



CYNGOR SIR  
YNYS MÔN  
ISLE OF ANGLESEY  
COUNTY COUNCIL

**DYLAN WILLIAMS**  
Prif Weithredwr • Chief Executive  
CYNGOR SIR YNYS MÔN  
ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL  
Swyddfa'r Cyngor  
LLANGEFNI  
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Y Cadeirydd / The Chair,  
Pwyllgor Cyfrifon a Gweinyddiaeth Gyhoeddus  
Public Accounts & Administration Committee,  
Senedd Cymru,  
CAERDYDD / CARDIFF  
CF99 1SN

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Ein Cyf / Our Ref: D.Lloyd / Canol Trefi  
Eich Cyf / Your Ref: Lowri Barrance  
Dyddiad / Date : 12 Medi / September 2022

Annwyl Gadeirydd / Dear Chair,

**Ymchwiliad Pwyllgor Cyfrifon a  
Gweinyddiaeth Gyhoeddus Senedd  
Cymru i Adfywio Canol Trefi**

Diolch am y cyfle i gyflwyno dystiolaeth i'r  
ymchwiliad uchod.

Amaeaf nifer o sylwadau sy'n ymwneud  
a'r materion a amlwgwyd yn eich llythyr yn  
gwahodd sylwadau.

Hyderaf y bydd y wybodaeth a sylwadau  
o ddefnydd i'r Pwyllgor.

**Welsh Parliament Public Accounts &  
Public Administration Committee  
Inquiry into Town Centre Regeneration**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit  
evidence to the above.

Please find attached a number of  
observations relating to the issues  
highlighted in your letter.

I hope that the Committee will find this  
information and comments useful.

Yn gywir/Yours Sincerely

**Dylan J. Williams**  
**Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive**

Amg – Gwybodaeth a Sylwadau ar ran Cyngor Sir Ynys Mon  
Encl – Information and Comments on behalf of Anglesey County Council

Please scroll down for English language version

## **Ymchwiliad Pwyllgor Cyfrifon a Gweinyddiaeth Gyhoeddus Senedd Cymru i Adfywio Canol Trefi – Gwybodaeth a Sylwadau gan Gyngor Sir Ynys Mon**

Sylwadau yn ymwneud â'r cwestiynau a amlygwyd yn eich llythyr (testun italig tywyll).

**1. Polisi a Deddfwriaeth Genedlaethol sy'n hanfodol i adfywio trefi i'w galluogi nhw i ffynnu a goroesi - penderfynu a yw'r ddeddfwriaeth a liferau polisi Llywodraeth Cymru ar gyfer adfywio yn addas i'r diben ac yn canolbwytio ar fynd i'r afael â'r problemau sylfaenol sy'n wynebu trefi. Yn benodol, mae'r Pwyllgor am edrych ar bolisi cynllunio a pholisi Canol Trefi yn Gyntaf Llywodraeth Cymru.**

Mae'r modd y mae Llywodraeth Cymru yn gweithredu drwy ganllawiau a pholisiau cynllunio cenedlaethol yn gynyddol ffafriol ac yn amddiffynnol tuag at ganol trefi. Mae'r rhain yn rhoi'r hyblygrwydd i Awdurdodau Cynllunio Lleol lunio polisiau manwerthu/canol trefi a chyfyngu ar ddefnyddiau manwerthu/canol trefi yn unol ag amgylchiadau/hyfywedd y canolfannau hynny. Mae dogfen 'Cymru'r Difrifol' yn cefnogi creu canolfannau aml-swyddogaethol gyda dyletswyddau tu hwnt i'r swyddogaeth manwerthu draddodiadol, a mae lle i edrych ar leoli hybiau gwasanaeth newydd gan y sector cyhoeddus yng nghanol trefi.

Mae'n bwysig cofio nad yw'r rhan fwyaf o ddatblygiadau a newidiadau sy'n digwydd yn y byd go iawn yn cael eu rheoli gan benderfyniadau polisi cynllunio, a dim ond un ymhliith llawer o ddylanwadau ar yr hyn sy'n digwydd mewn gwirionedd yw'r system gynllunio. Dros y degawdau diwethaf gwelwyd newidiadau ym meysydd trafnidiaeth, manwerthu, a chwyldro digidol. Mae datblygiadau manwerthu wedi digwydd ar ymyl neu gyrion trefi ar draws Cymru, ac mae twf mawr hefyd wedi bod mewn siopa ar-lein, gyda hwb mawr i hynny yn ystod pandemig Covid. Mae'n ymddangos bod canol trefi mwy twristaidd Môn wedi addasu'n dda, gyda thwf mewn defnyddiau fel bwytau, llety gwyliau a siopau anrhegion, gydag ychydig iawn o unedau gwag. Mae rhi canol trefi traddodiadol eraill wedi bod yn llai llwyddiannus, gyda thwf diweddar sylweddol yn niferoedd yr unedau gwag.

