

Burry Port Town Centre Placemaking Plan



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1 Purpose

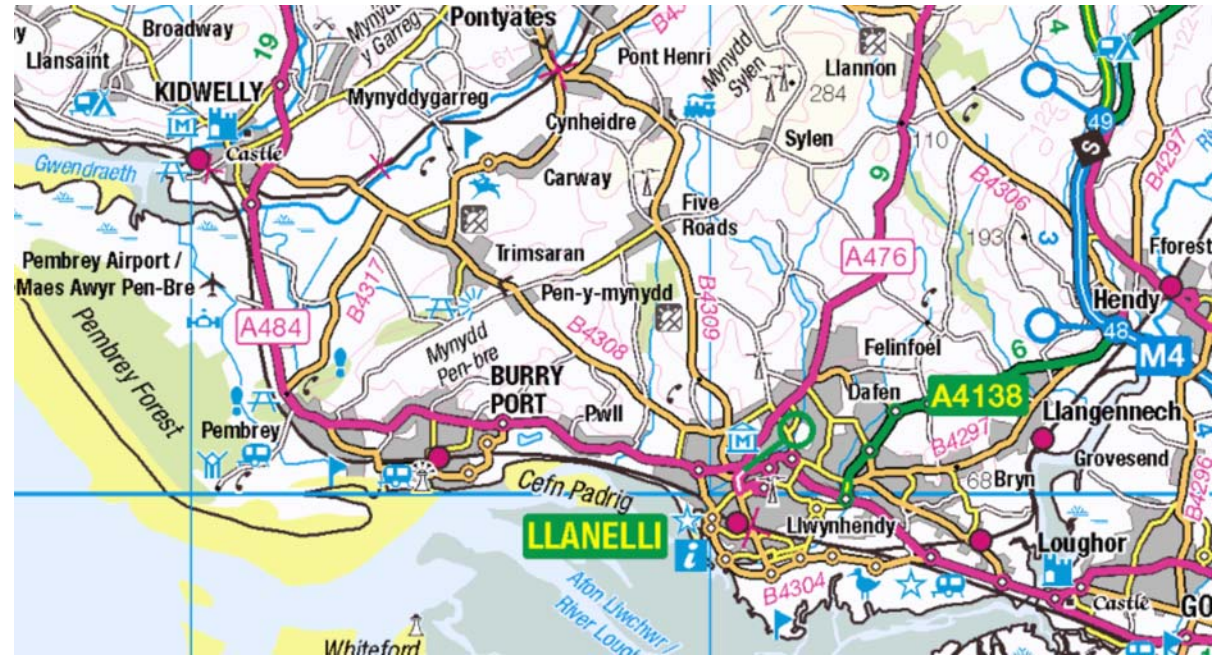
This placemaking plan has been commissioned for Burry Port town centre by Carmarthenshire County Council (Carmarthenshire CC) in response to several ambitious regeneration schemes in the area including the harbourside regeneration. The purpose is to identify opportunities which will strengthen the recovery of the town centre alongside the wider growth and regeneration aspirations for Burry Port.

The plan has been prepared with the contributions of local businesses and stakeholders. They have identified the key issues, opportunities and new ideas for recovery and growth of the town centre. The Plan will support future economic well-being of the community, guide and support future funding applications.

The aim of the Placemaking Plan is to:

- Grow existing business
- Maximise job creation
- Support the development of a knowledge economy
- Develop distinctiveness of the area
- Identify current and future role of service provision in the community
- Support opportunities for sustainable energy provision
- Establish sustainable income generation for future growth
- Increase resilience, sustainability and future growth of the town and surrounding feeder communities

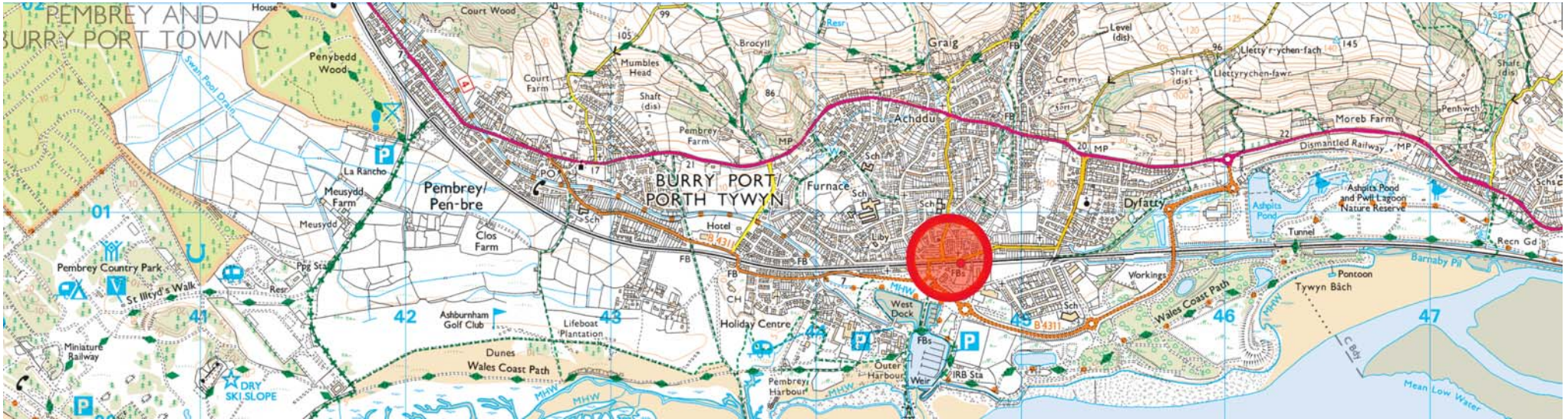
Figure 1 - Burry Port location context (Ordnance Survey)



