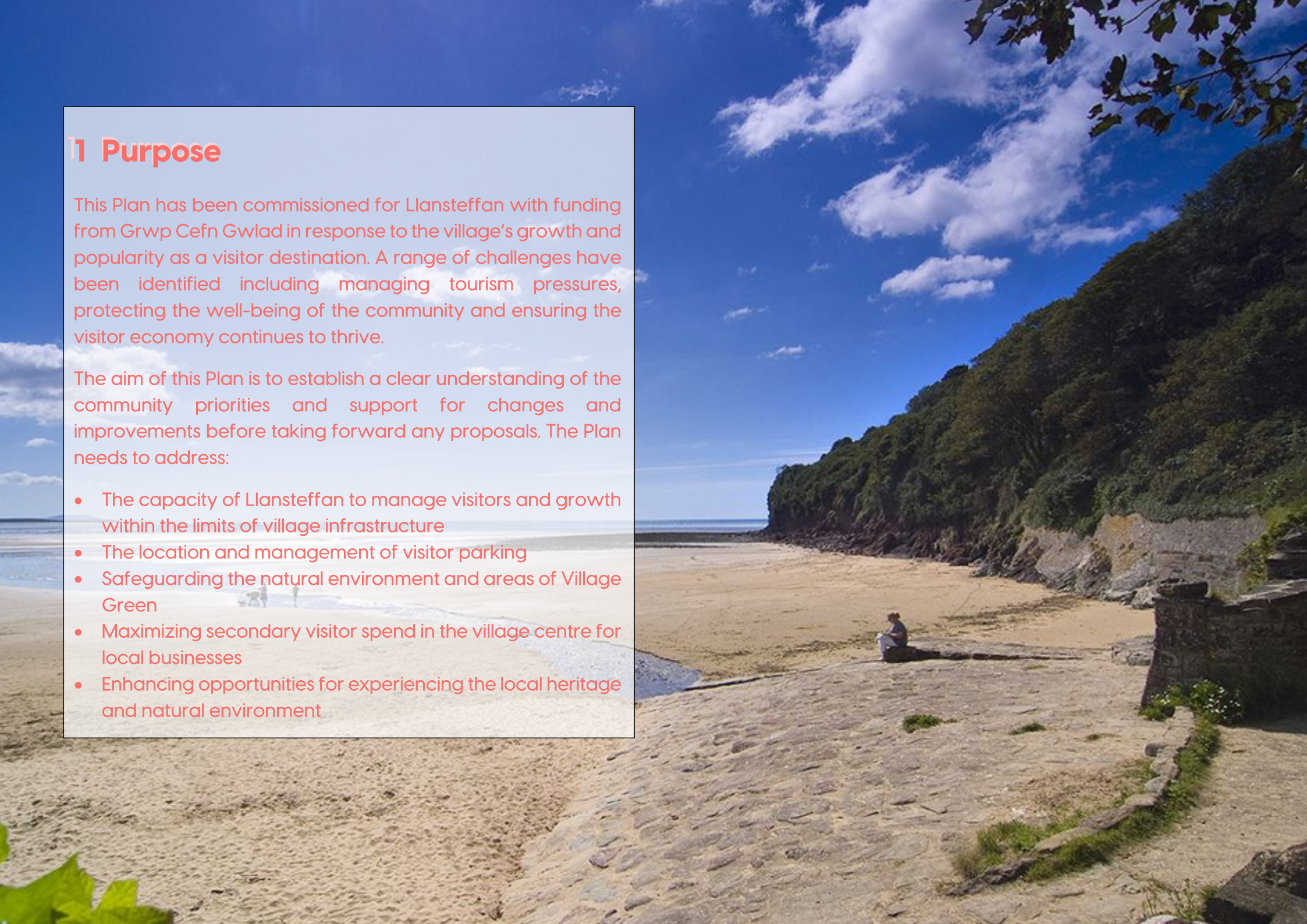


1 Purpose

This Plan has been commissioned for Llansteffan with funding from Grwp Cefn Gwlad in response to the village's growth and popularity as a visitor destination. A range of challenges have been identified including managing tourism pressures, protecting the well-being of the community and ensuring the visitor economy continues to thrive.

