

Bangor Strategy and Vision

Final Report for Bangor City Council
December 2016



Cynlas Cyf

IN ASSOCIATION WITH JEFF STPAUL CONSULTING & JAMES GOODMAN

Contents

1. Executive Summary.....	1
2. Overview of the Strategy	5
3. Bangor	7
4. Strategic Context.....	14
5. Partners and Stakeholders.....	18
6. Sustainable Models for Future Delivery	26
7. Themes and Action Plan.....	31
8. Conclusions	63

Table 1 - 16-74 Population Breakdown by Economic Activity and Social Class.....	7
Table 2 - BANGOR LSOAs WIMD Breakdown 2014.....	8
Table 3 - Top 10 Factors that Make a Great City	16
Table 4 - 10 Factors that make a City Great - RAG.....	17
Table 5 - Breakdown of Businesses in City Centre.....	44

Figure 1 - Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015) Wales	14
---	----

Appendix I
Appendix II
Appendix III

Action Plan
Census Data 2011
Terms of Reference – Partnerships and Theme Groups

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction.

As a city and a sub-regional centre for North Wales, Bangor has a distinct character and is marked by a profound sense of civic pride amongst its resident, studying and working populace. It is a place which possesses a significant number of attributes, both modern and old, but is also faced with significant challenges in terms of its future prosperity and vitality.

This Strategy and Vision predicated on exploiting Bangor's primary role as the sub regional centre for Gwynedd and Anglesey, recognising its inherent strengths and latent potential, and eradicating the negatives that have beset this City over the last decade and more.

If fully realised, then Bangor can become the Greatest of Welsh Cities; offering the whole ambit of attributes and amenities that makes any City Great; but gilded with a sense of Welsh and Celtic Heritage.

1.2 Themes and Action Plan.

The Strategy has three interdependent themes, none of which can fully achieve their outcomes alone. It is a holistic approach, both on a strategy level and thematic level.

An initial Action to support has been developed to support this Strategy and Vision. This should be considered as an initial "template" for the Partnership and Thematic Groups to consider, amend and further develop. A total net budget of **£9.710m** has been identified, and has been prepared as an "investment ready" proposal to support applications for funding to Welsh Government, the Lottery and other organisations

The Three Themes:

1.2.1 **Development and Environment**

Underpinned by four sub themes:

- Development
- Built Environment
- Public Realm
- Transport and Pedestrian Access

This theme is focused on addressing the issue of poor building fabric within the retail area and public Realm works. Further investment in developing the Pier, further development of the Cultural Quarter the redevelopment of the University's Campus on Deiniol Road and its transformation into a Science and Technology Quarter. This will be underpinned by a number of initiatives to enhance the overall aesthetic of the city, the provision of citizen friendly green spaces and the rationalisation of transport and pedestrian access.

1.2.2 **Economy and Promotion**

Underpinned by three sub themes:

- Business Support
- Marketing and Promotion
- Events

Projects will include reversing the decline in the professional sector and regenerating the city through reutilisation spaces above shops, a grant and advisory support services for retailers and businesses within Bangor, a rebranding and repositioning of the City, and and initiatives to encourage private sector investment.

1.2.3 **Housing Health and Wellbeing**

Underpinned by two sub themes:

- Homes
- Health and Wellbeing

This theme will have a significant focus on revitalising and growing housing stock within the City, tackling negative issues around HMOs, and working with Registered Social Landlords and Private Sector to return Properties back to a standard where young people in particular would wish to live. This will be complemented by appropriate initiatives to support more sustainable and healthy living conditions, and access to health and wellbeing services and support.

1.2.4 **Programme Office**

This will provide a locally based dedicated project team who could work with all the key stakeholders and local delivery partners.

1.3 The Strategy is underpinned by two core drivers

- The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.
- 10 Factors that make a City Great.

These factors have been drawn up by cross referencing a number of documents and reports that have identified factors that make a city attractive and prosperous. These 10 factors are:

- ❖ Shared open, green spaces
- ❖ Culture
- ❖ Connectivity
- ❖ Historic Architecture and interesting and pleasing built environment
- ❖ Good Food
- ❖ Ownership & Opportunities for all
- ❖ Public Private Ownership, Shared Vision and Good Governance
- ❖ Social Capital
- ❖ Attractive living environments
- ❖ Distinctive Identity

1.4 Partners.

The Key Partners in realising this Strategy and Vision are:

- Gwynedd Council
- Welsh Government
- Bangor University
- Pontio
- Bangor City Council
- Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board
- Strategic Housing Partnership
- Grwp Llandrillo Menai
- Private Sector (BID)
- Strategic Housing Partnership

1.5 Key Operational and Strategic Challenges

The strategy is comprehensive in its nature, both thematically and geographically. However, there are some key issues that the Partnership will need to consider and

keep in focus to achieve its goals. Most notably:

- Keeping the Momentum and Enthusiasm Going
- Securing the Support of all Partners, at both a Strategic and Delivery Level
- Defining the position and relationship of the partnership with other fora and partners.
- More clearly defining and identifying match funding for the Action Plan
- Bringing the Citizens of Bangor along

1.6 Summary

This Strategy and Vision will evolve and develop over time. An initial 3 year Action Plan has been drawn up; but it should be seen as a “kick start” for more comprehensive and long term vision for Bangor; one that will, over the course of the next decade, transform the City’s fortunes, and establish it as one of Wales’ most attractive destinations to live, work, invest, learn and visit.

2. Overview of the Strategy

2.1. Background.

Following a stakeholder analysis undertaken in 2015, on behalf of the City Centre Partnership Bangor City Council commissioned Cynlas Cyf to undertake three specific tasks, namely to:

Embed and develop robust management structures for the City Centre Partnership.
Develop an overarching Strategy and Vision for the City Centre; to include four specific themes of work, these being:

- Development and Environment
- Business and Economy
- Housing & Health
- Marketing and Promotion

Finally, based on the conclusions of the two other tasks, develop and support the implementation of an Action Plan on behalf the City Centre Partnership.

2.2. Methodology

A number of key methods were deployed to develop the strategy:-

- Desk Research and document review
- Stakeholder Engagement
- One to one dialogue
- Workshops
- Partnership and Sub Groups
- Field Work and Site Visits

Desk Review

- The document review included:
- Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan.
- Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, Welsh Government
- Gwynedd Destination Management Plan 2013-2020
- Vibrant and Viable Places Regeneration Framework 2013 - Welsh Government
- Bangor Pier Business Plan
- Bangor University Strategic Plan 2015-2020

- Bangor University Estates Strategy
- Pontio Arts Programme Development Strategy
- Pontio 5 Case Business Plan
- North Wales Economic Ambition Strategy

Stakeholder Engagement

A wide range of consultees were engaged utilising three interrelated methods:

- One to one consultation
- Workshops, most notably with Gwynedd Council and Bangor University
- Through the partnership and other fora such as the joint working group between the key cultural organisations developing the cultural quarter.

The workshops were used to ensure that a holistic overview was obtained of the relationship between these organisations and the City, and also to identify what inputs and resources can be applied to enhance and drive forward the agenda.

Field Work and Site Visits entailed using previous studies as a base, and then undertaking an Urban Design analysis of the City core and surrounding areas. This was primarily used to understand how the various areas articulate and relate to each other. This also led to identification of sites which may be key to future developments in various sectors thus impacting on the future development and prosperity of the city.

- 2.3. This final report is designed to be "investment ready" and included indicative costs and the likely sources of funding that could be appropriate and possibly available. This is then illuminated in the Action Plans which have been developed to support the strategy.

3. Bangor

3.1. Overview

Bangor is the oldest City in Wales, with a current population of 16,658 at the 2011 census. It is one of only six places classed as a city in Wales, although it is only the 25th-largest urban area by population

The population figure includes 7180 students. During term-time the total estimate of students (based on the University's 2014/15 figure) is 10,766. Therefore, the best estimate of the population of Bangor during term time is 20,244. This is important in that it shows the significant dominance of the student population as a social class within the City, and the importance of the University socially, culturally and economically. A more detailed Profile of Census Data can be found attached as Appendix II.

One of the key impacts of the presence of the University has been the preponderance of student housing stock. Of the 13007 "registered" Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) across Gwynedd, 1160 are based in Bangor (88%). This also represents some 21% of the total housing stock in the City (based on the 2011 Census).

The makeup of the 16+ population is markedly different to that of the Gwynedd and All Wales figure; as illustrated by the Table below.

Table 1 - 16-74 Population Breakdown by Economic Activity and Social Class

	Bangor Total	%	Gwynedd	%	Wales	%
Population	16358		121874		3063456	
Population 16-74	13308	79.85	88913	73	2245166	73.3
Economically Active	6586	52.725	57995	65.2	1476735	65.8
Employed	5568	45.5625	53961	60.7	1363615	60.7
Unemployed	443	6.6125	3176	5.5	96689	6.5
Economically Inactive	6722	47.275	30918	34.8	768431	34.2
Long term sickness/disabled	478	9.625	3867	12.5	140760	18.3
Social Class						
Mangerial and Professional	1947	17.2375	23720	26.7	614294	27.4
Skilled	1925	16.875	27029	30.4	659631	29.4
Part/unskilled	2256	19.175	23031	25.9	646089	28.8
Students and other	7180	46.7375	15133	17	325152	14.5
No qualifications (Age 16+)	2522	21.15	23365	23.2	650517	25.9

Source – Census 2011

This table again shows the dominance of the student population and its impact on other key statistics, such as economically inactive. The economically inactive figure is significantly higher than the County and Wales figure, but many students will be included within this total.

In terms of its prosperity Bangor is a City of stark contrasts. There are some areas of significant prosperity, whilst others are marked by notable deprivation. The lower layer super output areas (LSOAs) of Marchog2 and Marchog1 are the 2nd and 3rd most deprived parts of Gwynedd in terms of the overall index and amongst the 10% most deprived areas of Wales. In contrast Menai (Bangor) ranks amongst the least deprived, on both a County and Wales wide basis.

Indeed, according to the latest Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIOMD) data from 2014, in terms of “Income”, Menai is the second least deprived LSOA in Wales (1908 out of 1909). Similarly, in terms of Employment it also demonstrates economic resilience, being the fourth least deprived LSOA in Wales (1906 out of 1909).

The Table below demonstrates the Bangor Position in more detail (and also shows Gwynedd’s most deprived Ward and least deprived as benchmarks).

Table 2 - BANGOR LSOAs WIMD Breakdown 2014

100	10%	W01000098 Peblig (Caernarfon)	Arfon
104		W01000091 Marchog 2	Arfon
162		W01000090 Marchog 1	Arfon
884		W01000075 Hendre (Gwynedd)	Arfon
999		W01000077 Hirael a Garth 2	Arfon
1006		W01000062 Deiniol	Arfon
1088		W01000064 Dewi	Arfon
1448		W01000076 Hirael a Garth 1	Arfon
1453		W01000072 Glyder	Arfon
1695		W01000092 Menai (Bangor)	Arfon

Source – Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2014

As a city and a sub-regional centre for North Wales, Bangor has a distinct character, is steeped in history, culture and social and economic heritage. The Joint Local Development Plan for Anglesey and Gwynedd (2011- 2026) notes:

“The City has a sub-regional role and role for the Plan area and a more local role. It plays a cross-boundary and local role in terms of employment, education, health and leisure opportunities. It is a retail centre not only for its own population but also for a wider area”

Whilst noting the above, it is arguable that the City has been somewhat neglected over recent years, and has not fully enjoyed the investment and focus enjoyed by other towns and cities across Wales. Nevertheless, it enjoyed a significant profile nationally and internationally, and has much that is to be lauded.

From a heritage perspective it has a prominent and historically significant Cathedral; a magnificent Pier; and possesses a cultural and social sense of place.

