

BIKE PARK WALES, ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT VOL 3.
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.

2. BACKGROUND

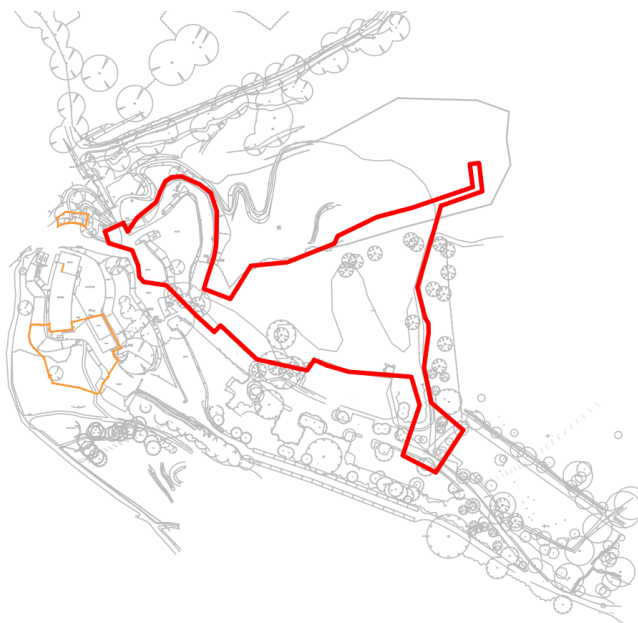
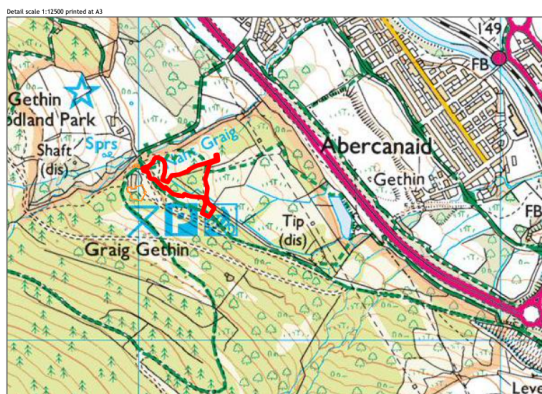
- 2.1 Since opening, BikePark Wales has seen a continual increase in visitor numbers from approximately 47,500 tickets sold in 2013/14 to approximately 75,000 tickets sold in 2017/18. Continued growth is expected, but the mountain bike market is also becoming increasingly competitive.
- 2.2 To ensure continued growth and prominence in the market place, BikePark Wales has planned and secured funding to implement a major growth plan that will include a capital investment of £1.5 million. This investment is 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. To date, part of the investment has been delivered, resulting in a new bike hire centre with associated bike washing facilities and storage areas, new catering unit, staff office building and extensive new parking areas to safely accommodate the increased number of visitors.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT SITE

- 3.1 The development site consists partly of an area of woodland with open areas and access tracks running through it. The remainder of the development site is the existing BikePark Wales facility, and is brownfield in character. Parts of the development 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 new parking areas and adjacent 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 1: Site location (development site highlighted red).



- 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.

4. THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL AND THE PLANNING APPLICATION

- 4.1 The proposed development will replace part of the development that was previously granted planning permission at BikePark Wales in 2020 via permission P/19/0073. Development approved in that permission included 36 camping pods and 5 chalets, a shower and toilet block, play and picnic area, new car parking areas to accommodate an additional 150 parking spaces, an overflow car park to accommodate an additional 46 car parking spaces, trail maintenance yard, highway access routes, ground profile works, drainage, infrastructure and landscape works. Following the grant of the permission part of the approved

development has been implemented, in the form of the additional parking areas and the associated access routes required to access them, and bike washing facilities. The remaining development has yet to be implemented, and now needs to be amended to ensure that the development is delivered reflects the operational requirements of BikePark Wales and meets its ambition to remain the premier mountain bike destination in the UK.