Yn aml mae gan ganol trefi traddodiadol lawer o adeiladau hanesyddol, ond mae natur llawer o adeiladau hŷn canol trefi yn golygu eu bod yn tueddu i beidio ag apelio at lawer o gadwyni masnachol cenedlaethol. Yn aml mae gan nifer o ganol trefi hanes cyfoethog ac asedau hanesyddol a diwylliannol diddorol y gellir eu defnyddio fel modd o ddenu pobl.

Mae hygyrchedd yn un o'r prif anghenion i ganol trefi ffynnu, gan sicrhau eu bod yn gyfleus ac yn hawdd i'w cyrraedd o weddill y dref a'i gyffiniau / dalgylch. Mae Llywodraeth Cymru yn gweithio gydag awdurdodau lleol sirol ac yn eu cefnogi i wella cyfleusterau trafnidiaeth gyhoeddus a chysylltiadau a seilwaith teithio llesol. Erbyn hyn mae gan rai canol trefi lefydd parcio cyhoeddus gormodol, a gallai ardaloedd dros ben gael eu hailddatblygu neu eu hail-bwrpasu ar gyfer defnyddiau eraill sy'n fuddiol i'r cyhoedd. Mae angen mynd i'r afael â materion seilwaith gwyrdd yng nghanol trefi, a cheisio gwella bioamrywiaeth a creu mannau gwyrdd lle mae hynny'n ddiffygol ar hyn o bryd. Mae Llywodraeth Cymru wedi bod yn cynnig rhywfaint o gyllid i awdurdodau lleol ar gyfer astudiaethau seilwaith gwyrdd a phrosiectau yng nghanol trefi. O ystyried cost uchel ynni a natur hŷn llawer o adeiladau canol trefi, mae angen mynd ati yn fwy dygn i hybu effeithlonrwydd ynni a nodau carbon sero-net.

Ble mae gan ganol trefi traddodiadol lawer o eiddo gwag dros ardal eang, mae angen ystyried y potensial i atgyfnerthu'r craidd manwerthu/masnachol, megis trwy annog defnyddio llawr gwag llai canolog ar gyfer defnyddiau eraill. Gellid cyflawni hyn drwy ddynodiadau defnydd cynllunio a/neu drwy ddarparu cymhellion ariannol perthnasol.

Mater arall o ran polisi cynllunio yw ei ymatebolwyd i newidiadau allanol sy'n effeithio ar hyfywedd canolfannau manwerthu. Yn ystod y blynnyddoedd diwethaf, mae dirywiad masnachol clir wedi digwydd mewn sawl canolfan fanwerthu a nodwyd a sydd i'w diogelu o fewn y Cynllun Datblygu Lleol (CDLI). Mae'r polisi lleol a gynhwysir yn y CDLI yn seiliedig ar yr ymchwil yn ol pan baratowyd y cynllun a phan na ragwelwyd effeithiau allanol fel sgil effaith y pandemig. Mae angen i system gynllunio allu ymateb i newidiadau allanol,. Fe wnaeth Llywodraeth Cymru gyflwyno newidiadau dosbarth defnydd / dosbarth a ganiateir dros dro yn ystod y pandemig diweddar.

Mae Grant Creu Lleoedd Llywodraeth Cymru bellach yn amodol ar fodolaeth cynlluniau creu lleoedd lleol ac aliniad prosiectau gyda'r rhain, ac yn ddiweddar cyhoeddwyd canllawiau ar gynnwys cynlluniau o'r fath. Croesewir hyn a'r cynnig o rywfaint o gyllid refeni i helpu paratoi cynlluniau o'r fath, a bwriadwn baratoi rhai dros y misoedd nesaf. Mae gan awdurdodau lleol y gallu i fabwysiadu'r cynlluniau lleoedd hyn fel canllawiau cynllunio atodol. Ar hyn o bryd mae'r broses yn ei babandod ac ychydig iawn o gynnlluniau o'r fath sydd eto wedi eu cwblhau a mewn lle ar draws Cymru. Iddynt fod yn ymarferol ddefnyddiol a chael silff-fywod tymor hir mae'n bwysig bod cynlluniau lleoedd lleol yn weledol ddeniadol, clir a chryno, yn adlewyrchu'r materion/ pryderon / cyfleoedd a godwyd gan bobl a busnesau lleol, ac yn cael eu hadolygu a'u diweddaru'n rheolaidd.

