

## ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL

### Scrutiny Report Template

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Partnership &amp; Regeneration Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>15.03.2023</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Levelling Up Fund – Holyhead: A culture and heritage driven transformation</b>
<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	<b>To report on the County Council’s Levelling Up Fund bid to UK Government</b>
<b>Scrutiny Chair:</b>	<b>Cllr. Dylan Rees</b>
<b>Portfolio Holder(s):</b>	
<b>Head of Service:</b>	<b>Christian Branch</b>
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<b>Local Members:</b>	<b>Relevant to all Elected Members</b>

o25

#### 1 - Recommendation/s

That the Scrutiny Committee...

1. Note progress in development of LUF bid
2. Recognise role of Council to develop and submit bid
3. Support delivery of the LUF (in line with agreed timescales, outputs etc.)

#### 2 – Link to Council Plan / Other Corporate Priorities

The Levelling Up Fund has been developed against the context of our corporate priorities with other key local, regional and national policies and strategies informing the Plan (i.e. Regional Economic Framework for North Wales, the Welsh Government Programme for Government and the Levelling Up White Paper).

Local strategies:

- Isle of Anglesey & Gwynedd Well-being Plan(Gwynedd & Anglesey Public Service Board, 2018)
- Council Plan 2017 -2022 (Isle of AngleseyCounty Council, 2017)
- Isle of Anglesey County Council Strategic Equality Plan 2020 –2024 (Isle of Anglesey County Council, 2020)
- Anglesey Transitional Plan (post pandemic) 2022-2023 (Isle of Anglesey County Council, 2022)
- North Anglesey Economic Regeneration Plan (Isle of Anglesey County Council, 2019)
- Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan 2011 –2026 (Isle of Anglesey County Council, 2017)
- Isle of Anglesey County Council toward Net Zero Plan 2022-2025 (Isle of Anglesey County Council, 2022)

### 3 – Guiding Principles for Scrutiny Members

1. Impact the matter has on individuals and communities [focus on customer/citizen]
2. A look at any risks [focus on risk]
3. Scrutiny taking a performance monitoring or quality assurance role [focus on performance & quality]
4. Looking at plans and proposals from a perspective of:
  - Long term
  - Prevention
  - Integration
  - Collaboration
  - Involvement
 [focus on wellbeing]

### 4 - Key Scrutiny Questions

1. The report discusses the significant role of partners in the successful delivery of the programme. What is the role of the Local Authority in monitoring delivery against the key priorities?
2. What are the key risks and how will they be managed to ensure delivery of work streams in the Fund?
3. What arrangements will be in place to manage the individual projects and overall programme to successful delivery?
4. To what extent does the Levelling Up programme as approved enable the Local Authority to realise the Council Plan for 2023/28?

### 5 – Background / Context

#### 1. Introduction to the Levelling Up Fund (LUF)

The LUF is the flagship funding pot from UK Government. The capital only fund is designed to invest in core, social-economic infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK. The £4.8 billion fund – launched in March 2021 – has a focus on 3 key areas:

1. Support town centre and high street regeneration,
2. Local transport projects, and
3. Cultural and heritage assets.

As a result of unrealistic timescales to develop a sufficiently detailed bid, the County Council decided not to pursue and submit a bid in the 1<sup>st</sup> LUF round which was held in early 2021. Instead a decision was taken to focus on inviting expressions of interest (EOI's) from external partners on schemes that could be delivered in collaboration with the County Council in preparation for the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of LUF.

Projects with a value of up to £20m could be supported and funding of £125,000 was provided to support development costs.

During this assessment it became apparent that only a bid focussing upon addressing Holyhead socio-economic needs would likely meet the UK Government's specific requirements and have any opportunity of being successful. These requirements included the ability to spend immediately; be deliverable by March 2025; demonstrate value for money; and be in possession of (or able to demonstrate no obstacles to securing) statutory

consents and match funding. It was also determined that a bid centred on the 'heritage; culture and townscape' attributes of Holyhead rather than the Island's wider regeneration needs would likely be more appealing to the UK Government.

