

## Monmouthshire County Council Cultural Services Review



**Commercial in Confidence**

June 2015

## Monmouthshire County Council

# Museums and Cultural Attractions Strategy

### Commercial in Confidence

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## 1 Executive Summary

**This report provides Monmouthshire County Council with a strategy for protecting and sustaining the museums and attractions in a way that is enterprising and responsive to all communities across the County.**

It has been produced in advance of a wider review of leisure services which is now taking place. The recommendations therefore need to remain flexible to some extent to take account of the changing context.

The museums and attractions service has been subject to significant ‘salami slicing’ in recent years. The 2015/2016 budget appears to be both unachievable and, more worryingly, inadequate to deliver a service of value to the people of Monmouthshire.

Providing a museums and heritage attraction service of value comes at a cost. There is no ‘silver bullet’ which allows councils to run services like this at no cost or minimal cost. Experience from everywhere shows that revenue funding is required in some form, whether through direct grants, cross subsidy or through the provision of income generating assets.

Putting the service out to community based organisations or charitable trusts may seem to be a good solution for the Council. But in reality, these small, volunteer run organisations are only able to provide a very small scale offer of limited benefit which can never contribute the type of value that a professionally staffed and run museums and heritage service can.

And Monmouthshire DOES still have a professional and valuable service – albeit one which has been stretched almost to breaking point.

We are not recommending therefore that the service is broken up and hived off as small scale individual sites. But we also recognise that the status quo is not acceptable. Instead we are proposing a strategy which reduces duplication in staffing, lowers staff costs, reduces expenditure on buildings and assets and realistically increases income.

In doing so, it will redefine the service and give it a sustainable blueprint for the future.

The recommendations also take account of the wider leisure services review which could have a significant impact on the service in the future. Interim recommendations will allow immediate improvements to be made whilst ensuring that the service can form part of the new organizational structure in the future.

Taken at face value, the level of revenue support which the Council will need to make is not much different from the amount which is expected this year. It does however represent a significant saving on the actual revenue that was required in 2014/15. We also need to reiterate our concerns about the reality of the current budget!

Importantly, the proposed annual cost to the Council, will represent much greater value for the people of Monmouthshire. It provides a much more effective and locally targeted way of spending c£700,000!

AMION Consulting, working with Headland, has been appointed by Monmouthshire County Council to review the options and opportunities for the future of the Council’s museums and attractions. Specifically the review should look at the finance, assets, property, staffing and

management of the service. The study has been commissioned because of the increasing pressures on the Council's revenue budgets as well as the significant backlog of capital investment that is needed to maintain the property and assets.

Monmouthshire is a large rural county with a population of 91,000 living in an area of around 330 square miles. Despite the significant financial pressures faced by the Council, it is committed to improving its services to its communities.

The picture for museums across Wales is changing. It is widely recognised that additional funding is very unlikely to become available and therefore new methods for management and delivery of museums services will be essential for longer term sustainability.

This report assesses: the County's current museums at Abergavenny, Chepstow and the Nelson Museum in Monmouth; the three attractions, Caldicot Castle, the Old Station Tintern and Shire Hall, Monmouth. All of the venues sit within Monmouthshire's Tourism, Leisure and Culture department.

Visits to all the museums are seasonal and range between 17,000 at the Nelson Museum and 24,000 at Abergavenny. Visitor numbers for Caldicot Castle, the Old Station Tintern and Shire Hall are not captured in the same way.

In 2014/15, the net cost of the service was £1.08m. The net cost for 2015/16 is budgeted to be £777k although it is very unclear whether the cost savings and income growth which has been assumed within the budget are achievable. The reduction has been based on cost savings which are largely unspecified and unsubstantiated income growth targets. **The consultant team has no confidence that the Council will be able to achieve this budget without substantial further reductions within the year to staffing levels and opening hours.**

An assessment of the current offer shows that there is a very high level of commitment and passion from most of the staff who work in the museums and attractions. There is also clear evidence of some very good practice in terms of collections management and the service which is being offered to some residents and visitors.

**But despite this, overall, the service is very seriously over stretched and fragmented.** Staff at all sites are forced to go to unacceptable levels to get their jobs done and it is **very clear that the council is quite simply trying to do far too much with too little resource.**

In terms of the buildings, none of the three museums are in buildings which are ideal. Abergavenny and the Nelson Museum are very compromised in terms of access and display spaces. Chepstow and Abergavenny are compensating to some extent through creative programming, entirely enabled by grant funding.

Caldicot Castle has been used for many years to generate income from functions which has gone some way towards covering the direct costs but has not contributed to the more major maintenance works which are needed. The building now presents a significant future liability to the council.

Shire Hall is in good condition but sits somewhere between a museum, a visitor attraction and a functions venue. At present it is not generating enough income to be financially self-sustaining and the visitor experience is ill defined.

The income generating services in all of the sites are insufficiently resourced and far too fragmented to be properly effective. But even with better commercial expertise and a co-ordinated approach, there is a limit to the amount of 'profit' which could be generated.

Across the museums and attractions there is very little sharing of resources and expertise. Even the museums, which all sit within the same service, are not really functioning as part of a county-wide service, but rather as three largely independent entities.

**We do not believe that the offer, as it is at the moment, is a good one for Monmouthshire's residents, its visitors or the council's staff.**

We believe that the council needs to do less, but to do it much better and in most ways, differently.

In order to do this however, some things will need to be sacrificed and this will almost certainly raise objections from some local residents, staff and other stakeholders.

There are core recommendations for future of the service as well as a number of specific recommendations for each site.

- The Council should create a **new centralised museums service** which brings together, in one building, all of the expertise and knowledge required for the museums service. This central location would hold all of the collections which are not on display. This step would bring many benefits. It would reduce duplication in skills, allow the collections to be rationalized, and prompt a broad programme of reform which would include digitization and co-curation with communities. **It would also enable the closure of one, or possibly two of the existing museums which are compromised in terms of space and access**, and allow for more resource to be deployed into outreach and education, taking a bespoke service out across the county.
- The Council should also create a new, **properly resourced and effective trading company** to generate a surplus to support the service. The wholly owned independent company would be responsible for the management of a range of catering services, functions, events and activities. Depending on the options agreed for each of the sites, the trading company would generate a net surplus of between £50,000 and £120,000.

There are a number of specific options for each of the sites.

- The Chepstow building is the best suited of the existing museums to be developed as a better museum, benefiting from its proximity to the Castle and the town. The creation of the central service will free up valuable space currently used for conservation, storage and back office functions, to allow for the creation of a new ground floor café, new exhibition space and activity and community areas.
- The building at Abergavenny is very compromised as a museum. It has particularly bad access and a fairly significant long term maintenance cost. There is the added complication that the building is owned by the Neville Estate which would expect a percentage of any income generated, reducing the value of any commercialisation. It is the strong recommendation therefore that the museum is returned to the Neville Estate to allow them to find an alternative sustainable purpose. The Council could however retain management of the grounds and introduce interpretation and town trails, working with the local community. If

this option is unacceptable, the building should be made more flexible to allow for a less static programme. Some additional income generation could come from seasonal catering pods in the grounds and more ticketed activities.

- The Nelson Museum sits within the Market Hall in Monmouth. The rest of the building has recently been vacated and there is a good opportunity to use the whole space (including the former one stop shop, empty offices and former slaughterhouses) for the creation of the new centralised service and store. This would allow the valuable Nelson collection to be better presented and the creation of a new café which takes advantage of the views across the river. If the space is not suitable, the Nelson collection should be relocated to the Shire Hall and a new use found for the museum building alongside the rest of the space.
- The Shire Hall provides a confused offer for visitors and faces significant commercial challenges from the market which prevents certain uses on Saturdays. If the Market Hall cannot be used for the central store, the Nelson Collection should be relocated into the Shire Hall, giving it a new purpose as a museum. Although this would reduce income from functions, this would be more than offset by the saving from closing the Nelson Museum. Other spaces could be improved to provide more temporary exhibition space. The new trading company would take responsibility for the management of the Shire Hall, improving the profitability of events. If the Nelson Collection stays within the Market Hall as part of the central service, limited changes are recommended to improve the profitability of the Shire Hall and increase the flexibility of displays.
- Caldicot Castle is the most challenging of the venues. It requires significant capital investment and the interior is increasingly unfit for purpose. The recommendation is to restrict public access to the courtyard and focus development on the country park with the introduction of new activities and seasonal pop up catering and camping pods. The Council should also work with the town council and local community to establish a development trust to raise funds for the major restoration work required. Once this is completed, the Council could consider providing a lease to a new community based trust to run the castle.
- The Old Station Tintern is probably the site with the greatest potential for increased income generation in the short to medium term, benefiting from strong visitor and resident markets. The Council should reduce costs by closing the carriages, transferring the lease of the cafe to the new trading company when it is up for renewal, adding camping pods to generate income and additional play facilities to increase footfall.

It is a strong recommendation of this report that the museums and attractions remain within the Council. **There is no value to be gained from creating a new trust and indeed this would inevitably create further problems.** Instead recommendations are made for a different reporting structure with reduced staff numbers reflecting the proposed changes. This is in addition to the creation of the new trading company.

The annual net cost to the Council could be between £685,000 and £763,000 depending on the options chosen.

Capital funding will be required for the development of the centralised service and the changes proposed at the Chepstow Museum. It is recommended that two applications are made to the HLF over a four to five year period, led by the Monmouthshire Museums Development Trust.



Capital of around £465k will also be needed for the development of the commercial facilities (excluding the proposed cafes at Monmouth and Chepstow which will be included in the HLF projects above). This commercial investment is likely to realise a payback over 5 years, which is typical for commercial leisure investment.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Project overview

AMION Consulting (in partnership with Headland Design Associates) was appointed in February 2015 by Monmouthshire County Council ('the council') to undertake a review of the **options and opportunities for the future of the council's museums and cultural attractions**.

Specifically the council requires a strategy and business plan that is able to plot the course of the service over the next five years and provide a **sustainable cultural service for the long term**. The strategy should explore all aspects of finance, assets, property, staffing and management. In particular, alternative forms of governance should be explored as appropriate, with an exposition of the key risks and benefits. This piece of work is seen as critical for a number of reasons:

- the **revenue funding** available for the service has been declining and is likely to continue to decline;
- there is a significant **backlog of capital investment**, maintenance and repair at the sites which would probably require external funding;
- there is a recognition that services may be operated, funded, managed and developed better under **different business models**;
- the council is not as well placed as other bodies to seek **fundraising**; and
- market and **consumer expectations** have moved on significantly over the last decade.

Critically, the council recognises that continued tweaks and incremental changes against a backdrop of **ever reducing budgets will not deliver the transformation of the service** that is required. The following paragraph is taken directly from the brief for this project.

*"The scale of the challenge, today and in the future is significant and as a council that remains committed to celebrating its rich cultural heritage and enabling services that add enormous value to local 'sense of place' and economic and societal development, it is clear that new ends and means are required. As a non-statutory discretionary service, the level of financial contribution required of the service over the medium-term in order to meet the burgeoning budget gap, will almost certainly render it unviable. Doing nothing is thus, not an option."*

The museums and cultural attractions are managed within the Tourism, Leisure and Culture department of the council and include:

- Abergavenny Castle Museum;
- Caldicot Castle and Country Park;
- Chepstow Museum;
- Nelson Museum, Monmouth;
- Old Station Tintern (Country Park); and
- Shire Hall, Monmouth.

## 2.2 Our approach

Our approach throughout this study has been that **form follows function**. A change to the way in which the museums and cultural attractions are governed can only be determined once there is a clear strategy in place for the future.

In identifying this strategy, it was important for us to get under the skin of each of the museums and attractions to understand how they can be used to celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Monmouthshire and how they can contribute to economic and social development as well as contributing to pride of place.

Our study has involved the following:

- incognito visits to each site;
- an inception meeting with the core client team;
- a tour of each site;
- face to face meetings with each site manager and other staff from across the Tourism, Leisure and Culture department;
- an in-depth review of all background information relating to the service and to the individual sites (business plans, budgets, condition surveys, maintenance plans, policies, legal documents etc.);
- an exploratory workshop with the core client team;
- face to face meetings with key stakeholders (other officers, councillors, development trustee, Borough Theatre, the Neville Estate etc.);
- public consultation session (invited guests including schools, local history societies, civic societies, friends, users etc.);
- written feedback from two of the five town councils;
- options workshop with the core client team;
- staff consultations sessions (visitor facing staff from each site);
- regular telephone calls with various members of the core client team; and
- various emails from members of the public;

We have been struck by the appetite of the core client team (managers and curatorial) to do things differently and to embrace change. They have been open, honest and generous with their time. Their over-riding aspiration for this piece of work is to achieve **a strong, exciting vision of a rejuvenated service which is enterprising, sustainable and at the heart of its communities**.

This report is a summary of our findings and recommendations.

## 2.3 About us

AMION Consulting is a well-established economics, financial and management consultancy based in Liverpool. The firm was established in 2000 and has built its reputation on providing straightforward, accurate and valuable advice to its clients, often bringing clarity and a good sense approach to complex projects and challenges.

This particular piece of work has been undertaken by our Visitor and Leisure Team which is a specialist consulting team that works exclusively in the areas of visitor attractions, museums, culture and tourism. The Visitor and Leisure team is led by Chris Melia who has been a consultant in this sector since 2007 and before that held a number of director level posts in visitor attractions and tourism throughout the UK.

Headland Design Associates (our partner for this study) is a long-established and well-resourced museum development and interpretive design practice. The practice undertakes consultancy work including feasibility studies, audience development, access and activity plans and interpretation plans; as well as the full-scale implementation of heritage design projects. Rosemary Allen, a director of Headland, brings a particular knowledge of the Heritage Lottery Fund and its requirements in terms of planning and development.

## 3 Relevant context

### 3.1 Monmouthshire County Council priorities

Monmouthshire County Council is administered by a partnership between the Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups. Its main stated priorities are: support for **vulnerable people**; **education** for children; support for **enterprise and job creation**; and maintaining **locally accessible services**.

In order to achieve the priorities above, the council created a Single Integrated Plan with three core outcomes in mind:

- **Nobody is left behind** - a place of cohesive communities where everybody is treated with dignity and respect and has the same opportunity to achieve what they wish.
- **People are confident, capable and involved** - Monmouthshire should be a place where people feel safe and want to be involved; where they are confident in themselves and their abilities and how they contribute to their own community.
- **Our county thrives** – the county should thrive which includes both the economy and the environment. The economy should support communities and families to live a good life.

Monmouthshire County Council covers a large, rural geographical area with a total population of 91,000 which is scattered over 330 square miles. The geography of Monmouthshire complicates the delivery of services to people. Centralising public-facing services is not always a practical in Monmouthshire since the distances between towns and communities makes this inefficient. The focus in Monmouthshire has always been on **local delivery**.

In order to deliver the three outcomes listed above, the council has created an Improvement Plan for 2015 to 2017. The Improvement Plan is written very much in the context of severe budget pressures all across the council and seeks to address the conundrum of improving public services against this backdrop. The document is upfront and honest about the challenges the council faces. It acknowledges that the council has to do more with less and that this will inevitably mean changing the way things are done.

In improving its services the council is committed to the following:

- a more agile, flexible workforce with the right people in the locations where they are needed and where they can work effectively;
- more efficient, effective and sustainable services enabled by council staff and service users working together to make change;
- better staff training and development that ensures staff are supported and support each other and also, learn from world-wide ideas and inspirational people;
- council staff supporting more meaningful engagement in communities; and
- an organisational structure which is 'networked' in nature and exhibits high levels of trust in its staff.

The council has an annual revenue budget of £151m for 2015/16 which needs to reduce to £130m over the next few years. The Tourism, Leisure and Culture department which is responsible for the museums and cultural attractions has an annual budget of £5.34m for 2015/16 which is a reduction of £430,000 on the previous year. In the space of the last 12 months, the department has been required to make savings of £400,000 on staffing.

The capital budget for 2015/16 has been identified at £47.6m although most of this (£42.2m) is for schools. £40,000 has been identified in this year's capital programme for a new kitchen in Caldicot Castle.

### 3.2 Regional and local museums in Wales

The regional and local museum scene in Wales is currently in a somewhat turbulent and fluid state. There is a review taking place at national level and all of the local authority museums are facing severe challenges arising from budget cuts and a focus on preservation of front-line services. In North Wales, a regional partnership is considering ways in which pooling resources could potentially provide mutual benefits to members sharing services and a study has been mooted to look at long term sustainability for museums in their region. Sharing and prudent management of resources is seen as a means of sustaining vital services in a climate where funds are shrinking.

Following an announcement at the conference of the Federation of Museums and Galleries of Wales in March last year, the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism commissioned an expert review of the current and future plans by local authorities to deliver local museum services in Wales. This began in October last year. The review sets out to consider the potential for new delivery models based on partnership working. Phase 1, which was completed as AMION was finishing this report, culminated in an all Wales report by the Expert Panel which provided research, analysis and comment on the current delivery of local museum services, together with recommendations for future delivery. The key findings which are relevant to this work are summarised in the following section.

In Phase 2, a consultation process on the potential new models for service delivery will be followed by the development of a delivery plan for local museum provision as part of the next national strategy for museums to be published in 2016.

Whilst the pressures on regional and local museums in Wales is a subject of concern at national level, it is difficult to see where additional funding will come from so developing new methods of museum management and service delivery is likely to be the only way forward.

### 3.3 Summary findings from phase 1 of the expert review

In October 2014 the Deputy Minister for Culture, Media and Tourism announced that there would be an expert review into Welsh museums, specifically considering the implications of the changes proposed by Local Authorities in Wales and identifying sustainable future models.

The first phase of the review, which was published in early autumn 2015, considered national, local and independent museums.

It contained ten key recommendations:

- Welsh Government, in partnership with Welsh Local Government Association, to create three Regional Bodies to provide operational direction, management and support to locally delivered museums.
- The Welsh Government should establish a national Museums Council in order to provide collective leadership and co-ordinated activities at national level for the museum sector.
- The Welsh Government should develop a Museums Charter to set expectations for public museums in Wales and the requirement to measure their progress and standards achieved.
- Local authorities, when reviewing their museums services, should consider all options including retention of present operation, transfer to alternative delivery model or closure and do this in consultation with Welsh Government.
- Welsh Government should put measures in place to establish Collections Wales which will rationalise, develop and safeguard collections of significance to the histories and cultures of Wales.
- Welsh Government, local authorities, other governing bodies and sector bodies to collaborate to identify and provide the skills development needed to support the workforce during the transition and beyond, in order for it to be able to fully achieve the requirements of the Museums Charter.
- Welsh Government should establish a transformation fund in order to facilitate the major changes required in the museum sector in Wales.
- The Welsh Government should review, in partnership with museum governing bodies, the policy and practice of charging for museum entry and from this to provide guidance.
- The Welsh Government should ensure that museums directly provided by local authorities should be given relief from National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) on the same basis as museums that are operated by charities.
- Welsh Ministers should be formally responsible for supporting and developing all public museums in Wales.

A number of these recommendations relate to the need for improved leadership of the sector at national level.

Of the recommendations which relate to the financial viability of local authority museums, the suggestions are headline or early stage thinking. Local authorities are urged to consider collaboration as a way of potentially improving long term viability. Government is urged to offer NNDR relief to local authority museums, and the policy relating to charging should be reviewed. There is also a recommendation that a transformation fund is established.

At this stage, there is little in the report which provides specific direction for Monmouthshire, although it will be important for the County to stay to remain engaged in the process.

Within the review however, there were a number of observations and specific recommendations which chime with the findings of this review. These include:

- A realistic approach needs to be taken when considering museum accommodation, recognising that premises are often less than ideal for their purpose;
- There should be a rationalisation of stores and changed approaches to reserve collections. Such work requires investment and imagination.
- A major review of collections and current approaches to collecting is essential.
- Capacity to generate real profit from trading activities (such as retail and catering) is limited.
- Significant capital investment is needed, but this has to be based on excellent strategic planning. Without this, local museums in Wales will continue to decline, both in terms of their public offer and the well-being of their collections.
- Decline seems to be a dominant theme for many museums.

### 3.4 Previous review of Monmouthshire cultural services

Monmouthshire County Council commissioned two previous studies considering potential governance options for the museums. The following summarises the key findings.

#### 3.4.1 *Appraisal of Alternative Service Delivery Options: Leisure and Cultural Services*

In 2006, Monmouthshire County Council's Cultural Services Manager produced a report for elected members, looking at delivery options for leisure centres, sports development, parks and recreation, libraries, museums, theatres and arts development.

The review was triggered in part by budget cuts and the impact these were having and would continue to have on the services.

The report considered four broad options: transfer of services to a trust or trusts; shared services with other authorities; externalising services to private operators; reconfiguring the services within the Council.

There were two overarching findings: that the Council needed to have a clear vision about the value of these services; and that the transfer of services does not guarantee either improvement or cost savings.

The report considered a number of sub options under the heading of **creating a trust** including a 'super trust' to run all the services as well as individual service trusts. It concluded that there was insufficient scale of operation in the county to create an overarching trust which would cross subsidise the cultural services. It also discounted the options of creating a cultural trust (to run libraries, museums, arts development and theatres) and of creating an arts and museums trust. The geography of the county was thought to reduce any potential benefits and a high level of subsidy would be required in both cases.