**2. *Creu a chynnal clymbleidiau lleol o newid – sut y mae awdurdodau lleol a'u partneriaid lleol, gan gynnwys dinasyddion a defnyddwyr gwasanaethau, yn rheoli ac yn adfywio trefi yng Nghymru; ac ystyried a oes gan awdurdodau lleol a'u partneriaid allweddol y sgiliau cywir, arweinyddiaeth, adnoddau, prynu i mewn a'u gallu i adfywio trefi.***

Mae adfywio a rheoli canol tref effeithiol yn gofyn am gydweithrediad a chydlynu ar draws sefydliadau a sectorau. Mae angen i gynnlluniau canol trefi ystyried llawer o wahanol faterion a chwaraewyr, ac nid ydynt bob amser yn llefydd hawdd i'w deall na'u rheoli'n effeithiol. Prif rôl y sector cyhoeddus ddylai fod i hwyluso'r sector preifat i ffynnu. Mae'r nifer o drefi a sefyllfaoedd gwahanol yn gofyn am amrywiadau mewn dulliau gweithredu, a does dim 'un maint yn gweddu i bawb'.

Nododd adolygiad diweddar Archwilio Cymru restr hir o'r camau yr oeddent o'r farn y dylai awdurdodau lleol fod yn eu cyflawni. Mae llawer o bwysau cystadleuol ar awdurdodau lleol, ac efallai na fydd modd cyflawni'r holl gamau a restrir yn llawn. Roedd adolygiad Archwilio Cymru yn ymwneud ag adfywio canol trefi a nid oedd yn ymestyn i gynnwys rheolaeth canol trefi. Mae o leiaf un blaid wleidyddol (Plaid Cymru) wedi cynnig y dylai rheoli canol trefi fod yn un o swyddogaethau statudol awdurdodau lleol.

O ran capaciti, mae gan Gyngor Sir Ynys Môn un swyddog adfywio penodol ar gyfer y sir, ac mae ei staff adfywio eraill yn cael eu hariannu'n allanol ar brosiectau dros dro penodol, ran fwyaf ar brosiectau sy'n gysylltiedig â threftadaeth yn ardal Caergybi. Nid oes swyddogion adfywio canol tref penodol na rheolwyr canol trefi, ond mae swyddogion ar draws gwahanol wasanaethau yn yr awdurdod yn ymgymryd â rolau ledled y sir sy'n cyfrannu at les canol trefi. Gyda pump canol tref yn y sir, mae'n anochel bod lefel y gwaith adfywio canol trefi neu weithgaredd rheoli canol trefi

rhagweithiol y gellir ei wneud gan y cyngor sir yn gyfyngedig, ac yn cael ei effeithio gan flaenoriaethau ehangach.

Wrth ymateb i faterion capaciti staff adfywio awdurdodau lleol, mae Llywodraeth Cymru'n caniatáu i ddyfarniadau grantiau prosiect cyfalaf gynnwys ffi rheoli prosiectau, ond yn amlwg mae hyn wedi'i gyfyngu o ran cwmpas ac amserlen. Mae LIC hefyd wedi bod yn dyfarnu rhywfaint o gyllid refeniw tymor byr ar gyfer astudiaethau canol tref yn ddiweddar. Mae cynnig cyllid aml-flwyddyn tuag at y gost o gyflogi staff adfywio canol trefi / rheoli canol trefi yn opsiwn y dylid ei ystyried.

Mae Cyngorau Tref hefyd yn awdurdodau lleol etholedig gyda llawer o bwerau dewisol a'r gallu i godi cyllid o bresept yn ogystal â sicrhau benthyc a cyhoeddus. Yn rhesymegol, dylai Cyngorau Tref fod mewn sefyllfa dda i delio â llawer o faterion adfywio canol tref lleol a rheolaeth canol tref ar gyfer eu trefi, gyda chyngorau sir yn gweithredu mewn rôl gefnogol gan gynnwys mynediad at grantiau, ac arwain ar brosiectau mwy a swyddogaethau a wneir orau ar lefel sirol. Roedd gan y cyngorau dosbarth trefol cyn 1974 lawer mwy o swyddogaethau a staff na'r cyngorau tref presennol.

Mae rhai enghreifftiau o brosiectau adfywio cyngor tref da, megis adnewyddiad Cyngor Tref Caergybi o Sinema'r Empire gyda chyfleuster chwarae dan do, gyda chymorth gan yr awdurdod lleol a LIC. Cyngor Tref Caergybi hefyd oedd yn arwain grŵp consortiwm cais LUF Caergybi yn ddiweddar. Dylai'r Pwyllgor ystyried y potensial ar gyfer datblygu rôl cyngorau tref fel cyrff arweiniol lleol gweithredol ar gyfer rheoli a gwella canol trefi lleol.

Mae gan yr heddlu hefyd ran bwysig i'w chwarae wrth reoli canol trefi. Mae trosedd ac anhrefti aymddygiad gwrthgymdeithasol yn faterion pwysig yng nghanol rhai trefi. Weithiau mae tuedd i weld grwpiau o bobl ifanc yn eu harddegau yng nghanol trefi fel problem, a dylid ystyried eu hanghenion yn llawn fel rhan o gynlluniau a mentrau canol trefi perthnasol.

