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Talybont-on-Usk Sustainable Tourism Action Plan

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Report to Brecon Beacons National Park

By Alison Caffyn



“Talybont-on-Usk - the pretty canal-side village keen for visitors to share its passion for the mountains and fascinating heritage via walking, water and wheels.”



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1. Executive Summary

The Sustainable Tourism Action Plan aims to develop the tourism potential of the Talybont-on-Usk area, strengthen its identity for visitors and identify priorities for action. The new Talybont Tourism Group has developed this plan with the support of the Collabor8 Programme and Brecon Beacons National Park.

The **Vision** for Talybont-on-Usk is:

By 2020 Talybont will be popular as an attractive and sustainable destination in the Brecon Beacons National Park and well known as:
The pretty canal-side village keen for visitors to share its passion for the mountains and fascinating heritage via walking, water and wheels.

A shorter, punchier strapline will also be useful:

Explore from Talybont-on-Usk by walking, water or wheels

The **Objectives** of this plan are:

1. To support and promote a sustainable tourism economy in the Talybont-on-Usk area, encouraging visitors who appreciate the special nature of the area and contribute most to supporting local businesses, jobs and services.
2. To make it easier for visitors to find their way around by providing good information, signposting, maps and waymarks so they grasp the local geography and connections between the village, trails, canal, tram-road, reservoir and forests and are encouraged to spend more time and money in the local area.
3. To work together collaboratively to promote an attractive and distinctive identity for the Talybont-on-Usk area, online and through traditional means.
4. To encourage more visitors at quieter times of the year to extend the season so local businesses gain more benefit and reduce the need for visitor management at peak periods, including promoting car free transport options.
5. To promote local heritage, arts, crafts, food, drink and wildlife more strongly – providing more information and opportunities for exploring local sites, events, tasting and buying local products and viewing interesting species.
6. To provide more things for families to do including short trails, play or fun based activities and events

Talybont's Unique Selling Propositions are:

1. Pretty **canal**-side village in the centre of the Brecon Beacons National Park...
2. With choice of **pubs**, shop, café and range of places to stay...
3. Set in **mountain scenery** with a beautiful **reservoir**...
4. With lots of opportunities for **walks, cycling** and other **activities** in the **forests**, hills, riverside, canal, **waterfalls**...
5. A lively local community with a distinct caring and green ethos...
6. And an interesting **history** to explore, Talybont has a unique history as the meeting point amid the mountains for river, canal, railway and tramway and where a reservoir was created, fed by cascading forest waterfalls and now providing rain-powered energy

Talybont's Current Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canal, river(s), reservoir, waterfalls - water • Scenery, mountains, forests, wildlife • Outdoor activities – varied options • Industrial and transport heritage • Four pubs , shop and café • Community hall with good facilities • Tranquillity and dark skies • Wide range of accommodation choices • Accessible but central to National Park • Friendly and innovative community • Local produce and agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signposting • Parking problems on busy days • Negative signs about security • Poor first impressions • Website needs modernising • Parking security, vandalism • Unsafe pavements in places • Limited public transport and taxis • Some concerns about quality • Patchy mobile phone reception

Development and marketing strategy

This plan provides a strategy to improve the management and promotion of the Talybont area as a sustainable destination for visitors over the next 5-10 years. It focuses on the main visitor types (older and younger couples, outdoor activity enthusiasts, families and groups) and tries to clarify the main 'offers' or reasons to visit. Joining things up for visitors is essential - making it easy to find out, decide, buy and consume is a priority. As people are increasingly using online information both before they come and while in the destination web based information should be the priority, supported by printed information. Better signage is also important and collaboration and cross-promotion between businesses.

Talybont has a reputation for being innovative in sustainability terms. This can be further developed by focusing on the low carbon aspects of the tourism product such as walking, cycling, encouraging more people to arrive by public transport, local food and drink and promoting the range of environmentally aware businesses. There are opportunities for new sustainable actions such as low carbon means of transport.

The **priority themes** which have emerged for Talybont are:

1. Information, communication and promotion
2. Facilities and services
3. Activities
4. Events
5. Arts, crafts and local products
6. Wildlife and environment

Top 6 projects for action:

1. Talybont Website and web-based communication and promotion
2. Talybont knowledge and welcome
3. Talybont-on-Usk map
4. Signage to and around Talybont
5. Walks booklet
6. Make more out of mountain biking

2. Introduction

This Sustainable Tourism Plan for the Talybont-on-Usk area sets out priorities for developing and promoting the area as a destination. The plan is intended to steer a way forward over the next 5-10 years. It is designed to be a working document that can be added to as the local groups identify new opportunities for development.

The purpose of the plan is to:

- Develop the tourism potential of Talybont-on-Usk and the surrounding area and strengthen its identity for visitors
- Provide a framework and rationale for planning the development of tourism in the Talybont area
- Identify priority actions
- Clarify how businesses can work together to deliver the plan with the support of other partners and organisations

2.1 Background and rationale

The Plan has been funded through the Collabor8 Project. This is a transnational European project which aims to contribute to the economic prosperity, sustainability and cultural identity of North West Europe with partners in Ireland, England, Netherlands and Belgium. The focus of the project is using the local sense of place and cultural heritage to help sustain the local economy and community, working with clusters of local businesses. These values have been used in developing this Sustainable Tourism Plan for Talybont and several other towns in the Brecon Beacons.

The Collabor8 principles relate closely to the principles of the 'VICE model' for local destination management which is used in many parts of the UK. This model was developed by the national tourism agencies and Tourism Management Institute to encourage the sustainable development of tourism. It aims to ensure positive outcomes for Visitors, the tourism Industry, local Communities and the built and natural Environment. So the destination plans aim to develop tourism which:

- Welcomes, involves and satisfies **V**isitors
- Achieves a prosperous and profitable **I**ndustry
- Engages and benefits host **C**ommunities
- Protects and enhances the local **E**nvironment

Why welcome visitors?

The visitor economy is particularly significant in rural areas where there are few alternatives and traditional industries such as agriculture, mining and quarrying have declined. Tourism has increasingly been seen as a vital element in the regeneration of an area. Not only does the visitor economy support businesses, jobs and the suppliers to those businesses, but visitors' spending also helps support local heritage, culture (eg festivals and events) and community services (buses, shops, pubs, post offices). Tourism is also a reason to

conserve special buildings, historic buildings, beautiful landscapes and important wildlife sites.

Tourism is calculated to bring £205 million to the Brecon Beacons National Park each year and support 4,072 jobs (either directly in tourism businesses - 3,288 - or indirectly in supporting businesses)¹.

2.2 Strategic context

This Plan sits within the context of several other tourism and regeneration policy documents and strategies. At a national level the **Wales Spatial Plan**, which is intended as a blueprint for future strategic development, identifies the landscapes of the Usk and Wye as having an important role in developing sustainable tourism and leisure opportunities.

Most pertinent is the **Brecon Beacons Sustainable Tourism Strategy** which gives the overall framework for the development and promotion of sustainable tourism within the National Park. This strategy has recently been reviewed and rewritten to support the National Park's imminent (late 2011) application to renew accreditation by the EUPOPARC Federation under the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. As a charter member the Brecon Beacons is one of a network of about 80 protected landscapes across Europe which have achieved this status.

The Strategy sets out a vision that the Brecon Beacons

In 2016, the Brecon Beacons is well established and recognised as a leading rural destination for sustainable tourism in the UK, receiving appropriate levels of business year round. Visitors appreciate the high quality, well maintained and varied landscapes as well as the cultural and historic heritage of the area, which in turn benefit from tourism. The National Park Authority, their public sector partners, tourism businesses, local communities and other interests work effectively together to ensure the ongoing success and quality of the visitor experience and of the destination as a whole.

The principles underlying the strategy are:

- Effective partnership
- Year round growth in value
- Social inclusion
- Sustainability
- Geographical spread and local distinctiveness
- An integrated destination brand
- Balanced market appeal
- Community engagement

The vision and principles tie in closely with the views and aspirations expressed during the Talybont workshops. This plan aims to incorporate them wherever possible.

¹ 2010 STEAM figures.

The **Tourism Strategy for Wales, Achieving our Potential** (2006-13) sets out five strategic challenges which have been borne in mind in the drafting of this Plan:

- Distinctive branding of destinations at all levels
- Higher quality – encouraging investment in staff and facilities to meet and exceed visitor expectations
- Easier access – both physically but also access to easy information eg on websites
- Better skills – and a motivated workforce
- Stronger partnership – of businesses and organisations to promote a sustainable and distinctive Welsh offer.

The Brecon Beacons are on the periphery of several tourism regions – South East, South West and Mid Wales. It is important to link in where possible with the relevant Tourism Partnership strategies and initiatives and local authority policy documents. The new destination status for the Brecon Beacons and 2010 Brecon Beacons marketing strategy will help address this.

The **Mid Wales Regional Tourism Strategy** produced in 2011 provides a strategic direction for all partners engaged in tourism in the Mid-Wales region, including Powys. It focuses on how the varied range of partners can better work together across the mid Wales region.

