
Rhydycar West, Merthyr Tydfil

Walking, Cycling and Horse-riding Assessment and Review

784-B023905

Final for Submission

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1.0 BACKGROUND AND HIGHWAY SCHEME DESCRIPTION

BRIEF

- 1.1 Tetra Tech has been commissioned by Marvel Ltd to act as the transport and highways consultant in support of a planning application for land west of the A470 and to the south of the village of Heolgerrig in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC).
- 1.2 Planning Application P/23/0065 proposes the development of:
 - 39,200 sqm Indoor Snowdome.
 - 7,500 sqm Water Park.
 - 27,400 sqm Hotel (418 beds).
 - Indoor / Outdoor Activity Centre; and,
 - 30 Forest Lodges (up to 2,000 sqm).
- 1.3 As part of their statutory consultee response, Welsh Government's Transport Network Management Division cited that a WCHAR report is required to accompany Application P/23/0065.

BACKGROUND

- 1.4 This report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements as detailed in Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) section GG 142 Walking, cycle and horse-riding assessment and review to inform the design process Application P/23/0065.
- 1.5 As set out in Table 2.2.1 of GG 142, a small highway scheme is defined as:
 - Highway schemes comprising minor changes to an existing all-purpose trunk road, or changes to existing motorway or trunk road junctions that affect the local highway network in a rural area.
- 1.6 The proposed highway scheme is detailed in the subsequent section and is considered by the Lead Assessor to be a small highway scheme, given that it entails minor changes to an existing all-purpose trunk road (the A470).
- 1.7 This WCHAR assessment is being undertaken at the Outline Application stage. It is anticipated that that the WCHAR review would be undertaken as part of the detailed design stage and could be secured via Planning Condition or S106 Agreement.
- 1.8 The existing highway layout consist of the three arm A470 / A4102 roundabout providing a connection from the A470 trunk road into Merthyr Tydfil. A fourth western arm is provided in stub only, with the existing forestry track gated off from traffic and blocked by boulders.
- 1.9 The proposed emergency access is gained from Dragon Parc, using the existing private access to residential and commercial properties. For a circa 115m section, this access is shared with the Taff Trail.
- 1.10 The existing pedestrian and cycle access is gained from Bridleway MT|101|9 which provides a ramped 3.0m bridleway bridge over the A470. MT|101|9 connects into MT|101|3, which connects the site east towards Rhydycar Leisure Park, connecting into Merthyr Tydfil. Between MT|101|9 and the Taff Trail,

MT|101|3 is unpaved and unlit, providing a rural in nature bridleway featuring a gravel and earth surface. A 3.0m wide paved bridleway bridge is provided over the A4102.

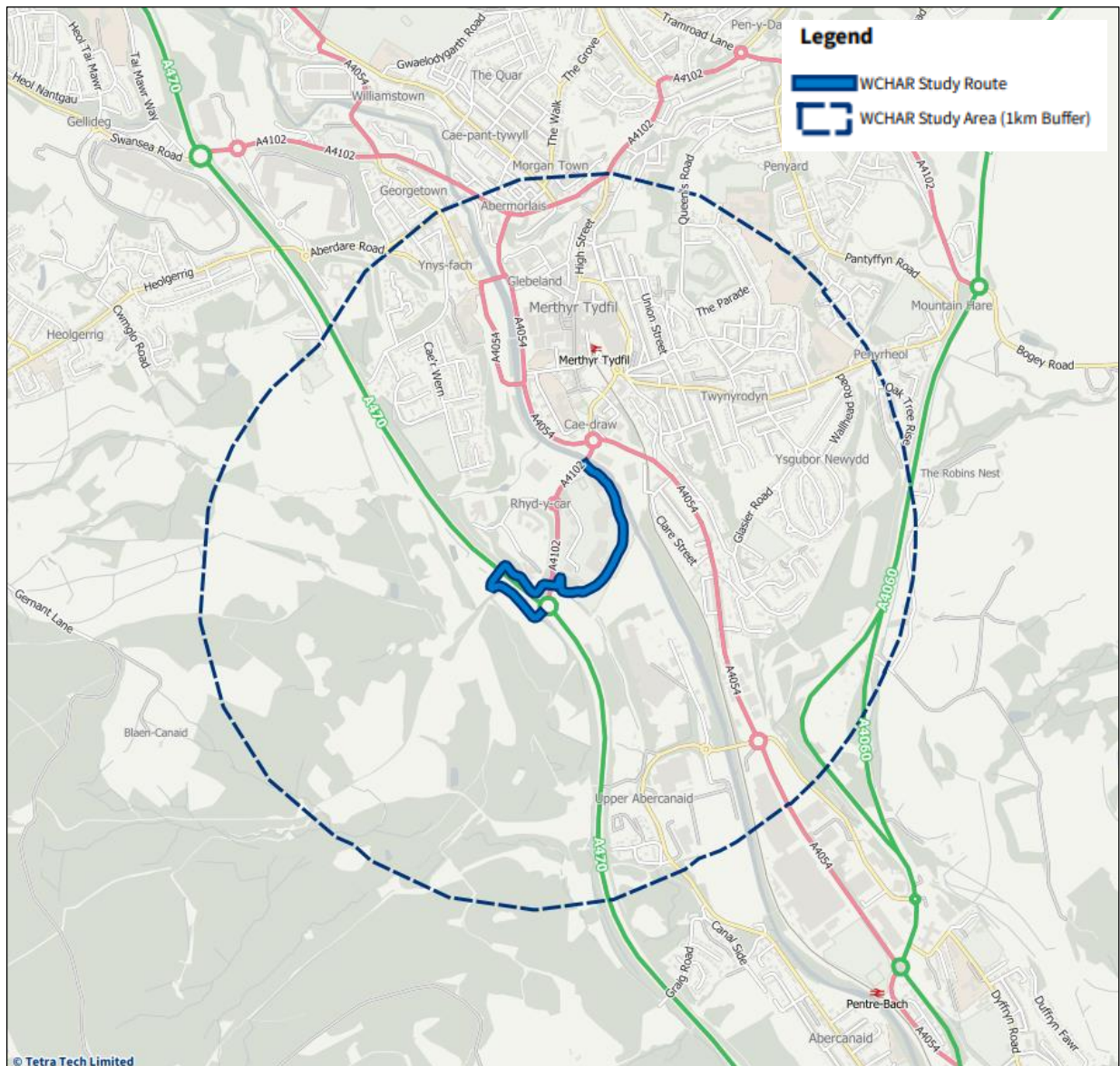
PROPOSED HIGHWAY SCHEME

- 1.11 The proposed highway improvement scheme comprises of the creation of a new / upgrading pedestrian / cycle links and the extension of an existing arm off the A470 / A4102 roundabout.
- 1.12 The A470 / A4102 roundabout improvement scheme will deliver an extension and improvement to the existing stub on the roundabout provided on the south-western arm.
- 1.13 The enhancements to this arm will provide two 3.65m lanes, increasing to two 4.5m wide lanes on entry to the roundabout, alongside a 90m centreline radius reducing to 24m to tie into the existing roundabout, with a 43.0m forward visibility.
- 1.14 The emergency access improvement scheme will be delivering improvements to Dragon Parc southeast of the site. The improvements will include visibility of X-distance of 2.4m and a Y-distance of 43.0m and a carriageway width of 7.2m.
- 1.15 Bridleway (MT|101|9) which comprises of a ramped 3.0m wide bridge over the A470 will be upgraded to a paved and lit active travel route between the A470 bridge and the Leisure Centre.
- 1.16 A new pedestrian / cycle link will be provided at the emergency access, connecting into the Taff Trail and the NCR8 at Upper Abercanaid.

WCHAR STUDY AREA

- 1.17 As detailed in **Paragraph 1.7**, the Lead Assessor considers that this scheme comprises a Small Highway Scheme. In accordance with GG 142, the study area therefore comprises a buffer of approximately 1km, around the existing bridleway (MT|101|9) access into Rhydycar West. Bridleway MT|101|9 will form the primary pedestrian and cycle access into the development and connects Rhydycar West into Merthyr Tydfil via MT|101|3 which provides connections over the A470 carriageway and A4102 carriageway, in the form of ramped 3.0m wide bridleway bridges. The proposed study route comprises an approximate 1km section of Bridleway MT|101|9, before connecting into the existing Public Right of Way (PROW) network within Merthyr Tydfil. Both the proposed study route and area are illustrated at **Figure 1.1**.

Figure 1.1 – Study Area



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- 1.18 As demonstrated at **Figure 1.1**, the proposed study area encompasses a significant proportion of the urban area of Merthyr Tydfil, within which key trip generators and strategic links will be considered.

