

Distinctiveness and Regeneration of Llanelli

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Distinctiveness and Regeneration

Assessment two

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This report examines the distinctiveness and regeneration of the Llanelli area and will look at the following fields:

- Llanelli's historical development.
- How Llanelli's fortunes have changed with development over time.
- Llanelli's interest groups and key stakeholders.
- Llanelli's existing assets, structures and its economic character.
- Businesses and organisations within the Llanelli area and determine how they benefit the local community.
- What opportunities are available to the local community and how/if they could improve.

This paper will also consider the following:

- How the local community feel about living within the area and if they feel it could improve and how. (interviews).
- Local and regional development strategies.
- Ideas for possible future opportunities to regenerate the area.
- And Llanelli's sustainable principles and how/if they are working towards a more sustainable future.

Historical development of Llanelli.

Llanelli is a historical mining town, situated in both the county of Carmarthenshire and the preserved county of Dyfed, Wales. Starting as an area with small and large family farms. Llanelli grew considerably during the 18th and the 19th century with the mining of coal. Llanelli later went on to the tinsplate industry and steel-works, which was served by the Llanelli and Mynydd Mawr railway, which opened in 1803. Until the end of the 18th century the Llanelli district was occupied primarily with the mining of coal, which brought a thriving trade to the small village and it wasn't until the last decade of the 18th century that iron-working commenced, whereas in other parts of the county iron-works had been in operation for over half a century and produced high-grade material using iron-ore. Lloyd, Sir John E. (n.d.).

However, these industries did not come with pollution.

Llanelli became a giant in the production of Tin, and it was referred to as 'tinopolis'. Jones, B. Lewis, R L. (2007).

In fact, towns such as Swansea, Llanelli, Neath and Port Talbots development was based largely on the growth of metallurgical industries and by the 19th century, the scale of production and the wide variety of metals manufactured in

such towns led to south Wales being regarded the World's leading centre for industry metallurgy. Edmund, N. Watts, S. (1996).

Llanelli is also famed for its proud rugby tradition; Llanelli is one of the most famous rugby towns in the world and has one of the most passionate followings as a result. Gibbard, A. (n.d.).

‘The Scarlets’ had their first game in 1876 and “have had a rich and unrivalled rugby heritage”. Llanelli Town Council. (n.d.).

How has development changed Llanelli’s fortunes over time?

Llanelli’s industrial revolution came when an Englishman, named Alexander Raby and his family moved to the town, with his investment he transformed the town from a small fishing town to one of the major coals and steel towns in south Wales. John, L. (2018).

The coal mining industry in Llanelli created jobs for the local community and boosted the local economy and population as people moved to Llanelli to seek employment. However, Llanelli was forced to face an economic decline due to overseas steel plant competition and the decline of the coal mining industry and mine closures. Agustina. (2017).

In 1884 87% of the UK's tinplate capacity was in south Wales, Llanelli's tinplate works was one-eighth of that percentage and in the 1880's the tinplate industry converted from wrought iron to steel. Davies, B. (n.d.).

Llanelli brought in its revenue from the tinplate industry after the decline of their coal mines and Llanelli's steelworks opened in 1907 and in the first part of the 20th century it thrived and expanded greatly.

The steelworks were later purchased by Canadian-based Duport Steel, but production ended, and the site was abandoned in 1981, after the company hit financial difficulties. Malaws, B A. (2010).

This saw a further decline in Llanelli's economy as there was a huge lose in employment, causing locals to go further afield for work opportunities, moving from their homes and families.

Llanelli has since been developing into a leisure and tourism destination and have had many developments such as the old castle works leisure village, the new Llanelli Scarletts rugby stadium, a national hunt racecourse. BBC Wales. (2007).

Machynys ponds which is a site of scientific interest, popular for its dragonfly population. Which is 1 mile south of Llanelli. County-side Council Wales. (n.d.).

And the Wetlands centre, a reservation area, home to birds from all over the globe, popular tourist attraction and family day out. Llanelli has used such developments to boost tourism and their economy and to also provide employment to the local community.

Llanelli's interest groups and its key stakeholders.

Some of Llanelli's interest groups and key stakeholders include, Llanelli town council, Carmarthenshire county council, Natural resources Wales, Llanelli community partnership, Mid and west Wales fire authority, Welsh ambulance services, Public health Wales, Dyfed Powys Police, Welsh water, Llanelli multi-cultural network, Carmarthenshire equalities Wales and Tesco. Cynefin Llanelli. (n.d.).

These stakeholders work together to benefit the Llanelli area, each providing a different service, from utilities to serving and protecting the community.

Organisations such as Natural resources Wales, Llanelli town council and Carmarthenshire county council constantly work to provide a better area for the local community.

For example, Carmarthenshire county council working in partnership with Swansea university and Sterling health to develop a project that will create close to 2,000 jobs and boost the local economy by £467 million. The project is a state-of-the-art wellness and life science village in Llanelli, combining

advanced life science research, business development facilities and leisure centre. Llanelli Online. (2018).

Llanelli's existing assets, structures and economic character.