Four objectives have been identified:

1. To organise tourism resources in the most effective manner across the Region;
 - Creating appropriate structures
 - Marketing support
2. To provide the appropriate infrastructure and high quality, sustainable, distinctive destinations, facilities and services, that will encourage more visitors to visit throughout the year, thereby encouraging growth in the visitor economy;
 - Improved infrastructure
 - Product development
3. To encourage more local people to follow and develop worthwhile careers in the tourism industry;
 - Promoting tourism careers
 - Improving human resources for tourism
4. To maximise opportunities for tourism development with and between different agencies.
 - Advocacy and brokerage
 - Research and evaluation

The 2010 **Brecon Beacons Cycling and Mountain Biking Strategy** provides the wider context for this activity and for Talybont as one of the cycling hubs for the National Park.

2.3 Process and partnership

This plan was triggered by several local businesses bringing together a wider group to act as a Collabor8 Cluster Group and work with the Brecon Beacons National Park. Collabor8 funding has enabled this Sustainable Tourism Plan to be developed and the embryonic Talybont Tourism Group plans to take forward some of the priority projects emerging from it.

The plan builds on initial discussions with a cross section of local tourism businesses in and around the village and through three workshops in October and November 2011, attended by a wide range of local businesses and partners involved in tourism. The attendees discussed the key elements of this plan, the vision for Talybont-on-Usk as a destination and identified the action points with the support of the consultant. The **steps in the process** can be summarised as:

1. Understanding the rationale - why welcome visitors, what are the benefits for the town and surrounding area, what do we want to achieve?
2. Identifying current and future visitors
3. Identifying what the area can offer visitors
4. Understanding the area's strengths and weaknesses
5. Considering how well the area meets the needs of its visitors now and in the future
6. Creating a vision of where Talybont wants to be in 5 – 10 years, from a visitor perspective
7. Identifying priorities and actions in order to achieve that vision

This plan follows much the same structure, building up the background and rationale to the action plan in the final section.

All the individuals who have been involved in the process are listed in Annex 8.1.

3. Vision and objectives

3.1 Vision for Talybont-on-Usk

By 2020 Talybont will be popular as an attractive and sustainable destination in the Brecon Beacons National Park and well known as:

The pretty canal-side village keen for visitors to share its passion for the mountains and fascinating heritage via walking, water and wheels.

A more detailed Vision has been developed – making the most of what exists already with some aspirational elements woven in:

Talybont has a unique history as the meeting point amid the mountains for river, canal, railway and tramway. A reservoir was created, fed by cascading forest waterfalls - a scenic focal point which provides the community with rain-powered energy. Visitors will be able to choose from a range of trails and routes to explore the landscape on foot, mountain bike and even by boat or canoe; easily accessing route information and hiring bikes or boats in the village. They will be able to find out about all aspects of the local heritage through traditional and web based information, plus regular guided walks and talks. Families will enjoy the range of natural and activity play areas in the forest, village and picnic areas.

All the local pubs, shop and cafe will be thriving, serving tasty local food and drink and providing a warm welcome and a flavour of the local community. The shop and café will provide a vibrant hub of activity for both locals and visitors, who will also be welcomed to the regular produce markets and events such as the ram sales.

Visitors will be inspired by the community's sustainable initiatives to adopt greener attitudes and try out some innovative activities and transport options during their stay and beyond.

There continues to be a wide range of places to stay from camping and caravan sites and the youth hostel to B&Bs, holiday cottages and country hotels. All are well promoted on their own websites and collectively on the dynamic Talybont website. Several businesses offer special breaks – themed historic, artistic, outdoors or wellbeing breaks encouraging visitors to connect with the special nature of Talybont and refresh their spirits.

This special place inspires many local artists and crafts people whose work can be seen and bought in the village cafe and new gallery. Wildlife lovers will enjoy exploring the extensive forests, mountainsides and especially spotting birds along the river, canal and on the reservoir. Others will come to star gaze or simply enjoy the tranquillity in such a welcoming and appealing place.

Many of these elements are already in place but are not necessarily well 'joined up' or co-ordinated and then promoted effectively to target audiences. This plan focuses on what can be done to help achieve this vision over the next 5-10 years.

The main vision statement could be used as a strapline in itself, however a shorter, punchier strapline will also be useful. The suggestion is to use:

Explore from Talybont-on-Usk by walking, water or wheels

The many ways in which water is important in Talybont was highlighted – the rivers, canal, reservoir, water energy, etc. This could be highlighted in the marketing messages used by businesses and Talybont collectively. Examples include:

- Go with the flow – in Talybont- on-Usk
- Quench your thirst for adventure, scenery, a taste of the real Wales...etc....
- Immerse yourself
- Splash out, splash ...your cares away,
- Refresh the spirit

The words '**refresh, energize and invigorate**' were popular as they are attractive propositions for visitors and could be used in many ways.

Those more daring could use word plays using the word 'rain'; for example rain powered holidays, rain fed activities – as is currently used for the rain powered B-bug buggies. While many visitors will find this interesting and the association with Wales and rainy weather is amusing it is obviously a little risky and could even put people off.

3.2 Objectives of the sustainable tourism action plan

The overall objectives of this plan are:

1. To support and promote a sustainable tourism economy in the Talybont-on-Usk area, encouraging visitors who appreciate the special nature of the area and contribute most to supporting local businesses, jobs and services.
2. To make it easier for visitors to find their way around by providing good information, signposting, maps and waymarks so they grasp the local geography and connections between the village, trails, canal, tram-road, reservoir and forests and are encouraged to spend more time and money in the local area.
3. To work together collaboratively to promote an attractive and distinctive identity for the Talybont-on-Usk area, online and through traditional means.
4. To encourage more visitors at quieter times of the year to extend the season so local businesses gain more benefit and reduce the need for visitor management at peak periods, including promoting car free transport options.

5. To promote local heritage, arts, crafts, food, drink and wildlife more strongly – providing more information and opportunities for exploring local sites, events, tasting and buying local products and viewing interesting species.
6. To provide more things for families to do including short trails, play or fun based activities and events

3.3 Statement of values

The Collabor8 Programme encourages cluster groups of businesses to discuss and agree a collective set of values which will benefit sustainable tourism in their area. The Talybont Tourism Group has agreed the following set of values which have been used to guide the development of this plan. They focus on the special nature of Talybont, its scale, sustainable initiatives and its surrounding environment. The values are ones that all the group felt able to sign up to individually and they can be used collectively to help guide their work and communicate the collective business approach for this special area.

Talybont-on-Usk Collabor8 Values

- To share our fabulous village and local area with visitors, offering a warm welcome and excellent customer care.
- To collectively promote a strong identity for Talybont-on-Usk based on its great landscape, heritage, outdoor activities, Welsh culture and wildlife.
- To sustain local businesses by encouraging visitors to stay longer, sourcing goods and services from local suppliers wherever possible and promoting local food and drink choices.
- To strengthen Talybont's reputation for innovation in sustainable tourism and ensure our businesses have minimal environmental impact
- To increase collaboration and cross promotion between businesses, forming a strong network and good links with the wider community.

4. Visitors to Talybont

The visitor is central to this Sustainable Tourism Action Plan. It is important to consider the area from the visitor's perspective rather than of a local resident. Key questions include:

- What types of people visit the Talybont area currently?
- Why? – what motivates them?
- What do they like and not like about our village and the local area?
- What will visitors be looking for in the future, are trends changing?
- Which visitors should we focus on attracting and catering for?
- How can we meet or exceed their expectations?

4.1 Current and future visitor markets

There is no visitor survey data from Talybont itself. However in discussions with tourism businesses a clear picture of the types of visitor that currently come to the area was developed.

The following main current groups of visitors have been identified:

- Empty nester/silver foxes – well-off active older people
- Young professional couples with no kids 25-40
- Experienced outdoors enthusiasts – walkers, climbers, mountain bikers, cycle tourers on longer routes, fishermen, some horse riders
- Families – some with younger children and those with more active older children who want to do activities.
- Business people - visits for courses, meetings, team building, including the Navy
- People coming for special events eg weddings, courses, local festivals
- Groups – eg of younger men (escaping fathers) doing activities inc some stag and hen groups or reunions etc
- People visiting friends and relatives - some of whom need accommodation but most of them want to visit the area's attractions and eat out and are thus a very valuable part of the visitor spectrum.
- Overseas – Dutch especially use self-catering accommodation, plus some others such as US/Canadian/French/German usually just one night passing through.

It was agreed that Talybont is happy to welcome all these groups but perhaps influence or discourage some behaviours. In particular:

- Some people come but do not quite grasp what there is to see and do. There is a need to provide more info/help to encourage them to stay – join things up for them and communicate the place better
- While mountain bikers and walkers are very welcome the aim is to encourage them to use local facilities, preferably stay overnight and make a financial contribution to local area not just use the village as a start point for walks/rides.