- 3. *Cyfraddau annomestig, cymhellion a threthi canol trefi - mae trethi annomestig yn cael eu gweld fel baich ar fusnesau bach, ond maent hefyd yn cynhyrchu £1 biliwn ar gyfer gwasanaethau cyhoeddus yng Nhymru ac yn hanfodol i iechyd ariannol llywodraeth leol. Dangosodd y pandemig bod awdurdodau lleol sy'n gweithio'n hyblyg wrth ddatblygu cymhellion yn hanfodol i helpu busnesau canol y dref i oroesi. Gallai beth sydd i'w ddysgu o'r pandemig siapio ymatebion wrth symud ymlaen.***

I lawer o adeiladau yng nghanol trefi llai (siopau) mae'r trethdalwyr busnes yn cael eithriad busnes bach ac yn talu dim trethi os oes gan yr adeilad RV o £6,000 neu lai neu dalu rhai o'r trethi nes bod RV yr adeilad yn cyrraedd £12,000. Yn ystod Covid (2020/21 a 2021/22) fe gynyddodd hyn i uchafswm o £110,000 yn y sectorau adwerthu, hamdden neu letygarwch er mwyn cael eithriad ardrethi busnes, a roedd hyn yn help mawr i gadw'r busnesau hyn i fynd.

O ran y polisi trethu busnes parhaus, dau beth nad yw'n helpu canol trefi ar hyn o bryd yw:-

**Tafarndai, Gwestai ayyb.** Mae'r math yma o fusnes yn rhan bwysig o ganol trefi, ond oherwydd bod yr RV dros £12,000 i'r rhan fwyaf o'r rhain mae'n rhaid iddyn nhw dalu'r cyfraddau yn llawn a ddim yn cael unrhyw gymorth. Mae llawer o achosion wedi bod lle mae'r bragdy'n rhoi tenant i mewn, ond dydyn nhw ddim yn gallu talu ac yn gadael gyda dyledion ac mae'r tenant nesaf yn dod i mewn ac yn gwneud yr un peth. Mae angen help ar y math yma o fusnes neu bydd mwy ohonynt yn cau dros y flwyddyn nesaf ac mae hyn yn achosi dirywiad mewn canol trefi

Eithriad Eiddo Gwag. Dim ond am 3 mis y mae'r eithriad yn para ac yna mae'r cyfraddau'n daladwy yn llawn - nid yw'n bosibl rhoi eithriad busnes bach ar eiddo gwag. Mae yna lawer o achosion lle mae'r landlord yn llenwi'r eiddo gydag unrhyw ddefnydd er mwyn osgoi gorfod talu'r trethi. Siop elusen yw hon fel arfer, oherwydd gall yr elusen hawlio eithriad elusennol gorfodol a dewisol ac felly talu dim trethi. Mae'r landlord yna'n hapus am eu bod nhw'n osgoi talu'r trethi a'u bod yn cael rhent - ond dydi cael tref yn llawn siopau elusen ddim yn helpu canol trefi chwaith. Byddai'n ddefnyddiol pe gallai fod eithriad llawn (ar gyfer eiddo gyda RV dros £6,000) os yw'r busnes yn un newydd.

Byddai'n bosibl bod ychydig yn fwy creadigol gyda'r trethi busnes e.e. mae cyfraddau pawb yn seiliedig ar lloosydd RV x, ond mae'r lloosydd presennol yr un ffigwr i bawb. Byddai lloosydd uwch yn bosibl ar gyfer parc manwerthu y tu allan i'r dref / eiddo archfarchnadoedd a lloosydd llai ar gyfer busnesau canol trefi dynodedig. Byddai modd gwneud hyn a lleihau'r baich treth ar fusnesau canol trefi heb leihau faint o arian sy'n cael ei gynhyrchu fel cyfanswm.

Mae cost cynnyddol ynni yn golygu y gallai rhai busnesau canol trefi ei chael hi'n anodd i oroesi, ac mae'n ddigon posib y bydd angen i Lywodraethau y DU a Chymru ystyried mesurau cymorth brys tebyg i'r rhai a ddarparwyd yn ystod pandemig Covid.

**4. Argaeledd, rheolaeth ac effaith cyllid Cymru a Llywodraeth y DU ar gyfer adfywio canol y dref - asesu pa mor dda mae arian yn cael ei ddefnyddio i adfywio canol trefi, ac a yw hyn yn cynrychioli gwerth am arian.**

Mae pwysau ariannol yn golygu bod adfywio canol trefi ar Ynys Môn yn dibynnu'n fawr ar gyllid allanol, yn bennaf gan Lywodraeth Cymru, gyda'r NLHF yn cyd-gyllido rhai cynlluniau. Mae'r ddibyniaeth hon yn ymwneud â staffio adfywio, cynllunio prosiectau a gweithredu prosiectau.

