



# Wye Valley Villages Stage 2 Report

Draft June 2021



monmouthshire  
sir fynwy

| Wye Valley AONB | Community councils | ARUP

# Stage 2 Report

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# 1. Introduction Wye Villages Plan for the Future

## 1.1 Purpose & objectives

The “Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan for the Future” will be a strategic framework plan that sets a holistic vision for transformation through a programme of short, -mid and long-term interventions.

The need for the Plan was triggered by issues around road (safety) and village infrastructure, which form part of a much more complex set of issues and challenges. This means that potential solutions can only be effective if addressed and set in a broader context and with an integral approach. In this case such a holistic approach and understanding offers a once in a lifetime opportunity to drive generational change on all fronts. The AONB Management Plan describes this context driven approach by the need to ensure transport is sustainable, integrated, and compatible with the purpose of its destination.

The objective of this Plan is to define the key elements and structure of a holistic vision and to offer a perspective on how this vision can deliver a transformational change in an era that is already demanding we address socio-economic, political and environmental challenges. There is a bigger opportunity to promote and enhance the AONB with a long term perspective, overall for visitors and residents, while addressing immediate issues and challenges.

We will identify and define these key elements through three stages of work with the client team, specialist consultants and key stakeholders, and by doing so, jointly shape the vision. The results of the second stage and draft vision are presented here.

The aim of the first stage of work was to identify key issues, challenges and opportunities to set a solid evidence base. Our Stage 1 Report offers a cross cutting summary and distils the essence of a broad, sometimes divergent evidence base, consisting of studies, reports, plans and strategies around green infrastructure, tourism, travel and transport, AONB management and regional development planning.

The purpose of the second stage of work has been to define a draft vision for the Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan for the Future and six key themes that form the pillars of that vision. The objective of this stage 2 report is to submit the vision, the programme of key themes and potential projects to wider public consultation, in order to gain valuable feed-back and inform the final vision.

## 1.2 Drivers of change

We have identified three key “drivers of change” that condition future transformation and are key to unlocking future potential and opportunities of the vision:

### Sustainability

In response to the Paris Accord on Climate Change, The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals provide a blueprint at the highest level to direct decision-making towards environmental, political, social and economic sustainability. framework for future growth and change.

At a national level The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) offers a radically different way of approaching development and change. The Act enshrines in law the need to consider the impact of our decisions on future generations. This can be thought of as ‘Cathedral thinking’ a reference to the altruism shown by the medieval craftsmen who dedicated their lives working on buildings they knew would not be completed within their life times.

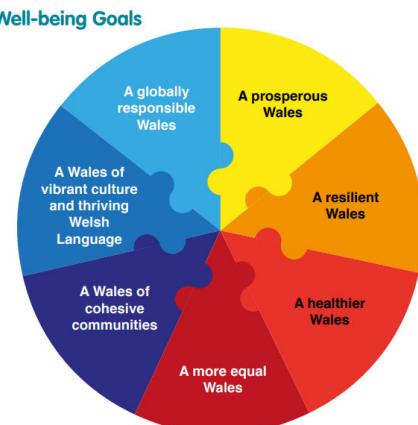
In 2019 both the Welsh Government and Monmouthshire County Council declared a climate emergency recognising the need for urgent action to combat the effects of global climate change.

This will impact upon and permeate all decision making. It will mean prioritising sustainable travel (public transport and active travel), climate change mitigation, renewable energy, local circular economies and ensuring local people can sustain themselves through access to employment and housing.

### Governance:

Engagement to date has laid bare the complex geopolitical context of the Wye Valley and the Wales-England border. The wide range of stakeholders and delicate balance required between tourism and residents adds further weight to the need for carefully considered governance. To avoid a disparate response without clear ownership there will need to be an integrated approach where efforts are joined-up around a shared objective. This will be essential in ensuring; That finite public funding is maximised and added value created

- That finite public funding is maximised and added value created
- There is one (external) voice which speaks for the Wye Valley
- The brand and reputation of the Wye Valley is consistent irrespective of political boundaries
- Leadership and ownership are clearly defined and agreed by stakeholders with greater cross border collaboration.



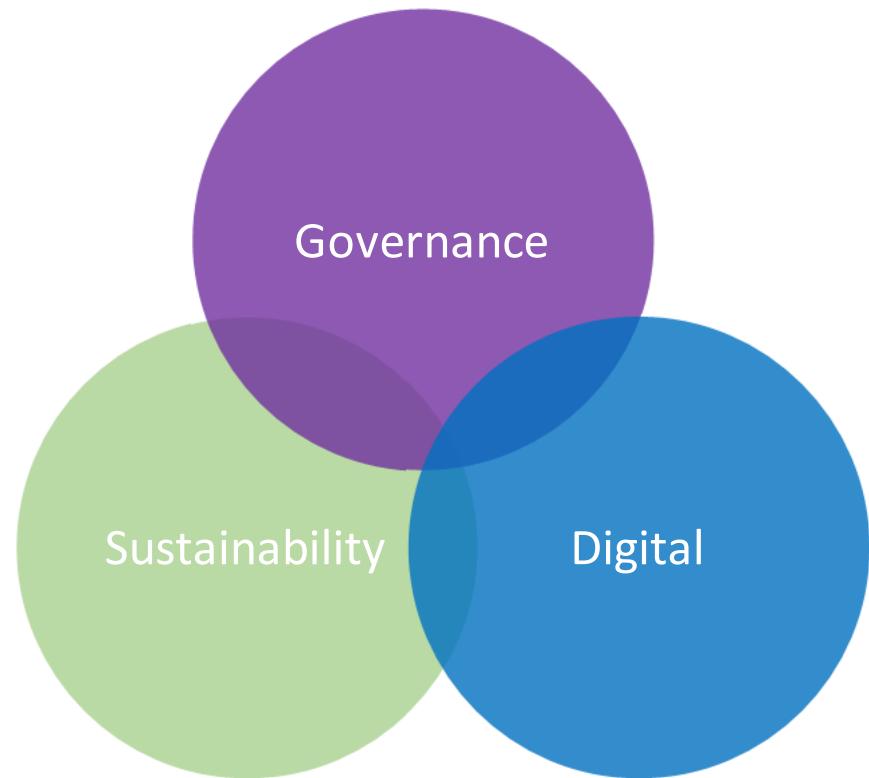
The 7 well-being goals of the WGFBA

## Digital:

Technology continues to rapidly change the way we live. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated many latent trends enabled by the devices and software that are now part of daily life. Increased online services and remote working are:

- Allowing us to blend work and lifestyles
- Increasing market reach for smaller enterprises who are no longer confined to a narrow geography
- Increasing the way we use, interact and access transport from app based bike hire, ticketless transport to live feed travel information
- Changing the way we explore an area through geolocation mapping or the web-based projection of a place
- The rise of co-working spaces in place of traditional, 'fixed' office space.
- Increasing the dependency on approval based platforms such as Tripadvisor for decision making

The current lack of widespread, fast internet will continue to limit the potential of enterprise until a solution is found. The ability of the Wye Valley villages, its enterprises and people to capitalise on the societal changes that are taking place around us will be directly linked to the sophistication of the digital infrastructure.



The drivers of change for the Wye Valley

## 2. Draft vision

The vision builds on the existing AONB character and the distinctive identity of the different villages, as well as the two gateway towns Monmouth and Chepstow.

### Updated vision statement:

The Wye Valley is a story of people and nature that has been shaped by many hands over centuries. The immediate challenges of climate change, post-Covid recovery, mobility and sustainable development require a new perspective on the future of this outstanding landscape and its settlements.

Our vision is to ensure that short term solutions are set within the context of long term needs and challenges. It is considered over a 100 year timescale to ensure it will endure for generations to come and work with a timescale for nature. It is founded upon three simple principles:

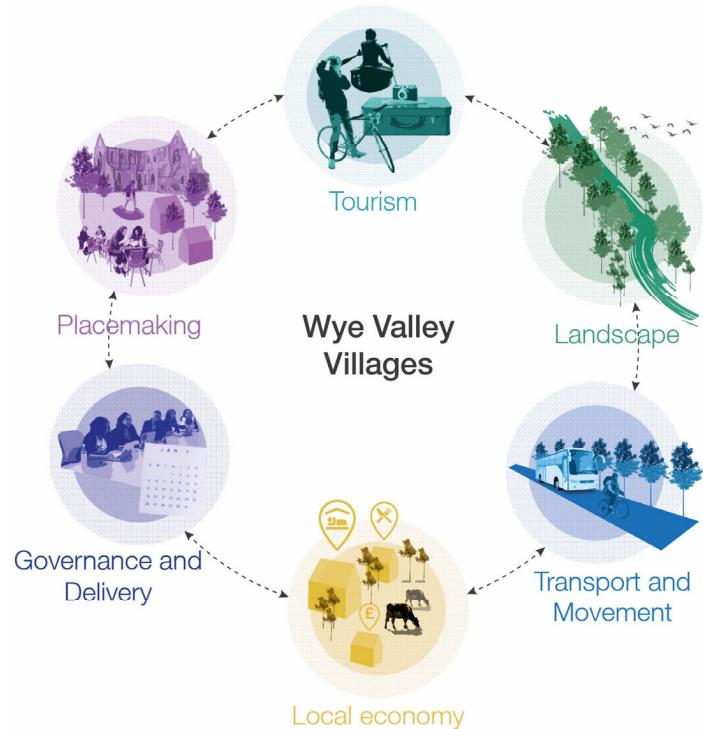
- Conserving and enhancing the natural and man-made assets that define this unique place for existing and future generations.
- A holistic approach to governance, territory and integral drivers of change
- Evolving to respond to changes caused by climate change and to capitalise on opportunities created by the target of net zero carbon.

We have defined six key themes that form the pillars of our vision, which are:

- placemaking,
- governance,
- tourism,

- landscape,
- transport and movement
- local economy.

The first two pillars, placemaking and governance, are also overarching themes to the other four. For each of these pillars we have set out a programme for future transformation, the guiding principles that define that transformation and the potential projects that can emanate from the programme.



### 3. Stakeholder engagement

Liaison with key stakeholders and the wider public, recognising the importance of consultation to understand issues and challenges and for a collaborative approach to project definition and opportunities is a fundamental part of our process.

Representatives of the client group that commissioned the work, Monmouthshire County Council, The Wye Valley AONB Partnership and community council representatives from Devauden, St Arvans, Tintern and Trellech United, have been a valuable soundboard for our work throughout the process.

Targeted stakeholder conversations have been held with Andrew Blake, Manager of the Wye Valley AONB, Nicola Edwards, Destination Manager of MCC and Helen O’Kane (Puzzle Wood) and Rachael Geddes (Humble by Nature), members of the board of “Forest of Dean & Wye Valley Tourism” the official Destination Management Organisation. Their ideas and feedback have helped shape the vision and key pillars.

A wider public consultation period will be held in summer 2021, during which the vision and six pillars will be made available in digital format through a “Virtual Engage” format. Feedback and suggestions will be captured and summarised to inform the next and final stage of work.

## SWOT

A SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) assessment was undertaken on December 17th 2020, as part of the inception meeting for the Wye Valley Villages project. The results of the assessment, that was based on the six pillars of the vision, are summarised in the adjacent diagram.



