

BikePark Wales Environmental Statement Vol.3: Non Technical Summary

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document provides a non-technical summary of the BikePark Wales Environmental Statement. The summary briefly describes the proposed development site and proposed scheme, and then summarises the environmental assessments that are included in the Environmental Statement.



Figure 1: Existing BikePark Wales Centre

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Since opening, BikePark Wales has seen a continual increase in visitor numbers from approximately 47,500 tickets sold in 2013/14 to approximately 75,000 tickets sold in 2017/18. Continued growth is expected, but the mountain bike market is also becoming increasingly competitive.
- 2.2 To ensure continued growth and prominence in the market place, BikePark Wales has planned and secured funding to implement a major growth plan over the next 4 years that will result in a capital investment of £1.5 million. This investment is imperative to ensure that Bike Park Wales can strengthen its offer to existing and new customers and maintain its position as the premier mountain bike destination in the UK.



Figure 2: Event day at BikePark Wales.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT SITE

- 3.1 The site to consists of an area of woodland with open areas and access tracks running through it. Parts of the site are designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCS), namely Abercarnaid Fields and Graig Gethin. The site is bounded to the west by the existing Bike Park Wales site, to the north by woodland, to the east by grassland and woodland, and to the south by woodland. The wider area includes a mix of woodland types on the valley sides above the River Taff. The A470 runs northwest southeast past the site, and the settlements of Abercarnaid and Pentrebach are found to the east, with industrial, retail, residential and public spaces present.
- 3.2 The site is accessed directly from the A470 which is a key strategic route spanning the entire length of Wales from north to south. The Welsh Government is responsible for the maintenance and operation of the A470. More locally the A470 provides a connection from the site to the surrounding communities including the Brecon Beacons, Merthyr Tydfil, Pontypridd and Cardiff as well as the M4 motorway. The A470 is a dual carriageway road with two lanes in each direction.
- 3.3 The site access road connects directly to the A470 as one arm of a large roundabout, which also includes the A4060. A short section of the access road within the immediate vicinity of the A470 roundabout is adopted highway. However, the majority of the access road is privately owned and maintained as part of Gethin Woodland Centre.