Mae cyllid blynnyddol yn unig yn achosi anawsterau, ac mae'r symudiad gan LC i ddarparu cyllid aml-flwyddyn yn cael ei groesawu. Mae trefniadau cyllid adfywio LIC yn newid dros amser, weithiau yn targedu llai o drefi mwy, gan ddarparu weithiau i drefi llai elwa hefyd. Ar Ynys Môn mae hyn yn golygu bod Caergybi bron bob tro yn gymwys i gael cyllid, ond weithiau dydy'r trefi eraill ddim, sydd weithiau wedi arwain at ddrwgdeimlad. Mae gan Gymru nifer fawr o drefi bach ac mae nifer o'r trefi llai yma yn amlwg angen eu hadfywio. Mae'r trefniant newydd o gael cyllideb 'strategol' i gefnogi prosiectau adfywio trefol pwysig mewn trefi allweddol penodol, a chyllideb 'creu lleoedd' mwy hyblyg efo dirprwyaeth rhanbarthol hyd at £250k y prosiect (y gellir ei ddefnyddio mewn unrhyw dref lle mae'n ymddangos bod achos prosiect cyfawn) yn ateb ymarferol da.

Mae cyllid Llywodraeth y DU hefyd bellach yn gallu cefnogi canol trefi. Mae rhai prosiectau bach yn cael eu hariannu gyda chyllid refeniw CRF yn ystod 2022, a'r gobaith yw gweld cynlluniai canol tref yn defnyddio arian SPF yn 2023-25. Mae cais cyfalaf LUF mawr wedi'i wneud yn ddiweddar i ariannu pecyn o brosiectau yng nghanol tref Caergybi yn ystod 2023-25 gyda disgwyl penderfyniad mewn rhai misoedd.

Amlygodd ein arolwg diweddar o ddefnyddiau canol trefi bod nifer fawr o unedau masnachol gwag yn rhai o'n trefi llai llewyrchus, a nodwyd hefyd nifer o eiddo adfeiliadol. Mae cefnogaeth i fusnesau canol trefi newydd a rhai sy'n bodoli eisoes yn amlwg yn bwysig, gan gynnwys gwybodaeth a chyngor, a chynlluniau cymorth ariannol addas gan gynnwys grantiau a benthyciadau ar gyfer datblygu busnes a buddsoddi mewn eiddo. Mae darpariaeth Llywodraeth Cymru o fenthyciadau ailgylchadwy i awdurdodau lleol er mwyn eu cynnig i berchnogion eiddo yn ffordd dda iawn o wella

gwerth cyhoeddus am arian, ond bydd angen cyllid grant ar rai cynlluniau o hyd er mwyn eu gwneud yn hyfyw.

Mae gan broses Gorfodi Canol Trefi ran bwysig i'w chwarae hefyd, ac roedd digwyddiadau hyfforddiant gorfodi diweddar Llywodraeth Cymru ar gyfer awdurdodau lleol yn dda iawn - rydym bellach wedi paratoi Cynllun Gweithredu Gorfodi sy'n nodi deuddeg eiddo blaenoriaeth, ond mae ein capaciti staff yn cyfyngu ar pa mor gyflym y gallwn weithredu'r rhain.

Mae gan ddefnyddiau a buddsoddiadau tai / preswyl rôl allweddol i'w chwarae wrth adfywio canol trefi. Gyda cefnogaeth gan LIC, mae sawl enghraifft dda erbyn hyn o weithio ar y cyd rhwng swyddogion adfywio a thai i fynd i'r afael ag ailddatblygu safleoedd ac adeiladau trefol problemus, gyda chronfeydd adfywio weithiau'n cael eu defnyddio fel ychwanegiad i gonfeydd tai. Nid yw'r defnydd o rai ardaloedd yng nghanol trefi gan y sector cyhoeddus ar gyfer rhai mathau o dai cymdeithasol neu lety dros dro bob amser yn cael ei groesawu gan randdeiliaid lleol oherwydd effeithiau negyddol canfyddedig. Mae'r trefi gwyliau twristiaeth mwyaf poblogaidd wedi gweld llawer o fuddsoddi eiddo fel ail gartrefi neu lety gwyliau, gyda pobl leol yn gynyddol yn methu gallu prynu neu rentu cartrefi preifat, a problemau eraill sy'n gysylltiedig a 'gor-dwristiaeth'.

***5. Bargeinion Dinesig a Phartneriaethau Rhanbarthol, a Chyd-Bwyllgorau Corfforaethol – oes mwy y gellir ei wneud yn y gofod datblygu economaidd rhanbarthol i helpu i adfywio trefi yng Nghymru neu fyddai gwneud y trefniadau hyn yn rhedeg y risg o wneud pethau'n fwy cymhleth nag sydd angen.***

Mae natur adfywio canol trefi yn golygu bod angen i'r rhan helaeth o'r gwaith gweithredu sydd ei angen ddigwydd yn lleol, ond mae rhai agweddau ohono sydd angen cynllunio a chydlyn u rhanbarthol a chenedlaethol.