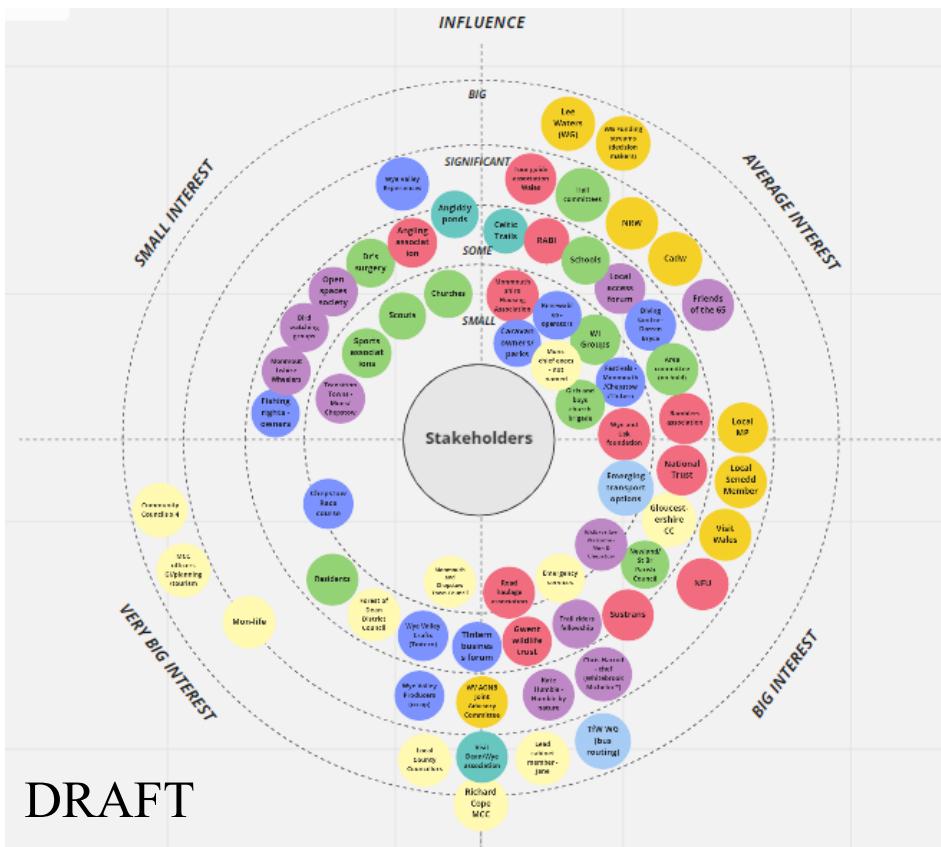
Extract from the Stakeholder mapping and SWOT exercise January 2021

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## Stakeholder mapping.

A stakeholder map has been produced with the client team. The purpose of this map is to identify all stakeholders relating to the project, create a clear summary overview of their relation to the project and the potential interest and influence on the project, future plans, delivery and governance.



Extract from the Stakeholder mapping and SWOT exercise January 2021

## Road Safety.

A specific thematic stakeholder session around road safety in the villages has been held on 15th of April with St Arvans Community Council, Devauden Community Council and Tintern Community Council and on 16th of April with Trellech United community council. During these sessions a deeper understanding was created of the current issues and challenges and potential solutions were discussed. The input and results have been a fundamental for the development of our vision and plans, which can be found in the respective sections in this report.

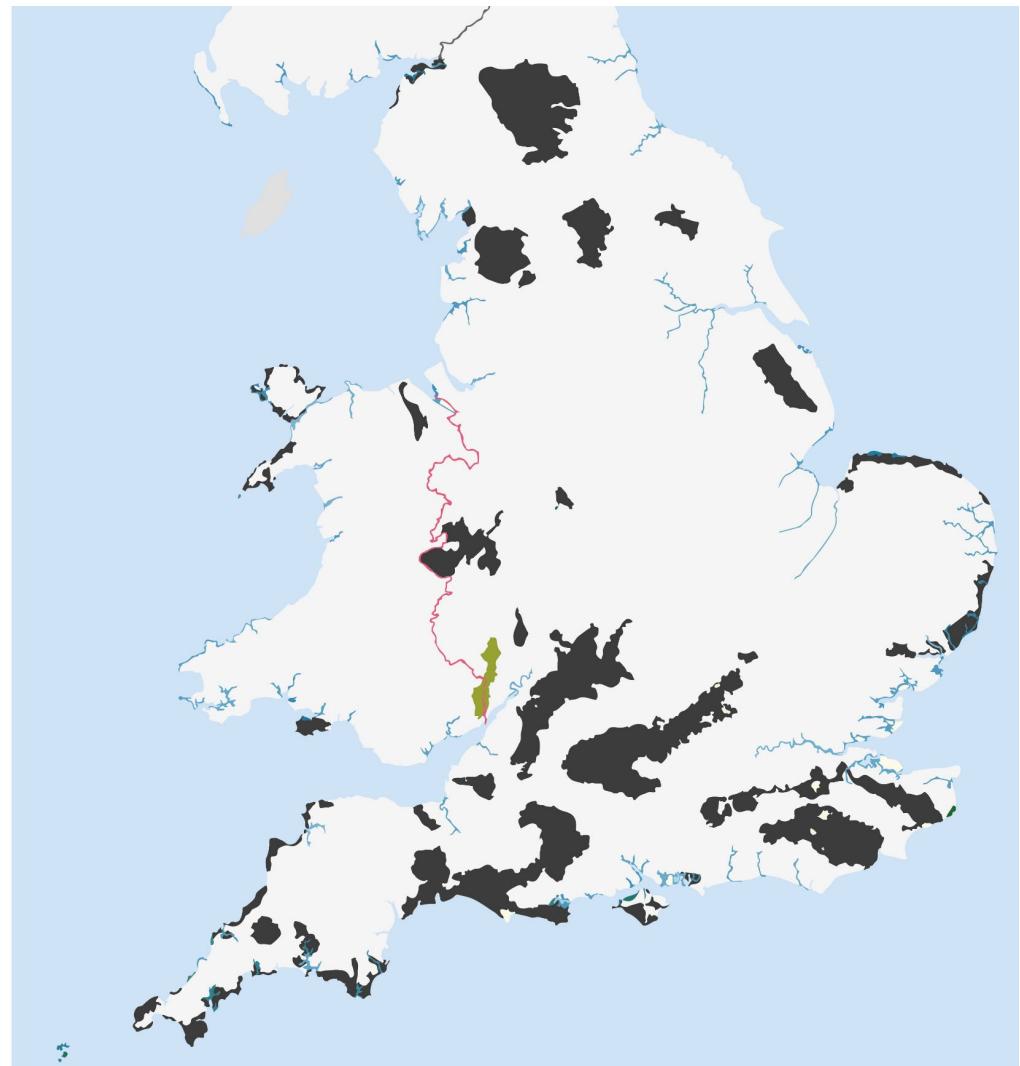


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  1. Removing road markings in Buriton, Hampshire to highlight key spaces and reduce traffic speeds
  2. Junction design creates an entrance place to Dunston village, Somerset
  3. Simple paving solution in West Meon, Hampshire to create a low-speed environment

## 4. National and regional context

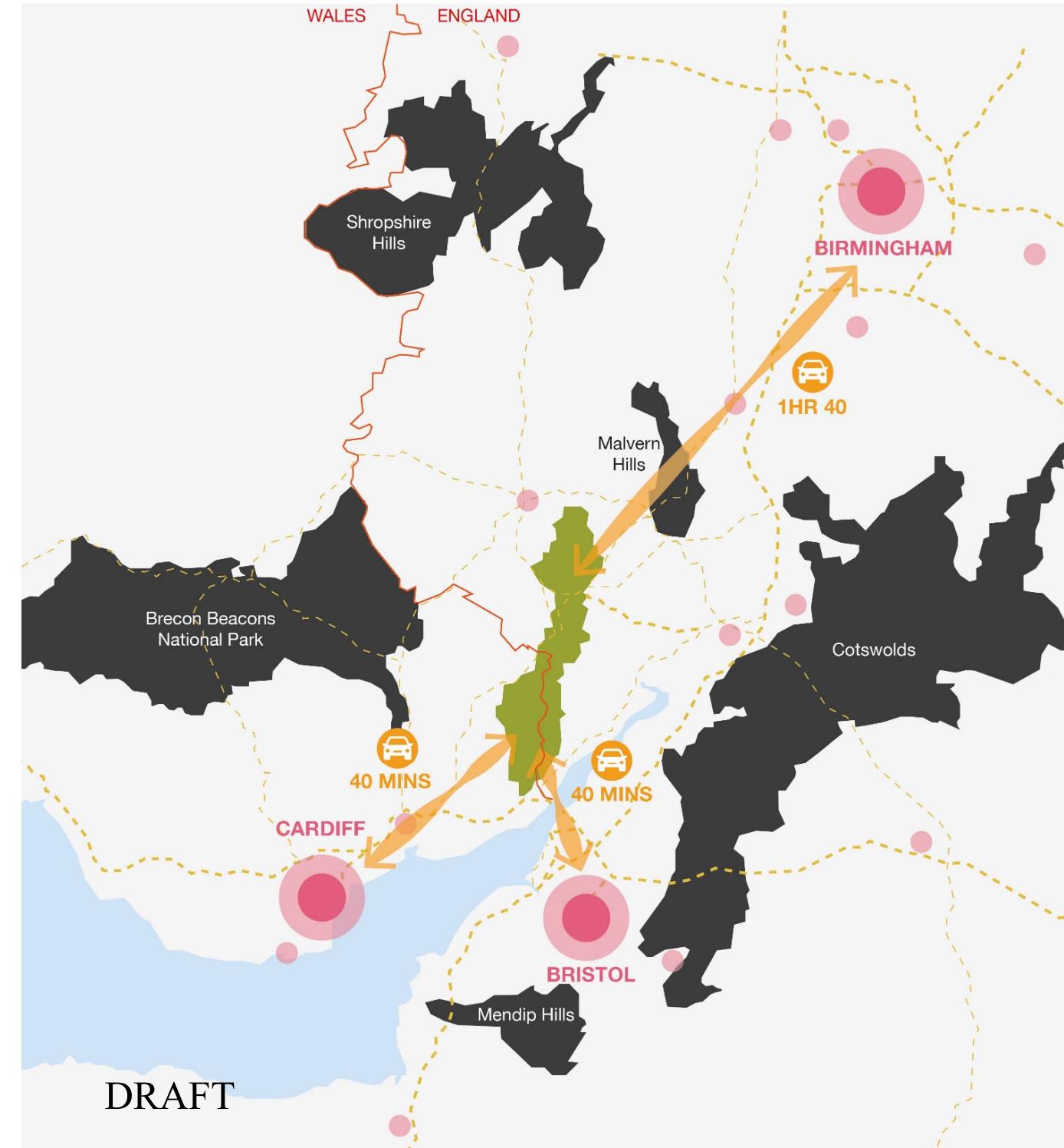
### AONB National context

When considering the Wye Valley at a national scale it is useful to consider the extent and location of similar, protected landscapes. Whilst each are unique in their own right it is noticeable that of the UK's 46 AONB's only a handful straddle national boundaries. The Wye Valley is a true 'border territory' where the interface of political boundaries, settlements, cultures, nationalities and the natural environment has shaped the 'uniqueness' of the area. This should be embraced and celebrated through the approach to tourism, branding and marketing but also points to the complexity of governance that exists.