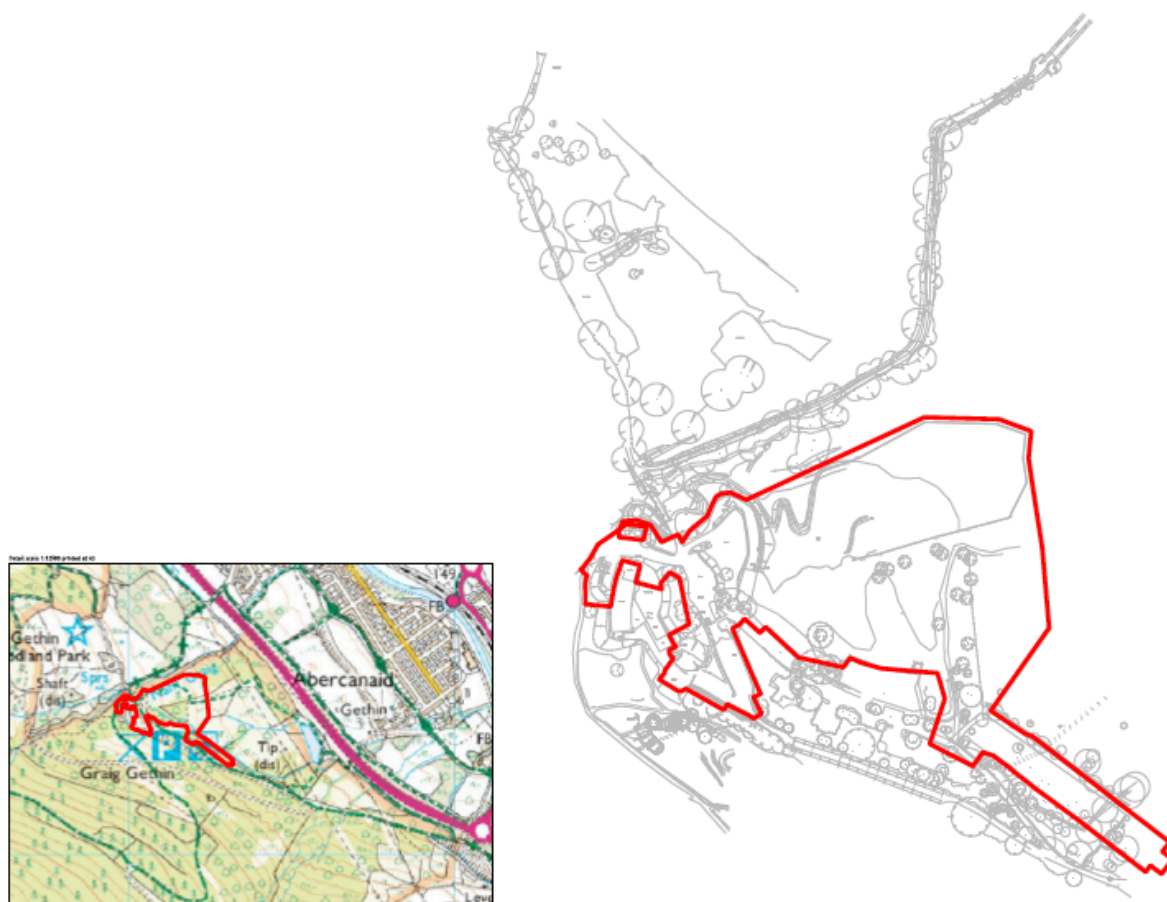


Figure 3: Site location (development site highlighted red).

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3.2 The site area is 3.02 hectares in total. This comprises 1.13 hectares of undeveloped land that will accommodate 141 parking spaces (including motorhomes) with 85 in overflow, highway access and pedestrian routes, 36 camping pods and 5 chalets, shower and toilet block, natural play and picnic area, trail maintenance yard and associated drainage and landscape infrastructure.