Mae Grŵp Swyddogion Adfywio Rhanbarthol Gogledd Cymru (RROG) wedi cyfarfod bob mis ers 2018. Mae'n cynnwys prif swyddogion adfywio'r chwe awdurdod sir lleol a rheolwyr adfywio Llywodraeth Cymru ar gyfer y rhanbarth. Mae'r grŵp hwn yn goruchwylion'r broses o gynllunio, dyfarnu a gwariant y dyraniad blynnyddol o tua £8m o'r gyllideb adfywio flynyddol gan LIC i Ogledd Cymru, a pharatoi ac adolygu cynllun adfywio rhanbarthol. Mae hefyd yn mynd i'r afael â materion a chyfleoedd, a datblygu arferion da, ac mae'n fecanwaith effeithiol ar gyfer adolygu a gwella'r rhngwyneb cyflenwi / ariannu / polisi yn barhaus. Mae'r grŵp yn darparu trefniadau cydweithredu rhanbarthol ymarferol ac effeithiol, gyda mewnbwn politicaidd pan fo angen.

Mae'n ymddangos bod y RROG yn fodel da ar gyfer cyflawni cydweithrediad rhanbarthol effeithiol ar gost isel, a byddai unrhyw newid sylweddol iddo (megis dod ag adfywio trefol dan CJC) yn pergylu niweidio'r trefniant gweithredol hwn a chreu biwrocratiaeth a chost ychwanegol di-angen.

Mae gan ein partneriaeth economaidd rhanbarthol ffocws ar faterion eraill, ac mae wedi bod yn hapus i'r RROG arwain ar faterion adfywio canol trefi. Gan bod rhai swyddogion yn mynychu'r ddau gellir gwneud unrhyw gysylltiadau angenrheidiol. Mae'r bartneriaeth economaidd rhanbarthol bellach yn arwain ar gynllun buddsoddi rhanbarthol Y DU ar gyfer cyllid SPF a materion cyllido newydd eraill Llywodraeth y DU. Oherwydd bod adfywio canol y dref yn flaenoriaeth i nifer o'r cynlluniau LlyDU newydd, mae'r RROG wedi cytuno i gynnal trafodaeth gyda'r bartneriaeth economaidd ar y ffordd orau o gydweithio ar hyn.

## **Welsh Parliament Public Accounts & Public Administration Committee Inquiry into Town Centre Regeneration – Information and Comments by the Isle of Anglesey County Council**

**Date: 12<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

Comments are based on the Issues in your letter (bold italic text)

**1) *National Policy and Legislation that is critical to the regeneration of towns to enable them to thrive and survive – determining whether the legislation and Welsh Government's policy levers for regeneration are fit for purpose and focus on addressing the underlying problems facing towns. In particular, the Committee wishes to look at planning policy and the Welsh Government's Town Centres First policy.***

The Welsh Government's approach through national planning guidance and policies in relation to urban regeneration is increasingly favourable and protective towards town centres. These give Local Planning Authorities the flexibility to formulate retail/town centre policies and limit retail/town centre uses in accordance with the circumstances/viability of those centres. The approach included in 'Future Wales' for the creation of multifunctional centres with duties beyond the traditional retail function is welcomed, and there is scope to locate new public sector service hubs in town centres.

It is important to remember that most developments and changes taking place in the real world are not controlled by planning policy decisions, and the planning system is only one among many influences on what actually happens. Recent decades have seen changes in transport, retailing, and a digital revolution. Many edge or out-of-town retail developments have taken place across Wales, and there has also been a large growth in online shopping, boosted during the Covid pandemic. The more touristic Anglesey town centres appear to have adapted well, with a growth in uses such as restaurants, holiday accommodation and gift shops, with very few vacant premises. Our other traditional town centres have fared less well, with a significant recent growth in vacancy numbers.

Traditional town centres often have many historic buildings, but the nature of many older town centre buildings means they tend not to appeal to many national commercial chains. Many town centres also often have a rich history and interesting historic and cultural assets that can be used as attractors of footfall.

Accessibility is a key requirement for town centres to thrive, ensuring that they are convenient and easy to access from the rest of the town and its hinterland / catchment area. The Welsh Government works with and supports county local authorities to improve public transport facilities and active travel links and infrastructure. Some town centres now have excess public car parking space, and surplus areas could potentially be redeveloped or repurposed for other publicly beneficial uses. There is a need to address green infrastructure issues in town centres, and seek to improve biodiversity and green space provision where currently deficient, and the Welsh Government has been offering some funding for local authority green infrastructure studies and projects in town centres. Given the high cost of energy and older nature of many town centre premises, there is a need to pro-actively pursue energy efficiency and zero net carbon aims.

Where traditional town centres have many vacant premises over a wide area, there is a need to consider the potential to consolidate the retail/commercial core, such as by encouraging the use of less central empty floorspace for other uses. This could be achieved via planning use designations and/or by providing relevant financial incentives.