- Encourage self-caterers to buy more supplies locally – this may include reassuring them in advance what's available or make it easy for them to buy supplies – eg order online before they arrive.
- Welcome responsible stag and hen type groups keen on outdoor activities
- Encourage more green visitors especially those willing to use the range of sustainable transport options and offer incentive services eg a collection service from the station
- There may be more scope for arts/crafts type courses – people coming here for several days to learn skills with local crafts people or to learn about the local heritage and wildlife
- Other special niche type visitors could include those seeking health/relaxation breaks (well-being tourism); people doing ancestral research or those exploring church history;

The couples on short leisure breaks are often quite high spenders if they find things they like and value. They are therefore a good market to focus on for developing the tourism product into the future. Such visitors appreciate good quality and they are quite loyal – returning to favourite locations. This group will want quality accommodation, interesting cultural and heritage experiences, and some walking or activity opportunities.

Families will need good information on facilities and activities. Accommodation and catering businesses may need to provide high chairs, child portions, games, baby changing etc and make a point of welcoming families. Parents are looking for things to occupy and entertain children such as farm attractions; short, fun walks; play grounds and adventure play facilities. Slightly older children may be entertained with activities such as treasure hunts, trails or geo-caching. However simple, safe environments where children can simply run around and play perhaps beside a river or in a woodland setting will also be very popular and could be highlighted. Talybont could attract more families by compiling information on what facilities currently exist and supplementing this by additional businesses and facilities providing more family friendly products, services or deals.

Future trends that will impact on the types of visitor, how they behave and what they are looking for include:

- Nearly three quarters of visitors research visits online before they arrive
- expectations of quality standards are continuing to increase
- More environmentally aware visitors
- Many people are seeking out peace and quiet
- There has been an increasing interest in authenticity – heritage, culture, local food etc
- More people wanting to avoid flying to go on holiday
- The potential of new technology – for information, interpretation, trails, apps etc
- Climate change and the move to sustainable technologies
- Increasing fuel costs

4.2 Target markets and brand values

The Tourism Marketing Strategy for the Brecon Beacons published in 2010, identified the following target markets for the Brecon Beacons as a destination.

Primary target markets

Priority 1:

- **Freedom seekers.** Looking for relaxation and soft activities in a scenic natural environment with good food and accommodation. Main message: “Escape and change of pace”
- **Active seniors.** Looking for the above together with broader cultural interest. Main message: “Indulgence”
- **Outdoor activists.** Specifically seeking hiking, cycling, riding, canoeing and other activities in a scenic environment. Main message: “Freedom and space”
- **Families.** Looking for active family holidays. Main message: “Plenty to do”.

The above are seen as coming primarily from London and the South East, the M4 corridor and Bristol and the South West. However, opportunities should also be sought to work on converting day visits from South Wales, including Cardiff, to overnight stays, especially amongst the family market.

Secondary target markets

Priority 2:

- **Youth Groups.** Looking for activities, personal development and bonding and field studies. Main message: “Challenging but safe”
- **Business/corporate activities.** Looking for team building etc. Main message: “Inspirational environment”

Priority 3:

- **Independent overseas tourers.** Looking for scenic beauty, soft activities and culture. Main message: “Scenically beautiful and culturally interesting”
- **Other special interest.** Looking for specific themes, e.g. conservation, geology etc. Main message: geared to the particular interest
- **Day visitors (general).** From South Wales primarily. Looking for the ‘National Park’ and individual attractions. Main message: “The Brecon Beacons is your back garden”
- **Day visitors (outdoor).** From South Wales and the Bristol area. Looking for undertaking regular activities. Main message: “Indulge your passion close to home”
- Also identified: Fishing and Family and Friends markets

There is a close fit with the markets identified in Talybont, above. It is therefore recommended that Talybont Tourism Group and its individual members can support and link into the destination marketing with confidence. The target markets are very similar – with perhaps the exception of the priority 3 visitors. Talybont does not want to encourage additional numbers of day visitors. The overseas and special interest groups are quite challenging to target. Talybont is perhaps more likely to receive overseas visitors who have booked into self-catering cottages or the youth hostel. There will be scope for individual businesses to target special interest visitors once the product is available – eg courses, guided walks, specialist interpretation. The marketing messages should be complementary

– using the themes for the Brecon Beacons but giving an individual Talybont twist as discussed in section 3.

The recent Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Brecon Beacons has developed some statements trying to establish a set of 'brand values' for the whole area. This has highlighted key elements of the area's appeal as: inspiring yet accessible landscapes; individual locations with their own character; and rural life and people.

An initial set of statements was published:

- A living landscape to discover and cherish.
- This landscape can appeal to everyone
- Special places in spectacular settings - everywhere you go
- You can change pace at any time
- Be inspired to be active
- This is a people place – come and meet, listen or join in

Again the relevance of these for Talybont can be clearly identified and they should be used to inform the marketing and promotion which is carried out as a result of this plan. It is these values which will chime with the types of visitor Talybont wants to attract.

5. The Tourism Offer

5.1 What does our area offer visitors?

A mini **Tourism Audit** has been undertaken to help identify the Talybont area's strengths and weaknesses from a visitor perspective and to help identify gaps in the offer, issues and opportunities. The key findings and issues arising are highlighted in this section.

Accommodation

Within the Talybont area – including Pencelli, and the areas between Talybont and Llangynidr and above the reservoir as far as Ystradgynwyn - there is a considerable number of accommodation choices for visitors. Using the Talybont website and additional web searches and information from consultees estimates of each type of accommodation have been assembled.

Accommodation	No.	Bedspaces (approx.)
Inns	4	32 plus 20 in White Hart bunkhouse
B&Bs/Guest Houses	9	52
Buckland Hall		68
Self catering units	29	148
Youth Hostels /educational group accommodation	5	180
Caravan/camping	2	110 pitches or 440 bedspace equivalents
Total	48	940

Given that Talybont is a small village and the surrounding hamlets are tiny, to have as many as 940 bedspaces is a very significant resource. There is a particular concentration of self-catering properties – many are on local farms and Talybont is also the headquarters for Brecon Beacon Holiday Cottages agency which handles the majority of units. Quality and price wise the accommodation covers a wide range – with perhaps a slight gap at the top end with no 5 star serviced accommodation (although Peterstone Court and Gliffaes Country House Hotels are nearby up and down the A40). The figures above do not include any people staying on rented narrowboats on the canal.

Full occupancy of accommodation is rare and caravan sites for example are closed for part of the winter. However if an estimate of 33% annual bed occupancy for the above bedspaces were applied there could be over 100,000 visitor nights in Talybont and the local area each year.

Places to visit

Talybont-on-Usk is a pretty village – visitors probably notice the attractive pubs and the canal bridge initially. It is very compact and visitors arriving by car probably feel the immediate need to park as otherwise they will have driven right through the village. Henderson Hall and its car park are not obvious to newcomers, particularly as they are found in what appears to be a residential area. One or two derelict buildings and areas spoil the overall attractive appearance of the village in places. However visitors willing to explore and walk along the canal or pause at the reservoir will be drawn in and encouraged to stay longer. The views of the mountains can be seen from most parts of the village. The immediate area around the village is slightly confusing and daunting for drivers as the lanes are very narrow and signposting not as good as it should be.

The main attractions in the Talybont-on-Usk area and slightly further afield include:

- Boats on the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal can be rented for short breaks from Cambrian Cruises at Pencelli, Country Craft Narrowboats at Llangynidr. Day boat hire is available from Beacon Park Day Boats from Brecon which can only just about reach Talybont and back within a day. Dragonfly Cruises at Brecon also operate boat trips down the canal.
- The Henry Vaughan Walk – a 4km stroll around Talybont which includes extracts of the Vaughan brothers' poetry
- The Brecon Mountain Railway – 71,298 visitors 2010
- The Welsh Venison Centre is in Bwlch and part of the Beacons Farm Shop
- Tretower Court – the Cadw owned medieval courtyard house, plus motte and bailey castle (open all year – weekends only in winter) 13,636 visitors 2010
- Talgarth Mill – the recently restored mill and café run by the local community
- Art, craft, photography studios – Harry Chapman, Nigel Forster
- Llangors Activity Centre

Two farm based family attractions are between Talybont and Brecon:

- Cantref Adventure Farm Park - 41,200 visitors 2010
- Brynich Play Barn - 28,000 visitors 2010
- Ashford House opens its gardens once a week during the summer months

Activities

There are a range of activities available locally. Some such as walking, cycling and perhaps some kayaking people will participate in independently. Others will organise activities through local companies.

