



Waterfall Country Visitor Traffic Study



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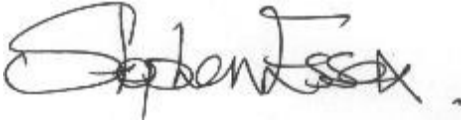

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Final Report

Waterfall Country Visitor Traffic Study

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1 Introduction

1.1 Waterfalls Country

The part of the Brecon Beacons National Park known as Waterfall Country has the greatest concentration of significant waterfalls in the UK.

The area is approximately 33km² in area. It is very rural, with a population of around 600. The main settlements in the area are the villages of Pontneddfechan and Ystradfellte, with Penderyn lying just outside the area. The area straddles three local authorities: Neath Port Talbot, Powys and Rhondda Cynon Taff.

The area is easily accessible by car from most of South Wales and neighbouring parts of England. Its beauty, unique qualities and easy accessibility mean that it is a popular place for holiday and day visits. On busy summer weekends, particularly sunny bank holidays, the number of visitors can overload the car parks, cause extensive congestion in the lanes and cause significant problems for the local residents.

1.2 The issue as seen by the brief

The brief for this project was produced by the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority following expressions of concern from residents, Council representatives and bodies like Pontneddfechan and Ystradfellte Community Council. The project was to review how cars are managed in the area including what additional capacity is required.

The review was required to not just include hard infrastructure but should to cover mechanisms such as coordinating messages in print and web material aimed at visitors prior to their visit, residents' car parking restrictions and other less direct methodology. The opinion in the brief was that a fully integrated plan is the only way to resolve the issues.

The outcomes following implementation of the proposals were expected to include:

- A more positive experience for both residents and visitors to Waterfall Country, particularly Pontneddfechan
- Consequential benefits for local businesses
- A sustainable car parking management regime in the area, supported by residents, businesses and public bodies

Transport Initiatives were commissioned to carry out the study in August 2017. The study comprised the following activities.

- A traffic study was undertaken during the weekend of the August Bank Holiday (28th August 2017). This comprised an automated study of use in three car parks, manual studies of parking in Pontneddfechan and along a circuit of the lanes between Pontneddfechan, Pont Melin fach, Ystradfellte and just south of Gwaun Hepste. The formal study focussed on the Sunday as the general feeling was that this was likely to be the busiest day. However, when travelling around the area on Saturday and Monday a vehicle mounted video camera captured parking and congestion.
- Visitor interviews were carried out on Saturday 26th August and Sunday 27th August with a few extra on the Bank Holiday Monday. 102 interviews covered 423 people.
- Discussions were held with representatives of statutory bodies and selected local residents.
- Residents were consulted in two open events. One in Ystradfellte on 27th September and the other in Pontneddfechan on the following day. 80 people signed in but more than that attended.

- Site visits were made to all existing and potential car parks, key footpaths were walked and local facilities visited. We walked under Sqwd yr Eira as well.
- We convened a focus group which met twice, once on 22nd March 2018 and the then on 11th June 2018
- Residents were finally consulted about the proposals at two open events, one at Pontneddfechan on 11th July 2018 and the second at Ystradfellte a day later.

1.3 Existing policies and proposals

The area is covered by the following plans and policies:

- BBNPA Management Plan 2016 - 2020: *Managing Change Together*
- BBNPA LDP Adopted December 2013
- Neath Port Talbot LDP (2011-2026) Adopted January 2016
- Cynllun Rheolaeth Bro'r Sgydau Waterfall Country Management Plan 2010
- Neath Port Talbot parking services annual report
- Powys Parking Strategy & Annual Report 2015/6

The main points referring to the Waterfalls area are summarised in Appendix 1



Clun Gwyn

2 Project and findings

2.1 Transport Initiatives' approach

We adopted a multifaceted approach looking at information, the traffic issues, the views of residents, stakeholders and visitors. We made extensive site visits to learn and understand the area and its attraction to visitors. In more detail we:

- Researched background documentation
- Formally surveyed parked vehicles in six car parks and alongside roads on the Sunday 29th August 2017 and informally on Saturday 28th and Monday 30th.
- Interviewed visitors at four car parks and at the Angel Inn, Clun Gwyn and Ystradfellte on Saturday 28th, Sunday 29th and Monday 30th August
- Had discussions with stakeholders and some residents, mostly during September 2017
- Consulted residents and local businesses at six sessions. Two were to gather information, experiences and ideas at Ystradfellte on 27th September 2017 and Pontneddfechan a day later. Two focus groups were held on 22nd March 2018 and 11th June at Pontneddfechan and final consultations on the proposals were held at Pontneddfechan on the 11th July 2018 and in Ystradfellte a day later.
- Searched for additional parking places, by following up leads from the consultation sessions, suggestions from stakeholders and hunting on the ground
- Walked key paths, visited most of the falls and visited businesses to understand the tourist offer and also walked some additional paths to test some alternatives.
- Researched how the area is portrayed in the internet and in guidebooks.

2.2 Traffic surveys

Our survey of parked vehicles comprised three elements:

- Automated survey of Dinas Rock, Cwm Porth and Gwaun Hepste car parks using number plate recognition cameras from midnight on Saturday 28th August to midnight on Sunday 29th. This was carried out by our sub-contractors Intelligent Data plc.
- A manual survey consisting of four circuits of the road between Pontneddfechan, Pont Melin fach, Ystradfellte (including the car park) and a point approximately half way between Gwaun Hepste and Ty mawr. One circuit was made including the ends of the Cwm Gwrelych Trail but there were no obvious parking issues associated with it so it was not repeated. Three of the circuits visited Pont Melin fach. In addition, a vehicle mounted camera was used on Saturday 28th when making trips connected with the visitor interviews.
- A manual survey of parking in Pontneddfechan between the Village Hall and the western extremity of the informal parking along Pontneathvaughan Road between mid morning and late afternoon on Sunday 29th August.

Cameras were installed at the entrance to the three main car parks, Dinas Rock, Cwm Porth and Gwaun Hepste. The camera equipment recorded and counted vehicles entering and leaving. Number plates were recorded and used to match vehicles to calculate the length of stay. Due to tail-gating, not every plate could be read successfully. However, we have length of stay details for 69% of the vehicles counted.

From this data it is possible to determine how full the car parks are at any one time. While there are some early visitors, all the car parks began to fill from around 9.00 with Dinas Rock and Cwm

Porth basically full by 11.00. Although the maximum number recorded at Dinas Rock is approximately its theoretical capacity, it never became totally saturated like Cwm Porth.

We will discuss Dinas Rock when discussing Pontneddfechan as there are other factors which may prevent it filling up. Both Cwm Porth and Gwaun Hepste start to fill at the same rate. This suggests that Cwm Porth would be used much like Gwaun Hepste if it was bigger. In practise cars are displaced elsewhere and these were picked up by our manual surveys in the same area.

Car Park Occupancy by Time of Day

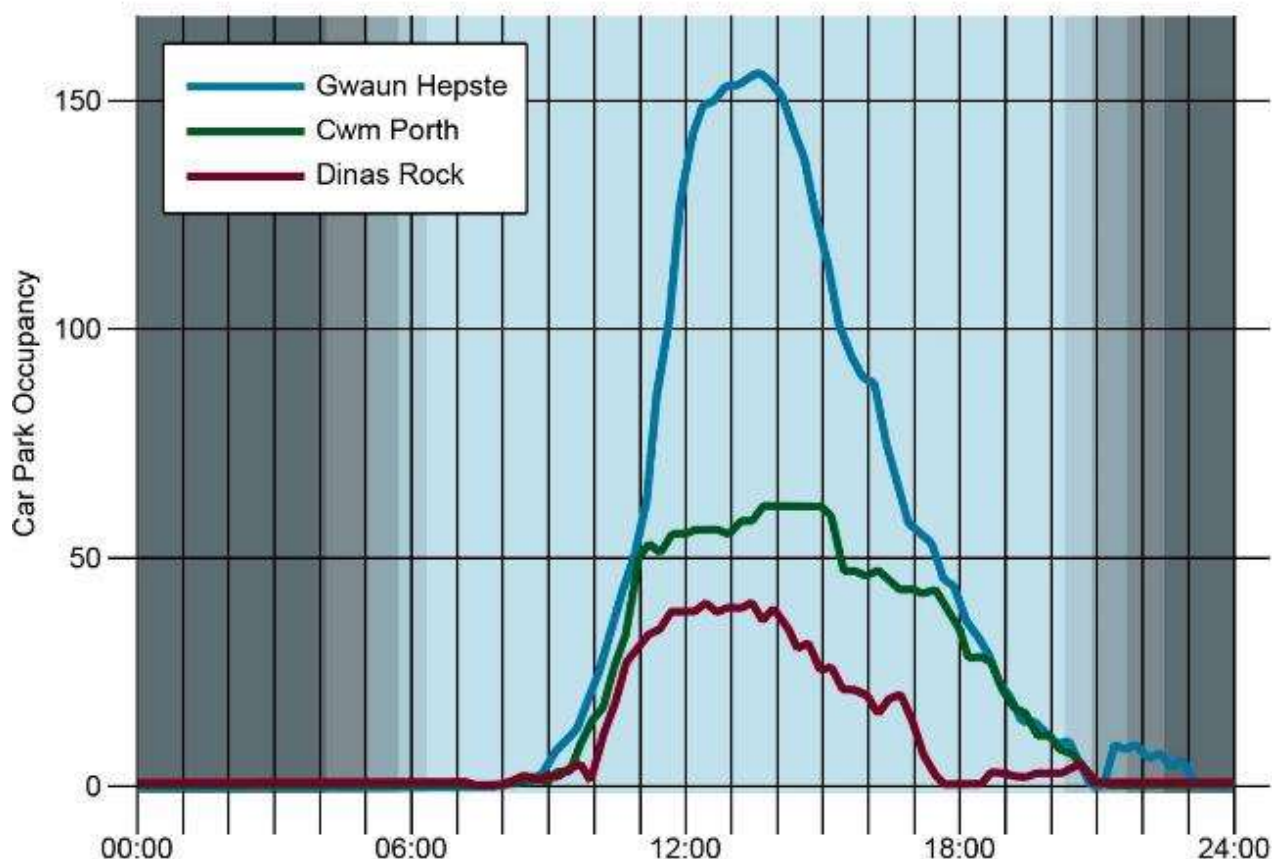


Figure 1 Car park occupancy

The patterns of use are different in each car park. In Dinas Rock most people stayed for between 3½ and 4 hours reflecting its use by activity providers. At Cwm Porth the stays are much longer. It too is used by activity providers but the longer stays reflect the longer walks to the falls. Most people surveyed at Gwaun Hepste were walking the Four Falls trail and the most common length of stays reflect the time taken to walk this.

The cameras picked up a significant number of people who stayed for very short periods of time. They weren't people who arrived and then departed because the car parks were full. We don't know why some visitors did this, it could be because they came to the wrong car park by mistake. The cameras could not pick up people who arrived at Gwaun Hepste, looked in and then decided to continue to another car park and at Cwm Porth the warden tended to deal with the overflow out of range of the cameras.

Manual surveys were made on four circuits of the lanes from Pontneddfechan to Ystradfellte and then south towards Penderyn on Sunday and two informal ones on Saturday. One circuit included the ends of the Cwm Gwrelych Trail but no parked cars were observed so it was not repeated.

Three trips visited Pont Melin fach. The core area with issues was from Comin y Rhos to a point just south of the Forestry entrance between Gwaun Hepste and Ty mawr. It included Ystradfellte car park.

In total 638 cars were seen with a maximum of 218 on any one circuit. There was particular pressure at Clun Gwyn, at the road junction near Maes Porth and around Gwaun Hepste.

While our manual surveys with widely spaced beats could not monitor the exact time when the people started parking on the lane outside Gwaun Hepste, our impression is that it is related to the main car parks getting full. The diagram below shows that there was no parking in the lanes around the Gwaun Hepste entrance on morning circuit when the car park still had capacity. Once a car park fills, neighbouring parking areas fill quickly. One visitor interviewed at Ystradfellte car park on the Bank Holiday Monday told how when they arrived at around 11.45 the car park was relatively empty but by 12.15 when their friend arrived it was nearly full.

On Saturday the day before the main traffic surveys, parking was different with cars parked additionally south of the former Youth Hostel cottages (8 cars) and in the field to the north west of Clun Gwyn. There were also more vehicles at Maes Porth (19 at one point) and around the shop. There were only two parked briefly in the lanes around Gwaun Hepste. On the Monday bank holiday there were also cars parked along the road between Maes Porth and Ystradfellte.

