

Draft Action Plan

For

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Photo: Second Severn Bridge the new Gateway to South Wales.

SEVERNSIDE AREA FORUM

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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out an action plan for the ***sustainable development*** of the Severnside Area, in order to enhance and to improve the environment, make Severnside a tourism destination and as a focus for community life.

The Severnside Forum is bringing forward ideas and projects that will hopefully bring about an increased activity, vibrancy and ***sustainable development*** to the Severnside Area.

Background

As residents of Monmouthshire, we are also just a few of the many millions of inhabitants of planet Earth. Many people will recall that back in 1992, 180 world leaders met in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil for a meeting known as the Earth Summit, which was intended to encourage countries to think about their responsibilities for our shared planet.

Delegates discussed environmental and development issues, because with so many people on Earth, it is vital that everyone has a decent quality of life, while protecting the planet and conserving its resources for future generations. This concept is called ***sustainable development***. The official definition of this is "development which meets the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Basically this means that we shouldn't cheat on our children. We all want a good quality of life, but we shouldn't achieve this at the expense of the environment, which we will hand on to our children.

Leaders at the Earth Summit wrote an action plan for the 21st Century called ***Agenda 21*** which outlines ways in which we can all work towards sustainable development. The UK Government and the National Assembly for Wales have taken Agenda 21 seriously and challenged all local authorities to produce their own ***Local Agenda 21*** strategies by December 2000, which set out a vision for a better future based on local needs and what local people think is important. It is hoped that it will pull together the good work that many organisations are already doing towards creating a more sustainable future, as well as inspire individuals and organisations into action to "do their bit" and make a difference.

In January 2004 Monmouthshire County Council introduced a Severnside Area Forum into the Severnside area, a partnership was formed between the Chamber of Commerce, Local Voluntary Groups and Organisations, Caldicot Town Council, Magor and Undy, Rogiet, Portskewett Community Councils and Monmouthshire County Council.

The Severnside Area has suffered economically and socially with a huge loss of its industrial base, which includes Steel Making, Coal, Railways, Heavy Engineering, Textiles, Light Manufacturing, Agriculture.

House prices has caused a population shift with a huge influx of city dwellers creating a huge problem for are young local people unable to buy their own dwellings because of the high cost of housing in the area.

Sustainable development is critical to the future of the Severnside Area; sustainability is one of our core values. A better quality of life for people in are Area cannot be achieved by County Council alone.

A Better Environment

- ❖ **BIODIVERSITY:** The diversity of wildlife is conserved, protected and managed appropriately. People have access to the countryside and understand why it is important to enhance biodiversity.
- ❖ **DISTINCTIVENESS:** The special qualities of Monmouthshire and its communities that are valued for their character or local distinctiveness are protected or enhanced.
- ❖ **POLLUTION:** Local, national and global pollution is limited to a level which the natural environment can cope with, without damage. Air, soil, water and noise pollution are all decreased, resulting in a cleaner, healthier environment for everyone.

Health and Well-being

- ❖ **COMMUNITY SAFETY:** People feel safe and secure and live without fear of personal violence, crime, harassment or persecution.
- ❖ **HEALTH:** People enjoy good physical, mental and social health and well being with easy access to good quality health

care, advice and preventative health care.

- ❖ LEISURE: Opportunities for culture, leisure and recreation are readily available for all.

Community Confidence

- ❖ PARTICIPATION: All sections of the community are empowered to participate in decision-making and play an active role in society, through information, education and equal opportunities.

Local Economic Development

- ❖ SATISFYING WORK: Everyone has the opportunity to undertake satisfying work in a diverse and healthy local economy, where staff work in decent conditions and companies take their environmental responsibilities seriously.

DEVISITY

- ❖ BASIC NEEDS: Everyone has the ability and opportunity to access good food, clean water, warmth, shelter, education and other essential services.
- ❖ GLOBAL CONNECTIONS: Individuals and organisations consider their impact on the rest of the globe and make it a positive one.

LOCAL ACCESS

- ❖ LOCAL NEEDS: Where possible, all local needs are met locally, reducing the need to travel and building up vibrant, self-sufficient communities.
- ❖ TRANSPORT: There is a reduced need to travel, but when people do need to travel there is an integrated transport network with quality facilities for walking, cycling and public transport.