New developments have provided Bangor with a new stimulus; most notably Pontio, the new museum and art gallery “Storiell” and the recently established Welsh Language Hub, run by Menter Iaith Bangor. These developments have reinforced and supported the emergence of a cultural quarter between the Main Arts Building of the University across to the Cathedral.

Work to bring the Pier back to the aesthetic and standard of its late Victorian era heritage is ongoing, and is coupled with a more emphatic approach to refreshing and stimulating the built environment of the City Centre.

Academically, economically and socially the University and “Grwp Llandrillo Menai” (the further education college) play an important part in the City. The recently announced redevelopment of the University’s Deiniol Road campus, with an approximated investment of at least £50m, further confirms the University’s commitment to the City Centre, and opens up new possibilities for the revitalisation and regeneration of Bangor as a whole.

Additionally the business sector has recently come together under the auspices of a Business Improvement District. This provides an additional focus and allows for a clear and strategic voice for the Private Sector in the future development of the City of Bangor.

3.2. The City's Strengths & Opportunities

Bangor possesses many strengths and attributes.

History and Culture

The development of a "Cultural Quarter" rest heavily on the City's historic heritage, from the establishment of the Cathedral to the development of the University to the emergence of a renaissance of culture and pride in the Welsh language emerging from the colleges in the 60s through to the 80s.

Built Environment

It also has a rich vein of historic buildings and noteworthy and in parts aesthetically pleasing and interesting properties across the span of the City, epitomised by the two buildings that dominate, the Cathedral and Main Arts Building of the University.

University & Pontio

Bangor University is a Key Strategic Stakeholder in the development of the Bangor City Strategy and a member of the City Centre Partnership. As well as Pontio, there are a number of other key public-facing facilities and locations including Canolfan Brailsford and Treborth Sports Facility/Botanical Gardens, The Management Centre, Academi, Bar Uno, Teras and the university library.

Several major developments are being undertaken over the coming years, some will have a very direct impact on the city. One such is the redevelopment of the science site on Deiniol Road. Further afield, a new science park is being planned at Gaerwen, construction to start in 2017.

Tourism

Undoubtedly Bangor has a long way to go to become once again recognised as a key tourist destination as compared to its nearest neighbour Caernarfon, and further afield Llandudno. However, it has its own distinct offer, and the increasing investment in facilities, amenities and the fabric of the city have seen a subtle but increasingly more apparent change in the offer. This includes the "timeline", Pontio, Storiell, the development of the Cultural Quarter, proposals for the Pier and plans by the Cathedral to develop its estate in and around the City Centre. There are also proposals being developed for an information portal which will coordinate and promote the City's vibrant local events scene, complemented by more significant regional events.

The increasing convergence between innovation, technology and tourism is nowhere more apparent than North Wales, which now offers world class adventure experiences exploiting the natural environment, taking advantage of the legacy of its recent industrial past, and using state of the art technology e.g. Surf Snowdonia, Bounce Below, Zip World. There is also significant potential in developing Bangor as a centre of academic excellence for this ever growing sector of the tourist market.

Business Improvement District

A Business Improvement District (BID) for the City was established in April 2016, and is now one of over 190 across the UK. The initial proposal includes the High Street and main City centre area, which includes approximately 350 rateable businesses units.

The BID offers an independent, business led sustainable mechanism which can contribute significantly to the regeneration of the City. At present it is still finding its focus and long term ambitions, but for the next five years at least, funding is secure. This has allowed for the appointment of a BID Manager and the roll out of a number of small but important pilot projects. As it grows and matures the opportunity for the BID to take on new projects, seek match funding for complementary projects and develop its geographic and sectoral reach (i.e. to cover a wider geographic area and capture the voice of other parts of the private sector in Bangor) will be ever more apparent.

Alongside the establishment of a Strategic Partnership, this offers the City a genuine chance to give Bangor a clear and progressive voice for the business community, and one which allows it to develop and lead on strategic projects (when and where appropriate).

Key Challenges

Environment & Development

The physical condition of properties in the city centre, particularly along High Street is of continued concern. Empty properties and rundown buildings were often raised during the consultation as being both aesthetically jarring and a hindrance to economic well-being. Particular points which were raised were poor condition of shop fronts, windows on upper elevations in poor condition, and defective rainwater goods causing staining.

Public Realm works, both those which have been undertaken and areas which need addressing, have arguably been the subject of significant investment, but little impact. Principal amongst these are the relatively recently works in the High Street and the Timeline.

There are also some notable areas which evidently need addressing, including the Bible Gardens and Bowling Green area and in particular the Railway Station area and Deiniol Road. The importance of this area as a gateway for visitors to Bangor is a key issue.

In relation to public realm works our consultation reaffirmed the position that delivering projects to a high standard even if this means a smaller area is addressed is an important and critical issue that the partnership and the individual stakeholders will need to consider carefully.

Addressing the use, further development and promotion of footpaths and linkages to the periphery of the City is a key issue that has emerged, particularly those around Hirael bay and Bangor Mountain.

The use of buildings, in particular flexibility of use, also needs to be considered. This included the better use of upper floors, particularly in the commercial area and for professional uses.

Proposed out of town uses, and the proposal to locate leisure uses at the Bryn Cegin site, also needs to be considered carefully. Considering how this can be exploited as a priority rather than a threat is recommended.

Business Performance & Offer

The City Centre continues to struggle, there are a number of empty shops, and the fabric and quality of a number of others is of concern. There are a few higher quality multiples and a small number of specialist shops which offer something different and appealing. But these two sub categories tend to be overshadowed by a number of underperforming poorer quality operations.

Footfall is of major concern, both being a cause and the result of the above. The Friday market has significantly improved the vibrancy and buoyancy of the main area of the High Street, and anecdotally the free car parking at the Menai Car Park has encouraged more people into to the City itself; however, the notable absence of footfall of any significance it has been a recurring theme of the consultation and numerous site visits.

Although the picture is improving, there is also a distinct lack of variety in the food offer, with only a small number of restaurants, quality cafes and coffee houses available across the City. As noted in the previous Stakeholder Analysis, the distinct absence of a Professional Sector, partly due to the lack of suitable services, accommodation and parking, and partly due to the pull of other sites such as Parc Menai, has contributed to and exacerbated this distinct problem of profile and offer.

Despite its designation as the sub regional centre Bangor will, in the short to medium term continue to face strong competition for neighbouring retail centres, and it will have to develop a strong and clear marketing message to reinvigorate the retail and commercial heart of the City.

Housing and Health Issues

As noted earlier, and exacerbated by the emergence of a series of new student accommodation developments, there has been a decline in the fabric of the houses and apartments previously occupied by this significant part of the City's population, and there is now a discernible issue around the quality of housing, particularly around the heart of the City.

The 2016 Wellbeing Assessment for Gwynedd and Mon shows that 67.8% of households in the wider Bangor area are currently priced out of the Housing Market, whilst the City has the largest number of people waiting on the common housing register (at 460).

Partnership Arrangements

The establishment of a truly strategic partnership is a significant and positive development for the City. It will bring together the University & Pontio; Gwynedd Council; Welsh Government, the Private Sector, City Council, Grwp Llandrillo Menai, Registered Social Landlords and community organisations to offer a cohesive and coordinated approach to the regeneration of Bangor. However, there continues to be some tensions, and some aspects of "dysfunctionality" that will need to be addressed and overcome if the vision and strategy is to gain credence and traction.

4. Strategic Context

4.1 The strategy has been developed giving due consideration to both historic and current policy issues, particularly relating to Regeneration, Town Centre Management, Heritage, Culture, Social Exclusion and Poverty, Tourism Heritage and Conservation; including those of Welsh Government, Cadw, UK Government, Gwynedd Council and Bangor City Council.

We have also noted the growing emphasis and influence of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, and the incumbent responsibilities now placed on Local Authorities and many other public bodies. Whilst many organisations such as Further Education colleges and Universities are not bound by the legislation, it is of note that as an institution Bangor University has publicly stated its intentions to work towards the same goals and ambitions.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act was passed in 2015. This Act is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. Its primary focus is to ensure that Public Bodies think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

The Act is founded upon 7 pillars; set out diagrammatically here:

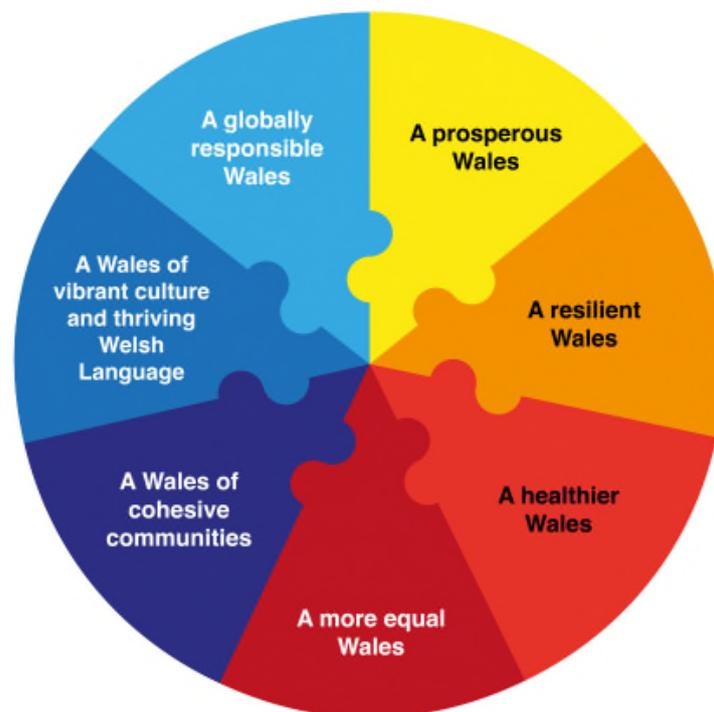


Figure 1 - Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015) Wales

These seven areas of focus all have relevance to this review.

Concurrently the strategy has been prepared in a fashion which will ensure that where appropriate and strategically legitimate, it can be used to support submissions for funding to Welsh Government, Local Government, Europe, the Lottery, the Private Sector and others.

During the course of the development of the Strategy and Vision we were also mindful of a number of prevalent issues that would undoubtedly have a bearing on the success or otherwise of Bangor moving forward.

Across the country, and the UK retail centre footfall is continuing to decline, whilst the continued pressure on public sector resources means that Local Authorities and central and regional government resources, financial and otherwise, are becoming more scarce. Grant support for regeneration is less evident than was the case in the past; again reflecting the continued pressures on public finances

Welfare reform will continue to exacerbate socio-economic problems in parts of the City, and is expected to place additional pressures on Registered Social Landlords such as Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd (CCG) and North Wales Housing to manage and control their budgets.

In addition there remains the prospect of some form of Local Authority reorganisation within Wales, although since the Assembly elections in May 2016, clarity as to the nature and extent of that reorganisation has become more opaque.

However on the positive front there are still numerous funding regimes available and what will now be the final round of European Funding Programmes also offers additional (possibly once in lifetime) opportunities, both directly to the partnership, and indirectly through partners such as the University and Local Authority.

The change in culture within the University with a wider community and economic impact focus also means that there is a “willing” partner with resources that can be brought to bear. However, it should also be noted that the impact of the exit from Europe is likely to have an impact on the University on a number of fronts.

Developing a “local” solution which can carry the regeneration to the point of commercial success and market viability has been a fundamental consideration.

During the consultation, and particularly through the workshops with the University and Gwynedd Council, the debate as to what the ambition was for the City came up time and time again. In addition, establishing a benchmark for where Bangor resides as a destination and place was discussed.

On that basis we reviewed a number of documents and reports which attempted to define what makes a City Great. The following 10 factors have been identified, in varying forms, and it is recommended that the Partnership utilise this, or a version of this as a further backdrop against which to move the Strategy and Vision forward.

