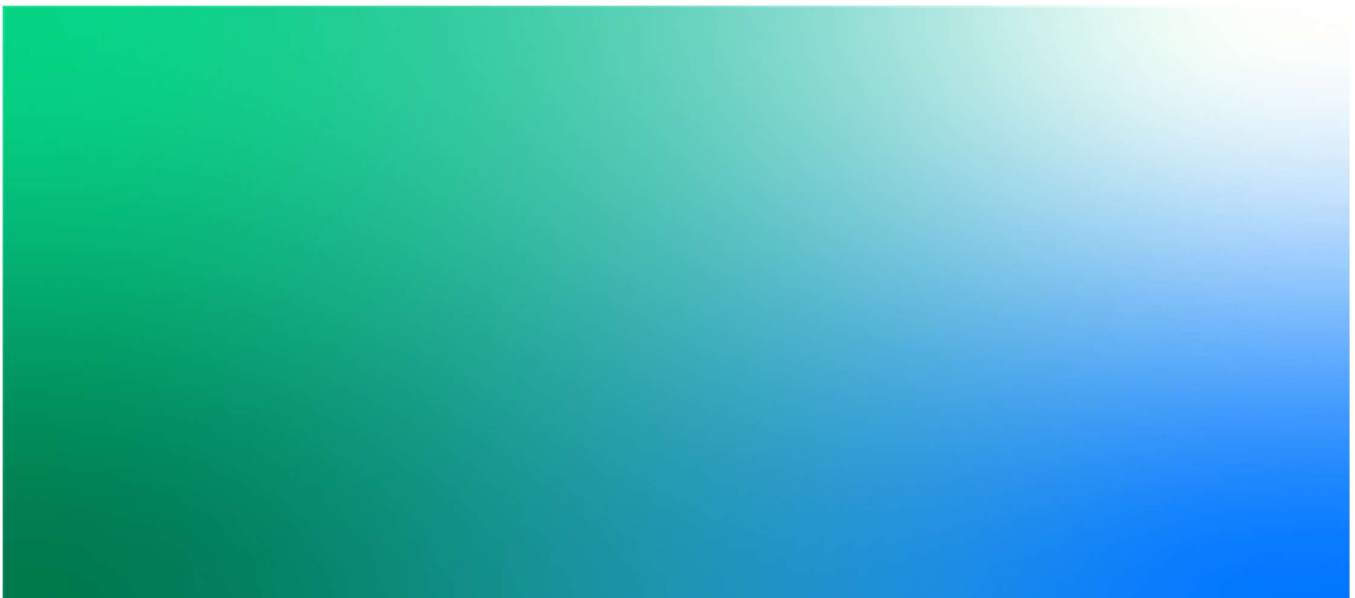




**A465 Section 5 and 6**  
**Pant Road Playground Usage Report**

B2191100/D2/1/412C | R0  
15 October 2019

**Welsh Government**



**A465 Section 5 and 6**

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

The existing A465 was built in the 1960s and is a single three lane carriageway with two lanes in the uphill direction and one in the downhill direction. A regional traffic study in 1990 identified the need to improve this road. The width of the road restricts traffic flow and opportunities for safe overtaking. In many areas there is poor visibility. Accidents on this stretch are concentrated around junctions and areas with poor visibility. This improvement to the A465 is critical to the social and economic regeneration of the Heads of the Valleys area. It will improve access to key services, jobs and markets supporting inward investment to areas such as the Ebbw Vale Enterprise Zone.

In October 2015 Jacobs were appointed to develop the design, produce an environmental impact assessment of the length between Dowlais Top and Hirwaun and take the scheme through the statutory process and seek the powers to build the road. The Welsh Government are converting the A465 from Dowlais Top to Hirwaun to 2 lanes in each direction.