AONB's of England and Wales

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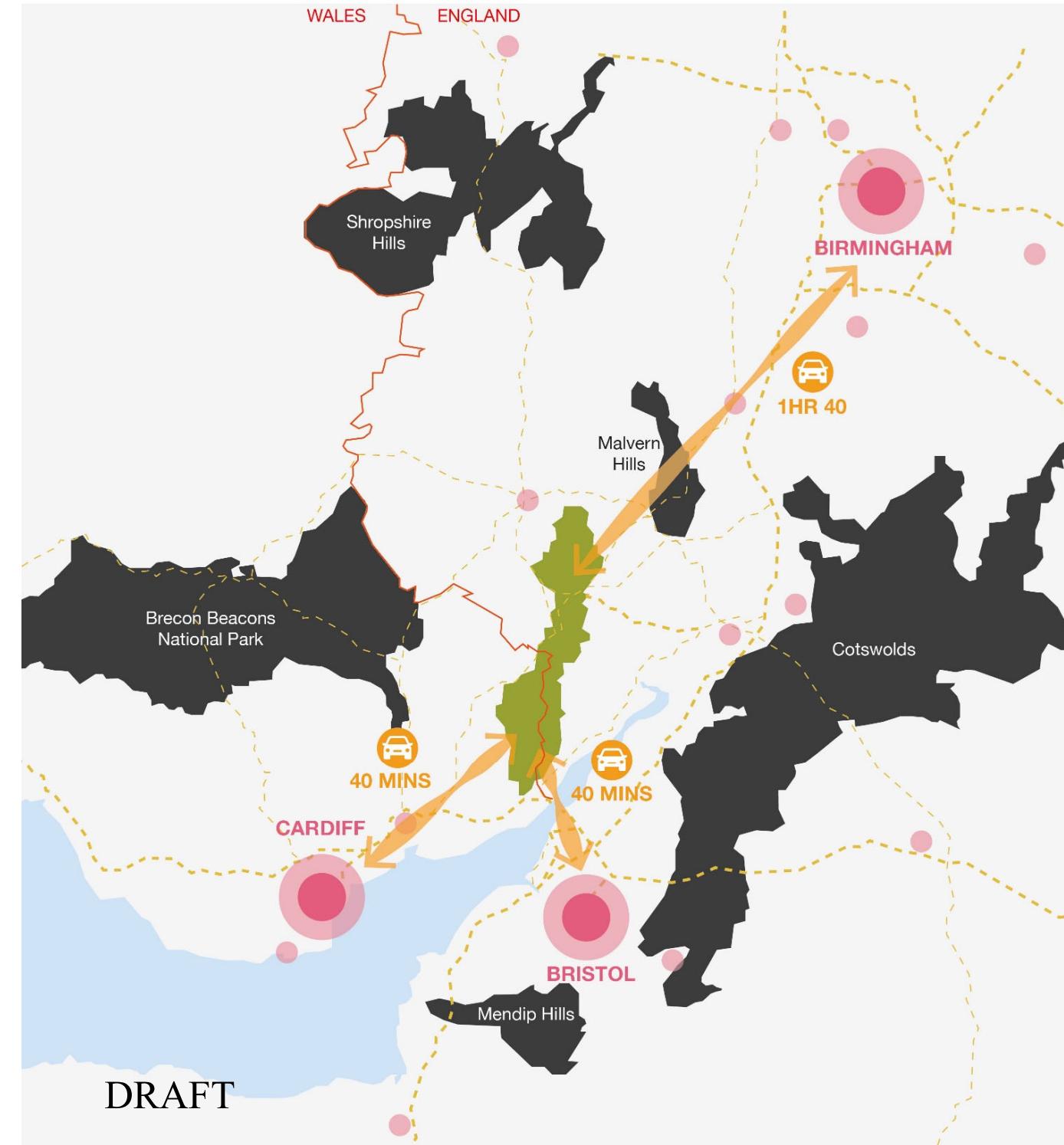


## Regional context

For the purpose of this report, the regional context is illustrated in the accompanying diagram. This reveals a number of considerations:

## The urban context

The proximity of Cardiff (40 mins travel time), Newport (30 mins), Bristol (40 mins) and Birmingham (1hr 40 mins) provides a significant pool of latent visitors and markets for local businesses. As technology continues to add greater flexibility to people's living and working lifestyles, these same areas are also likely to generate 'would-be' new residents, further increasing pressure on finite local housing and community infrastructure. This should also be seen as an opportunity to attract a younger generation of entrepreneurs to help drive the local economy.



### The AONB- A system of outstanding landscapes

The Wye Valley is part of a collection of landscapes including the Forest of Dean, Cotswolds, Shropshire Hills and Brecon Beacons. Despite separate governing bodies these are a system, not independent landscapes which have the potential for mutual gain through greater collaboration and cross-selling. Through the engagement process it had become evident that these invisible boundaries are ignored by entrepreneurs such as Visit DeanWye who see the value in sharing digital tourism platforms with partners in the Cotswolds. This perspective is essential in understanding how the Wye Valley interacts with surrounding areas. It will frame the outcomes of this study – the proposed transformations for the Wye Valley and its communities.

### A conduit north-south

The natural barrier formed by the River Wye is manifest in geopolitical boundaries that have existed in some form for centuries. The north-south alignment of Offa's Dyke remains an important historical monument, broad territorial boundary and walking route of nation significance. The Wye Valley marks the southern gateway to this route and the landscapes to the north. For many it will be the start and end of journeys, experiences and visits and as such it is important to remember that the Wye Valley in itself is part of a broader offer.

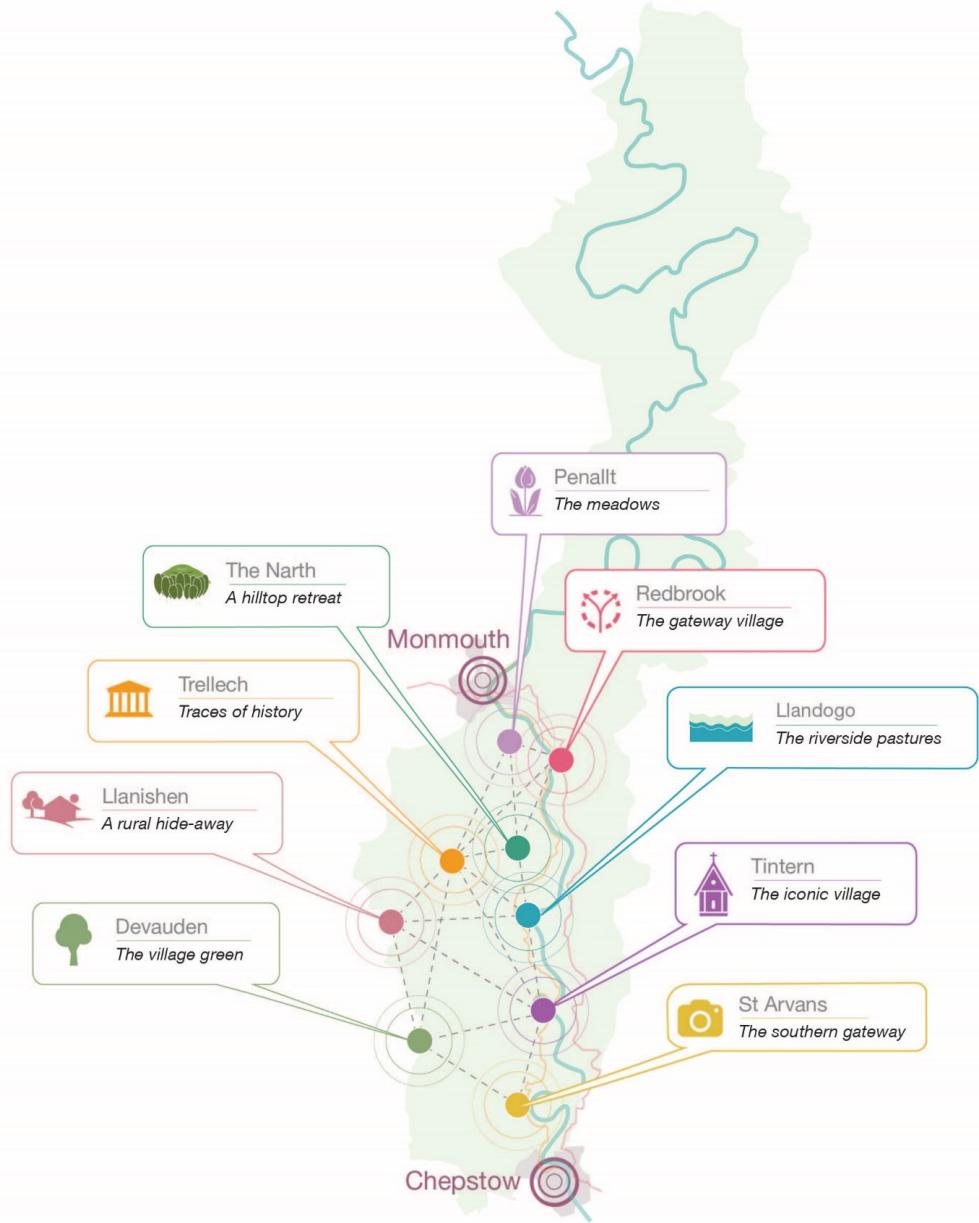
# 5. Wye Valley context

## Study area

The scope of this study is limited to the Welsh part of the Wye Valley AONB and the 8 main settlements that have been identified with MCC:

- Trellech
- Penallt
- The Narth
- Devauden
- Tintern
- St Arvans
- Llandogo
- Llanishen

The geographic boundary of the study reflects the administrative boundary of Monmouthshire County Council. In reality, the 'villages' of the Wye Valley extend east of the River Wye to England and arguably further again into the Forest of Dean. This is important because the social and economic function of the area is not restricted by the administrative boundaries. Any proposed changes discussed in this study will potentially impact other settlements. For example, a consistent approach to road safety would be more effective if managed at a broader geographical area (to include places such as Redbrook) that is consistent with the cross border AONB boundaries.



Network of villages as presented in Stage 1  
Please note Redbrook is outside of the study area

## **A network of Villages**

During the initial stages of engagement with the community council's the villages were presented as a network or system not as separate and independent settlements. This reflects the community and social connections between villages, the movement of people and trade within the area and the need for a collaborative and joined-up approach to key issues such as road safety.

This network is bound by the river to the east, the higher land and escarpment to the west and bookended by Chepstow and Monmouth north and south.

## **Activity**

Touristic activity is traditionally closely aligned to the river corridor due in large part to the ease of access offered by the A466 and the presence of Tintern Abbey. The villages on the higher ground in contrast are generally more residential and community in nature, however have a different offer towards tourism that could be further explored.

## **Roads**

Road safety and traffic concerns have been identified as a priority concern for the community council's. Understanding the exact causation of traffic and speeding is complex but an appreciation of the local road network reveals part of the problem.

The villages have developed around two key routes, The A466 and B4293 which effectively form a circuit. Both routes connect Chepstow and the M4 corridor with Monmouth and the A40 to the north serving as strategic transport routes. The linear nature of the valley and general lack of faster (and therefore convenient) east-west routes both within the study area and beyond help to amplify movement along these routes. The scenic value of the A466 in particular will entice movement based on recreational value.

## **Chepstow and Monmouth**

Although both towns are situated outside of the study area they play an important role in the function of the valley. Both offer employment, education, retail and service provision for the villages. They are also existing and potential markets for enterprises within the study area.

Chepstow provides the nearest point of access to the rail network while Chepstow racecourse is an important generator of income to the local economy.