In essence if a tick can be placed against each of the 10, then Bangor can rightfully claim to be a great City, and one that can compete on a national and international level.

The Table below sets out these 10 factors.

Table 3 - Top 10 Factors that Make a Great City

Top Ten Factors	
1.	Shared open, green spaces
2.	Culture
3.	Connectivity
4.	Historic Architecture and interesting and pleasing built environment
5.	Good Food
6.	Ownership & Opportunities for all
7.	Public Private Ownership, Shared Vision and Good Governance
8.	Social Capital – schools, public amenities, retail and entertainment venues (“great shopping” / “Smart Spending”)
9.	Liveable – attractive living environments
10.	Distinctive Identity

- It is recommended that the Partnership begin to benchmark the City against each of the 10, and align each of the proposed programme of work against one or more of the factors. As an initial template we would propose the following with a RAG assessment of where we consider the City to be in 2016.

The table below is indicative only at this stage. We have suggested a RAG system at a strategic level, but a scoring system of 1 – 10 may be more practical on a working level.

Table 4 - 10 Factors that make a City Great - RAG

10 Factors that make a City Great – Bangor 2016		
Factor	RAG	Proposed Actions
1. Green Spaces	Orange	
2. Culture	Green	
3. Connectivity	Red	
4. Historic Architecture	Green	
5. Good Food	Orange	
6. Ownership and Opportunities for all.	Orange	
7. Partnership and Governance	Orange	
8. Social Capital	Orange	
9. Liveable	Orange	
10. Distinctive Identity	Orange	

The role of a City Centre Partnership and establishing a robust and sustainable vehicle to take this agenda forward is therefore critical, as is agreeing on the most appropriate and feasible model of governance and management.

This will need to be underpinned by a new vision for Bangor premised on its aspiration to become the epitome of all that is best about a City and all that is noteworthy and best about being Welsh (in its broadest and most catholic sense).

5. Partners and Stakeholders

5.1. The Stakeholder Analysis undertaken as a precursor to this study has identified a core number of organisations who are considered as strategically essential to the future direction of the City. These are:

- Gwynedd Council
- Welsh Government
- Bangor University
- Bangor City Council
- Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board
- Grwp Llandrillo Menai
- Strategic Housing Partnership
- Private Sector (BID)

Albeit that Pontio is, in essence, a manifestation of the University, the consultation and review reinforced the view that Pontio should have a separate seat around the table.

The need for the community to have a strong voice, and be fully engaged is also key to the forward direction of the City, although the nature and form of that voice and how it can be coordinated effectively is less clear at this stage.

Other organisations of significance have also been cited; including Bangor Cathedral and North Wales Police. However, the ability of these organisations to contribute at a strategic level (due to capacity constraints and other strategic and policy priorities) means that their input at this level is unclear at this stage.

Below we outline the key partners in more detail.

5.2. **Gwynedd Council** is, arguably the most critical partner in relation to the strategic direction of Bangor. It has a range of both statutory responsibilities and strategic objectives. In 2015/16, the Gross Revenue Expenditure of the Council was £367 million, covering a range of responsibilities, including schools, strategic management and coordination of Housing Investment and Enforcement, roads maintenance, social services, culture and tourism, economic development and environmental Health.

It has had significant involvement in many of the projects, capital and revenue which have come to fruition over the last few years, including Environmental

Improvements of £3.5m on the High Street, and strategic and fiscal engagement in Pontio and Storiell, and Management of the Communities Cluster in the Marchog Ward.

Its work is governed by its Strategic Plan. The current plan (2013 – 17) sets out a vision which aims to achieve:

“The best for the people of Gwynedd in a difficult time”

The Strategic Plan lists 16 improvement objectives across seven thematic areas, many of which resonate with the ambitions of the Strategy and Vision for Bangor.

- Effective and Efficient Council
- Children and Young People
- Care
- Safeguarding
- Poverty, Deprivation, Economy, Housing
- The Welsh Language
- Financial Planning

5.3. **Welsh Government.** The devolved powers of the Welsh Assembly, and the Strategic Policies of its Government provides the context and direction for the City. Much of what is involved in this strategy and vision will be governed, funded or directed by Welsh Government. Its sphere of influence covers all aspects of life in Bangor, and its involvement at both a strategic and operational level is therefore critical.

“Taking Wales Forward” sets out the government’s programme to drive improvement in the Welsh economy and public services, delivering a Wales which is prosperous and secure, healthy and active, ambitious and learning, united and connected. Welsh Government. Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021 outlines the government’s priorities for delivering those improvements

Alongside this, Welsh Government has published well-being objectives which set out how it will use the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 to help deliver its programme for government.

Its role in setting out targets for Housing, reducing Poverty, City Centre Regeneration, Skills and Business Growth is a fundamental. It has already provided the core funding for the establishment of the City Centre Partnership and Business Improvement District, funds the Community First Initiative, and there is a prospect of additional funding through its Regeneration Portfolio.

In the medium term, the prospect of a follow on Programme to Welsh Government's Vibrant and Viable Places Programme, offers the possibility of significant seed funding to stimulate the revitalisation of the City. Although there is no confirmation as yet as to whether there will indeed be a new programme, the City's current position warrants such an application for funding.

- 5.4. **Bangor University** is a Key Strategic Stakeholder in the City. As well as representing the formative Partnership it has played a key role in the development of the Bangor City is also represented on the Bangor Improvement District). The BID geographical area encompasses Pontio but no other major parts of the University estate.

As well as Pontio, there are a number of other key public-facing facilities and locations including Canolfan Brailsford and Treborth Sports Facility/Botanical Gardens, The Management Centre, Academi, Bar Uno, Teras and the university library. A number of these have received external funding reflecting this public aspect. Arguably, Pontio, by virtue of its £12.5m of ERDF structural funding, £15.4m Welsh Government and £3.5m Arts Council of Wales (ACW) capital funding, together with on-going revenue support from ACW, has a particularly important public facing role and mandate.

Several major developments are being undertaken over the coming years, some will have a very direct impact on the city. One such is the redevelopment of the science site on Deiniol Road.

The university has a number of strategic business relationships at corporate level; these include links with Horizon Nuclear Power and Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics (Llanberis). These could also have an impact on life and work in and around the city, as well as the university.

As described in its Strategic Plan 2015-2020, Bangor University's **Vision** is *"to be a leading University with an international reputation for teaching and research, while fostering the intellectual and personal development of our students and staff, providing a supportive multicultural environment, promoting widening access and inclusiveness, and ensuring that our activities result in environmental benefit and social progress within a resilient economy."*

The University is committed to **sustainability**, and is strategically aligning itself with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

It also contributes significantly economically. Various studies have considered the

wider direct, indirect and induced economic impact of higher education in the UK.

Figures for the sector indicate that for every £1 of expenditure made, this is worth a further £1.35 to the wider economy.

With over 8000 undergraduates, 2,600 postgraduates and approximately 2,000 staff, an annual turnover of around £140m and a number of large capital developments that have taken place recently (e.g. Pontio, St Mary's site, SEACAMS, Ffriddoedd site developments) the university is and will continue to be a powerful economic driver for the city and the region. There is a desire to grow only modestly in numerical terms over the coming years, placing quality of students above quantity, and student satisfaction being paramount. Thus there is appetite for only modest growth in number of academic staff, in order to keep delivering an excellent students experience.

Pontio Arts and Innovation Centre. Although part of the wider university, Pontio has been given a separate heading here because of its strategic nature in terms of city-wide strategy development. The strategic investment objectives of the project, as outlined in the business case for Strategic Capital Investment Funding (SCIF) to the Welsh Government and to WEFO are as follows:

Investment Objective 1: Regeneration

Investment Objective 2: Innovation

Investment Objective 3: Skills

Investment Objective 4: Arts and Culture

Investment Objective 5: Community

Pontio's **Innovation facilities** are where the wider university, the art, the sciences, engineering, business and design meet in a physical facility. Whilst recognizing that innovation occurs in many aspects and corners of the university, once again, Pontio is a vehicle through which such things may become more visible to the wider community, especially the business community. The remit of the facilities, which include a FabLab¹, MediaLab, MakerSpaces, Collaborative Working Spaces,

¹ Pontio's FabLab is a member of an international network of around 500 such facilities; these share the ethos of providing equipment and tech support that allows relatively inexperienced users to prototype 'almost anything' within an easy-going, supportive environment. See: <http://fabfoundation.org/fab-labs/>

industrial quality 3D printing, cutting and prototyping equipment and a WhiteBox virtual discovery space, is to work with individuals and businesses for the economic wellbeing of the area.

Pontio will enjoy a strategic position as the link bar between the two 'nodes' of the Main Arts and Science site, linking upper and lower Bangor, and linking the 'cultural quarter with the 'science and technology' quarter.

- 5.5. **Bangor City Council** assumed this title since Bangor was accorded official City status in 1974. The Council has 20 Councillors serving 8 wards, and is the focal point for the community in Bangor. It is physically central to the City, with its offices right in the heart of the commercial centre.

It has a relatively significant budget, with a precept for 2016/17 set at £331,532.00. It is responsible for a number of services and facilities, most notably the Pier. It also jointly manages public toilets and was responsible for leading the applications for both Town Centre Partnership and Business Improvement District funds to Welsh Government.

Bangor City also owns the Pier, and has invested significant sums into its maintenance and development.

It offers a "community voice" on a consistent and democratically accountable basis, and although its resources are limited in comparison to the University and Gwynedd Council, it provides strategic and pragmatic input into the regeneration process. Most recently this has manifested itself (very noticeably and emphatically) through its lead in rolling out and administering the "Painting Scheme" across the High Street.

- 5.6. **Betsi Cadwaldr University Health Board.** Bangor has a historic long-standing role in providing health care services at a sub-regional level; in the 20th Century this manifested itself most particularly through it's the C&A Hospital (Caernarfon and Anglesey) which stood on what is now Morrison's Supermarket and the St David's Maternity Hospital which operated from 1910 to 1985.

The two hospital operations, as well as other local services were brought together in the Mid 80s when Ysbyty Gwynedd opened. This Hospital, located in Penrhosgarnedd, is also the Headquarters of the Betsi Cadwaldr Health Board for the whole of North Wales.

On a strategic level, the Operation Plan for 2015/16 notes that:

- *“We will demonstrate that the care and treatments we provide are safe, effective and compassionate, fitting with the approach of “Prudent Healthcare”.*
- *We will develop a workforce who have broad skills, are inquisitive, valued, well led and effectively managed.*
- ***We will work closely in partnership with our local authority, third sector and other partners, to deliver services and support communities.***
- ***We will build on our distinctive and innovative relationship with Bangor University and work closely with other Higher Education bodies, to translate outstanding research, learning and innovation into better health and wellbeing services”***

From this brief summary it can be seen that the Health Board plays a fundamental role in the future of the City. It has a significant physical and strategic presence, and its services and support are key to addressing many of Bangor’s current ills.

Our consultation with the Health Board indicates a willingness to fulfil the objectives of working in Partnership and to have a seat on the Partnership.

As noted above, the relationship with the University is also of key importance; and the opportunity for the City to support and benefit from this “distinctive and innovative” relationship cannot be underestimated.

5.7. **Grwp Llandrillo Menai.** In a similar vein to Ysbyty Gwynedd, Grwp Llandrillo Menai has a long established physical relationship with the City. Bangor Technical College, then Gwynedd Technical College, played a key role in the provision of Further Education in the region.

As part of the wider Group, Llandrillo Menai, the Menai site on Ffriddoedd Road, continues to play a strategic role in the life of City.