- There are a wide range of walking opportunities in the area from short strolls to the most challenging of hill walks. Particularly popular are the Waterfalls Area, the Allt which gives great views of the main Beacons peaks, and the mountains towards and including Pen Y Fan which are walkable at a stretch from Talybont.
- There are three promoted mountain bike trails from Talybont – the Tramway (green-easy), Talybont Forest (blue – moderate) the Pontsticill Crossover (red – challenging)
- Talybont is on the Taff Trail a 55 mile way marked cycling and walking route from Brecon to Cardiff. The scenic sections from Talybont above several reservoirs is particularly popular.
- Cycle hire and guided cycle rides/mountain bikes are available from several local businesses including Bikes and Hikes, and several places in Brecon and Crickhowell.
- There is a wide range of fishing available locally: Trout and salmon fishing on the river Usk – either through public permits or via specific landowners. Permits for Talybont Reservoir which is a productive brown trout fishery are available from a machine at the water treatment works. On the canal anglers can fish for trout, carp, dace and perch. There is wheelchair access for fishing on the towpath at Talybont. One can fish from a hire boat on Llangorse Lake for pike, perch, roach, bream and eels and a licence can be bought for trout.
- Canoeing is possible on the river Usk (during the winter) and the canal. Details of launch and exit points is available on the Wye and Usk Foundation website. The Beacons Water Trail leaflet guides canoeists along the canal. Canoe hire is available in local towns or via one of the many outdoor activity operators.
- There are riding centres at Cantref Riding Centre, Brecon, Ellesmere Riding Centre, Llangors and Golden Castle Riding Centre, Llangynidr. They all offer half and full day rides, riding holidays and pony trekking.
- The nearest golf courses are at Crickhowell, Merthyr Tydfil, Brecon and Abergavenny
- Other activities such as paragliding, gliding, climbing, caving, etc can also be organised through the many local outdoor activity centres.
- The nearest Leisure Centres are at Brecon, Crickhowell and Abergavenny

Food and drink

Talybont itself has four pubs offering food and drink, plus a café adjoining the village shop. There is a café in the forest at Ystradgynwyn and the youth hostel at Danywenallt has been experimenting with offering a café at busy times. There are also pubs at Pencelli and Llangynidr. Four pubs in a village the size of Talybont is very unusual and a considerable strength from a visitor perspective. Currently the Star Inn is the most proactive with promotions including a beer festival, music nights and awarded CAMRA Brecknockshire pub of the year 2009, 10 and 11.

The recently published Canal Food Trail and Beacons Water Trail encourage visitors to explore the Monmouthshire and Brecon canal from Brecon to Talybont highlighting the eating places en route.

The degree to which eating places promote locally sourced produce is a little patchy. Visitors are always keen to try out local dishes and produce which is an important part of the experience for many.

Traditionally the wider area has produced excellent quality produce. Only certain products however can easily be sourced from local outlets. These include Aber Valley apple juice, Welsh venison from the venison centre at the Beacons Farm Shop in Bwlch, local meats, ice creams and cakes. There are two local breweries in Brecon and another at Dowlais.

There is a farmers market at Llangynidr and in Brecon – recent discussions have discussed the feasibility of holding a local produce market in Talybont itself.

There are regional and Wales food initiatives to support local producers and raise awareness of Welsh produce.

Events and festivals

The Talybont area hosts several events during the year. These include:

- Canal festival events (2012 is the canal's bicentenary and there will be more celebrations that year)
- Monthly film nights at Henderson Hall
- Regular ram sheep and pony sales
- Village show (August)
- Beer festival (October)
- Christmas Nativity

Nearby larger festivals include:

- Crickhowell walking festival - February/March
- Hay Literary Festival - May
- The Green Man Festival (near Crickhowell) - August

- Brecon Jazz - August
- Festival of the Black Mountains Talgarth - August
- Abergavenny Food Festival – September
- Brecon Beacons Food Festival, Brecon - November
- A range of challenge walking and mountain biking events

Events are not only fun for the local community but give people a reason to visit and to return. They help reinforce the image of the area and raise its profile for the event's theme or topic. Ideally they should be designed to encourage people to stay for more than just one day. They can reinforce business networking and collaboration locally and be an opportunity for community and visitors to integrate. However events can be very time-consuming to organise well and often depend upon volunteer effort. It is vital to ensure events are publicised through all relevant websites and what's on guides.

Talybont as a small destination will probably not be able to organise major events but it will be important to make the most of the events that do happen, perhaps building them up year on year. One way to make more of events would be to make the most of the larger events in surrounding towns – encouraging people to stay locally for the event, perhaps laying on transport and encourage them to stay on longer after it has finished. Another approach would be to link in to events happening nearby and offer an offshoot event. For example to offer a Talybont walk each year as part of the Crickhowell Walking Festival. Or to explore ways to bring people from other festivals on walks or for relevant visits to the Talybont area. Several organisations run an annual programme of events, walks and talks – such as the Brecknock Wildlife Trust and Brecon Beacons Park Society. It would be useful to discuss whether Talybont could host several events such as this during the year – eg a walk looking at the local bat population, or themed walk on the history of the reservoir or marking a significant anniversary.

The canal presents considerable potential for specific Talybont events, especially linked to the nearby pubs. It will be important to monitor how the bicentenary events go and see whether any have potential for becoming annual events into the future.

Challenge activity events are becoming more popular. There are already several which are run in the local area. Care needs to be taken that large number of participants don't cause environmental problems and damage routes. However such events, if properly managed can attract the type of activity participant who will appreciate the area and are likely to return. They also give the area a high profile for the relevant activity. It is important to encourage organisers of such events to liaise with accommodation and food providers well in advance of the events.

Also there may be scope for more heritage themed events – exploring the local tramway, railway, canal and reservoir heritage. Open days or weeks at local arts and crafts people's workshops or local food producers might be another option.

Information and interpretation - Online

The current website for Talybont www.visitourbeacons.com was set up by the Community Council during 2001 as a response to the terrible impacts of the foot and mouth disease outbreak that year. It has acted as a very useful source of information on local visitor accommodation and facilities and several businesses have mentioned how it has been an important source of enquiries for them. However it has changed little since it was established (other than being updated) and times have moved on. Websites now include more visual imagery, more propositions to tempt people in and are increasing including more dynamic features.

The area would benefit from giving the existing site a makeover – freshening up the content, ensuring listings are comprehensive, including more photographs, some suggested itineraries and potential hosting downloadable walks, trails, heritage information etc. It could include short film clips and recommendations from previous visitors and local people. The basic design need not be complicated but should be as attractive, professional and useful as possible, with good search engine optimisation. It might be useful to have a domain name which includes the name Talybont. The [visitourbeacons](http://visitourbeacons.com) domain could still be retained and point to the same site. Advice on this should be sought from a website professional.

Currently a Google search for Talybont on Usk brings up the following results:

1. www.visit-brecon-beacons.co.uk – a commercial site with generic Brecon Beacons information, events information for 2007 and while giving a pleasant description of the area is of limited current use.
2. www.starinntalybont.co.uk – the well maintained website for the Star Inn
3. www.visitourbeacons.com – the current village tourism website
4. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talybont-on-Usk – the Wikipedia page which is relatively limited and refers to a murder case.
5. www.brecon.beacons.org – the National Park's website

The aim should be to get the village tourism website to the top of the list. The Wikipedia webpage should also be edited and filled with more information.

The priority is to make sure the site is well maintained and kept up to date particularly with events listings. Good quality photography (which downloads quickly) should be a priority and could perhaps be sourced by local enthusiasts along with organisations such as the National Park, Forestry Commission and Wildlife Trust.

Most of the local pubs and accommodation businesses have websites – some are good – stylish and easy to use. However some could benefit from a refresh or better photographs. Some businesses have not redesigned their sites since they were first set up and they still use old fashioned, backgrounds, mixed fonts and slow loading photographs. Keeping sites up to date should be a business priority. Ideally business sites would present a quality image of the area and promote similar messages about the area to reinforce the collective identity of Talybont.

Visitors arriving in Talybont looking for information in person will probably be able to pick up a leaflet or two in the shop or one of the pubs and they will see the rather faded but attractive map of the area in the centre of the village. The village notice board in the bus shelter contains a wide range of information only some of which would be of interest to visitors. Some businesses such as the Talybont Farm campsite display a large OS map of the area – very useful for walkers. An up to date map of the whole area but with detail on the village centre and the obvious local walks would be very useful. It could not only be sited to replace the old map in the village centre but copies could be installed at other locations where visitors are likely to want to orientate themselves eg at the Usk Inn, YHA, on the canal towpath, near the dam, at the planned picnic site and maybe at a layby location on the A40.

Such a map could also be made downloadable from the website – so that people could print it out before they visit, or businesses could print it out for their visitors.

Print - The printed leaflets on Talybont include:

- The Henry Vaughan Way – now largely out of print
- The Canal Food Trail
- Walks and rides along the Brinore Tramroad (out of print but pdf available to download)

Some Talybont businesses also feature in the Crickhowell and the Black Mountains Visitor Guide leaflet. The Brecon Beacons mountain bike pack includes all the Talybont routes.

Printed visitor literature can be costly to produce and requires a sensible distribution plan for how it is to be used. It can become out of date quickly for example if business details change or opening times are altered. There may be scope to produce a simple leaflet – perhaps using the new map of the village and area as a basis. It could incorporate the Henry Vaughan trail so that wouldn't need to be reprinted as well. It might be best to include only simple information about the area and local businesses so that the leaflet would have a long shelf life. It could highlight the website and drive people to use that for more specific information about events, opening times, etc. Any print would need to be professionally designed to promote the agreed marketing messages and values in the plan.

The other item which might be worth printing would be a set of local walks. While these could also be downloadable individually online a printed booklet (perhaps like that recently produced by Talgarth) would be popular – it could even be saleable with revenue being put aside to allow an update and reprint.