# 6. Six Pillars

## 6.1 Sustainable Transport & Road Safety

### Introduction

The two key priorities for the Transport element of the strategy are as follows:

- Improving actual and perceived road safety within the villages; and
- Enhancing sustainable transport provision for both residents and tourists.

The priorities identified above align with the views expressed by stakeholders alongside the key themes that underpin local and national planning policy. Both priorities complement each other well as improving road safety is likely to encourage more journeys to be made by sustainable modes of transport, particularly active travel. Similarly, encouraging more trips to be made by sustainable modes of travel will reduce vehicle movements on the transport network, thus improving road safety.

### Road Safety

The most significant observation is the lack of distinction that is made to the road (and not street) design when entering or leaving each village. This lack of transition reinforces the sense of continuity for drivers and therefore any sense that you are entering a ‘place’ where people live or visit is lost. The result is an inevitable conflict between road users and people where drivers are given priority.

There are a number of measures to be explored further to reduce both perceived and actual road safety concerns. Some of these measures have been reflected in the diagrammatic plans for each village in section “7-The Villages-Placemaking” and further recommendations are included below:

- **Street Design Manual:** it is recommended that a design manual is prepared that details how streets within the We Valley should be designed to enhance both character and function. These design standards can be used to encourage consistent good quality street design within each of the Villages.
- **Road Speed Strategy:** alongside the Street Design Manual, it is recommended that a road speed strategy is developed for the study area. We recommend this includes a 20mph speed limit for all streets within the villages.
- **Village Transport Schemes:** speed reduction features will be required to enforce the proposed reductions in speed limit. Bespoke transport schemes are recommended for each village, responding to the individual opportunities and constraints of the existing transport network. These should be delivered in alignment with the standards set out in the Street Design Manual.

The above recommendations will positively contribute to the wider strategy of each village acting as a disruptor to the wider road network, changing the overall character of the route.

## Sustainable Transport

There are opportunities to enable both residents and tourists to make more journeys to, from and within the Wye Valley by sustainable modes of transport. These include:

- Improvements to the existing **bus service provision**, including increased service frequencies and better connectivity with more strategic bus and rail services;
- Enhancing the **pedestrian and cycle network**, including the provision of a north/south cycle route extending the existing Wye Valley Green Way, and also could be delivered through the potential introduction of Quiet Lanes; and
- **Intermodal interchanges** at tourism hubs that become a ‘new place’ with a clear and distinct sense of arrival and departure for multiple modes of transport with services and facilities to support visitors and tourists alike. Potentially located both in the north and south of the Wye Valley, these hubs would enable tourists travelling by car to transfer to another mode. The mobility hubs would include access to hire vehicles such as cycles, e-bikes and potentially electric vehicles. There is also a future opportunity for e-scooters to be made available. Further investigation is required to identify potential locations for such hubs; however, Chepstow Racecourse is suggested as a potential site to be explored further.
- There are also opportunities for smaller **mobility hubs** to be located in strategic locations across the Wye Valley, by relocating existing bus stops in the Villages to more strategic locations (such as village greens and village halls), to enable the transition from car to other modes of travel, both for residents and for visitors.

## Active Travel

The Wye Valley contains numerous walking and cycling routes which form a complex network of active travel, recreational and touristic routes. For expediency, this section notes the regionally significant Offa’s Dyke footpath and Wye Valley Walk footpath and the emerging Wye Valley Greenway. These are the primary north-south routes which at varying points connect the river villages. Both the Offa’s Dyke and Wye Valley Walk are part of longer walking routes passing into Shropshire and mid Wales respectively. As previously noted, this offers potential for the area to celebrate the beginning and end of these.

**Inclusive active travel** where the needs of all people are understood and catered for is becoming an increasingly important consideration. This includes groups with typically lower levels of uptake include the elderly, BAME groups and women. There is a significant opportunity for the Wye Valley to pioneer an approach to inclusive active travel by offering safe and adapted routes and means, as well as targeted marketing and branding.

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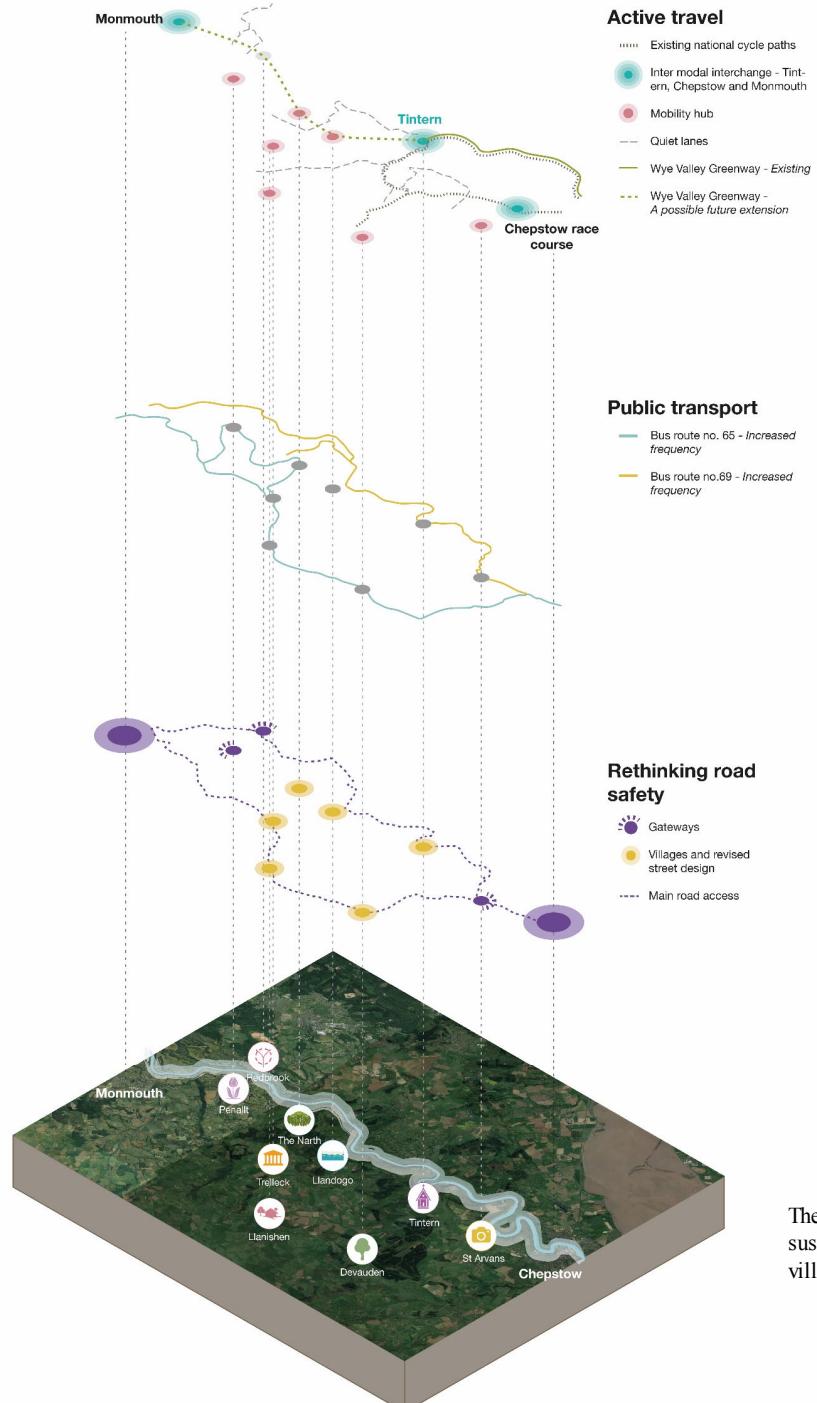


Inclusive cycling in  
cities and towns

Stage 1 Report | June 2019



Inclusive Active Travel: 2019 Arup report and mixed ability cycling.



The layers of proposed road safety and sustainable transport as they relate to the villages



Shared space Caernarfon

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Top: Gravel riding is growing in popularity creating an opportunity for a new audience.  
Above: Inclusive active travel caters for all ages and ability – Greater Manchester

## 6.2 Landscape - Green & Blue Infrastructure

The recommendations offered around green and blue infrastructure are cognisant of the vast body of work contained by and managed by the AONB. Particularly the recently published Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management plan 2021-2026. In response, the recommendations of this study are not based around large-scale change to the landscape and water system of the AONB. Instead, the focus of this study is on recommendations which can be aligned with community-based projects, Council led initiatives or the result of collaboration.

### Net Zero Carbon

In 2019 Monmouthshire declared a climate emergency and a target of net zero carbon by 2030. In achieving this target it is likely that Monmouthshire County Council will need to understand the contribution green and blue infrastructure can make both within the county and more specifically the study area of this report. Similar carbon assessments assess the sequestration value of council owned/publicly owned assets and the impact future changes to natural systems can make. Whilst this report does not make a specific recommendation for a particular course of action, this should be viewed as a cross cutting theme.

### Pilot projects for regenerative agriculture

There is an opportunity to engage the agricultural community in order to deliver shared benefits for the AONB, local communities, local ecology and to mitigate climate change. Regenerative agriculture can be defined as farming practices which actively seek to conserve and enhance biodiversity, improve soil health and support the local economy. During the study we have discussed the opportunity for MCC to utilise publicly owned land holdings for a pilot project to explore the benefits, challenges and opportunities for regenerative agriculture. We recommend this is explored further.