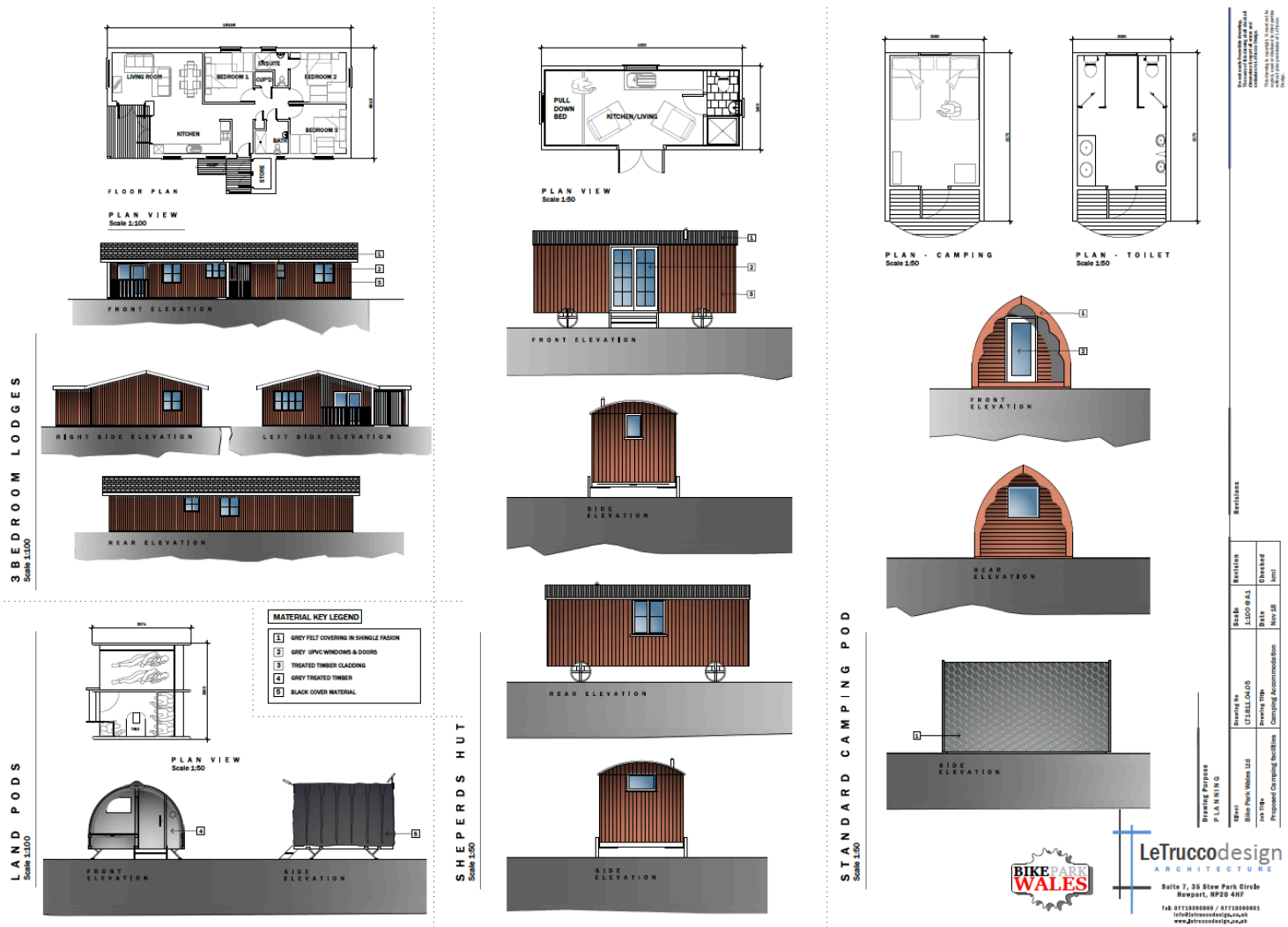


Figure 4: Examples of proposed accommodation

4. THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL AND THE PLANNING APPLICATION

4.1 The proposed development consists of the following components that are described further below:

- 141 parking spaces to be provided for day-to-day use (including motor homes), with 85 in overflow.
- Highway access and pedestrian routes;
- 36 camping pods and 5 chalets;
- Shower and toilet block;
- Natural play and picnic area
- Trail maintenance yard; and
- Associated drainage and landscape infrastructure.