The option to create a trust for the museums service alone was considered to be a viable option however which could re-energise the service. Whilst this could bring improvements to the offer, it would not generate any financial savings.



The **shared services** option was not considered a realistic proposition for the museums service given the very different types of services offered by potential partners. Some specific options were suggested for individual sites. The Monmouth Museum could potentially be considered as part of the national museums, although this could create difficulties around the local history centre. Caldicot Castle could sit more naturally within CADW's portfolio.

The devolution of the museums to town councils was also discussed. This was seen as a less appealing option than the creation of a trust, resulting in a more fragmented offer and requiring complex negotiations and arrangements to achieve.

The third option of **externalisation** to a private management company was discounted for the museums service.

The final option of **reconfiguration** within the Council was not considered in detail although the opportunities for the integration of learning services was suggested as having some potential for further exploration.

The report did not include any financial modelling and the assessment of options was made on a qualitative basis.

#### *3.4.2 Scoping Study and Options Appraisal for the Devolution of Monmouthshire Museums to Charitable Status*

In 2007 Egeria was commissioned to assess the suitability of the museums service for transfer to a charitable organisation.

Four potential options were considered: devolving the service as a single entity; devolving each museum as an independent entity; creating a larger heritage trust to include Shire Hall and the heritage sites; creating a trust for Abergavenny and Chepstow and a separate Lower Wyre Heritage Trust.

The report concluded that the museums service was interesting and was delivering a very good service for visitors and the community on very slender resources.

It was however facing a number of challenges from budget cuts, future pressure on council funding and the need for capital investment.

The report was clear that devolving the service into one or more trusts would not achieve financial improvement. All options were at best 'cost neutral' although creating individual trusts would be more expensive. The option of creating two trusts for Abergavenny and Chepstow and a Lower Wyre Heritage Trust would offer the greatest development flexibility.

The benefits of running the service as a charity related to improved engagement and greater organisational flexibility.

Ongoing core funding would be required from the Council within a range of £620k to £730k annually, depending on the option. Allowing for savings from NNDR (business rates) and VAT, the saving to the Council would be a maximum of £14k based on the subsidy level at that time.

The importance of a stable financial base from which the charities could initially be established and later grow was emphasised.

### 3.4.3 Implications for this study

In the eight or nine years since the reports were produced, a number of local authorities have devolved their museums services into charitable organisations. The ongoing requirement for council subsidy has been evident in every case. The financial fragility of these organisations has also become apparent, with many suffering from severe cuts to the council subsidy.

The core findings of both reports remain valid however. Creating an independent trust to run museums services offers a number of 'soft benefits' such as a re-energised and re-focused organisation. In order to realise these benefits however, a solid financial platform, underpinned by a realistic revenue subsidy, is essential. Unless a viable business model can be developed, devolving the service to a trust would lead to significant problems and ultimately closure.

The option of shared services for museums was considered unrealistic at the time. This opportunity could potentially be reconsidered as part of the wider leisure services review.

## 3.5 Monmouthshire population and demographics

The local authority area of Monmouthshire is largely rural covering an area of 330 square miles with a population of 91,000. Half of the population live in the main towns of Abergavenny (10,000), Monmouth (10,000), Caldicot (11,000) and Chepstow (12,000).

Taken at face value, Monmouthshire appears to be an affluent area – average wages and salaries are higher than any other local authority in Wales; house prices are much higher than average; twice as many people live in large, detached houses than the national average; people are generally older and better off than average; more people run their own businesses than average; more people have degree level qualifications than average; and more people are employed in professional occupations than average.

The apparent affluence masks the deprivation of which there are pockets of course: the lowest earners in Monmouthshire earn significantly less than the average for Wales or the UK; and it is very difficult to buy a house since house prices are so high.

In Monmouthshire, there are:

- 6,670 pupils in 31 maintained primary schools;
- 4,874 pupils in 5 maintained secondary schools; and
- 1,457 pupils in 6 independent schools.

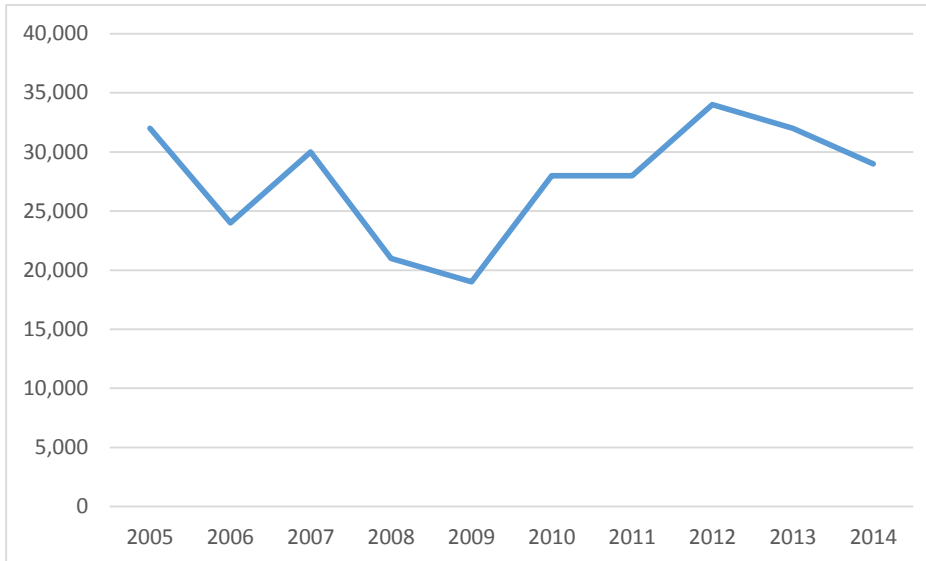
## 3.6 Tourism in Monmouthshire

Tourists are attracted to Monmouthshire by its stunning countryside, landscapes, rivers and its built heritage. The Wye Valley which runs through part of Monmouthshire was arguably the birthplace of British tourism with pleasure boats and excursion beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Tourism is important to the economy of Monmouthshire with over 300,000 leisure and holiday tourists staying in the county and a further 3.4 million visiting for the day (a further 90,000 people

stay in the county for work or business each year). It is estimated that 10% of the jobs in the Monmouthshire economy are supported by tourism.

Of the 300,000 tourists that stay overnight in Monmouthshire, around 30,000 are from overseas. The chart below shows the number of **overseas tourists** in Monmouthshire between 2005 and 2014 (excluding those staying for business). It is clear that the market fell between 2007 and 2009 as the global recession took hold but Monmouthshire appears to have done well since 2009 with the number of overseas tourists increasing by about 50%.



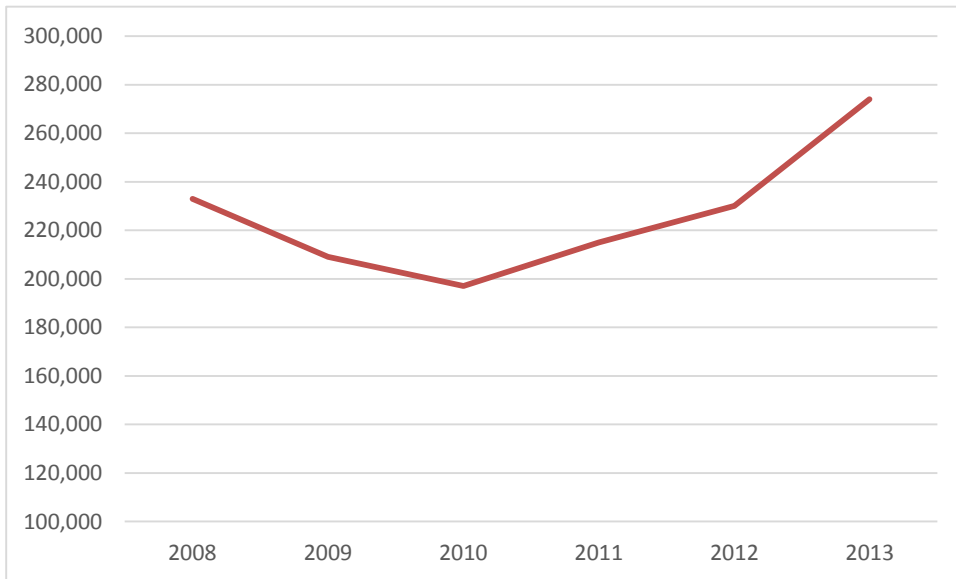
*Source: International Passenger Survey, Travel Trends 2014, Office for National Statistics*

It is important to note however that of the 800,000 overseas tourists staying in Wales each year (excluding business), just 4% stay in Monmouthshire. Monmouthshire ranks 9<sup>th</sup> out of the 22 local authorities in Wales for overseas staying tourists (excluding business). The places where overseas tourists stay are very much driven by hotel accommodation – the Celtic Manor Hotel for example will account for the majority of overseas tourists staying in Newport.

<i>Local authority</i>	<i>Staying tourists from overseas (2014)</i>
Cardiff	198,000
Gwynedd	81,000
Pembrokeshire	78,000
Conwy	68,000
Swansea	58,000
Newport	40,000
Ceredigion	33,000
Anglesey	33,000
<b>Monmouthshire</b>	<b>29,000</b>
Powys	27,000
Wrexham	25,000
Denbighshire	25,000
Neath/Port Talbot	18,000
Flintshire	18,000
Carmarthenshire	16,000
Vale of Glamorgan	11,000
Bridgend	11,000
Rhondda	10,000
Torfaen	8,000
Caerphilly	8,000
Merthyr Tydfil	4,000
Blaenau Gwent	3,000
<b>Total Wales</b>	<b>802,000</b>

*Source: International Passenger Survey, Travel Trends 2014, Office for National Statistics*

As with the overseas market, it appears that the number of **domestic tourists** to Monmouthshire has grown significantly over the last few years. The number of domestic tourists to Monmouthshire was declining up until 2010 but has increased by 40% since then. The chart below shows the number of domestic tourists staying in Monmouthshire between 2008 and 2013.



Source: *Great Britain Tourism Survey 2013, Visit Wales*

It is important to note that this equates to just over 3% of all domestic tourism visits to Wales. Areas such as Gwnedd, Pembrokeshire and Conwy take most domestic tourism in Wales.

<i>Local authority</i>	<i>Domestic tourists (2014)</i>
Gwynedd	1,417,000
Pembrokeshire	1,078,000
Conwy	833,000
Cardiff	799,000
Denbighshire	629,000
Powys	523,000
Anglesey	492,000
Ceredigion	491,000
Swansea	448,000
Carmarthenshire	335,000
<b>Monmouthshire</b>	<b>274,000</b>
Bridgend	200,000
Flintshire	188,000
Rhondda	116,000
Newport	111,000
Vale of Glamorgan	94,000
Neath/Port Talbot	79,000
Caerphilly	69,000
Torfaen	65,000
Blaenau Gwent	22,000
Merthyr Tydfil	6,000
<b>Total Wales</b>	<b>8,269,000</b>

*Source: Great Britain Tourism Survey 2013, Visit Wales (Wrexham has been omitted from the survey).*

## 4 Current state analysis

### 4.1 Abergavenny Castle Museum

#### 4.1.1 *Current offer*

Abergavenny Museum is located in a building which was formerly a hunting lodge, set in the attractive grounds of a ruined Norman castle. The building is rented from the Neville Estate, the council does not own the castle or the grounds.

The building has a number of different levels and two possible entrances. Most of the public spaces can be reached in a wheelchair with help from staff. The collections began at the beginning of the early 20th century and culminated in a museum being first established in the town in 1957.

The building is far from ideal as a museum as it is made up of a series of small interconnected spaces on different levels. It has some very attractive and interesting displays in the basement which include a World War II air raid shelter a well-interpreted Welsh Kitchen and the contents of a former local grocery shop. The kitchen and the grocery shop fit well with Abergavenny's established good quality food offer and food festival but offer little animation and do not change. The displays at entrance level are tired and are not strongly associated with Abergavenny. Some of the displays could be in any Welsh market town. Whilst there is a pleasant informal atmosphere, the museum lacks a sense of arrival, a strong introduction or a logical flow.

The collections are stored on the first floor of the museum, where the offices are, and just about anywhere else that they will fit. The collections include social history reflecting the history and way of life of the town and surrounding district, particularly rural life, agriculture and domestic and working life. There is a strong photographic collection, an archive connected to the town and its businesses, a strong costume collection, an extensive and significant collection of archaeology and a nationally important archive of the Father Ignatius Memorial Trust.

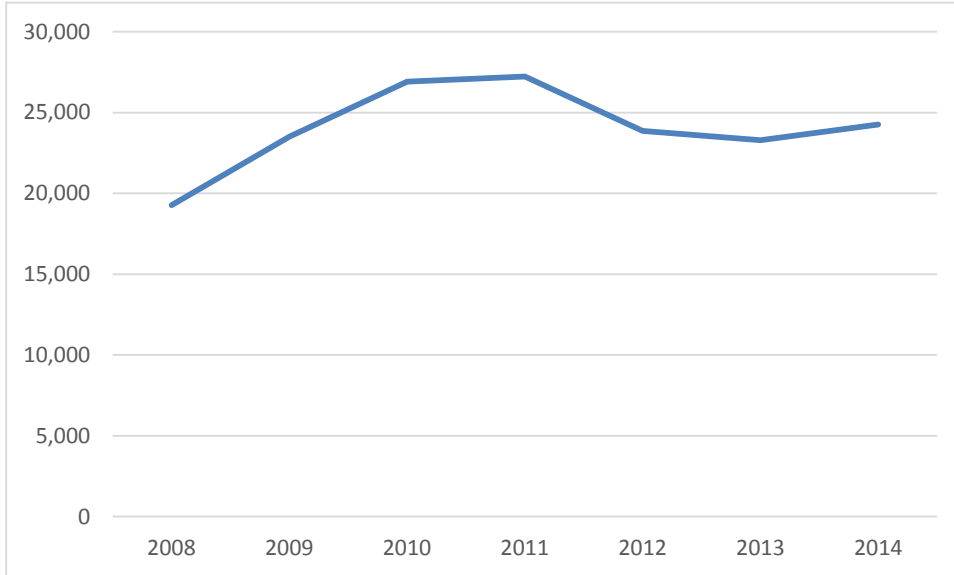
The temporary exhibition space is in the basement and was refurbished in 2007 under the Sharing the Treasures Scheme. Temporary exhibitions have been mounted regularly over the years often featuring strong parts of the collection like costume, or living memory themes like "growing up in Abergavenny". Travelling exhibitions from the National Museum of Wales and the National Library have also been shown.

The museum offers family activities including children's explorer backpacks and castle discovery boxes for schools. There is a comprehensive schools workshop programme linked to the National Curriculum in Wales.

#### 4.1.2 *Visitor numbers and profile*

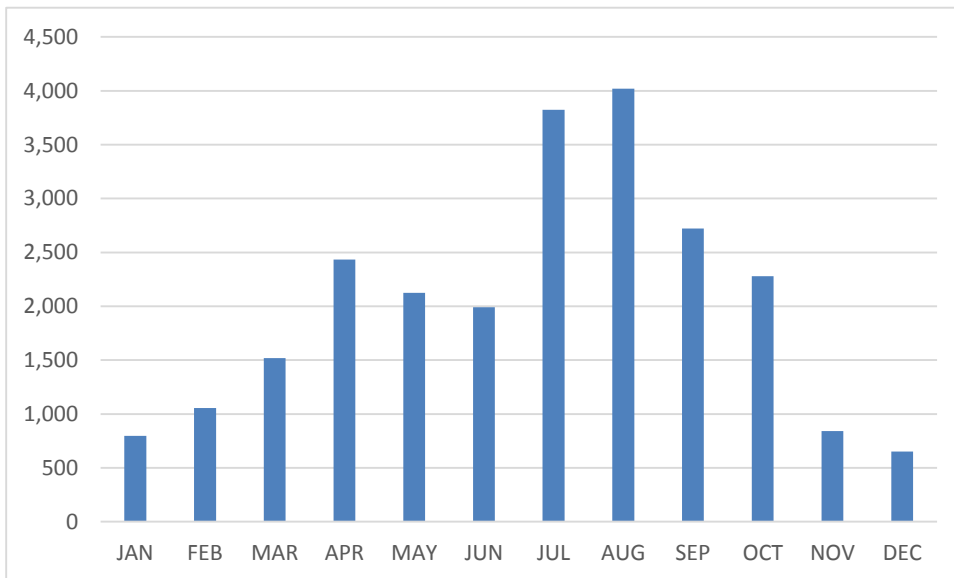
The museum at Abergavenny Castle attracted just over 24,000 visitors in 2014 which is consistent with the number of visitors in 2013 and 2012 although slightly down on 2011 and 2010 where visitor numbers were at 27,000. For a town with a population of just over 10,000, it is a very solid

and consistent achievement to be seeing 24,000 to 27,000 visitors per annum. The annual visits to the museum between 2008 and 2014 are shown in the chart below.



Source: Monmouthshire County Council

As with many attractions and museums, admissions to the museum in Abergavenny are seasonal with July and August being the peak months. The chart below shows the distribution of visits in 2014 by month.

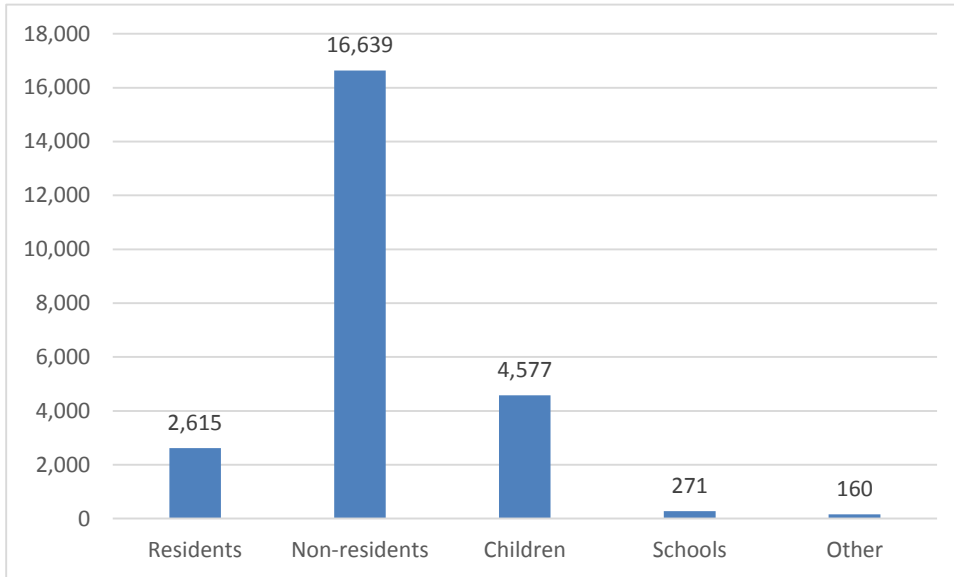


Source: Monmouthshire County Council

This pattern of visitor numbers would suggest that the market is dominated by tourists to Abergavenny. The data collected by the museum would seem to support this assertion. The chart



below shows the make-up of visitors to the museum. (The admissions data has been caveated by the museum management team as being somewhat unreliable).



Source: Monmouthshire County Council

In terms of visitor profile a number of ad hoc, informal visitor surveys have been undertaken. The surveys are not necessarily statistically robust but do give a flavour of the types of visitors and how they use the museum. Surveys with non-visitors have also been undertaken. The insight and feedback from both suggested that:

- the museum generally attracts older (55+) couples and families with children;
- most people are visiting for the first time;
- most visitors stay (inside the museum) for less than 30 minutes;
- visitors enjoy local history, dress-up clothes and the castle/scenery;
- negative comments relate to a lack of interactive, fun things to do; and
- non-visitors would be more likely to visit if there were more changing exhibitions, special events, tours, workshops, and a café.

#### 4.1.3 Financials and staffing

The museum is staffed by a full time curator (who is also site manager) and 4 part time custodians (visitor services assistants) who man the front desk and the museum during opening hours. There is also a casual relief post to help with front of house as and when required. In the financial year 2014/15, the direct costs associated with running the museum were £118,000. Most of this was spent on wages, salaries and premises costs (rent, rates, electricity, security and maintenance). Only a small amount was spent on exhibitions, materials and marketing.

The budget for 2015/16 is around £10,000 lower than the amount spent in 2014/15. Beyond paying staff wages and the premises costs (rent, rates, security, electricity, cleaning, telephones), there is **virtually nothing in the budget for exhibitions, materials, equipment or marketing**. It is very difficult to see how any further cuts to this budget can be made without a reduction in opening hours.

Income generation is limited to small amounts of ice cream and drinks sales, small amounts of commission on art sales and small scale events funded through grants. Retail sales are accounted for across the museum service and are dealt with later in this report.

**Our professional opinion is that the museum will not continue to thrive with such a small operating budget.**

In addition to the direct costs laid out below, Abergavenny Museum incurs a further £9,000 of indirect costs (apportionment of the council's central costs) and £7,000 of maintenance expenditure.