Here in Severnside, as in every other place in the world, we all affect and are affected by our local environment. Every resident should have the opportunity to say how they would like the Severnside Area of the future to be because everyone has a stake in the future.

This concept is called ***Sustainable Development***. The official definition of this is "development which meets the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Basically this means that we shouldn't cheat on our children. We all want a good quality of life, but we shouldn't achieve this at the expense of the environment, which we will hand on to our children.

Severnside – Heritage and Nature

The Severnside Area is a district of the County of Monmouthshire County Council sandwiched between the M4, M48 corridor and the Severn estuary.

For centuries this part of Monmouthshire has been an important transport point. Most of the people travelling to or leaving South Wales have passed through the area using the important river crossings. This tradition continues today with the two Severn Bridges which link South Wales to England. But don't rush through on the motorway! Take time to explore the Caldicot Levels, the most extensive ancient fenland in Wales, and the villages which dot the Levels. You'll be rewarded with glimpse of a rich heritage and a natural history, which spans 5,000 years of settlement along the Severn Estuary.



Photo: Nestling close to the Severn Tunnel and surrounded by motorways (M4 and M48) - Caldicot plays a key role as a link town between Wales and England.

The Severnside Area is made up of the town of Caldicot surrounded by villages of Magor, Rogiet, Portskewett, Sudbrook, Undy and Caerwent.

MAGOR and UNDY

Magor and Undy are situated on a limestone spur in the fertile sea plain south of Wentwood, which has a long history of Celtic, Roman and Norman settlement. The villages are clustered around a square, which, until the building of a railway, was the centre of considerable trade in cattle to

Somerset via Magor Pill and the Severn Estuary.



Photo: The ruined walls of the Procurator's House

The ruined walls of the Procurator's House, in the 14th Century the Procurator lived here. His duties were to preside over a court in which rates of pay, boundary and other disputes were settled. He collected rents and other local taxes, which were transferable to the Catholic Church in Italy. The Procurator was a man of status and the size and solidity of the building is the only one of its kind in Wales.



Photo: Swans in the Magor Marsh

The Magor Marsh is the last example of traditionally managed fenland in the Gwent levels, with a pattern of drainage ditches and other features which have remained unchanged for centuries.

The reserve features a wet rush pasture and two hay meadows, and has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

There is a bird hide from which you may see marsh warblers and kingfishers.

Night Herons pass by on their way to winter grounds, and sparrow hawk, buzzard and peregrine may be seen at any time of year.

Amongst the plant life you can see are marsh marigolds, yellow flag and ragged robin.

PORTSKEWETT

Black Rock and the village of Portskewett have a rich history, due to their strategic position on the transport route between England and Wales. A thousand years ago Portskewett was named as being one of the chief ports in Britain.

In 1065, the Saxon Earl Harold of Wessex made incursions into the district and, according to the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', began to build a hunting lodge at Portskewett. The lodge was promptly attacked by the Welsh, under Caradog, King of Gwent. The builders were slain and the building materials carried away. Earl Harold was never able to avenge the defeat. Having become king in January 1066, he met his death at the Battle of Hastings in October.

During the Civil War Charles 1 used the river crossing here to escape a band of Parliamentarians. By the 18th Century a regular ferry service crossed the river from Black Rock to New Passage on the Bristol side transporting passengers, cattle and iron ore. The Black Rock Hotel served travellers and became a popular local entertainment venue. The Severn Tunnel, which opened in 1886, cut the 2½-hour journey from Cardiff to Bristol to just 75 minutes.

Lave Net Fishing At Black Rock

The River Severn has the second highest tidal range in the world, and treacherous mud and currents.



Photo: Local Lave Net Fisherman

Local fishermen at Black Rock have passed knowledge of the tides down from generation to generation, and they fish safely in this dangerous stretch of water. They use hand held lave nets that are crafted from local willow and on certain days through the year demonstrate their historic fishing tradition.

SUDBROOK

An Iron Age promontory hill fort, with ramparts over 5m high stands overlooking the Severn Estuary. This area was also used by the Romans, vestiges of a treble-ditched Roman camp at Sudbrook on the Via Julia, part of which has been swept away by the river. There are also traces of an ancient chapel nearby.