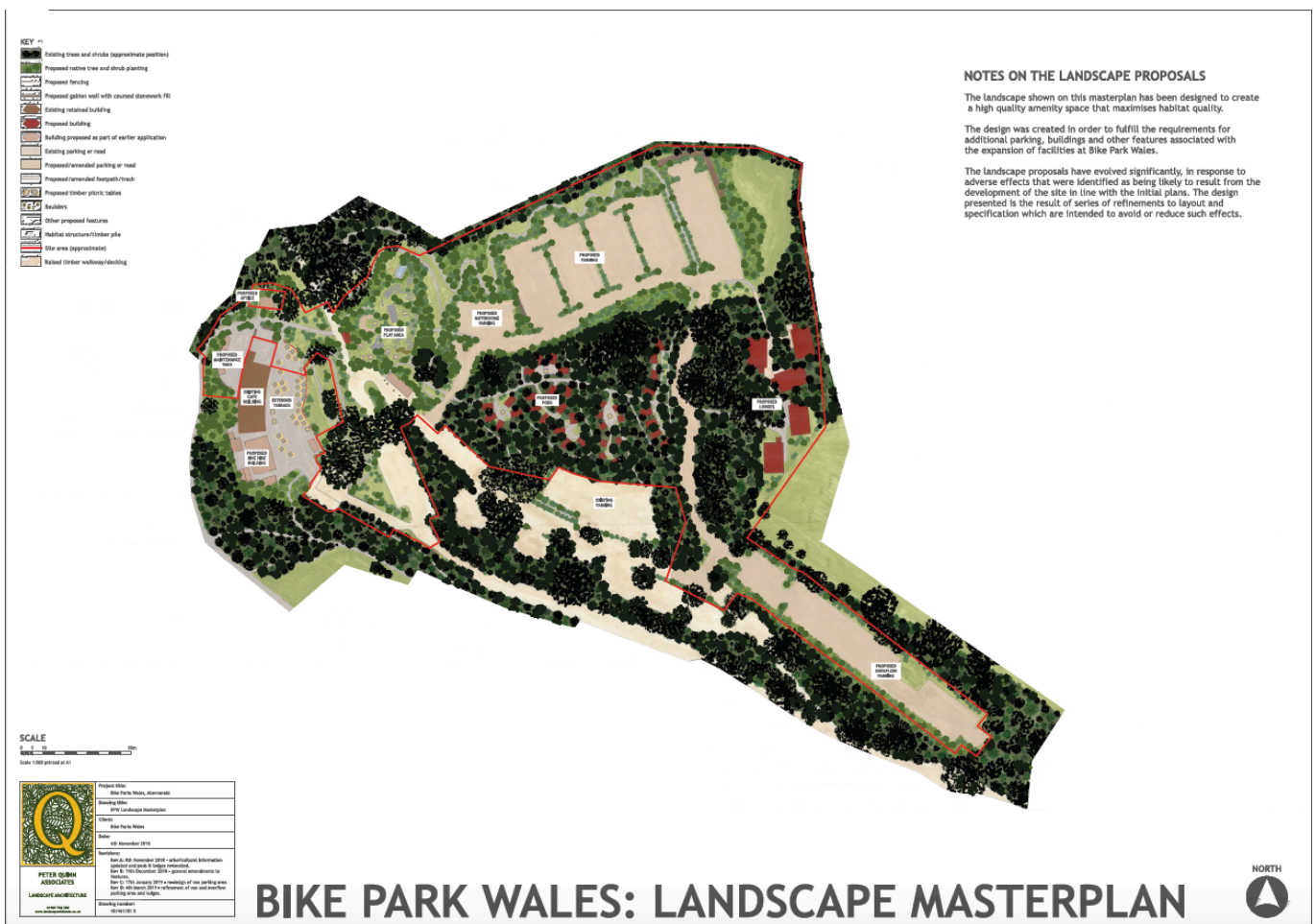


Figure 6: Illustrative masterplan

4.2 Provision of additional parking and highway access/pedestrian routes

4.2.1 Since opening, BikePark Wales has seen a continual increase in visitor numbers from approximately 47,500 tickets sold in 2013/14 to approximately 75,000 tickets sold in 2017/18. Continued growth is expected, but the mountain bike market is also becoming increasingly competitive. Therefore BikePark Wales need more parking spaces in order to keep up with current and future demand.

4.2.3 The proposals for the additional 141 parking spaces and overflow parking area seek to address the increase in visitor numbers that BikePark Wales is currently facing and will continue to face. The new parking areas and roads would inevitably increase the hard standing area of the site, but care has been taken in the design to integrate the infrastructure into the site landscape through the use of natural materials and the incorporation of tree planting and bunding.

4.3 Provision of 36 camping pods and 6 chalets

4.3.1 Currently, visitors to BikePark Wales rely upon the existing B&B trade for over night accommodation. The proposals include the provision of 36 camping pods and 5 chalets for overnight stay. Therefore, whilst this accommodation would help meet growing demand (particularly in the family market), it is considered that the local B&B trade would still stand to benefit from the wider investment in the park with visitor numbers increasing year on year.

