

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Report to:	Governance and Audit Committee
Date:	8 th February 2022
Subject:	Review of Town Centre Regeneration in Wales
Head of Service:	Christian Branch Head of Regulation & Economic Development 01248 752491 ChristianBranch@ynysmon.gov.uk
Report Author:	Dewi G Lloyd Regeneration Manager 01248 752483 DewiLloyd@ynysmon.gov.uk
Nature and Reason for Reporting: To report on the Audit Wales review of Town Centre Regeneration in Wales and its recommendations to local authorities in Wales To report on the County Council's response to these recommendations, including its self-assessment based on Audit Wales guidance	
Recommendation : That the Governance and Audit Committee accepts the report and notes the content	

Audit Wales - Regenerating Town Centres in Wales

Audit Wales (AW) undertook a review of town centre regeneration in Wales during 2021, and published related reports in September 2021. Officers from Anglesey County Council and local stakeholders were involved in providing evidence and comments to WAO as part of their review.

The report is published online here <https://wao.gov.uk/publication/regenerating-town-centres-wales>

The key messages in the report are as follows :-

- a) Town centres are at the heart of Welsh life and can be vibrant and sustainable places, but addressing the many challenges they face requires brave decisions and ambitious leadership*
- b) The growth of out-of-town retail, the progressive loss of services such as banks, and the growth of online shopping has led to a steady decline in many, added to by the pandemic.*
- c) The Welsh Government had invested significantly in town centre regeneration, but its 'town centre first' policy is not yet fully embedded, and town centres often struggle.*

d) Local authorities are the key public bodies to help regenerate town centres, but they often lack the capacity to deliver the sustainable regeneration needed, and powers available are often not fully utilised.

e) Local authorities are well placed to prioritise and lead on place planning but need to be clear on the purpose of their town centres, involve key stakeholders in decisions, better understand problems, identify the best solutions, and become more interventionist.

AW's Recommendations

The report makes six Wales-wide recommendations :-

R1 - WG should review non-domestic rates

R2 – WG should help local authorities to address transport needs for town centres

R3 – WG should improve local authority access to funding for town centres, including multi-year funding and giving revenue/staff capacity support as well as capital funds.

R4 – Local authorities should effectively use their existing enforcement, financial assistance, and debt recovery powers to support regeneration, working cross-departmentally

R5 – WG should set out how it plans to deliver the ‘Town Centre First’ approach in practice

R6 – Local authorities need to plan carefully how they manage town centres, and should use our review tool to self-assess their current approaches to identify where they need to improve their work on town centre regeneration <https://audit.wales/system/files/2021-08/Regenerating%20Town%20Centres%20in%20Wales%20Self%20Evaluation%20Tool%20-%20English.pdf>

Anglesey County Council's Response to the Report

Two of AW's recommendations apply to all local authorities in Wales.

In response to Recommendation No6, relevant officers from different IoACC Services have completed a self-assessment exercise to identify any areas for improvement / further work by the authority. The outcome of this exercise is attached and is summarised below, indicating that the authority is undertaking all of the 38 identified work areas, with none identified that is not currently being undertaken.

IoACC SELF-ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

SCORE	1	2	3	4	5
POSITION	No, we do not do this at all, and have no plans to do so	We do this to a limited extent and have further work to do	Yes, we do this quite well, but have some limited further work to do	Yes, we are good at this, with these largely being addressed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required
FREQUENCY	0 / 38 0%	4 / 38 11%	21 / 38 55%	13 / 38 34%	0 / 38 0%

Only 4 areas need significant work to do, 21 are being addressed quite well but need some further work, and the other 13 are considered to be already met very well . As there is always scope for some future improvement, none were scored as 5. The areas needing significant work relate to the 'Intention' section of the assessment, and most of these gaps had already been identified prior to the report issue. With WG revenue funding support, work is underway to prepare a new regeneration strategy covering all five of Anglesey's town centres, and this process should address most of the significant gaps identified.