None of the other EOI's that were submitted met these exacting requirements and given the timescales, it would not have been possible to progress and develop them sufficiently.

A total of 5 EOI's were submitted from Holyhead. These included:

1. Môn Communities First & the Town Council
2. The Church of Wales
3. The Ucheldre Centre
4. The Maritime Museum
5. Isle of Anglesey County Council – Heritage Regeneration

Following an open EOI process, the Executive on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022 endorsed the recommendation by Officers that the Island's bid focus on a bid centred on the culture, heritage and regeneration of Holyhead

## **2. Developing the Bid & Partnership Working**

It cannot be underestimated the volume and complexity of work that went into developing the bid. This resulted in significant, intensive collaborative working with partners from Holyhead on a level and detail the Team had not done for some time.

Assembling the bid demanded having a clear and coherent story focussing on a sense of place, which was critical and clearly defining how all the components fit together and how they would form part of a longer journey to levelling up in the area.

Successful bids were to be assessed against four key criteria (weighted at 25% each):

1. Characteristics of the place (the LUF priority level of the LA, Anglesey was #2)
2. Strategic fit with local and LUF priorities
3. Value for money
4. Deliverability – Finance, ability to spend immediately and complete by 2025, management and commercial cases, and monitoring and evaluation

These criteria would be assessed on a pass/ fail basis.

Developing the bid also involved securing further information and a rigorous, high degree of supporting each of the 5 EOI's (Môn CF, Holyhead Town Council, Ucheldre Centre, the County Council (Heritage) and Church of Wales) and having detailed discussions with them to assess each project's maturity, viability and alignment to the LUF principles and requirements. Please see Annex A for a summary of outputs on what each individual project component is expected to deliver in terms of outputs.

In June 2022, a Portfolio Holder decision was secured to Endorse the submission of the County Council's application to the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF).

The "Holyhead: A culture and heritage driven transformation" bid was submitted on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

the bid outlines how it will help reverse the decline of the town centre, and increase pride of place for residents. It will help transform the town by securing £22.5m of investment, including £17m from the Levelling Up Fund, and deliver more than £54m in tangible benefits to the local community.

The bid includes a package of projects to increase employment; improve the town centre offer and visitor experience; increase footfall and spending; provide modern floor space to meet business needs, and increase access to the arts, culture and leisure.

It should be noted that the match funding towards the LUF bid had to be fully confirmed and is from the project's own sources. The County Council – apart from its own internal project – has not provided match funding to any of the project sponsors.

### **3. LUF Outcome**

On the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023, the County Council was made aware it had been successful in securing the full £17m it had requested within the LUF bid.

Out of the 529 bids that were submitted in the UK during Round 2, only 111 (20%) were successful. This demonstrates that the bid submitted by Anglesey was of a very high standard and more than fulfilled each of UK Government's exacting LUF criteria and requirements.

Further information on the bid is available on the Council website and also as a supporting Annex B

### **4. Role of the County Council in the Delivery of LUF**

Whilst the County Council – apart from the Heritage project– does not have a direct delivery role in LUF, it does have a critical role to play in the successful management and implementation of the overall programme

An experienced Programme Manager has been appointed who will oversee the management of the LUF programme, working closely with the 5 project partners to ensure that they deliver on the bid as submitted within the original business case, to cost, to time and securing all outputs. Colleagues in Finance Services will also play a key role in terms of financial monitoring, compliance and risk management

This strategic role for the County Council will be a new way of programme delivery and a new way of delivering on behalf of the people of Anglesey. It mirrors the role the County Council will adopt in the delivery and roll-out of other UK Government funding mechanism such as the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF).

A new Governance framework is in the process of being finalised which will ensure clear roles and responsibilities are adopted at the correct levels of the County Council as well as external input and support where required. A Programme Board will also be created to

ensure robust governance measures are in place and Officers will assist but also scrutinise decisions before they are taken by the project partners, especially in areas such as procurement to ensure full compliance with regulations.

The County Council is also in the process of designing bespoke legal agreements between the Council and the five delivery organisations (the project partners) ensuring roles, responsibilities, governance arrangements, monitoring, performance, claims etc. are all outlined and agreed at the outset. These will be based on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by the UK Government.