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>2014/15 Actual</i>	<i>2015/16 Budget</i>
Staff costs	£ 90,913	£ 86,196
Rent (net of food festival charge)	£ 5,000	£ 5,090
Utilities	£ 6,331	£ 8,145
Repair and maintenance	£ 2,843	£ 256
Security	£ 2,759	£ 2,189
Business rates	£ 2,365	£ 2,545
Professional fees	£ 2,360	£ 247
Equipment and materials	£ 1,372	£ 611
Marketing and promotion	£ 1,344	£ -
Cleaning	£ 899	£ 864
Goods for resale	£ 542	£ -
Telephone, IT, licences, subscriptions	£ 536	£ 1,087
Travel and transport	£ 370	£ -
Museum acquisitions	£ 346	£ -
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 117,981</b>	<b>£ 107,230</b>
<i>Income</i>	<i>2014/15 Actual</i>	<i>2015/16 Budget</i>
Donations	£ 438	£ -
Hire	£ 258	£ 244
Refreshments	£ 3,262	£ 4,459
Events	£ 2,164	£ 212
Art commissions	£ 254	£ 126
Other	£ 461	£ 555
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 6,837</b>	<b>£ 5,596</b>

#### 4.1.4 *Key findings from consultations*

- Local people appreciate the museum and access to the castle grounds in particular. The castle grounds are busy regardless of whether the museum is open or not. People would like to see more activity (events/catering) in the grounds.
- People appreciate the heritage value of the castle (some believe that cars should not be allowed in – for others it is a convenient town centre car park).
- Local people value the museum staff and volunteers.
- The curator is excellent and held in high esteem.
- The museum has had success in unlocking small scale grants.
- The opening hours are considered to be poor (closure between 1pm and 2pm and open for just three hours on Sunday afternoons). Local people would like to see more activity in the evening (tours, classes, workshops, talks etc.).
- The layout of the building and size of the rooms are not optimum for a museum and limits the activity that can take place (difficult for schools; difficult for those with limited mobility; difficult to host community activities; no events space etc.)
- The museum is somewhat tucked away in the town and signage is poor.
- There was some comment that the permanent displays are not engaging or interesting enough. They are dated and too static.
- Whilst people appreciate the volume of the collection, they are frustrated by the lack of access to it.
- There is an appetite for a Friends of the Castle group.
- Our sense is that people value the castle more than the museum – the museum could be re-located in Abergavenny without much public outcry.

## 4.2 **Chepstow Museum**

### 4.2.1 *Current offer*

Chepstow Museum is located in a handsome Georgian townhouse close to the town centre and opposite Chepstow Castle. The building has been used as a girls' high school, a Red Cross hospital in World War I and later as the Chepstow District Hospital. It has been a museum since 1982 and these former uses are represented in tableaux within the displays. It still has the appearance of a house but has a modern extension at the rear creating one large gallery space. The displays vary in style and character. Most galleries are very dated. The social history gallery at the rear of the building has some interaction but is tired and dreary. It was produced at a time when interpretation did not always show off objects to the best advantage. It does not do justice to the rich and varied past of an ancient town.

There is a modern gallery at the front of the building which has been recently refurbished under the Sharing the Treasures Scheme which is contemporary in style and which is not currently used to its full potential. Upstairs there is a room containing collections stored in drawers which straddles between display and storage and there is a new gallery with an imaginative interpretation of the Wye Valley tour, which was incomplete at the time of visiting.

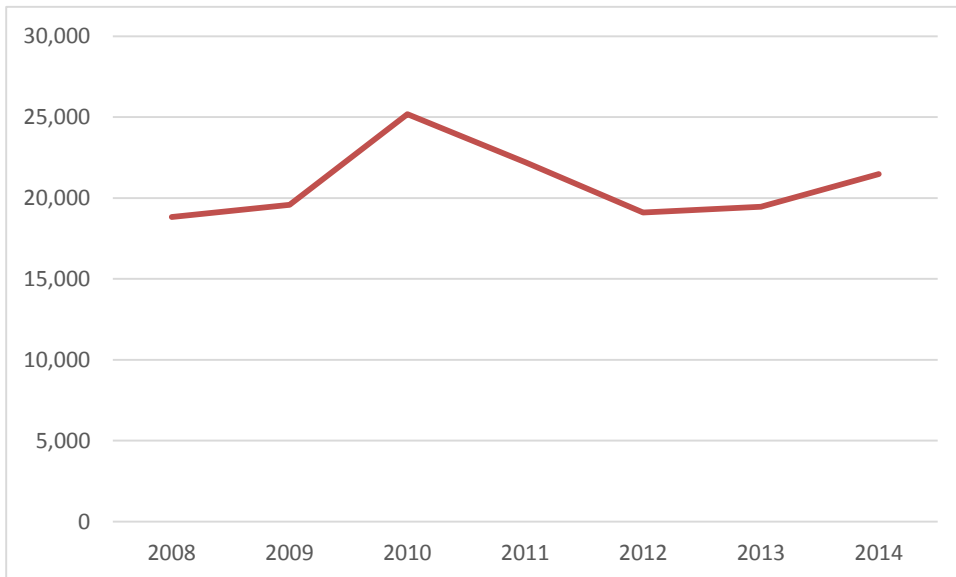
The ground floor and the first floor have back of house space as well as public space and this includes conservation laboratories and office space. There is no access for disabled people to the first floor and the space as it stands is not used to best advantage. There is a well-stocked and attractive shop.

The collection reflects the social history of Chepstow, its wine trade, shipbuilding and salmon fishing and includes natural history material. There is a very good art collection and photographs and ephemera.

There is a programme of changing exhibitions, workshops which include creative activities and quizzes and worksheets for children. The formal learning offer is restricted since there is no classroom space. The museum has no website.

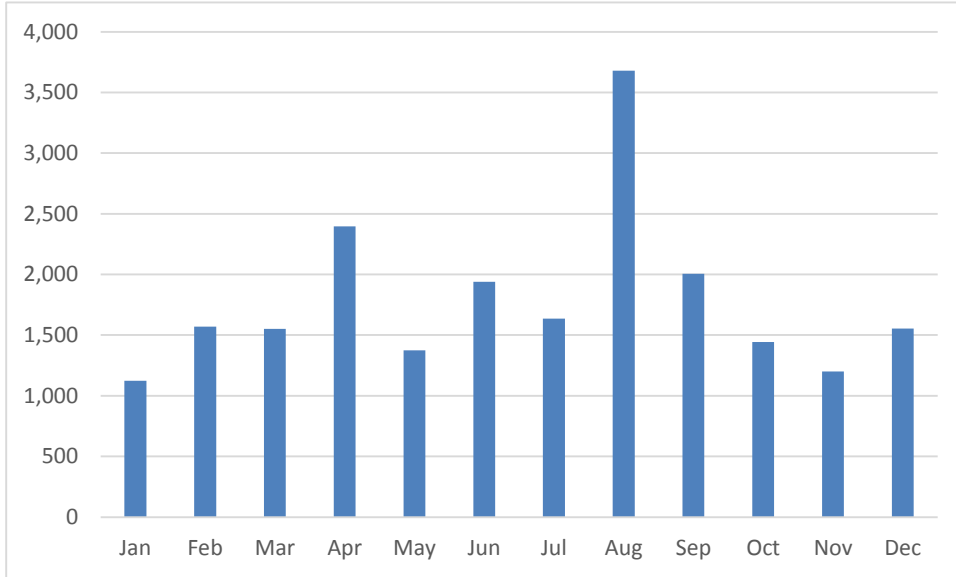
#### 4.2.2 Visitor numbers

Chepstow Museum attracted just over 21,000 visitors in 2014 which is slightly more than the number of visitors in 2013 and 2012 although slightly down on 2011 and 2010 where visitor numbers peaked at 25,000. As with Abergavenny, for a town with a population of 12,000, it is a very solid and consistent achievement to be seeing 20,000 to 25,000 visitors per annum. The annual visits to the museum between 2008 and 2014 are shown in the chart below.



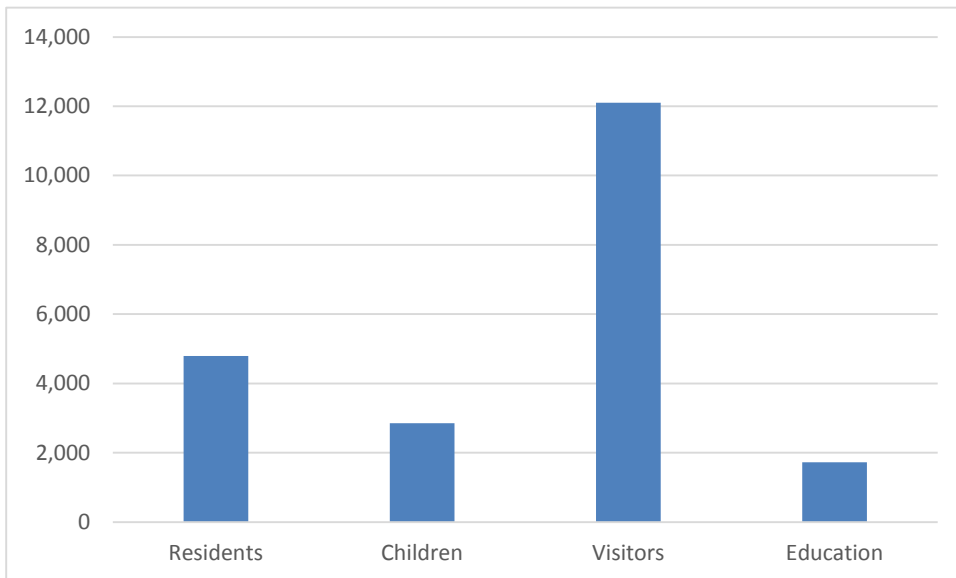
Source: Monmouthshire County Council

As with many attractions and museums, admissions to the museum in Chepstow are seasonal with April and August being the peak months. The chart below shows the distribution of visits in 2014 by month.



Source: Monmouthshire County Council

This pattern of visitor numbers would suggest that the tourists to Chepstow are an important part of the mix. Our observations prove that it does very well from being opposite Chepstow Castle and the main visitor car park. The data collected by the museum would seem to support this assertion. The chart below shows the make-up of visitors to the museum.



Source: Monmouthshire County Council

#### 4.2.3 Staffing and financials

The museum is staffed by a full time curator (who is also site manager) and 3 part time custodians (visitor services assistants) who man the front desk and the museum during opening hours. There is also a casual relief post to help when required. In the financial year 2014/15, the direct costs associated with running the museum were £134,000. Most of this was spent on wages, salaries and premises costs (rates, electricity and security). Only a small amount was spent on marketing.

The budget for 2015/16 has been set at £20,000 lower than what was spent in 2014/15. Beyond paying staff wages and the premises costs (rates, security, electricity), there **is virtually nothing in the budget for exhibitions, materials, equipment or marketing**. It is very difficult to see how any further cuts to this budget can be made without a reduction in opening hours. Income generation is limited to events and education sessions (retail sales are accounted for across the museum service and are dealt with later in this report).

**Our professional opinion is that the museum will not continue to thrive with such a small operating budget.**

In addition to the direct costs laid out below, Chepstow Museum incurs a further £16,000 of indirect costs (apportionment of the council's central costs) and £12,000 of maintenance expenditure.

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>2014/15 Actual</i>	<i>2015/16 Budget</i>
Staff costs	£ 105,276	£ 94,753
Utilities	£ 7,864	£ 7,836
Repair and maintenance	£ 620	
Security	£ 3,273	£ 3,563
Business rates	£ 10,288	£ 10,689
Equipment and materials	£ -	£ 575
Professional fees	£ 565	£ 895
Marketing and promotion	£ 6,443	
Cleaning	£ 63	
Goods for resale	£ 66	
Telephone, IT, licences, subscriptions	-£ 435	£ 1,699
Savings	£ -	-£ 3,333
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 134,023</b>	<b>£ 116,677</b>

<i>Income</i>	<i>2014/15 Actual</i>	<i>2015/16 Budget</i>
Events	£ 10,769	£ 8,387
Grants	£ 3,000	£ 2,000
Donations	£ 1,025	
Refreshments	£ 10	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 14,804</b>	<b>£ 10,387</b>

Source: Monmouthshire County Council

#### 4.2.4 *Key findings from consultations*

- Local people value the museum in Chepstow and believe it helps to provide a sense of place and identity.
- The museum is seen as the custodian of the town's heritage and a valuable resource for visitors to the town.
- The temporary exhibitions programme is well regarded but some of the permanent exhibitions are viewed as dated and in need of refreshment.
- Local people value the presence of a curator on site. The current curator is excellent and is held in high esteem.
- The Town Council in Chepstow is not in a position to fund the museum (it already provides a small amount to cover lunch time opening).
- Museum staff are considered to be friendly, welcoming and engaging. There is good provision for children.
- The location of the museum is excellent and is able to benefit from being opposite the castle, the car park and the tourist information centre.
- The museum lacks a café which could trade well given its location.
- The upgrading of the temporary exhibition space is very valued as it allows the museum to display collections of national importance.
- The museum has poor access for disabled people.
- The museum lacks a dedicated website.
- The museum is viewed by the community as much more than a facility, it provides a sense of identity and is part of the "glue" that holds together many aspects of town life, shared experience, community strength and future.

### 4.3 Nelson Museum, Monmouth

#### 4.3.1 *Current offer*

The Nelson Museum is located close to the Shire Hall in Monmouth in the Market Hall building. The historic building, completed in 1840 retains its handsome façade but the central section was destroyed by fire in the 1960s. Although the building came close to demolition at the time, a new flat roof and a Modernist metal and glass façade at the rear, overlooking the Monnow, were added in the late 1960s by architects Donald Insall, an early proponent of the now accepted methodology of combining conservation of historic building with contemporary additions.

The Nelson collection was left to the town of Monmouth in 1923, when Lady Georgiana Llangattock died. She was married to local landowner and town benefactor, John Rolls, 1st Baron Llangattock and was Charles Rolls' mother. She was a great fan of Nelson and a very keen collector of 'Nelsoniana'. The collection was displayed from 1924 in a Gymnasium which the family had

also given to the town and moved to the Market Hall after the refurbishment when the Local History collection was also located there.

The Nelson collection includes both personal and commemorative material, and is particularly noted for the large number of personal letters. Star exhibits include Nelson’s fighting sword, and a selection of outrageous forgeries, including Nelson’s glass eye. The displays are object rich, but very cramped and poorly interpreted. The Local History Centre collections are based on the Monmouth Borough archive, the local history reference library, photographs, prints and paintings, maps and plans. The staff are very knowledgeable and helpful but the experience is poor compared to the quality of the collection.

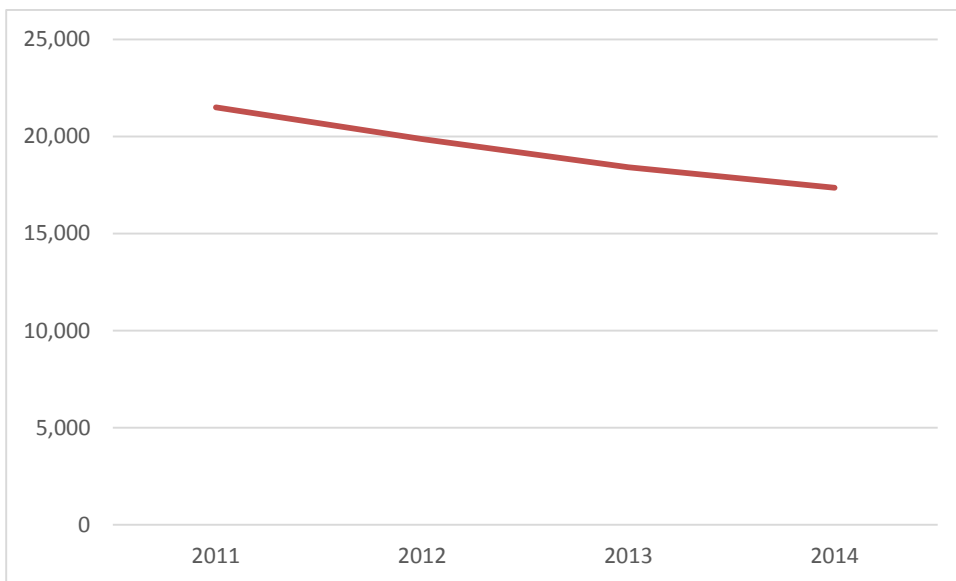
The Lonely Planet website say:

*“Lady Llangattock, local aristocrat and mother of Charles Stewart Rolls, became an obsessive collector of 'Nelsoniana', and the results of her obsession can be seen in this endearing museum. It's fascinating to see how fanatical Nelson-worship was in 19th-century Britain, with forged items, such as locks of his hair.....”*

#### 4.3.2 Visitor numbers and profile

The Nelson Museum in Monmouth attracted just under 17,000 visitors in 2014 which although is commendable in town with a population of 12,000, it appears that visitor numbers are declining year on year. Data has been provided from 2011 which highlights a 20% decline in visitor numbers over the past four years.

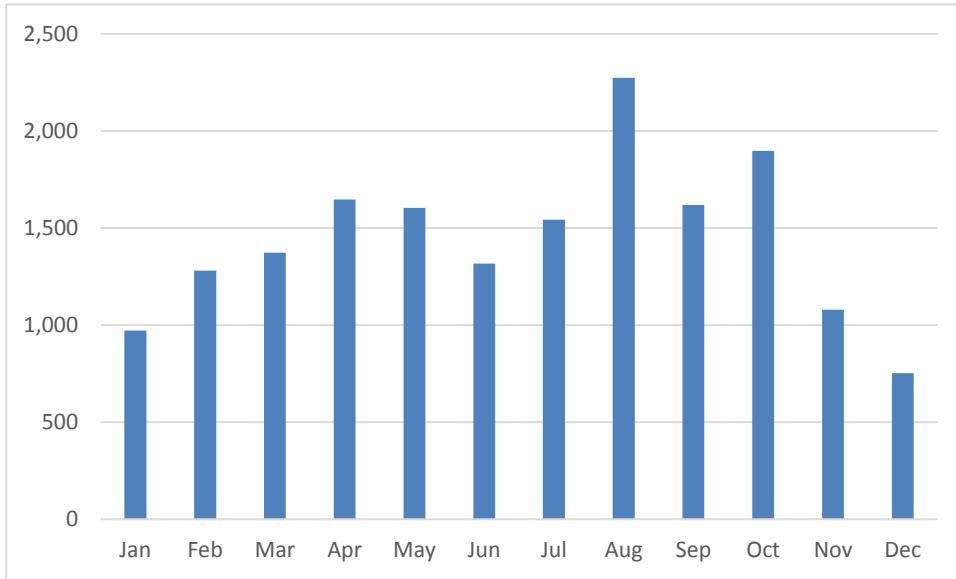
Unlike Abergavenny and Chepstow, the museum in Monmouth does not have a full time curator and has perhaps not had the same opportunities to host temporary exhibitions that Abergavenny and Chepstow have had.



Source: Monmouthshire County Council

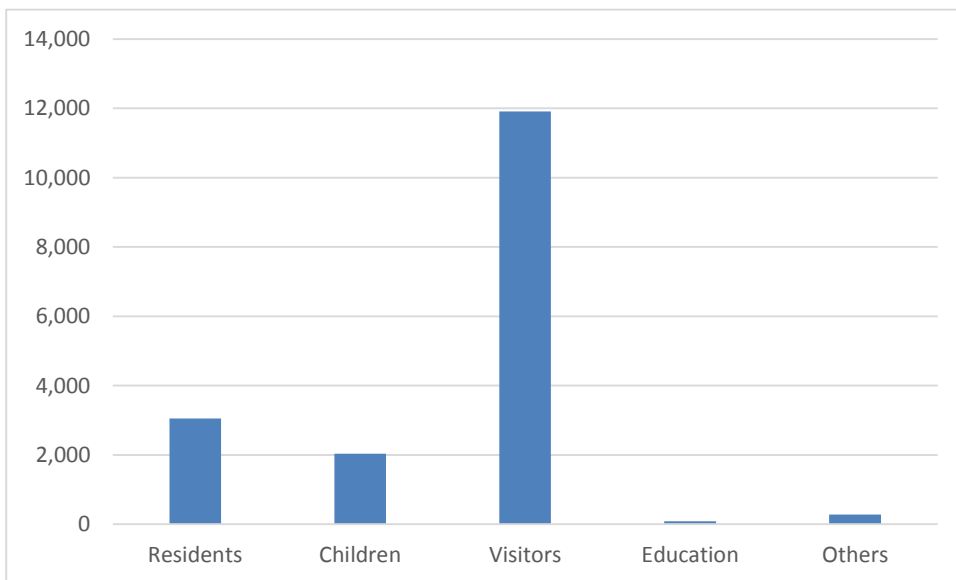


There is a seasonality in the pattern of visits to the Nelson Museum with August and October apparently being the peak months. The chart below shows the distribution of visits in 2014 by month.



Source: Monmouthshire County Council

This pattern of visitor numbers would suggest that as with Abergavenny and Chepstow, tourists to Monmouth are an important part of the mix at the Nelson Museum. The data collected by the museum would seem to support this assertion. The chart below shows the make-up of visitors to the museum.