In response to Recommendation No4, relevant officers from different IoACC Services have jointly prepared a Town Centre Empty Property Enforcement Action Plan, and 25 staff / 15 members/senior officers have attended related training sessions.

Significant external capital funding is potentially available from WG and other sources- this often needs some match-funding. WG and regional prioritisation policies impact on which towns can receive funding, and this changes over time. Our lobbying on behalf of smaller towns has been successful, and means that it is possible to bid for some types of regeneration funds for eligible schemes in any of Anglesey's town centres.

The Council's ability to deliver tangible outcomes related to both recommendations also depends to a great extent on the staffing resources, capacity, experience and skills being in place to do so effectively. Staff capacity and budget limits are likely to mean that not all the items listed by WAO can be undertaken, and some may not be viable or suitable for a small mainly rural authority to undertake. Despite these constraints, the work that has happened with long-term problematic sites such as the Market Hall, Plas Alltran, and Beaumaris Social Club shows evidence of effective cross-service working to deal with key town centre challenges.

Report prepared by Dewi G. Lloyd, Regeneration Manager

1 February 2022

APPENDIX



Isle of Anglesey's Town Centre Regeneration Work

A Self- Assessment Using the Wales Audit Office 'Regenerating Town Centres' Assessment Tool

Updated: 1 February 2022

Paratowyd ar y cyd gan Swyddogaeth Adfywio & Tim Tai Gwag yn unol a canllawiau SAC
Jointly prepared by Regeneration Function & Empty Homes Team based on WAO guidance

Fersiwn / Version	Diweddarwyd gan/ Updated by	Dyddiad / Date	Nodyn / Note
V1	DL	02.12.21	Drafft cyntaf ar gyfer sylwadau swyddogion First draft for comments by officers
V2	DL & GO	18.01.22	Drafft diwygiedig yn adlewyrchu sylwadau a diweddariadau Revised draft reflecting comments & updates
V3	DL	01.02.22	Diweddariadau pellach Minor updates included

TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION BY IoACC – SELF-ASSESSMENT USING WAO TEMPLATE

No.	ACTIONS NEEDED BY LOCAL AUTHORITY AS IDENTIFIED BY WAO	IACC SELF-SCORE / 5	IACC OFFICER COMMENTS
	INTENTION		
1	We have a long-term vision for all our town centres.	2	Currently only for Holyhead, but a county-wide strategy covering all 5 towns has been commissioned for completion in mid 2022, sitting within a wider North Wales regeneration strategy, and an all-Wales Transforming Towns programme
2	We have committed, highly visible political leaders for town centre regeneration.	2	Scope for more visible activity linked to above – PR campaign arranged
3	Our approach to town centre regeneration is integrated with our key strategies and plan – eg Wellbeing Plan, corporate priorities and other community, council and regional strategies.	3	Integration does take place and the new strategy will help to make this clearer / more effective.
4	We have set SMART objectives for town centre regeneration.	2	Currently only for some individual projects linked to specific funding awards - new Anglesey wide town centres strategy will need to include
5	We have a clear accountability framework to govern and scrutinise our decisions in regenerating town centres.	3	Yes but there is scope to make this clearer. IoACC has scrutiny structures in place including a Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, and local members regeneration briefings with portfolio holders and officers periodically take place for Holyhead.
6	We act in a transparent way and everyone is clear on how decisions on town centre regeneration activities are made and by whom.	3	See above – there is room for improvement & the new strategy should address this
7	Those who make decisions on town centre regeneration are accountable for their choices and are held to account through clear governance arrangements.	3	See reply to No5
8	We have enough staff in the right services and with the required seniority to undertake town centre regeneration work.	2	Very small number of core staff in R&ED & Housing Services undertake this work where possible as a part of or in addition to their main duties, supported by a few temporary grant-funded staff, most geographically limited to Holyhead Finance grants staff also play a key role in town centre work Redeployment of several IoACC officers to manage/deliver Covid work such as business grants in the period since March 2020 has adversely impacted on progress with town centre projects/ plans