2 Introducing Burry Port

2.0 Context

Figure 2 – Burry Port town centre context (Ordnance Survey)

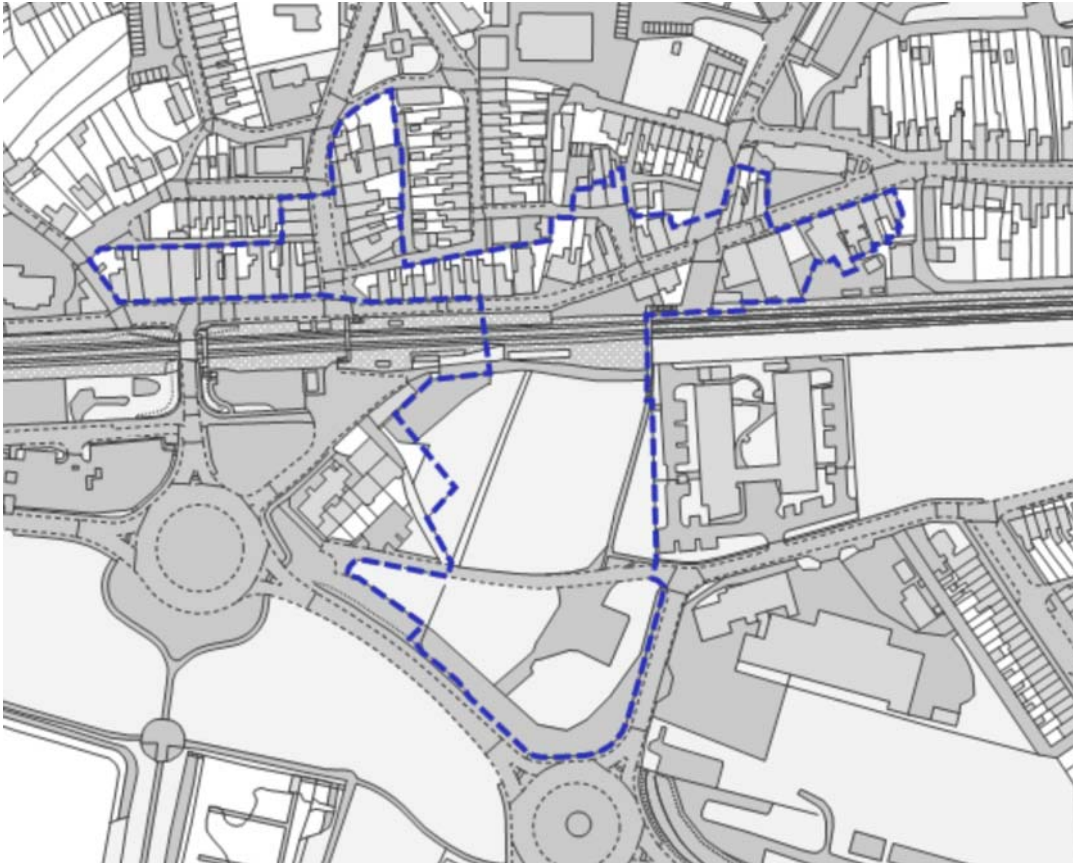


The A484 is the key route connecting Burry Port with Llanelli and the M4 to the east and Carmarthen to the west. The town centre train station has direct links with west Wales, Swansea, Cardiff, Manchester and London.

Historically, the town has grown around industry associated with the harbour which once facilitated the movement of coal from the Gwendraeth Valley. The industrial activity within the town has largely disappeared and the harbour now serves as a marina for small leisure craft as part of a network across west Wales. The Millennium Coastal Park and Path provides strong links to Pembrey Country Park and Cefn Sidan Sands to the west and Llanelli to the east.

2.1 Town centre

Figure 3 - Town Centre study core area



The defined¹ town centre boundary for Burry Port covers the local retail area incorporating a mix of convenience and comparison retailers. However, the focus of this plan also includes various sites and features located around the edge with an influence upon the future direction of the centre.

The plan area is divided into two distinct parts by the railway line, to the north is the traditional commercial centre along Station Road. To the south of the railway line the area is characterised by infrastructure (parking, public toilets), open green spaces and future development sites for mixed use retail development.

¹ Carmarthenshire County Council Local Development Plan

3 Location & place

3.0 Strategic regeneration & development

Burry Port forms part of the cluster of settlements along the Llanelli coastline with a strong growth-related and regeneration focus. The National Plan identified Llanelli specifically as a 'national growth area' and the focus for development with Burry Port providing a service centre and a component in the delivery of new homes and jobs. In contrast with the wider urban and post-industrial character, the Burry Port area is set within an attractive coastline and rural backdrop. The town has impressive views of the Gower Peninsula and Carmarthen Bay. The tourism attractions include the Millennium Coastal Path and nearby Pembrey Country Park along its southern coastline.

3.1 Burry Port Masterplan

Burry Port Harbour is one of Carmarthenshire's strategic regeneration areas supported by the Llanelli Waterside Joint Venture between Carmarthenshire County Council and Welsh Government. Investment has already been made in infrastructure and transport to make the area more accessible and to strengthen the link between the Millennium Coastal Path and town centre. The area includes completed projects including the new RNLI building and Parc Y Tywyn School developments.