The time scales for delivery are challenging with the £17m to be spent by March 2025 therefore having these supporting frameworks in place will aid in the deliver of the programme. Informal discussions have taken place with UK Government to seek a time extension on March 2025.

### **5. Risks associated with LUF**

Some risks that have been identified in the delivery of the LUF on Anglesey include:

1. The volatility and unpredictability of the construction sector and inflation can result in an unanticipated increase in costs of materials.
2. The Council not being in a position to provide any additional funding if cost variances arise within the £17m envelope.
3. Reputational risk as the Body responsible for managing the LUF on Anglesey should any of the projects not be delivered. External interest in this is extremely prominent.
4. Being dependent on external delivery partners who don't necessarily have experience in the delivery of such schemes and the risk of those underdelivering on approved projects.
5. Challenging timescales especially given that information is sluggish coming from UK Government to enable commencement of the schemes with certainty and confidence and not at risk.
6. The Council not taking full advantage of the opportunity presented by LUF.

### **6. Other Funding Sources**

Whilst the LUF funding secured is only for Holyhead it is important to note that other funding sources remain for the other areas on Anglesey. The Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) is currently in progress of being assessed and scored with later rounds expected, Welsh Government has Town Centre funds available and we can also access NDA funding specifically for North Anglesey.

## **6 – Equality Impact Assessment [including impacts on the Welsh Language]**

### **6.1 Potential impacts on protected groups under the Equality Act 2010**

None – applications by and for protected groups under the Equality Act 2010 will be dealt with exactly the same and funding could be targeted towards those groups

### **6.2 Potential impacts on those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in their lives (strategic decisions)**

Positive – this funding has the potential to be targeted towards those at a socio-economic disadvantage

### **6.3 Potential impacts on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language**

Positive – by creating employment opportunities in the area it is hoped that more Welsh speakers will be able to benefit and stay in the locality.

### **7 – Financial Implications**

Neutral – there are no financial implications on the County Council as the cost of the bid development and staffing implications have been paid for and will be met through external sources.

### **8 – Appendices:**

**A – Detail on Delivery Partners Projects**

**B – Holyhead LUF Bid Submission Summary Document**

**9 - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):**

## Annex A

### LUF Project Overview and Outputs

1. A substantial extension to The Ucheldre Arts Centre, to provide better facilities and greater capacity to enable this key cultural institution to grow its programme and reach more people.
2. The renovation of St Cybi's Church, the Grade 1 listed star of Holyhead's heritage assets and Eglwyd Y Bedd, which will expand into a community hub, helping local people and bringing more activity into the heart of the town.
3. A substantial extension by Holyhead Town Council to the Empire Play Centre, the town's main indoor attraction, to cater for increasingly higher demand and the renovation of the Newry Beach Frontages improving facilities for locals and visitors alike.
4. Môn CF will embark on a property restoration programme, targeting some of the largest and most prominent vacant properties and creating sustainable vibrant new community uses, ensuring that these buildings are saved for future generations.
5. The Isle of Anglesey County Council will extend the highly successful Townscape Transformation programme, refurbishing dilapidated town centre heritage properties helping to reverse the decline of the town centre. They will also transform the public realm around St Cybi's, drawing people into the town centre, upgrading visitor facilities and installing a viewing platform, offering stunning panoramas of the historic Breakwater, Port and Town.

The bid will also support further enhancements to the Breakwater Heritage Visitor Centre, including improvements to routes and public realm, routes and links from the Country Park back to the town centre, allowing more people to learn about the heritage of Holyhead, Holy Island and Ynys Môn.