Source: Monmouthshire County Council

A visitor survey was undertaken in the summer of 2013 at the Nelson Museum and whilst the sample size is far from statistically robust, it does help to provide a flavour of those that visit the museum. Some of the conclusions drawn from the survey are:

- most visitors are over 55 and visit as a couple (as opposed to families with children);
- most visitors have never visited the museum before;
- learning about local history was the main reason for people visiting; and
- the Nelson collections was by far and away the thing that most people enjoyed.

#### 4.3.3 *Staffing and financials*

The museum is staffed by a full time senior custodian (but not a curator) and 3 part time custodians (visitor services assistants) who man the front desk and the museum during opening hours. In the financial year 2014/15, the direct costs associated with running the museum were £83,000. Most of this was spent on wages, salaries and premises costs (rates and electricity). Only a small amount was spent on equipment and materials.

The budget for 2015/16 remains as it was for 2014/15. Beyond paying staff wages and the premises costs (rates, security, electricity), there **is virtually nothing in the budget for exhibitions, materials, equipment or marketing**. It is very difficult to see how any further cuts to this budget can be made without a reduction in opening hours. Income generation is very limited beyond retail which is accounted for elsewhere in the museums budget and dealt with later in this report.

**Our professional opinion is that the museum will not continue to thrive with such a small operating budget.**

In addition to the direct costs laid out below, Chepstow Museum incurs a further £8,000 of indirect costs (apportionment of the council's central costs) and £10,000 of maintenance expenditure.

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>2014/15</i>	<i>2015/16</i>
	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Budget</i>
Staff costs	£ 63,940	£ 70,262
Utilities	£ 7,517	£ 6,685
Repair and maintenance	£ 620	
Security	£ 230	£ 3,054
Business rates	£ 5,321	£ 5,314
Equipment and materials	£ 3,339	£ 611
Professional fees	£ 508	£ 292
Marketing and promotion	£ 76	
Cleaning	£ -	
Goods for resale	£ 444	
Telephone, IT, licences, subscriptions	£ 684	£ 1,011
Savings		-£ 3,333
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 82,679</b>	<b>£ 83,896</b>

<i>Income</i>	<i>2014/15</i>	<i>2015/16</i>
	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Budget</i>
Other	£ 1,912	£ 2,011
Refreshments	£ 11	£ 95
Grants	£ 898	
Donations	£ 654	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 3,475</b>	<b>£ 2,106</b>

#### 4.3.4 *Key findings from consultations*

- The Nelson collection is valued by people across Monmouthshire and seen as a gem. There is an opportunity to link with other Nelson interest sites in Monmouth and around the UK.
- ‘Nelsoniana’ is an interesting concept with contemporary parallels.
- The people of Monmouth value the museum and the resource centre where people can research their ancestry.
- Monmouth has a fascinating history that is not being told effectively in the town.
- From the outside, it is not clear what the building is.
- The internal layout is poor and it is in need of refreshment.
- The opening hours are unsuitable.
- The local archaeology collection is impressive but not on display.
- The lack of curatorial input has had a negative effect on the museum – its temporary exhibition programme has ceased and it feels ‘unloved’.

- With the council's one-stop-shop vacating the premises and the planning office already having done so, an opportunity exists to create a much more exciting museum and visitor experience with the Nelson collection as the star.
- The museum lacks a dedicated web site.
- There are large, open spaces within the Market Hall with excellent views of the river.
- There is an appetite within the town and the community to set up a community trust to administer the museum.

#### 4.4 Other services and posts within the museums

In addition to three museum sites in Abergavenny, Chepstow and Monmouth, there are a number of other services and posts that fall under museums:

- **Conservation services** – the museums service employs a full time paper conservator and a part time object conservator. The two post holders spend part of their time conserving the council's collection and part of their time undertaking commercial conservation work in order to generate income. The total direct costs related to this service in 2014/15 were £78,000 (of which £67,000 was for staff costs). This was offset by £25,000 of income. The expenditure budget for 2015/16 is virtually the same as 2014/15 whilst the income target has been increased by around £6,000.
- **Retail** – sales of goods and souvenirs at the three museum sites amounted to £30,000 in 2014/15 with £7,000 spent on purchasing goods for re-sale. The income target for 2015/16 has been increased to £45,000 (with no provision to purchase any goods for re-sale).
- **Storage unit** – the museum service rents a storage unit in Caldicot which costs around £16,000 per annum (rent, rates and utilities).
- **Learning** – the museums service has the use of a full time Learning Manager (this post is being paid for from grant funding and other council pots). The contract runs until September 2015. This post is not embedded within the museums budget nor does the post have any real budget for materials, equipment, resources etc.
- **Fundraising** – a full time fundraising post has been created and is currently being paid out of budgets across the Tourism, Leisure and Culture department. This contract runs until September 2015. This post administers the Monmouthshire Museums Development Trust through which the museums can raise funds.
- **Collections Access Officer** – this full time post is paid for by a grant and works across the collection undertaking documentation and is supported by volunteers.

## 4.5 Caldicot Castle

### 4.5.1 *Current offer*

Caldicot Castle sits within a 55 acre country park which is open all year, whilst the castle itself opens from the beginning of April until the end of November. It has a long history and was used as a family home until the mid-1960s. It is not a ruin and therefore has a strong quality of peacefulness created by the feeling of enclosure within the castle grounds, its sheltered position and the well-kept lawns and planting. The very unsympathetic conversion and self-styled “restoration” of the castle by Joseph Cobb after he purchased it 1885 however has done much to destroy its medieval character. The result is a hotchpotch of peculiar spaces, which neither read as being of a Victorian design nor as medieval. Cobb was a keen amateur student of medieval military architecture who thought he was well qualified to restore the castle and turn it into a family home. He described his theories in a series of archaeological articles, but his work attracted a lot of criticism even at the time.

After his death, his daughter in law continued the project. When his grandson inherited, he leased furnished apartments in three of the towers and in parts of the gatehouse to young married couples and families. Whilst this adds to the interesting story of the castle, it also adds to its confusing appearance. The use of some of some of the spaces for medieval banquets and other entertainments in the recent past, coupled with inadequate recent maintenance, very run down catering equipment and further inappropriate interventions result in interior spaces which are miserable in quality and atmosphere.

The “Cobb collection” is stored out of public view within the castle. It reflects a major interest of Joseph Cobb and his son in Nelson's Mediterranean flagship HMS Foudroyant, which they rescued and restored for use as a training ship on which a number of local boys served. The collection includes large objects from the ship, such as a figurehead and a cannon, salvage material from the wreck, other Foudroyant material and furniture and costume belonging to the Cobbs. There is also a small collection of social history material relating to Caldicot and the surrounding villages and objects and photographs related to the castle's tenants in the 1950s and 60s.

Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 resource boxes linked to the National Curriculum are available for teacher-led sessions at both Caldicot Castle and the Country Park. Living history workshops are available using reenactors at costs which vary according to requirements, and schools weeks. There are events during the seasons such as a musical picnic, a VW rally and a day of family activities around a Bronze Age theme. The castle is available for hire for all sorts of private events using external caterers.

### 4.5.2 *Visitor numbers and profile*

Robust visitor data is not available for Caldicot Castle. Data has been provided from 2008 to 2010 which showed annual visitor numbers of between 22,000 and 28,000. Since that time the castle has become a free admission attraction and numbers are no longer recorded.

In terms of visitor profile, a small visitor survey was undertaken in 2011. This is not statistically robust but gives a flavour of the visitor profile. Some of the key insights from this include:

- most visitors to the castle are on their first visit;
- most visitors lived less than an hour away and arrive by car;
- most visitors came as part of a family group;
- more activities for families/children was the most requested improvement;
- dwell time at the castle is relatively high with most people staying for longer than an hour;
- local people value the heritage, open space and enjoy the programme of events; and
- many local people however, are lapsed visitors and don't believe there is anything new to see.

#### 4.5.3 *Financials and staffing*

The castle is staffed by a full time manager, a part time customer services officer, 2 full time wardens/grounds maintenance staff and part time visitor services assistants who man the café and shop during opening hours. An events officer works at the castle but is paid out of other budgets within Tourism, Leisure and Culture.

In the financial year 2014/15, the direct costs associated with running the castle were £304,000 which was offset by £88,000 of income meaning that the net cost of running the castle in 2014/15 was £215,000.

The budget for 2015/16 has been set at a level which is £100,000 lower than that which was spent in 2014/15 although most of this relates to non-recurring costs such as redundancy and professional fees. £20,000 however has been reduced from the supplies and services budget. Income has also been set at £20,000 higher than the castle achieved last year despite the fact that admission is now free. It is expected that the castle will earn this additional income (and cover the lost admissions income) through events despite the budget for supplies and services being cut by £20,000.

The net direct cost of running Caldicot Castle is budgeted to be £93,000 in 2015/16 compared to an actual outturn of £215,000 in 2014/15.

In addition to the direct costs laid out below, Caldicot Castle incurs a further £7,000 of indirect costs (apportionment of the council's central costs).

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>2014/15</i>	<i>2015/16</i>
	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Budget</i>
Staff costs	£ 126,904	£ 131,000
Redundancy	£ 23,941	£ -
Utilities	£ 11,334	£ 9,671
Repair and maintenance	£ 11,225	£ 16,121
Security	£ 1,274	£ 2,036
Business rates	£ 12,274	£ 12,257
Professional fees	£ 34,032	£ 509
Equipment and materials	£ 32,515	£ 11,908
Marketing and promotion	£ 7,318	£ 5,000
Cleaning	£ 3,862	£ 4,734
Goods for resale	£ 8,510	£ 10,152
Telephone, IT, licences, subscriptions	£ 6,572	£ 3,359
Travel and transport	£ 3,398	£ 4,375
Other	£ 20,353	-£ 7,938
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 303,510</b>	<b>£ 203,184</b>

<i>Income</i>	<i>2014/15</i>	<i>2015/16</i>
	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Budget</i>
Events	£ 18,657	£ 44,466
Catering	£ 20,491	£ 27,675
Hire	£ 9,222	£ 17,733
Retail	£ 2,128	£ 15,355
Donations	£ 443	£ 2,600
Concessions/rallies	£ 3,876	£ 1,821
Bar	£ 1,331	£ -
Grazing rights	£ 350	
Admissions	£ 20,541	
Other	£ 11,750	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 88,789</b>	<b>£ 109,650</b>

Source: Monmouthshire County Council

#### 4.5.4 Key findings from consultations

- The outdoor space is highly valued and is a well-used local recreational resource.
- The events programme is well attended and valued.
- There is a perception amongst the community that Caldicot Castle has been neglected by the council.
- The website is informative.

- The site is challenging to interpret because of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century alterations.
- There is also a perception that poor decisions have been made with regard to the commercial aspects of the castle (catering and banquets in particular).
- There is a perceived lack of visitor interpretation.
- The local community believe that not enough is done to exploit the commercial potential of the site.
- Events parking is insufficient.
- The local community feel isolated from the castle's future and fear it will not be preserved properly for future generations.
- Visitors believe that the lighting is poor in the grounds.

## 4.6 Old Station Tintern

### 4.6.1 *Current offer*

As the name suggests, the Old Station Tintern is located on the site of a former railway station. The site is a beautiful green space within the Wye Valley with woodland walks and access to the river. The site has a Green Flag Park Award and won the UK's favourite park award in 2011.

The site includes a tea room which is operated by a local business. The tea room is excellent and extremely popular with locals, tourists and cyclists. The tea room is open between April and October.

A series of static railway carriages host a gift shop, tourist information point and a small meeting room. The shop and information point are staffed between April and October. There is also a full time site manager.

Entrance to the site is free of charge but visitors must pay for parking. Visitor numbers are not collected at the Old Station. Public toilets are open between April and October.

The site has benefitted from a new children's play area which was funded through donations and grants. Camping is also available if booked in advance.

### 4.6.2 *Staffing and financials*

The Old Station Tintern employs a full time site manager and 6 part time/casual staff to man the gift shop/information point.

The total direct costs of running the site in 2014/15 were £146,000 although £30,000 of this was spent on the new play area which was funded by grants and donations. The expenditure budget for 2015/16 is set at £104,000 which (allowing for the play area in last year's budget) is a reduction of around £10,000.

The £104,000 of expenditure is offset by various sources of income including the sale of gifts/souvenirs, events, car park charges, the rent from the tea room, meeting room hire and



camping. The income target for the Old Station Tintern has been increased by £19,000 (37%) with no real understanding of how this might be achieved and certainly no investment to allow this.

The net cost of running Old Station Tintern was £63,000 in 2014/15 and is budgeted to be £34,000 in 2015/16 but this is contingent on £19,000 of additional income being generated.

In addition to the direct costs in the table below, the Old Station Tintern incurs indirect costs (share of the council's overheads) of £8,000.

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>2014/15 Actual</i>	<i>2015/16 Budget</i>
Staff costs	£ 73,709	£ 69,724
Utilities	£ 6,423	£ 7,169
Repair and maintenance	£ 1,341	£ 4,928
Security	£ 573	£ 1,222
Business rates	£ 1,513	£ 1,527
Professional fees	£ 4,807	£ 3,624
Equipment and materials	£ 30,733	£ 1,058
Marketing and promotion	£ 1,580	£ 2,443
Cleaning	£ 5,247	£ 5,400
Goods for resale	£ 19,807	£ 14,863
Telephone, IT, licences, subscriptions	£ 137	£ 324
Travel and transport		
Savings		-£ 8,144
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 145,870</b>	<b>£ 104,138</b>

<i>Income</i>	<i>2014/15 Actual</i>	<i>2015/16 Budget</i>
Retail	£ 18,914	£ 24,588
Events	£ 4,628	£ 17,428
Car parking	£ 14,920	£ 13,725
Café rent	£ 8,485	£ 9,051
Hire	£ 1,988	£ 2,971
Camping	£ 1,899	£ 2,106
Grants	£ 25,405	£ -
Donations	£ 4,835	£ -
Electricity	£ 1,500	£ -
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 82,574</b>	<b>£ 69,869</b>

#### 4.6.3 Key findings from consultations

- Local people think the tea room is excellent.
- Access to the Wye Valley is important not only as part of the setting/background but it provides a valuable tourism market.

- The site is viewed as child and family friendly.
- Beyond the tearoom, there is a perception that there is not much to do (the new playground will help with this).
- Visitors and staff do not view it as a 'council site'.
- Visitors appreciate the friendly staff.
- Visitors do not appreciate the poor toilets.
- The parking is not sufficient for the busiest of days.
- The site is not well lit which limits winter opening.
- Overnight accommodation could be an area to develop.
- More attractions could help to increase visitor numbers.

## 4.7 Shire Hall, Monmouth

### 4.7.1 *Current offer*

Shire Hall is a former Court of Assizes and Quarter Sessions in the centre of Monmouth, surrounded by attractive shops, cafes and bars. It is a Grade I listed, classically designed building and has recently been completely refurbished and made fully accessible through a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) project. The total project cost was £4.5 million, of which £3.2 million came from HLF. The building was reopened to the public in September of 2010. The Monmouth Tourist Information Centre is located at the front of the Shire Hall.

In 1839 and 1840 a number of Chartists were tried in courtroom 1 for their involvement in the Chartist Riots in Newport. The courtroom and the holding cells below have been dressed out to illustrate this story. Other spaces are not interpreted but are used for a variety of different purpose including meetings exhibitions and weddings. There is a dedicated community space at the rear of the building with its own entrance which was intended to be able to be used without access to the rest of the building, but issues with access to toilets mean that it cannot operated completely separately. There is a very poor display about archaeology on the ground floor close to the main entrance area.

There was a learning officer in place following the opening in 2010, also supported by HLF, and a programme of schools learning activities. Whilst there is still a learning space, these activities no longer take place.

Shire Hall is not a museum and doesn't have a collection. Guided tours can be provided by special arrangement and people are welcomed when there aren't events taking place to look around the building, but in spite of its impressive and interesting interiors, it is not a visit that offers engagement or learning in the way that the museum sites do.

In more recent times, the Shire Hall has focused on hiring out the various rooms for meetings, functions, community events, fairs, weddings and parties.

#### 4.7.2 *User numbers*

The Shire Hall does not operate like a traditional visitor attraction. It is open to the public to have a look around (the courtroom and the cells in particular) and the front desk provides a tourism information service. Most of the activity revolves around venue hire (meetings, weddings, functions, events, community hire, classes, activities etc.).

In the year 2014/15, the Shire Hall hosted 560 meetings (community, businesses, Town Council, County Council) with an attendance of 2,800. This equates to an average of 5 people per meeting and 11 meetings per week.

In addition, the Shire Hall hosted craft fairs, art exhibitions and other local events over 110 days which attract an average of 150 people per day.

In 2014/15, the Shire Hall hosted 7 weddings and 23 private functions.

The tourist information centre recorded over 50,000 visitors during the course of 2014/15.

#### 4.7.3 *Staffing and financials*

The Shire Hall is staffed by a full time General Manager, a full time Duty Officer and a number of assistants (events and tourist information) on various hours and contracts.

The direct costs associated with running the Shire Hall amounted to £271,000 in 2014/15 which was offset by £114,000 of income from hire fees, rent, catering, bars, retail and other sources. The total net direct cost of running the Shire Hall was therefore £157,000.

The expenditure budget for 2015/16 is £47,000 lower than the actual for 2014/15 with the majority of the savings to be made in staff costs.

Income for 2015/16 is budgeted to be £30,000 higher than the level achieved in 2014/15 but includes grant and match funding of £19,000 leaving £11,000 of earned income to be found (10% increase).

In addition to the direct costs shown in the table below, the Shire Hall incurs £24,000 of indirect costs (share of the council's overheads).

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>2014/15</i>	<i>2015/16</i>
	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Budget</i>
Staff costs	£ 179,587	£ 140,467
Utilities	£ 14,610	£ 14,915
Repair and maintenance	£ 849	£ 4,999
Security	-£ 9	£ 1,000
Business rates	£ 18,920	£ 21,515
Professional fees	£ 6,487	
Equipment and materials	£ 4,533	£ 1,195
Marketing and promotion	£ 13,496	£ 11,840
Cleaning	£ 10,822	£ 10,858
Goods for resale	£ 15,898	£ 18,795
Telephone, IT, licences, subscriptions	£ 6,239	£ 3,776
Travel and transport	£ -	
Savings	£ -	-£ 4,937
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 271,432</b>	<b>£ 224,423</b>

<i>Income</i>	<i>2014/15</i>	<i>2015/16</i>
	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Budget</i>
Hires and rents	£ 63,978	£ 47,181
Catering	£ 28,400	£ 27,907
Grants and match funding		£ 19,183
Retail	£ 12,269	£ 17,677
Events	£ 134	£ 16,611
Admissions	£ 2,515	£ 7,841
Bar	£ 5,871	£ 5,728
Donations	£ 366	£ 2,000
Other	£ 942	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 114,475</b>	<b>£ 144,128</b>

#### 4.7.4 Key findings from consultations

- The Shire Hall is a valued and important community asset. Local people value the restoration and renovation project which has left them with a very well equipped venue.
- Beyond the practical use of the hall, it is incredibly valued as a heritage monument and is part of the fabric of Monmouth.
- The Town Council believes that the Shire Hall should be owned and used by the community.
- The current role of the Shire Hall is however somewhat less clear. Is it a visitor attraction about Chartism or is it now just a venue for hire?
- Some in the community believe that the room hire rates are too expensive.

- Some believe that the building feels unwelcoming with the railings acting as a barrier to visit. The reception desk is also unfriendly as it very high.
- The Saturday market puts off wedding bookers as clear access from the front of the hall is not available.
- There is a sense that since the lottery funding has expired, the emphasis on learning and education has been lost.

#### 4.8 Overall financial summary

Combining all of the budget codes across the service and for each of the venues provides an estimated total net cost of running the service. Indirect costs, works, maintenance and staff accounted for in other Tourism, Leisure and Culture budget have all been accounted for (or estimated).

**The total net cost of running the service in 2014/15 was £1,078,000.**

**The total net cost of running the service in 2015/16 is budgeted to be £772,000.**

The costs for 2014/15 and the budget for 2015/16 are laid out below. This information was provided by Monmouthshire County Council.