Location	1045 - 1145	1415 - 1530	1545 - 1600	1640 - 1730	Total	Comments
Pont Melin fach	9	27	No survey	17	53	
Comin y Rhos			1		1	
Clun Gwyn parking area	17	72	60	48	197	
Area around the shop	5	4	4	4	17	
Lanes in between shop and cottages by ex-Youth Hostel			1		1	
Group of cottages by ex-Youth Hostel	2	9	8	5	24	Two are probably residents
Junction with lane to Cwm Porth at Maes Porth	5	12	15	13	45	
New Inn Car Park	18	36	37	35	126	
Ystradfellte Village including lane to bridge over Afon Mellte	6	10	11	5	32	At least four are residents
Lanes around Cwm Porth and Ystradfellte to Gwaun Hepste		18	15		33	
Lanes around Gwaun Hepste entrance		19	28	19	66	
South of Gwaun Hepste around junction with back road to Ystradfellte and NRW entrance	6	11	16	10	43	
TOTAL	68	218	196	156	638	

Table 1 Survey of car parking

Pontneddfechan was surveyed manually with regular beats recording details of part of number plates. One surveyor carried out 4 beats taking approximately an hour each and recorded a total of 931 vehicles. Clearly vehicles parked for a long time were seen more than once, some vehicles moved and were recorded again and due to only part of the number plates being recorded there were some duplicate plates. The total number of different vehicles was around 490.

Early visitors parked both on the road outside the Angel and at the two eastern car parks. Dinas Rock filled to around 11am then emptied from around 13.30. Use of the village hall was erratic. After midday all the visitors parked at the western end of the village. The first visitors to arrive showed a preference to park their cars in the four bays next to the toilets. During the survey these were always full.

On the 14.00 beat two additional cars were parked on the pavement. The Angel car park and the north side of the road started to fill first with the roadside being over half full by around 11.00 and the Angel car park being around a quarter full. Once the car park was full and the north side of the road had around 45 vehicles parked on it visitors started to park on the south side verge. They then filled both the north and south sides of the road with the end of the parking area heading westwards as the afternoon progressed.

People appeared to drive to the Angel area and then turn around and head west to find a space.

The Village Hall car park which was reportedly over capacity on previous weekends was very lightly used, never reaching capacity.

Figure 2 below combines the manual surveys of parking in Pontneddfechan with the results from the automated survey of Dinas Rock car park.

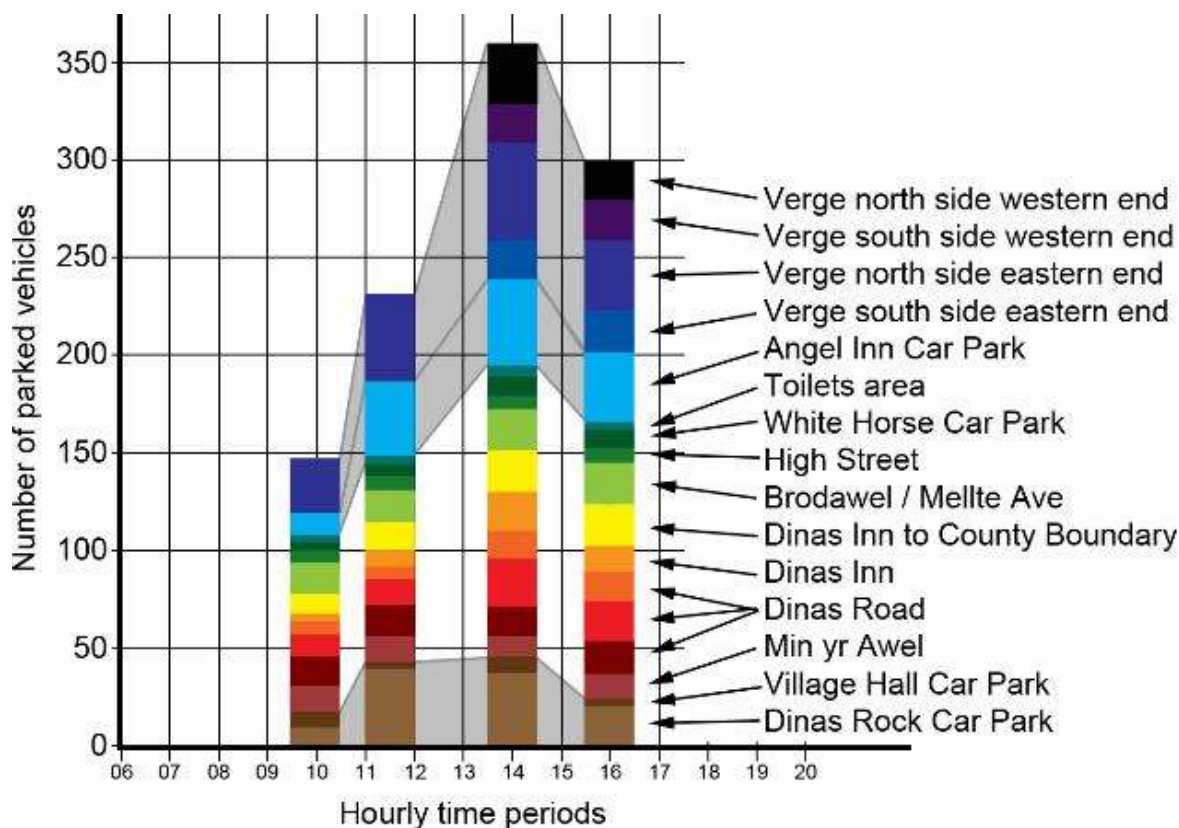


Figure 2 Number of vehicles parked in Pontneddfechan.

2.3 Excess parking

During the August survey it was not possible to determine whether parked cars belonged to visitors or residents. However, an October 2017 evening survey in Pontneddfechan counted 91 parked cars on the road while one in February 2018 counted 84. This can be used as a baseline for resident parking numbers.

Approximately a third of the vehicles counted on the evening surveys were matches for those seen during the August bank holiday so residents clearly own cars that were not seen during the bank holiday survey period. Similarly, some of the vehicles counted at Ystradfellte belonged to residents, some of which we have seen since.

At the height of the 2017 Bank Holiday Sunday afternoon there were a *minimum* of 315 vehicles in the Waterfalls area which belonged to visitors but did not have a recognised visitor parking place. A possible maximum on the Bank Holiday Sunday was 380 vehicles.

Two additional points were that because the village hall car park was virtually empty some cars which could have parked there may well have been parked in the Angel area. This would boost the *apparent* numbers parking without a recognised space to 340 – 405 cars. The second point is that we know that the Bank Holiday Monday was busier. The excess vehicles were mostly parked on verges, in passing places or in gateways. The key places were:

	Minimum	Possible Maximum
Pontneddfechan	170 vehicles	230
Clun Gwyn	50 vehicles	50
Maes Porth	15 vehicles	15
Lanes around Gwaun Hepste	60 vehicles	60

Table 2 Car parking range

2.4 Visitor Surveys

We surveyed both day and overnight visitors on Saturday & Sunday of the 2017 Bank Holiday weekend. We interviewed a few extra on Monday.

We asked about travel, parking, information, car park facilities, how they found out about the area, potential park & ride and shuttle buses. Our findings are described in detail in a separate report.

The initial questions in the Visitor Survey concerned visitor origin, traffic and parking. The majority of the day visitors had a Cardiff postcode, the rest were either scattered across the valleys, were from Bristol and a few came from west London. There was a scattering from the rest of England and Wales. The average journey length was 56.1 miles. (This misses out a coach party from London who skew the figures). Holidaymaking visitors were mainly staying in the Brecon Beacons, the Valleys, Glamorgan coast or the Gower. Most visitors felt it was easy to drive to the Waterfall Country and only a few had problems with getting lost (10%) or driving in narrow lanes (5%). However, while the third of visitors who arrived early had no parking problems, the remainder had some issues with a quarter having to park on a verge, passing place or move to find another car park. Two thirds of visitors either parked in the closest place to the Waterfall they wanted to visit or followed instructions from their activity provider or marketing material. One fifth ended up in the first or only place they found.

“Parking” was the most commonly quoted worst aspect of the day at 12% of all respondents.

Having parked (or got off the bus) people need to know where to go. Information in the area varies from “rudimentary” to “sufficient”. When people found information boards such as at the Angel they found them useful. It was easy to find the waterfalls from their dedicated car parks but not from places such as Ystradfellte, or Pontneddfechan Village Hall. A quarter of the people questioned at Cwm Porth found the ranger helpful. In terms of additional facilities in car parks, by far and away the most common request was for more toilets (50%) although only 6% said it was the worst aspect of their day. An information point or centre was mentioned by 20% of visitors, a café by 13% and signposting by 11%. The greatest proportion of respondents requesting a toilet was at Gwaun Hepste, The Angel, Clun Gwyn and Ystradfellte were reported the worst places for information.

The most common destinations were Sgwd Gwladus (walk from Pontneddfechan), Sgwd yr Eira (from Pontneddfechan or on the Four Falls walk) and Clun Gwyn (from the nearest car park or as part of the Four Falls). The walking experiences are largely separate and the combination of car park and walk operate almost like four independent products. Although people were not directly asked about this, it is most likely because they have to return to their cars and many people found the simple out and back walks long enough. The responses to the question about the shuttle bus indicate that the potential bus was seen as a way to shorten the Four Falls Trail, to walk the whole length of the Waterfalls area or to extend the Elidir Trail. In terms of additional facilities on the walks, lack of seats was considered the worst aspect of their day by 5% of respondents.

2.5 Neath Port Talbot Visitor Research Exercise Nov 2017

Neath Port Talbot (NPT) Council commissioned a visitor survey which was run through the summer of 2017. It compared visitor experiences at Margam Country Park, Afan Forest Park, Glyncorrwg Ponds, Aberddulais Falls, Aberavon Seafront and Pontneddfechan. Their Pontneddfechan findings differ from ours but their survey was concentrated in the village and covered non-bank holiday weekends.

Compared to the other attractions, Pontneddfechan:

- is one of the “getting away from it all” places
- is the subject of more online searches than elsewhere, NPT average was 25%, Pontneddfechan was 35% (although our figure was 20%)
- has more first time visitors. The average in NPT was 34%, they found that 49% of those surveyed in Pontneddfechan were there for the first time whereas we found 58% were first time visitors.
- had more young adults and more couples – possibly due to the adventure aspect
- had the highest proportion of social classes A&B and the highest proportion of foreign visitors.
- had the lowest daily visitor spend is lowest of all the sites – £20.75 against a maximum of £28.15. Of this, £19.17 was spent on food & drink – this is the highest of all the sites but Pontneddfechan is low on local travel spend £1.47 (highest £4.23) and lowest on shopping, £0.05, against the highest £7.98 at Glyncorrwg.

Considering visitor spend, the report contains a comment that visitors would like to see more shops, particularly local produce. This echoes comments from our consultation exercise.

2.6 Consultation

We ran six consultation sessions. The first two were open, idea gathering sessions and the following two were meetings of a discussion group drawn from interested attendees of the first two, and the last two presented the draft proposals again to an open meeting.

The first two open consultation sessions, one at Ystradfellte and the other at Pontneddfechan are written up in detail in a separate report.

Attendees made around 540 separate comments. There were stark differences between the responses in Ystradfellte and Pontneddfechan.

In Ystradfellte the main traffic issues were congestion and a general intolerance of drivers' inabilities to handle rural roads. Speeding in Ystradfellte was felt to be mainly due to "boy racers".

In Pontneddfechan the main issues were parking, some speeding and pedestrian safety.

Residents felt that visitors need more parking, toilets and signing. There was concern about rubbish.

Residents' parking was definitely not wanted at Ystradfellte. At Pontneddfechan there were mixed feelings mainly revolving around cost and their own visitors' ability to park.

While we were really talking about parking and tourist issues, there was a feeling expressed at both sessions that visitors did not put much back into the area. There are few businesses where visitors can spend their money and few chances or venues for local people to set them up.

The Neath Port Talbot visitor surveys showed that non food and drink spend in Pontneddfechan is very low. When asked what they would like to see Pontneddfechan residents said they would like a shop. There are examples of shops serving local people that can only exist or can have longer hours due to tourism's extra income. Examples include Castleton in the Peak District and Nenthead in Northumberland. A background impression we got from Pontneddfechan was that there were not the facilities or the skills in the village to profit from the visitors beyond serving them in the pubs. An exception is the village hall café, but that has limited opening hours and is poorly advertised.