Project Delivery Partner	Outputs to Deliver Against Business Case
Town Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community space created or improved (Play Centre)</li> <li>• Beach frontages/ Kiosks for Newry Beach</li> </ul>
Mon CF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leisure space provided (Dance Studio)</li> <li>• Town centre floorspace created or improved</li> <li>• New and improved residential units</li> <li>• New holiday-lets</li> <li>• Dilapidated buildings improved</li> <li>• Additional commercial units with broadband access of at least 30Mbps</li> <li>• Heritage buildings renovated/restored</li> </ul>
St Cybi's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural space created or improved</li> <li>• Heritage buildings renovated / restored</li> </ul>
Ucheldre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural/ arts space created or improved (Ucheldre Centre)</li> </ul>
IACC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town centre floorspace created or improved (Townscape Transformation Project)</li> <li>• Dilapidated buildings improved (Townscape Transformation Project)</li> <li>• Public realm created or improved</li> <li>• Public amenities/facilities created, improved or relocated</li> <li>• Additional commercial units with broadband access of at least 30Mbps (Townscape Transformation Project)</li> <li>• Additional residential units with broadband access of at least 30Mbps (Townscape Transformation Project)</li> <li>• Heritage buildings renovated/restored (Townscape Transformation Project)</li> </ul>





# Holyhead: A culture and heritage driven transformation

Levelling up Fund Bid  
August 2022



CYNGOR SIR  
YNYS MÔN  
ISLE OF ANGLESEY  
COUNTY COUNCIL



UK Government Wales  
Llywodraeth y DU Cymru

[www.ynysmon.llyw.cymru](http://www.ynysmon.llyw.cymru)  
[www.anglesey.gov.wales](http://www.anglesey.gov.wales)

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# Summary of Investment

The Holyhead bid is low-risk and will make a visible difference quickly. It will bring forward £22.5m of public and private investment that will deliver over £54m of benefits to the local community.

## Beach Frontages

Run down beach shelters will be refurbished to be used as tourist information for local attractions and food and beverage outlets.



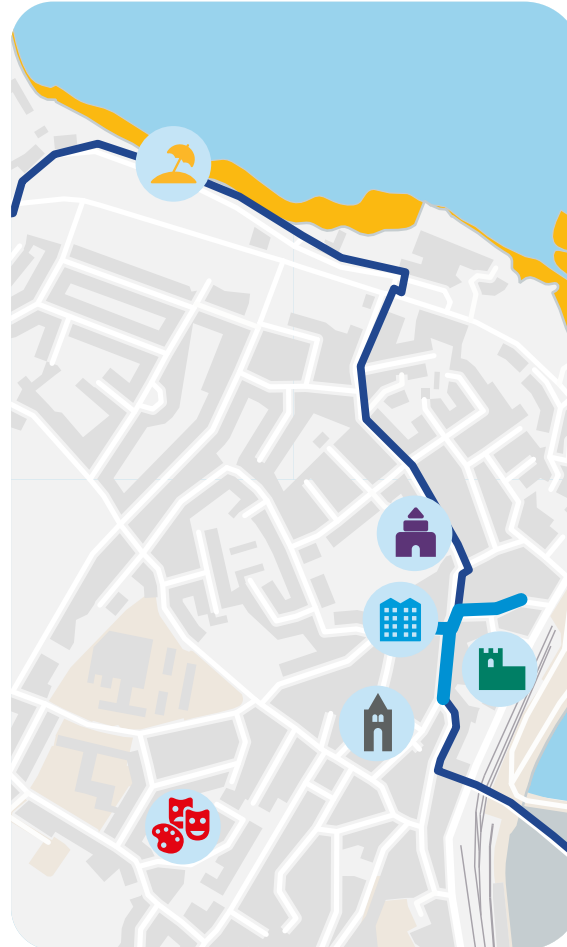
## Townscape Transformation Project

A continuation of a highly successful project of refurbishment of neglected town centre properties. Investing in visual improvement of buildings to restore pride in place, reduce vacancy, increase occupancy and footfall and reverse town centre decline.



## Ucheldre Expansion

Ucheldre Centre is the town's main arts and cultural asset. It currently struggles with a lack of space and capacity. Expansion of the centre will provide space for the extensive events programme which ranges from children-parent activities to theatre and opera screenings.



## Vacant Property Programme

The Programme involves the purchase and refurbishment of derelict/vacant town centre properties and builds on the success of the Empty Shops Initiative. Five key buildings will be purchased and brought back into use for the benefit of the community.