9	We have a can-do culture and entrepreneurial mindset within the council for town centre regeneration.	3	Some examples of significant initiatives being driven forward despite major challenges eg Market Hall, Beaumaris Social Club, Plas Alltran, Holyhead Empty Shops Initiative (via MonCF)
10	We can recruit the right people with the right skills to deliver our town centre regeneration work.	3	Numbers applying for IACC project posts generally is very limited and we sometimes struggle to recruit, and some experienced staff have left for better paid roles elsewhere
11	We have embedded regeneration with programmes of long-term transformation and/or recovery from COVID-19.	4	TCR is named / included in IoACC's recovery plan TCR funds were used to support Covid adjustments eg signage for businesses
12	We are able to secure the resources we need to undertake town centre regeneration	3	Capital grants and loan funds are available from WG, and some revenue funds are also now available. Good well-developed projects are generally fundable The scope of WG urban regeneration funding has recently been widened beyond Holyhead Late annual-only funding allocations at a governmental level and a lack of ready-to-deliver projects limits what is possible to actually deliver in time
	INVOLVEMENT		
13	We effectively communicate internally and externally about what the council and its partners are trying to achieve through our town centre regeneration work	3	Yes to a degree but there is clearly scope to improve, especially outside Holyhead – the new Strategy will address and assist improvement – Website page is in place https://www.anglesey.gov.uk/en/Business/Regeneration/Town-centre-regeneration.aspx Holyhead/Holy Island regeneration Twitter account has 1,000+ followers & Anglesey-wide version is under consideration PR campaign arranged
14	We draw on the expertise and knowledge of partners, businesses, citizens and stakeholders when identifying and agreeing our priorities for town centre regeneration.	3	Yes but scope to improve – this will form part of the new Strategy work New Holyhead Market Hall base for regeneration staff will assist engagement in our main town centre North Anglesey Economic Regeneration Plan online engagement drew 600+ replies and these influenced the final plan
15	Our priorities for town centre regeneration reflect the feedback we receive from partners, businesses, citizens and stakeholders.	3	Yes to a degree, but largely limited to projects / areas that have staffing resources to do so eg in Holyhead - there is scope to improve – stakeholder engagement and feedback will form part of the new Strategy work in 2022
16	We enable all our stakeholders to be fully involved in identifying and agreeing town centre regeneration priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected Members • Welsh Government • Local Health Board • Fire and Rescue Authority • National Park Authority • Police • Police and Crime Commissioner 	3	Yes – to a degree, and largely limited to projects / areas that have staffing resources to do so Track record of local stakeholder engagement in Holyhead There is scope to improve – stakeholder engagement and feedback forms part of the new Strategy work in 2022

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town and Community Councils • Business Improvement Districts • Chamber of Commerce • Social Enterprises • Local community groups • Individual citizen 		
17	We encourage partners, businesses, citizens and stakeholders to develop solutions that help regenerate our town centres.	3	Yes – IACC has assisted/supported a number of solutions developed by others eg several projects by MonCF and Menter Mon, but there is clearly scope to do more, but this relies on having suitably experienced capacity to do so
18	<p>We support community-led regeneration and actively encourage our partners, businesses, citizens and stakeholders to lead on town centre regeneration by encouraging and working through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Improvement Districts • Town and Community Councils • Place Plans 	3	<p>Yes – several examples of joint working with MonCF, Menter Mon, & Town Councils eg Covid adjustments scheme, Maker Spaces, Digital Towns</p> <p>There is scope to do more and considering this will form part of the new Strategy / Place Plans work in early 2022</p>
	INFORMED		
19	We use a wide range of data to understand our town centres and identify the priorities for action.	4	<p>Yes – range of data is used including WIMD, empty premises, Census, Welsh places website</p> <p>WIMD profile for 5 towns appears on website</p> <p>Town profiles recently produced as part of N.Wales Regeneration Strategy & being produced as part of Ynys Mon Town Centres Baseline work in 2022</p>
20	<p>Our data covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Footfall • Digital – Wi-Fi usage, social media interactions, travel movements, etc • Property – rent, profit margins and empty units • Catchment demographics • Interdependency of towns 	3	<p>Lazer-beam footfall counters in Holyhead</p> <p>Digital Towns public Wifi system installed or planned in all 5 town centres</p> <p>Occasional occupancy surveys undertaken</p> <p>Various published data considered as appropriate</p> <p>Additional data sources to be scoped as part of planned baseline work</p>
21	We make transparent decisions based on good quality information when deciding on town centre regeneration	3	Yes - but decisions often reflect capital spend deliverability and eligibility considerations – there is scope to improve matters and this will form part of the new Strategy work in 2022
22	<p>We receive good quality information to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • judge whether we should approve a town centre regeneration project; and • monitor and fully evaluate performance of our delivery of town centre regeneration 	3	<p>Yes – the funding criteria and forms for most schemes make it clear what information is needed with applications and this is generally received but it is not always of good quality – information from monitoring tends to be quite basic.</p> <p>There is scope to improve, but achieving this largely relies on capacity</p>
23	We have a confident decision-making culture and elected	3	Yes but scope to improve – this will form part of the new Strategy work in 2022