### Wider enhancement opportunities – Lowland Meadows

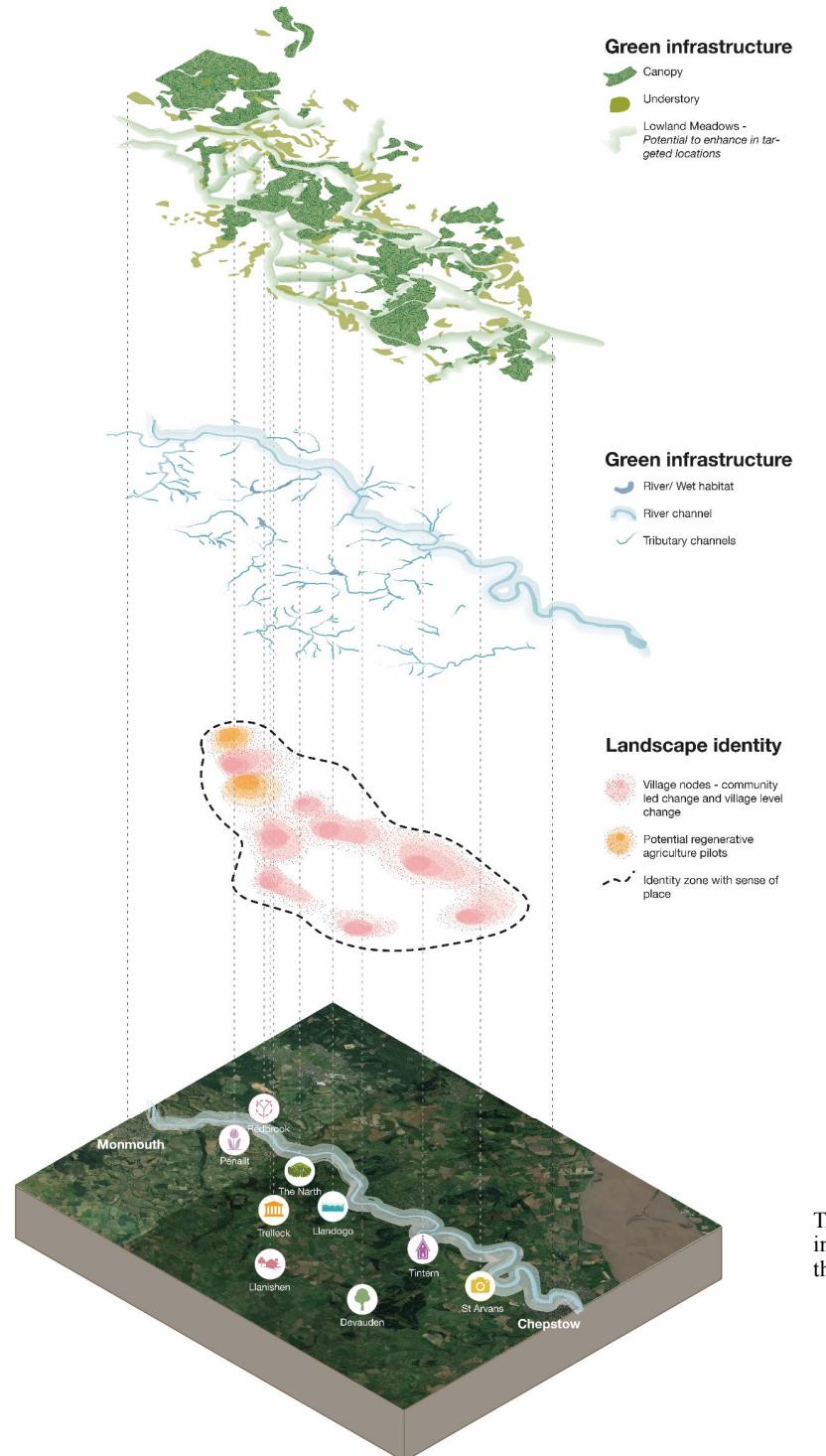
Lowlands Meadows are a Priority habitat under Monmouthshire biodiversity action plan. A local action group (Monmouthshire Meadows) is active within the area and have successfully delivered Trellech Wet Meadows Local Wildlife Trust with Gwent Wildlife Trust. The potential to create additional schemes should be explored.

### Village level change

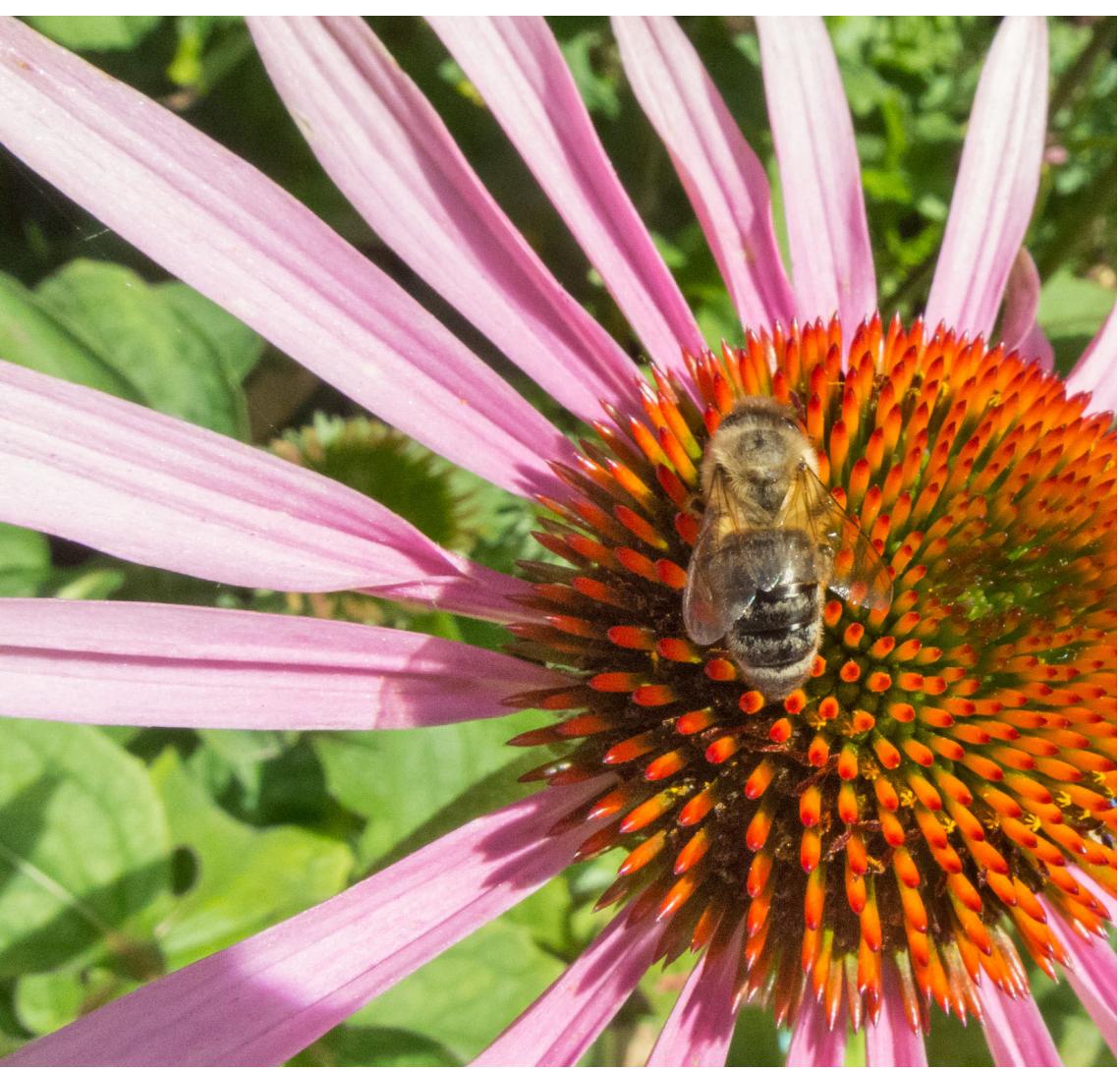
At a village level, it is recommended that any improvements to localised streets and public spaces are taken forward with nature-based solutions to water management. This is often referred to as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems. These can deliver multiple benefits including the creation of low maintenance filtration systems, new habitat and recreation value.

### Community led change

In addition, community led initiatives which align with and support the overarching aims of the AONB can play an important role in placemaking and raising awareness amongst the community. Micro habitat creation such as the so-called Tiny-forests initiative or local food production schemes such as Incredible Edible can prove an invaluable source of positive change and help further shape the character of the villages.



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#### Community and village led green and blue infrastructure

**Above:** Pollinator planting was designed into the Fitzpark temporary park in London. Monmouthshire has a successful track record of delivering small scale pollinator and wildflower initiatives (including County Hall, Usk). This theme should be extended to each village as part of the public realm enhancements.

**Above right:** Incredible Edible projects encourage community food production. Already existing in Usk, these could be encouraged within the villages to encourage healthy eating, biodiversity and to reflect the aims of the AONB Management Plan.

**Bottom right:** Mini Forest projects (Cardiff Bay shown) are small scale community tree planting schemes.



## 6.3 Tourism

### 1. The Real State of Tourism

In general, all tourism activity in sensitive rural contexts, comes with challenges and opportunities, as visitors inevitably have an impact and a degree of negative footprint.

The scale of opportunity and any proposed development of tourism should be very carefully planned and measured against the potential negative impacts, but they are not the same for all the villages.

A few of the villages and interstitial areas, are naturally tourism centric, with well-established and successful tourism offers. Some have (perhaps) significant, untapped tourism potential. Others, more residential in nature, would seemingly appear to have relatively limited tourism appeal, opportunity and appetite

*Q : Can we resolve what each village's opportunity and appetite for tourism is and clarify for the brief, if the broader Tourism Economy really is fragile, where, to what degree and in what way?*

### 2. Governance & Geopolitical Boundaries

The brief is too geopolitically confined (villages, Welsh-AONB, Monmouthshire, Wales) yet tourists are blind to these arbitrary boundaries seeing only treasured, beautiful, memorable, enjoyable, place and places.

*Q: So why is tourism (and this study) strategised, planned, managed, financed and delivered within these arbitrary boundaries? Can we overcome these (geopolitical) Governance Issues around Tourism ?*

### 3. Destination Management and Marketing

Given that stakeholders consulted have expressed frustration that their activities are limited by the available financial resources, surely there must be a benefit in investing energy and resources, into a more joined up approach to the visitor economy and tourism opportunity.

Further, given the existing and foreseeable constraints on public finances, surely it makes more sense to collectively plan, manage, finance and deliver marketing in a more joined up way, avoiding duplication of effort, wasted resources, and delivering greater efficacy for the benefit of all?

*Q: As Visit Dean Wye appear to be an effective, tourism economy focussed cross border agency with members both side the geo-politics, should they/ could they, not take an elevated role in delivering the regional tourism destination management, as part of a more integrated multistakeholder programme – led in part, supported and guided by MMC and AONB?*

### 3. Tourism Hubs

Located at least at the southern and northern end of the Valley, these enclaves or tourism hubs of perhaps more intense development could:

- Provide a ‘new place’ with a clear and distinct sense of arrival and departure
- Delineate a zone for reduced private car usage
- Provide modal transport interchanges, where public transport, private cars and active transport (cycles, cycle hire etc) can all meet and integrate
- Provide drop-off and collection points for walkers and cyclists so they can undertake more linear explorations of the Valley (in keeping with its geography) – ‘walk out: ger a ride back’
- Deliver Tourist Information in a more concentrated, managed and cost effective way
- Host commercial enterprises
  - Bike Hire & Sales
  - Outdoor Equipment Hire & Sales
  - Food Service
  - Accommodation

As key conditions for these hubs we need to consider:

- the linear nature of the Valley,
- the fact that the beauty of the natural environment of the Valley and the surrounding villages is best experienced, not simply observed. Don’t look at the Valley, get out of the car and get into it!
- The environmental and road safety issues

*Q: Is there is an opportunity to develop more concentrated ‘Visitor Hubs’?*

### 5. Borderlands - Identity and Narrative Theme

In his paper BORDERLANDS: An Unlikely Tourist Destination? Timothy Dallen notes that borderlands and their frequently associated remoteness appeal to tourists because they

- Provide some of the **most pristine natural landscapes in the world** and
- Incite a mythical frontier image in the human psyche.
- Offer a sense of ‘otherness’; other places and other cultures
- Could this be made to apply to Wye Valley AONB as an overtly expressed facet of its personality and brand ?

The English and Welsh borders represent an exciting melting pot, of differing histories, languages, ethnographies, and cultures.



Polish Karkonosze National Park /  
Czech Krkonoše National Park



The Mexico United States  
International Park



La Amistad International Park



**Left:** Borderlands – comparator managed landscapes located at national boundaries.  
**Above:** PEAK is a proposed all year leisure, education, wellness and entertainment destination set in 300 acres of reclaimed parkland on the edge of the Peak District National Park and Chesterfield.