Figure 4 - Masterplan Sites (Source Carmarthenshire CC)



The masterplan of the area provides diverse development opportunities for commercial, retail, leisure and tourism, alongside new residential units. Recent and future developments opportunities include:

- Enterprise Village - employment space with an element of live work units and possible marine related uses to support and promote harbour activity.
- Commercial Leisure Site - 2.8 acres of land for a mixed-use development scheme incorporating circa 5,000 sq m of retail, hotel, pub/restaurant and residential uses providing an active frontage across the marina.
- Food Store Site - 3.8 acres of land with potential for retail or other uses based on need. The site is located within close proximity to the town centre and benefits from good public transport and road links.
- Former Grillo site – the site of a Zinc Oxide factory owned by Grillo that was demolished in 2007 suitable for 230 homes and up to 465 sqm of retail and leisure floorspace (A1, A3 and D1 uses)

3.2 Burry Port Marina

Burry Port Marina offers 450 berths, enabling year-round cruising along the beautiful coastline. The marina is managed by The Marine Group and as part of the wider masterplan for the harbour, and a programme of improvements to upgrade the marina include:

- Capital investment in boat lifting equipment
- Rolling dredging programme
- Upgrade works to facilities
- The addition of diesel fuelling facilities
- Maintenance and upgrade of pontoons

In addition to this, a new marina office, shower/toilet facilities and start up workspace are under construction within the former RNLI building. After years of decline, the marina is expected to be fully watered and attracting new activity by Spring 2022, with the new births generating major opportunities for local spend and strengthening Burry Port as a destination.

A regenerated marina provides Burry Port with a strategic position to capture growth in sailing and marina activity, recreational fishing and servicing offshore industry such as energy. Planned investment in commercial leisure facilities around the harbour are essential for supporting growth and improving the level of attraction. The vision includes seasonal accommodation e.g., floating accommodation and camping/campervan areas and a year-round events calendar – e.g. regattas, music, and food events.

The main challenge for Burry Port town centre is to ensure its attraction and the quality of the overall offer is strong enough to maximise opportunities arising from the growth and development of the marina area.

4 Movement

4.0 Train & buses

Burry Port and Pembrey train station runs hourly services on the South Wales Main Line towards Carmarthen and Fishguard (westbound) and Manchester and London (eastbound). The station is a prominent feature and visitor gateway for Burry Port with a pivotal position and influence on the adjacent shopping area.

The railway line effectively divides the town centre from the harbour and coastline, with one of the biggest issues being the lack of convenient walking and cycling connections between both areas.

The stations proximity to the scenic walking and cycling paths and Pembrey Country Park means the town centre is an ideal starting/finishing point for visitors

The free parking areas, bus services, cycle hire and toilet facilities positioned around the station have created a cohesive transport 'hub'. The XII bus service connects with Carmarthen and Kidwelly to the north, and Llanelli and Swansea to the east. The service (from Carmarthen to Swansea) begins at around 7:30am and the final eastbound bus to stop at Burry Port is at 6:30pm.

Community involvement in the station has been supported by the South West Wales Community Rail Partnership and encourages initiatives with support from Transport for Wales (TfW). The Burry Port and Pembrey station gardens have been maintained by the Cefn Sidan U3A and Burry Port Town Council as part of the station adoption scheme.

Identified improvements that would benefit the station have included:

- New 'welcome' signage to raise greater awareness / promotion of the station "Alight here for the town centre, harbour and gateway to the Wales Coastal Path".
- Additional seasonal planting and prominent floral displays
- Wayfinding signage directing people from the station to the town centre, harbour, and Coastal Path
- Cycle facilities – in addition to the cycle storage facilities available on the eastbound platform the area would benefit for more visible and public facilities located in the car park or town centre.
- CCTV – the station occasionally experiences incidents of anti-social behaviour

4.1 Walking & cycling

There are several physical and psychological barriers that have weakened the links between the town centre and marina. Combined, they have created an impression of distance that is much greater than the actual 5-minute journey.

Navigating on foot or cycle the two town centre footbridges are less than straightforward. One of the footbridges is a segregated metal 'cage' with an uninviting no-frills appearance. It allows direct pedestrian access either side of the railway line but does not allow cycling. Links towards the marina are confused because there is no direct linking pavement between the town centre, footbridge and crossing the B.4311 roundabout towards the coastline.

Figure 5 – Walking distances from town centre



A third, less obvious, pedestrian bridge is currently 'hidden' in a small car park at the eastern end of Station Road. The bridge is poorly maintained and managed with a build-up of rubbish beneath. The footpath immediately south crosses waste ground and leads to Glanmor Terrace with equally poor-quality access to the harbour.

Significant improvements are necessary to overcome the movement "barrier" of the railway, not only for pedestrians including families with pushchairs and young children, but those with accessibility needs and cyclist. Carmarthenshire CC have in the pipeline proposals for improved crossing facilities at the south side of the combined road footbridge. This is currently in the process of being designed for delivery later in 2022.

In terms of cycling, the flat coastal location, Millennium Coastal Path and National Cycle Network (Route 4) makes Burry Port the ideal destination for family and recreational cycling and active travel. Pembrey Country Park is located 4.5km from the town centre – a 15-minute cycle ride or 55-minute walk.

However, within the town centre there's a scarcity of infrastructure in support the cycling potential. Apart from cycle storage located on the station platform (only for rail users), there's no public cycle stands in the centre and no waymarking directing visitors to the Millennium Coastal Path and National Cycling Network. More encouraging is the Brompton Hire located in the main car park. This is a self-serve 24h bike hire for up to 30 days and is perfect for supporting visitors on long weekends away or commuting through the week. Cycles can be returned to the docks in Burry Port, Carmarthen, Llanelli or nationwide.

4.2 Parking

Users of the town centre have the option to park in a limited number of on street 1 hour parking bays at the west end of Station Road and along Stepney Street. The east of Station Road is much narrower and predominantly restricted parking (double yellow lines) which is a concern for the business located in this area and local observations suggest is frequently ignored.