The Strategic Plan for 2015-218 has four key objectives; those being to:

- Achieve excellent student success
- Support employer skills needs in a growing North Wales economy.
- Deliver education and training opportunities through effective networks and partnerships
- Be a sustainable and financially stable organisation.

All four have a relevance to this vision and strategy.

Of key significance is the College's current deliberations regarding its site at Bangor. Much of the building complex was originally developed in the 1960s and early 1970s. The Management team is currently reviewing its options as to the future of the site, and we understand that a number of options are currently being considered.

Engagement with Grwp Llandrillo Menai is an important facet of the development of the Vision and Strategy, not just in relation to the Ffriddoedd Road, but across its array of services and activities.

The Group Principal has confirmed the College's commitment to engaging with the Partnership on an ongoing basis, and this relationship should be nurtured and supported.

5.8. Strategic Housing Partnership. Housing is undoubtedly one of the key issues that needs to be addressed in relation to the future development, prosperity and wellbeing of Bangor.

With over 25%² of housing stock rented out by Social Landlords, as compared to a Gwynedd average of 16.3% and All Wales average of 16.5%, the role and influence of this section of the housing market cannot be underestimated.

As elaborated in greater detail later in the report, despite significant Social Landlord provision, and another 30% privately rented, current Gwynedd Council figures show that there are 460 people on the Housing Register awaiting placement.

A further factor is the significant preponderance of HMOs in the City, with 88% of such properties in Gwynedd, located in Bangor.

It should also be noted that the Housing Associations have, and continue to play a wider social and economic role in regenerating communities. Across Gwynedd and the wider region the RSLs operating in Bangor have developed innovative and sustainable projects which have enhanced and supported communities. Such approaches need to be adopted and encouraged in the context of Bangor (recognising that much laudable work has already taken place).

A formal Strategic Housing Partnership for Gwynedd exists; this encompasses the

² Source = 2011 Census

Registered Social Landlords, and Gwynedd Council as the strategic organisation responsible for directing Welsh Government Housing funding in the County.

It is recommended that the Strategic Partnership has a formal seat around the Partnership table.

5.9. Private Sector (Business Improvement District). One of the noteworthy features of the vitality of the City over the last two years has been the establishment of a Business Improvement District for the Commercial Centre. This has provided a coherent and consistent voice for the Private Sector Bangor, and it has played a pivotal role in the development of this vision and strategy over the last 18 months.

Albeit that the private sector is much more than the City Centre, with significant organisations across the City, from Caernarfon Road to Llandegai Industrial Estate and Parc Menai, nevertheless it does, for the first time offer a cogent and sustainable voice for key section of the business community. As such its input at the strategic level is warranted.

5.10. Other Strategic Partners. There are a number of other organisations who have a critical role to play; as noted earlier North Wales Police and the Cathedral both offer unique and important inputs into the development of this strategy and vision. Whether either has the capacity or prioritisation within their respective organisations is yet to be determined.

5.11. Community engagement has proved to be most difficult to resolve. The People of Bangor Community Group has a prominence within the City, but involvement has been intermittent and inconsistent. There also issues relating to the organisation's ability to represent the voice of all communities within Bangor.

However, although this is a "tough nut to crack", the Partnership needs to consider how it can ensure that the Vision and Strategy takes its citizens with it, and considers new and innovative ways to engage with its communities. Working with the University and the RSLs may provide a part solution to this; as between them they represent a significant proportion of the residents of the City.

5.12. Other Partners. The delivery of this Vision and Strategy is predicated on having a Strategic Partnership, underpinned by three work-streams focused on the three themes of Development and Environment; Economy and Promotion, and Housing, Health and Wellbeing. We will address this in greater detail in the next section.

6. Sustainable Models for Future Delivery

6.1. The initial Stakeholder Analysis undertaken in 2015 noted that the Partnership should be:

“...composed of the key stakeholders and that it should be supported by a host organisation with the capacity and resources to effectively manage and coordinate the process.”

and that

“Thematic Groups are established to take forward the delivery of specific elements of the Development Strategy and Action Plan, led by a specific stakeholder or key influencing Stakeholder and include relevant influencing and impacted stakeholders.”

Terms of Reference for the Strategic Partnership and Thematic Groups are attached as Appendix III.

There is evidently a good working relationship between some of the key stakeholders in Bangor. However, there is no doubt that some relationships could be improved, and others revisited to reflect changing dynamics locally, and policy changes regionally and nationally.

Through the consultation process it has also been evident that there is a will and desire amongst others to work with the team in developing joint projects. Nevertheless, however worthwhile the intentions, without a sustainable or semi sustainable organisation in place, history elsewhere in Wales and the UK, suggests that the partnership will ultimately fail.

There is therefore a critical need to determine, which model or organisational structure, if any, has the capacity, focus and commitment to drive the regeneration of the City forward.

6.2. Structure

Our review has confirmed the need for the TCP to revisit its purpose and defined relationship and for it to be underpinned by effective project management, capacity and resources and authority.

The key principles for the TCP is that it should ultimately carry its own authority to make decisions on the resources made available to it, i.e. the TCP funding and other possible external funding sources.

Moving forward the TCP will to have to adopt a more robust Project Management Process and not only deliver but also monitor and measure its progress against the outputs and outcomes expected by Welsh Government. This will entail having a robust, sustainable and commercially viable Administrative Lead Body, responsible for coordinating the process ensuring that expert advice is obtained ; co-opting relevant officers and members onto Project Teams, and developing tangible and meaningful links with other relevant collaborative endeavours, most particularly in partnership with the BID and key organisation such as the University.

Ideally this should be a stand-alone organisation with a singular focus on revitalising and growing the economy and prosperity of the City. Below are some options for the partnership's considerations.

6.3. Organisational Options

It is recognised and acknowledged that the University, Gwynedd Council and Welsh Government, and potentially the Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) will potentially be the major players in terms of resources and strategic input. However, all of these have specific remits and have perspectives beyond the City itself (albeit that the University is predominantly based in the City, its reach and role is much wider). Realistically only an organisation which has its roots and responsibilities focused on the City itself can meaningfully offer such a solution.

6.4. Options for Delivery

There are a number of other options that can be considered:

Business Improvement District.

Its strengths include:

- A sustainable income stream for the short to medium term
- Captures the voice of the sector
- A dedicated officer
- Potential to apply for other grant funding and develop assets.

Weaknesses:

- Very limited capacity (at present)
- New organisation, with little experience in this arena.
- City Centre focused, not City wide. Retail dominant.
- Private Sector focused.

Bangor City Council

Its strengths include:

- A resilient host organisation, with political legitimacy and deep rooted in the City.
- Leading on the partnership
- Dedicated staff
- An appreciation of key issues locally and an ability to engage with the community

Weaknesses:

- Very limited capacity to engage and lead on activities beyond current programme activities
- Lack of consensus amongst councillors about the priorities and the City Council's role.
- Programme Management infrastructure not in place.

People of Bangor Community Group

Its strengths include:

- Community based
- Experience of running City based activities
- Local legitimacy

Weaknesses:

- Uncertainty over the future of the group
- Limited capacity and experience
- Not fully engaged with all quarters of the City (at present)
- No robust programme management processes in place.

New Organisation (Bangor Development Trust)

In the absence of another organisation "stepping into the breach", the establishment of a new social enterprise or third sector organisation with its focus on revitalising the city centre and leading the partnership also s to be considered.

Whilst the implications of the Williams Report on the reorganisation of local government may see a somewhat different outcome to that envisaged before the last Assembly Elections (due to a change of Ministers); without doubt the ability of Local Authorities to intervene and lead on specifically local initiatives is becoming more and more restricted.

Any new organisation will have to grow organically and in a pragmatic and measured fashion. Nevertheless, it may also to consider long term asset development and sustainable income generation. The prospect of negotiating asset transfers with the Local Authority and other public, private and third parties could be a long term consideration for the organisation as it grows.

Potential Strengths could include:

- Meets a strategic and community need
- No historic "baggage"
- Best practice examples elsewhere and peer support through organisations such as WCVA, Development Trust Association, etc.

Weaknesses:

- Potential duplication with other organisations
- No assets and no capacity
- Risk heavy
- Community scepticism
- Absence of parent organisation or social entrepreneur willing to take responsibility.

6.5. Asset Transfer

Although cumbersome, nevertheless the prospect of negotiating asset transfers with the Local Authority and other public, private and third parties could be a long term consideration for the Partnership as it grows. However, it will need to have a vehicle to do so A development trust with a focus on developing above shops for offices and intervening in the market to buy other properties in the City Centre,

could therefore be an option.

6.6. Programme Office

If the proposed strategy and vision gains momentum and secures the resources to deliver against the Action Plan outlined in this strategy, then a dedicated Programme Office will be required.

To a great extent, this would address the debate about which organisation should lead the Partnership moving forward (at least in the short to medium term), and allow the Partnership sufficient time to determine the most vehicle for the long term delivery of the Programme.

Under the Vibrant and Viable Places programme certain areas applied for and were successful in obtaining funding for the management and coordination of activities.

During the consultation with Local Authorities in 2013/14, and in response to the initial bids, Welsh Government noted the following: i

"Concern was raised as to the level of resource needed to deliver major schemes at a time when local authority staffing structures are under increasing pressure".

Since then pressure on Local Authorities and other public bodies has increased, and the need for a dedicated resource to manage this process is ever more evident.

Whichever organisation leads on submitting an application on behalf of the Partnership for funds (should funding programmes become available), it is recommended that the Programme Office is located day to day at the City Council, or within practical working reach.

This would allow for a locally based dedicated project team who could work with all the key stakeholders and local delivery partners. Whilst responsibility for delivering projects will reflect the most appropriate arrangement for each project, each project manager will report on a consistent basis to the programme manager, who will then report to the Partnership"

7. Themes and Action Plan

7.1. In developing themes and Action Plan for the Strategy and Vision for Bangor there are two underlying governing strategic ambitions which it is recommended that the Partnership aligns itself with, and strives to achieve.

These are:

- The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015
- The 10 key factors that make a City Great.

Both of these have been addressed in detail earlier in the report, but the morality and strategic alignment of the former, and the rationale and business logic of striving for the latter offer a robust template against which to overlay the Programme of Activities.

In the Action Plan and Project Profiles we will illustrate how each intervention meets one or more of the objectives of both.

Below we set out the three key themes for driving the Strategy forward, namely:

- Development and the Environment
- Economy and Promotion
- Housing, Health and Wellbeing

7.2. Development and the Environment

As outlined elsewhere, the first objective of this study is to develop and embed robust management structures for the City Centre Partnership.

Phase two is to, ‘...develop a cohesive strategic economically driven vision and regeneration programme for the City Centre.’ One of the key themes within this Strategy is Development and Environment.

The focus of the study is to be practical and ‘investment ready’. The work put forward under the theme of Development and Environment should be directed towards this goal.

The aims of creating a better environment and improving the economic prospects of the city should not be regarded as separate aims. If approached correctly, they are

symbiotic and not exclusive.

7.2.1. Review of Previous Studies

Over many years there have been numerous studies and resulting programmes of work for implementation which have sought to analyse and improve the built environment of Bangor.

Some have been addressed almost exclusively towards improving the built environment others with a closer focus towards generating a beneficial economic effect. As mentioned above in 1.4 the two shouldn't be mutually exclusive.

It is worth stating that many of these studies have taken place in times when resources for investment in public realm works were more readily available. Even allowing for this, one of the striking factors when reviewing these studies are the gaps in implementation. None have been implemented in full and some hardly at all.

The most recent relevant study commissioned was undertaken by Taylor Young, 'Bangor Public Realm Strategy and Implementation Plan', and reported in December 2009. The brief for this study was to,

'...provide a foundation for transformational change,' and to,

'...strengthen 'investor confidence (be that... business, property or the intellectual and human capital of the City.'