2.0 WCHAR ASSESSMENT

- 2.1 This section summarises the findings of the WCHAR assessment as set out in Section 4 of GG 142. For clarity, the findings of each topic area required by GG 142 are set out in individual subsequent sections of this report.

ASSESSMENT OF WALKING, CYCLING AND HORSE-RIDING POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

- 2.2 Walking, cycling and horse-riding policies and strategies have been examined and used to inform the WCHAR assessment. The following documents have been reviewed as part of this process:

- National Policy
 - The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges: Policy GG 142 (2019)
 - Planning Policy Wales
 - Technical Advice Note 18: Transport
 - Active Travel Act Guidance (2021)
 - Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (2021)
 - Wales Transport Strategy 2021 (Llwybr Newydd: A New Wales Transport Strategy)
 - The Clean Air Plan for Wales (2020)
 - Future Generations of Wales Act (2015)
 - Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener
 - Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener, Britain
 - Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget
- Local Policy
 - South East Wales Valleys Local Transport Plan (2015)
 - The Adopted Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan: 2016-2031 (2020)

National Policy

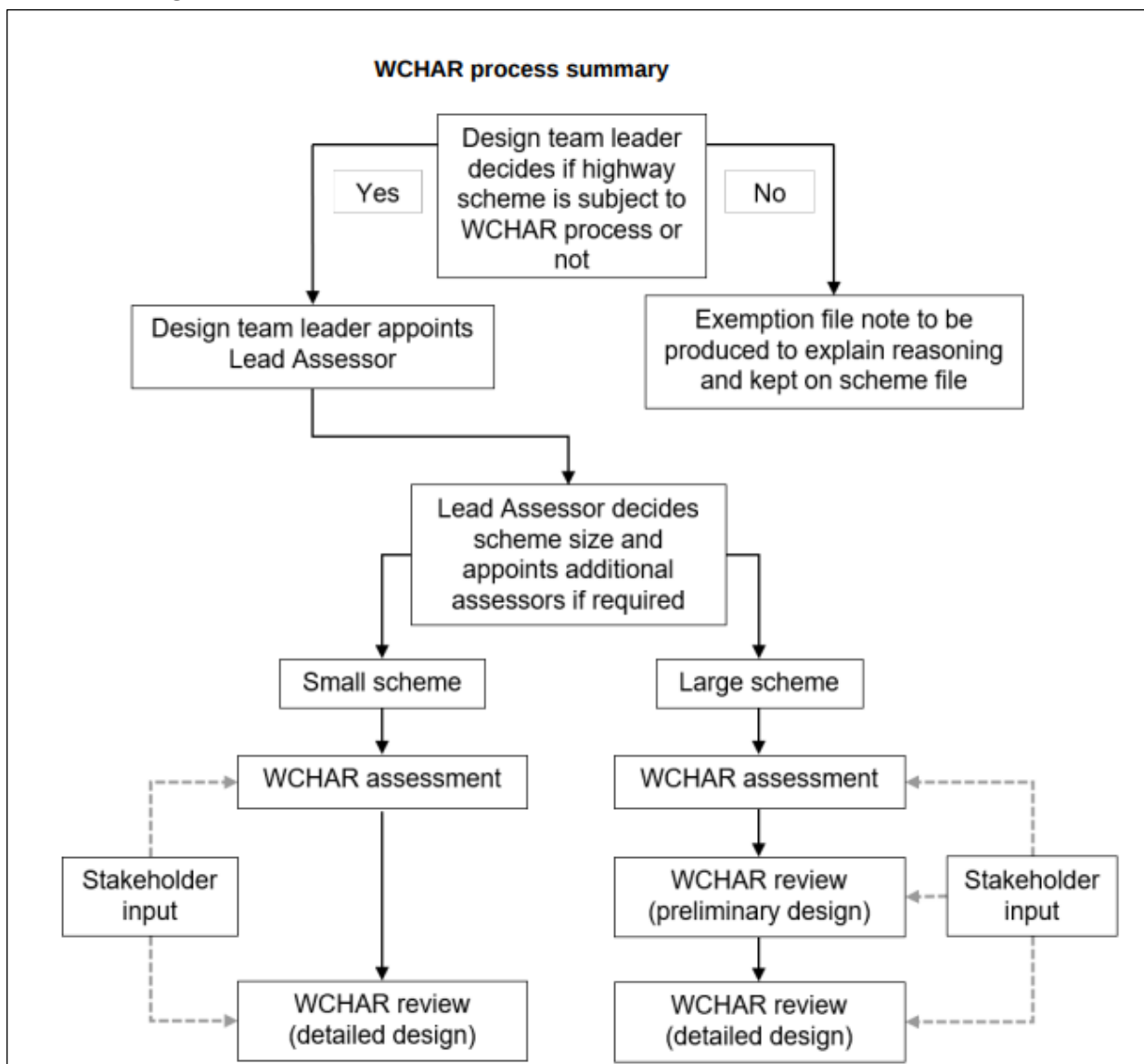
The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges: Policy GG 142 (2019)

- 2.3 Standards for Highways' 'The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges' (DMRB), Policy GG 142 (formerly HD 42/17), was published in November 2019 and both details the process for 'walking, cycling and horse-riding assessment and review' for highway schemes on motorways and all-purpose trunk roads.
- 2.4 The policy seeks to increase collaboration, interaction, and engagement with key stakeholders, to:
- To gain an appropriate understanding of all relevant existing facilities for pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians (users) in the local area.
 - To provide background user information that can be referred to throughout the development of the highway scheme.

- To identify opportunities for improvement for users.
- To continually review proposals for pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians throughout the development of the highway scheme design.
- To review the potential impact of the proposed highway scheme on users in the area and on existing facilities; and,
- To identify new opportunities for improvement (or removal of constraints) for users that may arise from the development of the highway scheme that were not evident during the assessment phase.

2.5 The policy also sets out the requirements for progressing a WCHAR, illustrated at **Figure 2.1**.

Figure 2.1 – DMRB Policy GG 142: WCHAR Process Summary Chart



Source: Standards for Highways' 'Design Manual for Roads and Bridges', Policy GG 142, pp 6.

2.6 As set out in **Figure 2.1**, the Lead Assessor is responsible for determining the highway scheme size based on the process criteria detailed within Policy GG 142. Given that the proposed development does not comprise new road construction, significant changes to an existing all-purpose trunk road or significant changes to an urban environment consisting of both the trunk road network and local

highway network, the proposed scheme has been identified as a small highway scheme, with the specified requirements having therefore been applied to this assessment.

- 2.7 An assessment report template is also provided in the appendix of Policy GG 142, to which this assessment has been tailored, detailing the required assessment process for the submission of a WCHAR.

Planning Policy Wales

- 2.8 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government, with Edition 12 published in February 2024.
- 2.9 Development proposals must seek to maximise accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport, by prioritising the provision of appropriate on-site infrastructure and, where necessary, mitigating transport impacts through the provision of off-site measures.
- 2.10 PPW requires the use of a sustainable transport hierarchy in relation to new developments, which prioritises walking, cycling and public transport ahead of the private motor vehicles.

Technical Advice Note 18: Transport

- 2.11 Technical Advice Note 18 (TAN 18): Transport provides national advice on transport related issues when planning for new developments and was adopted by the Welsh Government in March 2007.
- 2.12 The document promotes inclusive developments which cater for all travel users. It prioritises movements by sustainable modes setting out that local development plans should integrate policies and objectives for walking and cycling, safeguarding routes in urban and rural areas for walkers, cyclists, and horse-riders.

Active Travel Act Guidance (2021)

- 2.13 The Active Travel Act Guidance was published in July 2021 by Welsh Government and provides technical guidance on the planning and implementation of infrastructure, to ensure that any proposals, schemes, or highway improvements give appropriate consideration towards active travel networks. The Act states that:
- ‘The contents must be considered when planning, designing and maintaining active travel routes and related facilities, enhancing provision for walkers and cyclists as part of other highway schemes (including planned maintenance work), or when considering the needs of walking and cyclists as part of new developments, traffic management and road safety schemes’.
- 2.14 With respect to WCHAR assessments, the Active Travel Act sets out that all highway design on the trunk road network should be undertaken in accordance with the DMRB, which includes Policy GG 142 (Walking, Cycling and horse-riding assessment and review), and that a draft WCHAR assessment must be presented to the Welsh Government at the end of WelTAG Stage 1, and a final assessment presented for approval at the end of WelTAG Stage 2.
- 2.15 In accordance with guidance DE403, Appendix G, of the Active Travel Act Guidance, the provision of any shared use paths / tracks will adhere to the following criteria:

-
- On less busy secondary routes, where the peak hour flow is less than approximately 50/hr, shared use paths will be a minimum of 2.5m width.
 - On primary cycle routes, where the peak hour flow is greater than approximately 250/hr, shared use paths will be a minimum of 3m width.
 - On particularly heavily trafficked routes, shared use paths will be increased to a minimum of 4.5m width.
 - All footpaths and cycle tracks should be continuous.
 - Flush kerbs with tactile paving at priority road crossings should be provided.
 - Cycle tracks should not deflect more than 45° from cyclists' desire line and constant changes in height should be avoided.
 - Machine-laid bituminous surfacing should be used as it will make journeys safer and more comfortable; and,
 - Where possible clear verges (1m wide) should be provided alongside pedestrian and cycle routes.