There are several formal off street car parks conveniently located across the centre. Parking is free, although there are concerns locally that this might change in the future. Overall, for a town of its size the appears to be sufficient parking options.

Table 1 – Town centre car parks

Location	
Seaview Terrace	Free – Long stay
Station Car Park	Free
Tramway Car park	Free
New Street Car Park	Free

5 Public Realm

Burry Port's town centre has a long and linear form focused along the west-east alignment of Station Road with Stepney Road laterally connecting and providing additional retail frontage and access to other facilities.

This simple arrangement results in a highly legible town centre with the Station Road/Stepney Street junction acting as a natural centre point and shopping core immediately opposite one of the entrances to the train station. However, pedestrian connectivity is significantly undermined by the traffic dominated streets and barriers to pedestrian movement particularly eastwards along Station Road where the road narrows and the centre peters out close to Bridge Street. In fact, the Station Road/New Street area feels distinctively secondary in nature, despite the location of some key businesses, and separate from the centre as a destination.

The compactness of the town centre has been compromised by the railway line that mirrors Station Road and presents a severe physical and perceptual barrier. The development of key facilities (public toilets, parking etc) to the south of the railway line and town centre further compounds the perception of severance.

The town centre has few eye-catching buildings, however Memorial Square positioned at the edge of the commercial centre is more impressive and provides an appealing mix of public space and civic buildings. With the exception of the small paved and seating area to the southern end of Stepney Road, there is no public space for people to dwell or for events to take place.

The Marina Fields provide alternative green spaces just south of the centre however, their attractiveness as a connected town centre destination is also compromised by the physical and perceptual barriers to pedestrian movement caused by the railway line and the disjointed routes across Ashburnham Road.

6 Identity

Burry Port is a harbour town which at the present time lacks the general public awareness of similar towns along the West Wales coastline. The absence of comprehensive visitor signage and a clear encouragement for visitors to explore Burry Port from the A484 contributes towards this lack of town profile. However, being relatively unknown also has its advantages with the self-branded tag - 'the best kept secret in West Wales'.

The town has its roots in heavy industry, and for decades the vast Carmarthen Bay power station dominated the coastline, it retains many aspects of its working town rawness and authenticity. However, in recent years the town has become a gateway to the Millennium Coastal Park and the post-industrial landscapes transformed into wetlands, woodlands, nature reserves, play areas, fishing lakes, visitor centres and a National Cycle Path. Today, the town is best known for its Marina and the landmark Burry Port Lighthouse, eight-mile-long beach and the wildlife and sea fishing of the Loughor Estuary.

Figure 6 - Impression of Burry Port



As well as the pride shown in the town’s industrial heritage, which a series of information boards placed around the town help to enlighten, the town is also celebrated for being the place where Amelia Earhart landed after her record breaking 1928 flight across the Atlantic. The memorial is positioned close to the town centre and connects the story and trail with the coast. Also, near to the harbour is found the renowned Parsons Pickles factory where the finest pickles are made, as well as lava bread and cockles.

However, Burry Port feels like a place going through the process of reinvention. There are transformative regeneration proposals for the harbour area, and despite its glorious surroundings and popular visitor attractions, some of Burry Port are still not particularly pretty and can be improved. The town centre itself is small and independent but feel very traditional and functional with only a few attractions and meeting the day to day needs of the local community.

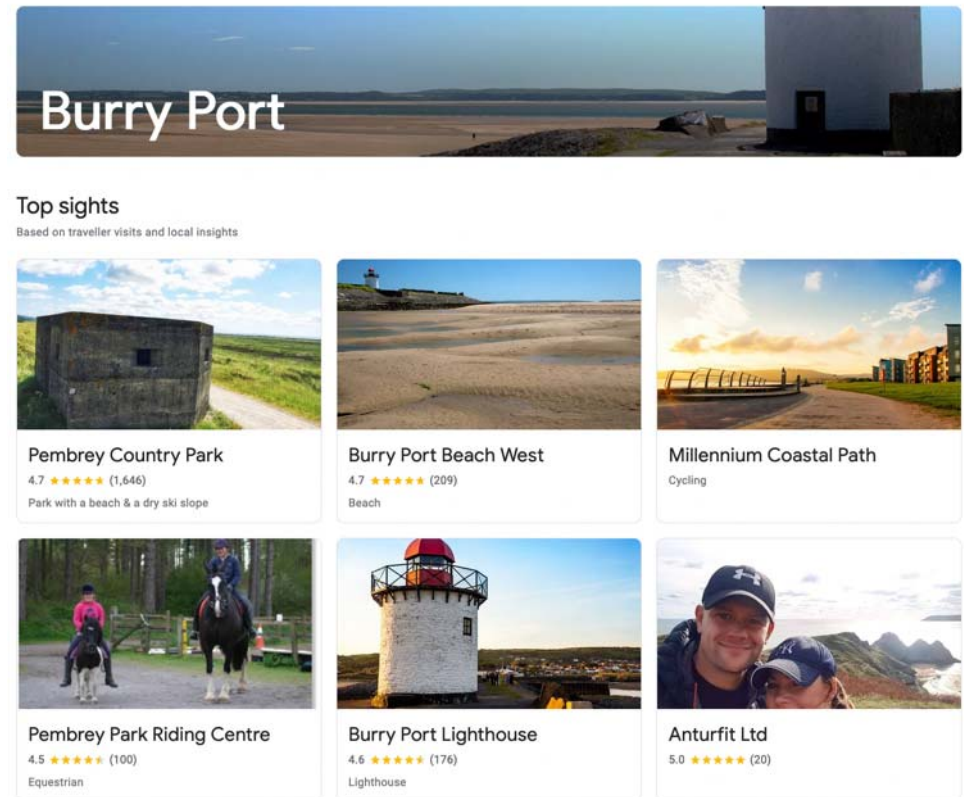
6.0 Online presence/identity

People’s awareness of a place and what a town has to offer is now driven by its online presence. The town’s online identity is closely aligned with nearby Pembrey and directed through third parties such as Discover Carmarthenshire and TripAdvisor. The combined Pembrey and Burry Port identity sometimes makes it harder to see the town’s unique appeal and the reliance on third party websites means the town centre businesses and local organisations are not in full control of how the town is marketed as underlined by some of the content and businesses profiled on these web pages being out of date.