The Taylor Young study was very thorough in its analysis of the, then, current situation and aspirational in the suggested proposals. It also incorporated extensive public consultation which guided the proposals put forward.

The Taylor Young Study envisaged a ten-year implementation programme so technically we are still within this period. The Implementation Plan was prioritised, phased, costed and judged on deliverability. There have been notable parts of the plan which have been implemented, in particular the works to the High Street including the 'timeline' interpretation and the opening up of Tan y Fynwent gardens. There have been different reactions to these schemes on completion. This is a largely anecdotal comment but, whereas the Tan y Fynwent scheme has been received with almost total acclaim there have been mixed comments regarding the High Street works, particularly in relation to the

cost.

Perhaps it is to be expected given the very ambitious nature of the Implementation Plan but large parts of the proposed works have not been implemented. In particular one might highlight suggested actions relating to Deiniol Road, the Railway Station and the Shop Front Improvement Scheme; although it should be noted that some of the unimplemented schemes were not given the highest priority.

With regard to previous reports, in the last twenty five years there have been many reports on many different but related topics, Urban Design and Heritage, Transport, Public Realm, Development Opportunities. Clearly, the further one goes back in time the less relevant the proposals and their implementation become but the principal relevant studies and their consequences are noted below:

- **Bangor Urban Design and Conservation Study November 1995**
- **Appraisal and Conservation Area Review March 1996**
- **Environmental Improvements Report, March 1996.**

These three linked studies, all undertaken by BDP, undertook a detailed appraisal followed by suggestions for redefining the Conservation Areas and for three major areas of Environmental Improvements.

Following the reports, no changes were made to the Conservation Areas and only one of the environmental schemes was partly implemented.

- **Bangor Conservation Area, Conservation Plan and Delivery Strategy, January 2002**

These linked studies were carried out by TACP and focussed on the built environment, both in how Bangor might benefit from a scheme to improve the built fabric and on public realm works within the Conservation Area.

Neither the suggested changes to the Conservation Areas nor the suggested Environmental Improvements were implemented.

From this brief review it can be seen that many thorough and detailed studies, from Taylor Young back into the mid 1990s, have been carried out by well-known and respected practitioners. Their conclusions have either not been implemented in full or occasionally not at all. The implementation of the suggested schemes has either not enjoyed the full support of the

commissioning bodies or there have been insufficient resources to implement them.

7.2.2. Public Consultation

The main themes and outcomes of the consultation process are covered elsewhere within the report. This section will address the main themes and outcomes as they apply to and impact upon Development and Environment.

The principal areas of consultation were with Gwynedd Council, University of Bangor, individual businesses and Network Rail. The main themes are noted below but individual respondents are not identified.

- Transport, its infrastructure, usage and possible improvements, was a common theme amongst all respondents. The main issues raised were:
 - The importance of the Railway Station, its setting and approaches.
 - Parking, differing views were received but the majority felt that parking was not as great a problem as often perceived. Pricing was felt to be an issue with some inconsistencies noted.
 - The importance of the gateways into Bangor were mentioned frequently particularly those from Holyhead Road and Caernarfon Road.

- The Built Environment and the Public Realm also featured frequently in the consultations. Foremost amongst the points raised were:
 - The physical condition of properties in the city centre, particularly along High Street.
 - Empty properties and rundown buildings were often raised as being both aesthetically jarring and a hindrance to economic well-being.
Particular points which were raised were poor condition of shop fronts, windows on upper elevations in poor condition, and defective rainwater goods causing staining.

- Public Realm works, both those which have been undertaken and areas which need addressing, were the subject of many comments but with a divergence of opinions. Many felt that large sums of money had been spent with little impact. Principal amongst these were the relatively

recently works in the High Street.

- There were specific areas mentioned as being in need of attention; these included the Bible Gardens and Bowling Green area and in particular the Railway Station area and Deiniol Road. The importance of this area as a gateway for visitors to Bangor was frequently stressed.
- A comment which was made more than once was, that in relation to public realm works it was important to do things well and to a high standard even if this meant a smaller area was addressed.
- The importance of footpaths and linkages to the periphery was mentioned, particularly those around Hirael bay and Bangor Mountain.
- The use of buildings, in particular flexibility of use, was another point frequently made. Better use of upper floors, particularly in the commercial area and particularly for professional uses was a recurring point. It was felt that public sector users, in particular educational uses would be more in touch with their communities and have a more beneficial economic impact if they were located in the heart of the city.

It was felt to be very important that such flexibility of uses was not hindered by policy considerations.

- Proposed out of town uses, in particular the proposal to locate leisure uses at the Bryn Cegin site, did raise some concerns but on the whole the reaction was positive with most respondents believing that it would add to the attractiveness of Bangor as a location.

7.2.3. Development and Environment –Themes and Areas of Action

This section will endeavour to identify themes and areas of action which will be beneficial to Development and the Environment. These can be developed to be part of the Strategy and Action Plan by identifying projects but they must be realistic, achievable and focussed towards economic and social benefit for the city.

Building Fabric. The condition of the building fabric, particularly within the retail core is an issue. Bangor famously has an extremely long High Street and a retail core much more extended than would normally be expected of an urban area of this size. Changes in retail practices have seen great pressure on the

retail area, particularly at the periphery.

Retail Core. Although by no means unique to Bangor this contraction of the retail core has led to vacancies and buildings which, in many cases understandably, are not maintained to a high standard.

Built Environment A preliminary visual external examination of the buildings has highlighted many problems with the buildings, these can be broken down into a number of areas.

- Roofs – some slipped and missing slates apparent and in some cases roofs that are approaching the end of their life.
- Rainwater goods – Deterioration of cast iron goods leading to corrosion, leakage and staining. Blocked gutters leading to overflows, staining and potential damage.
- Facades – Above street level there are units where a lack of repair and maintenance is clearly causing problems.
- Shopfronts - Tired frontages, sometimes in good traditional units which are potentially attractive but lack of maintenance, often just cosmetic, does not show them at their best.
- Details – There are many buildings within the retail area where fine traditional detailing, for example plasterwork and iron work, is either in need of attention or is not shown to its best effect.

This is not just a question of visual appearance and aesthetics, although that is important. The public face of buildings can help to create a positive atmosphere and encourage confidence, both for the building owner and the public. There is an economic dimension underlying the public face.

Public Spaces. As outlined above, over the years there have been several studies and a great deal of money spent on public realm works. When designed and implemented successfully these can have a very beneficial effect, much in the same way as works to improve buildings. A positive economic effect can be generated by effective public realm works.

However, as already mentioned many of the schemes which have resulted from the studies, though undoubtedly well intentioned and designed, have not been implemented or others which have made it off the drawing board have had mixed responses.

There are several areas within the city which are candidates for further

attention; the principal amongst these are discussed below:

- **The Railway Station and approaches.** The importance of the Railway Station to Bangor has been noted. With such a high population of students in relation to the residents it has a particularly high impact on first impressions on arrival in Bangor.

The separation and perceived isolation of the station from the city by both distance and by the Highway configuration is unfortunate. In essentials it cannot be changed but it may be ameliorated.

In recent years, extensive renovation has taken place to the station buildings, including the Grade II listed original station building, and to the car parking arrangements with additional space provided at a new location to the Caernarfon Road direction of the station.

In discussions with Network Rail it is apparent that although there are plans for some works to re-point walls and re-roofing to prevent water ingress but no plans for large scale maintenance. However, they are always willing to discuss ideas and would be happy to engage with the Bangor Partnership. One area of discussion centred on possible improvements on the entry to Bangor along Caernarfon Road and particularly the railway bridges. Network Rail were very happy to discuss ideas but sounded a note of caution in relation to the high costs which might be incurred due to safety and operational considerations.

- **Deiniol Road.** Although the main thoroughfare thorough the city and straddled by important uses on both sides, Deiniol Road has tended to be somewhat forgotten in terms of proposals for its improvement.

As part of a wider estates strategy, Bangor University is currently developing ambitious plans to revitalise its science teaching and research facilities located along Deiniol Road. The estimated £60m redevelopment will allow the University to co-locate much of these activities on one site where new, multi-disciplinary teaching facilities will be available. This in due course will see Electronic Engineering and Computer Sciences moving from Dean Street to the Science and Technology Quarter. The announcement by the university of a major investment in and regeneration of its estate will give a new context to consideration of works, both on public and university land. This includes the possibility of creation of 'green areas' within the envelope of the

science site, together with improvements of access from the railway station, both aesthetically and in terms of road layout/street furnishings. It would be a missed opportunity if this were not given close consideration in respect of its impact on the wider area, together with potential uses for the vacated Dean Street area.

- **Bible Garden.** This is an important but rather forgotten space in a central public area in the city. Its position near to the Cathedral, the former Bishop's Palace housing the Storiell venture, and on important pedestrian routes makes it a key area for consideration in respect of improvement works. With imaginative design and implementation, a scheme could make the Bible Garden as important and successful as Tan y Fynwent. The owners, Bangor Diocese, should be engaged regarding the future of the space.
- **Other Public Areas.** There are other public areas, for example, the Bowling Green, Bishop's Palace and Police Station area which are important and would benefit, and benefit the city by improvement. However, the watchwords to considering public realm improvements must be resources and priorities. It is highly unlikely that, however desirable, a city wide programme of Public Realm improvements would be fully funded.

If resources are to be gained it is likely to be as part of a programme within which physical works are only a part and therefore realistically only the highest priorities should be pursued and these should be targeted towards those schemes with the greatest beneficial social and economic impact.

- **Use of Buildings.** Underuse of buildings, particularly of upper floors, is a problem Bangor shares with many towns and cities. Increased use of these upper floors would be beneficial to the individual buildings and the general economy.

Quantification of the extent of the underuse of upper floors is not an easy task. Much anecdotal evidence exists and enquiries have been made of the District Valuer's office and they could be commissioned to carry out work. It may be that a property by property, on the ground survey, would yield the best results and at the same time identify those buildings most suitable and owners most likely to pursue the matter.

There are two main avenues to be followed in identifying possible upper floor uses. One is for residential in a 'living above the shop', initiative. Another is for use of upper floors for business/ professional use. The presence of commercial and professional services within the city centre has declined markedly in recent years partly due to a lack of suitable accommodation.

During the consultation it was strongly suggested that public bodies of all kinds might actively consider such accommodation.

The economic and social benefits of such a scheme are clear. Both residential and commercial use of the upper floors would not only safeguard buildings and bring them into better beneficial use but also contribute to the social fabric and economic benefit of the area.

- **Policy.** One area which should be, and to an extent is being, addressed is the policy background. It is encouraging to see the draft Gwynedd/ Anglesey Joint Local Development Plan proposing a more flexible approach to use and a contraction of the High Street.
- **The Pier.** It has long been recognised that the Pier is an important resource for Bangor but that it does not perhaps have the economic impact it might have. The geographic location is a given but its attractiveness, and therefore its contribution, to the rest of the City might be improved in a number of ways.

The City Council, as well as looking at the structural integrity of the Pier and instigating work programmes to address these, is currently examining a number of proposals, individually quite small but cumulatively important, to improve the attractiveness of the Pier.

As the structure is a Grade II* listed building these have been discussed with the authorities from a heritage viewpoint and will be discussed further within the City Council before decisions are made.

- **Parc Bryn Cegin.** Bryn Cegin was identified and developed as a major high quality employment site for Bangor and the wider area in the late 1990s onwards, initially by the Welsh Development Agency and later by the Welsh Government. It arose out of a need for employment areas of a high standard given the lack of available space at Parc Menai.