As part of this development land is required for a temporary construction compound in Pant within Merthyr Tydfil for the construction works associated with the widening of the A465. It is proposed that the land currently used by Merthyr Motor Auctions along Pant Road located directly beneath the A465 adjacent east of Pant Road is used for the storage of construction materials and vehicles during the construction period. To compensate for the loss of land used by Merthyr Motor Auctions to store the vehicles on sale, the Welsh Government is proposing that the vehicles use the land adjacent west of Pant Road, directly opposite their current site where at present a children's playground (hereafter known as Pant playground) is located.

As this will remove the playground facility from the public use during this temporary period, It is proposed to provide enhancements to the existing play offer within 1km radius of Pant playground, in order to compensate the loss community play space.

### **1.2 Purpose of this Report**

In October 2019, surveys were undertaken of Pant Playground along Pant Road in Merthyr Tydfil and the two closest play areas in Trevor Close c.635m to the north and at Station Road c.450m to the south. These were undertaken by a Chartered Landscape Architect with a depth of experience in playground design and implementation specifically within public play areas for local government.

A summary of the findings and recommendations are provided within this report.

## **2. Pant Playground**

### **2.1 Current Condition**

Pant Playground is located immediately adjacent to Pant Road.

The playground is dated and in need of complete regeneration. The play equipment is dated but functioning and clearly well used due to the condition of the equipment.

The play facilities consist of an enclosed fenced equipped play area and a Multi Used Games Area (MUGA) to the west of this within an open area of parkland.

The equipment within the fenced play area is manufactured by Wicksteed and consists of:

- 1no. 2 bay baby/toddler swing – Metal frame, poor quality
- 1no. 3 Bay Swing modified with tyre seats – Metal frame, poor quality
- 1no. Single Point Cantilevered Tyre Swing – Metal frame, poor quality
- 1no. Roundabout – Metal frame, poor quality
- 1no. Seesaw with two seats – Metal frame, poor quality



2 bay Baby/Toddler Swing



3 point Bay Swing modified with tyre swing



Modified tyre swing seat



Single point cantilevered tyre swing



Roundabout



Seesaw



MUGA – Goal end outside of fenced play area.

The safety surfacing consists of old black rubber tiles, also manufactured by Wicksteed. These are contained by a solid course of blocks, these are well worn and gappy in places with weeds and moss growing through the gaps.

This safety surfacing is used underneath all the pieces of play equipment apart from the Seesaw.

The Seesaw is located within an area bark chip which appears to have received no maintenance to keep the levels topped up to an adequate depth, there are considerable amounts of weed, grass and moss growing through.



Black rubber tiles (Wicksteed)



Back chippings, unmanaged

The fencing containing the play area is a combination of steel bow top fencing and matching self-closing gates, with tensioned weldmesh steel fencing to the majority of the perimeter. The fencing is continual and intact however the quality and condition is poor.



Self-closing gates



Weldmesh tensioned fencing



Bow top Fencing



Metal picnic benches

The play area also contains 2no. picnic benches and bins 1no. bin

## 2.2 Reinstatement Opportunities

The condition and quality of the play area at Pant Road suggest it would benefit from complete reinvention and reinstatement following the temporary period of construction works.