The aim of this Plan is to establish a clear understanding of the community priorities and support for changes and improvements before taking forward any proposals. The Plan needs to address:

- The capacity of Llansteffan to manage visitors and growth within the limits of village infrastructure
- The location and management of visitor parking
- Safeguarding the natural environment and areas of Village Green
- Maximizing secondary visitor spend in the village centre for local businesses
- Enhancing opportunities for experiencing the local heritage and natural environment



Context

Llansteffan is well-known as a visitor destination since 19th and early 20th Century specifically for its beach, charming village, and the castle. It is an area of natural beauty that contrasts the post-industrial character of the wider area with rolling natural landscapes that can be viewed from Llansteffan Castle.

Visitors continue to flock to Llansteffan and many attend events taking place throughout the year. With the COVID pandemic, Llansteffan has experienced a sharp boost to its visitor economy with people seeking local coastal environments for outdoor exercise and enjoyment.

The Llansteffan population of about 500 people often swells on the busiest summer days and increases pressure on local services and amenities. Issues such as litter, traffic volumes, nuisance parking, and unregulated overnight camping are more regular occurrences.

Because of these challenges, a new and balanced approach for managing the village's infrastructure is required that needs to:

- support the growth of tourism and improves the quality of experience for visitors
- protect the quality of life and facilities for the local community
- consider the pressures on social infrastructures such as the growth of second homes and holiday lets on affordable housing and local facilities.



2 The Key Issues & opportunities

A public consultation with the community and businesses about the key issues facing Llansteffan was held during June/July 2022. There were 381 individual visitors to the online hub and 62 people made comments, 97% described themselves as residents with 16% described as a local business. In addition to the online consultation, there were 18 handwritten responses. The total number of participants was 80.

In addition, discussions have taken place with the Community Council, Councillors and local organisations to identify their priorities. This has been supported by a detailed exercise of independent research and has led to the identification of the following key issues.

Village Green

The Village Green is a strip of land that runs along the beachfront in Llansteffan between the football pitch in the north, to the carpark in the south. It was designated in the 1980's and is protected for its lawful use for sports and pastimes.

The area is important for its landscape and amenity value and the range of historic land uses including areas used for car parking. Most of the Village Green is owned by the County Council, with one strip of land affected by the parking and entrance to the football pitch owned by the Community Council and a small fenced off area in private ownership used by Coastal Delights mobile café.

Many of the traffic management and parking issues experienced within the village and along the beachfront area are rooted in the way the

Village Green is managed. However, without a clear strategy the overall impacts of improvements on the village and Village Green have remained unclear. Establishing what the community feels is in their best interest is important as part of preparing this Plan.



Figure 1: Designated Village Green (indicative)





Figure 2 Key sites & assets

The Square

Pathway to
Village

Football Pitch

The Morfa

Pathways to
village & Castle

North Car
Park

Village Green
North

Village Green
South

Green Car
Park

Castle

2 - Visitor Traffic and Car Parking

Visitor traffic is currently directed along Water Lane towards the two main car parks with access to the beach and the castle. The road becomes a narrow single lane with few opportunities for passing traffic creating congestion for both visitors and residents that live and overlook the estuary. There's also a shortage of car parking spaces for the number of visitors arriving on the busiest days creating problems with parking on unsuitable areas of the Village Green, congestion along Water Lane and cars and larger vehicles dispersing into adjoining residential areas and the village centre.

North Car Park

The **North Car Park**. Is the area adjacent to the village football pitch and pre-dates the Village Green dating back to at least the 1950's. It has the potential to accommodate up to 100 vehicles. The key issues include:

- Mixed ownership between the County Council and Community Council
- Limited to land uses that pre-date the Village Green including the current parking and toilet block
- Poor condition and appearance with a mixed gravel and earth surface and un-marked parking. Vehicles Park randomly, sometime blocking the beach access, and an inefficient use of the available space.

- Disturbances and negative impacts of overnight camping/motorhomes and issues with waste disposal, litter and ASB
- Prominent derelict looking toilet block owned by the County Council and closed for over 20 years. The facility requires significant investment and there are no plans for its reuse as a public toilet although it could possibly be leased for a new activity.
- Beach access for emergency vehicles and the seasonal cockling activity helps to reduce congestion along the narrow beachfront road

Village Green (north)

The area adjacent to the North Car Park was once a seasonal visitor parking area but was developed some 5 years ago for an underground flood and drainage management scheme. Parking was temporarily removed to allow the green space to regenerate following the works but the effect of removing parking has increased visitor parking pressure elsewhere in the village. Historical aerial photographs suggest the whole area accommodated between 50 and 100+ vehicles.

Village Green (south)

The thin strip of raised Village Green includes a small area of resident parking for the properties located opposite. Because of the shortage of parking spaces, the area has often become congested with up to 35 vehicles at peak periods.