4.2 The development included in this ES therefore includes the following:

- 29 camping pods, which will replace the 36 pods previously approved.
- A changing village, which will replace the shower and toilet block previously approved.
- A bike storage area, consisting of a series of containers that will replace existing site structures.
- A workshop for vehicle maintenance, and which was not included in the previous permission.
- Redesign of the children's play area to accommodate the vehicle workshop.
- Bike wash facilities, which are now proposed in an updated location.
- Appropriate landscape, highway and drainage design will be provided as part of the above the works, but the approach remains unchanged from that previously granted planning permission.

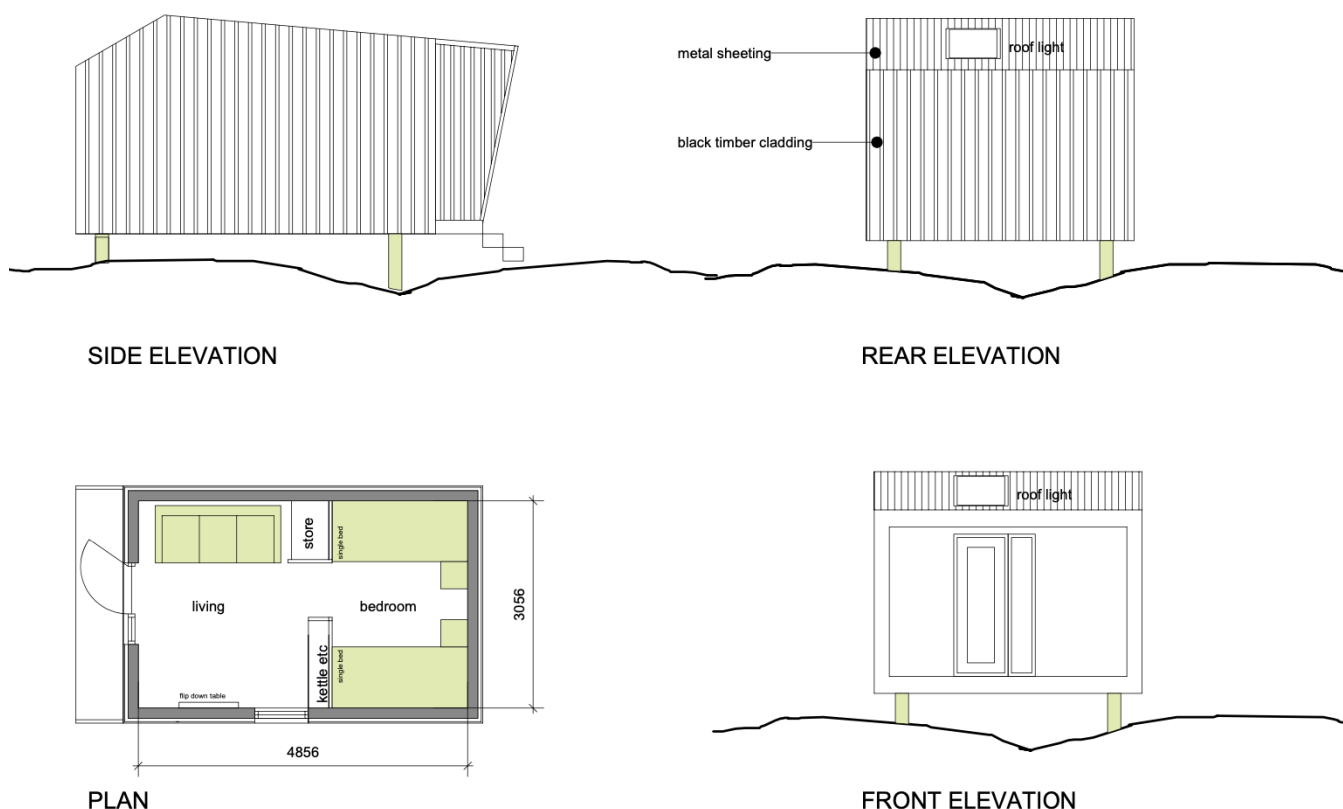
Figure 2: Illustrative site layout / masterplan.