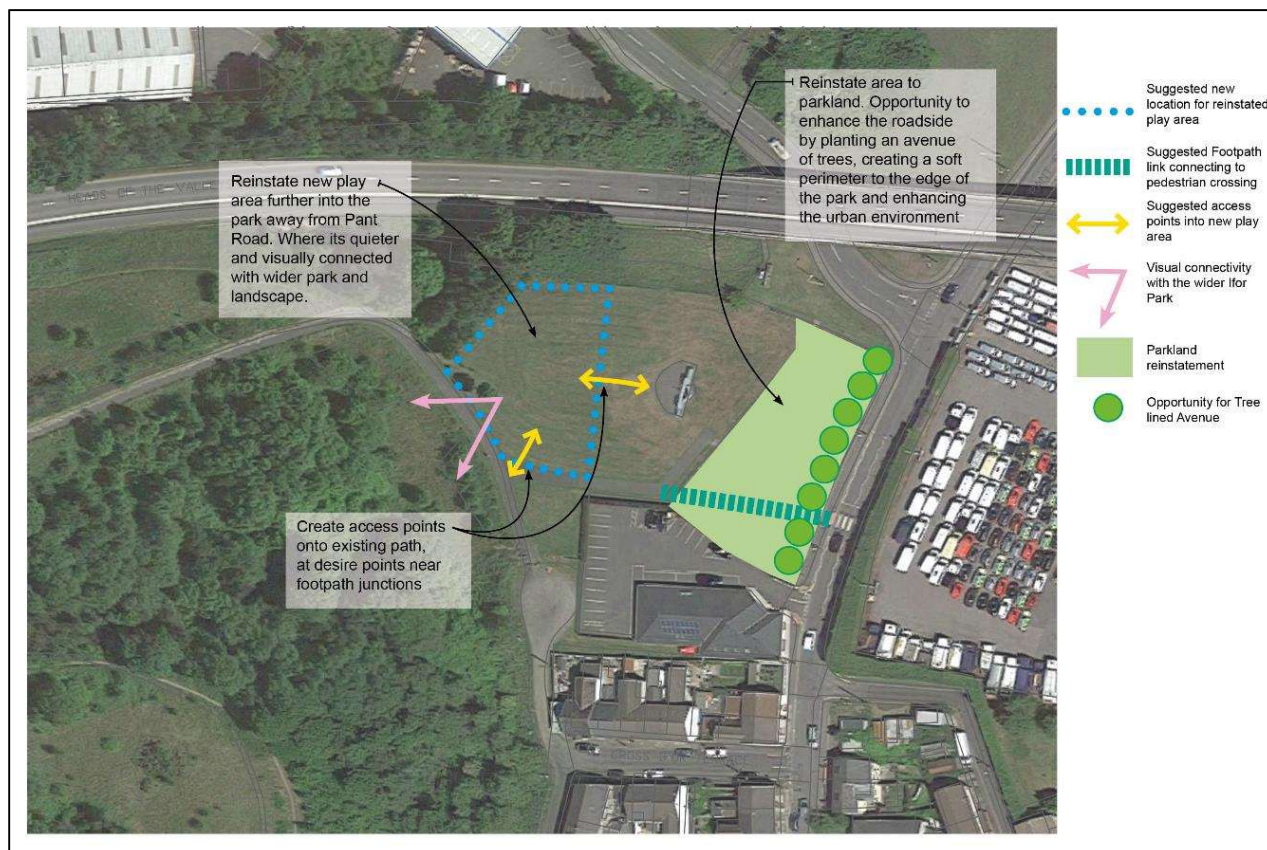
Play England's guide to creating successful play spaces explains how good play spaces can give children and young people the freedom to play creatively, while allowing them to experience risk, challenge and excitement. Good play spaces are designed as places in their own right. Well designed play spaces are good for all of the community.

Play England have identified 10 Play Design Principles. Successful play spaces;

- 1) are 'bespoke'
- 2) are well located
- 3) make use of natural elements
- 4) provide a wide range of play experiences
- 5) are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children
- 6) meet community needs
- 7) allow children of different ages to play together
- 8) build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge
- 9) are sustainable and appropriately maintained
- 10) allow for change and evolution

## 2.3 Indicative Proposal and Recommendations

The plan below identifies the key constraints and opportunities for the reinstatement of Pant playground.



The new playground would be best reinstated away from Pant Road, bringing the play area further into the park at a confluence of existing footpaths. At this location there are views over the wider landscape and across the rest of Ifor Park. The play area design should be guided by Play England's current guidance documents. The play area would ideally be fenced with self-closing gates. There should be a good range of play equipment conforming to the current BS EN standard, with a broad offer of activities from Swinging, Sliding, Climbing, Balancing as well as elements for sensory and imagination. The new playground should be lead by the 10 design principles listed in paragraph 2.2.3

The most cost-effective process of design and implementation for a new play area would be for the funding authority to invite several playground manufacturers for a direct quote to design and implement the new play area. Listed below are several companies who are large enough and experienced in offering this type of service.