## Play Centre Expansion

The Empire Play Centre is one of the few indoor attractions in Holyhead. Visitors currently exceed capacity. Bringing forward the extension project will meet the needs of local people and tourists (targeting children and families) for an indoor/bad weather attraction.



## St Cybi's Church

The Church is a Grade I listed building and the main heritage asset of Holyhead. The funding will turn the Church into a more flexible, community-oriented space and create a social enterprise deli/cafe.



## Public Realm and Visitor Experience

A new visitor centre for the Breakwater Country Park and improvements to the signage and the routes to the town centre. These go via the beachfront, and include public realm improvements around St Cybi's and the Roman Fort.



# Our bid objectives

The overarching objective is to reverse the decline of the Town Centre, and increase pride of place for residents.



Reducing the number of vacant or dilapidated buildings



Increasing footfall and spending



Increasing employment and reducing unemployment



Providing modern floorspace to meet business needs



Increasing and improving access to arts, culture and leisure



Diversifying the town centre offer and improving visitor experience

# Holyhead:

## A culture and heritage driven transformation

# Holyhead: making a visible difference

Holyhead's history, culture and outstanding natural setting are strengths that serve its local community well.

They mean the town is well-placed to capture the benefits of being one of the UK's busiest ports, with direct connections to both Dublin and via rail to London, and the gateway to a world-famous tourist destination.

But to do so, the town centre needs to be fit for visitors, and public investment in this now will make an immediate visible difference, leveraging private investment and visitor spending, to the benefit of local communities.

This bid brings together strong local partners and a coherent, comprehensive package of well-chosen interventions. Together they will put the town on a new and more sustainable path.

As one of the most deprived places in Wales, and the top-ranked priority Level 2 area in Round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund, the opportunity to make a difference here is huge, and urgent.



## A town centre that is failing its community

Ynys Môn faces multiple economic challenges, with low productivity and income, as well as high unemployment - it is ranked as the top priority of all Level 2 areas in Wales.

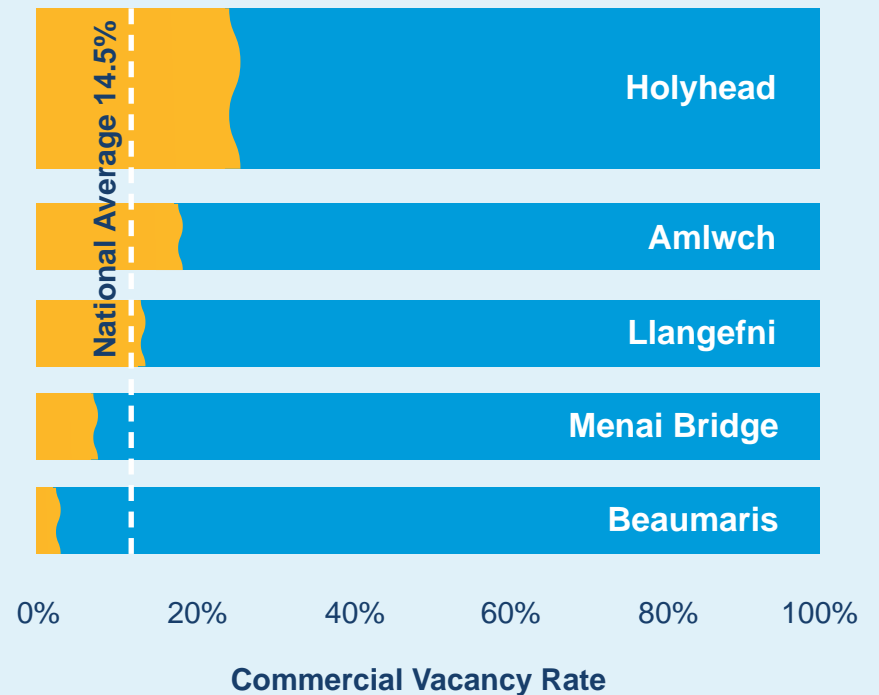
The island's largest town, Holyhead, is the one most in need of investment, with some of the worst-deprived neighbourhoods in Wales.