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (2021)

- 2.16 Future Wales – The National Plan 2040 sets out the national development framework and the direction for development in Wales, covering the period up to 2040. This document was prepared by the Welsh Government and was adopted in February 2021.
- 2.17 Policy 12 of Future Wales sets out that the Welsh Government will work with Transport for Wales, Local Authorities, operators, and partners to prioritise walking and cycling for all local travel, seeking to create comprehensive networks of local walking, and cycling routes to connect places that people need to access for everyday purposes.

Wales Transport Strategy 2021 (Llwybr Newydd: A New Wales Transport Strategy)

- 2.18 The Welsh Government's Llwybr Newydd: The Wales Transport Strategy sets out how the transport system in Wales will change over the next 20-year period and was adopted in March 2021.
- 2.19 The document sets out the overall aim for walking and cycling to become the normal choice for shorter journeys. It aims to continuously develop a network of local walking and cycling routes and ensure that provision for walking and cycling is available from the outset of new development.

The Clean Air Plan for Wales (2020)

- 2.20 The Clean Air Plan for Wales was published in August 2020 and last updated in April 2023. The plan sets out an aim to improve air quality and reduce the impacts of air pollution on human health, biodiversity, the natural environment, and Wales' economy.
- 2.21 Regarding walking, cycling and horse-riding, it details an aspiration that for shorter journeys, walking and cycling become the preferred choice. To enable this, planned networks must meet community needs, increasing the likelihood people are motivated to use them.

Well-being of Future Generations of Wales Act (2015)

- 2.22 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities, and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. Objectives are required to support the delivery of the seven well-being goals which are creating a more prosperous; resilient; healthier; equal; cohesive; vibrant and globally responsible Wales.
- 2.23 Public bodies need to make sure that when making their decisions they consider the impact they could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future. This must balance short- and long-term needs; prevent problems occurring; integrate aims in wider objectives; collaborate on supporting well-being goals and ensure that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener

- 2.24 The Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener was published in October 2021 and sets out policies and proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the UK economy to meet the net zero target by 2050.
- 2.25 The document sets out the overall aim to end the sale of new internal combustion engine cars by 2030 and the 2035 commitment that all cars must be zero emissions capable. The document sets out that this can be achieved by investing in EV infrastructure, active travel infrastructure, improvements to bus networks, and an aspiration to invest significantly in rail electrification, removing all diesel only trains by 2040.
- 2.26 The document states that streets will be cleaner, people will be healthier from breathing cleaner air and therefore walk and cycle more.

Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener, Britain

- 2.27 This plan sets out the government's commitments and the actions needed to decarbonise the entire transport system in the UK. It includes the pathway to net zero transport in the UK, the wider benefits net zero transport can deliver and the principles that underpin the government's approach to delivering net zero transport.
- 2.28 The document aims for 2025 are to double cycling from 0.8 billion stages in 2013 to 1.6 billion stages in 2025. Journeys below five miles represented 58% of all private car journeys in 2019 and provide the biggest opportunity for switching short car journeys to cycling which can be done through improved cycling facilities safer bike routes and more cycle parking.

Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget

- 2.29 The Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget sets out how Wales aims to meet its second Carbon Budget for the period 2021-2025.
- 2.30 Regarding transport, it sets out an aim to reduce emissions from passenger transport by 22% in 2025 (from 2019) and 98% in 2050 through demand reduction, modal shift, and the uptake of low carbon technologies.

Local Policy

South East Wales Valleys Local Transport Plan (2015)

- 2.31 The South East Wales Valleys Local Transport Plan (LTP) was adopted in January 2015 for use in the administrative areas of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and Torfaen County Borough Council. The LTP covers the period up to 2020 in the short-term and up to 2030 in the longer-term.
- 2.32 The LTP aims to reach a “low carbon future, which has a transport network and mobility culture that positively contributes to a thriving economy and the health and wellbeing of its citizens, and where sustainable travel is the option of choice”.
- 2.33 The document aims to increase the numbers of cycling trips through new and / or improved cycling trips.

The Adopted Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan: 2016-2031 (2020)

- 2.34 The replacement LDP underwent examination in public in 2019 and was adopted by the council on the 29th of January 2020. The Replacement LDP supersedes the previous adopted LDP and forms the basis for land use planning decisions in the County Borough, excluding the Brecon Beacons National Park.
- 2.35 The document sets out that within Merthyr Tydfil there are extensive cycling routes, but they are not well connected and therefore the number of people who cycle for trips under 5k or less is low and the east-west travel is difficult. The documents sets out that improvement is required for the connectivity of the existing routes, as set out in Policy SW12 - Walking and cycling – Existing and proposed Active Travel Routes.

COLLISION DATA

- 2.36 Personal Injury Accident (PIA) data has been obtained from ‘Crashmap’ for a five-year period from 2018 to 2022, comprising the most recent data freely released by the Department for Transport (DfT). ‘Crashmap’ uses data collected by the police regarding the occurrence of Personal Injury Accidents. This data is approved by the National Statistics Authority and reported on by the DfT each year.
- 2.37 The severity of incidents has been classified as either ‘slight,’ ‘serious’ or ‘fatal’ for either pedestrians, cyclists or ‘Other’ (comprising Motorcycle, Car, Bus and Goods Vehicle) casualties. **Figure 2.2** illustrates the location of all 50 incidents recorded for the five-year period within the study area.