	members are not afraid of challenging officers and holding people to account.		Local members briefing / Q&A meetings periodically take place for Holyhead
24	We regularly review our town centre regeneration work to ensure our actions and decisions are the right ones.	3	Yes but this tends to be linked to external funding – there is scope to improve and this will form part of the new Strategy work in 2022
25	We amend our town centre regeneration programmes to reflect changing needs and demands.	3	Yes but this tends to be linked to external funding – there is scope to improve and this will form part of the new Strategy work in 2022
26	We set targets and measures of success for town centre regeneration to judge improvement over time, and monitor these when they have been agreed	4	Yes – WG and other regeneration funding for town centres is subject to quantitative targets that are monitored on a quarterly basis
27	We jointly take corrective action as a result of our ongoing evaluation of town centre regeneration programmes	4	Yes – for example the RROG has identified the lack of support for smaller/ rural towns, and has lobbied for and successfully changed the focus of the regional programme to allow part of the regeneration funds to support such towns
28	We share learning and draw on evidence from other councils in Wales and elsewhere to learn what does/ does not work, the challenges we face and the potential rewards	4	Yes – IACC attends a number of regular and one-off networking meetings and events that achieve this eg monthly regional regeneration group (RROG), Town Centre Action Group, WLGA Regeneration & Property Loans meetings
29	We review the effectiveness of our past decisions on town centre regeneration to understand what worked and what did not	4	Yes, such as the independent evaluation of Holyhead ESI and the Holyhead VVP Programme 2014-17, but only tends to happen where this is specifically required by funders/ provided for in an externally funded budget
30	We undertake post-implementation evaluation of individual town centre regeneration schemes to check that the objectives we set were delivered	4	Yes – see above
31	We can draw on robust information that shows how our regeneration work is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving local people's social and health wellbeing; • improving the quality of buildings and homes in our town centres; and • delivering carbon reduction targets and improving green infrastructure 	3	Yes to a degree – outputs are monitored eg with TRI schemes but there is scope to do more to monitor and measure longer-term outcomes, especially those that are more qualitative / intangible
	INTERVENTION		