Another issue from a planning policy perspective is its responsiveness to external changes affecting the viability of retail centres. In recent years, a clear commercial decline has taken place in several existing retail centres identified and protected within the Local Development Plan (LDP). The local policy approach included in the LDP is based on the research carried out when the Plan was prepared and when external impacts such as the side effects of the pandemic were not predicted. Planning systems need to be able to respond to external changes, and the Welsh Government did introduce temporary permitted development / use class changes during the recent pandemic.

The Welsh Government's Place Making Grant regeneration funding is now conditional on the existence of local place making plans and the alignment of projects with these, and guidance on the content of such plans has recently been issued. This and the offer of some revenue funding to help prepare such plans is welcomed, and we intend to prepare such plans over the next few months. Local authorities have the ability to adopt these place plans as supplementary planning guidance. The process is currently in its infancy and few such plans are actually in place across Wales. For them to be practically useful and have a long-term shelf-life it is important that local place plans are visually attractive, clear and succinct, reflect the issues/ concerns / opportunities raised by local people and businesses, and are regularly reviewed and updated.

***2) Creating and sustaining local coalitions of change – how local authorities and their local partners, including citizens and service users, are managing and regenerating towns in Wales and considering whether local authorities and their key partners have the right skills, leadership, resources, buy-in and capacity to regenerate towns.***

Effective town centre regeneration and management requires effective co-operation and co-ordination across organisations and sectors. Town centre policy needs to consider many different issues and players, and they are not always easy places to understand or manage effectively. The public sector's primary role should be to facilitate the private sector to thrive. The many different towns and situations require variations in approach, and there is no 'one size fits all'.

The recent Audit Wales review identified a long list of actions they considered that local authorities should be undertaking. There are many competing pressures on local authorities, and fully achieving all the listed actions may not be possible. The Audit Wales review related to town centre regeneration and did not extend to town centre management. At least one political party (Plaid Cymru) has proposed that town centre management should be a statutory function of local authorities.

In terms of capacity, Anglesey CC currently has one core-funded specific regeneration officer for the county, and its other regeneration staff are externally funded on specific temporary projects, mostly on heritage-related projects in the Holyhead area. There are no specific town centre regeneration officers or town centre managers, but officers across various services in the authority do undertake county-wide roles that contribute to the well-being of town centres. With five town centres in the county, the extent of pro-active town centre regeneration or town centre management activity that can be undertaken by the county council is inevitably limited, and impacted by wider priorities.

Responding to local authority regeneration staff capacity issues, the Welsh Government does allow capital project grant awards to include a project management fee, but this is obviously limited in scope and timescale. WG has also recently been awarding some short-term revenue funding for town centre studies. Offering multi-year co-funding towards the cost of employing local town centre regeneration / town centre management staff is an option that should be considered.

Town Councils are also elected local authorities with many discretionary powers and the ability to raise funding from a precept as well as secure public borrowing. Town Councils should logically be well placed deal with many local town centre regeneration and town centre management matters for their towns, with county councils acting in a supportive role including access to grants, and generally leading only on larger projects and functions best undertaken on a county-level. The pre-1974 urban district councils had far more functions and staff than the current town councils.

There are some examples of good town council regeneration projects, such as Holyhead Town Council's refurbishment and reopening of the closed Empire Cinema with an indoor play facility, with support from local authority and WG regeneration officers. Holyhead Town Council also led the recent Holyhead LUF bid consortium group. The potential for developing the role of town councils as active local lead bodies for managing and improving local town centres should be considered by the Committee.

The police also have an important role to play in managing town centres. Crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour are issues in some town centres. There is sometimes a tendency to see groups of teenagers in town centres as a problem, and their needs should be fully considered as part of relevant town centre plans and initiatives.

***3) Non-domestic rates, town centre incentives and taxes – non-domestic rates are seen as a burden on small businesses, but they also generate £1 billion for public services in Wales and are vital to the financial health of local government. The pandemic showed that local authorities working flexibly in developing incentives was critical to helping town centre businesses survive. What is there to be learned from the pandemic that can shape responses going forward.***

For many buildings in smaller town centres (shops) the business ratepayers receive a small business exemption and pay no taxes if the building has an RV of £6,000 or less or pay some of the taxes until the building's RV reaches £12,000. During Covid (2020/21 & 2021/22) this increased to a maximum of £110,000 in the retail, leisure or hospitality sectors to receive a business rates exemption and this greatly helped keep these businesses going.

In terms of the ongoing business rating policy, two things that don't help town centres at present are:-

Public Houses, Hotels etc. This type of business is an important part of town centres, but because the RV is over £12,000 for most of these they have to pay the rates in full and don't receive any help. There have been many cases where the brewery puts a tenant in, but they can't pay and leave with debts and the next tenant comes in and does the same. This kind of business needs help or more of more will close over the next year and this is causing town centre decline.