<i>Direct expenditure</i>	<i>2014/15 Actual</i>		<i>2015/16 Budget</i>	
Staff costs	£	751,685	£	668,918
Rent	£	14,995	£	15,382
Utilities	£	54,455	£	53,266
Business rates	£	55,648	£	58,862
Repair and maintenance	£	17,497	£	26,304
Security	£	8,100	£	13,064
Cleaning	£	20,893	£	21,856
Professional fees	£	55,361	£	5,567
Equipment and materials	£	83,509	£	21,353
Marketing and promotion	£	31,325	£	19,283
Goods for resale	£	52,439	£	43,810
Telephone, IT, licences, subscriptions	£	18,534	£	13,541
Travel and transport	£	3,768	£	4,375
Museum acquisitions	£	346	£	-
Other/ <b>Budget savings</b>	£	20,353	<b>-£</b>	<b>27,685</b>
<b>Total direct expenditure</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>1,188,906</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>937,896</b>
<i>Income</i>	<i>2014/15 Actual</i>		<i>2015/16 Budget</i>	
Retail	£	62,890	£	103,466
Catering	£	52,174	£	60,136
Events	£	36,352	£	87,104
Hire and rent	£	88,157	£	79,001
Conservation income	£	25,261	£	30,000
Grants and match funding	£	29,494	£	23,079
Other	£	16,819	£	2,692
Bar	£	7,202	£	5,728
Camping	£	1,899	£	2,106
Donations	£	7,761	£	4,600
Car Parking	£	14,920	£	13,725
Admissions	£	23,056	£	7,841
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>365,985</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>419,478</b>
<b>Net Direct Cost</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>822,921</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>518,418</b>
Indirect Costs	£	73,597	£	73,597
Staff posts accounted for elsewhere (estimate)	£	120,000	£	120,000
Maintenance and works (average)	£	60,000	£	60,000
<b>Total net cost</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>1,076,518</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>772,015</b>

## 4.9 Estimated gross economic impact of the museums and attractions

It is not our intention to provide a robust and accurate figure for the economic impact of the museums and attractions but it is clear that the museums attract visitors who in turn spend money in the Monmouthshire economy. It is not clear however whether those visitors would visit Monmouthshire without the presence of the museums or attractions and it is therefore difficult to quantify the economic impact that is **attributable** to the museums and attractions.

Taking all of the visitors to all of the sites and knowing what we do about the split between tourists and locals would suggest that the museums and attractions have a total gross visitor impact of around £3.7m. The true net impact is likely to be much smaller but is not clear without much further detailed analysis.

The service employs the equivalent of approximately 25 full time staff across of the sites. Using the methodology set out by the Association of Independent Museums, it can be estimated that the museums account for a further 13.5 indirect and induced full time equivalent jobs in the economy.

## 4.10 Overall observations

- Many of the venues, whilst providing excellent customer service and despite the best efforts of staff and management, fall below the standards expected of modern day museums and visitor attractions. They are in real need of capital investment.
- There is a large and varied collection and it is believed that in most cases, a better story of the places could be told with a re-interpretation.
- Many of the sites suffer from low dwell time – those with cafés (Caldicot and Old Station Tintern) do not suffer from this.
- The core opening hours of the museums are poor with lunchtime closure and partial opening on Sundays.
- Many people in the community have expressed a desire to engage with the museums during the evening (talks, tours, classes, workshops, events, exhibitions etc.).
- The welcome and customer service across all the sites and without exception has been very warm and friendly although many local people and users believe that the museums are staffed by volunteers since uniforms and name badges are not worn.
- Most of the venues are operating on extremely tight operating budgets to the point in some cases where staff are having to buy their own supplies or working with broken equipment (printers, taps etc.).
- The finance systems (as with most local authorities) do not support commercial trading.
- There is a real sense of low morale across the staff. In part, this is due to uncertainty around personal job security but more widely, it is due to a lack of direction and focus.
- Staff would appreciate more contact with senior management within the council.

- Staff would also welcome the opportunity to undertake more training and professional development.
- There is evidence of silo working (a one-service approach does not currently exist).
- None of the sites nor the service as a whole has a clear direction of the future – the only strategy appears to be fighting the ever reducing operating budgets and apparently arbitrary income targets.
- As with any change situation, there is evidence of entrenched views but in the main, our observation has been that staff are seeking a fresh vision of a more exciting future for the service and for the venues.
- Whilst the museum service now has a learning officer, the post is temporary and project funded. The post holder is building up school engagement which has been seriously lacking for many years.
- Volunteers can be used to improve access to heritage if well managed and well trained.
- The marketing of the sites is largely event or exhibition driven with very little budget for promotion or advertising and virtually no cross-marketing or shared resources. The most recent leaflet for the museums and attractions omitted the Nelson Museum. Web presence is patchy with some venues having their own dedicated website and others relying on the council pages.
- The extent to which the community is willing to take an interest or a stake in the venues is different in each location.



## 5 Proposed strategy

### 5.1 The reasons behind our recommendations

Before we begin to outline our proposed options for the future of the service, it is important to be clear about the key findings from the sections which precede this and which have led us to make these recommendations.

Firstly, we have been very impressed by the commitment and passion of most of the staff who work in the museums and attractions. There is also clear evidence of some very good practice in terms of collections management and the service which is being offered to some residents and visitors. The museums and attractions form part of the tourism 'fabric' of Monmouthshire, and as such contribute directly and indirectly to the county's economy.

But despite this, overall, the service (in the museums and the attractions) is very seriously over stretched and fragmented. Staff at all sites are forced to go to unacceptable levels to get their jobs done, buying resources out of their own money, getting printing done outside of their workplace and managing without essential equipment such as working taps. It is highly commendable that the staff are prepared to go to these lengths, but it **highlights very clearly to us that the council is quite simply trying to do far too much with too little resource.**

In terms of the buildings, none of the three museums are in buildings which are ideal, and two, Abergavenny and the Nelson Museum are very compromised in terms of access and display spaces. Chepstow and Abergavenny are compensating to some extent through creative programming, entirely enabled by grant funding. There is less evidence of this in the Nelson Museum which has fewer resources.

Caldicot Castle has been used for many years to generate income from functions which has gone some way towards covering the direct costs but has not contributed to the more major maintenance works which are needed. The building now presents a significant future liability to the council.

Shire Hall is in good condition but sits somewhere between a museum, a visitor attraction and a functions venue. At present it is not generating enough income to be financially self sustaining and the visitor experience is very weak and ill defined.

The income generating services in all of the sites are insufficiently resourced and far too fragmented to be properly effective. But even with better commercial expertise and a co-ordinated approach, there is a limit to the amount of 'profit' which could be generated. As the following sections will show, there is certainly scope for significant improvement, but this will not be enough to fund the operation of all of the sites as they are at present.

Finally, across the museums and attractions there is very little sharing of resources and expertise. Even the museums, which all sit within the same service, are not really functioning as part of a county-wide service, but rather as three largely independent entities. It is probably as a result of this 'dispersed' management approach that the museums service does not have a proper education or outreach service which is found in most local authority museums services and would

be particularly valuable in a diverse and largely rural area like Monmouthshire. In every way, this is not the best, or the most cost effective way to operate this type of service.

**This should not be taken as a criticism of the managers or staff involved.** We fully appreciate and support the strongly held desire to protect and provide locally appropriate services within a number of geographically dispersed locations.

**But we do not believe that the offer, as it is at the moment, is a good one for Monmouthshire's residents, its visitors or the council's staff. Maintaining the status quo is not an option.**

We believe that the council needs to do less, but to do it much better and in most ways, differently.

In order to do this however, some things will need to be sacrificed and this will almost certainly raise objections from some local residents, staff and other stakeholders.

The changes will also inevitably incur some costs initially to implement them. We have given some initial thought to sources of external funding which could potentially be secured to support this. It is likely however that the council may need to provide some financial support in order to ensure a more viable long term future for the service.

## 5.2 Guiding principles for change

During a workshop session with senior staff which included a SWOT analysis some guiding principles were discussed to address the weaknesses and threats that were identified and to building on the strengths of the county's heritage and its collections. These were:

- Each museum location should continue to have some means of telling the local story.
- The most distinctive stories and collections for each place should be selected and presented there.
- Centralised storage and skills would enable better delivery across the service – a central store would need to have public access and research facilities.
- The current staff structure is muddled and unbalanced and a clear staff structure is needed.
- There needs to be a strong on-line presence for heritage in Monmouthshire.
- Trails are needed across the county to link stories together and communicate heritage outside of museums and buildings.

## 5.3 Overarching recommendations

At the heart of our recommendations there are four core service-wide recommendations. There are then a number of specific recommendations for each of the sites. For some of the sites we are suggesting two or more potential options.

The core service-wide recommendations are:

- **Create a centralised museums service** based in a single location which brings together all of the expertise, knowledge and skills and holds all of the collections which **are not on display** within a single, accessible store. It would allow for the closure of one (or potentially two) of the existing heritage sites, which are compromised in terms of accessibility and space;
- **Create a properly resourced and effective trading company** which generates a surplus back to support the service (the museums and attractions);
- **Create an effective leadership function** which allows the different elements of the museums and attractions to be managed appropriately.
- **Continue to provide access to the county's heritage** using its collections and archives through outdoor interpretation, pop-up exhibitions and activities and events, where closures of heritage sites occur.

The implications of these recommendations are explored in the sections which follow. The site specific recommendations are then addressed.

## 5.4 Centralise the museum service

**The council should create a new, low cost, fit for purpose central museums building which would be the base for the council's museum service staff.**

It would store, in a single location, the collections which are not on display, making management and maintenance easier, more cost effective and better organised. The collections would be rationalised before being transferred into the new location, disposing of duplicated material, objects beyond repair or which do not or no longer fit with appropriate collection policies.

In doing so, it would free up valuable space in some of the existing museums to allow for the creation of income generating services. It would also enable the closure of at least one of the current museums, which are not fit for purpose. This is explored in the options for the individual sites in the sections below.

The stores would be available for research and accessible to the public and to academic audiences at agreed times although the building would not be designed or promoted as a 'visitor attraction'.

Two potential locations have been considered initially: the Phoenix Block at the Comprehensive School in Monmouth which is owned by the council and will become surplus to requirement under the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme; or the Nelson Museum (see 5.6.3). A full specification would need to be developed to understand the size and type of space required after which a site appraisal could look at these and any other potential locations.

**Most importantly, by creating a single team of staff, it will be possible to reduce duplication in skills and introduce a small but properly resourced outreach and education team which could take the service out to different parts of the County**, providing a more bespoke offer which meets the needs of the County's wide range of communities.

A centralised museum service for Monmouthshire will enable the collections to continue to be managed well, but from one place with less curatorial input and less travelling and time input from the conservation team. Dedicated volunteers who are interested in collections management

(this is always a popular volunteer role) will be able to work across the collections with one point of supervisory contact. Digitisation with new project specific equipment will become a priority and a new online presence, again developed as a specific externally funded project will enable better marketing to take place across the service, through a high quality dedicated website. This will allow access to digitised parts of the collections, short well written pieces of research and photographs and prints. Co-curation with community members being able to post their own heritage images and stories can be developed with links to the Peoples Collection Wales website.

A new project will enable active volunteer recruitment and training opportunities in a number of areas which can expand service delivery and increase community engagement. These could include recording and assembling an oral history archive to add to any existing oral history in the collections, which can be edited and uploaded to the website where appropriate or used to inform temporary exhibitions.

Other volunteer roles could include developing or augmenting existing research and writing skills in community groups, learning storytelling skills, giving guided tours in designated areas of the county, collaboration with amateur drama groups or schools to develop theatre around heritage and use handling collections as props or providing facilitated family or schools activities. All of these roles would require a project based leader, input from permanent staff and training and travel budgets.

Whilst there would be space in the new central store for bringing these volunteers together, meetings, training sessions and delivery would need to take place in a number of different locations across the county. These would include heritage sites in Monmouth and Chepstow and potentially other locations like the new secondary school in Caldicot (being built as part of the councils 21st century schools programme) and council owned or existing community venues across the county.

A programme of exhibitions and activities and events would be planned across the county, with particular emphasis on the towns of Monmouth, Chepstow, Abergavenny and Caldicot, but also in other historic sites. Locations would include Chepstow Museum or the Market Hall or Shire Hall in Monmouth (depending on options development) and in pop-up locations in Abergavenny (likely to be associated with the market or theatre complex), a marquee at the food festival or a specially created "interpretive shelter".

Partnerships could also be developed with independent, National Trust or Cadw owned sites enabling stories connected to the county owned collections and archives to be communicated on a visiting event basis.

A manageable set of out posts needs to be considered and agreed in consultation with active community based heritage interest groups and colleague officers working on other project like the 21st century schools programme. This shouldn't be more than around 6 with varying scales, including the museum service's own venues. It is also important that a clear vision is developed for such a project which active community groups can buy into or not so that the strength of the concept is not diluted by external priorities or objectives.

The staff posts which would be needed for this central service are:

Post	Role
Museums Manager	Manages the museums service. Responsibility for fundraising and programme development.
Curator	Manages the collections and oversees the development of permanent exhibitions. Provides objects for temporary exhibitions.
Conservator	Conserves the collections. Sells the conservation service externally if there is spare capacity to do so.
Learning Officer	Develops education and schools programmes. Delivers education and schools programme, supported by volunteers.
Outreach & Exhibitions Officer	Develops outreach programme. Delivers outreach programme, supported by volunteers. Develops temporary exhibition programme. Manages the volunteers.

The staff would be supported by a bank of volunteers who would provide education and outreach activities in their local area. AMION Consulting has had full access to all of the salary information for the service and based on existing salaries and some benchmarking across the sector, the total staff cost of the five posts above has been assumed to be £212,000.

The case studies for Ludlow Museum Resource Centre and for the Herefordshire Museum Resource and Learning Centre, which are provided in the appendix, offer some valuable lessons. In the case of the Ludlow Centre, this was an additional facility for the service and was designed with high running costs in 2003 when the museum picture was very different. It has allowed for significant improvements to the way that the collections are stored but insufficient attention was given to the longer term viability and the building was never staffed to its full potential and currently only has one part time person. More recently with the development of a new museum in Shrewsbury, the council's focus in terms of heritage delivery has changed. In the case of Herefordshire, the new Resource and Learning Centre has also significantly improved the way that the collections are managed and has provided facilities that didn't exist before in Herefordshire's two other sites, both of which are also in Hereford.

The project at Ludlow was focused on bringing together objects which were hidden from view in a number of different locations and making them more accessible to the public, this was also the case with the store in Hereford although the project was much less ambitious in terms of its staffing requirements. Neither project was primarily concerned with pooling and sharing skills across the service. To compare the objectives of each and their successes or failures can provide useful guidance but Monmouthshire's project would be different. The council would need to be

very clear about the reasons behind creating a new centralised service and rationalise the staff structure and skills mix at the same time. The building should be designed to minimize running costs and to allow for a properly managed and skilled team. Although there would be initial set up costs, the ongoing revenue costs would be met by savings in other areas of the service. This is shown in section 5.9.

## 5.5 Create a trading company

**The Council should create a wholly owned arms length trading company which would have the necessary skills and flexibility to run commercial services across the existing museums and attractions and in some new council owned locations.**

Since 2003, local authorities in Wales have had the right to establish trading companies which make a profit to support their areas of activity<sup>1</sup>. In the tightening financial climate, more councils are exploring this option as a way of supporting important services. In the appendix we have included a case study for Blackpool Council which established BECL in 2014 as a trading company to run the Winters Gardens which is a substantial income generating venue.

The benefits of taking commercial services out of council operation are well recognised. The way that councils are required to operate to ensure public accountability does not encourage good commercial practice. Council staff are obliged to follow strict procurement rules and are usually prevented from recruiting staff on flexible contracts and with commercial terms and conditions<sup>2</sup>. These constraints also make it difficult for councils to appoint staff with good relevant experience. As a result, council run trading services are rarely as entrepreneurial as similar services in the private sector and operate with higher costs. Putting commercial services out to tender is also not ideal in many ways. Services which are inherently profitable and are tendered out by lease effectively 'give away' much of the potential profit to a third party. Commercial services which are only minimally profitable are harder to outsource and either remain in house or the council is obliged to offer a management fee to the contractor as a guarantee.

The commercial services which operate from the museums and attractions in Monmouthshire are generally not operating profitably. The Shire Hall has a team which runs the venue hire but which is constrained by the council's terms and conditions. It is also only responsible for one venue so there is no opportunity to share costs such as senior management and marketing or to procure jointly. The retail units in Shire Hall, the three museums and Tintern Old Station all purchase individually and generate very little profit, if any, after all costs have been accounted for. One of the more commercially viable parts of the operation is the café at Tintern which is leased out and generates a small rental income of £8,500 back to the council.

Given that there are a number of income generating opportunities across the museums and attractions, there would be value in the council establishing a company which could be managed at arms length by a properly skilled individual and operated under commercial conditions. Since the company would only be running the service for Monmouthshire Council, it would qualify for

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<sup>1</sup> 2003 Local Government Act Section 95

<sup>2</sup> This does not necessarily mean zero hours contracts or less than living wage payments, but there is still a significant discrepancy between staff on Council contracts and those employed in the hospitality and other leisure industries.

Teckal exemption, meaning that the opportunity would not need to go through a competitive tendering process.

The trading company could **operate all of the following income generating services:**

- A new café at Chepstow museum (see 5.6.1);
- Seasonal or pop up kiosks in the grounds of Caldicot Castle, Old Station Tintern and potentially Abergavenny museum (see 5.6.2);
- The café at Old Station Tintern when the lease expires;
- New camping pods in the park at Tintern and possibly the grounds of Caldicot Castle;
- Seasonal activities at the Caldicot Country Park such as a high ropes course, segways and bike hire;
- The venue hire operation at Shire Hall (see 5.6.4);
- The venue hire at Caldicot Castle (see 5.6.5);
- Car parking at Abergavenny (see 5.6.2) and the Old Station Tintern
- A new seasonal kiosk or pop up at Black Rock
- It could also potentially take over the licenses for other council owned sites which are currently held by food van operators across the County (such as the one on the A472 in Usk).
- Running a programme of income generating events such as the fireworks display at Caldicot Castle and summer theatre. The company should exploit all catering opportunities associated with events through direct operation of catering kiosks as well as the sale of licenses to third parties.

The company would require the following permanent posts (many more visitor facing staff would be required):

Post	Role
Director	Overall responsibility for the trading company. To oversee business development (new sites, new income streams) and to ensure appropriate levels of profitability.
Catering and retail manager	Oversee all catering outlets and retail units. Product selection, menu development, stock management, staff scheduling
Sales manager	To pro-actively sell all of the available spaces for venue hire, functions, parties, meetings etc.
Events manager	To take responsibility for the smooth operation of events.

In order to be effective, staff with demonstrable expertise in catering and hospitality would be required. The organisation would need to be given sufficient freedom to operate with commercial flexibility and should not be over burdened by council requirements. An appropriate mechanism for governance would need to be established including a board, chaired by someone from the

private sector with relevant expertise. The BECL case study provides a good example of how the board and a communication protocol with the council could be established.

The financial implications of the new trading company are shown in 5.9 below.

## 5.6 Proposals for each site

### 5.6.1 *Chepstow Museum*

Chepstow Museum is probably the most suitable of the three existing museums buildings to operate as a museum. It has a number of good exhibition spaces although access for disabled people is poor. The newly refurbished temporary exhibition space on the ground floor is fitted out to a high standard and provides a flexible space for temporary and hired-in exhibitions and objects from national collections. It is also programmed well and provides a good service to its local community.

At present however, the space is not being used as well as it could be. With the exception of the temporary exhibition gallery, much of the existing display space is used for relatively static displays which are difficult to change. A significant amount of space is also used for storage, conservation and back of house purposes. The creation of the central service and store will free up a significant amount of space which could be used for new and more flexible displays. The gallery at the rear of the building called Chepstow at Work is particularly outdated and does very little to explain what is special and unique about Chepstow, it is worn out and needs to go.

If the museum is to have a café, then this should go at ground floor level and at the front of the building. The Development of Chepstow Gallery and the space behind it would be the obvious choice for this because of the recent investment in the temporary gallery to the other side. This would capitalise on the proximity of the building to the car park and the Tourist Information Centre. It would be open throughout the year and be run by the new trading company. In addition to generating income, the café would increase footfall and bring new audiences into the museum, particularly during the main summer months.

Meanwhile the rear gallery would be cleared out and refurbished to provide a flexible interactive gallery on the story of Chepstow, whilst other spaces currently used for conservation could provide accessible galleries for family activities and for community work around the collections of photography and ephemera. The Wye Tour Gallery has only just been put in place at first floor level and some of the other rooms are used for storage or office space, whilst the print room feels rather like a store. Some of the museum's very good art collections could be displayed within vacated rooms on the upper floor. There would also be opportunities to work on co-curated displays with community members to tie into Chepstow events.

Assuming that all professional museum staff would operate out of the central services unit means that staff based at the museum would be visitor facing only. We have allowed a budget of £55,000 assuming two staff on duty during all opening hours.

### 5.6.2 *Abergavenny Museum*



For the Abergavenny site, we are presenting two options.

**(i) Abergavenny 1 – Hand back to landlord and allow a new purpose to be found**

Abergavenny museum is well run and provides a strong and varied programme. The grounds are an important facility for local people and the castle is a key landmark in the town.

**As a museum however the space is very poor.** The exhibitions and displays are accommodated in a number of small rooms and access around the building is not good for people with mobility difficulties. With the exception of the temporary exhibition space on the ground floor, most of the displays are static and difficult to change.

In our opinion, the building is very limited as a museum and there are few ways that it could be improved significantly.

There is a further challenge in that the building is owned by the Neville Estate which requires a percentage of any income generated in the building or grounds. Any ‘commercialisation’ of the site therefore would bring limited benefit to the service.

Furthermore, the council is responsible for the maintenance of the building which comes with significant long term liabilities. The 2010 condition survey identified a number of major repairs which were required to the fabric of the building which have only partially been completed.