Water Lane and Glan -y-Mor

Roads in these areas have no parking restrictions although visitors frequently park on both sides of the road causing congestions with the narrowing of the road. Water Lane is also designated part of the Wales Coastal Path and a key pedestrian route toward the village centre. However, a direct footpath to the centre known as Carriers Lane is slightly hidden and unclear for visitors.

The Green Car Park

The County Council managed car park located to the south is currently free to use and hugely popular with visitors because of the beach access and facilities. The key issues identified include:

- Narrow access road and congestion on the approach road
- Ramped beach access blocked with beach blown sand and without accessible alternatives
- Disabled parking bays also regularly covered with sand
- Proliferation of visitor information, car park and other signage making it feel cluttered and confusing for visitors
- Controlling unauthorised vehicles accessing the beach causing damage
- Proposals for car parking charges and season tickets



Village Centre

The historic village centre and conservation area is full of character and history and the hub for local businesses. The local medieval church with a decorative East Window is another important attraction.

However, the village centre is not very pedestrian and visitor friendly with narrow pavements and, in some places, no pavement interfering with the safe movement and enjoyment of the space. There's also a limited amount of on street parking with many residents reliant on road spaces and often competing with visitors for spaces.

The Square located at the junction of High Street and Church Road acts as the natural heart of the village and is sometimes used for community events. However, it feels like an oversized road junction interfering with its potential as an attractive attention-grabbing village centre.

The other main issues are:

- Pedestrian routes and visitor signage from the main car park and beachfront fail to effectively encourage visitors to explore the village centre.
- Local walks and the route of the Wales Coastal Path direct visitors away from the village centre
- Moving traffic and large vehicles passing through narrow streets
- Visitor traffic mistakenly attempting to access the castle causing congestion



The Morfa

The Morfa is an important community facility and open space owned by Carmarthenshire County Council and let to Llansteffan Sports Club. In contrast to the beachfront Village Green that is used by visitors and the community equally, the Morfa is viewed as an area for the community sports and activities.

However, the Morfa experiences poor seasonal drainage making it often unplayable for football during the winter months. The Football Club currently use the beach football pitch because it has better year-round drainage. A drainage improvement scheme for the Morfa has been investigated although funds have not been found to implement the works.

Affordable Housing

The lack of affordable housing for local people and families because of a growth in second homes, holiday lets, and rising house prices has been raised as a major issue. There are very few affordable houses available for rent and young people, therefore families with children are moving out of the village. This has raised concerns about the longer-term impacts on sustaining community and social infrastructure.

Visitor management

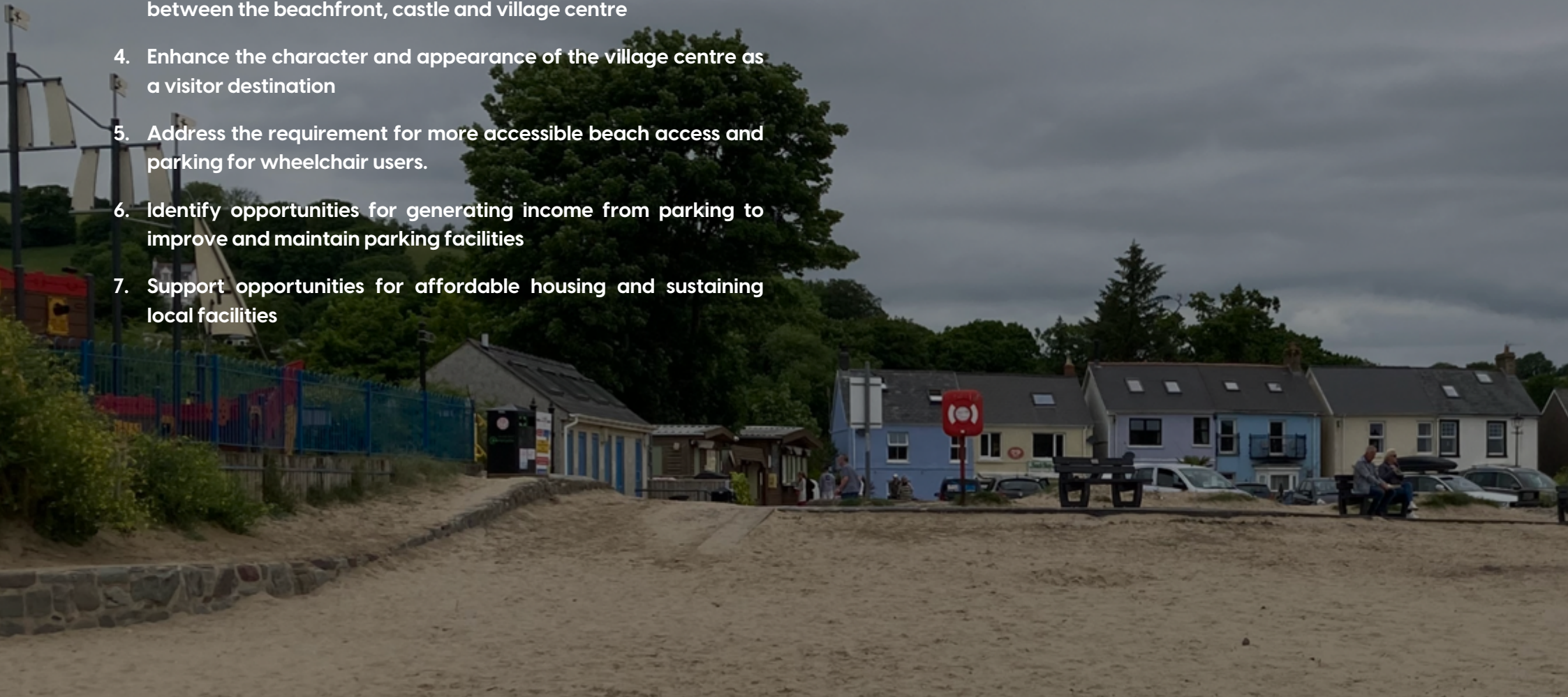
A range of visitor management issues have been raised by the community and stakeholders including