The discussion groups convened twice, once in February 2018 where we tried to move from the problems members had described in September to a set of solutions. This process took longer than we expected so we reconvened in June and discussed an actual set of proposals. The members generally supported the basic concepts described later of moving visitor pressure from Cwm Porth and Clun Gwyn to Gwaun Hepste and to Pontneddfechan, moving pressure from the Angel towards Dinas Rock and from the whole area towards Penderyn. They supported being clearer about the waterfall product being offered to visitors and measures to improve the pedestrian experience around the Angel. Resident's parking remained a contentious issue.

The final two consultations were held in early July 2018. Again, they are written up in more detail in a separate report. In general attitude to the proposals was slightly positive. There was still a variation between Pontneddfechan and Ystradfellte viewpoints. Pontneddfechan residents felt that the layby built by Neath Port Talbot Council had not worked well. It was not efficiently used and led to more visitors walking in the carriageway. While the yellow lines had initially had some effect, lack of enforcement means that there were now being flouted. Residents parking remains a contentious issue with an increasing feeling that it wasn't needed at the Min yr Awel end of the village. The biggest issue that affects this report was that there was significant resistance to the idea of additional parking on the green area at the village hall as it is the only level green area for children to play. Consultees liked the proposed colour coding of footpaths. A new problem that has arisen over the year is coaches. They cause obstructions when parking, congestion in the lanes, have difficulty finding somewhere to turn and park with their engines running.

2.7 Information about the area

The visitor interviews showed that 20% of people used the internet to find information (although the Neath Port Talbot survey showed 35% for Pontneddfechan). Search terms fell into three groups: “Adventure”, “Waterfalls” or “Brecon Beacons”.

Different sites point people to different waterfalls. Searching for Top 10 waterfalls in Britain show the *Telegraph* including Sgwd yr Eira yet *Go Outdoors* mentions the Four Falls and Henrhyd. *World of Waterfalls* directs people to Sgwd Isaf Clun Gwyn while *Trip Advisor* suggests that the waterfall rankings in Wales are 1. Sgwd yr Eira, 3, Henrhyd, 4, Four Falls, 9 Aberdulais and 14, Melincourt.

Under “all attractions” BB mentions waterfalls “most famous is Sgwd yr Eira” although it is not directly listed under the top 12 things to do. *Visit Wales* lists Sgwd yr Eira as the “most popular”.

Walking websites prefer to advertise walks on the higher ground. The National Trust’s page clearly favours Henrhyd while *GPS Routes* includes the Four Falls Trail. The Elidir trail appears in some (such as *Go4aWalk*) as an easier walk. The BBNPA’s own site lists the Gunpowder Trail and Sychryd as well.

Searching for adventure tends to lead to activity providers and while they don’t say exactly where the adventures will happen, pictures on their site commonly include Dinas Rock for climbing and falls and rapids in the Waterfall Country. Also found under adventure was *Wales on Line*’s “50 things you must do before you can tie your shoelaces” where “take a walk in Waterfall Country” was number 15.

These sites don’t necessarily give good information on how to get to the falls or the difficulties in walking there. The most comprehensive is the World of Waterfalls but it reads more like a detailed blog than a guide.

Better information can be found by searching for specific walks. Descriptions of the Four Falls Trail can be found on Walkscene, the NRW site, Visit Wales and RouteYou. Unfortunately, in a search for Sgwd yr Eira the crowd-sourced Trip Advisor appears in advance of more detailed and accurate walk descriptions. All the sites say start both walks from Cwm Porth so while BBNPA/NRW literature could say Gwaun Hepste there will still be a body of literature that is behind the times. Not all sites give correct information. For instance, a visitor using Google maps to get to Ystradfellte Car Park will find themselves at Clun Gwyn

The Cicerone guidebook “45 walks in the Brecon Beacons” Includes five walks in Waterfall Country plus a sixth one incorporating Henrhyd Falls

2.8 Potential Car Parking

There are around 400 existing car parking spaces in the area. None of the existing car parks or the new layby west of the Angel are marked into bays so the actual number of vehicles that can be fitted in depends on how well people park and the size of vehicles. The Cwm Porth warden commented that he could fit more in if bays were marked out. The potential car parks are described in detail in Appendix 2

There are approximately 230 further spaces which could be realised in the short term, including:

- Five spaces in the Angel Car Park formed by rejigging the existing car park. This has not been discussed with the landlord and would involve considerable work for a small increase
- 36 spaces on Glynneath Golf Course land offered by the club
- 46 spaces at Clun Gwyn formed by hardening verges already used informally for parking

- 7 spaces in Cwm Porth car parked formed by cutting into one bank to allow cars which park longitudinally to park end on
- 26 spaces in Gwaun Hepste Car Park formed by extending the surfaced area.
- Approximately 112 spaces in a proposed car park on Rhondda Cynon Taff Council's land at Penderyn.

	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Short Term</i>	<i>Long Term</i>	<i>Temporary</i>	<i>Shuttle bus</i>
Dinas Rock	44		18		
PNF Village Hall	26				
Angel Car Park	38	5			
by Toilets	4				
NPT Layby	48				
Hogan's buildings			49		
Hogan's Field (Planning appl)			42		
Glynneath Golf Course short term	0	36			
Glynneath Golf Course long term			95		
Clun Gwyn	10	46			
Showground Field Clun Gwyn				150	
Shop	7				
Ystradfellte Car Park	37				
Ystradfellte field opp Village Hall				800	
Porth yr ogof farm				75	
Porth yr ogof upper fields				380	
Cwm Porth	61	7			
Cwm Porth farmer's field				430	
Guaun Hepste Main Car Park	74	26			
Guaun Hepste Quarry			80		
Guaun Hepste Access Road	26				
A4059 Layby					46
Penderyn Triangle		100			
St Cynog's	12		80		
Penderyn Community Centre	11	7			
TOTAL	398	227	364	1835	46

Table 2 Potential car parking

We identified 300 spaces which could be provided in the longer term. These may involve negotiation with the landowner or more extensive physical works.

In addition, there are around 1,840 potential temporary spaces. These spaces have all be used in the past, have been offered by landowners or been the subject of discussion with the farmer.

These include around 150 spaces near Clun Gwyn used for the Ystradfellte show and occasionally by activity providers but also used for temporary parking in May 2018, 430 spaces at Cwm Porth used on the August Bank Holiday 2016 and May Bank Holiday 2018, 800 spaces in Ystradfellte and around 450 spaces in Porth yr ogof farm recently offered by the landowner. The 450 spaces at Porth yr ogof farm may be permanently available but the other spaces are on land used for agriculture and would not be available at all times. The farmer at Cwm Porth has charged for parking, similarly the Showground at Clungwyn was charged and the farmer at Ystradfellte would want to charge although he has discussed splitting the proceeds.

2.9 Discussion and Conclusion

2.9.1 The Basic Problem

The fundamental problem in the area is that there are too many vehicles. The lack of places to park them leads to access and parking problems in Pontneddfechan, and access and obstruction problems at Clun Gwyn, Ystradfellte and around Gwaun Hepste. The large number of vehicles cause congestion in the lanes leading to Cwm Porth.

While some visitors pay for their parking, some visit the pubs and a few visit the shop so the amount of money that flows from the visitors to the area is very small. There is a general resentment that visitors impose problems on the area but bring very few benefits. The number of visitors has increased dramatically in recent years. Many put it down to the Waterfalls featuring in one television programme but the Waterfalls appear prominently in web searches for walks and adventure and frequently appear in “10 best” type articles in the press. Some of the web articles, particularly if they are crowd sourced like Trip Advisor, don’t give good details about the sites.

Some visitors interviewed found problems with the length of walk to the falls and another site with a more immediate experience, such as Aberdulais, may have suited them better. Encouraging people away from the area might reduce the problems but the National Park Authority has no direct control over many of the sources of information people use to plan their trips and certainly no control over the “word of mouth” used by 28% of all visitors.

There are few cheap and easily available alternatives to car travel to the area and hence private cars account for 98% of all non-organised-trip travel. We saw and interviewed both bus passengers and cyclists. To make a serious impact on the amount of car travel both bus and cycle use would have to increase at impractical rates and so for immediate impact focus should be on managing car travel and parking rather than developing alternatives. That said, the best time to consider developing an alternative is now and so buses and cycling will be considered later.

2.9.2 Parking Pressure and Spare Capacity

There is actually space in the Waterfalls area to accommodate all the parking required but doing so would have a detrimental effect on the very countryside that visitors want to see.

Potential parking places are also not aligned with demand. The diagram below shows excess parking demand and potential temporary & permanent parking in the area.

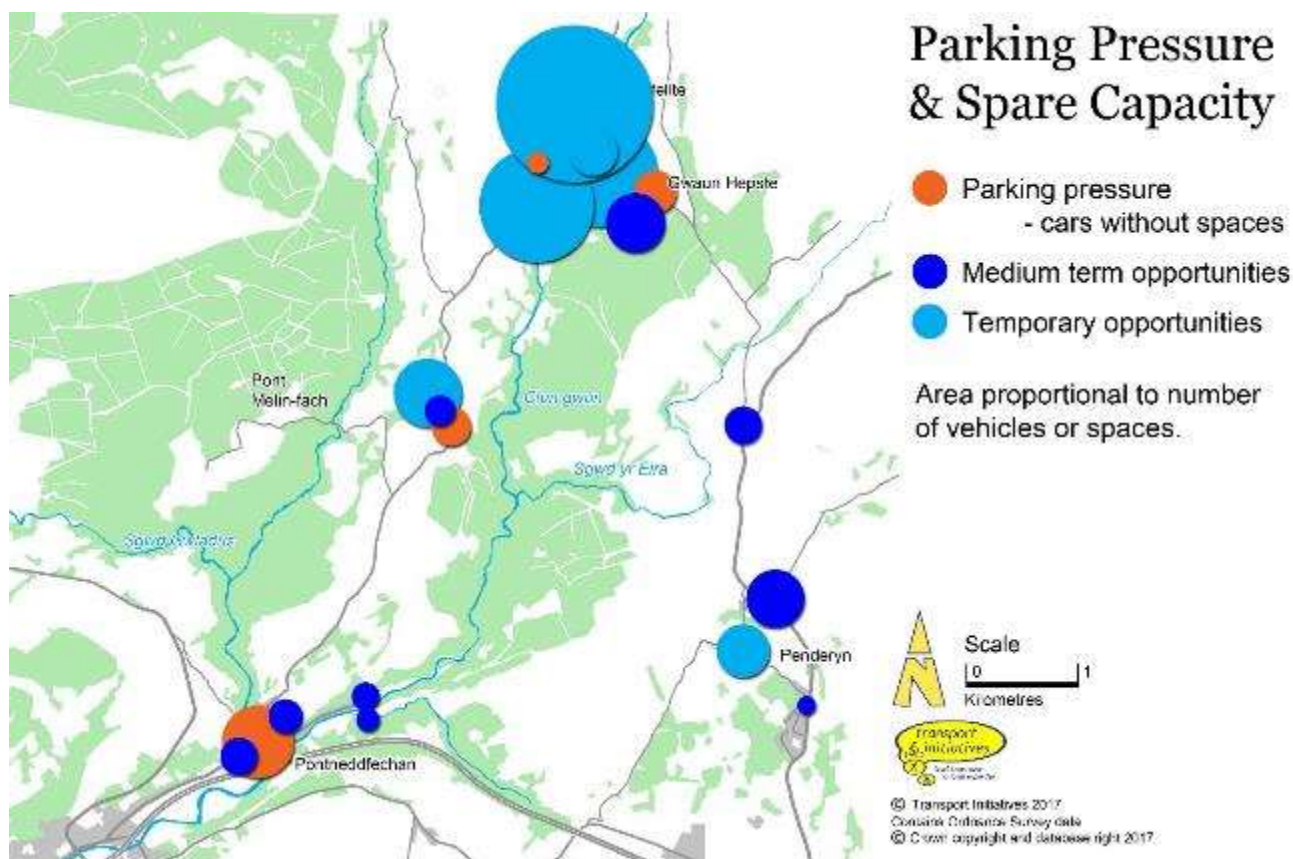


Figure 3 Parking pressure

The bulk of the parking pressure is in Pontneddfechan with temporary parking opportunities in Ystradfellte. Penderyn has little holiday pressure but does have parking opportunities. An enlarged Gwaun Hepste car park would appear to be able to absorb the current excess parking in the area but it would take time to construct. On the other hand permanent parking opportunities in Pontneddfechan and near Clun Gwyn would appear to be insufficient. A potential parking strategy would appear to be:

- Use temporary car parks to absorb excess capacity in the Ystradfellte/Cwm Porth/ Gwaun Hepste area and also at Clun Gwyn.
- Initially attempt to move some Pontneddfechan pressure towards Ystradfellte
- Improve car parking at Gwaun Hepste and Penderyn and direct visitors to those locations in the medium term.
- Use temporary car parks to absorb peak holiday demand.