In short, it has limited potential for improvement as a museum, the commercial opportunities are hindered by the requirement to share any profit with the Neville Estate and the building has a relatively costly long term maintenance need.

For these reasons, our strong recommendation to the council is to hand it back to the Neville Estate when the lease expires or to discuss the intention to remove the museum and negotiate withdrawal from the lease at a mutually acceptable time.

This would achieve a number of positive outcomes. It would reduce the cost of the service by £130,000 (this is the actual net direct, indirect and maintenance costs of running the museum at Abergavenny provided to us by Monmouthshire County Council), allowing greater resource to be used for the development of the new central service and store.

It would also allow the Neville Estate to develop a new commercial use for the site which would better support the development of the town. Potential suggestions have been a restaurant, pub or self catering accommodation. (It has been indicated to us that the Angel Hotel might be interested in the building).

We appreciate however that there might be strong local opposition to this proposal. Given the strength of the stories, collections and archives associated with the Abergavenny’s heritage and the long history of community engagement which began with the establishment of the museum by community members, it is essential that a visible presence is maintained. There are examples of community engagement projects throughout the UK, where people have participated in creating external graphic, sculptural or conceptual heritage inspired communication. Some of these have been very much more successful than others.

Proposals for such a project cannot be prescriptive in the context of this report and if developed will need input from the Abergavenny museum staff, other service staff and community consultation. But they could include:

- a shelter in the castle gardens which includes interpretive panels and has a meaningful design, within which activities could take place;
- a town trail with building markers and paper and digital way finding;
- creative apps using oral history and soundscapes;
- collaboration with restaurants and shops in the town enabling photographic images with short bilingual texts to be displayed in appropriate location which reference that location in the past;
- creation of a heritage inspired performance area with seating developed by community members and inspired by the town's heritage where storytelling and performance could take place;
- Production of a heritage marquee for use at festivals with an emphasis on handling of collections; and
- an active group of volunteers developed in the town to give guided tours, tell stories and facilitate outdoor or indoor heritage inspired activities.

**(ii) Abergavenny 2 – increased flexibility**

If the hand back option is not acceptable to the council, an alternative option would be to improve the offer as much as possible within the recognised constraints. The museum would form part of the new central service, alongside Chepstow.

Changes would include:

- Increasing the amount of flexible display space within the museum;
- Introducing seasonal temporary catering kiosks or pop ups in the grounds which could generate a surplus into the proposed trading company;
- Introducing car parking charges to generate some income and restrict use of the car park;
- Increasing the number of income generating events in the grounds.

Assuming that all professional museum staff would operate out of the central services unit means that staff based at the museum would be visitor facing only. We have allowed a budget of £55,000 which allows for two staff to be on duty during all opening hours

**5.6.3 Nelson Museum, Monmouth**

We are also proposing two options for the Nelson Museum.

**(i) Nelson Museum 1 – use the Market Hall as the central service and store**

The relocation of the one stop shop and offices from the Market Hall building adjoining the museum creates some interesting opportunities.

The museum at present is poorly laid out and does not display the collections well. In particular, it does not do justice to the significance of the Nelson Collection. The 1960s adaptation of the

building is potentially of some architectural interest but this is also lost in the current configuration of the space.

The upper floor of the building, which is partially empty and used for offices, has attractive views across the River Monnow and there is potentially storage space in the slaughterhouses underneath the building.

It is possible therefore that the space could be reconfigured to accommodate the central service and store.

The design of the windows in the spaces overlooking the river however not only maximise the amount of light that comes into the building but also makes it challenging to exclude light which would be very detrimental to stored collections. So the viability of this would depend on the amount of space available with minimal light and finding suitable purposes for areas with open-plan space, light and views

The layout would need to be looked at in detail but this option would allow the Nelson Collection (and potentially the Rolls Collection) to be retained and better displayed in the building, complementing the public access to the stores.

The slaughterhouses and other areas could be used for the collections store. A new café with river views could be opened up on the first floor, run by the trading company.

There are a number of benefits to this option if the space does prove to be suitable.

The building is already in council ownership so there would be no acquisition costs for the establishment of the central store (although there would be costs for adapting the space). It would allow the Nelson Collection to be retained in its current location and be presented better as part of general improvements to the building. It would also allow the service to capitalise on the value of the river view.

Leaving aside, the professional museum staff that would operate out of the central services unit, we have assumed staff costs of £55,000 assuming two staff on duty during all opening hours.

**(ii) Nelson Museum 2 – relocate the Nelson Collection to the Shire Hall and find a new purpose for the Market Hall**

If the space is unsuitable for the central service, or the council now has other plans for the One Stop Shop space in the Market Hall, the second option would be to relocate the Nelson Collection into the Shire Hall and allow an alternative use to be found for the museum space alongside the One Stop Shop, taking it out of the museums service.

The option of relocating the Nelson Collection into the Shire Hall has been considered previously but was discounted on the grounds of cost. A proper costing exercise was not undertaken however and some of these assumptions were based on floor loading concerns, suggesting that it was the upper floors that were being considered. A more suitable space would be the Community Gallery at ground floor level at the rear of the building with its own direct access. The limiting factor would be the size of this room although it does have the advantage of being a clear rectangular area without awkward spaces, where the displays could be laid out to maximise the space available.

If the first option is not viable, this should be given proper consideration.

There are a number of key benefits. Firstly it would allow for the closure of the current museum, saving around £100,000 (this is the actual net direct, indirect and maintenance costs provided to us by Monmouthshire County Council) which would allow for investment into the central service and other venues.

Perhaps equally importantly, it would provide a clearer purpose for the Shire Hall which currently has a confused offer and purpose. (The precedent of relocating the collection has already been established when it was moved from the Rolls Hall where it had been bequeathed).

#### 5.6.4 *Shire Hall*

There are also two options for Shire Hall.

##### **(i) Shire Hall 1 – take the Nelson Collection**

The recent renovation work carried out on Shire Hall has been very valuable in terms of ‘future proofing’ the building. The core concept however, of creating a venue for hire with some elements of a visitor attraction is difficult to understand. For visitors it does not present a compelling proposition.

As a venue for hire, it is an attractive space but there are a number of constraints, particularly relating to access when the market is taking place, which will always limit the amount of income which can be realised from functions and weddings.

Given that the potential for commercial growth is constrained, the option of relocating the Nelson Collection into the building, if the Nelson Museum closes, is a positive option for the Shire Hall. It would allow the Shire Hall to become a museum first and foremost, which also has function rooms for hire. It would have a clear proposition and purpose.

Alongside this, more of the space which is currently used for static displays should be converted into temporary exhibition and display space to allow the venue to host a changing programme over the year. This could happen in Courtroom 2 or the Old Council Chamber.

Income from functions would reduce by around £60,000 per year (based on current performance at the Shire Hall and taken from financial data provided by Monmouthshire County Council) but this would be more than offset by the closure of the Nelson Museum.

The new trading company would employ a general manager, a catering manager, a sales manager and an events manager to cover all sites. In this situation, the Shire Hall would only require on site staff of a Duty Officer and cover for the museum and front desk.

##### **(ii) Shire Hall 2 – commercial improvements**

If the option of closing the Nelson Museum and relocating the Nelson Collection is not adopted (if the option to bring the central service into the Market Hall is accepted for example), the best option for the Shire Hall is to continue to improve its commercial performance as a functions venue. It is important however to be realistic about the amount of income that the building is going to be able to achieve. At best it will reach a point where it covers its own costs.

The option of creating more temporary exhibition space should also be considered, as in option 1 above. These could be annual exhibitions drawing on the best of the stored collections on cross

county themes and would work well if they were linked to trails around the county, or sites or events linked by very broad themes such as Wine, Animals or Cloth.

The new trading company would employ a general manager, a catering manager, a sales manager and an events manager to cover all sites. In this situation, the Shire Hall would only require on site staff of a Duty Officer and cover for the tourist information desk.

### 5.6.5 *Caldicot Castle*

**The council should focus development on the Country Park and work with the local community to set up a development trust to restore the Castle for the long term.**

Caldicot Castle is probably the most challenging of all the venues within the museums and attractions.

The Castle is an important monument in the area which is highly valued by the local community. The country park is also very popular and well used by local people.

The Castle has many challenges however, in particular the significant amount of work which is needed to repair the fabric of the building and bring it up to acceptable standards. Securing the funds to do the work through HLF (probably the most realistic source of funding for this type of work) would be very difficult given the scale of the 'ask' and the relatively limited heritage value of the structure. It is not impossible, but it will be very difficult and will almost certainly take many years.

In the past, attempts have been made to use the Castle to generate income, with some degree of success. But as the building and the fit out continues to age and deteriorate, making money out of functions will continue to decline. The kitchen is now unfit for use and will require a major refurbishment if it is to be used. Other facilities, such as the public toilets also require updating.

There is also a history of problems between the community and the council linked to issues around management and operation.

Bearing in mind the condition of the fabric of the building and the interior, we are proposing a two step approach to the future of the building.

In the first instance, the council should 'scale back' the operation of the Castle as a visitor attraction. During the main season (March to October) visitors should be allowed to access the interior courtyard but the interior of the castle should remain closed. This would allow the council to reduce staffing costs and prevent further deterioration of the interior of the building.

Instead, the focus should shift towards making improvements to the Country Park, transforming it into an exciting outdoor activity park offering a range of family activities. The types of activities which would work within the park include:

- High ropes courses
- Segway hire
- Bike hire
- Outdoor trampolining

- Zip wires
- Children's play area

Pop up catering should be introduced to the park during the main season, also run by the trading company.

These activities should be developed by the council and run by the new trading company, rather than franchised out to a third party. They are relatively low capital cost to introduce and would generate a small but valuable on going revenue for the service. A dedicated business plan would need to be developed for the activities. (Headline numbers have been assumed for this report).

In the meantime, the council should begin discussions with the town council about the longer term future of the building. We believe that ideally, a development trust would be set up for the Castle which would be run by the local community. The purpose of the trust would be to raise the funds necessary for the restoration of the building. This would involve a major funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, as well as other fundraising activity. It is important that the local community takes ownership of this process. In the meantime, the council would maintain it as outlined above. There would also need to be a close communication between the development trust and the Monmouthshire Museums Development Trust.

In the future, if and when the required restoration works have been completed, Monmouthshire County Council could grant a lease for the building to a new community run charitable trust which would develop out of the development trust and would run the building. The new trust could determine if the building is then reopened as a visitor attraction.

Whilst negotiations with the local community are taking place and the development trust is being established, it may still be possible to generate some income from functions and events. The trading company should look at the viability of selling the venue for functions and weddings and offer these if it is profitable to do so. The state of the kitchen is likely to prove to be a major issue however. If it can be brought up to an acceptable standard relatively cost effectively, functions are more likely to be viable. We understand that £40,000 has been earmarked by the council in this year's capital budget.

It may also be necessary to allow the development trust to run functions from the building as part of its fundraising efforts and this should clearly be prioritised as required.

It is important however to understand that generating income from functions in this way is time limited. If the restoration works do not take place, the venue will over time become completely unsuitable. The use of the Castle as it is now, as a functions venue, should be seen as a meanwhile use whilst fundraising takes place.

#### 5.6.6 *Old Station Tintern*

**The council should maximise the income potential from this popular country park.**

The Old Station at Tintern is a well used country park which, unlike Caldicot, has significant tourist potential because of its location. It is also well used by local residents alike.

The café is very well run and had developed an excellent offer which understands and meets the needs of its customers.

The railway carriages however are used relatively little and are a costly addition to the park.

Of all the sites, the Old Station at Tintern presents the best opportunity for income growth and cost reduction.

The proposal for the site is:

- Close the railway carriages and remove the need for dedicated site staff. Instead, run the park as a country park using the shared pool of staff with Caldicot Country Park;
- When the café lease expires, this should be taken over by the new trading company;
- Introduce camping pods into the park (see the appendix for case studies);
- Improve the children's play facilities as a free facility to encourage more footfall;
- Introduce more charged events, managed by the trading company.

## 5.7 Address leadership and management

**The council should retain responsibility for the museums and attractions but with a different management structure.** Involvement from new community based organisations or trusts should be considered for the development of Caldicot Castle and potentially for the development of a small exhibition in Abergavenny.

A key requirement of the brief for this study is to assess governance arrangements and to consider alternative options.

We have been clear from the outset however that the process needs to assess what should be done and then to decide how this should operate. The importance of this approach has become even more apparent to us as we have understood more about the current operation.

During the course of our study, the Council began to consider governance options for the wider leisure service, potentially including leisure centres and activity centres. This work is at a fairly early stage and cannot therefore directly inform the recommendations within this report. It is important however that the implications of this wider review for the museums and attractions are factored in at the appropriate time.

Our recommendations on governance therefore reflect the current situation.

We have already identified that the commercial services should be run by an independent non-profit distributing organisation which would generate a surplus back to support the operation of the venues. We then considered the options for how the museums and attractions should be run, reflecting the current situation. We considered five basic options:

1. The museums and attractions stay within the council, managed as they are now;
2. The museums and attractions stay within the council but are reorganised to provide a more appropriate leadership structure;

3. The museums and attractions are 'spun out' into a single non profit distributing organisation (which could be a registered charity);
4. The museums and attractions are spun out into two separate independent, non profit distributing organisations (which could be charitable trusts).
5. Hand all or some of the venues over to be run by local community based organisations or trusts.

Our assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each option, and the resulting recommendations, are provided in the appendix.

**We are very clear that there is no benefit in creating a small independent organisation (or organisations) to run all of the museums and attractions (options 3 and 4 above).**

The main reasons for this assessment are:

- It is difficult to see the benefits that have been realised by other museums services which have gone down this route. Sheffield was one of the first authorities to adopt this approach in 1998 when it created two independent trusts, Museums Sheffield and Sheffield Industrial Museums Trust to run the museums which were in council ownership. Seventeen years on, both trusts have faced significant financial difficulties which have resulted in the closure of venues, reduced opening hours and reduced staffing levels. The trusts have been able to access some sources of funding (such as the recent Arts Council funds which were given to Museums Sheffield to help them to 'restabilise' the operation after the latest round of local authority cuts). Despite the access to these types of funds, both trusts are still in crisis. We are seeing this elsewhere. Financially, the opportunities for independent trusts are still very limited and there are very few sources of funds which are available to trusts but which are not open to local authorities<sup>3</sup>. Museum trusts are usually very heavily dependent on local authority funding. If this is cut (and it is often easier for authorities to make cuts to independent organisations), the trusts struggle to survive.
- Alongside this, the cost of running an independent trust is almost always higher than running the service as part of the council. When the full cost of 'purchasing' financial management, HR and other support services as well as premises maintenance costs are allowed for, it is always more costly for a small independent company. We estimate that costs of running an independent trust could be around £250,000 higher than running the same operation within the council.
- Many of the arguments around flexibility of operation and ability to create an appropriate culture simply do not apply to services which need to be subsidised. They do apply to organisations which need to operate with a commercial ethos – hence the recommendation to establish the independent trading company. But councils are very well suited to providing beneficial services to their stakeholders. The museums and attractions have more similarities with other council run services (such as education services and public spaces) than they do commercial operations. Culturally therefore, there is no problem!

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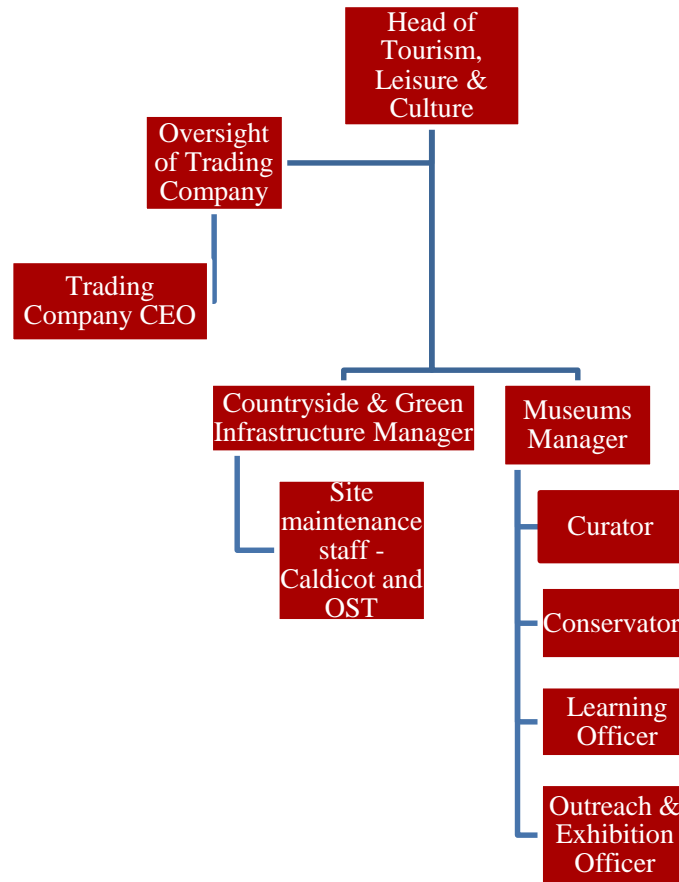
<sup>3</sup> Although this is often quoted as a benefit of trust status, in reality there are very few sources of funds which cannot be accessed by local authorities. It is largely only private donations and small trust funds which cannot be accessed by local authorities. Income from these sources is typically minimal to museum trusts.



The assessment of option of passing the operation of the museums over to local community based organisations (option 5) is less straightforward. The summary of our assessment is:

- Museums which are run by local community trusts or societies are usually small scale and whilst this is not, in itself, a problem, **it does not replace the value delivered by a professionally run and managed museums service which employs skilled staff to protect collections and engage with different audiences.** For this reason, we would not recommend the break up and ‘disposal’ of the museums service to local community organisations. Local community organisations could however provide **a very valuable addition to support and work with the museums service.** In Abergavenny for example, if the option of closing the museum is adopted, a local community based society could be very valuable in providing an alternative and more sustainable local exhibition or display for the town. Similarly, we are recommending that a community based development trust is set up to deliver the restoration work for the Castle and eventually take over its operation.
- It is also important to be aware of how fragile volunteer run museums can be. These museums are entirely dependent on the goodwill and ability of the active members to maintain and deliver the service. There are many examples of community based museums getting into difficulty and the ‘problem’ returning to the council. (This situation is not dissimilar to what happened in Abergavenny previously). The community run museums should therefore be seen as **an addition to the core service, not a replacement for it.**

We are making a clear recommendation therefore that **at this time** the museums service and the management of the attractions remains within the council but that a new management structure is adopted to take account of the proposed recommendations in this report. The following is a suggested management structure for the operation of the two functions.



In addition, we are recommending that there could be a role for a small community based exhibition in Abergavenny if the option is taken to close the museum.

In the short to medium term we are recommending a development trust is established to fundraise for Caldicot Castle which could migrate into a management trust once the restoration works have been completed.

## 5.8 Longer term governance implications

At the time of writing this report, the wider review of the governance of leisure services is still ongoing. Clearly, the recommendations in this report need to be reassessed in light of the findings of this work.

The potential scale of a bigger independent organisation, which runs a portfolio of leisure services including the museums and attractions, would alleviate some of the serious concerns about financial viability and sustainability.

Although it would need to be considered fully, it is likely that a bigger organisation could be created which could run all of the services effectively and with some degree of financial stability. This would clearly have implications for some of the recommendations within this report. For

example, the trading company recommended here could form part of a wider commercial operation.

The core recommendations relating to the central service, and the specific recommendations for each site, however, are unlikely to change in any material way.

On this basis, we are recommending that in the short term, the changes proposed above are made to the staffing structure of the museums service and the attractions. This would allow the work to begin on the development of the central service and for some immediate improvements to be made to the operation of the attractions.

The creation of the trading company however should be delayed, pending the findings of the wider review.

## 5.9 Revenue implications

There are essentially four different scenarios that could be adopted in the strategy above and we have been able to model the revenue implications of each. The total annual net cost to the council is forecast to be between £685,000 and £765,000 in the four scenarios. **This compares to a total net cost of running the service in 2014/15 of £1,077,000.**

**The budget for 2015/16 is £772,000 which is in the ball park of our four scenarios but with appropriate levels of expenditure on marketing, exhibitions, equipment and materials factored in to the proposed model.**

Whilst there is less than £80,000 between the four options, it would appear that the least costly option (in revenue terms) would be to close Abergavenny as a museum and transform the Market Hall in Monmouth into a new museum and central store.

It is important to note that the forecasts below are assumed to be in a stabilized year. Clearly any changes will take time to bed in but for the purpose of assessing options, it is important to look at forecasts in a notional stabilized year. It is also important to note that this does not take into account any changes to the governance of other services in the council.

Each of the line items is explained below the table.