4.3 Accommodation Pods

4.3.1 A total of 29 accommodation pods are now proposed. This is less than originally approved 36 pods, as it is proposed to increase the quality of the pods being provided, with each pod afforded greater site space and privacy, and better internal living spaces and facilities. The pods are key to enabling BikePark Wales to meet growing demand (particularly in the family market) and will supplement the local B&B offer and the 5 chalets that are approved on site under planning permission P/19/0073. The pods would be in the same area of the Park as the originally proposed pods; sited in a woodland environment that would screen views of them from the wider Park and surrounding landscape.

Figure 3: Elevations and floorplan for the camping pods.



4.3.2 The 29 pods vary in type, with sleeping accommodation provided via 21 camping pods and 3 shepherd huts and ancillary uses catered for with 2 toilet pods, 2 linen pods where bedding will be kept, and 1 workshop pod where guest can maintain their bikes. Unlike the previously approved pods, each pod type will have a consistent appearance and material treatment to ensure synergy, but will vary subtly in form to signify their different uses. Each pod would be clad in black timber with black metal sheet roofs, which

would create a modern architectural appearance that is also sensitive to woodland environment they would be located in. The black appearance of the pods would also be in keeping with the BikePark Wales brand. Each of the pod types would be modest in scale, as outlined below:

Development Type	Height	Width	Length
Camping pods	3.6 metres	3 metres	4.85 metres
Shepherds huts	3.91 metres	3.05 metres	4.85 metres
Linen pod	3.27 metres	3.55 metres	4.55 metres
Toilet pods	3.35 metres	3.05 metres	4.85 metres
Workshop pod	3.62 metres	3.35 metres	4.85 metres

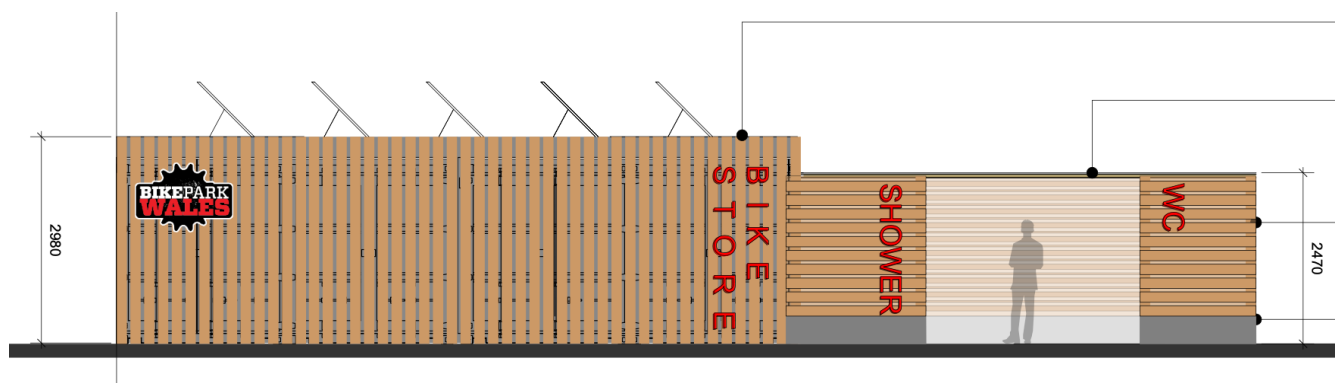
4.4 Changing Village and Shipping Containers