Aside from Wikipedia, there is a lack of a website that highlights Burry Port’s current offer including shops, restaurants, events, and activities as well as any future developments. The Town Council website partially fulfils this

role, but it ranks lower in the search engine results (featuring on the second page) and justifiably has more of a local community focus. The most prominent Google Travel sights also reflect the combined Pembrey and Burry Port identity, which can make it harder to identify the key attractions of the town from a visitor’s perspective.

Figure 7 - Google Travel top sights



Local shops, cafes, and restaurants do not feature prominently in search results, although Facebook is popular amongst local businesses, particularly the hospitality sector, including:

- Caffi Lofa – 3,022 likes
- Nik the Greek – 2,868 likes
- Cadno – 2,842 likes
- Carmarthenshire Coffee Company – 605 likes

However, this is not reflected across other social media platforms, such as Instagram or Twitter, or in search engine results; this suggests that town centre businesses could have a stronger online presence and form a larger part of Burry Port's online identity.

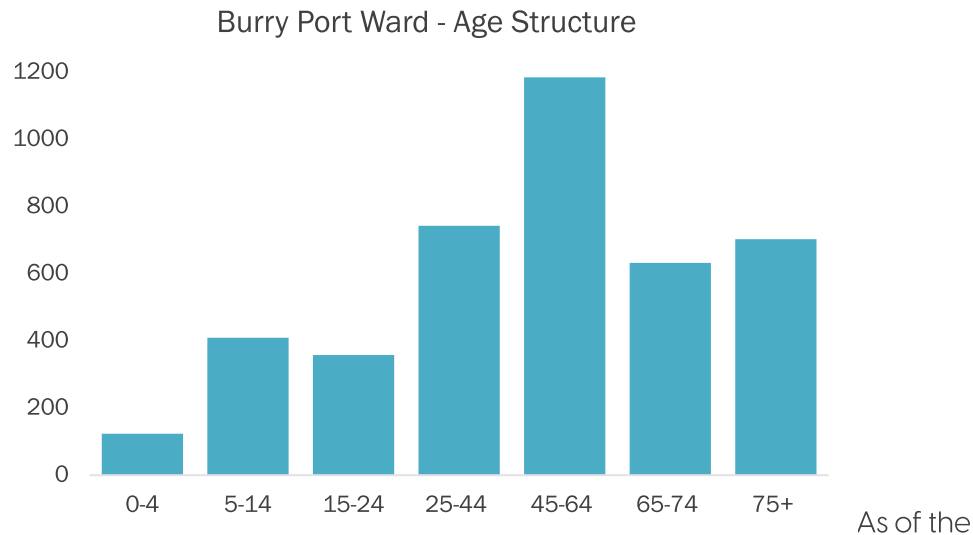
Burry Port has a mixed online presence, with generally positive representation alongside Pembrey but there is significant room for improvement – specially to promote the town's 'best kept secret' distinctiveness. A single unified website and a comprehensive social media presence for businesses and attractions would help achieve this providing a first port of call for residents and visitors.

7 People & community

7.0 Understanding the community

The ward of Burry Port has an estimated population of 4,154, of which nearly a third are aged 65+, this is significantly higher than the Carmarthenshire average of 24%. Burry Port's older population is also reflected in above average proportion of retirees between ages 16-74 (24%) compared with the Carmarthenshire average of 18%.

Figure 8 - Age syructure

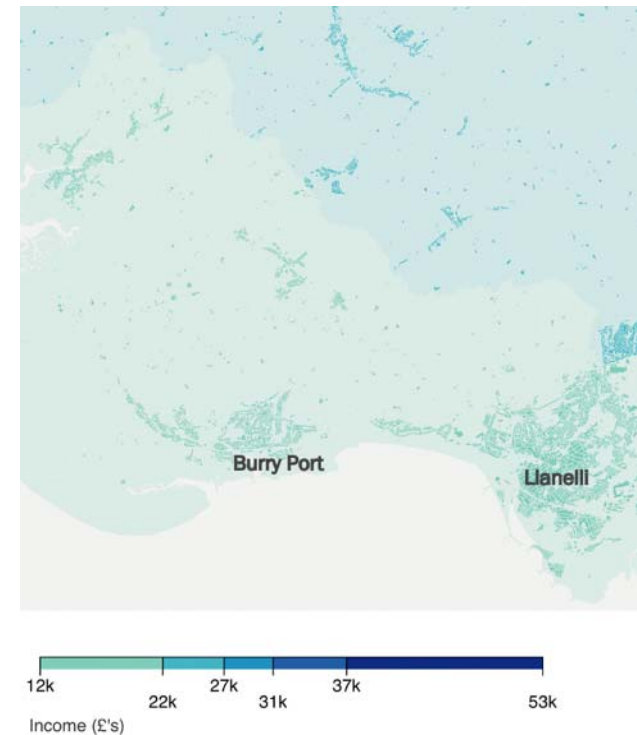


2011 census, 32% of the population can speak Welsh, which is more than 10% lower than the proportion of Carmarthenshire as a whole (44%).