2.9.3 Clun Gwyn Car Park

The focus shouldn't necessarily be on just increasing parking opportunities where informal parking indicates a demand. The area has a unique visual and ecological character which should be protected.

One particular area where parking could damage both is near Clun Gwyn. Parking on the road here causes residents problems through obstruction but constructing parking areas would intrude on to protected land and visually widen a narrow lane. It might be better in places like this to actively reduce parking places and manage those that are left to encourage a quicker turnover. Some parking happens because people park where they see parking.

A strategy that encouraged visitors to keep away from the Pontneddfechan – Ystradfellte road would also help reduce pressure here.

2.9.4 Cwm Porth Car Park

Cwm Porth Car Park is another location where associated problems suggest simple expansion is not necessarily appropriate. It appears to be critical in developing solutions for the area. It is the most developed car park with an all weather surface, toilets, information and a warden.

The car park lies close to Ogof cave and slightly closer than Gwaun Hepste to the most spectacular waterfalls. It is the car park most frequently mentioned in walking guides and in consequence fills first, has to be closed through the middle part of the day and many of the displaced vehicles get parked in inappropriate places nearby.

The car park is on a narrow lane and there are conflicts between residents and visitor traffic. Due to visitors walking between their informal parking to Cwm Porth, there are also conflicts between traffic and pedestrians. If there was to be a shuttle bus serving the car parks the width of the lane would limit the size of the bus. Residents suggestions include making the lane one way and closing the lane at peak times.

Some of the problem is caused by Cwm Porth being too small for the numbers of people who are attracted there. Visitors are thus making needless trips along the lane. Enlarging the car park wouldn't reduce the number of trips along the lane although it would reduce the amount of informal parking in the area and the number of pedestrians. Closing the lane at peak times would be difficult legally unless closed by the police on safety grounds. Making it one way would increase the danger faced by pedestrians as traffic speeds would increase. However, closing the car park would waste the investment already made in it.

The way forward should try to limit the people in the lane to the number who can fit into the car park. Automated "car park full" signs are expensive and would be an urban intrusion into the countryside. A strategy should be to establish a more formal use of the car park by managing who can use it and encouraging other visitors elsewhere by:

- Limiting users to booked activity providers and pre-booked visitors particularly at peak times
- Altering BBNPA and other public information to remove references to the car park
- Removing the car park symbol from road signs
- Asking walking websites to alter their guides
- Developing nearby Gwaun Hepste as the Four Falls car park

Residents observed that Cwm Porth feels like a safer car park than Gwaun Hepste and due to the warden people feel their cars are more secure.

2.9.5 Gwaun Hepste

Gwaun Hepste is the most popular of the formal car parks in the Waterfall area. Currently its facilities are minimal and visitors would like to see more. Every visitor we interviewed would like to see toilets and 28% wanted a café. A problem with Gwaun Hepste is that it has no water or power supply and so adding these facilities would require significant investment.

On the other hand, Gwaun Hepste is the car park with the most expansion potential. Of the Ystradfellte area car parks it is closest to a main road which means that visitors could be caught before they get to the narrower lanes at Cwm Porth. It has the largest area of flat land for expansion and can be hidden from the road by trees.

Our surveys looked at fitting more cars into the current car park footprint and using the adjacent old quarry. NRW have suggested something bigger further along the Four Falls Trail with a proper visitor centre. The cost of a simple toilet block with warden's office could cost around £1¼ million while a bigger car park along a longer access road with a bigger visitor centre could cost four times that.

Given suitable investment, expanding Gwaun Hepste looks promising but there are three further issues with expending it. The first, raised by residents, is that expanding Gwaun Hepste would reduce trade at the New Inn. This could be overcome by ensuring Ystradfellte and local facilities are incorporated on all information panels and Ystradfellte is included in any footpath signing system for the Waterfalls area. The pub itself could promote walks based from Ystradfellte. The second is that the terms of the leased land do not permit non-forestry profits, so you couldn't have a commercial café. Café profits would have to be reinvested in the area in some way although it could supply a source of seasonal income for a community based enterprise for instance. The final issue is that the lane between it and the A4059 suffers from some congestion and has some narrow sections, particularly at the cattle grid near Hepste Bridge and Tai-hirion. Additional passing places may need to be provided.

2.9.6 Penderyn

Penderyn is closer to Sgwd yr Eira than the Four Falls car park yet is used by very few visitors to the area. We only interviewed two people who had walked from Penderyn and while we saw cars parked we never saw parking pressure at the end of the Sgwd yr Eira footpath. The landlord at the Lamb said some of his custom came from people walking to the falls. While there are reports of people parking on verges and blocking accesses there is potentially spare car parking space in the area.

One proviso is the Penderyn Livestock market. Sales lead to parking problems in Penderyn which could conflict with developing Penderyn as a gateway to the waterfalls. What the auctioneers describe as "big sales" happen in September and October, well away from popular times. There are no sales on bank holiday weekends or over the summer school holiday period.

Rhondda Cynon Taff Council have proposed a car park on the land immediately south of the old chapel. St Cynog's church car park is currently little used and statutory consultees suggested the livestock market and the field near the bus terminus as potential sites for more. Penderyn is also on the A4059 and visitors starting from here wouldn't have to use the lanes around Gwaun Hepste. Penderyn also has the distillery as an additional attraction to add to the waterfalls. The distillery could be added to any pedestrian signing or information scheme.

A problem with developing Penderyn is that the footways along the A4059 from the proposed RCT car park northwards towards the path to Sgwd yr Eira are substandard in width and have some missing sections. There is also no formal pedestrian crossing, either refuge island, zebra or signalled pedestrian crossing, over the A4059. A crossing is not essential but would improve the visitor offer.

Developing Penderyn requires two things to be in place, Firstly the Rhondda Cynon Taff proposed car park or another car park needs to be operational. Secondly while the footpath between Penderyn and Sgwd yr Eira looks in good condition now its construction wouldn't stand up to heavy use. The footpath should be signed, but not in the full colour coded arrangement as recommended in 2.9.16, and use monitored, Penderyn can be added to literature but full promotion requires a car park and confidence that the path will stand up to heavy use.

2.9.7 Linking Falls to Car Parks

One thing that follows from our visitor survey and the idea of developing Penderyn is that each car park has its closest waterfall or group of falls. This could lead to a set of simple products that consist of a car park and a set of falls.

Gwaun Hepste is good for the Four Falls Trail, Clun Gwyn for a quick visit to a fall and Pontneddfechan for Sgwd Gwladus and the Elidir Trail. If a visitor only wants to visit Sgwd yr Eira then Penderyn is the best place to start. This suggests a way of marketing the falls in a way that spreads the visitor load.

2.9.8 Temporary Parking

We don't have figures for visitor numbers throughout the year but we would expect the numbers to vary immensely. Making provision for every visitor car would mean the investment would be made for facilities that would remain unused most of the time. An answer may be to use temporary car parks on farmers' fields. We identified five potential sites.

Site	Nature of site	Comments
Ystradfellte opposite village hall	Offered. Used for silage most likely available for august bank holiday. Farmer would want to charge, would need someone to collect the money but would be willing to split proceeds	A long way from the Waterfalls, would require improvements to the Ystradfellte – Cwm Porth footpath. Access from Gwaun Hepste – Ystradfellte Lane would help keep cars away from Cwm Porth. Probably low priority. Supported by residents who say it gets used for parking overload for village or church events
Porth yr ogof farm	Offered. Currently unused. Farm buildings may get used for holiday accommodation. Same farmer as above but charges not discussed.	Would require improvements to the Ystradfellte – Cwm Porth footpath to which direct access could probably be made. Access from Gwaun Hepste – Ystradfellte Lane would help keep cars away from Cwm Porth. Visitors walking to falls could keep away from roads.
Porth yr ogof upper fields	Offered. Currently unused. Same farmer as above but charges not discussed.	Close to Gwaun Hepste for overflow car park. Would require visitors to walk along lane to Cwm Porth. May be possible to link car park to Ystradfellte – Cwm Porth footpath. May be possible to construct footpath to Gwaun Hepste
Cwm Porth	Not discussed but used in August 2016	Visitors using this site would need to use the Cwm Porth lane.
The Showground Clun Gwyn	Used for the Ystradfellte show and by activity providers. Discussed using the field at and early consultation, the idea has since been followed up by BBNPA and operated successfully during the May 2018 bank holidays	Very handy for Clun Gwyn as there is a gate very close to the existing parking area. Sufficient size to absorb existing maximum demand.

Table 3 Temporary parking

The general issue with temporary car parks on farms is that their agricultural needs come first and so availability cannot be guaranteed. There also needs to be a 28 day gap between keeping animals on the field and allowing the public to use it. Farmers might prioritise parking if they could derive an income from it which would be easier if the other parking in the area was charged for. Four of the sites would support a strategy to keep general visitors away from Cwm Porth. The one near Clun Gwyn would support a strategy to reduce parking along the lane at that point while the two connected with Porth yr ogof could provide and overflow for Gwaun Hepste. The following strategy is a possibility:

Ystradfellte	Low priority – develop if other Porth yr ogof sites are unfeasible or get full
Porth yr ogof Farm	Medium priority – develop in conjunction with any accommodation proposal
Upper Porth yr ogof	High priority for further investigation
Cwm Porth	Let farmer open it if required. Not part of our strategy
Clun Gwyn	High priority for regular use

Table 4 Temporary parking strategy

Supporting proposals would include improving the Ystradfellte to Cwm Porth footpath and investigating additional footpaths from upper Porth yr ogof to Cwm Porth and Gwaun Hepste

2.9.9 Managing car parking with parking fees

Many local authorities and businesses control parking using parking fees. Graduated fees or charging only for specific times can help spread the pressure or encourage turnover. Around 85% of the visitors we interviewed expected to pay and an average of £4.00 - £4.60 was seen as reasonable. Some respondents suggested that fees should be aligned to those charged by the National Trust.

Currently only Gwaun Hepste and Cwm Porth have charges. The charge covers every day in the year and runs from 8am to 6pm. The charge is £4 for cars, £7 for vans, and motorcycles are free. The response from visitors would suggest that the fees are set at an acceptable level. Certainly, visitors seem to park informally elsewhere because the car parks are full, not because of the charge. That said, Ystradfellte residents report that visitors park in passing places due to the car park charges.

Analysis of visitor origins and visitor arrival times suggests that it would be difficult to spread parking demand more evenly throughout the day by starting the charging period later. Nor could you encourage quicker turnover by graduated charging because most visit lengths at Cwm Porth and Gwaun Hepste are determined by the length of the walk to the falls.

Graduated charging works if there are alternative options that visitors can choose between and so would work at Clun Gwyn where visitors could take a short walk to Sgwd Clun Gwyn or take a significantly longer walk to Sgwd y Pannwr or Sgwd yr Eira. A similar case would exist at Dinas Rock or the Village Hall because the Gunpowder Works path, Sgwd yr Eira path, the Dinas Trail and an organised Activity are all of different lengths. A problem might arise when people don't know where they are going to go or become enthused to continue once they see the first waterfall. There are parking systems available that allow users to top up their parking time but they require a mobile phone signal.

A simple two step half day / whole day graduation might be the easiest to understand with a potential extra short free period where the car park is next to a café. (Village Hall / possibly Gwaun Hepste).

We do not have the data to say whether a cheaper weekday or off season charge would help spread the peak pressure.

Other points visitors made about charging were:

- Not everybody carries cash and so card payment would be useful. This requires power, a phone line or good mobile reception and so could only be implemented once Gwaun Hepste is developed.
- A weekly season ticket aimed at holiday makers would save continual ticket purchases. Administration of this could be combined with pre-booking Cwm Porth if that is progressed. Visitors may object to paying for a pass, finding a National Park car park full and being directed to a temporary one and being asked to pay again. Agreements would need to be made with farmers operating paying temporary car parks if the National Park Authority wanted the pass to be used in any paying car park.
- Tickets should be transferable between car parks.