- Better management of dogs fouling and the lack of respect/enforcement of rules for dogs on the beach
- Introducing charge for parking and using the funds raised to manage and maintain the parking sites.
- Improve visitor litter management
- Preventing illicit overnight camping/motorhomes in all car parks
- Discourage visitor traffic attempting to access the castle along Church Lane
- Improved visitor information between the Green Car Park to the castle and village centre
- Improved pathways towards the castle to meet the need of those with accessibility needs.

3 Objectives

In summary the main objectives for the Plan are:

1. Address traffic management and parking capacity issues along the beachfront and village centre
2. Protect and improve open spaces and recreation area for the use and benefit of the community
3. Improve tourism information and strengthening the links between the beachfront, castle and village centre
4. Enhance the character and appearance of the village centre as a visitor destination
5. Address the requirement for more accessible beach access and parking for wheelchair users.
6. Identify opportunities for generating income from parking to improve and maintain parking facilities
7. Support opportunities for affordable housing and sustaining local facilities



4 Draft proposals

This consultation draft Plan is an opportunity for the community and local stakeholders to comment on a series of proposals and improvements. It is an important stage in establishing what improvements are in the community interest.

The feedback received will help establish the principles for many of the ideas, with some opportunities needing further designs, public consultation and in some cases statutory approval before implementation. It will also be necessary to identify new funds, income streams and responsibilities for ongoing management and maintenance of the improvements proposed.

Proposal for the North Car Park and Village Green

Landscape improvements to uplift the quality and appearance of the car park for visitors and maximise the number of parking space. This could be achieved through:

- Using surfacing materials that maintain the existing hard and soft areas without extending them.
- Introducing general natural landscape features such as earth, stone bunds and log/wooden bollards to encourage visitors to park more efficiently within the space available and prevent vehicles blocking the beach access.

Enforcement measures to dissuade motorhomes staying overnight. Options include a combination of:

- Lockable night barriers managed by local volunteers or a new Coastal Warden.
- Promotion and encouragement of nearby alternatives including motorhome camping sites located in the village such as The Cottage Fields

Introduce parking charges – like many coastal destinations, motorists could be charged to park close to the beach and facilities using a pay and display system and unmarked parking bays. The revenues raised could be used to manage and maintain the parking areas.

Re-use of the Toilet Block – subject to the restrictions the potential exists to let the toilet block out for a new activity or business use to ensure its positive use and improved appearance. One option could be letting the building to an existing beachfront business interested in enhancing their existing offer. In addition, this option could be a means to explore the potential reopening of the toilet under the management of a local business.

Overflow parking –seasonal overspill visitor parking could be located on part of the Village Green (north). It would reinstate an area pre-dating the Village Green and help alleviate parking pressure elsewhere along the beachfront and village centre. The option to create a small overflow area accessed through the North Car Park would intercept visitors on the busiest days including weekends and bank holidays. The overflow area would include:

- Lockable gates restricting parking until 6pm and preventing overnight stays.
- 2m height restriction barrier to allow cars only.
- A low retained earth/ stone bank to edge to exclude visitors from parking on the wider Village Green
- New roadside signs (possibly digital) directing visitors towards the overflow area when The Green Car park becomes full
- Parking charges
- Seasonal use would reduce the amount of damage and allow the grassed areas to regenerate throughout the year.