² Office for National Statistics

Household income data² estimates the average household income of Burry Port and Pembrey to be £24,300 – amongst the 10% lowest areas in England and Wales.

Figure 9 - Household income after housing costs in Burry Port and the surrounding area (ONS – 2018 data)



21% of the population aged 16-74 are in semi-routine occupations, such as shelf-stackers, care workers or farm workers and 5% are long-term unemployed or have never worked. Both are slightly higher than the Carmarthenshire average, whilst the proportion in higher managerial, administrative, and professional occupations is slightly below average.

The key issues for the town centre:

- Burry Port is an older than average community
- Low household income.
- Lower levels of economically activity
- People in employment tend to be in routine or semi-routine occupations.

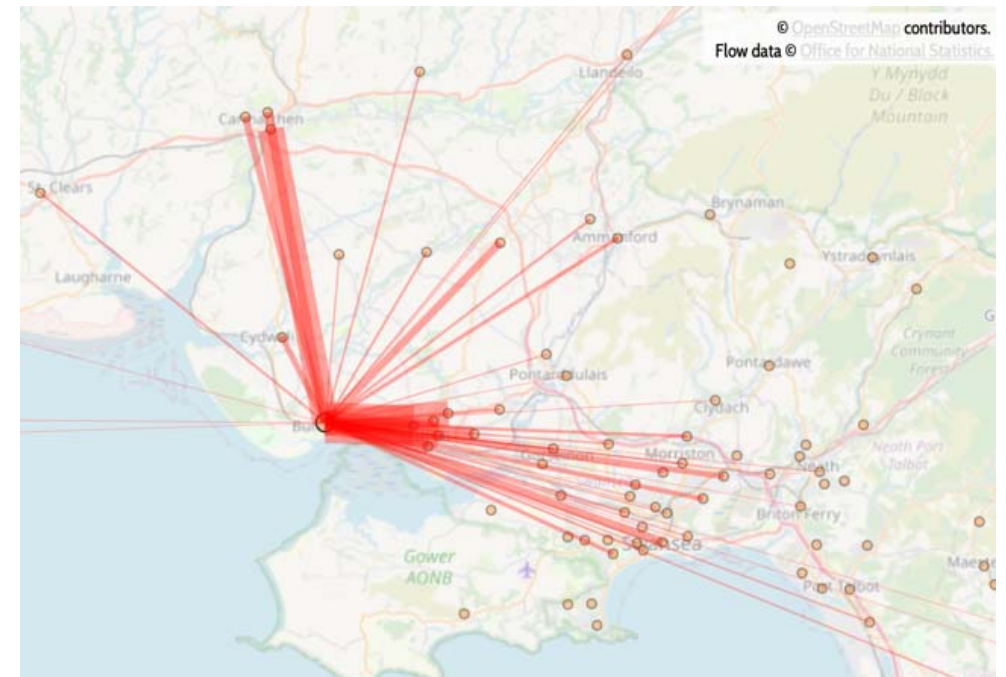
7.1 Where do people work?

Burry Port is categorised³ as a Dependent to Interdependent, this is a place where residents on the whole travel longer distances to work and services and are reliant on neighbouring places for some activities and jobs, as is reflected in the travel to work data highlighted below.

Travel to work data shows that several hundred people both live and work in the Burry Port area; there is significant diversity in local employment, with jobs spread across a number of sectors.

There is no large local employer in Burry Port, however there are several small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Local employers include Amcanu (an industrial design and sheet metal fabricator), Whitfish (fish merchant), Celtic Couriers and The Marine Group (operator of the harbour).

Figure 10 - Map of commutes from Burry Port to the surrounding area (DataShine)



Based on Census data, a quarter of people in employment worked from home or within 5km of Burry Port, with 38% travelling 10km or further. This has likely changed since the pandemic but reflects the assessment of Burry Port which categorised the town as a residential coastal town (i.e., lower job density).

³ Understanding Welsh Places

The travel to work data suggests that before the pandemic around 2,000 people regularly commuted from Burry Port to primarily work in the South West Wales region. The main places people travel to work outside of Burry Port are Swansea, Llanelli, and Carmarthen.

Key issues for the town centre:

- Low job density with resulting lower local spending
- Whilst commuter patterns are likely to remain, the restructuring of the labour market, particularly with the widespread introduction of work from home may create new opportunities.

7.2 Key stakeholders & organisations

The town benefits from several groups and key organisations with a strong interest in the future direction of the town centre. In addition to the two local Members of Carmarthenshire CC, the towns governance includes Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council and Officers. The Town Council has established a community partnership forum with several thematic groups including the local economy. Burry Port Business Group is for local business owners working together and 'putting Pembrey and Burry Port on the map'. Other important stakeholders include:

- Friends of Burry Port Harbour Group
- Events group
- TfW Transport for Wales
- Marine Group
- RNLI

7.3 Events & activities

Events in recent years have included the Pembrey and Burry Port Carnival, Burry Port Car Boot Sale, RNLI Burry Port Triathlon and a Christmas Market and Parade. Although local in scale and appeal, these events have been successful in attract a significant number of people to the town and are considered popular among residents.

The carnival and car boot sale, both organised by the Pembrey and Burry Port Carnival Committee, have been held on the Marina Field, which is located south of the town centre in a key position adjacent to the marina. The space was frequently used before the pandemic however it lacks facilities that would support a greater level of use and diversity of use such as performance shelters, water and electricity hook-ups etc.