This part of the discussion has hinted that charges could be levied on Clun Gwyn, the Village Hall and Dinas Rock Car Parks. It might also be necessary to charge for parking in the Neath Port

Talbot layby. Clun Gwyn is a stand alone case and charging would have to accompany measures to prevent parking in the vicinity and consideration of temporary parking in the neighbouring field. Charging for parking in Pontneddfechan is more difficult in that currently you can park on most of the immediately adjacent roads for free and visitors parking in village roads causes residents problems even without charges. The Village Hall and Dinas Rock are very much tied up with the potential for residents' parking in Pontneddfechan in that charges could be used to help offset a parking scheme's running costs. The NPT layby is different as there is abundant free parking along the road towards Glynneath and a currently free and open car park belonging to the Angel Inn. Any proposals to restrict parking at places like Clun Gwyn or expand charging will need to be accompanied by measures to control informal parking. The area can be divided into three: the rural area north of Comin y Rhos, the part of Pontneddfechan village in Powys and Rhondda Cynon Taff and the part of Pontneddfechan in Neath Port Talbot.

2.9.10 Residents' Parking Scheme (Powys)

A Residents' parking scheme could be implemented in Pontneddfechan to deter visitors from parking in places used by residents. Residents complain that if, for instance, they go shopping on a summer Saturday they cannot park near their houses on their return. Residents would need a permit to park within the zone. Currently Powys charges £65 per year.

There are 111 houses fronting onto the public highway in the lower part of Pontneddfechan. Over half (63) of these do not appear to have off street parking and thus would be more badly affected than the others. In Mellte Avenue and Brodawel some residents own more than one car so there are more cars than off street spaces. On street residents' parking is concentrated at Min yr Awel, Mellte Avenue, Brodawel, High Street and outside the terrace east of High Street. A parking scheme would need to include the small areas of carriageway at Min yr Awel operated by Powys Housing Department.



Dinas Road. Most houses east of these garages have no off street parking



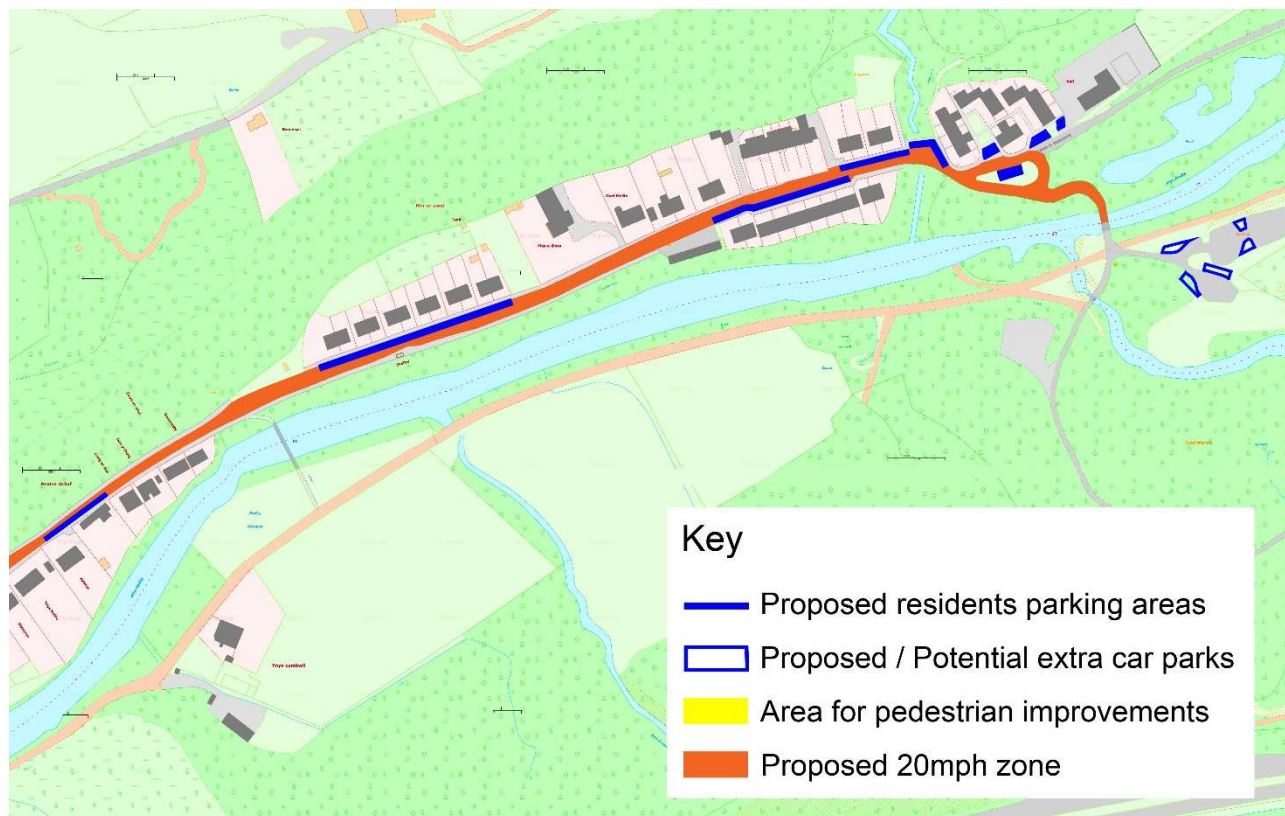
Pontneathvaughan Road just east of High Street

A residents' parking scheme need only operate at times of peak problems, so for instance it could operate on weekends and bank holidays between May & September between say 10am and 6pm. Similarly some residents feel that there isn't a need for residents' parking at Min yr Awel but that could be because of the potential need to pay.

In urban areas asking residents to pay for their parking can be justified as the problems arise because between them they own too many cars. In Pontneddfechan the residents feel paying is unfair because it isn't their cars that cause the problems. This view was one of the most consistent comments by residents, clearly being made at the initial open consultations but also at the discussion groups and again at the final consultations. Hence there is a resistance to the idea of paying, however much residents may want easier parking.

A way forward is to set up a Community Interest Company or similar to manage the parking in the area. Such a company could operate the car parks at Dinas Rock and the Village Hall using money raised to pay for or subsidise the residents parking. The precise details of how the scheme might operate and what funds raise could be used for are outside Transport Initiatives' area of expertise and therefore a more in depth investigation. The question of how a residents' parking scheme could be managed should also be explored in more detail by a residents' reference group.

A potential residents' parking scheme is shown in the two diagrams below.



Figures 4/5. Possible Residents parking scheme: east end of Pontneddfechan (top) & west end (lower)

Any proposals for residents' parking will need extensive consultation in addition to the statutory consultations for the legal orders.

2.9.11 Pontneddfechan west of the Neddfechan (Neath Port Talbot)

During the August bank holiday weekend visitors parked in the Angel car park and on Pontneathvaughan Road. As the day wore on the line of parked vehicles gradually extended westwards. If the new layby remains free to use the pattern of parking will be the same but there will be less on-carriageway obstruction. If NPT charge then visitors will park on the north side of the road because it is free and will only begin to use the NPT layby once they feel the length of parking along Pontneathvaughan Road makes it too far to walk. At periods of low use we will have the peculiar situation where free parking causes an obstruction to traffic yet if people park clear of the carriageway they get charged. The following things would need to be in place before visitors could be charged to use the layby:

- There should be a residents parking scheme in the main part of Pontneddfechan
- The Angel Inn would have to have a mechanism for charging visitors but reimbursing those who subsequently visit the pub
- 24 hour no-waiting restrictions would need to be implemented along Pontneathvaughan Road. There is a general rule of thumb that people are unwilling to walk further than 400m between where they park and the attraction. It is suggested that the initial length of the lines should be for around 400m west of the Neddfechan bridge. There are two houses without off street parking and one where there is usually a vehicle parked on the carriageway west of the village in this length. These may require a resident's parking place. We would need to check whether the laybys (formed by the old line of the road) are adopted highway and we need to consider whether they should be included in the area of parking restrictions.
- Having the temporary car parking area at Glynneath Golf Course operational would be an advantage

Waiting restrictions along Pontneathvaughan Road would make a permanent or temporary car park in the fields south of the road more viable.

2.9.12 Controlled or Restricted Parking Zone

The more rural areas near Ystradfellte are rather different. Normally parking restrictions involve yellow lines and signs. This would impose a visual intrusion all the time to control parking on only a few days each year.

Controlling parking in the lanes away from Pontneddfechan doesn't have to mean yellow lines. Other authorities have used "no parking (or no stopping) except in marked bays" orders. Examples are around the Ladybower Reservoirs in the Derbyshire Peak District or alongside The Roaches in Staffordshire.



The Roaches, Staffordshire, scheme boundary



Example of signs and marked bay

The Roaches scheme appears to have been successful although at the Ladybower Reservoirs one road has been subsequently converted to a yellow line system.

If the controlled area is too small then people will merely park at the ends of it. If it is too big it will prevent people from parking where they don't cause problems. The diagram below shows in blue the maximum extent of the rural parking and congestion problems experienced by the residents or observed by us. We feel that some of the problems are directly connected with Cwm Porth car park reaching capacity and if its use is managed then some of those problems will disappear. The core areas that should be covered are the potential overflow areas from Gwaun Hepste and Clun Gwyn car parks. In discussions Ystradfellte residents felt that the controlled area should include their village as well.

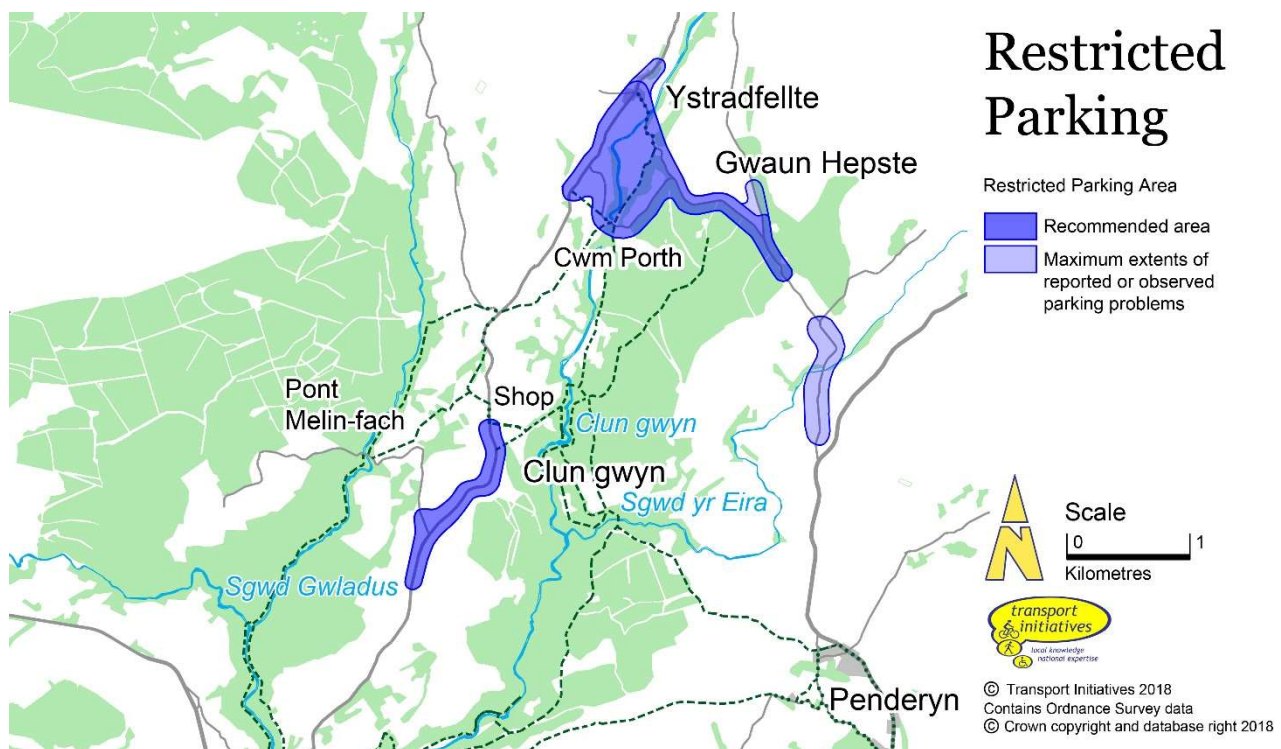


Figure 6 Possible restricted parking areas

2.9.13 Passing Places

The scheme should prevent visitors parking in passing places. Passing places could also be highlighted using “Passing Place” signs common in Scotland but also occasionally used in England and Wales. Residents also complained about damage to verges where people try to pass. They especially mentioned timber lorries. A way forward might be to make certain parts of lanes clearly passing places and ensure the carriageway is wide enough and the location signed and make the rest of the road clearly too narrow to pass. Residents requested that they should have an involvement in deciding the locations and sizes of passing places particularly with regard to agricultural needs.