The map displays Merthyr Tydfil with various roads and landmarks. Key roads include A4102, A4054, A4053, A4052, A4051, A4050, A4049, A4048, A4047, A4046, A4045, A4044, A4043, A4042, A4041, A4040, A4039, A4038, A4037, A4036, A4035, A4034, A4033, A4032, A4031, A4030, A4029, A4028, A4027, A4026, A4025, A4024, A4023, A4022, A4021, A4020, A4019, A4018, A4017, A4016, A4015, A4014, A4013, A4012, A4011, A4010, A4009, A4008, A4007, A4006, A4005, A4004, A4003, A4002, A4001, A4000, A3999, A3998, A3997, A3996, A3995, A3994, A3993, A3992, A3991, A3990, A3989, A3988, A3987, A3986, A3985, A3984, A3983, A3982, A3981, A3980, A3979, A3978, A3977, A3976, A3975, A3974, A3973, A3972, A3971, A3970, A3969, A3968, A3967, A3966, A3965, A3964, A3963, A3962, A3961, A3960, A3959, A3958, A3957, A3956, A3955, A3954, A3953, A3952, A3951, A3950, A3949, A3948, A3947, A3946, A3945, A3944, A3943, A3942, A3941, A3940, A3939, A3938, A3937, A3936, A3935, A3934, A3933, A3932, A3931, A3930, A3929, A3928, A3927, A3926, A3925, A3924, A3923, A3922, A3921, A3920, A3919, A3918, A3917, A3916, A3915, A3914, A3913, A3912, A3911, A3910, A3909, A3908, A3907, A3906, A3905, A3904, A3903, A3902, A3901, A3900, A3899, A3898, A3897, A3896, A3895, A3894, A3893, A3892, A3891, A3890, A3889, A3888, A3887, A3886, A3885, A3884, A3883, A3882, A3881, A3880, A3879, A3878, A3877, A3876, A3875, A3874, A3873, A3872, A3871, A3870, A3869, A3868, A3867, A3866, A3865, A3864, A3863, A3862, A3861, A3860, A3859, A3858, A3857, A3856, A3855, A3854, A3853, A3852, A3851, A3850, A3849, A3848, A3847, A3846, A3845, A3844, A3843, A3842, A3841, A3840, A3839, A3838, A3837, A3836, A3835, A3834, A3833, A3832, A3831, A3830, A3829, A3828, A3827, A3826, A3825, A3824, A3823, A3822, A3821, A3820, A3819, A3818, A3817, A3816, A3815, A3814, A3813, A3812, A3811, A3810, A3809, A3808, A3807, A3806, A3805, A3804, A3803, A3802, A3801, A3800, A3799, A3798, A3797, A3796, A3795, A3794, A3793, A3792, A3791, A3790, A3789, A3788, A3787, A3786, A3785, A3784, A3783, A3782, A3781, A3780, A3779, A3778, A3777, A3776, A3775, A3774, A3773, A3772, A3771, A3770, A3769, A3768, A3767, A3766, A3765, A3764, A3763, A3762, A3761, A3760, A3759, A3758, A3757, A3756, A3755, A3754, A3753, A3752, A3751, A3750, A3749, A3748, A3747, A3746, A3745, A3744, A3743, A3742, A3741, A3740, A3739, A3738, A3737, A3736, A3735, A3734, A3733, A3732, A3731, A3730, A3729, A3728, A3727, A3726, A3725, A3724, A3723, A3722, A3721, A3720, A3719, A3718, A3717, A3716, A3715, A3714, A3713, A3712, A3711, A3710, A3709, A3708, A3707, A3706, A3705, A3704, A3703, A3702, A3701, A3700, A3699, A3698, A3697, A3696, A3695, A3694, A3693, A3692, A3691, A3690, A3689, A3688, A3687, A3686, A3685, A3684, A3683, A3682, A3681, A3680, A3679, A3678, A3677, A3676, A3675, A3674, A3673, A3672, A3671, A3670, A3669, A3668, A3667, A3666, A3665, A3664, A3663, A3662, A3661, A3660, A3659, A3658, A3657, A3656, A3655, A3654, A3653, A3652, A3651, A3650, A3649, A3648, A3647, A3646, A3645, A3644, A3643, A3642, A3641, A3640, A3639, A3638, A3637, A3636, A3635, A3634, A3633, A3632, A3631, A3630, A3629, A3628, A3627, A3626, A3625, A3624, A3623, A3622, A3621, A3620, A3619, A3618, A3617, A3616, A3615, A3614, A3613, A3612, A3611, A3610, A3609, A3608, A3607, A3606, A3605, A3604, A3603, A3602, A3601, A3600, A3599, A3598, A3597, A3596, A3595, A3594, A3593, A3592, A3591, A3590, A3589, A3588, A3587, A3586, A3585, A3584, A3583, A3582, A3581, A3580, A3579, A3578, A3577, A3576, A3575, A3574, A3573, A3572, A3571, A3570, A3569, A3568, A3567, A3566, A3565, A3564, A3563, A3562, A3561, A3560, A3559, A3558, A3557, A3556, A3555, A3554, A3553, A3552, A3551, A3550, A3549, A3548, A3547, A3546, A3545, A3544, A3543, A3542, A3541, A3540, A3539, A3538, A3537, A3536, A3535, A3534, A3533, A3532, A3531, A3530, A3529, A3528, A3527, A3526, A3525, A3524, A3523, A3522, A3521, A3520, A3519, A3518, A3517, A3516, A3515, A3514, A3513, A3512, A3511, A3510, A3509, A3508, A3507, A3506, A3505, A3504, A3503, A3502, A3501, A3500, A3499, A3498, A3497, A3496, A3495, A3494, A3493, A3492, A3491, A3490, A3489, A3488, A3487, A3486, A3485, A3484, A3483, A3482, A3481, A3480, A3479, A3478, A3477, A3476, A3475, A3474, A3473, A3472, A3471, A3470, A3469, A3468, A3467, A3466, A3465, A3464, A3463, A3462, A3461, A3460, A3459, A3458, A3457, A3456, A3455, A3454, A3453, A3452, A3451, A3450, A3449, A3448, A3447, A3446, A3445, A3444, A3443, A3442, A3441, A3440, A3439, A3438, A3437, A3436, A3435, A3434, A3433, A3432, A3431, A3430, A3429, A3428, A3427, A3426, A3425, A3424, A3423, A3422, A3421, A3420, A3419, A3418, A3417, A3416, A3415, A3414, A3413, A3412, A3411, A3410, A3409, A3408, A3407, A3406, A3405, A3404, A3403, A3402, A3401, A3400, A3399, A3398, A3397, A3396, A3395, A3394, A3393, A3392, A3391, A3390, A3389, A3388, A3387, A3386, A3385, A3384, A3383, A3382, A3381, A3380,

2.38 **Figure 2.1** demonstrates that a total of 50 personal injury accidents were recorded for the study area during the 5-year period, with a summary of all incidents detailed at **Table 2.1**.

Table 2.1 – Personal Injury Accident Data Summary

Severity	Total
Pedestrian Casualty	
Slight	12
Serious	5
Fatal	1
Cycle Casualty	
Slight	4
Serious	1
Fatal	0
Other Casualty	
Slight	25
Serious	2
Fatal	0

- 2.39 **Table 1.2** shows that for pedestrians, 12 incidents were classified as ‘slight’, 5 were classified as ‘serious’ and one was classified as ‘fatal’. For cyclists, 4 incidents were classified as ‘slight’, 1 was classified as ‘serious’ and none classified as ‘fatal’. For ‘Other’ casualties, a total of 25 incidents were classified as ‘slight’, 2 were classified as ‘serious’ and none classified as ‘fatal’.
- 2.40 The study area recorded an average of 10 incidents per year, over the assessment period, with 82% recorded as ‘slight’, 16% as ‘serious’ and 2% as ‘fatal’. One ‘fatal’ incident was recorded, and occurred on the 24th of December 2022 at the A4054, Avenue De Clichy.
- 2.41 No pedestrian or cycle incidents were recorded within the immediate vicinity of the development along the A470 / A4102, with the majority (7) of pedestrian incidents occurring along High Street to the north of the study area, and therefore considered unlikely to be affected by the proposed scheme.

MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORT SERVICES AND INTERCHANGE INFORMATION

Rail

- 2.42 Merthyr Tydfil Railway Station is located within the study area, located approximately 1.7km northeast of the site.
- 2.43 The station is located on the Merthyr branch line and is operated by Transport for Wales. The station provides a half-hourly service Monday to Saturday to and from Cardiff Central, with services continuing onwards to Barry, Barry Island and Bridgend. On Sundays, a service every two hours is provided, though it is noted that this is due to increase to hourly as part of the South Wales Metro proposals.

2.44 Merthyr Tydfil station benefits from:

- 10 cycle racks.
- Ticket office; and,
- Step free access, from the car park.

2.45 From Rhydyar West, Merthyr Tydfil station can be accessed by utilising the existing pedestrian and cycle access of Bridleway MT|101|9, which routes over the A470 onto Bridleway MT|101|3. Bridleway MT|101|3 provides a direct connection to the Taff Trail, a 55-mile cycle and walking route which provides a seamless link between Cardiff Bay and Brecon via Merthyr Tydfil and shares a section of shared pathway with National Cycle Route 8. Following the Taff Trail northbound, through the A4102 tunnel, access is gained to the A4054 over the River Taff via a dedicated shared-use bridge and in turn a shared-use crossing over the A4054, which connects into the existing pedestrian network of Merthyr Tydfil and in turn Merthyr Tydfil Railway Station.

Bus

Local Bus Stops

2.46 The nearest bus stop is located 1.2km from the site within the grounds of the Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Village. This bus stop is marked and benefits from a layby, shelter, and timetabling information.

2.47 The stop benefits from a regular level of services which operate Monday to Sunday, providing connections to the town centre and wider parts of Merthyr Tydfil. A summary of these services is presented in **Table 2.2**. An additional service can be access via the Merthyr Tydfil Castle Bingo bus stops, located on the A4054 High Street.