Figure 11 -Burry Port Car boot Marina Field (Source Facebook)



8 Business & mix of uses

8.0 Diversity of uses

Burry Port town centre includes 81 business units, which are occupied by 36 businesses (and other organisations). Aside from residential, the dominant uses are hair and beauty, takeaways (including fish and chip shops), traditional pubs and restaurants. There's also small but diverse mix of specialist businesses with a bakery, butchers, pharmacy, post office supported by specialist women's clothing, and antiques shop.

Most businesses in the town centre are independents, with only Jenkins Bakery and the Co-op representing regional or national multiples.

Figure 12 -Town centre diversity



Figure 13 -Town centre uses

It is possible to buy all the essentials in the town centre from independents or the Co-op, and the centre is a place the local community rely upon for local and top up shopping. However, larger food and comparison-shopping take place mainly in Llanelli or other larger centres and retail parks nearby.

In addition to the range of businesses there's good range of community facilities and services further strengthening the variety of the town centre, including:

- Police station
- Health Centre and GP
- Institute and Memorial Hall (Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council)
- Memorial Park with various sports pitches and games areas

However, the library is located outside of the town centre within a nearby residential neighbourhood (0.2 miles or 5-minute walking distance). The opportunity exists to consider the benefits of relocating this service nearer to the public transport hub and commercial centre where footfall is greatest.

Use class of occupied units in Burry Port town centre

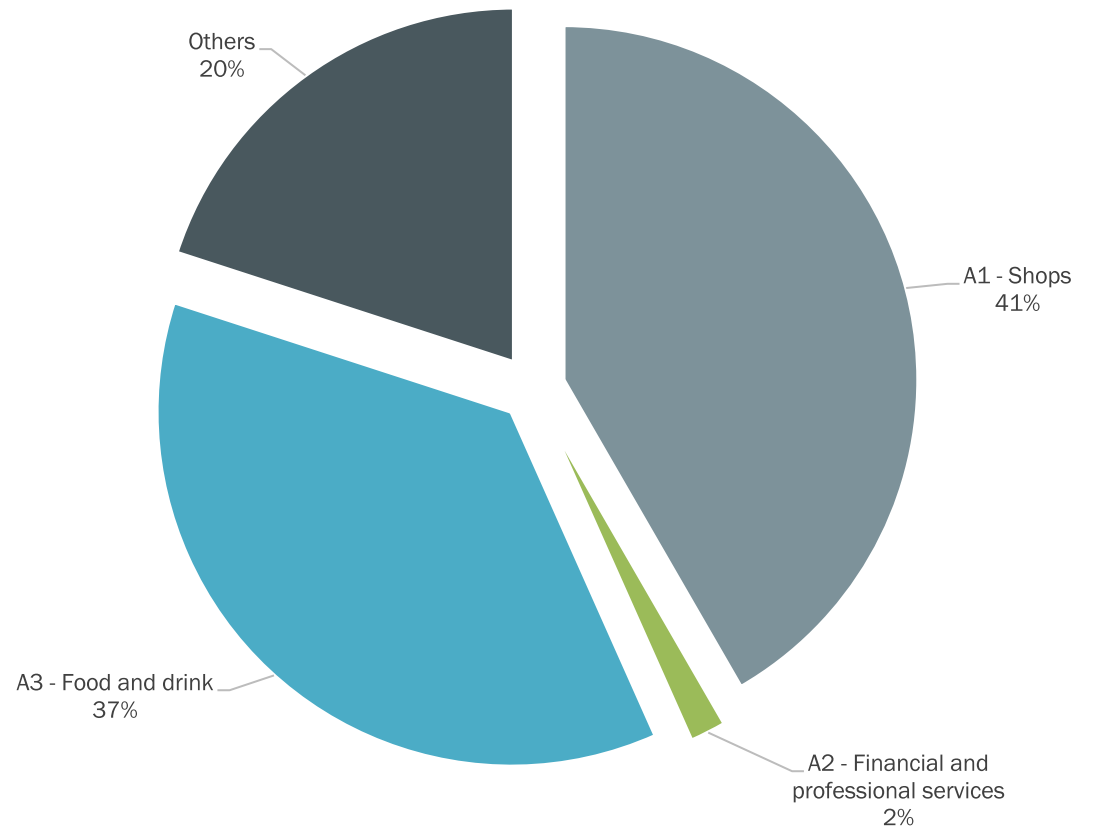
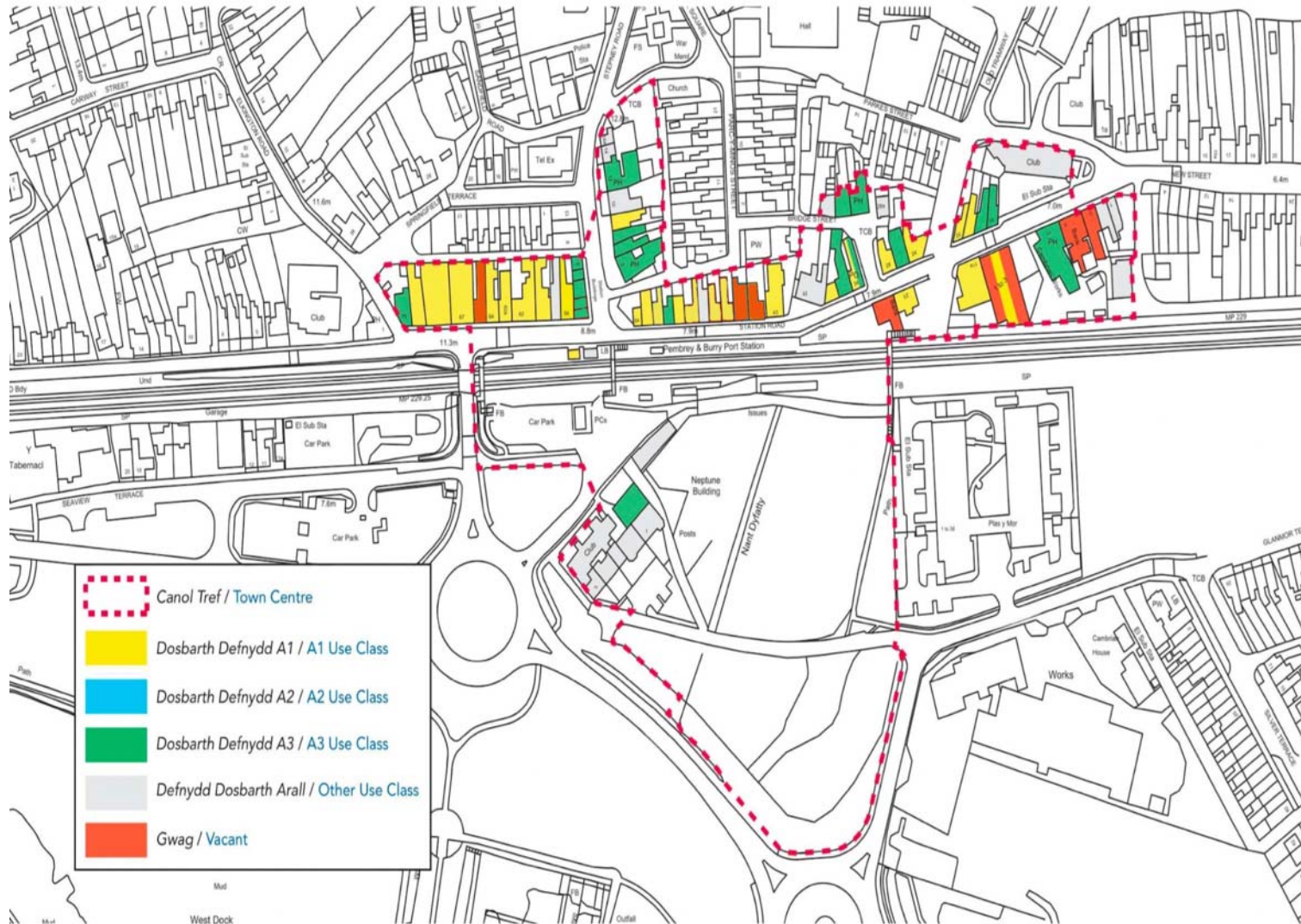