Glen Lyon, Perthshire



Combs Lane, Chapel en le Frith, Derbyshire

2.9.14 Enforcement

Enforcement is currently a major concern with residents. Until recently there was only a short length of lines for Powys to enforce and so Pontneddfechan was rarely visited. Furthermore, the area is split across two police areas for enforcement of obstructions. However, both Powys and Neath Port Talbot have proposals for, or have recently implemented, waiting restrictions covering the length of Pontneathvaughan and Dinas Roads from outside the old Tourist Information Centre to the corner east of the Dinas Inn. The current proposals would give more to enforce and making enforcement visits more worthwhile, particularly if they included a residents' parking scheme.

There are examples of one authority working in others, for instance enforcement in Staffordshire Moorlands District is undertaken by Stoke on Trent Council. The Essex Parking Partnership has been set up with two separate bodies administering parking on behalf of Essex County Council and 12 Borough/City/District Councils (see <https://www.parkingpartnership.org/>).

Enforcement of parking restrictions can be undertaken by a contractor and clearly parking contracting companies operate in several authorities at the same time.

2.9.15 Communications Strategy

Not every aspect of communicating advance information to visitors can be controlled. Brecon Beacons National Park cannot control ‘word of mouth’, general internet searches, crowd sourced websites, existing guide books or previous experience. However, it can control its own website and leaflets and should be able to influence Visit Wales and media articles. These represent a third of sources used by first time visitors used or 20% of the sources used by all visitors. While this might seem low, it is a greater proportion than ‘excess parking’ is of the total number of visitors (15%).

In the earlier section on developing Penderyn, the idea of devising a number of separate carpark/walk products was mooted. Any communications strategy would have to be based on this principle where each waterfall (or group) had a specific car park. Each car park / fall combination should be described in such a way as to enable visitors to separate them and work out the sort of experience they want. Also, in any general waterfalls overview there should also be information on

Aberdulais, Melincourt and Henrhyd Falls and the Cwm Gwrelych Trail because they may suit some visitors better.

Finally, all publicity and walks information should contain public transport information, limited through it is.

2.9.16 Signing

There are three elements to a signing strategy. Firstly, visitors should be guided to the relevant car park by signs on the highway. Once there they should be given information about the area, falls and paths and then finally they can be guided to the falls they want to visit by footpath signs. The strategy could be based on providing separate products but should not prevent visitors devising their own routes.

A highway signing strategy should attempt to keep visitors on main roads for as long as possible and limit use of single track roads. Hence the Waterfalls signing should not direct people along the Pontneddfechan to Ystradfellte road. Because of this it would need to separate signed routes to the various places a fair way from the Waterfalls area. From the Neath direction the routes into the main Waterfalls area would split at the A465 Glynneath junction, from Cardiff at Hirwaun and from Brecon at the A4059/Ystradfellte lane junction. The highway signing strategy would also need signing to encourage visitors to travel east of the Angel towards the Village Hall and Dinas Rock.

Many visitors we interviewed at Gwaun Hepste liked the Four Falls pedestrian signs. They liked the location numbers and some said hunting the next number enthused their children. The system of red arms could be extended to other paths as shown on the map below with a different colour for each main route. The main routes should be supported by a network of other strategic footpaths shown in dark green on the map. Sign arms for these routes would be dark green, the traditional footpath sign colour.

Destination names should be common to the main routes and supporting paths and also appear on all information panels. The idea would be to have a complete network covering the whole Waterfalls area with one very important exception. The exception is that no signed route should cross the River Hepste at Sgwd yr Eira as the route would be dangerously impassable when the river is in spate or the rocks icy.

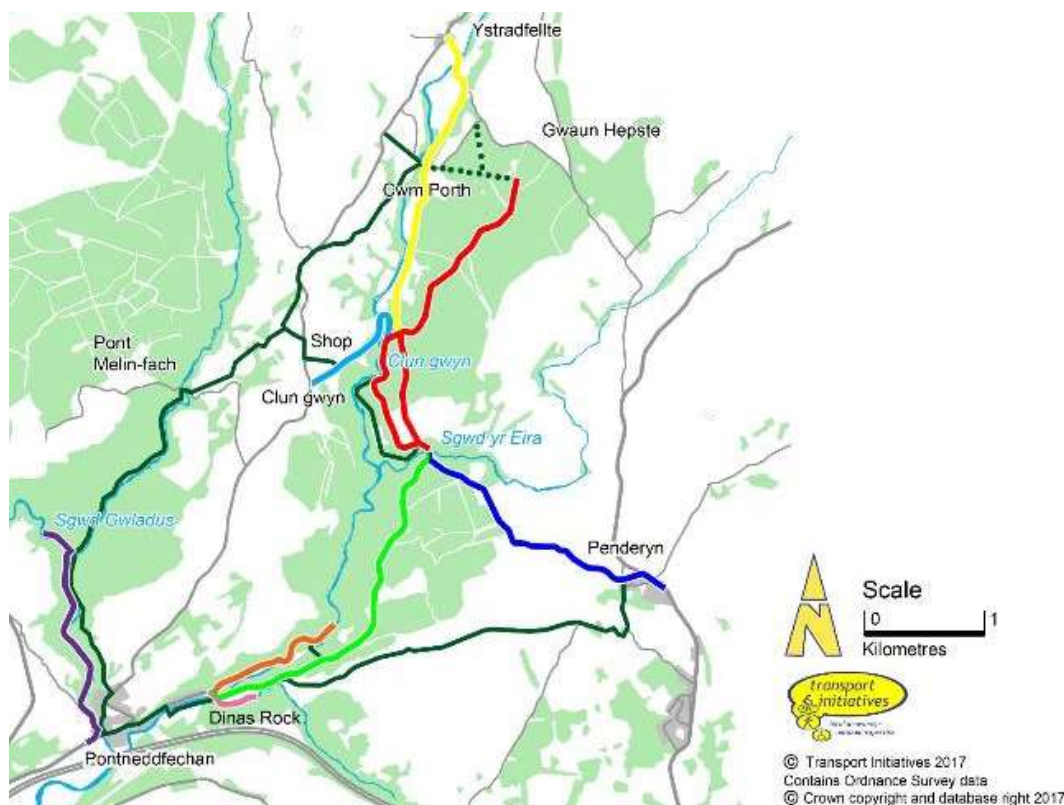


Figure 7 Possible signed routes

While most people have few problems in finding their way to and from the falls, at times people do get lost. A common strategic problem is that visitors start a walk from, say, Cwm Porth, walk to the falls and instead of returning the way they came continue on to Pontneddfechan by mistake. We have observed this and the residents tell many tales in the same vein. Coloured routes might alert people to their mistake but not necessarily.

The idea of colour coding the key walks was supported by residents. One of their bugbears is transporting people who make navigational errors back to their cars. A shuttle bus could provide the return trip but would not run for most of the year or at the very ends of the day. A simple method of providing a return trip would be to provide taxi phone numbers on information panels. Another navigation error is that some visitors confuse Cwm Porth and Gwaun Hepste car parks. A direct and signed footpath between the two could help here.

2.9.17 Alternative Means of Travel - Bus

Parking pressure would be reduced if visitors travelled by alternative means. The alternative transport methods interviewed visitors used to get to the Waterfalls area were public transport and cycling. Five people had used the X55 bus, two of whom had used it in conjunction with the train from London.

At the time of the surveys there were two services serving the area and one passing nearby. The X55 ran between Neath and Min yr Awel (Pontneddfechan Village Hall) with two services on Sundays and bank holidays, the 9 ran between Glynhafod (near Aberdare) and Penderyn and the 8 ran between Glynhafod and Morfa Glas (near Glynneath) but neither ran on Sundays or bank holidays. The X55 now only runs to Pont Walby and again not on Sundays or bank holidays. Effectively this means that there are no bus services to the area on the days that experience the greatest pressure. There is a bridlepath from the Pont Walby to Pontneddfechan. Potentially it is only 1.6km from the bus terminus to the centre of Pontneddfechan but the footbridge over the Mellte River is 500m east of the Angel thus making the journey longer than necessary.

2.9.18 Alternative Means of Travel – Shuttle Bus

Visitors were asked whether they would use a shuttle bus or park and ride to enable them to get to the area or make one way rather than out and back walks. The response to park and ride was lukewarm. The characteristics that would make people use a bus were a good frequency (21%), a good price (13%) and if it made visiting the falls easier (13%). The greatest number of visitors come from either Brecon or a Cardiff postcode, with a smaller number from the Neath direction. It would be difficult to serve the three origins at a good frequency. It might be possible to divert the T4 Cardiff/Merthyr – Newtown bus to run via Penderyn but that only runs four times a day on summer Sundays and so couldn't provide a sufficient frequency.

A shuttle bus attracted more interest with 43% saying they would use it and 11% saying maybe. When asked what they'd like to do visitors were more unsure, possibly because their general awareness of the area was low. Figure 8 shows the paths potential users said they'd like to walk and those walks transferred to a bus route.

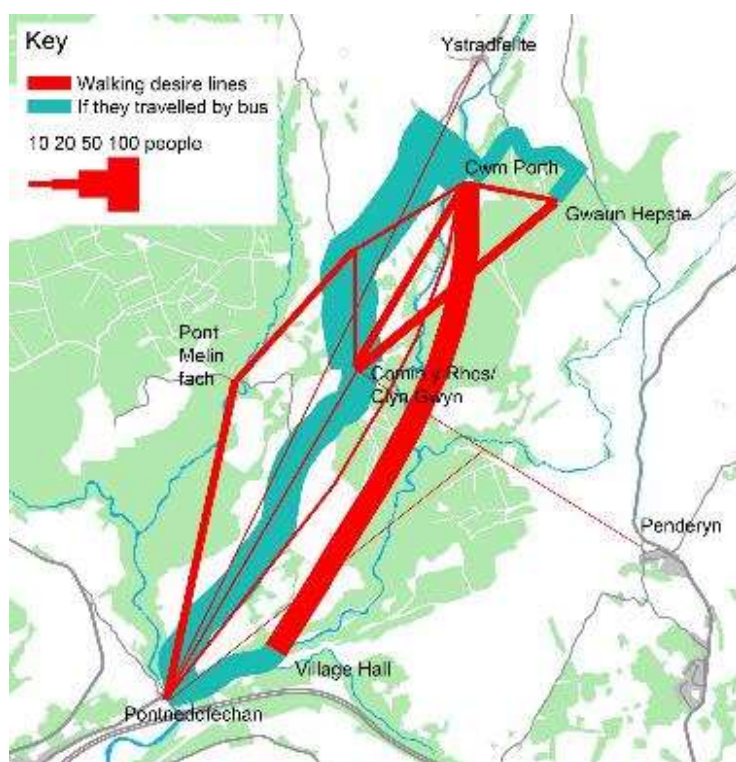


Figure 8 Desire lines

Key points are:

- Previous discussion means that the potential large flow at Cwm Porth might be transferred to Gwaun Hepste. The route should then run via Ystradfellte
- It is important that the bus would serve the Village Hall and Dinas Rock so it would have to turn around with passengers on board near the Angel
- Clun Gwyn is seen as important. A shuttle bus could be used to lessen parking pressure here.
- The bus should also serve Penderyn.
- A bus would operate more efficiently if people had a place to wait at Gwaun Hepste and Pontneddfechan Village Hall. In other words the Village Hall café should operate for the length of the bus service and a place serving drinks and snacks be operating at Gwaun Hepste.
- A bus would need extensive marketing to make any inroads into travel and parking issues

2.9.19 Alternative Means of Travel - Cycling

The cyclists we interviewed were out for a longer ride rather than intending to visit the Waterfalls. The Waterfalls area is served by three cycle routes which roughly follow the service bus routes. The Swansea Bay Cycle Route uses Pontneathvaughan Road, The National Cycle Network follows the old line of the A645 through Rhigos and there is a path along the old tramway between Hirwaun and Penderyn.

None of the routes provides a complete continuous safe route between places where people live and the Waterfalls area and none offers an advantage (such as getting closer to the falls) over driving. Probably because Sgwd yr Eira was a river crossing for a drove route there is a bridleway to it from Pontneddfechan but as a cycle route the bridleway would best be described as “challenging”.