Table 2.2 – Bus Service Summary

Bus Service	Route	Frequency		
		Mon-Fri	Saturday	Sunday
Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre				
81 (Stagecoach South Wales)	Aberfan - Merthyr Tydfil	07:16 – 19:16 Hourly	07:16 – 19:16 Hourly	No Service
	Merthyr Tydfil - Aberfan	06:26 – 18:27 Hourly	06:26 – 18:27 Hourly	No Service
89 (Adventure Travel / Stagecoach South Wales)	Aberdare – Merthyr Tydfil	No Service	No Service	14:45 – 18:25 Every 2 hours
	Merthyr Tydfil - Aberdare	No Service	No Service	15:05 – 18:10 Every 2 hours
Merthyr Tydfil Castle Bingo				
24 (Peter’s Minibus Hire)	Pontsticill – Merthyr Tydfil	11:41 – 16:41 Every 2-3 hours		No Service

78 (Stagecoach South Wales)	Abergavenny – Brynmawr - Merthyr Tydfil - Pontypridd	05:46 – 17:37 Hourly	No Service
	Pontypridd – Merthyr Tydfil - Brynmawr - Abergavenny	06:33 – 19:35 Hourly	No Service
79 (New Adventure Travel)	Bedlinog - Merthyr Tydfil	07:02 – 18:06 Hourly	No Service
	Merthyr Tydfil - Treharris	07:16 – 18:16 Hourly	No Service
81 (Stagecoach South Wales)	Aberfan - Merthyr Tydfil	07:14 – 19:14 Hourly	No Service
	Merthyr Tydfil - Aberfan	06:29 – 18:29 Hourly	No Service
T4 (Stagecoach South Wales)	Newtown – Llandrindod Wells – Brecon – Merthyr Tydfil – Cardiff	06:19 – 20:51 Every 30 mins	08:00 – 18:06 Hourly
	Cardiff – Merthyr Tydfil – Brecon – Llandrindod Wells - Newtown	08:30 – 22:49 Every 30 mins	09:58 – 20:01 Hourly
T4C (Stagecoach South Wales)	Merthyr Tydfil – Cardiff	06:19 – 20:51 Every 30 mins	08:00 – 18:06 Hourly
	Cardiff – Merthyr Tydfil	08:30 – 22:49 Every 30 mins	09:58 – 20:01 Hourly
T14C (Stagecoach South Wales)	Merthyr Tydfil – Cardiff	12:04 – 16:03 Every 2 hours	No Service
	Cardiff – Merthyr Tydfil	10:04 – 18:04 Every 2 hours	No Service

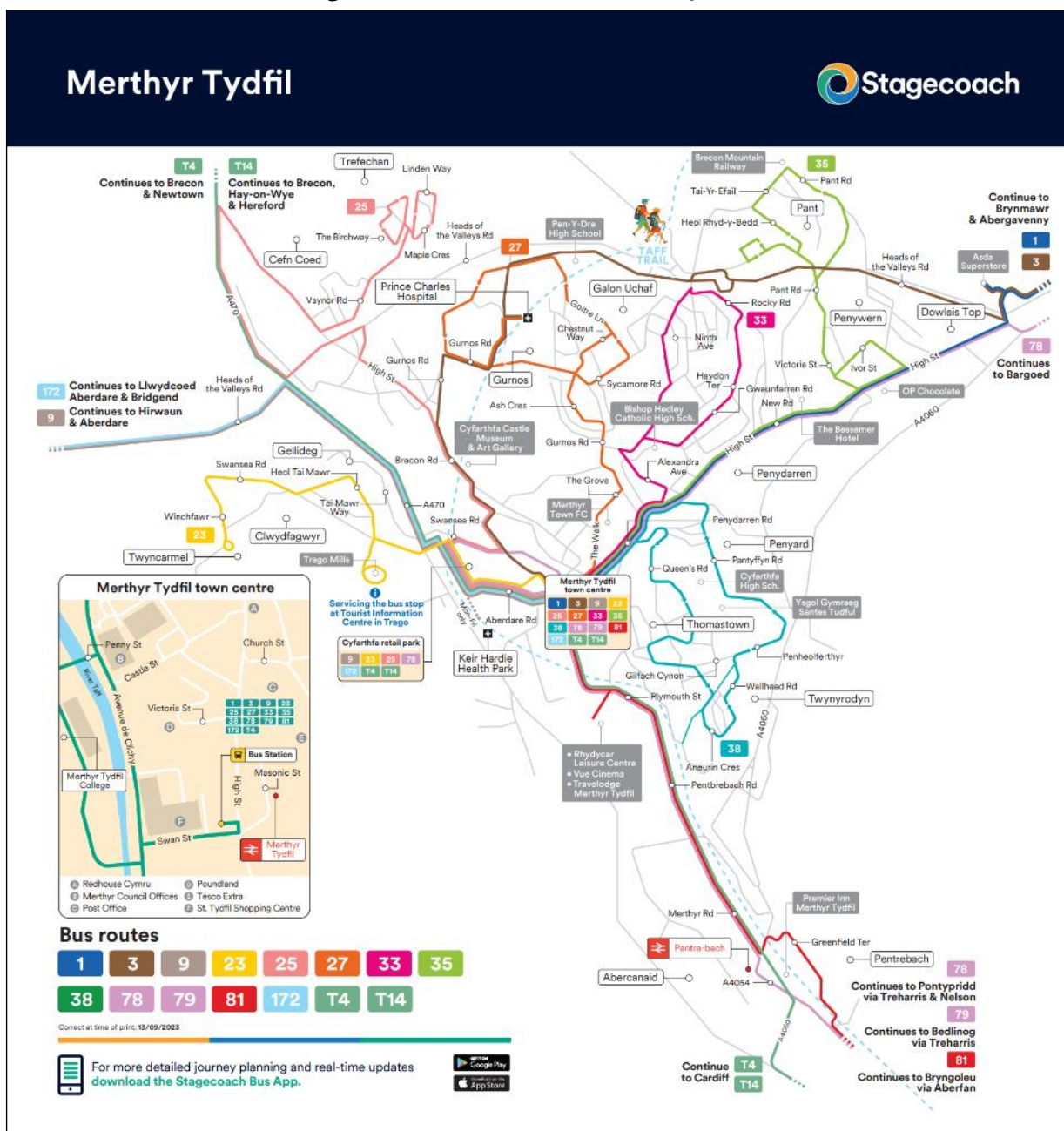
Service pattern as of March 27th 2024

Merthyr Tydfil Bus Station

2.48 The nearest bus station to the site is Merthyr Tydfil Bus Station, approximately 2km north, located to the north of Swan Street. Merthyr Tydfil Bus Station offers many services that provide regular access to the wider parts of Merthyr Tydfil and surrounding settlements as well as several more strategic destinations.

2.49 A summary of the services available from the bus station and their routing is illustrated at **Figure 2.3**.

Figure 2.3 – Local Bus Network Map



2.50 These bus routes provide frequent services to key destinations, including:

- A service to Cardiff is provided via the T4 approximately every 40 minutes, Monday to Saturday, with a service every two hours provided on Sundays.
- A service to Pontypridd is provided via the T4 approximately every 40 minutes, Monday to Saturday, with a service every two hours provided on Sundays. Additionally, the 78 bus provides an hourly service to Pontypridd, Monday to Saturday.
- An hourly service to Abergavenny is provided via 78, Monday to Saturday.
- An hourly service to Aberdare is provided via the 78, Monday to Saturday, with a service approximately every 2 hours provided on Sundays. Additionally, the 9 bus provides a service

approximately every 40 minutes to Aberdare, Monday to Saturday, with an hourly service provided on Sundays.