Figure 14 Town centre uses and vacancy



The changing character of the town centre in recent years has been a shift away from retail towards food and drink businesses. In 2017, 14 units were occupied by A3 (food and drink) which has increased to 22 units as of November 2021 – an increase of more than 50% in 4 years. Whilst the majority are considered as offering traditional quality there are some prominent ‘destination’ businesses including Caffi Lolfa Art Caffi catering for vegetarian, vegan and gluten free dishes.

The Ticket Office is a business positioned next to the train station providing tickets and travel information alongside a lowkey visitor information point. Other key services include two ATM cash machines located in the centre although no longer any banks. Public toilets located on the southern side of the train station provide important local conveniences for the centre.

8.1 Number of vacancy properties

As of November 2021, Burry Port town centre had a vacancy rate of 10% with 73 (of the 81 units) occupied. Sell 2 Vape and Ladbrokes have recently closed in the town centre. The vacancy rate has declined since 2017 (12%) although the pattern has changed with a greater concentration of empty units presently occurring along the eastern end of Station Road/New Street that appears to be an area in transition.

8.2 Town centre investment

The high proportion of independents, diverse range of businesses and low vacancy rate suggest that the town centre is in a healthy position. The Phoenix Italian and Carmarthenshire Coffee Company are recent openings and there are good levels of interest in available commercial property when they become available.

The growth of food and drink businesses in the town centre appears to be continuing with a new bar and a restaurant due to open in the centre in early 2022. This investment has the potential to help strengthen the centres evening economy. Discussions with stakeholders have identified a need for more high-quality dining, coffee, and retail establishments in the town centre to capture extra spend from visitors, particularly those attracted to the harbour as its commercial/leisure offer grows.

There are concerns that the centre needs to start catering more for the likely new wave of visitors and users of the harbour. It is important for the future of the town that the level of quality found in the centre and harbour area remain in balance including new opportunities for businesses to establish themselves particularly in the core area around Station Road/Stepney Road.

8.3 The Co-op

The town centre supermarket will relocate in 2022 to its new site located on Seaview Terrace. The 570sqm store includes a small amount on onsite car parking and is located a few minutes' walk from the existing store.

The relocation of the Co-op is an opportunity to strengthen the convenience offer of the centre, although it also creates a potentially significant and eye-catching empty property at the main entrance to the town centre. The Co-op will strip out the existing store before marketing and is unlikely to be available for alternative uses until at least 2023. The building is likely to require subdivision and modernisation to attract interest from smaller scale businesses. Creating the opportunity for new footfall generators in the town centre through a mixed-use regeneration of the building would help to counterbalance the loss of the Cop-op from the main shopping area.

9 SWOT & Analysis

The analysis of Burry Port town centre has identified the following key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). The purpose of the SWOT analysis is to find out what's working well, and what's not so good. It also looks at how the town might wish to grow, and how it might get there; as well as what might get in the way.

Strengths



Weaknesses



Opportunities



Threats



9.0 Analysis drawing

Figure 15 – Analysis of town centre