In the short term cycling probably cannot provide much of a solution. However, in the longer term the path from Hirwaun to Penderyn could be extended into the village. The path from to Sgwd yr Eira from Penderyn could be designated a bridleway or routes could be constructed through the forest from Gwaun Hepste but these are outside the scope of this report.

2.9.20 Road safety

The Waterfalls area is not dangerous in terms of highway crashes leading to injuries. However speeding traffic was mentioned at both initial consultation sessions. Pontneddfechan residents identified the difficulty for children crossing Pontneathvaughan Road just east of the Neddfechan bridge where the footway changes sides but also has a gap. They have also pointed out the dangers to pedestrians who parked their cars on the south side verge of Pontneathvaughan Road. The latter issue remains with the new layby. One resident at a final consultation session mentioned speeding traffic on the Parish Road (Angel to the Inter Valleys Road) and the possibility of a crash caused by pedestrians leaving the Elidir Trail. At the final consultation residents talked about the dangers caused by the hill and sharp bends on the Ystradfellte Road

Our surveyors commented on the vehicle / pedestrian confusion around the Angel in on the Bank Holiday Sunday. Since then the Sgwd Gwladys Café and bunkhouse has opened and visitors cross between here and the footway on the north side of Pontneathvaughan Road.

The footway on the north side of Pontneathvaughan Road is substandard. The section on the Neddfechan bridge is 1.4m wide and just east of the Angel car park is 1.6m wide. West of the entry to the Angel car park pavement parking narrows the pavement further. During busy times pedestrians spill over into the carriageway.



Pontneathvaughan Road east of the Neddfechan showing the gap in footway provision where it changes sides



Pontneathvaughan Road at the Angel showing the substandard footway width, pavement parking and the location of the entrance to Sgwd Gwladys by the traffic signals sign

Visibility is good for people crossing the road from north to south. The bend in the road at this point means that visibility for people crossing in the other direction is substandard. Visibility would also be at around the absolute minimum for a 30mph road for any entry into the fields south of the road should they be required for temporary parking.

Solving these issues would help the visitor experience even though conventionally there is no “accident issue” to be solved. A scheme should be produced for the area around the eastern end of the Neath Port Talbot layby, the entry to Sgwd Gwladys, the entry to the Angel, the toilets area and the Neddfechan bridge to:

- Widen the existing northside footway to 2.0m where possible
- Close the gap in footway provision east of the Neddfechan bridge
- Provide dropped kerbs with tactile markings across Pontneathvaughan Road east of the Neddfechan, across the old road by the toilets and across Pontneathvaughan Road at Sgwd Gwladys. The Angel Inn car park entrance could have a continuous footway across it.
- Include measures to improve the visibility from Sgwd Gwladys
- Include measures to slow traffic
- Implement a 20mph speed restriction.

One possibility suggested by our surveyors was to make the area between the Angel and the Toilets a shared surface. Residents felt that the shared surface should still say “road” to pedestrians. The shared zone could include the end of the Elidir Trail. Production of an actual scheme is outside the scope of this project. The Police have suggested there should be 24 hour “no waiting” along the north side of Pontneathvaughan Road between the Angel and the beginning of the new layby. This would help access to any permanent or temporary car park in the fields to the south east of the road. A potential scheme is shown below in Figure 10. The south western table would form the start of the 20mph zone with the chicane on the Ystradfellte Road and the river bridge at Dinas Rock forming the other boundaries. The 20mph zone is shown in figure 4.



Figure 10. Traffic Calming Angel area.

2.9.21 Community & Economic Development

The 'Waterfall Country' area receives very little income from its many visitors (see the NPT study). At the same time, facilities in the area have diminished, particularly those that would; benefit local residents, provide informal meeting points, a focus for local community information and support community cohesion such as the village shop or school gate. Aspirations to address either of these issues appear to be low, particularly but not exclusively in Pontneddfechan.

Support for the community and economic regeneration of the area would enable further businesses to develop, existing businesses to flourish and greater 'competition' to drive up standards and aspirations. Businesses could develop a collaborative offer for mutual benefit and at the same time benefitting local people rather than them just suffering from visitor influxes.

There is scope for example to encourage the development of the village hall which could in turn generate income for both the community and individuals. Its Saturday and Sunday café has scope for development, and there is potential for additional facilities and activities attracting both locals and visitors.

Another idea / issue put forward at the first Pontneddfechan consultation was the need for a shop (either as a private business or a community enterprise). One participant had looked around for premises but there appears to be nothing obvious in the village.

We can contrast these with a honey pot village in the Peak District where an elderly group of church members have converted their church so that it now provides a conference, exhibition and outdoor pursuits centre as well as a church. Separately in the same village, residents report a thriving village shop serving both residents' and visitors' needs and which stays open until 7pm enabling locals to purchase the ingredients of an evening meal after work or a day out. Nearer to Waterfalls Country, Talybont-on-Usk offers a small but well-used shop and cafe, bus shelter noticeboards and coin-operated showers at the village hall.

Community development is outside the scope of this project but appears to be important in helping the residents derive an economic benefit from visitors to the area.

3 Recommendations

3.1 Strategies

The basic strategy is to

- Encourage visitors to visit other places under less pressure with a different but equally good visitor experience
- Encourage visitors away from the current Pontneddfechan – Ystradfellte axis by developing Penderyn
- Control some informal parking by focussing access to the Waterfalls area on Pontneddfechan (but encourage use of Dinas Rock and the Village Hall), Gwaun Hepste (with overflow to Ystradfellte), and Penderyn.
- Make use of temporary car parks to accommodate excess vehicles at peak times. Preferably they should be associated with permanent parking so acting as an overflow.
- Control parking at Clun Gwyn
- Alter management of Cwm Porth car park by concentrating activity providers (and pre booked visitors & blue badge holders) at Cwm Porth with general visitors encouraged to use Gwaun Hepste instead
- Manage inappropriate parking in Pontneddfechan with a residents' parking scheme and at Clun Gwyn, Cwm Porth, Gwaun Hepste and Ystradfellte with a controlled parking area. As part of the residents' parking scheme introduce charges for both Dinas Rock and the Village Hall car parks.
- Provide some new parking in Penderyn and increase the size of Gwaun Hepste
- Use marketing and signing to link the three key attractions (Four Falls Trail, Swgd yr Eira and Sgwd Gwladys) to a specific car park
- Devise a signing strategy to encourage people towards the three key entry points and away from the Pontneddfechan to Ystradfellte road
- Once visitors have arrived at the three key entry points provide good and clear footpath information between the car parks and the key falls
- Investigate a shuttle bus running between Pontneddfechan Village Hall and Penderyn.
- Devise a community based organisation to manage car park income and possible residents' parking subsidies and / or other community benefits.
- Maintain dialogue between the National Park Authority, the Local Authorities, other stakeholders and the residents using a reference group based on the group that formed to discuss the Waterfall parking issues.

3.2 Detailed Proposals

3.2.1 Marketing Strategy

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority's website and publications should:

- Be clear about how to get to the falls and the length of the walks involved
- Offer alternatives which have shorter walks or a different experience even if in some cases such as Aberdulais they are outside the National Park
- Promote the idea of Penderyn as the best start point for Sgwd yr Eira

The National Park Authority should seek to get other websites to change their recommended start points from Cwm Porth to Gwaun Hepste

3.2.2 Develop Penderyn as an alternative entry point for the walk to Sgwd yr Eira.

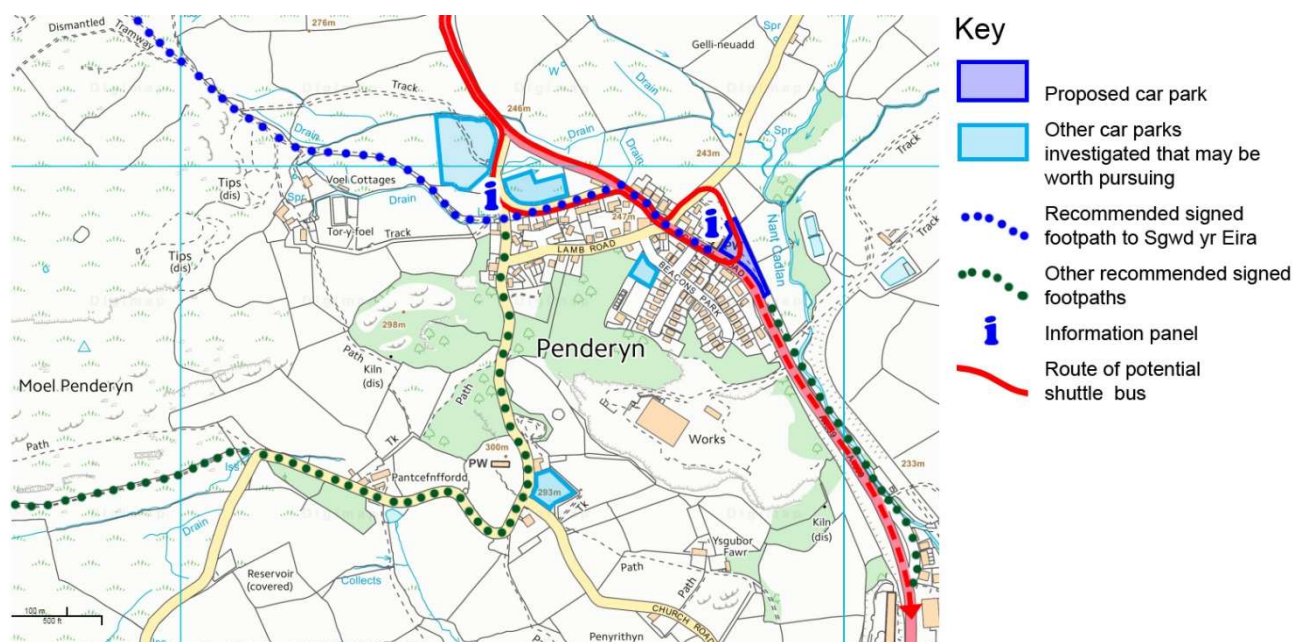


Figure 11 Penderyn recommendations

This will require

- A car park (such as that provided by Rhondda Cynon Taff) on the triangle of land just south of the Lamb Hotel junction.
- Information / interpretation boards at the proposed car park and bus terminus / footpath start and also at the footpath/bridleway junction immediately south of Sgwd yr Eira
- Pedestrian / footpath signs between the Distillery via the car park and bus terminus to Sgwd yr Eira. In addition, the bridleway between Penderyn and Pontneddfechan should also be signed (see later)
- Highway signing directing visitors to Penderyn
- Alternative parking places particularly the area at the end of the path should be further investigated
- Investigate a turning space for the potential shuttle bus. The bus route could include the distillery.
- Use of the proposed car park should be monitored
- The footpath to Sgwd yr Eira improved to take the anticipated extra walkers.

3.2.3 Develop Gwaun Hepste as the Four Falls Car Park

The existing car park should be enlarged and extended into the old quarry. Toilets, ranger accommodation, space for a potential café or refreshment kiosk and a bus turning area should be provided. Electricity and a phone line would enable cashless payments for parking. When alterations to Gwaun Hepste are complete Cwm Porth should be reserved for activity providers and people who pre book. The name is important. While visitors would find a car park called the Four Falls Car Park easier to understand, residents felt that the car park should be named after the place. Thus, the recommended name is “Gwaun Hepste the Four Falls Car Park”.

3.2.4 Use temporary car parks to accommodate excess vehicles at peak times

- Discuss the two sites at Porth yr ogof in more detail with the landowner
- Continue to use the site at Clun Gwyn and working with the land owners
- Hold the large site at Ystrafellte in reserve
- Allow the farmer at Cwm Porth to provide parking if he thinks fit.

3.2.5 Control parking at Clun Gwyn

- New surfaced parking spaces should be constructed around the cattle grid. It should be possible to have eight end-on spaces south of the grid and four north of it.
- The wider sections of verge south of the Clun Gwyn bunkhouse entrance should be hardened for a sufficient distance to accommodate approximately nine vehicles on the east side and 13 on the west. Parking should be discouraged south of there by placing boulders on the verges or mounding them.
- Payment for parking should be investigated

3.2.6 Alter management of Cwm Porth and Dinas Rock car parks

- Concentrate activity providers (and pre booked visitors) at Dinas Rock and Cwm Porth
- Encourage general visitors to use Village Hall / Angel and Gwaun Hepste instead.
- Devise system for controlling access to Dinas Rock or keep gate open and set up enforcement system.
- Set up booking system which could also issue weekly (or longer) season tickets for all paying car parks.