4.3.2 In order to prevent repetition and to contribute to a more organic layout, the proposed accommodation varies in terms of its design, scale and external finishes/features, however each of the accommodation types are considered to be suitable and complementary to a woodland environment. Furthermore, the structures are all of modest scale. The scale of the accommodation is outlined in the table below:

Accommodation Type	Height	Width	Length
Land pods	3 metres	3 metres	3 metres
Lager pods	2 metres	3 metres	5.2 metres
Shepherds huts	2 metres	6.3 metres	2.6 metres
Chalets	4 metres	15.2 metres	6.9 metres

4.4 Toilet and shower block

- 4.4.1 Given the increase in visitor numbers BikePark Wales has and will be experiencing, additional shower and toilet facilities are required. The proposed shower block has been located so that is viewed within the context of the site's existing built environment. Its size has been minimized to the operational requirements, and the materials replicate that of the accommodation and the existing center building. Details of the building are below:

Structure	Height	Width	Length
Shower and toilet block	3 metres	12.6 metres	3.6 metres

4.5 Natural play area

- 4.5.1 One of the main aims of the development is to ensure that BikePark Wales can enter the family market and remain competitive. Therefore a small natural playground is proposed as a part of the development, which would be located in close proximity to the proposed accommodation. This would be integrated in to the existing landscape of the site.

4.6 Trail Maintenance Yard

- 4.6.1 As the scale of the trail facilities at BikePark Wales has grown, so has the size of the team and the tools required to maintain them. BikePark Wales aim to create a yard for storage of trail maintenance plant that is hidden from the public eye behind the existing building. A slate faced wall and wooden gating would also enclose the yard.
- 4.6.2 Currently, trail plant is frequently parked in the customer car park, which is both unsightly and difficult as it takes up precious parking spaces. Having the yard close to the building also improves security as it is close and within line of site of the one site security guard. Furthermore, the location of the yard would restrict access to trail crew only.

4.7 Proposed Foul Water Drainage

- 4.7.1 The proposal for the new building and shower block is to discharge the flows into the existing treatment plant via new connections. The new camping pods and lodges are to be kept separate from the existing treatment plant due to capacity issues and levels, with a proposed new sealed foul water treatment plant /cesspit

4.8 Surface Water Discharge

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- 4.8.1 The proposed new rental and shower block building will discharge to ground via a swale and soakaway system together with external areas, such that there is no increase in surface water run off. The new car park area and motorhome area will be constructed of open bound gravel and stone surfacing allowing all surface water run off to percolate to ground. Soakway areas will also be provided to manage excess water associated with periods of heavy rainfall. The camping pods will all discharge direct to ground at surface level to reduce and limit any excavations for soakaways in the woodland area to protect any tree root system. The chalets will have their own individual soakaway/swales. All new roads and footpaths will be constructed in open bound stone based macadam which allows percolation, with any excess rain fall being taken by swales and ultimately discharging to ground. These measures will ensure that the scheme conforms with sustainable drainage guidance.