This is more and more visible in the town centre, with vacancy rates as high as 26%, over double the average of the Island's four other town centres. Empty properties are blighting Holyhead and deterring visitors, while low rents make refurbishment and redevelopment unviable.

Public investment is urgently needed to tackle market failure, bringing activity back to Holyhead and kick-starting private sector investment.



Ynys Môn's largest town centre is suffering









# Building on Opportunity

There is an enormous opportunity for change in Holyhead – with great underlying strengths waiting to be unlocked. Its history and culture make it an ideal destination for visitors, if the investment is made.

And those visitors are already here – Holyhead is well connected compared to most peripheral coastal communities. A direct train to London and a direct ferry to Dublin, as well as a cruise port, mean two million visitors pass through the town each year.

It is a tourism gateway for Snowdonia and North Wales, while Ynys Môn itself is already a much-loved tourist destination in its own right. Holyhead, as its largest town, should be a natural stop for visitors, our plans will give visitors a reason to do so.

There is enormous civic pride in Holyhead, but the community's spirit is let down by the fading fabric of the town centre. Investment will change this, making pride of place a visible reality.



# A visibly vibrant town centre

Residents and tourists alike will benefit from the co-ordinated investment plan from the Levelling Up Fund.

Reducing vacancy rates and attracting new uses will provide jobs for local residents and improved options for eating, drinking, shopping and leisure.

It will also boost tourism and take advantage of the growth of cruise ships visiting the port.

The natural beauty of Ynys Môn and North Wales needs attractive town centres to complete the all-weather visitor experience. We will do that in Holyhead by combining improvements to the cultural and heritage offer, better access to the seafront, and a package of changes to bring activity and a facelift to create a town centre less dependent on retail.

The new spending and employment opportunities will revitalise a failing local economy and town centre, re-use assets and reduce crime. The community improvements will bring visible change for local people.







## Bringing culture and heritage to the fore

- **St Cybi's Church** The Grade 1 listed star of Holyhead's heritage assets will expand into a community hub, helping local people and bringing more activity into the heart of the town.
- **Ucheldre Arts Centre** Better facilities and greater capacity will enable this key cultural institution to grow its programme and reach more people.
- **Roman Fort and Swift Square** The public realm around St Cybi's will be transformed with upgraded visitor facilities including a viewing platform.
- **Empire Play Centre** Completing the mix for all ages, one of the town's main indoor attractions will be expanded to cater for already high demand.





## Making the most of natural assets

- **Newry Beach Frontages**  
Improved facilities for locals and visitors alike, to access and enjoy the town's seafront. The beach frontages are part of the Breakwater Heritage Trail to guide cruise ship passengers into the town centre.
- **Breakwater Heritage Visitor Centre**  
Improved routes from the Country Park on the edge of Holyhead will allow more people to learn about the heritage of Holyhead and Ynys Môn. Public realm improvements will direct tourists into the town centre and the local heritage assets.