Llanelli's existing assets include, Dafen Park, Trallwm playing fields, Pwll recreational grounds as well as many local play areas, which were recently transferred to Llanelli rural council by Carmarthenshire county council, sustaining the local recreational grounds is a key priority for Llanelli's rural council as these facilities have a positive impact on the general well-being. Evan, A. (2017).

Llanelli has 13 parks and play areas, 6 playing fields and 10 community halls. Other assets may include their transport links such as, Llanelli train station.

Some Llanelli structures including, Llanelly house is one of the most historical buildings in Llanelli, the early 18th century Georgian town house has been described as 'the most outstanding domestic building of its early Georgian type to survive in south wales'. Wales Online. (n.d.).

North dock, a former industrial dock in Llanelli, which was used mainly for the exportation of coal and tinplate from south Wales, since the decline of the industry, the dock is no longer in use and has been redeveloped for leisure. Llanelli waterside. (2017).

And Parc Howard museum art gallery and the historic former Buckley's brewery maltings and barley kiln buildings. Each of these structures bring in tourism and boost the local economy.

Llanelli's economic character, local economic development and regeneration, helps to make areas in Llanelli more attractive and more competitive, helping development, this all adds to Llanelli's economic character. Although Llanelli faces challenges, Carmarthenshire county council. (2019).

Llanelli's strengths have been overlooked for a long time, Brexit and the 4th industrial revolution will bring challenges to the community, it will also offer opportunity, in unpredictable times Llanelli needs to move away from conventional approaches and focus on fast, agile approaches which will adapt to the changing and challenging circumstances. Llanelli should explore the value of the everyday economy such as, food, energy, housing, tourism and healthcare sectors, exploit this and reverse the deterioration of employment. Lee for Llanelli. (n.d.).

Businesses and organisations within the Llanelli area.

Tata steel: the tata group was founded on the principles that the businesses activities should benefit society, today Tata steel follows the same long-term vision. They operate in a safe way and have respect for the local environment with sustainability being of high importance. Tata Steel. (n.d.).

And the local community also benefit from the employment created by Tata steel.

Mind Llanelli is an organisation which provides vital support and information to people across Carmarthenshire, they offer befriending support services and local drop-ins for people with mental health issues, they also campaign to improve existing services and create new ones, raise awareness, promote understanding and challenge the stigma and discrimination around mental health, they have been providing these services to the people of Llanelli and surrounding areas for the last 30 years. Mind Llanelli. (n.d.).

Organisations such as Mind, provide vital support to those who need it, in turn greatly benefitting the local and surrounding communities.

What opportunities are available to the local community and how/if they can improve.

There is limited information available for opportunities in Llanelli. However, Llanelli rural council offer a scheme to local people whom are able to spare some time doing voluntary work in return for time credits.

Sharon hall, Ponthenri community hall, Brynsierfel ti a fi and wales wildlife walks have all agreed to allow people to use their services in return for time credits spent. The rural time credits programme has been running since February 2016. Llanelli Rural Council. (n.d.).

The scheme enables the local community to be involved with such organisations and earn time credits to use their services for free.

How do the local community feel about living within the Llanelli area? And if they feel it could improve, if so how?

To try and get an insight into Llanelli and what its residents feel about the area I interviewed two residents of Llanelli.

The first was Mrs Joanna Pickley, interview date: 11/06/2019.

Question one: How do you feel about living in the Llanelli area?

“i don’t feel safe for me or my children living in Llanelli, at times and I worry about the influence on my children growing up here, as there is a lot of crime and drug/alcohol abuse within the area”.

Question two: Could you describe Llanelli in a few sentences?

“Llanelli is a rough, dirty area and a lot of the people living here are not so nice”.

Question three: Are there any positives in your view to living in Llanelli?

“Llanelli has a lot of play areas for children to play, but I have to worry about the drug/alcohol abuse that happens in the parks at night, because of all the broken glass and so on that they leave behind”.

Question four: What do you think could change about Llanelli and how?

“having more to do for young people to help prevent them to going into a life of crime, by having more youth clubs, safe spaces and activities for the young people growing up in Llanelli”.

“the area could be made cleaner, as there is a lot of dog fouling, rubbish, and broken glass, having more maintenance staff to maintain the streets and play areas, to make Llanelli a healthier place to live”.

“and finally, and perhaps more importantly more policing to control the level of drug/alcohol abuse and crime, especially in children’s play areas as these areas should be safe and clean enough for children to play”. Pickley, J. (2019).

The second interview was with Mr Stephen Popplewell on the 11/06/2019.

Question one: How would you describe Llanelli?

“it is a degraded town estate, that’s dying off because of Throstre shopping estate”.

Question two: How do you feel about the Llanelli area?

“i don’t like it much, as there is a lot of crime and I don’t feel safe here”.

Question three: Given the chance would you stay living in Llanelli or move elsewhere?

“given the choice, personally I would move, but I do know people who have lived in Llanelli all their life, happy and wouldn’t ever move”.

Question four: What could improve about the area?