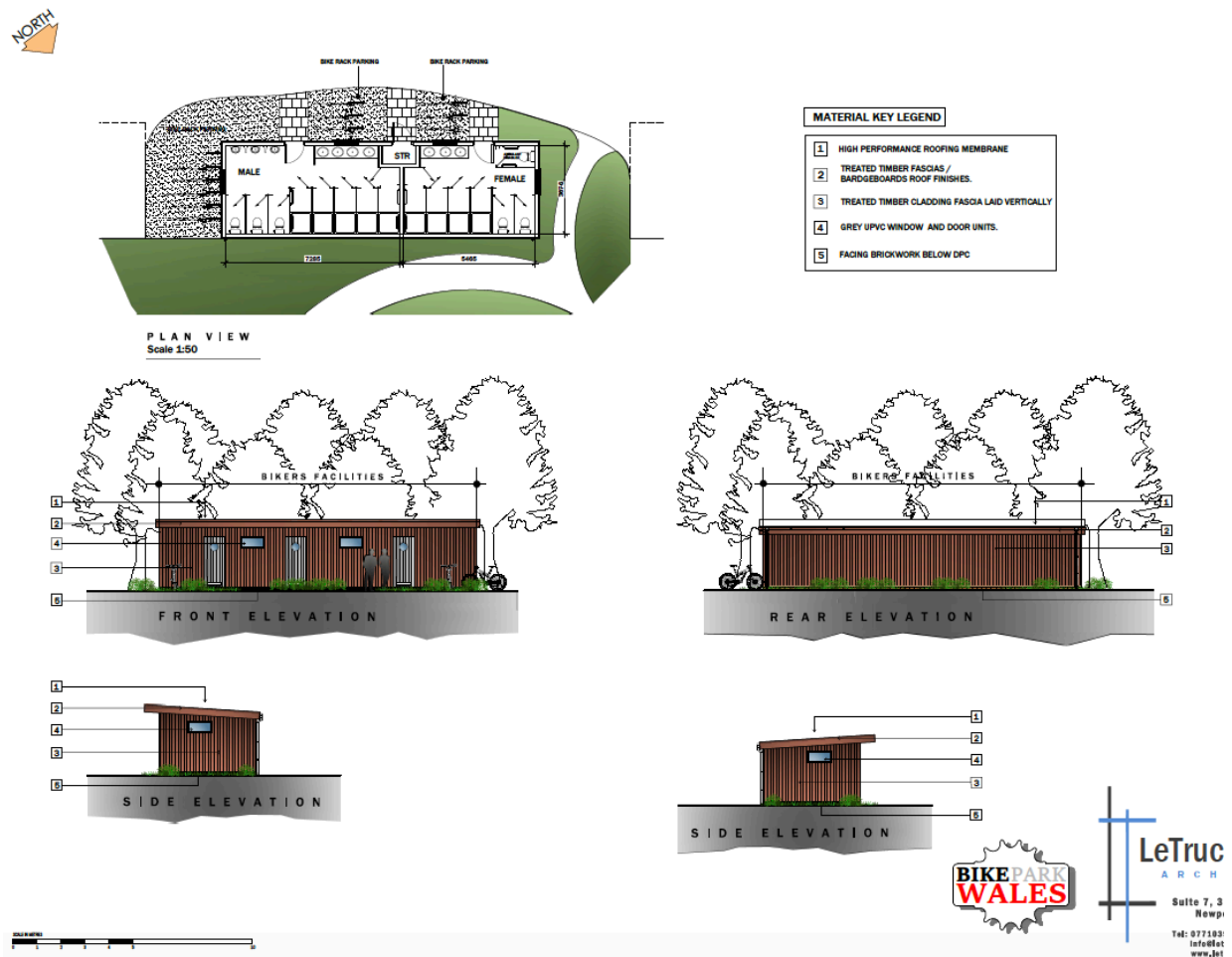


Figure 7: Proposed Shower and Toilet Block

5. DEVELOPMENT CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION

5.1 Construction

5.1.1 The detailed construction method required to deliver the development is not fully known. However, a series of informed technical assumptions have been made for the purpose of assessing the likely effects of the proposed development. These are outlined in chapter 4 of the Environmental Statement. Construction hours for the development will be typical (Monday to Friday (08:00-18:00). Where weekend works are required they will be undertaken on Saturday (08:00-13:00).

5.1.2 The exact number of construction vehicles is not yet known. To minimize the number of construction vehicles entering and leaving the site, the development design has sought to reuse material won on the site and minimize the need for export vehicles. Construction vehicles will therefore be associated with labour force and the import of materials required to deliver the proposed development. This number will be relatively low and will be short-term in nature.