Signage

Signposting for Talybont on surrounding roads is relatively poor. The village is not advance signed on the A40. Signs at the main junction from the A40 do not indicate the village's services and attractions. Signposting on major routes is difficult to secure agreement for. There needs to be a strong case, possibly evidence of people not finding a location and road signs can be expensive. However Talybont as a well known destination in the Brecon

Beacons – with a reputation in excess of its small size – might be able to argue the case for some brown and white signage on the A40 if a safe location for the signs are available. This needs to be carefully considered, sited and worded as it is likely to be in place for ten years or more. The most effective signage includes just a few words, reinforced by easily recognised symbols. Those suitable for Talybont include symbols for information, picnic area, camp site, woodland recreation area, canalside attraction, woodland walk, refreshments, accommodation and youth hostel. As a minimum action a selection of these could be mounted on a brown and white panel below the existing sign for Talybont. This would be less expensive than new signage requiring new posts etc. Any symbols used should then be repeated along the relevant route to the facility – so further signing implications would follow and it would be best to take an overview and plan a wider signing strategy.

Signs must be the relevant size to be legible for the speed of traffic and must obviously also be safely positioned. Brown and white road signs are internationally recognized as of interest for visitors.

To follow up signage from the main roads, attractive welcome signs are important. Talybont village has some signs but some of these are hidden behind fast growing planting. Visitors are then looking for signs either to a suitable place to park or to find further destinations such as the reservoir, or nearby villages. Other signage issues raised include:

- Lack of signs into the village centre from the top of station road
- Signs for parking at Henderson Hall are too small to be easily visible and are non standard in design. A full size blue P would be better
- Poor signage to the reservoir and up the valley from the village centre/canal bridge
- Insufficient signing for the YHA – especially from the canal bridge
- Lack of signs for Abercynafon
- Way marking from major walking and cycling routes such as the Taff Trail to Talybont (not just to the end point of Brecon)
- Similarly, ensure signing to the main walking and cycling routes from the village is clear and easy to follow

Signage of businesses and facilities in the area was mixed – some good and some poor. There are some signs which are poorly painted or maintained. Signs are the first thing visitors see and it is crucial for the whole area that they look attractive - tatty, dirty and amateur signage gives a negative first impression. As do signs which are out of date – about past events for example. It is difficult to address poor business signage – perhaps peer pressure from other businesses or local people may have some impact. Some of the signage in and around Talybont belongs to organisations such as British Waterways, Welsh Water and the Forestry Commission. This also varied in quality and maintenance. British Waterways had a sign in its information board by the canal in late August saying it had last been updated in November.

A particular issue in the Talybont area appears to be the large number of signs about security and safety. There are far more signs about risk of car theft in the forest car parks than any information signs about walks etc. At the reservoir there are several signs about

things which are dangerous or forbidden, rather than highlighting the attractive waterside walk and views. Even in the village centre there are several signs about theft and security. This is an issue requiring a balanced approach as if there is a genuine risk it is wise to alert visitors. However signage should be appropriate in wording, ideally using positive messages (rather than negative language), well sited and accompanied by useful information about what visitors might enjoy doing.

Transport and parking

There is a separate study underway into the transport and parking issues in Talybont. This is looking at measures which can be taken to encourage more visitors to park away from the main street, reducing congestion. It will also consider the need for parking restrictions and traffic calming if necessary.

There are likely to be several options to improve the current situation through highlighting existing facilities eg by better signing Henderson Hall parking, but also other more ambitious suggestions.

One action suggested in the workshops is to encourage more people to use public transport to reach Talybont. The nearest rail station is at Abergavenny which is served by at least hourly trains from Cardiff and South Wales up through Herefordshire, Shropshire to Crewe and Manchester. Improvements are planned for the station. The issue for Talybont businesses is whether visitors will be prepared to catch a bus from Abergavenny or whether there are options to pick people up. There is a bus service which runs up the Usk Valley which will bring people to Talybont and on summer Sundays the Beacons Bus service serves the village linking from Abergavenny to Brecon. Highlighting these options on the website (on a how to get here page) and on individual business websites will reassure visitors considering using public transport and may convince some to leave their cars behind. They will probably want further information on how easy it can be to travel around the local area once here as well.

One weakness identified is that there is no local taxi service which could economically run the short journeys that visitors might often require – eg from the village to the youth hostel, or from the village to the start point of a walk some miles away. Taxi companies operate out of the nearby towns – which can be expensive for those in Talybont. It has been suggested that this could be an opportunity for someone local to set up as a private taxi operator. A local private hire taxi might not only be able to promote some recommended walk options by taxi but also market half day or day itineraries to take people around the local area. There are licensing costs and the driver would require additional insurance and CRB checks but if local businesses were able to recommend the service it might add up as a viable part time business.

This audit, supplemented with discussions and direct observation, was used to develop the SWOT in the next section.

5.2 SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canal – as means of transport, as industrial heritage, as a recreational route, as a scenic feature, for wildlife • River(s), reservoir, waterfalls - water – natural/hydro/transport/recreation • Scenery, mountains, setting of the village, forests, space to explore • Wide range of outdoor activities • Industrial and transport heritage - railway, canal, tram-road (in beautiful setting) • Four pubs , shop and café • Community hall with good facilities • Agriculture – inc. ram and pony sales, weekly sheep sales • Tranquillity and dark skies • Wildlife – bats, birds inc. migratory birds • Wide range of accommodation choices • Accessibility – by road – A40 and 1 hour from the Severn Bridge • Accessible countryside – easy walking and cycling routes - not just for specialists • A small community with friendly people, skills and innovative people • A central point for exploring the wider National Park • Community hydro scheme • Quality food and drink – local produce • Local stories – Henry Vaughan, runaway train • Ancient history – iron age hill fort, Pencelli Castle, Roman road, ancient battles, Llanfeugan church, church bells • Local churches • Recent history – industry, reservoir, flooded valley, canal flood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signposting – road signs, directional signs in village, lack of brown and white signs, some gaps in signing, some poor business signs and signs on canal • Parking problems on busy days – in main street and pub car parks – visitors very reliant on cars • Negative signs about dangers and security in village, at reservoir and in forest • Poor first impressions – view under bridge and from the Brecon direction • Some rundown areas and buildings – some in prominent locations give a negative impression and are a missed opportunity? • Website needs updating and modernising • Parking security both in village and especially in forest car parks, plus vandalism at forest car parks • Unsafe pavements in places – some missing sections • Transport – fewer buses and changed routing, lack of local taxi for short trips • Limited retail eg of activity gear or arts/crafts • Some concerns reported about quality – accommodation/meals • Patchy mobile phone reception

Opportunities

- Henderson Hall – use more eg for evening activities, courses
- Additional car parking eg on edge of village
- Improve signage around village and local area
- Make more of the canal – encourage more visitors to use it
- Find use for disused building(s)
- New pedestrian bridge over ford
- Booklet and maps of local walks
- Hire facility - boats, canoes, bikes
- Make more of mountain bike hub status
- More services for mountain bikers eg racks, hoses, secure lock ups
- Geo caching
- Explore options for new permissive footpaths
- Family activities – eg woodland play area and/or family orienteering
- Encourage more fishing
- Promote existing events better eg ram sales
- Start new events
- Better sharing of information amongst local community, businesses and visitors
- Better marketing the choice of things to see and do
- Redesign and re-launch of website
- More visible info point/notice board
- Improve staff skills
- Craft workshops or gallery
- Sculpture/art trail
- More local produce on menus and for sale
- Plans for Local Nature Reserve and picnic site at old campsite and reservoir
- Bird hide – better sign/refurbish
- Bats – watching/walks/webcam
- Wildlife themed events
- 'In bloom' initiative or new planting
- Green transport options eg electric boats, buggies
- Explore improved transport options eg taxi or pub shuttle

Threats

- Continuing recession
- Increasing competition from other destinations
- Deterioration in unused buildings or eyesore sites in village
- Loss of any key businesses
- Public sector funding cuts might threaten services such bus routes, the National Park Authority, footpath maintenance, forestry.
- Increasing parking problems
- High fuel prices
- Continuing thefts from forest and other car parks
- Local community annoyance over issues such as parking

5.3 Talybont's USPs

Talybont's Unique Selling Propositions were identified at one of the workshops. These are:

1. Pretty **canal**-side village in the centre of the Brecon Beacons National Park...
2. With choice of **pubs**, shop, café and range of places to stay...
3. Set in **mountain scenery** with a beautiful **reservoir**...
4. With lots of opportunities for **walks, cycling** and other **activities** in the **forests**, hills, riverside, canal, **waterfalls**...
5. A lively local community with a distinct caring and green ethos...
6. And an interesting **history** to explore, Talybont has a unique history as the meeting point amid the mountains for river, canal, railway and tramway and where a reservoir was created, fed by cascading forest waterfalls and now providing rain-powered energy

5.4 Meeting future visitor expectations

It is important to consider how Talybont currently meets the expectations of the main target visitor markets identified in section 4 and how it will match up in five or ten years time as trends change and expectations continue to increase. Talybont is already a popular place for visitors with the choice of pubs and pretty canal side location. However the weaknesses identified earlier need addressing. The village is not maximising the benefits from those who do visit and there are visitor management issues which need to be tackled to ensure business-visitor-community relations are good. Visitors should be given reasons to visit at quieter times of the year and encouraged to take advantage of all the sustainable activities and options for their visit.