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Close Abergavenny - transform Market Hall (Monmouth) to include new central store</i>	<i>Retain Abergavenny - transform Market Hall (Monmouth) to include new central store</i>	<i>Close Abergavenny - vacate Market Hall and move Nelson Collection into Shire Hall - central store in another building</i>	<i>Retain Abergavenny - vacate Market Hall and move Nelson Collection into Shire Hall - central store in another building</i>
Staff costs	£ 473,000	£ 528,000	£ 426,000	£ 481,000
Rent	£ -	£ 5,090	£ -	£ 5,090
Utilities	£ 43,751	£ 51,896	£ 43,751	£ 51,896
Business rates	£ 52,461	£ 55,006	£ 52,461	£ 55,006
Repair and maintenance	£ 15,999	£ 16,255	£ 18,499	£ 18,755
Security	£ 10,875	£ 13,064	£ 13,821	£ 16,010
Cleaning	£ 15,858	£ 16,722	£ 18,858	£ 19,722
Professional fees	£ 10,196	£ 10,443	£ 13,528	£ 9,256
Equipment and materials	£ 31,695	£ 36,695	£ 27,300	£ 31,000
Marketing and promotion	£ 20,000	£ 20,000	£ 20,000	£ 20,000
Telephone, IT, licences, subscriptions	£ 9,486	£ 10,573	£ 9,699	£ 10,786
Travel and transport	£ 15,000	£ 15,000	£ 15,000	£ 15,000
Indirect costs	£ 71,864	£ 80,825	£ 62,864	£ 71,825
Indirect maintenance and works	£ 50,000	£ 60,000	£ 50,000	£ 60,000
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£ 820,185</b>	<b>£ 919,569</b>	<b>£ 771,781</b>	<b>£ 865,346</b>
<i>Income</i>				
Museum events	£ 20,000	£ 30,000	£ 20,000	£ 30,000
Grazing at Caldicot	£ 350	£ 350	£ 350	£ 350
Conservation income	£ 5,000	£ 5,000	£ 5,000	£ 5,000
Chepstow Town Council grant	£ 2,000	£ 2,000	£ 2,000	£ 2,000
Profit from trading company	£ 97,200	£ 120,400	£ 49,200	£ 64,400
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£ 124,550</b>	<b>£ 157,750</b>	<b>£ 76,550</b>	<b>£ 101,750</b>
<b>Net cost</b>	<b>£ 695,635</b>	<b>£ 761,819</b>	<b>£ 695,231</b>	<b>£ 763,596</b>

- **Staff costs** are based on creating the new central management team at a cost of £212,000 per annum with appropriate front of house cover at the sites. Existing salaries have been used and have been benchmarked across the sector. Clearly there are savings made in the options which involve closures.
- **Rent** is payable at Abergavenny – the amount shown is the amount currently payable. There is no rent payable in the options where the council leaves the site.
- **Utilities costs, business rates, repairs, maintenance, security, cleaning, professional fees, telephone, IT, subscriptions** are based on the actual costs currently incurred at the various sites. This information was provided by Monmouthshire County Council. Where there are site closures, the costs have been reduced accordingly. Additional allowance has been made for any new buildings (the central store for example should it not go into the market hall).
- **Equipment and materials** – a much greater budget has been allowed for museums equipment and materials than that currently provided.

- **Marketing** – a single dedicated budget of £20,000 has been assumed to market the museums more effectively. This does not include marketing of trading venues which is accounted for below and includes a further £20,000.
- **Travel and transport** – an allowance of £15,000 has been made which is over and above the current costs. This is to allow for travel and transport of people and objects/equipment between the sites since the collections will now be housed in a single store and the core museum staff will need to travel extensively between the sites.
- **Indirect costs** - are based on the actual costs currently charged by Monmouthshire County Council to the various sites. This information was provided by Monmouthshire County Council. Where there are site closures, the costs have been reduced accordingly. Additional allowance has been made for any new buildings (the central store for example should it not go into the market hall).
- **Indirect maintenance costs and works** – this is based on the actual costs provided to us by Monmouthshire County Council averaged over three years. Where there are site closures, the costs have been reduced accordingly. Additional allowance has been made for any new buildings (the central store for example should it not go into the market hall).
- **Events income** – this is a new assumed income stream. It has been assumed that each of the museum sites should be able to host two charged events per annum which generate net income of £5,000 each.
- **Grazing at Caldicot** – based on actual income currently received from allowing grazing on the land.
- **Conservation income** – an assumption has been made that the Conservator will continue to spend a small amount of time undertaking commercial conservation work.
- **Chepstow Town Council** – a sum of £2,000 is currently provided by the town council annually to allow for lunch time opening of the museum. This has been assumed to continue.
- **Profit from trading company** – this reflects the assumed net contribution from all of the new trading activities outlined in the table below.

**The table below is an indicative trading account for each scenario. At this stage, the numbers are headline and illustrative. Further work should be undertaken as the project progresses. The trading assumptions made below are largely based on the experience of AMION Consulting in other locations but has been informed by the current performance.**

- The income assumed at the new cafés at Chepstow, Monmouth and Old Station and the kiosks at Caldicot, Old Station, Black Rock and Abergavenny are all based on our experience of similar sized operations around the UK. They are often modest operations which on their own do not make much commercial sense but as part of a group become much more financially viable.
- Shire Hall Catering, Bar and Venue Hire income is based on the current trading performance (this was provided to us by Monmouthshire County Council) and a 30% increase in trade has been assumed as a result of being part of a much more commercially focused operation.

- The camping income at Caldicot and Old Station is based on an assumption of 10 camping pods being acquired at each site. It has been assumed that the pods will be available to hire at a rate of £50 per night (net of VAT) for 6 months in the year. A 20% occupancy rate has been assumed.
- A broad assumption has been made with regard to the potential income from new activities/attractions at Caldicot that an investment of around £300,000 is made into a combination of attractions include zip wires, high ropes, Segway, children's play, bike hire etc. Attracting 10,000 additional users per annum at a price of £5 per person (net of VAT) could generate annual income of £50,000.
- The events income assumed at Caldicot and Old Station is a slight increase on the current budget (figures provided by Monmouthshire County Council) to allow for a more commercial operation.
- Caldicot venue hire is based on current budget figures.
- Car parking income at Old Station is based on current actual performance.
- Car parking at Abergavenny is based on introducing a car parking charge for non-museum visitors should the council remain as tenant.
- Retail income from all sites is based on current actual trading date (provided by Monmouthshire County Council). Where there are site closures, the income has been reduced accordingly.
- Catering costs of goods is based on an industry standard of 35%.
- Retail costs of goods is based on an industry standard of 50% (museum retail).
- Other cost of sales refers to an allowance of 10% of the income generated from car parks, attractions, camping and venue hire.
- Event costs allow for a 10% margin to be made on the income assumed above – this is typical.
- Variable staff costs allow for the cost of employing additional staff for the cafes, kiosks, attractions, venue hire. An allowance of 40% of the income from catering, bars, venue hire and attractions has been assumed.
- Fixed staff costs allows for the four key posts of: Director, Catering and Retail Manager, Sales Manager and Events Manager.
- £20,000 has been assumed for marketing.
- An additional £45,000 has been assumed for additional operating costs.

	<i>Close</i>		<i>Retain</i>		<i>Close</i>	<i>Retain</i>
	<i>Abergavenny - transform Market Hall (Monmouth) to include new central store</i>		<i>Abergavenny - transform Market Hall (Monmouth) to include new central store</i>		<i>Abergavenny - vacate Market Hall and move Nelson Collection into Shire Hall - central store in another building</i>	<i>Abergavenny - vacate Market Hall and move Nelson Collection into Shire Hall - central store in another building</i>
New Chepstow café	£	120,000	£	120,000	£	120,000
New Caldicot kiosk	£	50,000	£	50,000	£	50,000
New OST kiosk	£	50,000	£	50,000	£	50,000
New Abergavenny kiosk			£	50,000	£	50,000
New café in Market Hall, Monmouth	£	120,000	£	120,000	£	-
OST Café	£	120,000	£	120,000	£	120,000
Shire Hall Catering	£	40,000	£	40,000	£	12,000
Shire Hall Bar	£	8,000	£	8,000	£	2,000
New Black Rock kiosk	£	50,000	£	50,000	£	50,000
OST Camping	£	20,000	£	20,000	£	20,000
New Caldicot camping	£	20,000	£	20,000	£	20,000
New Caldicot attractions	£	50,000	£	50,000	£	50,000
Caldicot public events	£	50,000	£	50,000	£	50,000
OST public events	£	20,000	£	20,000	£	20,000
Caldicot venue hire	£	15,000	£	15,000	£	15,000
Shire Hall venue hire	£	80,000	£	80,000	£	20,000
OST car parking	£	15,000	£	15,000	£	15,000
Abergavenny car parking			£	10,000	£	10,000
Museum and Shire Hall retail	£	60,000	£	75,000	£	35,000
<b>Income</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>888,000</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>963,000</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>649,000</b>
Catering cost of goods	£	195,300	£	212,800	£	141,400
Retail cost of goods	£	30,000	£	37,500	£	17,500
Other cost of goods	£	20,000	£	21,000	£	14,000
Event costs	£	63,000	£	63,000	£	63,000
Variable staff costs	£	243,200	£	263,200	£	181,600
Fixed salaries and on costs	£	150,000	£	150,000	£	105,000
Marketing	£	20,000	£	20,000	£	20,000
Office and general overheads	£	45,000	£	45,000	£	45,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>766,500</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>812,500</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>587,500</b>
Profit before tax	£	121,500	£	150,500	£	61,500
Tax	£	24,300	£	30,100	£	12,300
<b>Net profit after tax</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>97,200</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>120,400</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>49,200</b>

## 5.10 Capital implications

### 5.10.1 *The Market Hall project*

The Monmouthshire Museums Development Trust should take a lead on fundraising for the major capital projects which will be required to deliver the proposed changes.

When a museum service faces the challenges and tough decisions that Monmouthshire does now, it is vital to take positive steps, develop a vision for the future and produce an alternative sustainable model that fits with modern best practice. Transformational projects require capital funding to provide infrastructure and short term revenue funding to build capacity and these days to recruit and train volunteers to take projects into the future.

Volunteering not only supports museums in their endeavours but increases community ownership and widens audiences through targeted projects both in terms of delivering services and of directly involving specific volunteers for example people with mental health issues or people with disabilities by empowering them to work in appropriate and supportive environments.

Realistically the only significant funding source for such development projects is the Heritage Lottery Fund, so it is also essential that Monmouthshire's development projects fit with HLF criteria and deliver the changes and benefits that they require in terms of heritage, people and communities.

The situation in Wales is currently particularly competitive and HLF in Wales only considers bids of under £1,000,000. Bids above this level would be in competition with national projects, which would be likely to be high profile. Taking into account any possible match funding from the Council perhaps through the sale of buildings or other appropriate assets and funding support from donors or charitable trusts, projects will necessarily need to be in the region of just over a £1,000,000 in order to have a realistic chance of funding success. So there is an argument that coats must be cut according to the cloth available, unless other funding sources emerge such as a significant gift or bequest.

When the service goes into a transitional phase, it will be appropriate to reduce everything other than opening the doors and managing buildings to a minimum in order to focus all available resources, including existing volunteers on project development and delivery.

HLF will accept phased projects and it may be appropriate to progress the transformation in stages. The following broad brush costings indicate what projects of this scale may consist of. Although, clearly specific studies would need to take place to develop these to an appropriate level of detail, with much better knowledge of the spaces involved and some architectural input.

### 5.10.2 *Central store project*

<p><b>Create central store in an alternative location</b>          Make space secure.          Re-use existing storage equipment where possible.          Purchase additional easy access storage equipment.</p>	
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Recruit, train and manage volunteers to assist. Undertake collections review. Dispose of some duplicated material. Centralise and consolidate documentation.	<b>£600,000</b>
<b>Create public access research area with IT equipment.</b> Centrally based continuation of digitisation project and public facing data base assembly. Recruit, train and manage volunteer support.	<b>£100,000</b>
<b>Develop a major digital community project celebrating Monmouthshire heritage</b> Built around the attractions and the collections. Include downloadable trails and apps for use in key sites and around the county. Enable community members to upload their own memories and memorabilia	<b>£200,000</b>
<b>Create a series of projects to provide community access to collections</b> which have been unseen for some time with a view to creating special exhibitions on significant people in Abergavenny, Chepstow and Monmouth.	<b>£150,000</b>
<b>Development costs and contingency</b>	<b>£150,000</b>
Total	<b>£1,200,000</b>

### 5.10.3 *Chepstow Museum project*

<b>Partial refurbishment of Chepstow Museum</b> to provide café and new interpretation on ground floor, with improved display spaces to upper floor	<b>£450,000</b>
<b>Relocate Nelson Collection to Shire Hall</b> and create temporary exhibition space or re-display in Market Hall.	<b>£450,000</b>
<b>Undertake community sculpture project at Abergavenny</b> inspired by and interpreting local heritage –could provide a sheltered space for activity which incorporates interpretation.	<b>£200,000</b>
<b>Development costs and contingency</b>	<b>£150,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,250,000</b>

#### 5.10.4 Commercial investment

In order for the proposed trading company to generate profits for cultural services, a programme of investment will be required. This could include:

- Camping pods at Old Station Tintern – 10 @ £6,000 each = £60,000 (based on current prices of Camping Pods to purchase).
- Camping pods at Caldicot – 10 @ £6,000 each = £60,000 based on current prices of Camping Pods to purchase).
- Caldicot attractions (zip wire, high ropes, Segway, children's play, bike hire) - £300,000 (this is an illustrative budget allowance and will depend entirely on what is specified).
- Catering kiosks at Caldicot, Old Station Tintern and Black Rock – 3 @ £15,000 = £45,000 (based on current prices of Camping Pods to purchase).

Investment in the cafes at Chepstow and Monmouth would be wrapped into the two projects referred to in the section above.

The total investment into commercial facilities would therefore be in the region of £465,000. The trading profits (in a stabilised year) could be in the region of £80,000 after tax which would equate to approximate payback period of 4.8 years (this level of payback is typical in commercial leisure and hospitality).

Again, the Monmouthshire Museums Development Trust could take a lead in raising funds to support the development.

### 5.11 Timescales

Inevitably a period of consultation will be required before any changes are implemented and there is likely to be some strong feeling particularly to some of the proposed changes.

Given the desperately stretched state of the current operation however we recommend that the Council aims to complete the consultation within the current financial year and to begin the process of implementing the changes from 2016.

The new trading company and introduction of the new commercial facilities could begin almost immediately and are largely independent of other changes although there will clearly be an impact on some staff, particularly in Shire Hall. This could be achieved in the financial year 2016/17.

The operational and staffing changes and Caldicot Castle and the Old Station could also be implemented relatively quickly after a period of consultation and assuming a favourable outcome is achieved and could be completed within the same year.

The creation of the centralised store and the subsequent changes that this will enable at the three museums is dependent on raising the required capital from the proposed HLF bid. This process will take a minimum of two years from agreement. The work at Chepstow museum would then take a further two years, allowing time for fund raising.

The implications of the wider governance review need to be factored in and may impact on some of these timings.

## 6 Appendix 1 – Case Study – Blackpool Council

Blackpool Entertainment Company Limited (BECL) was set up by Blackpool Council in summer 2014.

The Winter Gardens is a vast grade II\* listed building which contains the Opera House Theatre, the Empress Ballroom, an exhibition hall, Illuminasia visitor attraction, a restaurant and café and various functions rooms and suites. In 2010, Blackpool Council brought the building back into public ownership by buying it and the Blackpool Tower from Leisure Parcs (a private company). In doing so, the Council recognised the strategic importance of these two assets to the town's future.

After purchasing the building, the Council put the management contract out to tender and appointed Crowne Leisure Limited. Under the terms of the arrangement, the Council would pay Crowne Leisure a £250,000 management fee and after this there would be a 50/50 profit share between the Council and Crowne Leisure.

In 2014, the Council re-tendered the opportunity and received a limited response. Crowne Leisure were keen to be re-appointed on the same terms but the Council recognised that this arrangement was costing the Council more than it needed to. The option of creating BECL as a wholly owned company was then considered and agreed.

BECL was established with the sole purpose of operating the Winter Gardens and therefore the Teckal exemption from the procurement rules applied, meaning that the opportunity did not have to be tendered. Key staff were transferred across to the new company under TUPE, including the highly regarded General Manager.

Although still under development, the Board of the new organisation will be made up of three members of the Council and three private sector appointments. It will have a private sector chair. The post of Chair was recently advertised and there was a very strong response. The Council has selected a senior individual from a non-competitive organisation who has relevant commercial skills.

Under the terms of the new company, the General Manager attends monthly management meetings with executive staff from the Council. The Leader and Deputy Leader also meet the General Manager and Chair every three months. There is a shareholders' panel twice every year.

The arrangement is generally working very well for the Council who are pleased with the decision. There has already been evidence of commercial entrepreneurialism with the new organisation franchising a business opportunity to China. Overall profitability will be significantly improved for 2015 and the Council believes that the quality of the experience is better under improved leadership.

There have been some challenges however. In particular, establishing an appropriate relationship between the Council (Executives and Members) and the new organization has proved difficult at times. There is a fear that the independence of the organisation could be compromised by 'inappropriate levels of involvement' from people within the Council which could cause problems with the General Manager and Chair. It is hoped however that the new Board structure could help to bring a better balance to the relationship.

## 7 Appendix 2 – Case Study - Glamping

### Eco camping

An emerging trend is the development of eco camping sites. These are small, low impact, environmentally friendly, off-grid camp sites with solar or wind powered showers and eco/compost toilets. They often have a central campfire area and/or allow campers to have their own campfires. Some sites offer secluded and isolated pitches for individual camping. Sites may have wildlife areas and some offer nature study and environmental activities and courses. Examples are Cerenety Camp Site in Cornwall ([www.cerenetycampsite.co.uk](http://www.cerenetycampsite.co.uk)), Northlodge in Pembrokeshire ([www.eco-camping.co.uk](http://www.eco-camping.co.uk)) and Comrie Croft in Perthshire ([www.comriecroft.com/sleep/eco-camping.html](http://www.comriecroft.com/sleep/eco-camping.html)). In some cases eco camping sites also offer glamping units or glamping sites have opened eco camping sites. Eco Camp UK ([www.ecocampuk.co.uk](http://www.ecocampuk.co.uk)), for example, offers fully equipped bell tents alongside forest tent pitches at its Beech Estate ecological woodland camp site in East Sussex, while The Secret Camp Site ([www.theseccampsite.co.uk](http://www.theseccampsite.co.uk)), also in East Sussex offers a glamping unit and a tree tent alongside its eco camp site. Comrie Croft has 5 Norwegian Kata tents. Dernwood Farm ([www.dernwoodfarm.co.uk/wild-camping](http://www.dernwoodfarm.co.uk/wild-camping)) offers wild camping alongside safari and bell tents and a woodland log cabin.



### Tree camping

Tree camping in tents and structures suspended in trees is an interesting, although very niche, emerging trend. Examples include:

- Red Kite Tree Tent in Mid Wales ([www.sheepskinlife.com/relax-at/red-kite-tree-tent](http://www.sheepskinlife.com/relax-at/red-kite-tree-tent));
- Treehotel in Sweden ([www.treehotel.se](http://www.treehotel.se)), which features 5 quirky, individually designed 'treerooms' and a tree sauna;
- The Tree Tent at The Secret Campsite in East Sussex: ([www.theseccampsite.co.uk/secret-shelters](http://www.theseccampsite.co.uk/secret-shelters)); and
- Lost Meadow Tree Tent in Bodmin, Cornwall: ([www.canopyandstars.co.uk/britain/england/cornwall/broom-park-farm/lost-meadow-tree-tent](http://www.canopyandstars.co.uk/britain/england/cornwall/broom-park-farm/lost-meadow-tree-tent)).



### Camping pods

Camping pods were first introduced in the UK at the Eskdale Camping and Caravanning Club site in the Lake District in 2008. The site has 10 camping pods priced at £43.75 per night. They are made from locally sourced timber and insulated with sheep's wool. They have hard foam floors, French windows, wooden decking areas, heaters and electric lighting. Each pod sleeps 4 people. They have proved extremely popular and have even attracted demand during the winter. The Camping and Caravanning Club has now introduced camping pods and dens at its club sites in Bellingham, Northumberland; Hayfield in the Peak District; Ravenglas in Cumbria; Skye; Gulliver's Kingdom at Milton Keynes; and Thetford Forest

[www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk/ukcampsites/club-glamping/camping-pods](http://www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk/ukcampsites/club-glamping/camping-pods).

Newfoundland Leisure Lodges, the company that manufactured the pods for these sites, reports huge interest in the concept, which is rapidly developing throughout the UK. The company has now supplied camping pods to over 70 sites across the country.

The YHA has introduced camping pods alongside its hostels at Malham and Grinton in the Yorkshire Dales, Hawkshead and Borrowdale in the Lake District and the South Downs hostel in East Sussex ([www.yha.org.uk/places-to-stay/alternative-accommodation/camping-pods](http://www.yha.org.uk/places-to-stay/alternative-accommodation/camping-pods)). The National Trust is another organisation that has started to offer camping pods at three sites in the Lake District, Clumber Park in Nottinghamshire and a site in Northern Ireland [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/holidays/camping/camping-pods](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/holidays/camping/camping-pods).