32	We have defined and clarified roles, responsibilities and our legal powers to support our town centre regeneration work	3	Yes but scope to improve / clarify roles and responsibilities – the recently prepared Ynys Mon Town Centre Enforcement Action Plan does this to an extent & the recent Ynys Mon Town Centre Enforcement Training has helped to clarify the powers available to LA's
33	We can draw on and utilise the skills and knowledge of our partners, the Welsh Government and stakeholders to help us take legal action to regenerate town centres	4	Yes – good joint working taking place across IoACC Services & with WG Several examples of action taken eg CPO's for Market Hall & Beaumaris Social Club, work on Plas Alltran WG has provided consultant to advise & assist LA's with problematic properties matters
34	We provide landlords, businesses, partners and stakeholders with good quality advice and guidance including: Advice to landlords on options for sale, rent and ownership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of agents to help sell/rent • Discounted fees through Auctioneer Scheme • Identify and list potential Investors/Developers • List of approved Builders/Architects • Free composite Schedule of Work 	4	Yes – enquiries are regularly dealt with by relevant IACC staff Examples of actions by Empty Homes Team include :- Annual mailshot to owners of empty properties throughout the Island. These provide a detailed outline of all financial incentive schemes available to owners of empty properties and the VAT reduction scheme for renovations of properties empty over two years. All leads are then followed up and bespoke advice and guidance offered to owners. Progress is then monitored The following are not currently offered by IACC :- List of approved Builders/Architects - Free composite Schedule of Work
35	We support landlords to tackle empty premises by offering a wide range of services including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use LA website to promote/advertise land/buildings for owners • Home Improvement Agency • Council run Private Sector Leasing scheme • Social lettings scheme to match applicants to private rented homes • Public Request Ordering Proposals • Direct purchase by LA or RSL • LOTS and HARPS to create homes above shop 	4	Yes – examples of actions undertaken include :- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct purchase of problematic premises for refurbishment & resale - Direct purchase of problematic premises for refurbishment & letting by LA - Assisting RSL to purchase & take forward scheme for problematic property/site The following are not currently offered by IACC :- Home Improvement Agency Council run Private Sector Leasing scheme Public Request Ordering Proposals There is no specific LOTS /HARPS scheme for homes above the shop
36	We provide landlords, businesses, partners and stakeholders with financial support to help regenerate town centres including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement grants linked to nominations to properties • Loans for improvement work 	4	Yes – advice, loans & some grants provided, for example : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Holyhead THI Grants for property improvements - TRI & PMG Grants for property improvements -Town Centre Loans / Houses into Homes Loans eg -conversion of Bull Hotel Amlwch into flats. -conversion of former HSBC Bank Amlwch into flats -conversion of former Chapel in Amlwch Port into flats.

	(interest free or interest bearing) • Commercial lending advice • Discount VAT and/or Capital Allowance schemes		Improvements grants linked to nominations rights to properties (70% grant/30% own funding) – 12 landlord grants allocated in Holyhead Town Centre Options for a new TIG grant are under consideration at a regional basis
37	We proactively take enforcement action to regenerate town centres fully using: • S.215 of the Town and Country planning Act 1990 – CPO • S.77-79 of the Building Act 1984 – dangerous structures, ruinous and dilapidated • Housing Acts 1985 and 2004 – improvement notices, EDMOs, demolition, clearance and CPO • S.79-80 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 – statutory nuisance • S.4 of the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 – treat pests • S.29 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 – boarding up • Listed Buildings/Urgent Works notice • Public Health Acts 1936 and 1961 – filthy and verminous • Naming and shaming landlords publicity	4	Yes but capacity & resources limits what can be achieved Examples of action undertaken includes :- Holyhead Market Hall – compulsory purchase Crown Restaurant building – compulsory demolition Beaumaris Social Club building – compulsory purchase following the submission of a successful planning application by Housing Services to demolish and re-develop the site into 6 apartments. Plas Alltran (one of the top Victorian Buildings most at risk in UK) successful negotiation with the owner and voluntary sale agreed. Housing Services have secured planning permission to convert into four social housing flats. 40 IoACC staff /members attended town centre enforcement training sessions in 2021
38	We use our powers to encourage empty buildings to be brought back into use in town centres: • Council Tax, Statutory Debts or Business Rates debt recovery (Bankruptcy, charging orders or Bailiffs) • County Court or Enforced Sales Procedure • Empty Homes and Holiday Homes Premium • Prosecution • Compulsory Purchase Order • Empty Management Dwellings Order • Enforced Sales Procedure • Direct Purchase	4	Yes – examples of powers used by IoACC include :- - Council Tax premium on empty homes & holiday homes - Several CPO's undertaken – see above 40 IoACC staff /members attended Anglesey town centre enforcement training sessions held in 2021