Talybont is a small village - visitors would not want to see major changes. However there are certain key areas where they will expect more.

We anticipate that visitors will be looking for more in future. This may include:

- An attractive identity for the Talybont area which gives visitors strong reasons to visit linked to their own interests.
- Once they've decided to visit visitors will expect to find it easy to arrange their accommodation and activities online – making enquiries, putting together several activities and booking.
- Also for those who arrive in person they will expect it to be easy to plan days out, arrange activities, visits etc with good information, suggested itineraries and easy to arrange equipment hire/transport options.
- A well maintained village environment – visitors will be put off and puzzled by disused buildings and derelict plots

- A good food and drink offer focusing on the pubs and cafes with warm hospitality and some local options on offer.
- A continuing trend towards demand for higher quality serviced and self-catering accommodation
- Easy options for car free holidays
- Making more of the Monmouthshire and Brecon canal, the tramway and the River Usk
- More information on walking and cycling routes – on and off road cycling, short and longer walking choices.
- Clearer signage
- Well researched and presented information on the heritage of the town, local churches, castles and wildlife sites.
- Wide spread examples of the innovative approach to sustainability claimed by Talybont – in village facilities and services but also in individual businesses.

6. Destination Management and Promotion

6.1 The Strategy

Section 3 outlined the plan's vision and objectives; section 4 discussed Talybont's visitors markets; and section 5 has identified the area's strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities to better meet future visitor expectations. In this section these elements are integrated to pull together a way forward – a strategy which will guide changes over the next five to ten years. A strategy to improve the management and promotion of the Talybont area as a sustainable destination for visitors.

Thinking from the perspective of the main types of visitor it is useful to clarify the main 'offers' or reasons to visit and then make it easy for the visitor to 'consume' that offer when they arrive. The outdoor activity enthusiast will spend most of their time out in the countryside but will want good hearty food and drink, may want to stock up on provisions or be tempted by a souvenir or useful gear and may be enticed to return by being made aware of other good routes, the attractions of coming in different seasons or a future challenge event. The leisure visitor who is motivated by sightseeing and heritage will find it helpful to have some itinerary ideas proposed, or a heritage trail or guided walk on offer. Those with families will want a menu of options which include opportunities for children to let off steam, family friendly eating places and maybe some activities with a learning element.

Joining things up for visitors is essential - making it easy to find out, decide, buy and consume is a priority. As people are increasingly using online information both before they come and while in the destination web based information should be the priority, possibly supported by printed information (often the same artwork can be used providing economies of scale). Also important is better signage – road and business signage - and collaboration between businesses and partners. Cross-promotion from one business to another will help retain visitors in the area longer and encourage more repeat visits.

Talybont has a reputation for being innovative in sustainability terms. This can be further developed by focusing on the low carbon aspects of the tourism product such as walking, cycling, encouraging more people to arrive by public transport, local food and drink and promoting the range of environmentally aware businesses. There will also be opportunities for showcase sustainable elements such as low carbon means of transport such as electric cars or boats and some interesting green ideas have begun to emerge for play equipment, new infrastructure and facilities and maybe visitors could be interested in a sustainable challenge of some type.

6.2 The future visitor experience

The overall vision for Talybont is given in section 3.1. The must-do experiences below expand that vision and break down the visitor experience into 'bite size chunks' which can be used to interest the different visitor markets. These are the top things to promote which will encourage people to visit; the types of things one would recommend to visitors they should do or places they should visit. These can be translated into ideas to feature on a website, in a leaflet or to recommend to visitors in person.

Talybont-on-Usk – ‘must-do experiences’

1. Explore the Blaen-y-glyn waterfalls area, following a path alongside the streams, looking for mushrooms, paddling in the water or having a picnic by one of the waterfalls
2. Stroll round the Henry Vaughan Walk which takes in most of Talybont, the tramroad, Afon Caerfanell and the canal and ponder on the Vaughan brothers’ poetry found along the trail.
3. Cycle the canalside towpath – either up to Brecon along the Canal Food Trail to visit the canal basin, museums, cathedral and shops or down the canal to Llangynidr for a pub meal and back
4. Walk to the top of the Allt for the best views in the Beacons – a fantastic photo opportunity too
5. Drink a pint of Welsh real ale or a bottle of the local Aber apple juice in one of the welcoming pubs – have a pub meal outside on a picnic table in good weather to drink in the beautiful surroundings.
6. Mountain bikers can choose between green, blue and red routes depending how keen you are – views from above the reservoir, forest bike trails and thrilling downhill sections.
7. Try your hand at fishing on the canal, reservoir or river – for beginners or experienced fishermen – just ask about permits locally.
8. Find a tranquil spot in late evening to make the most of the dark skies and learn about star gazing – how many constellations can you identify?
9. Try a challenging walk along a stretch of the Taff Trail and round the reservoir or up into the mountains to do Pen Y Fan the hard way.
10. Beginners can try canoeing on the canal – a great way to spot watery wildlife. Good canoeists can try the River Usk in winter for a more exhilarating experience.
11. Have a chat in the café or one of the welcoming pubs, where if you’re lucky you might catch a music night or even a beer festival
12. Take your binoculars along to spot birds – migrating water birds on the reservoir, dippers and kingfishers on the rivers and streams and birds of prey such as red kites wheeling overhead among the mountains. Check out the latest sightings at the reservoir bird hide.
13. Turn your walk into a treasure hunt by taking the geocache trail up to the dam and through the forests.
14. Check out what’s on at Henderson Hall – you might catch a film night, a village event or local produce market or head along to a ram or pony sale down at the auction yard – all opportunities to mingle with the local community.
15. Walk up Tor y Foel first thing in the morning and watch the clouds clear and come back down into Talybont for a coffee and cake.
16. Visit Harry in his workshop and maybe buy some beautifully crafted wood or try your hand at something artistic yourself by enrolling on a workshop or course with one of our local artists.
17. Take the family to one of the great local attractions such as the Brecon Mountain Railway, medieval Tretower Court or inspiring Talgarth Watermill.

18. Try an activity you've never done before – mountain biking, fishing, canoeing or head over to Llangorse Lake to try sailing, climbing and there are several places you can book a short horse ride.
19. Challenge yourself to see how little carbon you can use on your trip – we have so many ways you can explore the stunning environment without environmental impacts – a real feel good holiday.
20. Investigate the unique heritage of Talybont – visit the lime kilns, tramroad, disused railway, canal, dam and watermills to find out how such a mountainous area now so tranquil, was once a hive of industry.
21. If the peace and mountain scenery become too much, retreat to one of our nearby towns of Brecon, Crickhowell, Hay on Wye or Abergavenny for a serious shopping fix.

This initial set of 21 must-do experiences can be refined and edited into a list which capture the range of attractions and experiences which can be promoted to visitors. These can then be used, ideally with a strong accompanying photo for each, on relevant pages of the website and in publications. They should be used in small groups – not necessarily all at once.

This type of information is also of great use to tourism marketers and PR people eg at the National Park, Brecon Beacons Tourism, Powys County Council, Visit Wales etc who are often looking for quirky facts or experiences which are distinctive to a particular destination.

6.3 Destination priorities

The priority themes which have emerged for Talybont-on-Usk are:

1. Information, communication and promotion
2. Facilities and services
3. Activities
4. Events
5. Arts, crafts and local products
6. Wildlife and environment

A full list of the actions which have been identified are detailed in the next section.

7. Action Plan

7.1 Introduction

This section builds on previous sections by putting the strategy into practice and developing an action plan to achieve the vision and objectives. It lists all the ideas and proposals suggested during the process or identified by the consultant, under the priority headings. The table summarises a wide range of potential actions and begins to identify which are most important and which can be delivered sooner or need to be worked on for longer. The columns begin to identify who needs to be involved and where any funding required may come from. With all the actions the crucial factor is what organisation or businesses are willing to take the lead and drive things forward.

Some projects can be achieved with minimal funding – perhaps just some time to update webpages, collate information or set up discussions. Others will require additional funds. The Collabor8 programme may be able to provide small amounts of funding to pump-prime some priority activities immediately, before the programme winds down in early 2012– likely to be revenue rather than capital projects. This plan could also be used to support funding bids to other organisations eg Lottery or European funding.

This plan will become a working document to guide the implementation and delivery of the destination plan. It will need to be added to and amended as more information and detail becomes available. It will need to be reviewed annually to tick off actions completed and review the progress towards others. New actions and ideas can be added as they arise.

The tabular plan is followed by more detailed descriptions of the top priority actions. Priorities need to be reviewed and amended by the Tourism Group periodically.

Key to priorities and timescales

Priority	Timescale
VH – Very High	QW – Quick Win = 6 months
H - High	S – Short = 1 year
M – Medium	M – Medium = 2-3 years
L - Low	L – Long = up to 5 years

Key to acronyms

BBT – Brecon Beacons Tourism

BBNP – Brecon Beacons National Park

BWT – Brecknock Wildlife Trust

PCC – Powys County Council

TOUCC – Talybont-on-Usk Community Council

TTG – Talybont Tourism Group

7.2 Talybont-on-Usk Sustainable Tourism Plan – Action Plan

Actions **shaded in blue** are top priority.