Figure 3 Example natural landscape features to improve car park appearance & control vehicles



Proposals for the Village Green (south)

Dissuade overspill visitor parking – dissuading visitors from parking on this area would prevent further damage and improve the amenity of the Village Green whilst reduce the impact of visitors on nearby homes. The proposal for a well-managed overspill car park adjacent to the North Car Park would increase the parking capacity in the area and intercept passing visitors with clear signage and more easily accessed alternatives.

. Improvements could include landscape treatment to restore the quality of the Village Green

Proposals for the Green Car Park

Proposals include:

- Reposition the disabled parking spaces away from the areas vulnerable to ingress from beach blown sand
- Create an alternative ramped access point to the beach that is more protected from the wind and sand. One option is the area near to the car park entrance and telephone box.
- Introduce parking charge operated by the County Council (with season tickets)
- Rationalise the amount of visitor information and signage so it becomes clearer and more consistent. Position signage in the area of the beach access, toilets and retail, and adjacent to the pathway towards the village.

Proposals for Water Lane

Alleviate congestion and strengthening walking/cycling active travel routes along the coastal pathway and toward the Village Centre. The opportunity exists to:

- Prohibit parking with single yellow lines (restriction apply to specific times of day/times of year) on Water Lane adjacent to The Morfa and North Car Park subject to a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO)
- New road signage: with a narrow lane warning; give-way to oncoming traffic; and giving priority from the south.
- New visitor signage encouraging pedestrian access to the village via Carriers Lane
- To avoid creating parking pressures elsewhere in the village, implementing this option needs to be considered together with creating additional alternative overflow parking e.g. at the North Car Park.

Proposals for the Village Centre & The Square

There's a need to calm traffic movement and improve the pedestrian friendliness of the village centre. Improvement could also enhance the quality of the public realm and create a stronger, more appealing visitor destination increasing dwell time and spend with local businesses and supporting the running of local events and festivals.

Proposals include

- Public realm and streetscape improvements for a more pedestrian friendly Square
- New signage discouraging visitor traffic along Church Lane
- Cycling stands and visitor infrastructure such as street pumps

Proposals for the Morfa

The aim is to develop and improve the sports facilities and to overcome the poor drainage and improve the year-round use of the area. The key opportunity is to identify potential grant support for the Sports Club/Football Club to improve drainage and enhance facilities adjacent to the clubhouse and pavilion.

Proposals for destination management

To ensure that Llansteffan provides a clean, safe, well managed and promoted destination for visitors, the option exists to explore the opportunity for creating a seasonal Coastal Warden position to oversee the enforcement of bylaws covering dogs on the beach, unregulated overnight camping, parking and litter management. Other roles could be supporting residents, visitors, attractions and businesses with local

information, guidance and the promotion of what's on offer and oversee monitoring of green infrastructure and biodiversity management. A feasibility study would be required to identify potential sources of revenue and management options.

Opportunities for Affordable Housing

With very few affordable houses available to buy or rent remaining in Llansteffan, the Plan supports the development of an area of housing land at Maesgriffith owned by the County Council which has been allocated in the deposit Local Development Plan (LDP) including a small amount of affordable housing.

In addition, LDP policies allow the 'rounding off' of areas of land around the edge of Llansteffan to provide new affordable homes and the Plan encourages landowners to investigate these options.

Figure 4 Summary Proposals



The Square

Traffic management & public realm enhancements

Maesgriffith Site

Future affordable housing

Water Lane

Control parking & improve walking & cycling links. New signs to improve traffic management & parking

Toilet Block

Potential re-use opportunities

North Car Park

Improved appearance & management of visitor parking

Overflow Car Park

Managed seasonal parking with adjoining areas of Village Green protected

The Morfa

Playing field drainage improvements

Green Car Park

Improved visitor experience & signage

Residents Parking

Existing area

Village Green

Dissuade visitor parking & restore environment

Beach Access

New ramped access protected from sand ingress

5 Next Steps

Following the consultations on the draft proposals, all comments received will be reviewed and discussed with the County Council, Councillors and the Community Council before agreeing a final Plan. The Plan will include an action plan describing how proposals with community support could be taken forward and within what timescales.



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