There was an ancient crossing from the Bristol side to Sudbrook, near the remains of a camp that guarded a ferry on the route between the Roman stations of Aquae Solis (Bath) and Venta Silurum (Caerwent).

ROGIET, SEVERN TUNNEL JUNCTION.

THE WELSH PORTAL of the Severn Tunnel is 4 miles 624 yards from the Gloucestershire entrance, and of this distance 2¼ miles are underneath the River Severn. The total length, including approaches, is approximately seven miles.



In 1872 the Severn Tunnel Railway Act, after many vicissitudes, received the Royal Assent. The Great Western Railway undertook the construction of the tunnel. Mr. Charles Richardson, the originator of the adopted scheme, was made engineer in charge, and Sir John Hawkshaw the consulting engineer.

Briefly, the plan envisaged the making of a railway from a point on the Bristol and South Wales Union Railway east of Pilning to the Gloucestershire shore, from there under the Severn, and thence to a junction with the main line at Rogiet, now called Severn Tunnel Junction.

The length of the Severn Tunnel is 4 miles 624 yards, of which two miles and a quarter are under the river. Of the remainder about half a mile is in Gloucestershire and the balance in Monmouthshire. Including the approaches, the total length is approximately seven miles. If we accept the London Tube railways, the Severn Tunnel is the longest railway tunnel in the British Isles; it is also one of the longest underwater tunnels in the world.

The line is level for some chains under the deepest part of the river, but rises at a gradient of 1 in 100 towards the Gloucestershire side, and at 1 in 90 towards the Monmouthshire side.

The tunnel was designed to have a depth sufficient to enable the building of a roof 30 ft. thick (subsequently increased to 50 ft. between the top of the arch and the lowest part of the river bottom). The latter is formed by the Shoots, a deep water channel

containing, even at low tide, a depth of 80 ft. of water, and having a surface width of about 400 yards. Throughout the remaining width of the estuary the exterior of the tunnel was to be partly exposed at full ebb, standing in places 15 ft. above water level.

The Great Western Railway Company lost no time in setting to work, and began operations early in 1873.

CAERWENT

The remains of a Roman City can be seen at Caerwent. The 44-acre site was surrounded by a high wall much of which still survives. Known to the Romans as Venta Silurum, the city became the tribal capital of the Silures.



Photo: southern stretch of the city wall

Caerwent developed on the main route to the legionary fortress of Caerleon, which was originally built to subdue the powerful Silures.

Visitors can walk along long stretches of the wall, which still rises to 5 metres high in places. The remains of shops, a courtyard house, Romano-Celtic Temple and the Forum Basilica can be explored.

Much of the 'modern' village is built from 'robbed' Roman stone. It is a delightful place to visit and there are information panels at the key sites.

CALDICOT

IN THE BEGINNING

People have lived, worked and worshipped in the Caldicot area since at least the Neolithic period. The earliest inhabitants probably lived close to the banks of the Severn, to the south of the present-day village, augmenting any agricultural activity with hunting wild fowl in the Severnside marshes and fishing in the river itself. The remains of a Neolithic long barrow overlooking the Severn at Heston Brake, near Black Rock Portskewett, indicate the importance of the area at that time.

There was considerable activity in the area during the Bronze Age. Recent excavations near the Nedern Brook in Caldicot Castle Country Park revealed a plank from a Bronze Age boat and complex wooden structures in the former riverbed. The boat almost certainly plied its trade across the Severn with the farmers and traders of North Somerset.

During the Iron Age, the major settlements in the area were the promontory fort at Sudbrook, two miles to the east of Caldicot, and at Llanmelin, four miles to the north. These forts were centres of trade for the farmers who lived in small communities on the fertile low land of the Severn valley. Farmers from the Caldicot area will have visited these forts trading animals and crops for pottery and iron goods.