- Wicksteed: <https://wicksteed.co.uk/>
- Eibe: <https://www.eibe.co.uk/>
- Kompan: <https://www.kompan.co.uk/>
- Proludic: <https://www.proludic.co.uk/>
- Lappset: <https://www.lappset.com/>

It is in our experience and opinion that working directly with a playground manufacturer as listed above results in the higher quality and best value for money play areas. As they understand design for play completely and may possibly offer bulk discount for providing all the equipment.

Alternatively, the funding authority could put out a tender for the design and build of a new play area. This may possibly see tenders returned from landscape contractors with an inhouse design team as well as playground manufacturers. Landscape contractors may have varied experience in constructing play areas, however it doesn't tend to be the only type of work they undertake, where as playground manufacturers are completely invested in play.

### 3. Playground Enhancements during the Construction Phase

#### 3.1 Principal

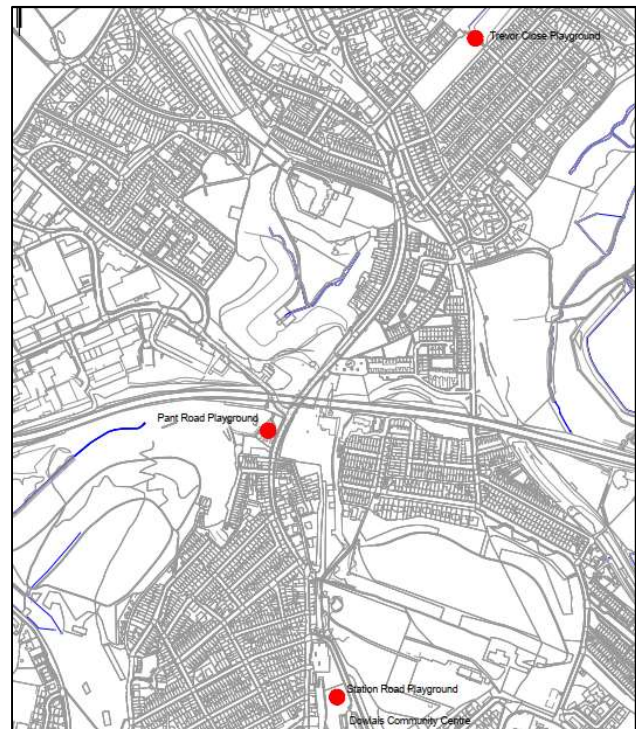
During the construction phase for the widening of the A465 from Dowlais Top to Hirwaun, Pant playground will be demolished and temporarily out of use to the public.

During this period of time, the Welsh Government are proposing to compensate this loss by providing enhancement to the closest play areas within 1km radius of Pant playground.

Two play area have been identified for enhancement, these are

- Trevor Close Playground; and
- Station Road Playground.

The locations of the sites are identified on the plan left.



### 3.2 Trevor Close

Upon survey the play area at Trevor Close seemed to be in good condition with a handful of play equipment items on an undulating site, which itself adds value to the play experience.

The play equipment includes 4 items:

- 1no. Seesaw – recently installed good quality
- 1no. Spinner – recently installed good quality
- 1no. 2 Bay Swing 1 baby/toddler seat and 1 swing seat - recently installed good quality
- 1no. Multiplay unit – dated poorer quality



1no. Spinner



1no. Seesaw



1no. Multiplay Unit



1no. 2 bay swing with 1no. baby cradle seat and 1no. swing seat

The safety surfacing consists of relatively new black wet pour with timber edging to the spinner, swings and seesaw which is in good condition. There is also old black rubber tiles, surrounding the multiplay unit. These are contained by a solid course of blocks, these are well worn and gappy in places with weeds and moss growing through the gaps. Other equipment includes a picnic bench.

The play area here is unfenced and identifies as a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) designed mainly for older children but has opportunities for younger children as well. The play offer is limited.