3.2.7 Manage parking using different payment systems

- Card payments should be investigated at paying car parks where power and a phone connection is available
- A pre-paid season ticket aimed at holiday makers should be investigated. This concept is easy while the only paying car parks are publicly owned or operated. However where overflow parking is accommodated by farmers and being charged for there could be problems where a visitor buys a season ticket, can't find a space in a public car park and then has to pay extra to park in an overflow car park. Farmers may have to agree to accept the season ticket for this idea to work.
- Where there is a café in the car park (potentially with an enlarged Gwaun Hepste and potentially at the village hall) there should be a short free period to enable passers-by to purchase and consume refreshments
- A discount should be offered for short stays at Clun Gwyn if it becomes a paying area.

3.2.8 Manage inappropriate parking in Pontneddfechan with a residents' parking scheme

- Investigate whether there are any mechanisms to subsidise parking permits for residents.
- Undertake consultation or further study to determine exact limits of a residents' parking area. It may not be needed at Min yr Awel.
- As part of the residents' parking scheme introduce charges for both Dinas Rock and the Village Hall car parks
- Monitor parking in Pontneddfechan and consider extending the paid area to include the new Neath Port Talbot layby and the Angel's own car park with additional yellow lines to control the free parking towards Glynneath. If that is done additional restrictions/residents' only bays may be needed along Dinas Road. If there continues to be an overload implement the 36 – 40 spaces offered by the Glynneath Golf Club.

3.2.9 Manage inappropriate parking around Clun Gwyn, Cwm Porth and Gwaun Hepste with a Restricted Parking Area.

- The order should be “no parking at any time except in marked bays 1st May – 30th September.”
- The extents of the Clun Gwyn section of the scheme should run from the south end of Comin y Rhos to the small summit just south of the Shop
- The extents of the Gwaun Hepste part of the scheme should be from the junction at Maes Porth to the junction between the Cwm Porth lane and the Penderyn – Ystradfellte lane. It should also run from just south west of the Maes Porth junction to the north end of Ystradfellte village and from there to the limits of the forestry south of Gwaun Hepste. Approximately 100m of the back lane to Ystradfellte from Gwaun Hepste should be included.
- Passing places should be marked with “passing place” signs and widened sufficiently to prevent verge damage. Residents should be involved in designating the passing places.
- The scheme should be monitored.

3.2.10 Devise a highway signing strategy to encourage people towards the three key entry points and away from the Pontneddfechan to Ystradfellte road

- Tourist signs to “Waterfalls” should be implemented on the A465 leading to Glynneath and Hirwaun and A4059 leading to its junction with the lane to Ystradfellte
- From then on the signs should say “Waterfalls Four Falls Trail”, “Waterfalls Sgwd yr Eira”, “Waterfalls Pontneddfechan” and “Waterfalls Henrhyd” as appropriate.
- Once in Pontneddfechan additional signs would direct people to the Village Hall and Dinas Rock
- Only local destinations should be signed along the Pontneddfechan to Ystradfellte road. The main signed routes would avoid the Cwm Porth lane.
- The Waterfalls signing strategy should include Aberdulais and Melincourt Falls

The proposals are summarised in Figure 12 below.

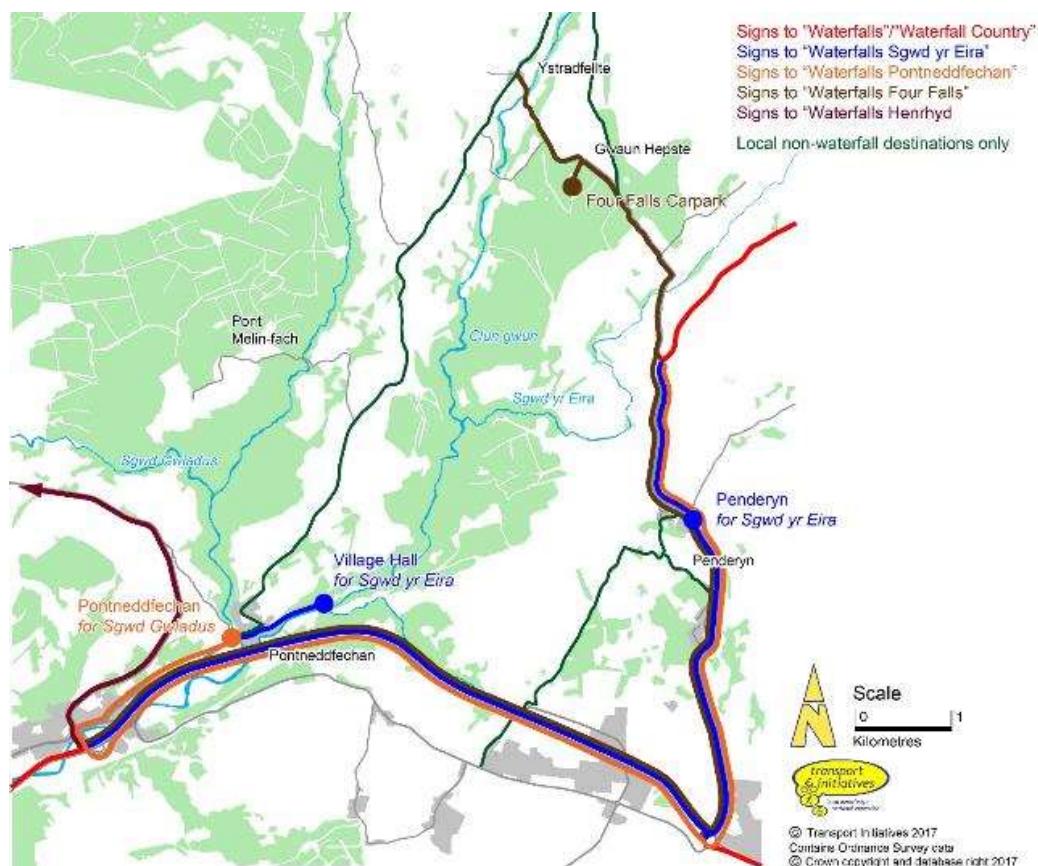


Figure 12 Highway signing strategy

3.2.11 Provide good and clear footpath information

- The footpath network should be redesigned. The Waterfalls paths between the car parks and the key falls should be signed using the coloured sign arms to extend the scheme currently used for the Four Falls Trail. Other strategic footpaths should be included in the scheme but should be signed using the standard dark green.
- Signs should include destinations names as well as the trail name.
- The colours, route names and destination should be repeated on any information panels.
- Normally rural pedestrian signs only apply to footpaths. Lengths of highway necessary for completing any route should be included.
- Investigate more innovative ways of presenting maps such as a rural version of the 'Legible City' concept, where the top of the map shows the direction which is being faced.



Figure 13 "Legible Countryside" map orientated to direction of travel with walk times. Mock up for Dinas Rock car park. There would be one at a larger scale next to it.

3.2.12 Investigate a shuttle bus running between Pontneddfechan Village Hall and Penderyn

3.2.13 Make improvements to the pedestrian environment around the Angel and old centre of Pontneddfechan

- Improve the point where pedestrians cross Pontneathvaughan Road near the end of High Street This needs a definite proposal – additional site visit needed
- Improve point where pedestrians will cross between the new Neath Port Talbot layby and the north side of Pontneathvaughan Road
- Widen footways and raise carriageway level between Angel Inn and the Toilet block.

3.2.14 Investigate a community based organisation to oversee ways of moving economic benefit from visitors to the local residents.

Investment in community development would enable local residents to regain and improve their confidence, sense of connectedness and belonging. It would also support the sense of pride and 'feel good' that make the villages a more desirable place to live. This may require a community development strategy.

3.2.15 Set up a Reference Group to maintain relations with residents.

This project built a good relationship between local residents and the National Park Authority and showed some residents appreciated being able to make a positive input to solving parking issues. A group should be set up to continue to look at issues relating to the Waterfall Country. It could be part of the community development vehicle proposed in 3.2.14 or be a stand alone group.

3.3 Quick wins

- **Rubbish & tipping management** - bins should be emptied particularly before summer weekends and bank holidays
- **Seating** - more seats should be provided along the trails. 5% said lack of seats was the worst aspect of their visit
- **Taxi company** phone numbers should be displayed on a notice board at Pontneddfechan Village Hall, Dinas Rock, Clun Gwyn, Cwm Porth, Gwaun Hepste and Ystradfellte.
- Improve **information** at path junctions both sides of Sgwd yr Eira and have signs when leaving the river saying where the paths go.
- Provide **signing** at Angel area directing people to Dinas Rock and Village Hall car parks



Flytipping & full bin by Pontneddfechan Village Hall on August Bank Holiday 2018

4 Provisional programme of measures

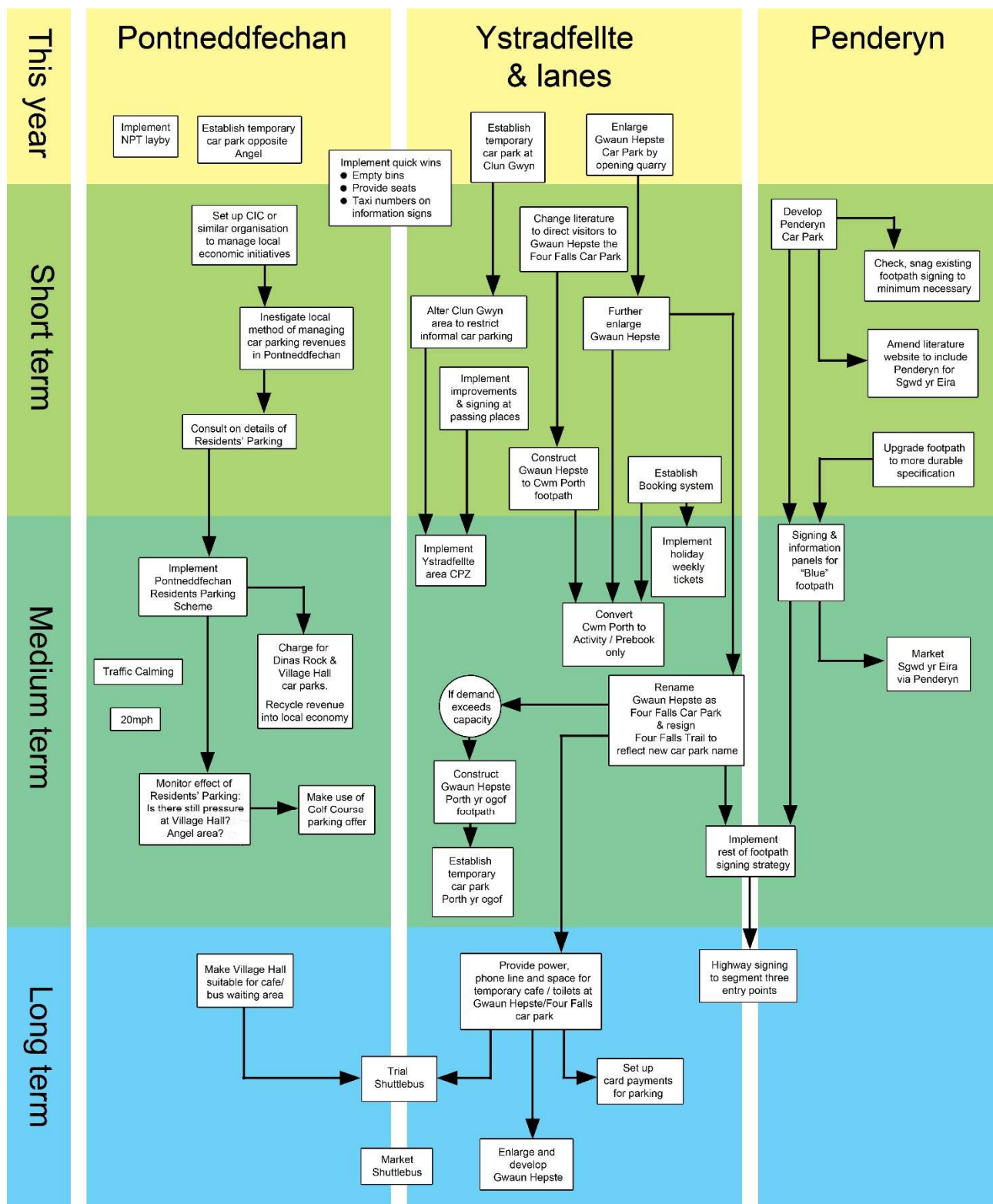


Figure 14. Provisional programme