THE ROMANS AND AFTER

With the Roman Conquest the centre of local activity shifted from Llanmelin and Sudbrook to the Roman town of Venta Silurum - Caerwent. At that time the Neddern was quite a substantial waterway and it is likely that Roman-trading vessels sailed up the river to Caerwent. Caldicot itself would, as in the Iron Age, have been a small Severnside agricultural and fishing community trading with the larger local settlement. Not all manufactured goods had to be obtained from outside, however. The discovery of a number of kilns near the site of Durand School, shows that coarse, gray and black pottery was produced in the village during Roman times.

With the departure of the Romans, Gwent, particularly eastern Gwent, became 'border country' disputed between the Saxons and the Welsh. A recent theory even argues that Llanmelin was the true site of Camelot, the centre of King Arthur's Celtic resistance to the Saxon invaders.

THE NORMANS

The Normans were soon able to establish control over the lowland parts of Gwent, including Caldicot. These lands were held by William Fitzosbern, King William's cousin. However, William Fitzosbern died in 1071 and his possessions in Gwent were inherited by his son, Roger. When, in 1074, Roger joined a rebellion against the King his lands were confiscated. The manor of Caldicot was given to Durand, the Sheriff of Gloucester.

The Domesday Book, compiled in 1086, records, 'Durand the Sheriff holds of the King, one land, in Caerwent, called Caldicot. He has in demesne there 3 ploughs, and 15 half villeins, and 4 bondmen, and one knight. All these have twelve ploughs. There is a mill worth ten shillings.'

THE CASTLE

The Domesday Book makes no specific reference to a castle at Caldicot, although it is likely that a wooden 'Motte and Bailey' structure had been constructed. Slight remains which exist to this day indicated that this may have been near Crick rather than on the present site

In 1158 the manor of Caldicot passed to Humphrey de Bohun III, Earl of Hereford. He was responsible for building the stone keep and curtain walls of the present-day Castle. The de Bohun family held Caldicot for over two centuries. In 1376 the manor, along with 70 others, passed to Thomas Woodstock, third son of King Edward III, when he married Alianore de Bohun.

With the death of Edward III the throne passed to his grandson, the nine year old Richard II. As the new king's uncle, Thomas played an important role advising him. He was created Constable of England. He rarely visited Caldicot, his main estates being at Pleshy in Essex, close to the seat of power.

In 1381, however, Essex was convulsed by the Peasants' Revolt. This may be why Thomas decided to spend part of that year in Caldicot. During his stay he gave orders for major new work to be done on the castle. A new gatehouse and drawbridge were constructed. At the rear of the castle a dovecote was replaced by a new tower with private chambers, now known as the Woodstock tower. At the foot of the Woodstock tower two carved stones were to be placed, one marked 'Thomas' the other 'Alianore'.

As time passed relations between Thomas and King Richard grew increasingly strained. In 1391, on the orders of the King, Thomas was kidnapped and murdered. His property was confiscated and passed into the hands of the Crown.

Caldicot Castle in its beautiful setting of tranquil gardens and a wooded country park.

Find out about its past with an audio tour, explore the medieval towers and take in the breath-taking views of the parklands and surrounding area from the battlements.



The Children's Activity Station includes puzzles and games, tree and leaf identification, draw your own shields and armour and the chance to make a castle to take home.

Find out about footwear in the past and try on a selection of shoes copied from original historical examples. From medieval slippers and a Tudor buckle shoe, to a shoe from the time of the English

Civil War and a Victorian lady's ankle boot, this activity lets you step back in time.



The castle plays host to many historical and social events.

Caldicot Castle is set in fifty-five acres of beautiful Country Park. The river Neddern winds its way through areas of woodland and pasture and the wildlife pond is complete with a pond-dipping station. The park offers an ideal setting for picnics and walks against the magnificent backdrop of the medieval castle walls, with picnic tables and barbecue hearths on site.

THE MEDIEVAL VILLAGE

During the Middle Ages Caldicot was more typical of English villages than of Welsh settlements. The villagers' huts were centred on the preaching cross in the middle of the village. They were surrounded by a series of arable open fields, the main ones being Church Field, Mill Field and Great Field (also known as West Field), each being divided into a large number of strips.

Further from the village were the commons, including Rogiet Moor, Ballan Moor, Simers Hill (now Highmoor Hill) and Black Marl Pits (now Five Lanes). These areas of rough grazing supported the cattle and sheep owned by the villagers.