***Q: Could we translate the rather amorphous nature of the border (too English for Wales, too Welsh for England) into a compelling and intriguing virtue, that celebrates the Borderlands?***

## Summary of Tourism Opportunities

- The Wye Valley is underexploited – sustainable tourism at 65% of its potential (AB)...and maybe lower
- There is a real opportunity to bring more people, for the right reasons, spending more money, doing the right things (impact and sustainability) and visiting off peak
- The Woodlands of Natural Resources Wales can act as a sponge to take up more visitors doing more off road activities eg Trail Cycling (Note not MTB)
- Existing tourism base is highly seasonal so there is huge capacity off-season
- The Valley is different with each of the four seasons so lots of reason to visit and revisit off-peak.
- Profile of Wye Valley is low and reasons to visit (USPs) are rather opaque and generic (get away from it all unspoilt landscape....all a bit 'so what ?'). Clarify and differentiate the offer
- Joined-up enhancement of sense of place - branding, marketing and communications could really help
- Borderland traits not exploited. 'Otherness' (contrast/juxtaposition, melting pot) could be dialled-up as a key theme
- Joined up thinking between stakeholders, DMOs, NRW, local councils, counties, national bodies

- Develop clear strategies on who we want to come, for what purpose
- Higher spending visitors on more curated, 'soft packages' of experiences.
- Better Transport infrastructure, more diverse, sustainable transport modes – more collaborative transport – more modal interchanges (hubs)
- More and better facilities and amenities – Accommodation, retail, foodservice, attractions. We have a world-class landscape but not world-class supporting amenities.
- Both of the above could be concentrated into more intensive purpose built hub developments at the north and south gateways.
- Not just outdoor recreation and adventure – develop / dial-up other themes, landscape, borderland history & heritage, ethnography
- Data Gathering - future development informed and supported by data – extensively and consistently gathered to support, guide and inform
- Opportunity to take a more business like / business plan approach to the opportunity.
- Driven by what could be the outcomes – direct economic returns and indirect economic returns (eg social value etc)
- Use the outcomes from a solid business case as leverage to drive the investment
- The new cycle route will change the dynamic of the lower part of the valley and be a real boost for Tintern. Build on this as a beacon and exemplar.

*Summary provided by Tim Rusby, Managing Director of TVAC.*

## 6.4 Local economy

While Monmouthshire has the highest rate of active businesses and business births as well as the third highest GVA in Wales, career opportunities and availability and quality of employment sites are limited, and the tourism industry is seasonal.

Four drivers of change may support improvements and transformation of the local economy, changing demographics, business dynamics, digital infrastructure and housing diversity. The following section included a short description of each and a list of actions.

**Changing demographics:** An older population is attracted to the region's high quality of life but in need of specific services and a younger population is in need of employment opportunities and incentives to drive initiatives forward locally. Specific actions could be:

- Attract and retain young people through providing the right employment, high quality education (tourism sector?), apprenticeships, graduate placements and startup schemes
- Provide better support for public services such as health, care and education



Left: The Glove Factory  
Bradford on Avon. Digitally  
enabled rural co-working

**Business dynamics:** There is opportunity for increasing entrepreneurship (such as the Wye Valley Producers collective) and growth in sectors such as environmental land management, local food processing and distribution, food tourism and education. Specific actions could be:

- Raise the profile of the region as a dynamic place to do business and as an investment opportunity for the private sector
- Invest in key growth sectors such as manufacturing, business, professional and scientific and arts, entertainment and recreation
- Increase number of local suppliers securing public service contracts and more flexible approaches to the promotion of smaller-scale businesses based on indigenous resources

**Digital Infrastructure:** Good quality digital infrastructure and connectivity is central in facilitating digital businesses, education, social inclusion, and inward investment in the region. Specific actions could be:

- Provide better broadband infrastructure such as Next Generation Access broadband coverage to reduce out commuting
- Enhance community, recreational and cultural facilities (e.g. community hubs, co-working spaces) to promote capacity building activities with local communities and businesses in order to increase social capital, create skills networks and drive initiatives forward
- Promote digital workforce skills and digital customer services as well as business digital capacity and automation

Housing diversity: Wye Valley is a desirable and expensive place to live, but it is unaffordable for people employed locally and young people. The high cost of housing may also be discouraging for new and existing local businesses. Specific actions could be:

- Encourage construction of new houses and address the need for affordable and varied housing stock.
- Increase availability of housing sites to provide differing residential products and to enable higher rates of jobs per dwelling.
- Address the wider geographic differences in employment and housing markets in the region.



Below: The Wye Valley contains important enterprises for local produce



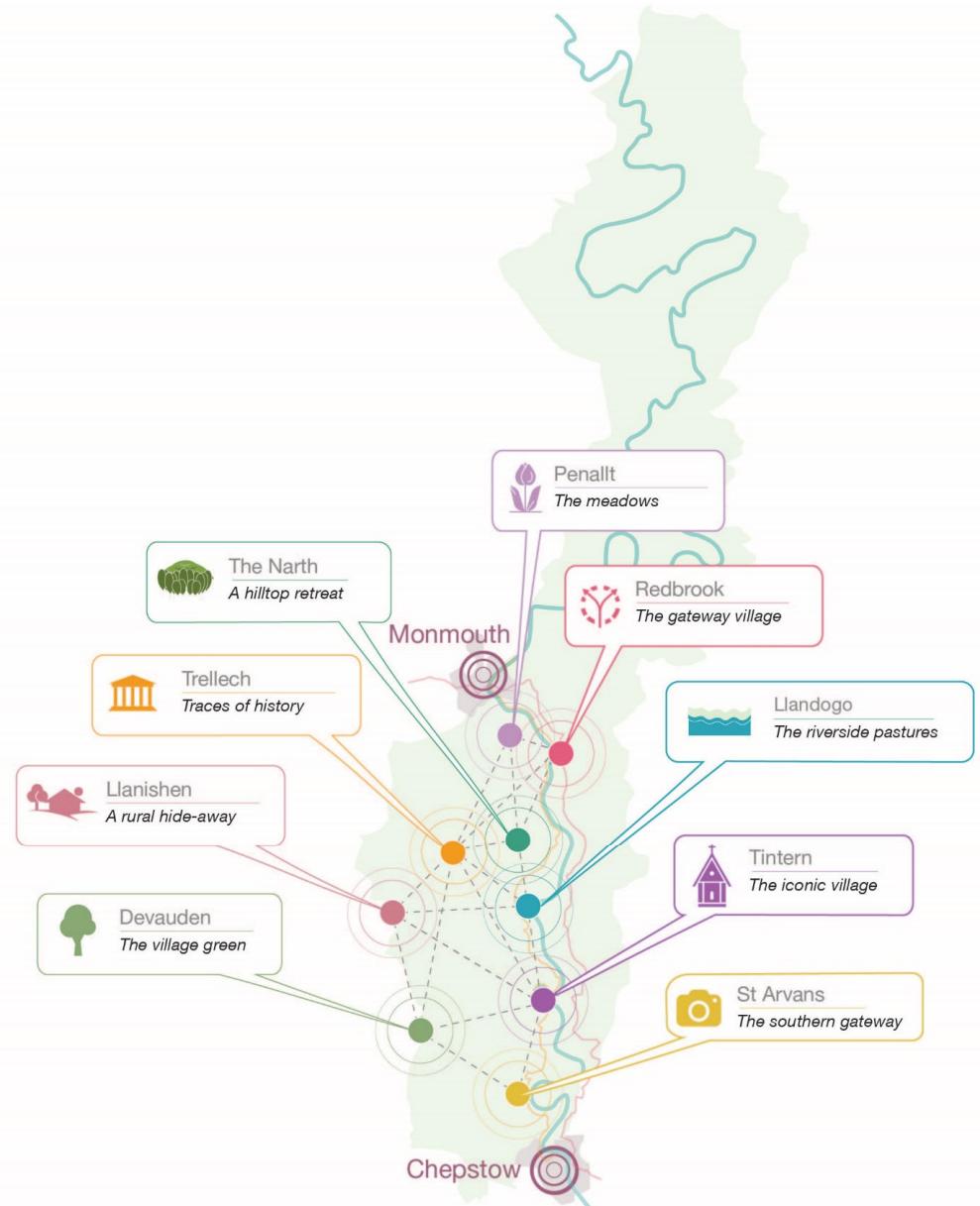
## 6.5 The Villages - Placemaking

The placemaking vision aims to define, enhance, and celebrate the uniqueness and diversity of the Wye Valley villages and their community. It aims to explore and unlock their distinct character, building on location conditions, history, heritage, landscape and ethnographic narrative of the settlement and their people.

To emphasise this uniqueness, we consider these villages as a tapestry of settlements, moving away from the basic distinction between the villages in the valley and the ones high on the plateau between Wye Valley and Vale of Usk. This network of villages allows for nine unique identities to flourish and be reinforced, together with Monmouth and Chepstow as gateway towns. Of these nine, eight are explored within this study. Redbrook, although part of the structure of villages and acknowledged here falls outside of Monmouthshire and therefore this study.

Using the same six key pillars as for the overarching vision, common strategies and principles for placemaking can be defined, such as interventions that improve:

- travel and movement (road safety, active travel routes),
- tourism (signage and wayfinding, amenities and services),
- landscape (SUDs, biodiversity, trees and vegetation) and
- local economy (co-working hubs, local supply chains, digital economy and businesses) all with support from an updated governance model.



The following pages contain diagrammatic plans explaining how these proposed interventions could be implemented in each village and includes a brief summary text for each. The accompanying key provided here defines each of the proposed interventions.

#### Interventions key

##### Tourism

-  Camping/ glamping
-  Interpretation
-  Scenic trail
-  Information point
-  Hotel
-  Historical interest
-  Nature reserve
-  Wild swimming
-  Wayfinding
-  Lay-by for views

##### Economy

-  Co-working
-  Wifi ready
-  Local shop
-  Restaurant
-  Farmer's market
-  Apps and QR interface
-  Intelligent lighting
-  Digital skills
-  Live timetabling

##### Transport and movement

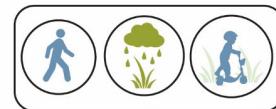
-  Enhanced pedestrian movement
-  20mph zone
-  Shared space design
-  Car/ EV parking and charging
-  Bike/ electric bike storage/ hire
-  Bus/ electric bus stop
-  Boat hire/ boat launch
-  Gateway feature

# TINTERN

'The Island'  
Car free environment,  
enhanced amenity,  
habitat and potential camp-  
ing site