### 3.3 Opportunities for Enhancement at Trevor Close

The topography of this site lends itself nicely for the incorporation of an embankment slide as suggested in the indicative sketch plan below. This could incorporate some localised ground modelling and landscape design to develop some associated embankment steps / scramble slope to get back to the top of the slide.

If funding allows the multiplay unit and associated safety surfacing could be upgraded inline with the rest of the play equipment.



### 3.4 Station Road

The play area at Station Close appears to be in a rundown condition and very dated. The play area is unfenced and located at the top of a steep embankment above a car park. It is located within an area of grass with no footpaths leading to it, as such will be difficult to access and inaccessible by some, such as wheelchair and pushchair users. The play area is also immediately adjacent to a collection of former railway station buildings, now utilised as Dowlais Community Centre. This play area appears to be a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP), for children who are beginning to go out and play independently with opportunities for younger children.

The play equipment includes 3 items:

- 1no. Multiplay unit – dated, poor quality
- 1no. 2 bay baby/toddler swing – Metal frame, dated, poor quality
- 1no. 2 bay swing – Metal frame, dated, poor quality



1no. Multiplay Unit



1no. 2 bay baby/toddler swing



1no. 2 bay swing



1no. park bench



1no. picnic bench

The safety surfacing consists of old black rubber tiles. These are contained by a solid course of blocks, these are well worn and gappy in places with weeds and moss growing through the gaps. This is used underneath all the pieces of play equipment.

The play area also includes a single picnic bench and a single park bench

### 3.5 Opportunities for Enhancement at Station Road

The playground area is advantageously located adjacent to Dowlais Community Centre and naturally feels as though it forms part of this community facility. This is due to the play area being sited next to these buildings and accessed primarily from the car parking area associated with the community centre.

Further investigation on site established that the buildings were the former ticket office and goods shed of Dowlais Train Station. Now owned and run by The Stephens & George Centenary Charitable Trust, who set up the Dowlais Community Centre.

To mark 100 years of British printing in Merthyr Tydfil and the South Wales Valleys, Stephens and George Print Group founded 'The Stephens and George Centenary Charitable Trust'. The Trust has been running since February 21st 2012 in response to the incredibly low literacy levels in the local community. The Trust's core aims are to provide future generations with the means to develop skilled, useful and fulfilling careers for themselves from within one of the UK's most disaffected areas.

The website for this trust is: <http://www.sg100charitabletrust.org.uk/> and is run by, Helen Hughes, Charity Co-ordinator (01685 375331). There are 4 members on the Board of trustees including local Councillor Lisa Mytton (<https://democracy.merthyr.gov.uk/mgUserInfo.aspx?UID=483>). Both are very proactive in regard to community improvement and passionate about instilling positive change in the lives of their community.

The facilities on offer at the Community Centre include:

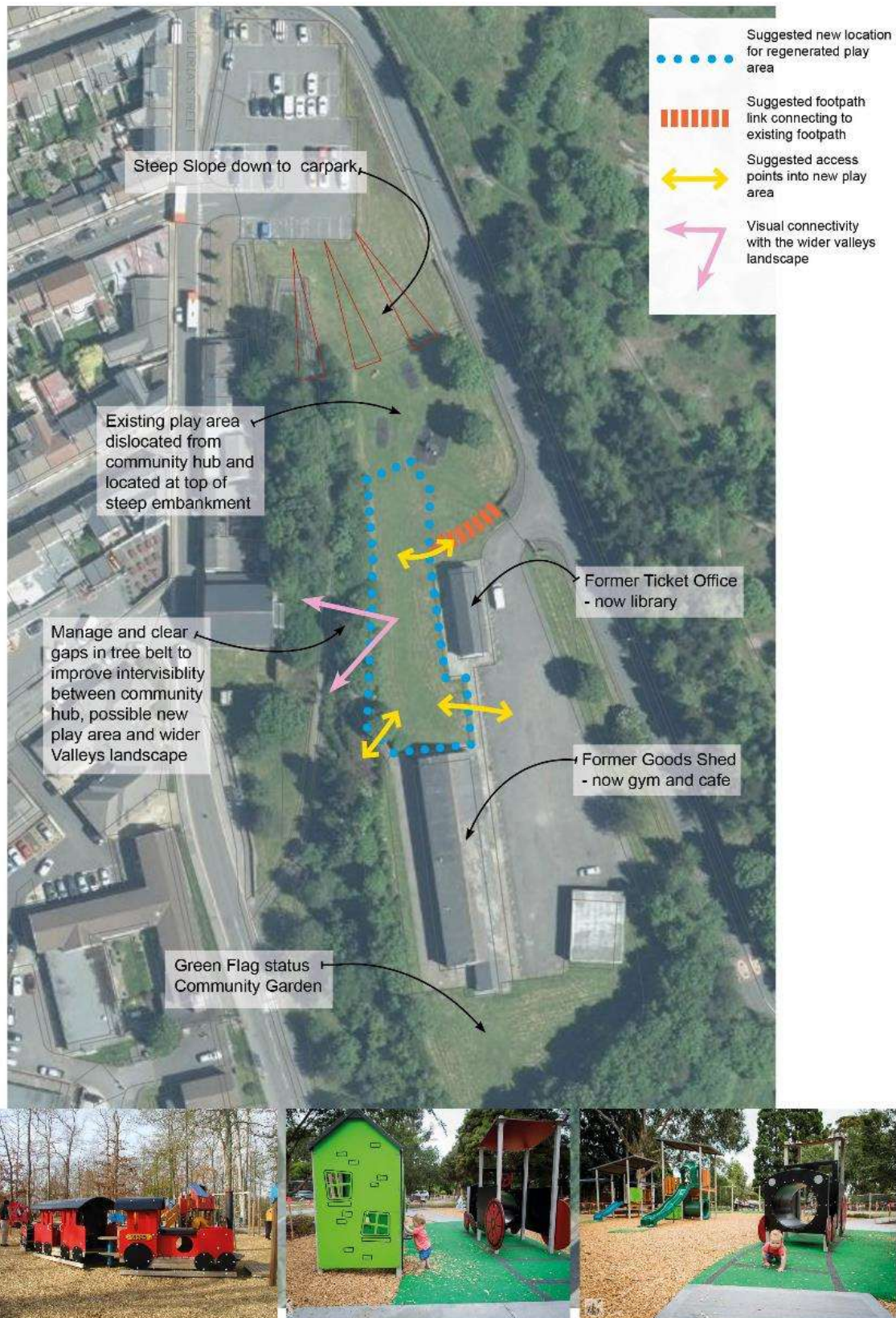
- The Railway café
- Gym and fitness suite with fitness classes
- Green Flag status community gardens – with a programme of former offenders who maintain the gardens
- After school clubs and school holiday clubs
- Community library and second-hand book shop
- Their ethos is “#no phones no computers”

Discussions with the charity coordinator Helen Hughes provided us with lots of insight into the community centre. The Trust are very keen to continually provide valuable facilities for the community. We were informed how heavily used the play area is, especially due to the number of children's clubs and literacy groups that are run from the centre. The local social problems were brought to our attention; such as third generation unemployment, parents with drug and alcohol issues, children having limited places to play and having too much screen time - not enough social engagement. It was also brought to our attention that the steep slope to the rear of the current play area suffers from anti-social quad biking/scrambling bikes being raced up and down it from time to time, which has an impact on the use of the play area.

It became obvious that there is a greater opportunity here to develop a scheme with considerably more value than perhaps simply providing an extra piece of play equipment, to what is essential a well-used but poor-quality play area. Thus, a continuation of the developing community hub at this location.

We would recommend that discussion is held between the Welsh Government (Funders for this scheme), Lisa Mytton local councillor at Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and perhaps Jacobs in regards to Corporate Social Responsibility. In order to potentially raise further funding and provide a more considered and collaborated approach to redeveloping the play area located at Station Road.

The indicative sketch plan below provides some ideas for what could be feasible under such collaboration.



Example idea: Theme play area with rail heritage