Animals which strayed on to the crops would be taken to one of the village pounds, one being situated at the top of what is now Station Road and the other on Church Road, by the entrance to the Castle. Grain was taken to the village water mill at the Pill, on a site now occupied by Linpac Metal Decorators.



Photo: Llanthony Secunda Manor

Apart from the Castle and the Church the major building in the village was Llanthony Secunda Manor, a huge farmhouse occupied by monks from Llanthony Secunda Abbey in Gloucester. The house, built in about 1120, is still standing and is one of the oldest occupied houses in Wales.

In 1349 and again in 1361 the Black Death hit Caldicot, decimating the village. The manor accounts record that nobody could be found to serve as reeve (village headman) since all the villeins were dead.

AFTER THE MIDDLE AGES

The centuries passed. Caldicot changed, but only slowly.

During Tudor times Britain became more stable and prosperous. This led to a period known as 'the Great Rebuilding' during which the more wealthy farmers replaced their old Medieval homes with grander more comfortable farmhouses. Some of Caldicot's finest surviving buildings, including Court House, Upper House and the Tippling Philosopher Inn belong to this period.



Photo: Tippling Philosopher Inn.

At the same time, however, the Castle and the water mill began to fall into ruins.

The Medieval system of agriculture, with its arable strips and common grazing, continued, although a small amount of common land at Caldicot Pill was enclosed and a few farmers swapped strips in order to create enclosed fields within the larger open fields.

In 1606 terrible floods swamped the Caldicot Levels. Many people were drowned. Although Caldicot itself escaped the worst of the flooding, many of the villagers' animals were drowned on the Moors.

Farming remained the way of life for the great majority of the population. Towards the end of the 18th century, however, a small shipbuilding industry developed at the Pill, owned by the Wise family who had come to Caldicot from Bristol.

VICTORIAN CALDICOT

When Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837, Caldicot had a population of around 450, virtually all of whom were engaged in farming or in trades serving the agricultural community. In many ways the village retained its Medieval character, being dominated by the Castle and the Church. A tithe barn stood behind the Church.

There was no school, the only formal education being provided by a widow in her cottage. She was paid by a local charity to teach poor children to write and to read the Bible. In 1847, however, St. Mary's Church School opened, largely as a result of the efforts of the vicar, Edmund Turberville Williams.

In 1850 Caldicot entered the 'Railway Age' a development which was to fundamentally change the nature of the village and to form its character for the next century and more. The opening of the South Wales Railway brought London, Cardiff, even Ireland within relatively easy reach, although the nearest station was at Portskewett (Caldicot station was not opened until 1936).

The railway attracted industry. In 1862 Henry Hughes of Tintern opened a wireworks next to the railway at Caldicot Pill. It soon became the village's major employer, attracting many new workers. Some of these were housed in a row of cottages built next to the factory, known as Forge Row. Others lodged with local families, causing some overcrowding.

In 1877 the Wireworks was sold and in 1880 it reopened as a Tinplate Works, producing tinplate for the canning industry.

In the meantime, improvements had been made to the railway network. In 1863, a branch line from the South Wales Railway to Black Rock, near Sudbrook, was opened. Passengers travelling from South Wales to Bristol no longer needed to travel via Gloucester. They could catch the train to Black Rock, where the railway ran out onto a pier. Here they got off and climbed onto a steam ferry, which took them across the Severn to New Passage, where they boarded a separate train for Bristol and London.

In 1879 work began on the shaft for the Severn Tunnel, which was built primarily to transport coal from South Wales to England, particularly to the Royal Navy dockyards at Portsmouth. The tunnel was opened in 1886. The construction work brought hundreds of navies to the village. After it was completed, many of them left, but the presence of the marshalling yards at Severn Tunnel Junction meant that Caldicot was now firmly a railway village. In the thirty years between 1851 and 1881 its population had more than doubled, from 661 to 1,401.

Thus, by the late Victorian period, Caldicot was no longer the purely agricultural community it had been for centuries. It now had a three-fold character, being made-up overwhelmingly of railwaymen, tinplate workers and agricultural workers. This character remained largely unchanged until beyond the middle of the 20th century.