New connection

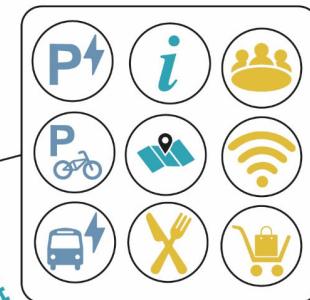


Village gateway



Wye Valley Walk

Tintern hub



Offa's Dyke Path

Tintern Village Arrival



Village gateway



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ARUP

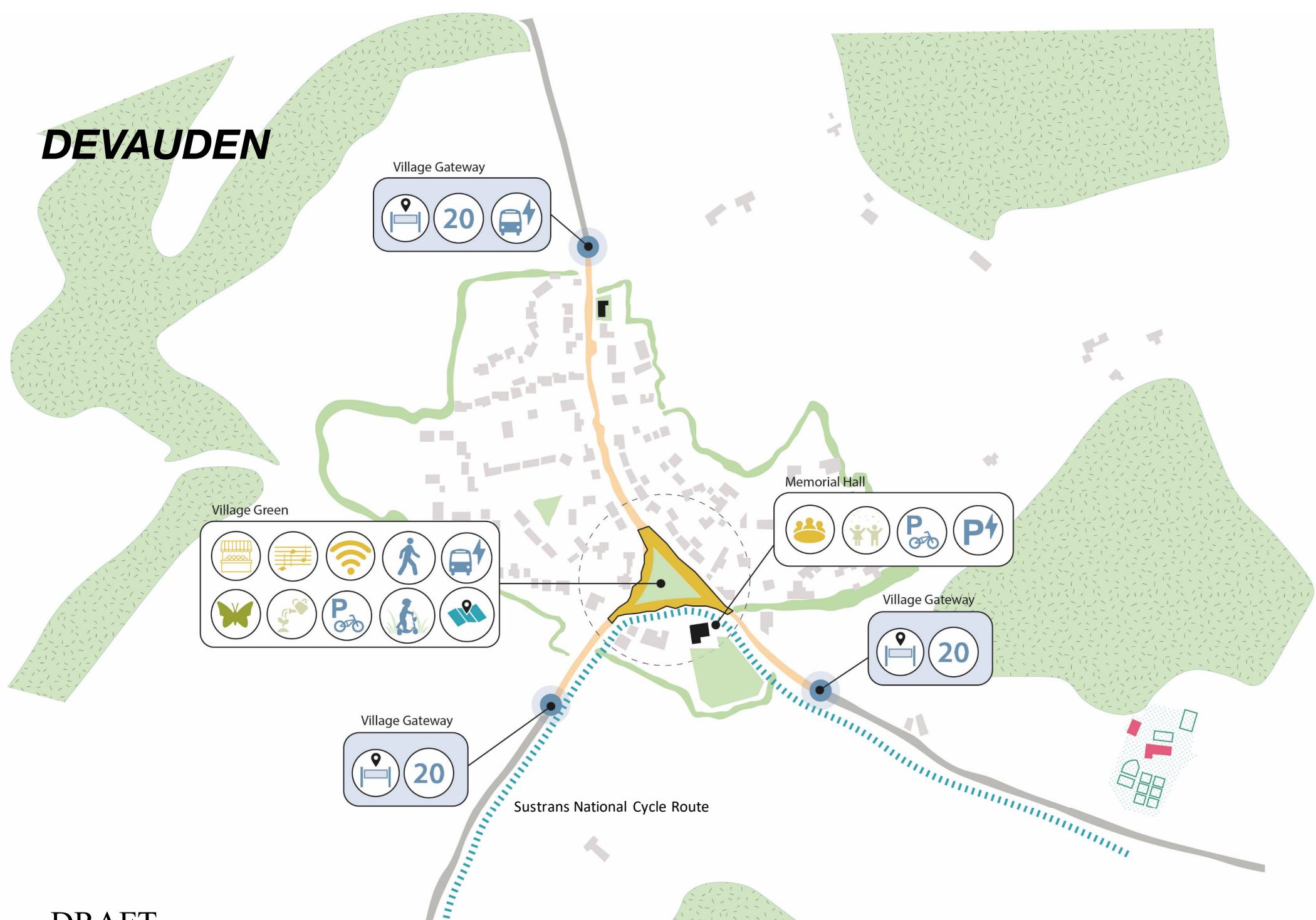
## Tintern

The remains of Tintern Abbey are one of the defining features of the Wye Valley. This is where visible history (the Abbey), past industry, the picturesque landscape and village life reflect the Wye Valley in one place. This places pressure on what is a small settlement to successfully manage the complex balance between visitors and residents. The initial proposal seeks to address this and enhance the village through:

- Street design to increase the sense of place, improve biodiversity and flood resilience (via SuDS) and improve road safety.
- A new connection over the River Wye to aid the movement of people through Tintern and potentially creating new opportunities for placemaking
- The agglomeration of services and uses around the Abbey
- A new transport hub to encourage greater use of sustainable transport



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## Devauden

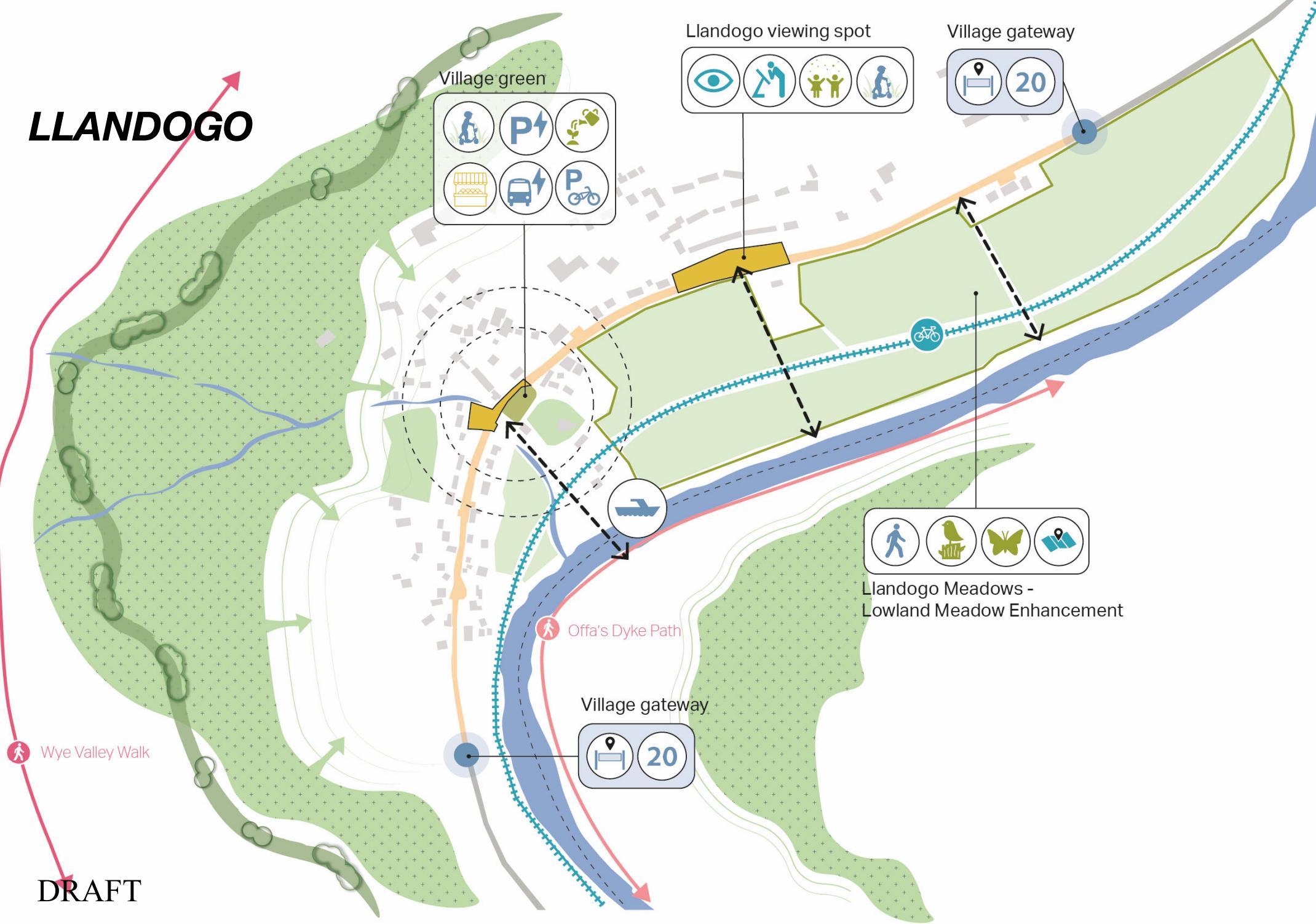
By contrast to the destination villages such as Tintern, the character of Devauden reflects its function as a community and less as a tourism destination. During the engagement process concern was raised over the volume and speed of movement. The main feature of note and opportunity is the village green which contains the interpretative feature for John Wesley. Given the importance of the Wesleyan movement and its global reach, there is an opportunity to enhance this space to serve multiple purposes for the community and visitors. The initial proposals are:

- Revised street design to increase the sense of place and improve road safety
- The transformation of the village green into a space which supports multiple uses and enhances the sense of place



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# LLANDOGO



## Llandogo

One of the riverside villages, Llandogo lacks the profile and status of nearby Tintern. The village has no single defining feature or space and although it enjoys a riverside access, it feels disconnected from the river which once supported the local trow industry. Despite this, the village has significant potential as both a pivot point for multiple walking points and as a place. The initial proposals seek to reshape the village to harness the natural advantages and rediscover its history by:

- Street design to increase the sense of place, improve biodiversity and flood resilience (via SuDS) and improve road safety.
- Forming a heart to the village by creating a multi-functional space within the village green
- Enhancing the biodiversity of the lowland river meadows
- Celebrating the maritime past by creating a new focus for river activities including a new wharf and chandlers
- Reconnecting the village to the river through improved access for walkers and cyclists



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# THE NARTH



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## The Narth

The village is like Devauden a community rather than a focal point for tourism. The quiet, secluded nature of the village and wooded setting are defining characteristics. Proposed change in the Narth is limited considering the residential nature of the village. However, subtle interventions could help garner greater community cohesion, increase the sense of place and cater for low impact tourism in the form of walkers/hikers. The initial proposals are to;

- Use the village hall as the location for local food markets and as a respite stop for walking and hiking
- Street design to increase the sense of place, improve biodiversity and flood resilience (via SuDS) and improve road safety.



# TRELLECH



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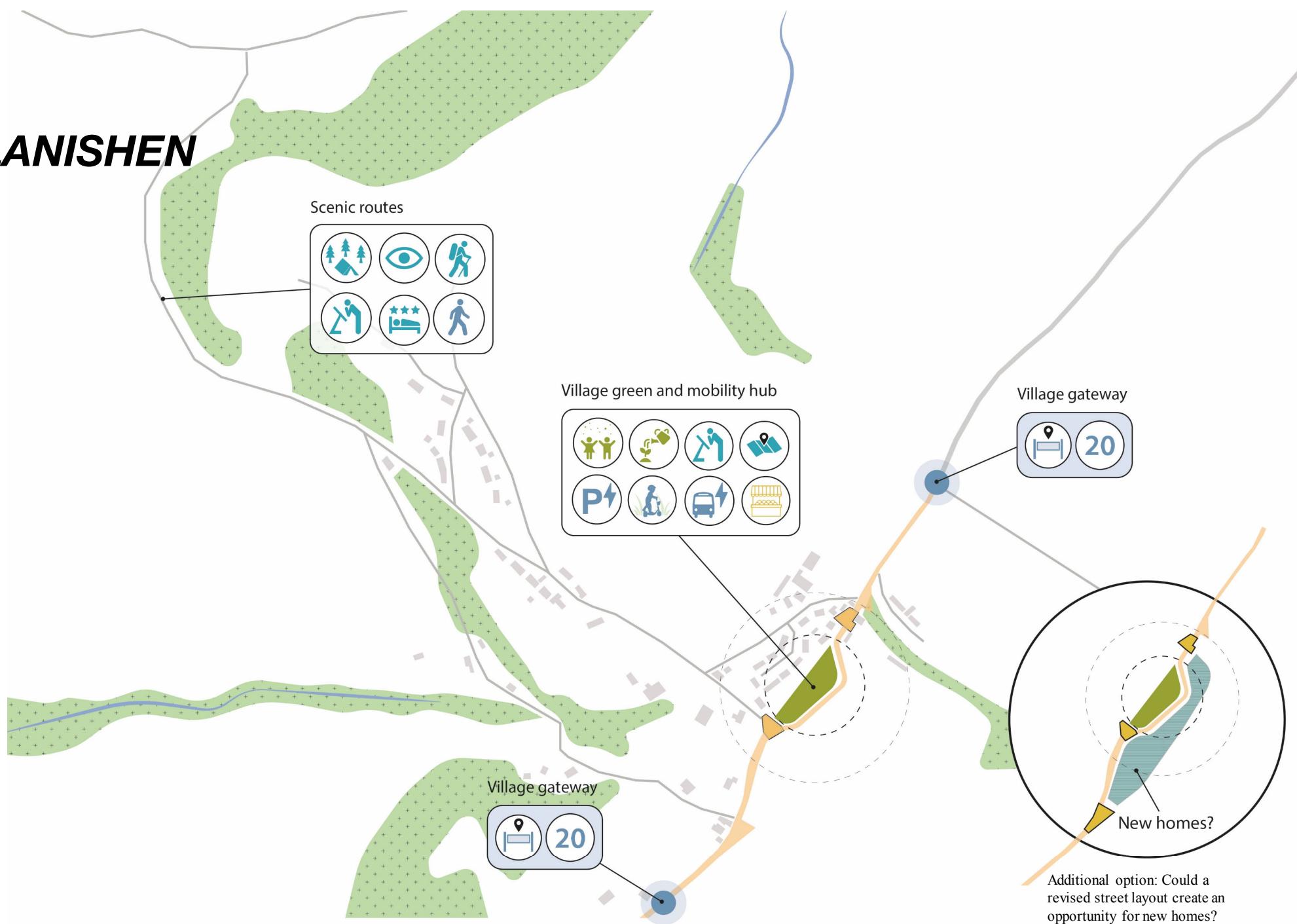
## Trellech