1.	Information, communication and promotion	Priority	Time-scale	Who and How
1.1	Better sharing of information locally and better marketing the choice of things to see and do – bringing together all the offers – encouraging more overnight stays. Set up Tourism Group/Network, email list, networking and more communications between businesses.	VH	QW	TTG
1.2	Redesign and re-launch website (taking it on from the community council), agree how to resource it and keep up to date on an ongoing basis	VH	QW	TTG
1.3	Use social media to promote area – eg Facebook or twitter, encourage tourism businesses to use social media for promotion and networking/referrals (Update village Wikipedia entry)	VH	Short	TTG
1.4	Improve business owners' and staff skills eg welcome, local knowledge, promoting local products and area's heritage. Arrange local visits to producers, local attractions and each others' businesses. Encourage more people to do BB Ambassadors training and promote the high number of Ambassadors in the village	VH	ongoing	TTG, BBNP
1.5	Village and area map – print a pocket version, have as printable off website and use as the basis for a new map board in village centre (and other locations such as entry points to village, Usk Inn, reservoir layby, Henderson Hall, YHA etc)	VH	S	TTG, BBNP
1.6	More visible notice board/info point for visitors in village centre – with information on events, transport options, activities etc. Potentially could be managed by shop/café.	M	M	Shop, TTG
1.7	Better information on access to the canal - boat companies, canal trips and holidays and the canal trail and events – initially with full listings on the website.	M	M	TTG, businesses, British Waterways
1.8	Use QR codes at key locations to enable people to access the new map(1.5) and website by mobile phone, with more detailed interpretation at key points eg of the local heritage	M	M	
2.	Facilities and services	Priority	Time-scale	Who and How
2.1	Improve signage (road signs and other signs) around village and local area. Use symbols to signpost off A40. Develop mini signing strategy for Talybont area to ensure improvements are	VH	S	PCC with TTG, Forestry Commission, Police, businesses

	well coordinated and continuation signing is installed. Reduce security signage and balance with more positive messages. Improve business and welcome signage.			
2.2	Provide additional car parking in or on the edge of the village – and encourage people to park up when they arrive. Detailed recommendations in transport plan.	H	M	TOUCC and PCC, BBNP
2.3	Investigate establishing more green transport options eg electric boats, buggies and promote to visitors	H	S	Talybont Energy
2.4	Explore improved transport options eg taxi service or pub shuttle. For example local accommodation providers could try to encourage someone to set up a local private hire service – and promote the service to visitors.	H	M	TTG
2.5	Henderson Hall – use more eg for evening activities, courses, events (see events section below)	M	M	H Hall committee
2.6	Henderson Hall – make more of the external area, play ground and playing fields. Provide more information on webpages and to businesses. Consider physical improvements and new equipment eg a waterslide.	M	M	TOUCC
2.7	New pedestrian eco-bridge at Pencelli ford as a feature and to better link walks options	M	M	Navy? Ceri Scott Howell,
2.8	Henderson Hall - refurbish external toilet for use by public – link to improved parking facilities	M	M	H Hall committee
2.9	Explore options to upgrade or relocate existing public toilets by White Hart Inn.	M	M	PCC
2.10	Explore options for a new role for unused old tea rooms building in centre of village – (see 5.2 but other options might also be possible).	M	L	Discuss with owners
3.	Activities	Priority	Time-scale	Who and How
3.1	Publish a booklet of local walks with good maps and have walks downloadable online	VH	S	BBNP, TTG, walks group
3.2	Make more of mountain bike hub status – and encourage mountain bikers to use local businesses. Better promote the three existing mountain bike routes and cycle routes eg round Llangorse and along canal.	H	S	

3.3	More services for mountain bikers eg racks, hoses, secure lock ups (both in village and at accommodation)	H	M	Dependent on parking and more services
3.4	Compile an attractive set of itineraries for visitors – to feature online and for verbal recommendation to visitors	H	S	TTG, BBNP
3.5	Geo caching – publicise existing route and set up more local routes	H	QW	
3.6	Set up family activities – eg woodland play area, family orienteering course, or mini mountain bike trail (like Garwnant)	H	S	Recreation group/Ali Crawshaw
3.7	Extend and better promote opportunities to hire bikes, boats, canoes. For example reintroduce boat hire by the hour/day in the village or have bike hire from the shop.	M/H	M	Shop, local hire operators
3.8	Encourage more fishing – better promote the choices, seasons and availability of permits, relevant contacts etc – brief local businesses and feature on website.	M	M	Include more info on website
3.9	Use Crickhowell Walking Festival to promote a special Talybont themed walk each year – eg industrial heritage or Henry Vaughan (see also 6.6)	M	S	TTG, walking group,
3.10	Explore options for new permissive footpaths eg along River Usk or right round reservoir.	L	L	Would require discussions with landowners
3.11	Develop more routes and accommodation for horse riders in central Beacons (and/or pursue linkage across A40 to link to eastern routes). Better promote local riding stables and half day/day rides.	L	L	TTG
4.	Events	Priority	Time-scale	Who and How
4.1	Promote existing events better (eg ram sales, monthly events at Henderson Hall, music events and open gardens) and consider scope to expand or strengthen some. Set up an events calendar on website and print out on paper for notice board (1.6) and at local accommodation. Make the most of the 2012 canal bicentenary events and build on those that are most successful – consider potential for making some annual events.	H	S	TTG, H Hall committee, pubs Canal events – Ali Crawshaw
4.2	Hold more events – options include: a farmers market or local products market in the Hall (a Taste of Talybont?),	H	S	TTG, Talybont Energy,

	a green/eco event showcasing sustainable projects eg energy scheme and freecycle event a mountain biking or canoeing event for novices			
5.	Arts, crafts and local products	Priority	Time-scale	Who and How
5.1	More local produce on local menus and for sale – a new farm shop type outlet?	H/M	QW	Local shop, pubs, hotel
5.2	Establish craft workshops or a gallery to showcase the work of local artists and crafts people. Possible buildings include the old tea rooms in the village centre and the old village hall	H/M	L	Discuss options with owners or something attached to H Hall
5.3	Set up a sculpture trail eg in local woodland or an art trail linking local artists' studios	L	M	Discuss with local artists, Forestry Commission
6.	Wildlife and environment	Priority	Time-scale	Who and How
6.1	Establish Local Nature Reserve and picnic site/play area at old campsite below reservoir	H	S	Discussions already underway with Welsh Water
6.2	Use old waterwheel as a feature/focal point – in centre of village or at entry point into village	H	QW	Welsh Water and Talybont Energy
6.3	Bird hide on reservoir – better sign and refurbish existing hide or set up a new one in optimum location. Promote, keep a record of sightings, feature on website.	H	QW	Welsh Water, BWT, BBNP
6.4	Wildlife, environment and heritage themed events such as guided walks, foraging and cooking, conservation workshops etc. Discuss opportunities for having Talybont walks/events within programmes of Crickhowell Walking Festival, Brecknock Wildlife Trust, Brecon Beacons Park Society, BBNP – which could then be collectively promoted as a programme for the local area. Compile a list of local independent walks leaders and encourage them to lead walks locally and bring visitors to local businesses.	H/M	M	TTG, BBNP, BWT
6.5	Make more of the special colonies of bats in the local area. Possibly link to dark skies themes with night time activities. Ideas could include guided walks, or evening talks, possibly children's activities. Setting up a webcam – which could be viewed online eg from the local pub or accommodation.	M	QW	BWT
6.6	Establish an 'In bloom' initiative or identify opportunities for new planting around village. Seek	L	M	ToUCC

	permission to tidy up unsightly or overgrown areas. This could be led by the horticultural society or be a project for local young people to become involved in. There might be scope to establish a village open garden event which could inc. local wild areas, vegetable patches etc.			
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7.3 Taking the Plan Forward

In order to implement this plan it is essential that there is a network of local businesses and organisations in place. The Talybont Tourism Group's role is:

- to champion the plan, ensuring that the plan is known about and understood amongst the local community
- to recruit additional tourism related businesses and organisations to be involved
- to lead some of the actions themselves
- to lobby for, or co-ordinate implementation of, actions by other groups and organisations
- to monitor progress and keep communicating
- to review the plan periodically – ideally every year - updating the priority levels, removing actions completed and adding any new projects
- to celebrate and publicise the successes as actions are completed!

7.4 Top Six Projects

The actions identified as very high priority in the plan above are described below in more detail to help the Talybont Tourism Group make them happen within the next 6-12 months.