Empty Property Exemption. The exemption only lasts for 3 months and then the rates are payable in full – it is not possible to put a small business exemption on an empty property. There are many cases where the landlord fills the property with any use to avoid having to pay the rates. This is usually a charity shop, because the charity can claim a mandatory and discretionary charitable exemption and thus pay no rates. The landlord is then happy because they avoid paying the rates and they receive rent - but having a town full of charity shops doesn't help town centres either. It would be helpful if there could be a full exemption (for a property with an RV over £6,000) if the business is new.

It would be possible to be a little bit more creative with the business rates e.g. everyone's rates are based on an RV x multiplier, but the multiplier is the same figure for everyone. A higher multiplier would be possible for out-of-town retail park / supermarket properties and a smaller multiplier for designated town centre businesses. It would be possible to do this and reduce the tax burden on town centre businesses without reducing the amount of money that is generated overall.

The rapidly rising cost of energy means some town centre businesses may struggle to survive, and the UK and Welsh Governments may well need to consider emergency support measures similar to those delivered during the Covid pandemic.

***4) The availability, management and impact of Welsh and UK Government funding for town centre regeneration – assessing how well money is being used to regenerate town centres, and whether this represents value for money.***

Financial pressures mean that town centre regeneration on Anglesey relies heavily on external funding, mainly from the Welsh Government, with NLHF co-funding for some schemes. This reliance relates to regeneration staffing, project planning and project delivery.

Annual-only funding causes difficulties, and the move by the WG to provide multi-year funding is welcomed. WG regeneration funding arrangements change over time, sometimes targeting fewer larger towns, sometimes providing for smaller towns to benefit as well. On Anglesey this means that Holyhead almost always qualifies for funding, but the other towns sometimes do not, which has sometimes led to resentment. Wales has a large number of small towns and many of these smaller towns clearly need regeneration. The new arrangement of having a 'strategic' budget to support important urban regeneration projects in specific key towns, and a more flexible and regionally delegated 'place making' budget capped at £250k per project that can be used in any town where there is a justifiable project case appears to be a good practical solution.

UK Government funding is also now being utilised or applied for to support Anglesey's town centres. Some small projects are being funded with CRF revenue funding during 2022, and it is hoped to see town centre initiatives using SPF revenue / capital funding in 2023-25. A large LUF capital bid has recently been made to fund a package of projects in Holyhead town centre during 2023-25 with a decision expected in the Autumn.

Our recent town centre uses survey highlighted a significant issue of commercial vacancy in some of our less prosperous towns, and noted a number of dilapidated properties. Support for new and existing town centre businesses is therefore clearly important, including information and advice, and suitable financial support schemes including grants and loans for business development and property investment. The Welsh Government's provision of recyclable loans to local authorities to offer to property owners is a very good way to improve public value for money, but some schemes will still need grant funding to make them viable.

Town Centre Enforcement also has an important role to play, and the Welsh Government's recent enforcement training events for local authorities was very good, and we have now prepared an Enforcement Action Plan which identifies twelve priority properties, but staff capacity limits how rapidly we can progress these.

Housing / residential uses and investments have a key role to play in town centre regeneration, and often encouraged / supported by WG, there are now several good examples of joint working between regeneration and housing officers to tackle the redevelopment of problematic urban sites and buildings, with regeneration funds sometimes used as a top-up for housing funds. The use of

some town centre areas by the public sector for certain types of social housing or temporary accommodation is not always welcome by local stakeholders due to perceived negative impacts. The most popular tourist resort towns have seen much non-local property investment as second homes or holiday accommodation, with local people increasingly outpriced in terms of being able to buy or rent private homes, and other issues of 'over-tourism'.

**5) City Deals and Regional Partnerships, and Corporate Joint Committees –  
*is there more that can be done in the regional economic development space to help regenerate towns in Wales or do these arrangements run the risk of making things more complicated than they need to be.***

The nature of town centre regeneration means that the vast majority of the delivery work involved needs to take place locally, but there are some aspects of it that need regional and national planning and co-ordination.

The North Wales Regional Regeneration Officer Group (RROG) has met monthly since 2018. It includes the lead regeneration officers of the six local county authorities and Welsh government regeneration managers for the region. This group oversees the planning, awarding and expenditure of the circa £8m annual regeneration budget allocation by WG to North Wales, and the preparation and review of a regional regeneration plan. It also addresses common issues and opportunities, shares and develops good practice, and is an effective mechanism for continuous review and improvement of the policy-funding-delivery interface. The group provides practical and effective regional co-operation arrangements, with political input sought when required.

The RROG appears to be a good model for achieving effective regional co-operation at low cost, and any significant change to it (such as bringing urban regeneration under a CJC) would risk harming this working arrangement and the creation of needless extra bureaucracy and cost.

Our regional economic partnership has a focus on other matters and has been happy for the RROG to lead on town centres. As some officers attend both they have been able to make any required linkages. The regional economic partnership is now involved in the UK- SPF regional investment plan and other new UK Government funding matters. Given that town centre regeneration is a priority for many of the new UKG schemes, the RROG has agreed to request a discussion with the economic partnership on the best way to work together on this.