Camping pod encampments and parks are now starting to develop across the UK. Examples include:

- West Stow Pods in Suffolk ([www.weststowpods.co.uk](http://www.weststowpods.co.uk));
- Bryn Dinas Camping Pods in Snowdonia ([www.bryndinascampingpods.co.uk](http://www.bryndinascampingpods.co.uk));



Holiday parks, holiday lodge parks, touring caravan and camping sites and hotels are increasingly introducing camping pods as an alternative accommodation option. Examples are:

- the Pure Leisure Group has introduced camping pods at three of its holiday parks (<http://www.pureleisuregroup.com/holidays/camping-pods>);
- the Hillcrest Park touring caravan park at Caldwell in County Durham ([www.hillcrestpark.co.uk/pods](http://www.hillcrestpark.co.uk/pods)) introduced 3 camping pods in August 2011, increasing this to 5 pods in March 2012 and 10 in October 2012 due to the strength of demand.
- the Old Thorns Manor Hotel and Golf Club at Liphook has developed a number of luxury eco pods adjacent to the hotel as an alternative accommodation option ([www.oldthorns.com/home/accommodation-old-thorns-hotel-hampshire/luxury-eco-pods](http://www.oldthorns.com/home/accommodation-old-thorns-hotel-hampshire/luxury-eco-pods)); and
- Woodland Park Lodges at Ellesmere in Shropshire has 5 camping huts alongside 11 holiday lodges ([www.woodlandparklodges.co.uk/camping-huts.html](http://www.woodlandparklodges.co.uk/camping-huts.html)).

### Glamping

A key trend in recent years has been the rapid growth of glamping (glamorous camping) offers, in terms of ready-erected, fully-equipped tents, yurts, tipis and other unusual forms of camping and caravanning accommodation. These types of accommodation have proved to be popular with more affluent families that want to experience camping holidays but without the hassle of having to bring their own tents and camping equipment. As a new form of accommodation they have attracted significant media coverage and wherever they have opened such accommodation operations have quickly attracted strong demand. Go Glamping ([www.goglamping.net](http://www.goglamping.net)), the leading online directory of luxury camping sites, now lists 200 locations in the UK. Key luxury camping products that have so far emerged in the UK are as follows:

- **Feather Down Farms** ([www.featherdown.co.uk](http://www.featherdown.co.uk)) is a concept that has been operated in the UK since 2005 by the Feather Down Farm Days Company as a seasonal luxury camping holiday option. Originally developed in Holland, the concept involves Feather Down Farm Days providing working farms with 5-10 fully equipped Feather Down tents for erection between Easter and October. The tents provide spacious, ready-to-use camping

accommodation including beds, bedding, a toilet, wood-burning cooking stove, cool chest and cooking equipment. The farmer is responsible for providing a cold water supply to each tent and connection to a mains sewer or septic tank, together with the provision of a communal hot shower facility. Feather Down Farm Days runs a national marketing, advertising and PR campaign and provides a central booking system. The company now has 34 sites across the UK. Their development strategy has focused initially on locations that are within a 2 hour drive time of London, as this is their core market. These holidays require some affluence, at circa £1000 for the week, and they recognise that they are aiming at the educated city dweller wanting rural family 'experience' for themselves and their children.

- The team behind Feather Down Farms launched a sister company, **Country Retreats** ([www.featherdown.co.uk/country-retreats](http://www.featherdown.co.uk/country-retreats)), in November 2014 aimed at other land and country estate owners that want to provide canvas lodges and/or fully collapsible log cabins and become part of The Country Retreats Collection. The company hope to roll out 50 of the new log cabins across country estates and farms in the UK by the end of 2015.
- **Ready-pitched luxury camps:** Jolly Days Luxury Camping ([www.jollydaysluxurycamping.co.uk](http://www.jollydaysluxurycamping.co.uk)) in North Yorkshire is a boutique campsite that offers the ultimate in luxury camping, with 8 large lodge tents with four poster beds, sofas and chandeliers, 7 vintage style tents and 7 bell tents. Shieling Holidays ([www.shielingholidays.co.uk](http://www.shielingholidays.co.uk)) on the Isle of Mull provides 16 fully equipped Shieling cottage tents, which take their name from the summer cottages that Highland shepherds traditionally use. The tents are equipped with proper beds and fully equipped kitchens and have electricity and gas heaters. Some also have shower and toilet facilities. Dandelion Hideaway ([www.thedandelionhideaway.co.uk](http://www.thedandelionhideaway.co.uk)) in Leicestershire offers a number of canvas cottages.
- **Yurts**, based on the Mongolian yurt, are wooden frame, insulated circular tents that are usually furnished with beds, wood burning stoves and kitchen equipment. The Bivouac ([www.thebivouac.co.uk](http://www.thebivouac.co.uk)) on the Swinton Estate in the Yorkshire Dales has 8 yurts and six timber frame shacks. Each yurt sleeps 5 and comes with beds, bed linen, a terracotta cold store, wood burning stove and gas burner for outdoor cooking on a wooden veranda. Lincoln Yurts at Welton in Lincolnshire ([www.lincolnyurts.com](http://www.lincolnyurts.com)) offers 5 themed yurts that are fully equipped with beds, bedding, a gas stove, BBQ and decked seating area and supported by a bathroom cabin with a Jacuzzi bath. Other examples area Hidden Valley Yurts in Monmouthshire ([www.hiddenvalleyyurts.co.uk](http://www.hiddenvalleyyurts.co.uk)) and Yurtshire ([www.yurtshire.co.uk](http://www.yurtshire.co.uk)) which has two yurt camps in North Yorkshire and one in Warwickshire.
- **Tipi** sites offer a similar set up. Examples include Wild Northumbrian Tipis and Yurts ([www.wildnorthumbrian.co.uk](http://www.wildnorthumbrian.co.uk)); Lincolnshire Lanes Camp Site in the Lincolnshire Wolds ([www.lincolnshire-lanes.com](http://www.lincolnshire-lanes.com)); Eco Retreats in Powys, Wales ([www.ecoretreats.co.uk](http://www.ecoretreats.co.uk)); and 4 Winds Lakeland Tipis ([www.4windslakelandtipis.co.uk](http://www.4windslakelandtipis.co.uk)) in the Lake District.
- Wooden **wigwams** rented out at around 20 sites in Scotland and the North East of England are another alternative. Northumbria's Pot-a-Doodle-Do ([www.northumbrianwigwams.com](http://www.northumbrianwigwams.com)) has 12 wooden wigwams sleeping 4/5 people. Each wigwam is fully insulated and has electric lighting and heating. Foam mattresses are provided. The site has a central shower and toilet block, kitchen for guests' use and licensed restaurant on site. Springhill Farm in Northumberland ([www.springhill-farm.co.uk/wigwams](http://www.springhill-farm.co.uk/wigwams)) offers a number of wooden



wigwams alongside self-catering cottages and a touring caravan and camping site. Wigwam Holidays ([www.wigwamholidays.com](http://www.wigwamholidays.com)) that supplies wooden wigwams to farmers and landowners that the company then markets under its Wigwam Holidays brand. The company now has 60 sites across the UK.



Other examples of glamping camping offers include:

- **Geodesic domes** for example, The Dome Garden ([www.domegarden.co.uk](http://www.domegarden.co.uk)) at Coleford in Gloucestershire has 10 geodesic ecodomes equipped with wood burning stoves, beds, private flushing toilets, a fully-equipped outside kitchen area with fridge and timber en-suite hot shower. Another example is Ekopod ([www.ekopod.co.uk](http://www.ekopod.co.uk)) in Cornwall.
- **Persian alachigh tents**, similar to yurts for example, Penhein Glamping near Chepstow in Monmouthshire ([www.penhein.co.uk](http://www.penhein.co.uk)).
- **Gypsy caravans** for example, Gypsy Caravan Breaks in Somerset ([www.gypsyncaravanbreaks.co.uk](http://www.gypsyncaravanbreaks.co.uk)) and Roulotte Retreat in the Scottish Borders ([www.roulotteretreat.com](http://www.roulotteretreat.com)), which has 4 French roulette caravans for hire.
- **Retro caravans** for example, Vintage Vacations on the Isle of Wight ([www.vintagevacations.co.uk](http://www.vintagevacations.co.uk)), which has a collection of 13 vintage American Airstream and Spartan caravans for hire; Happy Days Retro in East Dorset ([www.happydaysrv.co.uk](http://www.happydaysrv.co.uk)) with four airstream caravans available for hire for holidays; and Mad Dogs and Vintage Vans in Herefordshire ([www.maddogsandvintagevans.co.uk](http://www.maddogsandvintagevans.co.uk)), which has four vintage caravans.

- **Shepherds Huts** for example, Herdy Huts in the Lake District ([www.herdyhuts.co.uk](http://www.herdyhuts.co.uk)) and Shepherds Huts South East ([www.shepherdshuts-southeast.com](http://www.shepherdshuts-southeast.com)) in Kent.
- **Safari Tents** for example, the Camping and Caravanning Club has four safari tents for hire at its club site at Gulliver's Kingdom theme park at Milton Keynes and one at its club site at Teversal in Nottinghamshire.
- **Bubble camping** in transparent inflatable tents was introduced in France in 2010 but has yet to come to the UK.
- **VW camper van pop-up camps** for example, Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles partnered with booking website LateRooms in 2014 to provide 6 VW California camper vans for hire on a nightly basis at Temple Island in Henley-on-Thames.
- **Cargo pods**, converted from shipping containers have been introduced at the Lee Wick Farm glamping and touring site at St Osyth, near Clacton-on-Sea in Essex ([www.leewickfarm.co.uk](http://www.leewickfarm.co.uk)).

### Treehouses

An interesting, although very niche self-catering accommodation product that has emerged in the UK in recent year, is self-catering treehouses. A number of these have been developed across the UK, primarily as individual units. They are generally very high quality. They clearly have appeal to the family market. Center Parcs has opened a small number of luxury two-storey treehouses at its holiday villages in Sherwood Forest and Longleat Forest. Aimed primarily at the family market the treehouses include 4 en-suite bedrooms; an open plan kitchen, dining and living area; a games den (accessed along a timber walkway) with plasma TV, pool table, games console, Blu Ray player and a bar area with fridge; and a private hot tub. ([www.centerparcs.co.uk/accommodation/By\\_Type/treehouse.jsp](http://www.centerparcs.co.uk/accommodation/By_Type/treehouse.jsp)). Forest Holidays (the Forestry Commission) has introduced luxury Golden Oak Treehouse Cabins at its forest cabin holiday sites in Cornwall, Forest of Dean, Blackwood Forest in Hampshire, Sherwood Forest, Thorpe Forest in Norfolk and North Yorkshire ([www.forestholidays.co.uk/cabins/cabins/treehouse.aspx](http://www.forestholidays.co.uk/cabins/cabins/treehouse.aspx)).

Other examples in the UK include:

- The Treehouse at Lavender Hill Holidays, Somerset ([www.lavenderhillholidays.co.uk/properties.asp?id=101](http://www.lavenderhillholidays.co.uk/properties.asp?id=101))
- Gwdy Hw, Powys, Wales ([www.canopyandstars.co.uk/britain/wales/powys/living-room/gwdy-hw](http://www.canopyandstars.co.uk/britain/wales/powys/living-room/gwdy-hw) )
- Brockloch Treehouse in Dumfries & Galloway ([www.brockloch.co.uk](http://www.brockloch.co.uk) );
- The Lime Treehouse, Worcestershire ([www.canopyandstars.co.uk/britain/england/worcestershire/little-comberton/lime-treehouse](http://www.canopyandstars.co.uk/britain/england/worcestershire/little-comberton/lime-treehouse) ).



## 8 Appendix 3 – Governance options

### 8.1 Governance options

Five governance options have been considered for the museums and attractions. These options reflect the current position of the service and have been assessed in advance of the findings of the wider leisure services review which is at an early stage.

The strengths and weaknesses of each option have been considered.

### 8.2 Museums and attractions stay within the Council

In this option, the museums and attractions would remain within the Tourism, Leisure and Culture Department of Monmouthshire County Council, managed as they are at present – the status quo.

The current management structure would need to deliver the recommendations in this report i.e. creation of the central service and site changes and improvements.

Strengths	Weaknesses
The services would remain within the Council, at least for the short term, whilst the wider leisure services review is completed. This would ensure financial viability in the short term whilst the wider implications for the service are assessed.	There are a number of weaknesses in the current structure which have been highlighted throughout this report. In particular, the lack of overall management of the museums service means that the sites operate largely independently, with little wider benefit across the county.
Although there would be some changes to staffing relating to the creation of the central service and the closure of one or two sites, there would be less disruption to staff than with some of the other options.	The lack of overall management of the service would make the creation of the new central service almost impossible to deliver. A new structure, with clear management responsibility, is essential if the new central service is to be created.
There are potentially some benefits in not changing the current structure whilst the wider review of leisure services takes place, allowing senior management to focus on the wider restructuring.	The current structure does not include provision for a county wide outreach and education service.
The second phase of national review may have implications for the museums. There could be some benefit in waiting to see what emerges before making any changes.	The management of the attractions is fragmented and inefficient with no economies of resource across the sites.
	There is insufficient commercial expertise to operate the trading company effectively. Recruitment of new skills would be required

	to deliver the commercial improvements recommended within this report.
	The head of service has a large number of direct reports which is time consuming and distracting at a time when focus is needed on the future of the service.

**Conclusions:**

There are some potential benefits in waiting for the findings of the leisure services review before making any changes. Given the immediate financial position however, and the likely shortfall in departmental budgets, urgent action is needed.

It is unlikely that the next phase of the national review will provide any short term solutions for the service and should not therefore be used as reason for delay.

### 8.3 Museums and attractions stay within the Council but are reorganised

In this option, the museums and attractions would remain within the Council at least for the short term, pending the wider leisure services review. It would continue to report to the Head of Tourism, Leisure and Culture. A new structure would be created beneath this comprising:

- Museums Manager with four reporting staff: Curator; Conservator; Learning Officer; Outreach & Exhibitions Officer. The Manager would also be responsible for visitor facing staff based at the two museums.
- Countryside Manager (existing post): responsible for a team of site maintenance staff responsible for Old Station and Caldicot Country Park.
- Oversight of an independent trading company – subject to the wider leisure review

Strengths	Weaknesses
A fit for purpose structure would be created to develop and run the museums service. This would include an overall manager and outreach and education staff. Staff at the two museum sites would be managed by the central service, ensuring that there was a joined approach to customer service delivery.	The changes will cause disruption to the staff in the short term with likely impacts on the service provided to users and visitors.
It would create a structure which could take a lead on planning for the new central service.	The changes will require input and resources which could distract senior management from the wider leisure review.

There would be economies of scale and sharing of expertise across the two countryside sites.	The new structure would need to be implemented in advance of the creation of the new building for the central service. One of the existing museums would need to operate as the 'museums HQ' in the interim, which would be a short term measure.
The new structure would remain part of the Council in the short term, providing financial security.	If funding cannot be secured for the new central store and premises, the service would need to be run out of an existing museum which is less than ideal. It is still a better option however than the current arrangement.
The service can be reviewed as part of the wider leisure services review.	
The current structure would be streamlined, reducing the number of direct reports to the head of service, freeing up capacity to focus on the wider leisure review and implementation.	

**Conclusion:**

This option provides a good interim solution. It would allow a new, fit for purpose structure to be created for the museums service which could then deliver the changes proposed to the operation and premises in the future.

It would also allow for more effective management of the countryside sites and provide greater efficiencies of staff resources. In reducing the number of direct reports to the head of service, it will allow greater focus on the leisure services review.

It is however an interim solution to some extent, pending the completion of the wider review. Further changes may be required, depending on the outcome.

As with any structural change, there will inevitably be some impact on the service although given the current stretched state of the operation, this seems necessary in the short term.

## 8.4 Museums and attractions are spun out into a single NPDO

In this option, a non profit distributing organisation (NDPO) is created to run the museums and attractions and associated services. It could be a registered charity, a mutual or a social enterprise. It would require its own independent structure but could 'buy' services from the Council.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>The new organisation could create its own ethos and culture appropriate for the type of service offered. It would not need to reflect the wider priorities of the Council or leisure services. The greater focus could theoretically lead to improved services although this is dependent on the availability of funds.</p>	<p>Precedents from elsewhere have proved how financially and operationally fragile small independent organisations of this type are. They are often subjected to greater cuts than in house council departments and are too small to have financial resilience on their own. It is very unlikely indeed that an independent organisation at this scale could survive without additional core funding. This is not available in the foreseeable future.</p>
<p>An NPDO could find it easier to attract more volunteers.</p>	<p>The cost of running the operation as an independent company at this scale would be around £250k higher than running it within the Council.</p>
<p>Some funding sources are only available to registered charities (although in reality, this rarely makes a material difference. Local authorities can bid for most of the more significant funding pots. It is usually the smaller project based grants which are restricted to registered charities).</p>	<p>There are insufficient income opportunities to offset the additional costs. As a result there would be no scope for service improvements. This assessment is borne out by the national review which highlights how modest the income generating opportunities are in most museums.</p>
<p>The new organization would have greater trading and operational flexibility which would reduce some costs and improve profitability in some areas. The additional costs however are significantly greater than the potential financial gains.</p>	<p>It would remove the opportunity to consider the service as part of the wider leisure review. The potential economies of scale offered by a bigger organisation would be lost.</p>

**Conclusion:**

Although there are some benefits to independence, in particular the ability to create a more flexible and fit for purpose organisational culture, financial stability would be needed to enable these to be realised. Creating an independent NPDO would increase costs at a time when cost savings need to be found.

An NDPO of this scale would be financially vulnerable and would threaten the long term viability of the service as a whole.

It should be reconsidered however as part of the wider leisure review where there would be different economies of scale and greater commercial opportunities.

## 8.5 Museums and attractions are spun out into two NPDOs

In this option, two non profit distributing organisations (NDPOs) would be created; one to run the museums and a second one to run the attractions and associated services. They could be registered charities, mutuals or social enterprises. Each would require its own independent structure but could 'buy' services from the Council.

Strengths	Weaknesses
The two new organisations could create appropriate cultures. The attractions could develop a more commercial ethos. The museums could focus on the community and learning benefits. The greater focus could theoretically lead to improved services although this would be dependent on the availability of funds.	All of the weakness outlined above would apply. The two organisations would be smaller scale and even more financially fragile. The additional level of subsidy that would be required has not been calculated but it would certainly be greater than £250k.
The other theoretical benefits outlined above would also apply: NPDOs could find it easier to attract more volunteers; there might be some small additional funding sources to bid for; they would be freed from Council restraints which could reduce costs. As in the option above however, the likelihood of these benefits being realised is very limited.	

### Conclusion:

This option is not viable.

## 8.6 Museums and attractions are handed over to local community based organisations

In this option, the Council would consult with the local communities in Abergavenny, Chepstow, Tintern, Caldicot and Monmouth and seek to find community based organisations to run all or some of the sites. The community organisations would be granted a lease for the operation. The assets would remain under council ownership.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Community run museums are very lean, operating entirely, or almost entirely, on volunteer labour. As a result they can prove to be financially sustainable with very little public sector support. They can also find it easier to recruit volunteer support than local authorities.	Volunteer run museums are only able to offer a fairly limited service. They are unable to provide education, outreach and community engagement that is offered by a professional museums service. It would allow little scope for service development.



<p>Local communities take ownership of the services that they run and therefore feel a greater level of commitment to their future. Tensions between the community and the local authority can be reduced (although there are examples of tensions being increased, particularly when funds are required for development).</p>	<p>Volunteer run organisations can be fragile and are often dependent on one or two key individuals. When these people are no longer involved, the organisation can struggle to survive. In these cases, the assets are handed back to the local authority. This has happened before in Monmouthshire.</p>
<p>There are examples of successful locally run museums in the county, such as the Usk Museum of Rural Life.</p>	<p>A number of the sites have significant capital liabilities which would still need to be met by the Council.</p>
<p>In some locations there is already strong community interest in the sites.</p>	<p>It may prove difficult, or impossible, to find (or create) suitable bodies to run any or all of the sites. It seems very unlikely that all of the sites could be 'handed over' in this way. The remaining sites would remain under Council operation and solutions would need to be found for them.</p>
	<p>The experience would be very fragmented and disjointed for users and visitors with different operating hours and services.</p>

### Conclusions:

There is real value in a greater level of engagement with local communities, particularly at some of the sites where there have been historic issues. It is very unlikely however, that all, or even several of the sites could be handed over to local community organisations to run. It may be possible in some of the locations, but unlikely in all cases.

Perhaps more importantly, handing over the museums in particular to local organisations would lose the professional service which currently exists. They would become relatively simple museum buildings with limited education, outreach and engagement services. This would not deliver the ambition for the service which is outlined as part of this brief.

It is also only a partial solution. It is very unlikely, and indeed probably not desirable, to hand the two attractions over to community organisations at the current time with their current operational issues and capital development requirements. Solutions would still need to be found therefore for parts of the service.

There is also always a danger that the assets would be handed back to the Council in the future, a situation which has happened previously.

## 8.7 Recommendations

Having considered the five options, the recommendation is that the service is retained within the Council in the short term but is reorganised to allow a more efficient and effective management structure to be created immediately. These changes will be needed to implement the recommendations in this report.

It will also create a more appropriate reporting structure which will allow the head of service to focus on the wider leisure services review.

The creation of the trading company should be delayed, pending the findings of the wider review.