Development at the site has been disappointingly slow with no occupiers at present. Part of the site has now been earmarked for leisure uses and a preferred bidder has been selected by Welsh Government to develop the site as ‘...a dedicated family leisure park to give North West Wales a local and tourist perspective.’ The company and Welsh Government are currently in contract negotiation and finalisation and sale will be dependent on securing Planning Consent.

Such an edge of town location does have implications for the city core and there are risks involved in terms of competition and drawing activity out of the centre. However, the mix of uses proposed and the creation of a leisure interest on the fringe of the city together with stimulation it may give to further development on Parc Bryn Cegin may be acceptable.

7.2.4. Action Plan

The Bangor Development Strategy Brief states that the third phase of the commission will be the formulation of an Action Plan, ‘... *for the overall strategy and specific themes.*’

The projects which are pursued within the Action Plan with regard to the specific theme of Development and Environment will be very important to its success.

Funding is clearly critical. It is likely that the funding streams pursued will encompass more than physical works but that physical works will be an important and very visible element. This work will have to be prioritised to gain the greatest impact.

The following themes should be followed up within the Action Plan:

- 7.2.4.1. **Address the issue of poor building fabric within the retail area** – it projects a poor image and is a barrier to investment.

This work should have two strands. Firstly, continuation and possible extension of the present Painting Scheme to address the external appearance. Although ‘cosmetic’, schemes such as this can have a marked impact on an area.

Secondly, the introduction of a scheme to address more

fundamental problems with building fabric. Whatever mechanism is used to deliver this it is vital to the future prosperity of the city that assistance is delivered.

Dependant on the level of funding, these schemes can be concentrated or spread more widely to achieve impact.

- 7.2.4.2. **Public Realm works.** These should be focussed and prioritised to make the best advantage of what are likely to be scarce resources. Priority should be given to those areas where most impact is to be gained and where other investments can be supported and enhanced.

Likely candidates are, The Railway Environs, Deiniol Road, and the Bible Garden.

Improvements to the Pier are important projects in their own right and, although possibly stand alone, should be seen as an important element of Public Realm works.

- 7.2.4.3. **Better use of Upper Floors,** particularly within the core retail area. More use of upper floors for residential, professional and other commercial uses would undoubtedly be of great benefit to Bangor on a number of levels. Greater flexibility is important and the possibility of working with private and third sector organisations is an important factor in bringing this to fruition. Such a scheme would form a valuable part of the Action Plan.

- 7.2.4.4. **Cultural Quarter & Science and Technology Quarter.** The development of the Cultural Quarter is now to be complemented by the redevelopment of the University's Campus on Deiniol Road and its transformation into a Science and Technology Quarter. Pontio, with its dual innovation and arts focus is both a physical and metaphoric link between these two quarters, naturally merging the two physically.

Initial plans to provide enhancements through interpretation, signage and physical links have been discussed for the Cultural Quarter. Interpretative and Urban Design expertise is now required to provide the sense of place that will transform a notion into reality.

Similarly, the transformation of the Deiniol Road site offers the opportunity for a more “hospitable” and pedestrian friendly environment, and if complemented by appropriate environmental and interpretative solutions on the opposite parts of the road, will offer a more cohesive and welcoming link between the Train Station and the City Centre itself.

- 7.2.4.5. **Additional Quarters.** We would propose a soft designation of other parts of the city to further "zone" the city into designated quarters. In particular we would suggest that the High Street from the Cathedral up to Kyffin Square be focused on café culture and artisan/specialist shops (Artisan Quarter). Between the Cathedral down to the Clock and its immediate environs be the focus for mainstream retail / multiples (Retail Quarter/Heart of Bangor). Further down we would suggest that the encouragement of new professional and arts/cultural businesses be encouraged (particularly above shops), becoming the Business/Professional quarter.

7.3. The Economy and Promotion

7.3.1. The City Centre Offer.

Bangor’s commercial centre and wider environs can boast a number of positives and is well placed to build on its assets and attributes moving forward.

These include:

- A cluster of well-maintained and historically significant buildings and locations, including the Cathedral, Bible Garden, Kyffin Square, University Campus, Bishop’s Palace, Pier, Roman Camp and Clock Tower.
- Pontio. Undoubtedly this flagship development is key to the City’s future prosperity. Increased footfall supporting the commercial centre of the City, and raising the profile of Bangor academically, culturally and commercially.
- Storiel. Located at the former Bishop’s Palace, this will again increase footfall, and has already increased visitor numbers significantly since opening in raising the profile and reinforcing the historic and cultural heritage of Bangor.
- The development of a “Cultural Quarter” to bring the above components together to create a greater sense of place and a more holistic appreciation of all the City’s cultural, historic and artistic

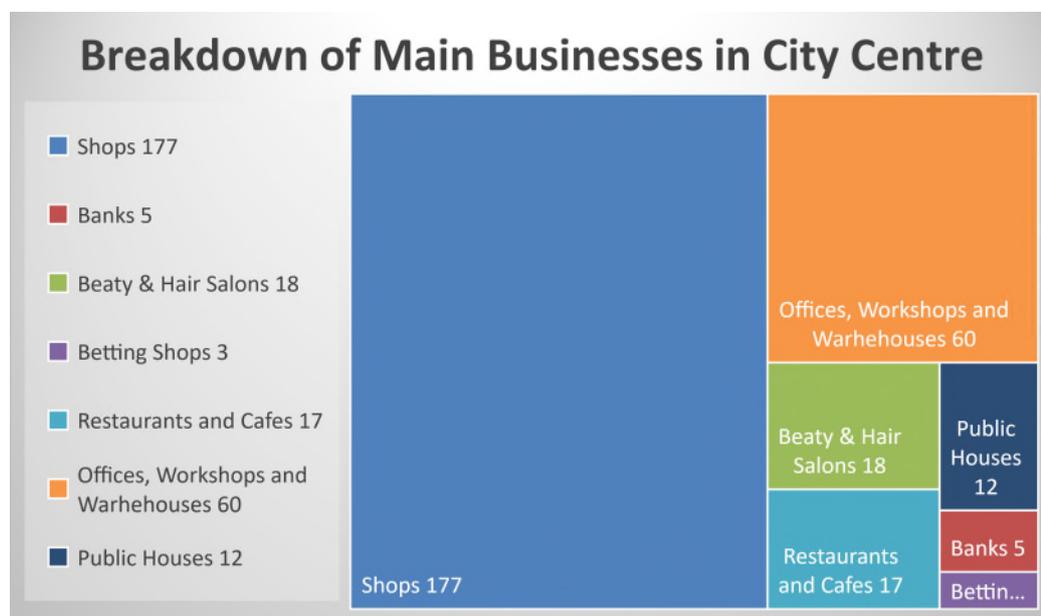
heritage and current offer.

- The recognised Sub Regional Centre for Anglesey and Gwynedd, and this is reflected in its role as the primary retail centre for the two Local Authority areas.
- A University with a positive reputation and world renowned academic expertise within its corridors.
- A significant Further Education Presence on the periphery in Coleg Menai (part of Grwp Llandrillo Menai – the largest FE in Wales).
- A significant student population and academic population. With over 10000 students in the University it helps create a sense of vibrancy (on occasions) and helps sustain and develop the diverse offer of the city centre.
- The Market – The introduction of the Market on a Friday has improved the “hustle and bustle” feel of the City Centre and has helped improve the prosperity of the High Street and Garth Road, as well as the Deiniol Centre.
- Student Accommodation. During the last few years there has been a significant change in the accommodation offer for Students in Bangor, and a number of Private Sector initiated and University led developments have changed the quality and dynamic of this key component of the City’s performance. It has also helped improve the environment of key buildings. Bringing more students into the city itself will also, if managed correctly, help to increase the footfall and support a night time economy.

7.3.2. Commerce.

The breakdown of businesses in the main City Centre, including tenants in the Deiniol and Menai Centres demonstrated the following:

Table 5 - Breakdown of Businesses in City Centre



Source - Gwynedd Council Business Rates

As one would expect, the profile demonstrates that the City Centre is dominated by shops; although it does not reflect the breakdown of the type of shop. It also shows a relatively small number of restaurants and cafes (and includes multiples such as Costa Coffee and Nero). Indeed, there are more beauty and hair salons across the City Centre than there are places to get a bite to eat or a drink.

For a City of its size, with a University of 10,000+ students and 2000 professional staff, this particularly stands out. In addition, there are only some 12 pubs, and very few which are of a type which encourages out of town visits.

The number of offices, workshops and warehouse is somewhat limited too (as was expected), although perhaps higher than originally envisaged. It also demonstrates that there is significant potential to increase this area of activity.

Most notably, the Centre of the City itself has no Hotels or Guest Houses. Although the wider commercial area contains five, with another 3 of note on the periphery.

Despite the loss of some key retailers, it should also be stressed that the City Centre still retains a number of well-known and well regarded High Street Chains, including Debenhams, Marks and Spencer, River Island and Boots. Indeed, it is the primary retail destination for Anglesey and Gwynedd, although

much of that activity is currently driven by the offer on Caernarfon Road.

There are also two shopping centres of note, the Menai Centre and Deiniol Centre, and between them they house a significant proportion of the more prominent multiples.

There are also a small number of specialist shops, which if clustered together could potentially, offer a different shopping experience. As it is, however, these shops tend to be dispersed across the whole High Street.

However, reflecting the declining fabric of the buildings themselves, many of the shops are struggling commercially, and there are concerns about the long term vitality of the retail centre, most particularly, but not exclusively at the periphery.

7.3.3. Negatives.

There are a number of key issues prevailing against the growth of the retail core:

- As noted earlier, and as often cited, the High Street is extremely long, convoluted and without a real sense of place (at present).
- Competition from Caernarfon Road. Rather than providing a magnet to the City, it predominantly attracts shoppers to the periphery. Indeed, the traffic congestion caused by the Caernarfon Road shoppers, particularly at the weekend, presents a barrier to those who wish to visit the Centre itself.
- Business Rates continues to be a perceived prohibiting factor. The average rateable value of commercial premises in the City Centre (High Street, Kyffin, Menai and Deiniol Centres) was £33,715 ³in 2014/16 Although this drops significantly to £21, 815 when the two main Centres are taken out of the equation.

However, when one considers that the average West Cheshire and Chester non domestic rateable value for the same year was £36k then the higher figure appear “high”. The Wales average for 2014/15 was £22k, with Gwynedd and Ynys Mon figures as a whole averaging at £14k.⁴

³ Source – Gwynedd Council Hereditament Figures for Bangor 2014/15.

⁴ Source – UK Government, Official Statistics - Non-domestic rating: Stock of properties July 2015

- A lack of welcome and sense of place. The main arterial routes into Bangor, from Caernarfon Road, Holyhead Road and the A5 as it approaches past Maesgeirchen and into Hirael, offer little in the way of welcoming signage, and environmental enhancements. Indeed, the approach into the City from Caernarfon Road towards the Railway bridge has a sense of “gloominess” and foreboding at present.

This lack of welcome, interpretation and signage is not limited to the main road routes. A similar issue arises when alighting from a train at the station. There is very little to inform you that you are arriving at a City with a world renowned University, the oldest Cathedral Foundation in the UK, one of Wales’ finest Victorian Piers, one of the most successful non- league football clubs of all time a wealth of shops, and now Pontio and Storiell.

More generally there is a consensus that the Bangor lacks a strategy for signage and interpretation. What there is less than inspiring, haphazard and inconsistent.

- A dearth of family attractions, albeit that Pontio and Storiell have begun to address this, and the Pier offers some form of recreational / leisure experience, there does not seem to be a significant
- Few major events of significance that bring people in from outside the City itself.
- Too few quality High Street multiples. Although there are a small number (as noted above), there are not enough to compete to with the pull of other major centres, most particularly Llandudno.
- The absence of a professional sector. Consultation and research over the last twelve months has suggested that there is a continuing decline in the professional sector, and that Parc Menai in particular has drawn this sector of the business community out of the heart of Bangor.