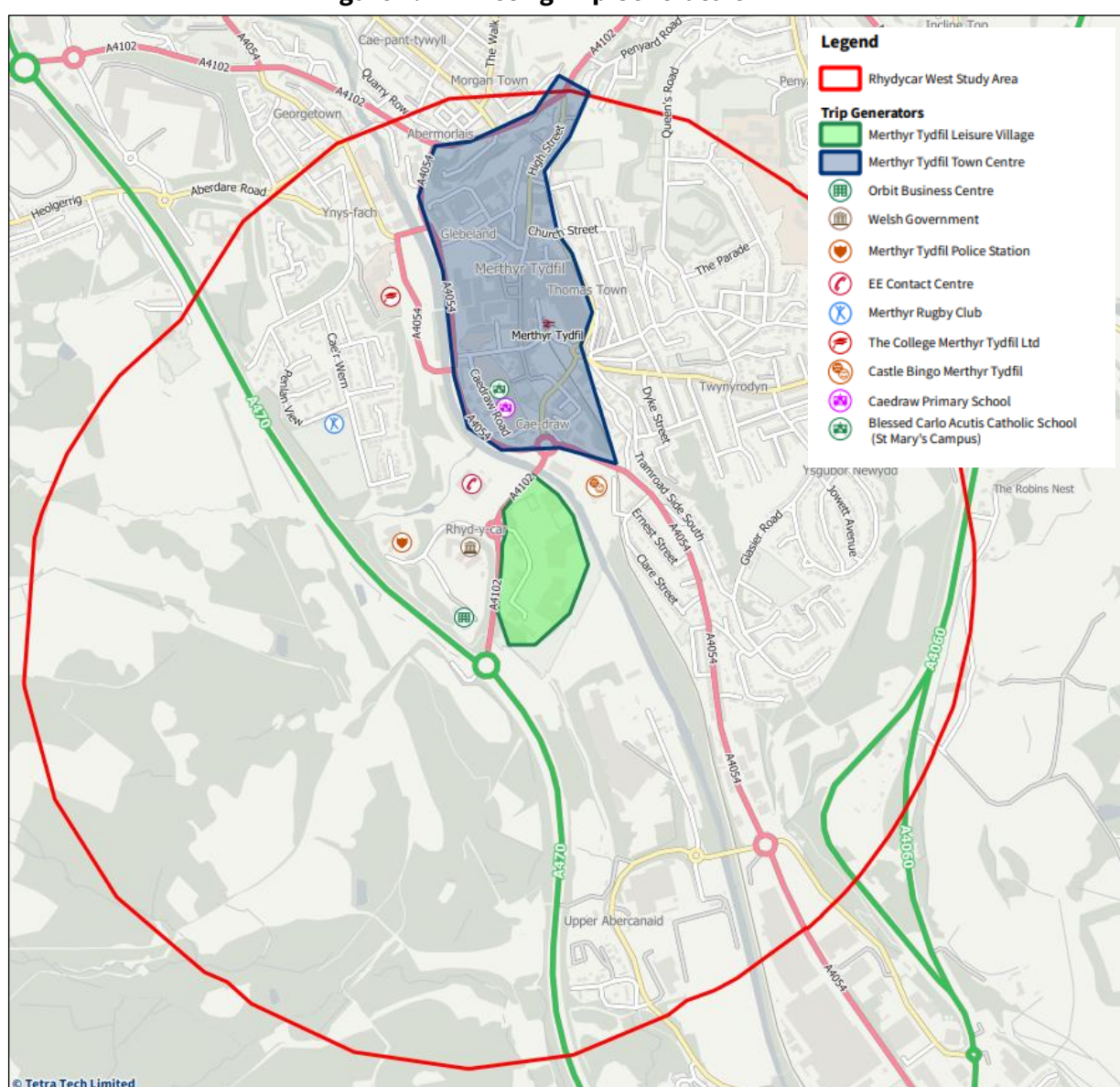
- A service every two hours is provided to Brecon via the T4, Monday to Sunday, with an additional service every two hours provided to Brecon via the T14B, Monday to Saturday.

TRIP GENERATORS

Existing Trip Generators

2.51 There is a range of existing trip generators within the study area that could be attractive to pedestrians, cyclists, or horse riders. The location of these trip generators is shown in **Figure 2.4** and summarised in **Table 2.3**.

Figure 2.4 – Existing Trip Generators



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Table 2.3 – Existing Trip Generators

Facility	Notes
The College Merthyr Tydfil Ltd	Further Education Facility (GCSE to Higher Education, 16+)
Caedraw Primary School	Primary School (4-11 years)
Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School (St Mary's Campus)	Catholic School Education Facility (3-16 years old)
Welsh Government	Employment Facility (approx. 450 staff)
EE Contact Centre	Employment Facility
Merthyr Tydfil Police Station	Employment Facility (Shift work- trips spread across the day)
Merthyr Rugby Club	Employment and Leisure Facility
Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre	Employment / Commercial / Leisure Facilities
Orbit Business Centre	Employment Facility (Comprising of 8 businesses)
Castle Bingo Merthyr Tydfil	Leisure / Employment Facility (Mostly an evening / weekend trip generator with organised trip / large groups)
Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Village	Leisure Facility / Employment (Comprising of a leisure centre, hotel, restaurants, cinema, bowling, skate park, bowls centre and parkrun (on Saturdays))

Future Trip Generators

Rhydycar West

- 2.52 As part of the pre-application discussions, the Applicant has confirmed that various PRowS will be established across the site. This will likely result in an increased level of walking, cycling and horse-riding traffic, particularly as they provide a new walking and cycling route to Bike Park Wales.
- 2.53 Furthermore, if Application P/23/0065 is consented and the Rhydycar West site comes forward, then the key active travel access route (the Study Route and route to the leisure centre) will be enhanced, paved, and lit to form the main active travel access route to the site. Through the delivery of the development, an increased level of walking and cycling trips will be experienced on existing active travel links within the study area, with a level of staff and visitors expected to walk and cycle to Rhydycar West.

Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area

- 2.54 MTCBC have identified the former Hoover factory site as a Strategic Regeneration Area, which is allocated under Policy SW6 in the Replacement Local Plan for 440 new homes, 1.5ha of employment,

400sqm of retail, a park and ride facility, safeguarded land for a new Metro station and associated development.

- 2.55 If the site is built out, it is anticipated that the level of walking, cycling and horse-riding traffic that may utilise dedicated Active Travel infrastructure within the WCHAR study area will increase.

Abernant to Merthyr Tydfil Tunnel

- 2.56 Marvel (the site owner) have been working closely with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Welsh Government to facilitate the reopening the of the Merthyr-Abernant Tunnel, which would provide a traffic-free and direct cycling and walking route of around four miles between the Abernant and Merthyr Tydfil town centres, reducing the current journey by around three miles. A Public Path Creation Order was made (in collaboration with the site owner) on 26 October 2020 to establish a bridleway and create a route across the site to the Merthyr-Abernant Tunnel representing a significant milestone for the full realisation of this project.
- 2.57 If this project is fully realised, it is anticipated that the level of walking, cycling and horse-riding traffic that may utilise dedicated Active Travel infrastructure within the WCHAR study area will increase.

SITE VISIT

- 2.58 A site visit has been completed as part of the WCHAR assessment, attended by the Lead Assessor. The Site Visit was completed on Saturday November 4th, 2023, between 1100 and 1400, the period when leisure trips are expected to be at their greatest. The weather conditions were heavy rain.
- 2.59 An initial site visit was also completed on Wednesday October 21st, 2021, between 1030 and 1200, attended by a member of the design team. The weather conditions were clear and sunny.
- 2.60 As part of the site visits, a review of relevant key walking, cycling and horse-riding routes was completed, with the study area covered illustrated in **Figure 2.5**.

Legend

- WCHAR Study Area (1km Buffer)
- Site Visit Access Facility Route

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2.61 The observations made during the site visit are summarised in the Existing Pedestrian, Cyclist and Equestrian Facilities section, with the notes shown in **Table 2.4**. The locations of these observations are highlighted in **Figure 2.6**, with photographs recorded during the site visit provided where necessary.

2.62 As part of Application P/23/0065 liaison with MTCBC and Welsh Government has been undertaken.

2.63 As part of their consultee response, Welsh Government have requested that a WCHAR is completed.

2.64 As part of their consultee response, MTCBC Highways commented on the emergency access, noting that the emergency access route is currently a designated bridleway (MT|110|79) and crosses the Taff Trail.

2.65 The existing public rights of way within the study area are illustrated in **Figure 2.6**.

Existing PROWs within WCHAR Study Area
 Rhydycar West
 Marvel Ltd

Legend

- Rhydycar West
- WCHAR Study Area
- Public Rights of Way
- BOAT
- Bridleway
- Footpath

2.66 **Table 2.4** details the assessment of the condition of key existing facilities for walking, cycling and horse-riding, with the location of the key assessed links illustrated in **Figure 2.7**.