- 4.4.1 Given the increase in visitor numbers to the Park, additional shower, toilet and changing facilities are essential. Planning permission P/19/0073, including a toilet and shower block, but it is now intended to deliver a more changing village, which will include WCs and showers in a better indoor/outdoor environment that will provide a better visitor experience and be easier to clean and maintain. The changing village would be located in roughly the same area of the site as the previously proposed shower block, though slightly further north. This would ensure that it is easy to access for guests staying in the pods and wider visitors to the Park. The changing village would be located within the context of the site's existing visitor centre and would have a timber cladding appearance that is consistent with those buildings, albeit it would have a more functional finish befitting its status as functional building. The roof to the changing village would be polycarb.
- 4.4.2 Immediately adjacent to the changing village it is proposed to place a series of shipping containers that will be used for guests staying on the site to store bikes. To ensure they have a consistent appearance to the changing village they will be wrapped in the same timber cladding as the changing village to ensure that they appear as one structure. A green roof and solar panels are proposed to be included on top of the containers. Details of the scale of the changing village and shipping containers are below by individual unit and where appropriate, combined:

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Development Type	Height	Width	Length
Changing Village	2.47 metres	6.2 metres	6.68 metres
Containers	2.98 metres	6.2 metres	9.85 metres
Combined Changing village and Containers			16.53 metres

Figure 4: Front elevations for the changing village and shipping containers.



4.5 Vehicle Workshop

A vehicle workshop is proposed in the north of the site, in an area that was previously allocated for a children's play area. The workshop is proposed to provide a place for BikePark Wales to maintain vehicles with protection from the elements. The workshop will replace the existing outdoor maintenance area and will serve to improve the visual appearance of the Park and the connections between the existing visitor centre area, the new pod accommodation and parking areas. The building would be functional in appearance, consisting of a steel frame and finish that would be coloured green for the elevations and grey for the roof. The scale of the building is outlined below:

Development Type	Height	Width	Length
Vehicle Workshop	3.53 metres	6 metres	9.7 metres

4.6 Children's Natural Play area

- 4.6.1 One of the main aims of BikePark Wales is to appeal to the family leisure and tourism market. Therefore, a small natural playground was included in permission P/19/0073. The play area is to be retained, but in light of the need for a vehicle workshop (refer above), it is necessary to reduce its size. The proposed park

would still be sizeable in coverage and equipment and would help to soften views of the wider Park, with its natural appearance and associated planting.

4.7 Bike Wash Facilities

- 4.7.1 A small bike wash facility was previously included in permission P/19/0073 to be delivered at the northern edge of the original visitor centre building. It is now proposed to be located alongside the access track to its north east. The was facilities would include timber screens, hardstanding and water supply for bike washing. Appropriate receptors are to be included to catch any oil spillage.

4.8 Proposed Drainage

- 4.8.1 The proposed development would not amend the drainage design approach previously approved under permission P/19/0073 and the related SAB approval. Foul connections from the changing village discharge to the existing treatment plant, while the camping pods would be served by the approved new sealed foul water treatment plant. Surface water from the proposed development would also not alter the previous surface water drainage design, with the changing village discharging to ground via a swale and soakaway system and the pods discharging direct to ground to reduce the need for excavations for soakaways in the woodland area and protect the tree root system.

4.9 Proposed Landscape

- 4.9.1 The proposed landscape design would be subject to minor amendments to that originally approved under permission P/19/0073 to reflect the updated proposals. However, the overall approach around location of new planting to screen views of the development and assimilate the development into the landscape would remain the same, as would the choice of planting species and maintenance arrangements.

4.10 Proposed Access and Parking

- 4.10.1 The proposed development would not increase vehicle numbers beyond that assessed in permission P/19/0073. The development does not therefore include amendments to the parking areas and vehicle routes included in permission P/19/0073. Associated levels of this infrastructure would also remain the same. There would be localised variation of some pedestrian routes to accommodate the updated proposals.

5. **DEVELOPMENT CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION**

5.1 Construction

- 5.1.1 The detailed construction method required to deliver the development is not fully know. 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 minimise 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 April 2022. It was agreed that the Environmental Statement would consist of the following assessments:

- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

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

6.2 Landscape and Visual Assessment

- 6.2.1 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.

- 6.2.2 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.

- 6.2.3 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 a full planning application for development that will amend aspects of development granted approval under planning permission P/19/0073. The amended development is central to 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 the 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.