Our own analysis of the position, based on site visits and analysing Local Authority data on business rates in the City confirmed this position. As much as anything else this has a significant effect on the performance of the retail centre. On any lunch time most major towns and cities benefit from the professional sector “sandwich and salad economy”, and it is evident that footfall increases during this peak period. A mid-week lunch time visit to the centre of Bangor would reveal a completely different picture. The absence of this sector, with a typically higher disposable

income average, undoubtedly has an impact on the prosperity of the City Centre.

- Absence of a night time economy. This was mentioned consistently. Although there are a small number of bars and clubs open, the offer is “limited” and the Centre is not noted as a night time destination. Indeed, some mentioned that parts of the City Centre were considered “no go areas” during the night time.
- Parking. In simple terms many consultees felt that there were too few car parking spaces; that they were too expensive and not easy to get to and navigate. However, one consultee did say that he felt that this was more perception than reality.
- Student Accommodation. Although there are significant positive dimensions, there was some caution expressed, and concerns that it could also inadvertently lead to “ghettoised” areas through the displacement of students from existing housing stock, and the decline of a significant percentage of that stock into HMOs. This will reinforce the negative perceptions of the City, and arguably also reduce spend per capita in the middle of Bangor.

7.3.4. The Solutions

To optimise Bangor’s strengths, and eradicate any lacunas in the City’s offer will require an integrated programme of support. The environmental and physical solutions have already been addressed above. Here the solutions for business and commerce are outlined, packaged into discrete but interrelated programmes of support.

It is recognised that there is a wider business population in the and around the City, particularly centred particularly on Llandegai Industrial Estate on the A5, Parc Menai on the A55/North Wales expressway to the west of Bangor, and in and around Caernarfon Road.

However, for the purposes of this strategy the priority and focus must be the businesses within the heart of Bangor; the shops, pubs, restaurants and offices that provide the commercial vitality that keep Bangor’s heart beating.

The approach proposed encompasses:

- Business Support
- Marketing and Promotion & Events

7.3.4.1. Business Support

The strategy and vision should look to provide the appropriate support to the business population of the City Centre. It is recommended that the Partnership come together, bringing in other business support providers and external agencies as appropriate, to develop a bespoke package of support for the City.

This support should focus on allowing businesses to exploit the opportunities, both existing and forthcoming, and help support them address any current failings within the businesses themselves, and overcome any external barriers that are currently prohibiting them for prospering and growing.

It should also encourage and promote new business development within the City Centre, creating the right environment for new enterprises and clusters to form and grow, particularly where there are current gaps e.g. in the professional sector.

Primarily, the work should be driven through the Business Improvement District (BID), its Board and Officer.

The following package is proposed as an initial consideration for the Partnership:

- Above Shops Initiative
- Professional Sector Cluster Development
- Bangor Investment Fund
- Retail Advisory Service
- Rates Relief Grant
- Business Engagement & BID Support

Above Shops Initiative

The Above Shops initiative has three interrelated purposes:

- Increasing the presence of the Professional and other business sectors on the High Street and therefore increasing footfall and spend.
- Supporting existing businesses through generating additional rental income
- Forging more tangible links with the University and Coleg Menai to encourage more spin outs and enterprise activity within the City Centre itself.

The Programme will involve identifying potential locations for developing and housing new businesses across the High Street and beyond, working with prospective operators such as Greenhouse locally, and national organisations such as Indycube, and providing incentivised support through complementary packages such as the Bangor Investment Fund.

Professional Cluster Development

This is proposed as a possible adjunct to the existing Business Improvement District, with a specific focus on:

- Nurturing and supporting the existing professional sector
- Encouraging other possible professional sector businesses to establish, grow or relocate.
- Providing networking opportunities for the cluster to offer a distinct but cohesive voice.

Additional resources will be required to those currently available to the BID, but it is proposed that this activity becomes part of the package of support coordinated through the Business Improvement District.

Bangor Investment Fund

Partly predicated on the former Local Investment Fund, and utilising best practice from the fund currently operating in Holyhead, the Bangor Investment Fund will both support and encourage investment by the Private Sector in the City Centre.

It is recommended that a specific designated area, perhaps wider than the BID area, but within the confines of the City itself, is agreed.

The key criteria will be:

- Supporting the growth and expansion of businesses (including, but not limited to high growth sectors), by providing a discretionary focused financial support package for new and existing businesses that are located in Bangor.
- The scheme will offer funding up to 50% to assist with eligible capital expenditure on business projects with awards offered of between £1,000 (minimum award) and £50,000 (maximum award).

- Applications over £10,000 will need to demonstrate there is clear evidence of job creation and growth within the project.
- Retail will be an eligible sector, but applicants must also undertake a Retail Review. (See also below).
- Minimum eligible item cost to be set at £100.
- It is proposed that the scheme, if funded, is administered by Gwynedd Council via its Business Support Unit.

Retail Advisory Service

It is proposed that the Partnership resurrect the scheme previously administered by Gwynedd Council. The previous scheme proved successful, but due to budget constraints was withdrawn.

The scheme was part of the package of project developed by Gwynedd, and was identified as a priority under the council's Responding to the Recession Action Plan.

The project offered advice in the form of a diagnostic review, highlighting changes, improvements and market opportunities.

It is proposed to offer this service, operating on the same geographic basis as the Bangor Investment Fund. The key criteria will be:

- The scheme will assist new or existing retailers within the designated area.
- The service will entail up to one day of support, free of charge to the retailer.
- All retailers seeking grant support through the Bangor Investment Fund will need to undertake a review prior to the submission of the grant application.
- It is proposed that the scheme, if funded, is administered by Gwynedd Council via its Business Support Unit.

Rates Relief Grant

Rates support should also be considered. Whilst the level of rates is restricted by national rules, and the rates department within Gwynedd Council is unable to extend support beyond that allowable under current guidelines, nevertheless a grant support scheme focused on new business establishing within the City Centre should

be considered, and is considered appropriate considering the context and current performance of the City Centre.

The key criteria could include:

- New businesses establishing within the designated area (across all eligible sectors)
- Existing Businesses relocating to the City Centre, or businesses within the designated area moving to larger premises (where the business rate increase is 100% or more)
- Businesses suffering long-term disruption due to work relating to regeneration or other development within the City Centre e.g. street works which restrict footfall.
- Support will be to a maximum of the total rates paid by the business over any 12-month period (up to a maximum of 12 months)
- It is proposed that the scheme, if funded, is administered by Gwynedd Council via its Business Support Unit.

Business Engagement and BID Support

The establishment of the Business Improvement District for Bangor offers a clear and distinct voice for the Private Sector in Bangor. The levy applied across the business community provides a stable, medium term vehicle that will add value and support the Partnership.

There is a programme of activities undertaken by the BID, and a part time Coordinator is also employed by the organisation (which is now established as a company limited by guarantee).

As the Strategy and Vision gains momentum and translates into a Strategic Programme of Regeneration, so the need for the BID and the voice of the sector will grow. Growth in the presence and strength of the sector will, theoretically, increase the budget capability of the BID. However, it is also evident that in the short to medium term it will need additional resources to allow it to add value to its core activities, and most importantly allow for it to build up capacity within the staffing structure.

Having a full time officer will be a necessity if a full regeneration programme is implemented; ensuring that the business community is a full participant and beneficiary of the Programme.

It is therefore recommended that provision is provided within the Programme to support the growth and sustainability of the BID. However, this should not be for core activities which have already been identified, but rather added value activities that enhance Bangor's profile, sense of aesthetic and performance.

7.3.4.2. Marketing and Promotion

As has been emphasised earlier, current promotional and marketing efforts relating to the City are limited.

The University does undertake a significant amount of marketing for its own purposes, and as such extolls the merits of the City and applies significant expertise and resource to raising the City's profile in this way.

The City Council has also undertaken some work in this arena, and there is a continued effort to undertake marketing and promotion, albeit within a limited budget capability.

However, it is also recognised that a major rethink about how the City is branded and promoted is required, and a concerted and coordinated effort by all needed to raise Bangor's profile and bring in the investment and business.

In recent years, Bangor has been promoted as the City of Learning, and this has some merit. However, this is not fully reflective of all that it has to offer, and some feel that there is a hint of "exclusivity" about the brand.

Significant investments in the "Timeline" on the High Street and other environmental improvements, Pontio, Storiel and the proposals for the Pier have clearly offered a new dimension to Bangor, potentially making the City more appealing to a wider audience of customer, locally, regionally and nationally.

Investment in infrastructure and business, and realigning the City's offer will need to be complemented by investment in branding and promotion.

Through consultation with key stakeholders there has been a significant amount of discussion about what that brand should be, and what mechanisms are required to get the message out effectively to the multifarious market places.

However, we would recommend that one of the first investments required by the Partnership is to commission appropriate expertise to

develop a tangible and meaningful brand that all buy into and is then used effectively and consistently by the Partnership.

The following package is proposed as an initial consideration for the Partnership:

Branding

There has been a lot of discussion around this issue, but at present there is no clear consensus. The City Council, on behalf of the Partnership, has begun work in this area, but appropriate expertise and resource will be required to ensure that significant regeneration investment is complemented by the right marketing messages and brand concepts.

This should be an early intervention by the Partnership, working alongside the University, Gwynedd Council, City Council and the BID in particular. However, it should be a fluid and iterative process, allowing for changes and enhancements when new and more substantial investments are underway and completed.

Marketing & PR Campaigns

A degree of marketing is immediately required to generate footfall and raise awareness of the Bangor's emerging offer. It is recommended that this is developed incrementally, with appropriate investment in marketing and PR expertise taking place at an early stage.

A review of the collateral required to support these efforts should also be undertaken in the first year, and appropriate material then produced as and when required.

There is also a need for "local" marketing and PR to ensure that the citizens and stakeholders, together with prospective investors, are aware of all that is already taking place within the Town.

Portal

The Partnership has already commissioned a report into the options for a dedicated Bangor Portal; offering a dedicated entry point which would be used for marketing, information and events.

There is consensus that this is a much needed resource, and we would again recommend that this is an early investment within the Strategy. As with the marketing and branding, the initial investment should be in a system will allows for growth, expansion and diversification. As

the Programme gains momentum, and the City's vitality grows, the needs for a Portal of this nature will also increase, in use and in dimension.

Signage and Interpretation

Although this is predominantly an intervention to be addressed under Development and the Environment, the branding, messages and identification of the target audiences, i.e. who are we providing information for, what is we are telling them and for what purpose, is clearly the remit of the Economy and Promotion theme.

Specific investment in commissioning interpretive materials and information for signage should be undertaken as soon as possible.

Investment Portfolio

As highlighted previously, there are specific gaps in Bangor's offer, much of which can only be filled by Private Sector investment. However, whilst there is some activity amongst the private sector, most of it of late has been geared towards housing on the periphery and student accommodation.

There is a lack of confidence and unwillingness to invest in the heart of the City, and as has been witnessed in other areas of regeneration, private usually follows public in terms of investment.

Encouraging interest from the Private Sector is critical, and it is recommended that a portfolio of Investment Opportunities, encompassing prospective development sites, emerging sector and growth opportunities, core economic and demographic data and skills and employment is developed.

Ambassador Programme

Accentuating the positive is fundamental. There has been a tendency to highlight the City's problems, and forget about its significant virtues. There are however, differences of late, partly perhaps as the result of the establishment of the BID and City Centre Partnership, and resultant actions such as the Painting Scheme.

Nevertheless, the City needs champions who can sell Bangor at a national and even international level. To sing its praises rather than mourning its decline.