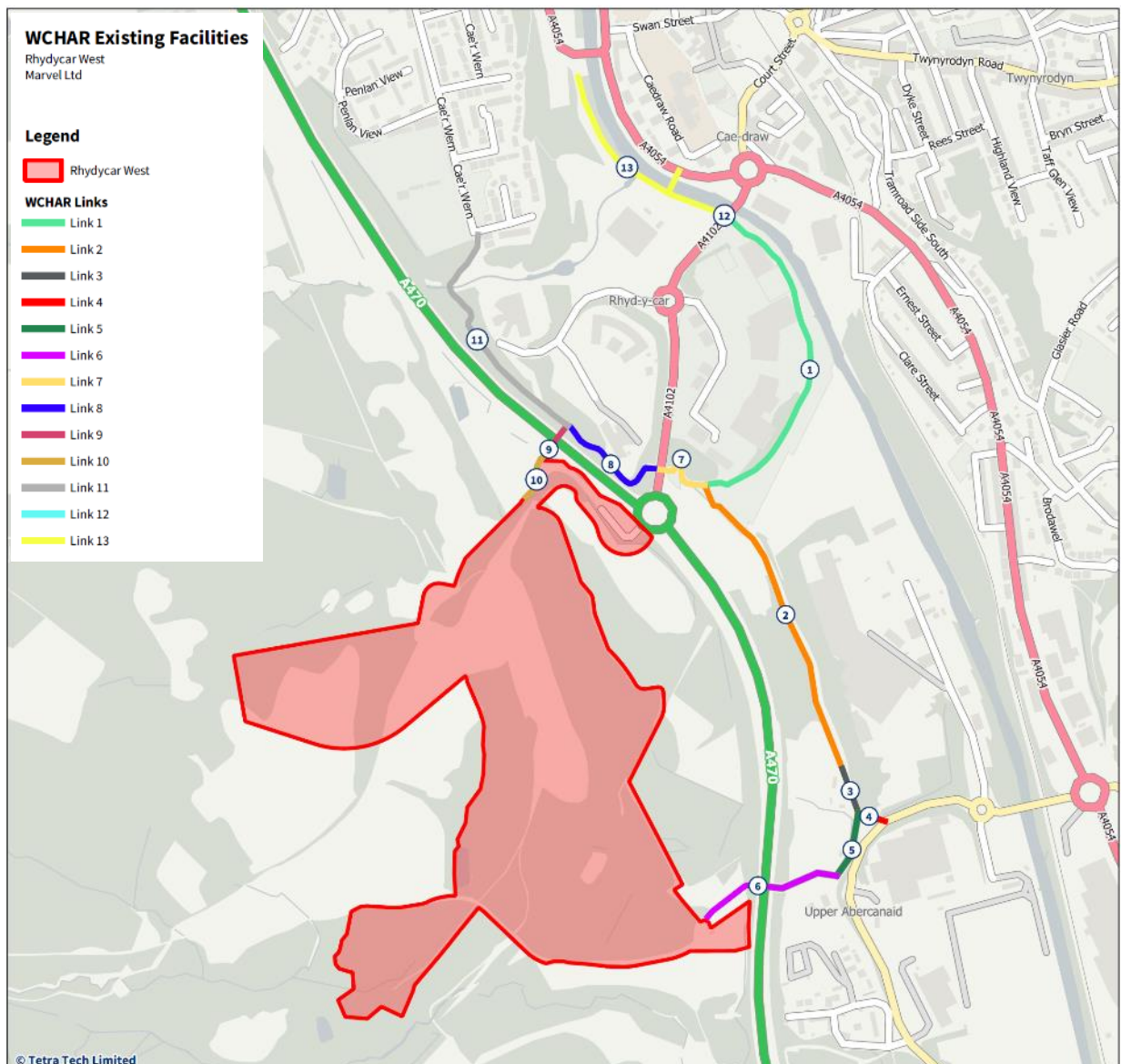
Table 2.4 – Summary Assessment of Key Existing Facilities

ID	Comment	Photo
1	Between the A4102 underpass and the junction with Bridleway MT 101 9, Bridleway MT 101 72 (the Taff Trail / National Cycle Route 8) forms a paved shared use path and signed cycleway, providing at least 3m width, with verges on either side. In accordance with the Active Travel Act Guidance, the width and paving of the route is considered appropriate for a shared use path away from a road. Along this section, Bridleway MT 101 72 (the Taff Trail) is not lit.	
2	Between the junction with Bridleway MT 101 9 and Glyndyrus House, Bridleway MT 101 79 (the Taff Trail / National Cycle Route 8) forms a paved shared use path and signed cycleway, providing at least 3m width, with verges on either side. In accordance with the Active Travel Act Guidance, the width and paving of the route is considered appropriate for a shared use path away from a road. Along this section, Bridleway MT 101 79 (the Taff Trail) is not lit.	
3	Between Glyndyrus House and the junction with Dragon Parc Road, Bridleway MT 101 79 (the Taff Trail / National Cycle Route 8) shares the available carriageway space with the private driveway to a residential dwelling. Bridleway MT 101 79 (the Taff Trail / National Cycle Route 8) remains a paved and signed cycleway, providing at least 3m width, with verges on either side. Along this section, Bridleway MT 101 79 (the Taff Trail / National Cycle Route 8) is not lit.	
4	Along the length of Dragon Parc Road, connecting to the main highway, active travel users are accommodated either on the carriageway or on the circa 2m footway provided. This link forms a National Cycle Network Link Route, with cyclists signed along this link to connect to the Trevithick Trail (National Cycle Route 477). The link is not lit.	
5	Between Dragon Parc Road and the access to Pitwood House, Bridleway MT 101 79 (the Taff Trail / National Cycle Route 8) shares the available carriageway space with the private driveway to a residential dwelling. Bridleway MT 101 79 (the Taff Trail / National Cycle Route 8) remains a paved and signed cycleway, providing at least 3m width, with verges on either side. Along this section, Bridleway MT 101 79 (the Taff Trail / National Cycle Route 8) is not lit.	

ID	Comment	Photo
6	Bridleway MT 101 12 routes west from Bridleway MT 101 79 (the Taff Trail / National Cycle Route 8) into the Rhydycar West site. The Bridleway is blocked off by a padlocked gate, with access achieved via stile only, which is not favourable to the movement of mobility impaired pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians. The Bridleway is paved and provides at least 3m width; it is not lit.	
7	Between the junction with MT 101 72 (the Taff Trail / National Cycle Route 8) and the A4102 overbridge, Bridleway MT 101 3 is paved and generally provides a 3m width. A hairpin bend is present in order to provide a ramped approach to the bridge. A bollard is present at either end of the bridge. Along this section, Bridleway MT 101 3 is not lit. The site visit noted a considerable amount of leaf cover across the bridleway which made the surface slippery. The sharp nature of the corners and proximity to vegetation limited the visibility around the bend.	
8	Between the A4102 overbridge and the A470 overbridge, Bridleway MT 101 3 narrows and changes to a more rural nature. The connection provides a gravel/earth surface, with areas of rainwater erosion causing a rutted surface. At the time of the site visit, there was extensive leaf cover and localised pooling of rainwater across the path. Along this section, Bridleway MT 101 3 is not lit. The site visit noted that this section of path can get very muddy and wet during wet periods; the site visit was undertaken during a period of heavy rain with sections of the path flooded for an extended length. The link also runs in proximity to the A470 carriageway with minimal infrastructure separating the two.	
9	Over the A470, MT 101 9 provides a wide and paved overbridge, with tall railings provided on either side of the bridge. On the approaches to the bridge, a gated access is provided, which is not favourable to the movement of mobility impaired pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians.	
10	Having crossed east over the A470, MT 101 9 narrows, descends down a slope and provides a gravelled access into the Rhydycar West site. The site visit noted that the width of the path would not be suitable for the two-way movement of users.	

ID	Comment	Photo
11	To the north of the A470 overbridge, MT 101 3 routes parallel to the A470 to connect to the residential neighbourhood at Celyn Ct. Along this stretch, MT 101 3 is largely rural in nature, with a gravel / earth surfacing and overhanging vegetation. Where infrastructure has been put in, e.g., the bridge over Nant Rhyd-y-car, the route widens. The link is not lit. The site visit noted that this section of path can get very muddy and wet during wet periods; the site visit was undertaken during a period of heavy rain with sections of the path flooded for an extended length. It is generally not appropriate for two-way movement and there are locations with limited visibility around the bend.	
12	Through the A4102 Underpass Bridleway MT 101 72 (the Taff Trail / National Cycle Route 8) is paved. The vertical clearance in this location is limited due to the A4102 carriageway passing overhead, and likely not appropriate for equestrian use.	
13	Bridleway MT 101 62 (the Taff Trail / National Cycle Route 8) routes northwest from the A4102 towards wider parts of Merthyr Tydfil. The link provides a wide, paved, lit connection with areas of CCTV coverage. A signed active travel crossing is provided across the River Taff.	
14	An informal pedestrian facility is provided from the junction of with MT 101 72 (the Taff Trail / National Cycle Route 8) and with MT 101 9, connecting north into Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Village. While not a formal PRow, a paved pedestrian facility is provided to link into the existing pedestrian infrastructure of the leisure village. Once within the leisure village, the links are lit.	