1. Talybont Website and web-based communication and promotion	
What	<p>1.1 Set up Tourism Group/Network, email list and establish email communications eg for referrals, events updates, news</p> <p>1.2 Redesign and re-launch website</p> <p>1.3 Recruit local businesses to use social media. Consider setting up Talybont Facebook and Twitter accounts. Build Talybont's profile using social media.</p>
How	Set up TTG with one or two key roles identified eg people to co-ordinate: communications, events listing, website, social media. May require bank account if payments to be taken to fund website.
	Draft and issue brief for website design – to be simple, attractive, easy to use, updatable by several local contacts, excellent photographic images (may need sourcing). Establish handover from ToUCC and new administration – inc whether to charge fee for listing and options for further advertising. Ensure all local businesses link their websites to new site. Optimise listing to become top 3 for Google. Include social media links/feeds.
	Training on facebook and twitter – basics, marketing and tips
	Talybont Facebook and twitter accounts – need to have someone committed to using and updating regularly – or automatic feeds from other businesses accounts. Seek professional advice. Build followers and use to promote events, stories, offers and profile.
	Seek other ways to promote Talybont – eg update Wikipedia entry, feed regular stories to BBT, BBNP, Powys, Mid Wales, Visit Wales, green networks.
Who	TTG with support from BBNP, ToUCC,
When	Jan-March 2012
Funding	Collabor8, business payments for website

2. Talybont knowledge and welcome	
What	Improve business owners' and staff skills eg welcome, local knowledge, promoting local products and area's heritage.
How	Arrange local visits to producers (tastings), local attractions and each others' businesses. Initial ideas could include Aber Fruit Juice, Tretower Court (Cadw), Talgarth Mill, Welsh Venison Centre and perhaps a guided walk or bike ride with a local expert.
	Encourage more people to do Brecon Beacons Ambassadors training and promote the high number of Ambassadors in the village
	Hold an (annual?) update/training session in quiet period – eg tips on an aspect of customer care, new technology, plus briefing on an aspect of local heritage, plus social event for businesses and staff. (Could bring in outside trainers or simply arrange within the group with several people offering to do brief sessions on something they know about.)
Who	TTG, with support from BBNP
When	Initial session spring 2012 but ongoing
Funding	Rural Alliances? Sustainable Tourism Powys

3. Talybont-on-Usk map	
What	Commission a designer to produce a map of Talybont and the local area. It needs to be both attractive visually but also accurate and practical to navigate around the area. It needs to work at several scales and formats – eg in print, as a website download and on a map board with a 'you are here' arrow. Include several local walks such as Henry Vaughan Walk and start points for key routes inc Taff Trail and MB routes. Aim to include local features of interest eg heritage sites, wildlife, viewpoints, etc as well as practical facilities such as parking, toilets, shops, pubs, cafes.
How	Agree and brief and commission a designer. Agree possible locations for map boards – with landowners/highways. Seek funding (or possibly advertising/sponsorship) for any print or map board versions. Individual businesses might pay for a map board version to be located at their premises eg campsites, YHA, pubs, Welsh Water, Forestry Commission (to bring people into the village from the forest and reservoir). A format which could be easily amended – at least for the download version - would be desirable in case details such as parking or a business change.
	Prioritise production of pdf and map boards but consider appropriate format for a print version – eg pocket map or leaflet (to include replacing the Henry Vaughan trail). It is important to plan which audiences it would be targeting, how it would be distributed and how many years it is intended to last before commissioning print. The map could form the interior of a leaflet with some promotional text and photos on the exterior. Priority would be a supply for businesses to send out to enquirers (although a weblink to the pdf might achieve this) and for racking in local information centres and attractions. BBNP can advise on formats and quantities.
Who	TTG, with support from BBNP,
When	Spring/summer 2012
Funding	Collabor8? Business sponsorship, Sustainable Tourism Powys?

4. Signage to and around Talybont	
What	Improve all signage around village and local area.
How	Seek advice on signage for Talybont off the A40 from highways officers. Agree an appropriate set of symbols or wording and suitable site for additional signs. Include a range of symbols for key facilities. Request costing and seek to raise funds to finance new signs.
	Develop mini signing strategy for Talybont area to ensure improvements are well coordinated and continuation signing is installed. To include a review of all the road signage from all directions, continuation signage and signage at key junctions/decision points for visitors who are unfamiliar with the area. To include signing for parking and facilities. (See signage section of the audit 5.1 above and the new transport report.) BBNP may be able to help with the signing strategy.
	Reduce security signage at key sites in the area and balance with more positive messages. Discuss signage with Police, Forestry Commission and Welsh Water and agree improvements such as removing some signs and commissioning new if appropriate.
	Review welcome signs for village and ensure they are clean and unobscured. Check whether any improvements or new signs are required.
	Encourage all businesses to review their signage – and to clean and repair signs where necessary, this may include repainting key building elevations or paintwork. Encouragement and support might be offered through the Community Council, TTG or peer businesses possibly including saving costs by sourcing local/volunteer sign writer, paint, labour.
Who	TTG, ToUCC, BBNP, PCC, Police
When	Start spring 2012 – some actions can be achieved very quickly but others such as A40 signs etc could take longer
Funding	Some actions low cost. BBNP may be able to help with strategy. Funding would be required for significant new road signs.

5. Walks booklet	
What	Publish a booklet of local walks with good maps and have walks downloadable online.
How	Review current walks leaflets, booklets and information to check how up to date and attractive they are and whether there is scope to replace or supplement current provision. Share information on what type of walks would meet visitors needs – to include a range - short walks around and from the village; walks to particular sites such as hill tops, view points, pubs/cafes, heritage sites; circular walks of varying lengths; and one or two challenging walks in the local area. Seek input from local walkers and landowners such as Forestry Commission, Welsh Water and National park rangers. Consider options for publication including pdf downloads, free booklet, set of map cards or saleable print – possibly with the funds going towards a future reprint. If a saleable format is agreed – consider how it can be sold eg from local businesses and accommodation.
	Commission the production of a map and route description of each walk. Include both practical information on the route and local facilities, but also include interpretation of at least one local ‘story’ with each route. Maps should be good enough to follow the route but may need licensing eg from OS. A simple standard format for each walk would be desirable – which can be easily used in the outdoors – and is easily printable from a download.
	Produce the booklet or whatever format is agreed. Hold a launch event – such as a short walk and celebration and promote through PR. Talgarth and Bwlch have both produced walks publications recently and have valuable experience to draw on.
Who	TTG, with support from BBNP, walks group,
When	2012 – with the aim to launch the booklet in autumn 2012 or spring 2013
Funding	Powys Sustainable Tourism, Rural Alliances?

6. Make more out of mountain biking	
What	Make more of Talybont's mountain bike hub status, the 3 promoted mountain bike routes, the Taff Trail and other mountain biking and cycling opportunities including the canal towpath. Promote these in a way which encourages use of local businesses - benefitting the local economy.
How	Weblinks to the Brecon Beacons mountain biking and cycling websites. Have a mountain biking page on the Talybont website with all relevant facilities, businesses which welcome mountain bikers, hire information and descriptions of routes. Encourage businesses to promote and/or sell copies of the Brecon Beacons mountain biking pack – in advance and on site.
	Ensure good local communications and advice by liaising with Forestry Commission, British Waterways and other landowners and highway authorities over the condition of routes and any potential for new cycling opportunities.
	TTG and individual businesses to work with local bike hire and cycling holiday companies to devise routes which include local businesses, agree special offers and mountain biking breaks.
	More businesses to provide services for mountain bikers eg racks outside pubs, shops (towpath), hoses and secure lock ups at accommodation. If Henderson Hall is promoted more for parking it could become a good start and finish point for cyclists – if a toilet and hose pipe are provided and information for cyclists about routes, conditions and pointing them towards food and accommodation.
	Generate PR using social media or inviting cycling journalists and publications to feature the Talybont area but ensure they include places to stay and eat. There is potential to work with BBT, Mid Wales Tourism and Visit Wales on any mountain biking promotions.
Who	TTG, bike businesses, ToUCC, BBNP, H Hall Committee
When	2012 and ongoing
Funding	Little funding required other than facilities at businesses and perhaps some additional bike racks in village

8. Annex – Participants in developing the plan

Individuals who have contributed to the development of this plan through discussions and attending meetings.

Anna Bell	The Star Inn
Toni Borgia	Danywenallt YHA
Mike Bugler	The Malt House B&B and self catering
Craig Burdon	Talybont Community Council
Tony Carr	Abercynafon Lodge
Jill Carr	Abercynafon Lodge
Nancy Cavill	
Sherri Carensen?	
Harry Chapman	Wood turner
Carol Collins	The Hawthorns B&B
Liz Daniels	Brecon Beacons Holiday Cottages
Paul Dann	Forestry Commission
Steve Essex	Consultant Transport Initiatives
Andrew Felix	The Usk Inn
Nigel Forster	Creative Photography
Christina Gale	Gethinog B&B
Rachel Griffiths	Ty Newydd B&B
Seamus Hamill-Keays	The Allt B&B
Jo Hughes	Artist
Robert James	
L Jenkins	Talybont Farm Caravan/Campsite
Ann Johnson	Brecon Beacon Holiday Cottages
Regan Jones	
Alison Kidd	Prospectory and Talybont Energy
Arlene Lee	Bike and Hikes
Eifion Morgan	Aber Apple Juice and B&B
Patricia Price	Belvedere B&B
Helen Roderick	BBNP
Ceri Scott Howell	Coity Bach Farm and self catering
Peter Seaman	Talybont Community Council
Carol Williams	Brecon Beacons National Park
Clare Wright	School Annex