“more policing, less crime, to be able to feel safe in my own community”.

Question five: Do you consider the negatives you’ve outlined to be the same for Llanelli as a whole, or just the area in which you live?

“there are some nicer parts of Llanelli that are not so dominated by crime and some lovely rural parts”.

Question six: Earlier you mentioned that Llanelli’s dying out because of Trostre shopping centre, why do you feel the shopping centre is affecting Llanelli in this way?

“the town centre is one of the most expensive places to both shop as an end user and open a shop as a business, footfall is down due, in part to the huge shopping complex in Trostre. The town centre itself, is in rapid decline, the buildings are not very well maintained and the only decent looking building that stands out is actually the court”. Popplewell, S. (2019).

With limited people interviewed, one based very close to the town centre and the other only a further 10 minutes away, very limited information could be gathered, both interviewee’s have expressed concerns for the safety of themselves and their family within the area and neither find it a very nice place to live, however as they live in such close perimeter of each other, I was unable to gather information about the other parts of Llanelli and how their residents

feel about living there. My first impression of Llanelli was coming out of the train station and it wasn't a good one, I've since seen some nicer, cleaner parts of Llanelli, so I feel the interviews and information was very one-sided and possibly unfair.

Local and Regional development strategies.

National, regional and local strategic priorities include; the well-being of future generations (Wales) act 2015, social services and well-being (Wales) act 2014,

The housing (Wales) act 2014, welfare reform act 2012, tackling poverty programmes and violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (Wales) act 2015. These national policies have influenced the development of mid and west Wales regional strategic plans, highly. Carmarthenshire. (n.d.).

The key theme appearing to be to support people, as each of the programmes above priorities are to help people, from the housing (Wales) act, helping to prevent homelessness, providing more housing and improving the private sector, to the violence against women, domestic violence and sexual violence (Wales) act, which helps and supports the victims of such violence.

Ideas for possible future opportunities to regenerate the area.

- The old derelict buildings are eye sores in the Llanelli area, they could be pulled down and replaced or the buildings themselves could be

regenerated, making use of the buildings/land and making the general area look more pleasant.

- Llanelli could benefit from more crime prevention programmes and policing particularly in the rougher parts of Llanelli, the area be safer, would allow Llanelli to be seen as a nicer area to visit and live, add more youth centres and similar projects such as work placements to keep young people away from crime and put their time into something more constructive and rewarding and to help their local community.

Llanelli's sustainable principles and how/if they are working towards a more sustainable future.

Carmarthenshire county council wants their community to take sustainability seriously, asking the community either as a business or as individuals to consider ways to reduce their impact on our planet. Carmarthenshire county council. (n.d.).

Carmarthenshire county council offer energy monitors on loan for free from any of their library's, for use to identify where it may be possible to save energy and reduce household bills. Carmarthenshire county council. (n.d.).

This helps both the environment and the resident.

Carmarthenshire are also a fair-trade county, having been awarded fair trade status for three years running. Carmarthenshire county council. (n.d.).

There have been huge international agreements recently, on both sustainable development and climate change. The United Nations sustainable development goals and the Paris climate agreement gave countries a common focus on action, this calls on the countries to make efforts to achieve 17 sustainable development goals, and 12 of the 17 directly involve action on climate change.

Wales have brought forward legislation for sustainable development through the well-being of future generations act (Wales) and it is believed that the act is the first in the world to make a legislative link to UN sustainable development goals within legislation. Wales is also 1 in a small group of countries which has established a statutory future generations commissioner role and one of the first to fully legislate for the UN convention on biological diversity. Assembly Wales. (n.d.).

Although I could not find information of sustainability policies for Llanelli itself, the policies outlined account for the whole of Wales, and each district must comply.

Conclusion.

The historic mining town grew significantly during the 18th and 19th century due to the coal mining industry and then their huge influence on the tinplate industry, since the industries collapse however, Llanelli has had to find ways to continuously develop to bring in revenue and people.

Development within the area has varied Llanelli's fortune over the years, from an area formed of small and large family farms to the coal mining and tinsplate industry and finally leisure and tourism, an area constantly developing to bring employment, tourists and boost their economy.

Llanelli's interest groups and stakeholders are formed of groups and organisations such as the public health Wales and Llanelli town council, that work together to ensure its residents are safe and healthy.

Llanelli has many assets and structures which include, play areas and historical buildings, although some are over-due a makeover.

Llanelli's businesses and organisations such as Tata steel and mind Llanelli bring benefits to the local community, in the form of employment and revenue to support to the local communities.

Due to limited information on the opportunities available to the community, I was only able to find information on a scheme from Llanelli's rural council designed to both benefit the organisations involved and its volunteers.

I collected limited information on how people feel living within the area, two interviewees confirmed they do not like living in the Llanelli area and don't feel safe. However, they lived quite close to each other and I was not able to gain information on the other areas within Llanelli.

Local and regional policies evolve around supporting the local communities and ensuring their health and safety.

Llanelli's sustainable policies follow the UN's sustainable development goals and are aspiring to go above and beyond their responsibilities.

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