A NEW TOWN

During the first half of the 20th century Caldicot continued to grow steadily, but unspectacularly, reaching a population of 1,770 in 1951. Early in the 1950's, however, Chepstow Rural District Council decided that the village should be allowed to expand to

approximately 3,000. Shortly after this decision, the government decided to build a new steelworks at Llanwern. Caldicot was designated as a suitable home for the thousands of steelworkers. Expansion plans were revised upwards. Llanwern steelworks opened in 1962 and by the end of the decade Caldicot was occupied by over 7,000 people and was still growing. The village was fast becoming a town.



Photo: Caldicot Town Centre.

The growth of the community was furthered by the opening of the Severn Bridge in 1966, strengthening the ties between Caldicot and the Bristol region, which have always been so important to the well being of the area.

With Caldicot now being part of the 'M4 Corridor' new industries such as Mitel Telecom came to the town, compensating for the contraction of the steel industry and the railways.

With the construction of the Second Severn Crossing, Caldicot appears to be destined to continue its growth.

In earlier years growth was achieved at the expense of the destruction of some of Caldicot's historic buildings. It is to be hoped that future development will take place in a more enlightened way, remembering that Caldicot has a proud past as well as a bright future.

Our Vision

Sevenside Heritage and Nature Trail

Using Caldicot Castle as a hub create a trail and cycle path that would connect all of the places of interest in the area.



Photo: Rogiet Nature Park.

Cycling and walking between cultural points along the trail, especially in a traffic free environment is a goal of the project.



Photo: Black Rock Picnic Site.

Caldicot Castle County Park

- ❖ Create a new lake within the County Park for boating, fishing, and wild life.
- ❖ Flood Lighting the Castle, include the lighting of the footpath and car park.



Photo: Caldicot Castle.

- ❖ Caravan, Camping Park.
- ❖ Upgrade electricity and drinking water supply.
- ❖ Upgrade toilet facilities

Sevenside Community Arts Centre

Sevenside has no venue big enough to hold a proper theatrical performance or concert. The centre would have a dual use, which would give schools and groups usage of the facilities.

Groups interested in this facilities: - Caldicot & District U3A, Severn Tunnel Band, Caldicot Operatic Society, and Youth Organisations.

The Sevenside Area is lacking facilities where these groups can meet and have use for storage facilities workshop areas etc.

Portskewett - Black Rock Visitor Centre



Photo: Proposed Lave Fishing Museum & Visitor Centre.

- ❖ Convert old stable block into a Lave Net Fishing museum and visitor centre.
- ❖ Create horse-riding bridleways.

Rogiet

- ❖ GWR Heritage Site at the Old Engine Sheds.
- ❖ Extension of the Nature Reserve with a coastal footpath connecting with Black Rock in the East and Goldcliff in the West.
- ❖ Motorway access to the M48.
- ❖ Reopen Ash path to Caldicot.



Photo: Severn Tunnel Junction.

- ❖ Create disable access at Severn Tunnel Station.
- ❖ Create a Parkway concept at Severn Tunnel Station.

Magor – Undy

- ❖ Reopen Magor Station.



Photo: Site of the old Magor Station.

- ❖ The need of a Leisure Centre / Community Centre.

Caerwent



Photo: Proposed Roman Museum & Visitor Centre.

- ❖ Roman Museum.
- ❖ Heritage Path connecting Caerwent with Caldicot.

Promotion of the Severnside Area.

- ❖ Brochures.
- ❖ Maps.
- ❖ Website.
- ❖ Post Cards.

Managing the Environment

Objective:

To encourage a sense of community pride by improving the environment of the Severnside Area.

Making it Happen Funding and Resources

***Sub Committee to write a report on SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT about the Severnside Area**

Send Report to: -

M. P.'s

A. M.'s

Monmouthshire CC Severnside Committee

Monmouthshire CC Castle

Monmouthshire CC Country Park

Community Councils

Caldicot Town Council

Portskewett

Magor & Undy

Rogiet

Caerwent

Groundwork Wales

Sustrans

All Organisation, Groups & Clubs in Severnside.

***Ask recipients to evaluate report + wish list + support**

***Monmouthshire C.C. to fund a Feasibility Study**

***Prioritise Action Plan**

***Cost Actions**

***Funding Trail**