Bangor can boast a significant number of tangible links with public figures in all walks of life. Many successful and well regarded people

have been brought up, been educated, worked or played sports at Bangor.

An effort to identify these people and to garner support amongst them for an Ambassadorial Programme, promoting the City for all that is and can be would add significant value to the marketing and promotion efforts.

This could be supported by marketing collateral, conferences and event such as a “Bangor Day” in the Houses of Parliament (akin to the Anglesey day).

Ecomuseum

The project is modelled on the ecomuseum concept, recently successfully implemented on the Llyn Peninsula, which was partly driven by Bangor University.

Aligned with the Cultural Quarter, it will build upon the partnerships now being forged in and encompass cultural and historic sites in and around Bangor to offer a more dynamic and comprehensive visitor experience.

Events

An events programme is an early win for Regeneration Programme. If managed properly and promoted effectively they can create a sense of vibrancy within a community, increase footfall and raise awareness of the Town or City.

At present there are few major events in Bangor, including:

- Christmas Cracker – BID / People of Bangor (Annual)
- Carnival (Annual) – People of Bangor (Annual)
- Science Festival – University (Annual)
- Music Festival – University (Annual)
- Circus Festival - Pontio (Biennial)

The Festive Celebrations has been an annual event, and in 2016 expanded significantly and was renamed the Christmas Cracker. Historically the event was organised by the People of Bangor Community Group; however the BID has now agreed to help resource and manage the event. Similar arrangements for the Carnival in future years are currently being discussed.

Both the Science and Music Festivals are well received, but in terms of

their impact and profile within the City they are “low key”. Yet both could have so much more to add to the vibrancy and sense of place.

The Circus Festival proved successful in 2015, and is returning to the City next year. It is, at present, one of the most prolific and events arranged by Pontio. It is to be hoped that the impact on the streets and within the City that was seen in 2015 is repeated in 2017.

There are other events, and a scheduled programme in place in the University and Pontio. However, the size, profile and capacity of the City could allow for a lot more.

It is recommended that:

- The Science and Music Festival organisers are engaged to explore how the University and the Partnership can work together.
- If the Carnival is to continue then similar arrangements to those now in place for the Festive Celebrations are arranged.
- The Pontio team is engaged fully to ensure that the Partnership provides mutually beneficial support to the Circus Festival.

In addition, it is recommended that Gwynedd’s Events Manager is engaged to explore whether there are other opportunities to bring other appropriate events, or develop new events to the City.

The following packages of support are also recommended:

Events Fund

Annual Events fund which existing events and new events can bid for through the Partnership.

Applications would need to demonstrate:

- Funding Gap
- Economic and Social Benefit to the City
- Does not displace existing events
- Management Capacity
- Exit Strategy

Events Portal

See above.

7.4. Housing, Health and Wellbeing

Housing is key issue for the Bangor moving forward.

As reported earlier in the report, there are a number of issues regarding housing and accommodation within the City that have permeated discussions during the formulation of this strategy and vision.

These can be broken down into the following key areas:

- HMOs
- The role of Social Housing
- Potential Impact of Wylfa

HMOs. A key concern expressed during the initial stakeholder analysis, and reaffirmed during the development of the Strategy and Vision was the emergence of a number of new student accommodation developments across the City. Whilst this does bring its own benefits, helping to consolidate the region's positioning as a key place to come to stay as a student, it nevertheless also potentially creates problems, particularly creating HMO enclaves and supressing student spend in the High Street.

As reported earlier, Bangor hosts 88% of the “registered” HMO housing stock across the County, with nearly 1200 properties classed as such. This represents 21% of the total housing spaces within the 8 wards which make up the City. This does not account for a number of other properties which are suspected of being HMOs, but have not, as yet, been registered as such.

Written evidence submitted by Nottingham Action Group on HMOs to Parliament’s Communities and Local Government Committee in 2013⁵ succinctly summaries the issues and problems that can arise from a proliferation of HMOs. This report noted that HMOs are characterised by:

- occupancy levels much higher than those of other similar dwellings;
- very short-term tenancies and hence high turnover of occupants;

⁵ Communities and Local Government Committee. [Written evidence submitted by Nottingham Action Group on HMOs 2013](#)

- lack of internal management structures;
- occupants from more restricted demographic and socio-economic mixes (eg students, so-called “young professionals”, benefit claimants, migrant workers, asylum seekers);
- tendency towards concentrations in specific geographical

According to the submission to committee, the following problems arise from such circumstances:

“loss of social capital, fracturing of community cohesion, downgrading or loss of community facilities such as schools, and creation of neighbourhoods where retail activity is seasonal and limited to takeaways, pubs, clubs and letting agents”

It also noted that the development of concentrations of HMOs, *“makes it harder to manage the problems associated with them”*. Those problems include:

- Environmental issues such as inadequate internal and external waste management regimes;
- parking problems exacerbated in many instances by conversion of garages into additional bed/study rooms;
- degradation of the streetscape with flyposting by landlords, agents and other businesses as well as by tenants, and prominent advertising material
- Behavioural issues such as anti-social behaviour
- The transfer of a significant proportion of Students to new accommodation facilities leaves a potential vacuum, and there is concern that the already existing problem of HMOS generally will be exacerbated by the potential further narrowing of the demographic and socio-economic mix.

The role of Social Housing. There are currently 1528 houses owned by Social Landlords in Bangor. This is almost 50% more than the second highest number within any one community (Caernarfon). Based on the 2011 census data, this represents some 25% of the total housing stock.

The two main Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) are Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd (CCG), and North Wales Housing, with Cynefin having limited engagement within the City as well.

The RSLs have played a key part in not only providing housing to an appropriate standard to a large cohort of the community, but have also added value through engagement and the delivery of a range of other added value activities, ranging

from supply chain programmes, grant support for community groups and the provision of extra care facilities that have released additional housing spaces elsewhere.

However, all recognise that there continues to be a need to continue to improve the existing housing stock and provide new housing units where appropriate.

Affordability is of some concern. The 2016 Wellbeing Assessment for Gwynedd and Mon shows that 67.8% of local people are priced out of the Housing Market. In addition, the Common Housing Stock Register has 460 people on its waiting list as of November 2016.

The potential for the RSLs to intervene in the private housing market, and in particular converting some existing HMOs into appropriate family homes should also be considered as the Strategy moves forward.

Potential Impact of Wylfa. A Construction Worker Accommodation Assessment for the Gwynedd Mainland was recently undertaken as part of a wider study. The conclusions of this report have yet to be published; however we understand that pressures in the local housing market are likely to be less severe than may be experienced on Anglesey, but that there may well be demand from temporary construction workers which could lead to increased pressure on housing supply during the construction period. In terms of the Strategy and Vision due care and attention must be given to ensuring that that pressure does not impact on those most disenfranchised from the housing market (of which there is a significant proportion in Bangor).

Conversely, this additional demand may afford the Partnership with an opportunity to address the quality of some private housing stock and, in particular, transform a percentage of HMOs to respond to this short-term demand. In the longer term this refurbished housing stock would offer a new stock of family homes.

In the short term a piece of work which would build upon that Assessment and focus on Bangor specific issues relating to the nature of its housing stock, and the additional requirements for services and utilities will be required.

As regards Health and Wellbeing, as noted earlier, Bangor is a City of contrasts, with many areas of prosperity, particularly towards Penrhos and Holyhead Road, but other areas of significant deprivation. Maesgeirchen's designation as a Communities First is predicated on Marchog Ward's ranking amongst the most deprived 10% of LSOAs in Wales.

However, there are also other pockets of deprivation area clearly evidences this, but there are other smaller communities within the City that are also struggling in terms of health, education, access to services, etc.

the Bangor area around 1,300 patients are registered per GP. This is slightly lower than Gwynedd at 1,400 and Wales at 1,600. The area's main hospital Ysbyty Gwynedd.

Specific information on the health of the population in the Bangor area is limited, however the 2011 census show that People with limiting long term illness or disability was 14%, compared to the Gwynedd average of 20.5%. However this figure is distorted by the significant number of students. Marchog Ward reveals a much higher level of 23.5%.

The key Projects proposed include:

Housing

First Time Buyer Scheme

This Project seeks to enhance the existing Gwynedd First Time Buyer Mortgage Deposit Loan Scheme, making additional sums available to encourage and support purchase of both vacant properties and those in need of significant refurbishment.

HMO Conversion/Refurbishment

This project will build upon the Gwynedd wide "Houses into Homes" project offering short term interest free loans to private owners, but would widen the scheme to include HMOs in designated areas on the proviso that the House is returned to single Housing Units i.e. one house or segregated flats/apartments.
Bangor Strategic Housing Partnership Fund.

Bangor Strategic Housing Partnership Fund

This Project will provide additional funds to enhance the Social Housing Grant Allocation. A sub group of the Partnership would be established and would have a specific focus on addressing the various housing needs of the City, through specific interventions such new converting existing dilapidated houses or HMOs in disrepair, developing new affordable homes, extra care housing etc.

Energy Wardens

This project would provide resource to employ a dedicated warden for the whole of the City, with a particular focus on social housing stock.

Wylfa Response Assessment

A Construction Worker Accommodation Assessment for the Gwynedd Mainland was recently undertaken. This Project would seek to build upon that Assessment and focus on Bangor specific issues relating to the nature of its housing stock, and the additional requirements for services and utilities.

Health and Wellbeing

Hwb Bangor

This project seeks to emulate the Hwb Dinbych Community Training Hub developed by Cynefin and its partners in Denbigh, but would also encompass the ambition to bring together Health and Wellbeing services under one roof. Initial funding would be for a feasibility study, with possible follow on funding for technical studies to support funding applications.

Bangor; Wales' Participatory City

This project builds upon the Participatory Philosophy that promotes the notion of people working together their neighbourhoods more exciting and enjoyable places to live. Taken together these many ideas will create places which will be more sustainable for the future: socially, economically and environmentally.

Funding support towards the development of a business plan, employment of a Project Officer and discrete funding for seed funding for specific projects

Sports Science Engagement Programme

Utilising Bangor University's capabilities in the area of Sports Science and Sports Psychology, this would seek to engage with the communities of the City to promote active communities. Funding would support pilot initiatives with specific cohorts across the City.

Housing Traineeships

This Project will roll out a pilot scheme being trialled by Gwynedd Council, which builds upon a Welsh Government Project, offering work experience to individuals who are seeking work or are long term unemployed and are looking for work within the housing stock improvement / construction / energy efficiency fields.

Public Amenities and Health and Fitness Facilities

Innovative approaches to the development of parks and public spaces. Funds would be directed towards the creation of the outdoor fitness sites across the City to promote fitness, health and wellbeing. This would complements the Sports Science Engagement Programme above.

8. Conclusions

Based on the conclusions of this work, which has been the subject of significant consultation, field and desk research, attached as Appendix 1 is a 3-year Action Plan. This plan is predicated on four key areas of work; the three themes of Development and Environment, Economy and Promotion, and Housing, Health and Wellbeing, and in addition, funding for a Programme Office to support the endeavours of the Partnership.

This Action Plan totals **£9.710m** over 3 years; and is focused on projects that will add value and enhance other investment that partners are proposing to undertake over the next few years.

It is intended as an “investment ready” prospectus to support applications to Welsh Government, the Lottery and other organisations.

It should also be recognised that this is an initial template which will be subject to revision, amendments and refinements as the partnership develops and matures. The Action Plan should be seen as a “kick start” for more comprehensive and long term vision for Bangor; one that will, over the course of the next decade, transform the City’s fortunes, and establish it as one of Wales’ most attractive destinations to live, work, invest, learn and visit.

If fully realised, then Bangor can become the Greatest of Welsh Cities; offering the whole ambit of attributes and amenities that makes any City Great; but gilded with a sense of Welsh and Celtic Heritage.