Figure 2.7 – Location of Assessed Links



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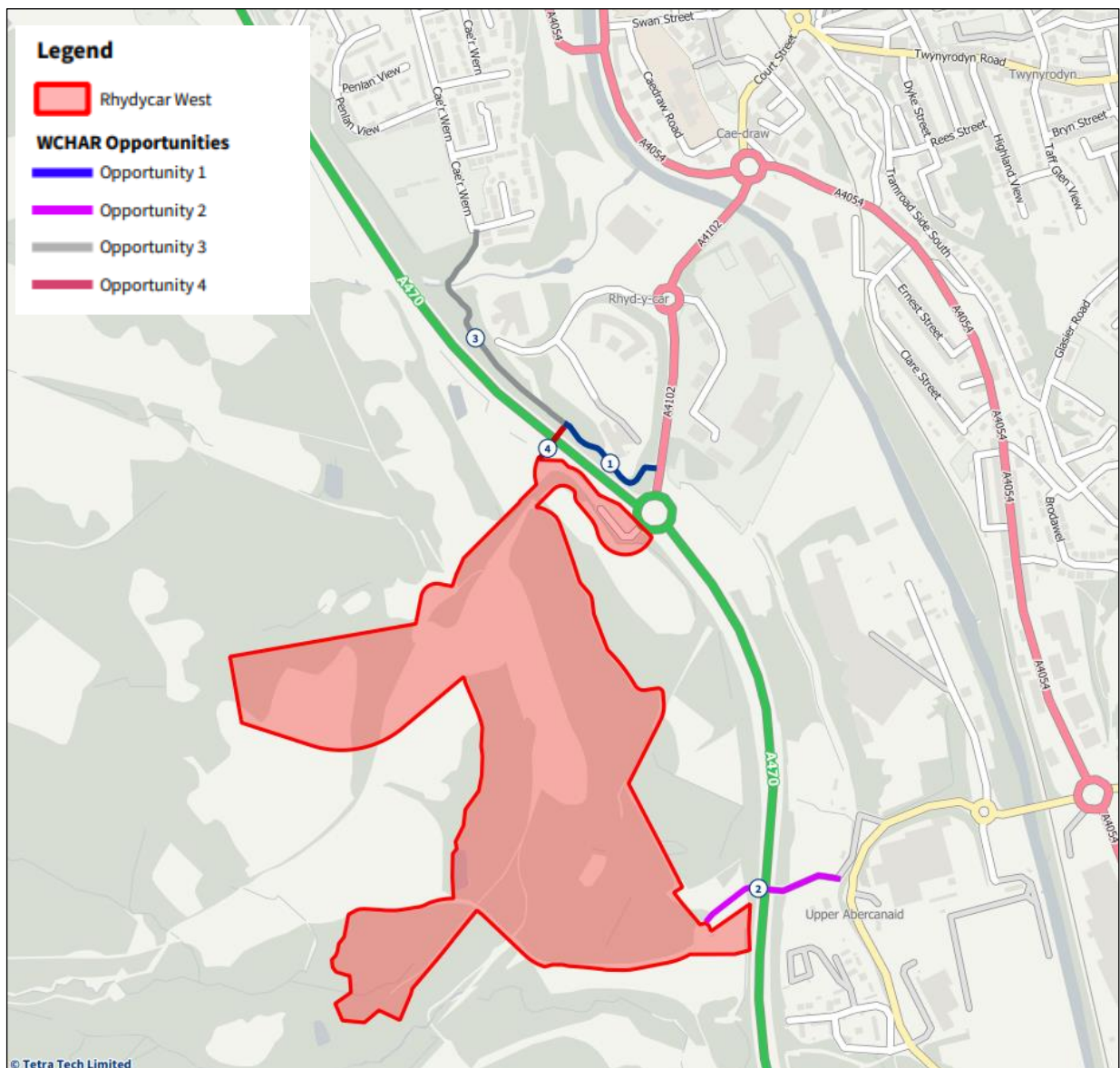
LIAISON WITH LOCAL USER GROUPS AND WIDER PUBLIC

2.67 Local user groups and the wider public have been extensively consulted since 2016 when concept plans were first developed and through the pre-application and application stage of Application P/23/0065. This liaison and consultation has included public workshops, events and exhibitions including a public exhibition from June to August 2023 at Merthyr College that was combined with an interactive panel discussion and public drop-in sessions in 4 wards across the borough. This has been complimented by sustained and ongoing liaison and consultation online/virtually including via social media, surveys, and the site owners/project website at www.rhydycarwest.com.

3.0 IDENTIFIED USER OPPORTUNITIES

- 3.1 Following an in-depth analysis through desktop assessments, on-site visits, and active engagement with key stakeholders, opportunities have been identified which can be considered as the scheme develops.
- 3.2 The location of the identified opportunities are shown in **Figure 3.1**.

Figure 3.1 – Location of Identified Opportunities



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IDENTIFIED WALKING, CYCLING AND HORSE-RIDING OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunity 1

- 3.3 There is an opportunity to improve the bridleway connection to Rhydycar West, specifically targeting the section between the A4102 overbridge and the A470 overbridge. The site visit noted that the existing facility narrows and becomes more rural in nature with sections of mud and pooled water.
- 3.4 As part of the development, the facility will be paved, widened and street-lit by the site owner before the development is operational. This will benefit the users of Rhydycar West, users of the existing PRoW network as well as residents of the local area. Existing vegetation will be trimmed back, and regular maintenance undertaken to improve the available width and vertical clearance for equestrian users.

Opportunity 2

- 3.5 There is an opportunity to provide a strategic benefit to Bridleway MT|101|12 as it routes west from Bridleway MT|101|79 (the Taff Trail / National Cycle Route 8) into the Rhydycar West site. As part of the development, the stile and padlocked gate will be removed in favour of at-grade access to increase the permeability and favourability of the link to pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians.

Opportunity 3

- 3.6 There is an opportunity to improve the bridleway MT|101|3 to the north of the A470 overbridge. The site visit noted that the existing facility is narrow in with sections of mud and pooled water.
- 3.7 As part of the development, the facility will be paved, widened and street-lit by the site owner before the development is operational. This will benefit the users of Rhydycar West, users of the existing PRoW network as well as residents of the local area. Existing vegetation will be trimmed back, and regular maintenance undertaken to improve the available width and vertical clearance for equestrian users.

CYCLIST AND EQUESTRIAN OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunity 4

- 3.8 There is an opportunity to provide a strategic benefit to the A470 overbridge by removing the existing gates at the eastern and western ends of bridge which will be done by the site owner once the development is operational. Pedestrian access is currently facilitated through a gap to the side of the gate, but the existing arrangement is not favourable for cyclists or equestrians.

4.0 WALKING, CYCLING AND HORSE-RIDING ASSESSMENT TEAM STATEMENT

- 4.1 As Lead Assessor, I confirm that this walking, cycling and horse-riding assessment report has been compiled in accordance with DMRB GG 142. The walking, cycling and horse-riding assessment was undertaken by the following assessment and review team:

Table 4.1 – Walking, Cycling and Horse-riding Lead Assessor

Name	Ben Maliphant
Position	Associate
Organisation	Tetra Tech
Signed	
Date	April 2024

- 4.2 As the design team leader, I confirm that the assessment has been undertaken at the appropriate stage of the highway scheme development. I confirm that in my professional opinion the appointed Lead Assessor has the appropriate experience for the role making reference to the expected competencies contained in GG 142.

Table 4.2 – Design Team Leader

Name	Antonio Pinto
Position	Director
Organisation	Tetra Tech
Signed	
Date	April 2024

5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

- 5.1 Tetra Tech has been commissioned by Marvel Ltd to act as the transport and highways consultant in support of a planning application for land west of the A470 and to the south of the village of Heolgerrig in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC). The proposal includes an indoor snowdome, water park, hotel, activity centre, and forest lodges.
- 5.2 A WCHAR assessment has been completed at the Outline Application stage to review the existing environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians in the vicinity of the small highway scheme associated with Rhydycar West.
- 5.3 The highway scheme involves minor changes to the A470 trunk road and upgrades to pedestrian/cycle links. The study area covers approximately 1km around the proposed development, focusing on urban areas and strategic links.
- 5.4 The site is sustainably located within an accessible distance to the existing local trip generators and public transport offering of Merthyr Tydfil and is well located to connected to several future trip generators should they come forward.
- 5.5 On-site assessments have been completed, reviewing 13 key walking, cycling and equestrian links within the study area, recording their existing condition, alignment, and construction.
- 5.6 This has identified four opportunities to deliver improvements to the local walking, cycling and horse-riding network. Opportunities are identified to enhance the connection between A4102 and A470 overbridges, to improve Bridleway MT|101|12's link to Rhydycar West, to upgrade bridleway MT|101|3 north of A470 overbridge and to enhance access at the A470 overbridge by removing existing gates, currently unfavourable for cyclists and equestrians.

CONCLUSION

- 5.7 Tetra Tech have conducted a WCHAR assessment for the proposed Rhydycar West development, identifying opportunities for improvements to pedestrian, cycling, and equestrian networks around the site. These include enhancing connections between bridges, improving links to Rhydycar West, upgrading bridleways, and removing gates at the A470 overbridge. These improvements aim to enhance the local active travel network.