The historic pattern of buildings, archaeology and surrounding open pasture of Trellech create one of the most distinct villages. Although these features have the potential to attract larger visitor numbers, Trellech retains the feel of a rural village in contrast to the destination of Tintern. Addressing the future role of Trellech within the Wye Valley needs consideration. A carefully orchestrated offer which maintains tranquillity for residents while attracting a new audience of visitors could positively support the wider offer of the Wye Valley. The initial proposition includes

- Street design to increase the sense of place, improve biodiversity and flood resilience (via SuDS) and improve road safety
- A focal point for tourists or hub formed around the existing pub
- The continuation of habitat enhancement from Trellech water meadows to include the surrounding pasture land by encouraging participation from the community and local school
- A low impact tourism accommodation site and visitor parking/mobility hub



# LLANISHEN



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## Llanishen

Like Devauden and the Narth, Llanishen is largely community focused. The village backs on to the B4293 partially screening it from passing traffic. It is fragmented in form, extending west away from the main road. Whilst the screening helps mitigate the impact of passing traffic for residents the lack of an evident 'place' for those passing through does little to discourage speeding vehicles. The initial proposal considers a more radical approach:

- Street design to increase the sense of place, improve biodiversity and flood resilience (via SuDS) and improve road safety.
- Diverting the B4293 to reduce vehicle speeds and create a new village heart (a green)
- An option to further divert the B4293 to create space for new homes set around the village green



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# ST ARVANS

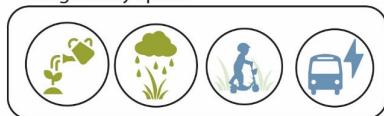
Village gateway



Scenic Routes



Village entry space



Inter modal interchange at Chepstow racecourse



Village gateway



Village gateway



Existing cycle path



Chepstow Race Course

Lover's Leap



Wye Valley Walk

Cold Bath



Giant's Cave

Otter Cave

Piercefield Park

DRAFT

ARUP

## St Arvans

The village marks the southern gateway to the Wye Valley and is immediately north of Chepstow racecourse. It marks the connection between the B4293 and A466 linking the lower reaches of the valley with the upper area. Despite this strategic importance there is little to mark this important location whilst local residents experience the dual negative of passing traffic with little direct benefit from visitors. The initial proposals for St Arvans includes:

Street design to increase the sense of place, improve biodiversity and flood resilience (via SuDS) and improve road safety.

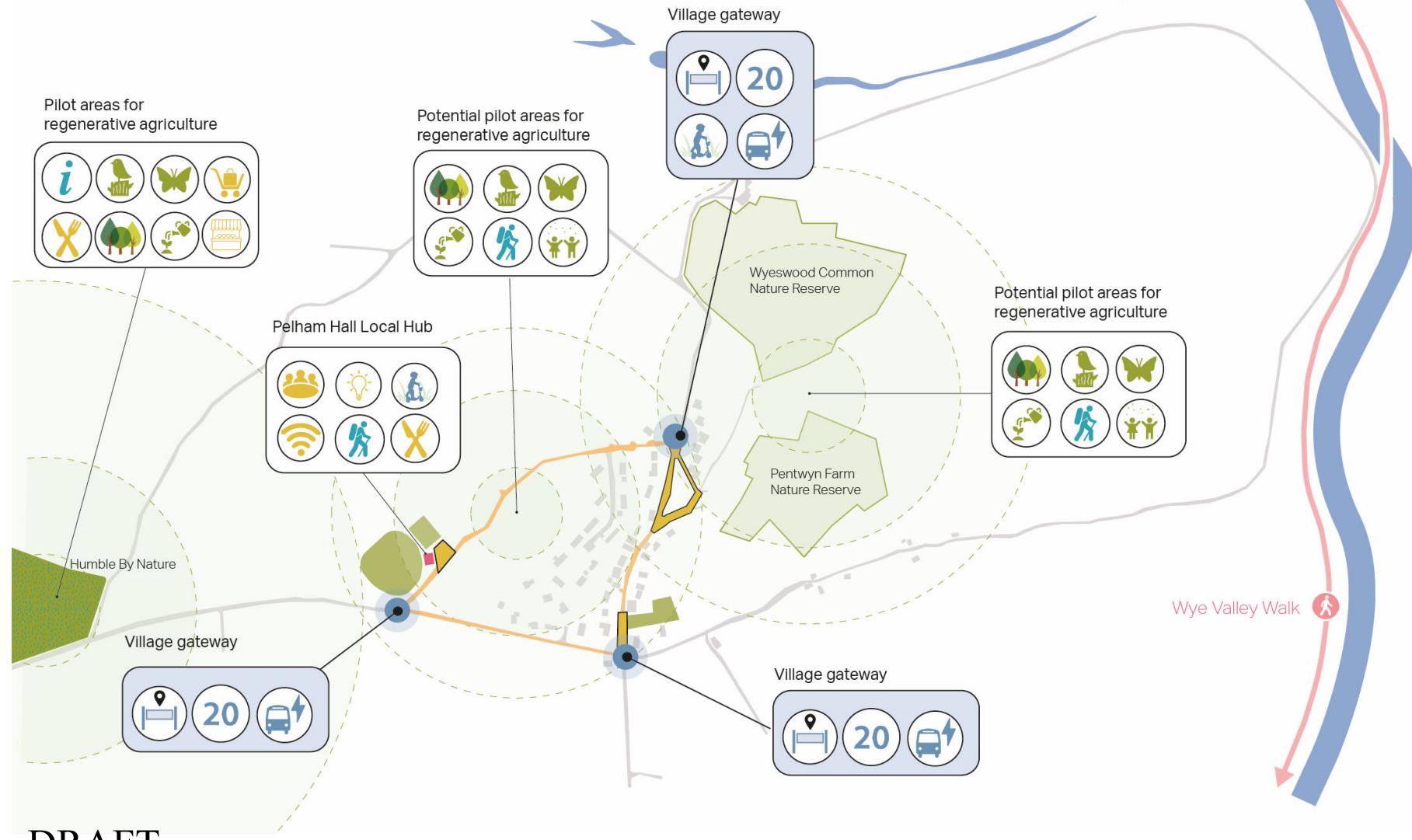
Creating a prominent feature through street design and landscape design to denote the importance of this gateway

The use of Chepstow racecourse as a transport hub to encourage greater use of sustainable transport and as an entry point to the strategic walking routes.



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# PENALLT



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## Penallt

The village enjoys a prominent location elevated at the head of the valley. The area is largely community focused with visitor destinations focused around Humble by Nature and Penallt Hall. Initial proposals are cognisant of these enterprises and build on these assets and the natural environment to shape a broader proposition around regenerative agriculture.

- Street design to increase the sense of place, improve biodiversity and flood resilience (via SuDS) and improve road safety.
- The deployment of regenerative agricultural pilots aligned to Humble by Nature, the existing nature reserves and village
- The use of Penallt Hall as a rural enterprise hub



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## 6.6 Governance

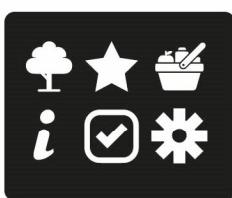
Leadership, ownership and identity will be decisive when it comes to delivering the vision for the “Wye Valley Villages AONB Plan for the Future”. The action and delivery plan that will support the Plan for the Future will need strong, constant and proactive management and guidance. That will ensure successful development, funding and delivery of a programme of potential projects that will be defined for each vision pillar (travel & movement, landscape, local economy and tourism).

An integrated approach is essential to resolve issues and realise opportunities.

Many of the challenges and opportunities in the Wye Valley are not bound by geographical or administrative boundaries and the “increasingly complex and widespread environmental, social and political challenges transcend traditional management boundaries” as the AONB management plan states. The opportunity is to create cross border partnerships with national entities, whose strategies and plans aim to achieve similar objectives and jointly coordinate, plan, deliver and fund future projects.

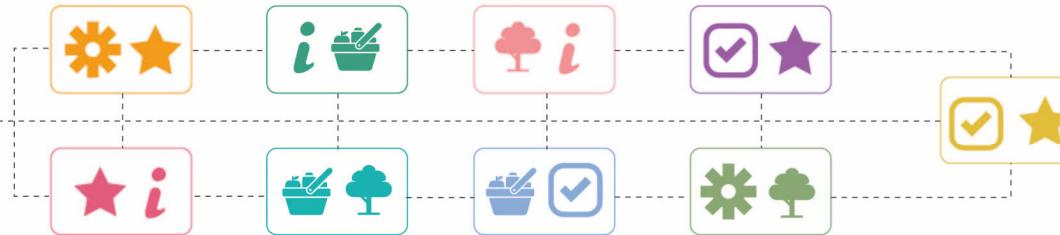
During the next stage of work, we will need to define or identify a governance structure that is able to deliver the vision. Clear and strong governance and removing traditional boundaries between public and private could further enhance collaboration and integration between the existing plans and projects and offer support to new or grassroots initiatives.

### Monmouth



### Wye Valley Villages

St Arvans, Devauden, Tintern, Llanishen, Llandogo, Trellech, Redbrook, The Narth, Penallt



### Chepstow



## 7. Next steps

- Once stage 2 report has been approved by the client team, Stage 3 work will include:
- Review of initial proposals with the client team.
- Undertake public consultation and review and summarise the feedback and results.
- Develop the vision into a holistic strategic framework plan with an action plan.
- Consider the creation of a village design guide.
- Roadmap and Recommendations to deliver the Plan of the Future.

The action plan will include a high-level delivery and funding strategy, identifying priorities for the short, mid and long term.

We will also include recommendations for next steps, such as a Business Plan for tourism, a Village design manual, road safety projects and pilot projects.



Digital public engagement using Arup Virtual Engage