## New life for the Town Centre

- **Townscape Transformation**

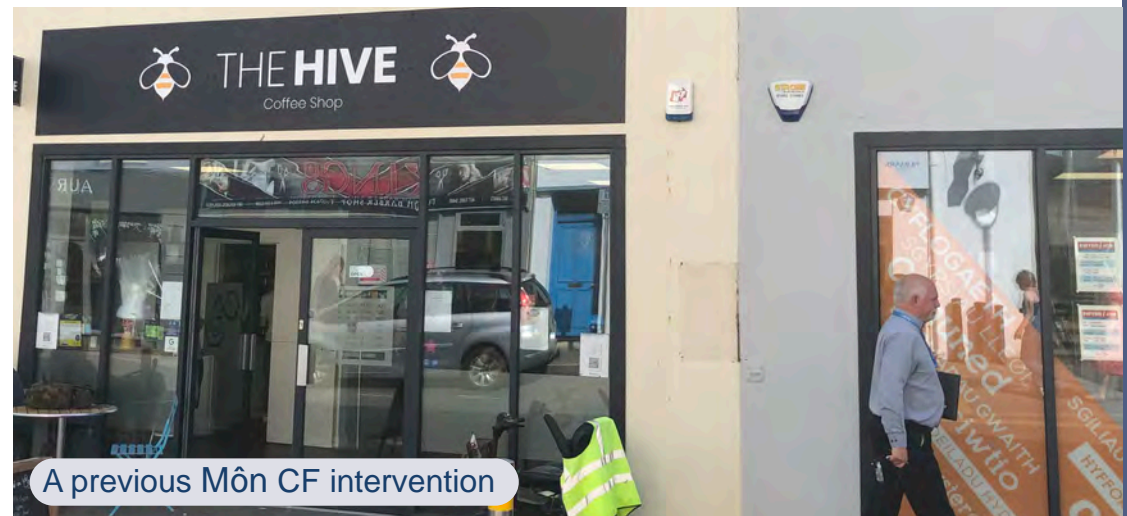
This will enable us to extend our highly successful programme of refurbishing dilapidated heritage town centre properties - reversing the decline of the town centre.

- **Vacant Property Programme**

Môn CF will buy some of the largest and most prominent vacant properties and create vibrant new community uses. This will create a visible difference to the town centre and attract more people in.



Tackling eyesores



A previous Môn CF intervention

# Outcomes

Collectively all these interventions are designed together to make the town a better place to visit and to spend time in, restoring pride of place.

In total the bid will bring forward £22.5m of investment, including £17m from the Levelling Up Fund which will deliver £54m of benefits (NPV).

Breaking the cycle of retail decline by offering alternative heritage and community attractions will bring footfall and spending that create further momentum.

It will also contribute to Net Zero targets by renovating existing buildings, leading to a big reduction in embedded carbon compared to new build.



## An improved culture, arts and leisure offer

- allowing more people to engage with their heritage

An expanded arts and culture offer (c. 575 sqm) at the Ucheldre Centre attracting 17,500 additional visits a year

A new dance studio (114 sqm) allowing 60 more dancers every week

An expanded play centre (c. 190 sqm) reducing the waiting list and allowing for 16,000 additional visits per year

Improved offer at St Cybis and a better presentation of heritage to allow the church to realise its potential as a key visitor attraction



## A vibrant, sustainable town centre

25 Vacant / dilapidated buildings brought back into use

8 Shop front improvements in the conservation area

20 new or refurbished homes and 7 holiday lets

Over 65 new (FTE) jobs, 6 new apprenticeships and over 85 volunteering opportunities

Land Value uplift (direct of £1.2m and indirect of £4.7m)



## Impacts

High spending in the town centre

Lower unemployment

Higher engagement with arts / leisure / heritage

Increased wellbeing of residents

Reduced crime

Increased pride in place

Tackling food poverty and social deprivation

Promoting community cohesion

Encouraging active travel

## Our experienced delivery team

### Isle of Anglesey County Council

This project builds on previous work by the council, including National Lottery Heritage Fund and Welsh Government funding. The council has responsibility for many of the assets in the project, including Townscape Transformation and Public Realm and Visitor Experience projects.



### Holyhead Town Council

The Town Council and Mayor Have been closely involved in specifying these projects, and developed the Play Centre expansion and Beach Frontages proposals.

### Môn CF

A charity owned by the community, supporting deprived areas, upskilling the local population and helping people into work.

Môn CF already has excellent track record in bringing vacant town centre properties into use.

Môn CF has ready-to-go plans for town-centre properties, once funding is secured.

### Diocese of Bangor

The Diocese of Bangor is a registered charity. It manages the capital assets of over 170 church buildings, including all necessary renovation and development works. St Cybi's Church is part of the Stones Shout Out project of preserving, renewing and improving five of the Diocese's most beautiful, historic churches.

### Ucheldre Centre

Ucheldre is a community arts centre and has the status of a registered charity. It is the only performing arts venue on Ynys Môn and plays a valuable role in providing access to a range of artistic activities to the local community.



# Ynys Môn

THE ISLE OF

# Anglesey



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