5.2 Operation

5.2.1 The proposed development is in accord with the current BikePark Wales operation and would not result in significant change to how the site currently operates. The main operational features would still consist of people arriving via private vehicle, utilizing the visitor center before accessing the wider trails via a series of uplift vehicles. The most significant change would occur as a result of the proposed accommodation. This would result in a 24-7 presence of visitors on the site.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

6.1 Scope of the Environmental Statement

6.1.1 The Scope of the Environmental Statement was agreed with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council in November 2018. It was agreed that the Environmental Statement would consist of the following assessments:

- Ecology Assessment
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

6.1.2 A non-technical summary of the assessments is provided below.

6.2 Ecology Assessment

6.2.1 The purpose of the Ecology Assessment is to identify the likely ecological effects of delivering the proposed development. The Assessment included in the Environmental Statement has been prepared by Wildwood Ecology (Chartered Ecological Consultants) and has been prepared in accord with best practice.

6.2.2 The Assessment identifies that a series of important ecological features to undertake the assessment. These consist of bat species, reptiles, nesting birds, hedgehog, badger, otter, invertebrates, common dormouse, amphibians, funghi habitat and two Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. The Assessment identifies that if mitigation is not undertaken alongside the development, some of these features could experience moderate adverse effects. To address this, the Assessment recommends mitigation that will be undertaken alongside the development. When these measures are implemented, the Assessment identifies that the proposed development would have negligible or minor adverse effects only.

6.2.3 The Assessment also considers the likely ecological effects of the proposed development alongside those that previously occurred as a result of delivering the existing BikePark Wales centre. The Ecological Impact Assessment can be viewed in the appendices section of the Environmental Impact Assessment. The assessment identifies that the majority of the ecological effects would likely again be negligible or minor adverse, but some features could be moderate adverse (hedgehog and amphibians) and high adverse (nesting birds). However, given the effects of the proposed development the impacts are

identified to be minor or negligible as the moderate cumulative effects and high cumulative effect are considered to be associated with the previous stages of development undertaken at the BikePark Wales site. The Assessment also identifies that some positive cumulative effects would likely occur on fungi habitats and the Graig Gethin SINC and Abercarnaid Fields SINC due to changes in management.

6.3 Landscape and Visual Assessment

- 6.3.1 The purpose of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is to identify the likely effects of the proposed development on the landscape of the site and the surrounding area, and also the visual amenity experienced on the site and the surrounding area. The Assessment has been prepared by Peter Quinn Associates (Chartered Landscape Architect) and has been prepared in accord with best practice.
- 6.3.2 In respect of landscape character, the Assessment identifies that the development proposed, and that the combined effects of the development alongside that of the existing BikePark Wales development would increase the number of significant effects on landscape receptors. However, the Assessment notes that the overall landscape character would not be altered by the proposed development, and the landscape would be able to receive the development without noticeable change to the overall landscape character.
- 6.3.3 In respect of visual effects, the Assessment concludes that while there are likely to be significant effects on views within and near to BikePark Wales as a result of the development, longer views are unlikely to be significantly affected. The Assessment also notes that the effects of the development combined with the wider BikePark Wales facility would not increase the number of significant effects on visual receptors.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This Non-Technical Summary of the BikePark Wales Environmental Statement is provided to accompany the full planning application for the development of the additional parking, new accommodation and associated access and landscape works at the BikePark Wales site. These proposals are central part of a programme of large-scale investment in BikePark Wales, and are imperative to ensure that BikePark Wales can strengthen its offer to existing and new customers and maintain its position as the premier mountain bike destination in the UK.
- 7.2 The Environmental Statement documents the Environmental Impact Assessment process that has been followed for the proposed development, and demonstrates that that ecological and landscape and visual effects have been fully considered and have informed the design of the proposed development.
- 7.3 The Assessments included in the Statement demonstrate that while there would be some ecological and landscape and visual effects associated with the proposed development, these effects can be suitably mitigated and minimised to acceptable levels. It is therefore concluded that there are no environmental reasons to prevent the progression of this proposed development, which is essential to allow a key local business to grow and continue to provide much needed local economic benefits.

