



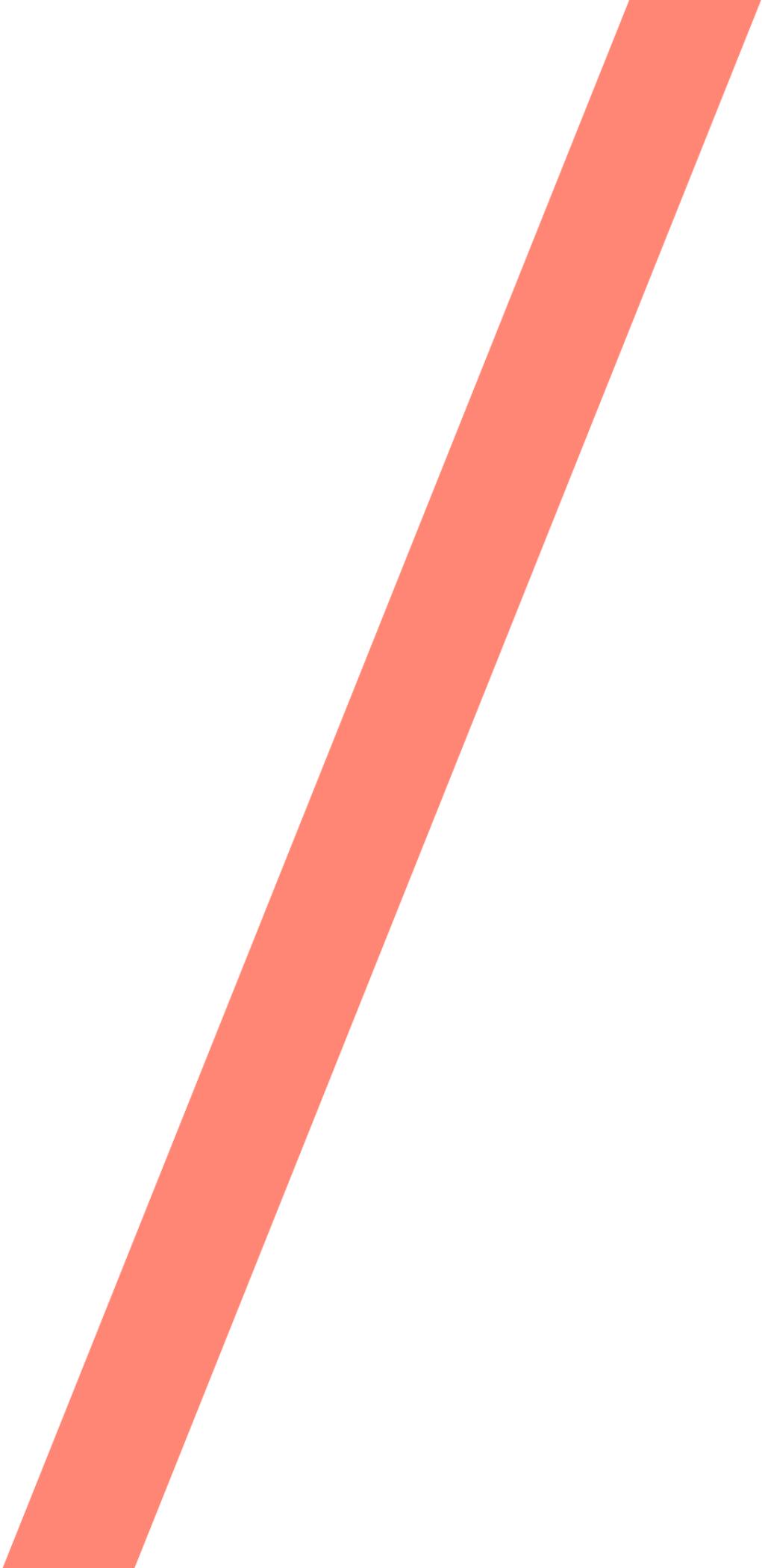
REPORT FOR:

UNDERCURRENTS: ON OUR
DOORSTEP

OUTDOOR SPACES

SEPTEMBER 2021

ALT/Architecture



INTRODUCTION + BRIEF



INTRODUCTION + BRIEF

ALT-Architecture is one of three creative practitioners commissioned by the UNDERCURRENTS - *ON OUR DOORSTEP* Partnership, to work with the partnership and local residents to draw out cultural connections across the Aber Valley (Abertridwr and Senghenydd) to reveal the benefits for communities of the area's cultural and environmental assets.

The aim of the project is to identify and make visible contemporary narratives of place, and to explore how art and cultural activity may enable communities to connect with their locale in new ways that enhance everyday life.

ALT-Architecture was commissioned specifically to engage with local individuals and groups through dialogue, debate and participatory activities to develop creative methodologies for exploring outdoor spaces. This was to include mapping and making visible the area's cultural and environmental assets, towards identifying opportunities for arts and cultural interventions that may highlight, enhance or make use of them for the benefit of local communities.

We were particularly attracted to this opportunity to develop an arts and cultural-led approach to mapping, place making and community engagement in the Aber Valley, because it aligns well with our practice's ethos, interests and previous experience.

We seek to work at the 'edge' of architecture, particularly where it overlaps with the disciplines of art and landscape, because this liberates our curiosity and imagination and makes our practice more exciting. This approach allows us to find alternative and creative ways to explore places and landscapes and engage with communities.

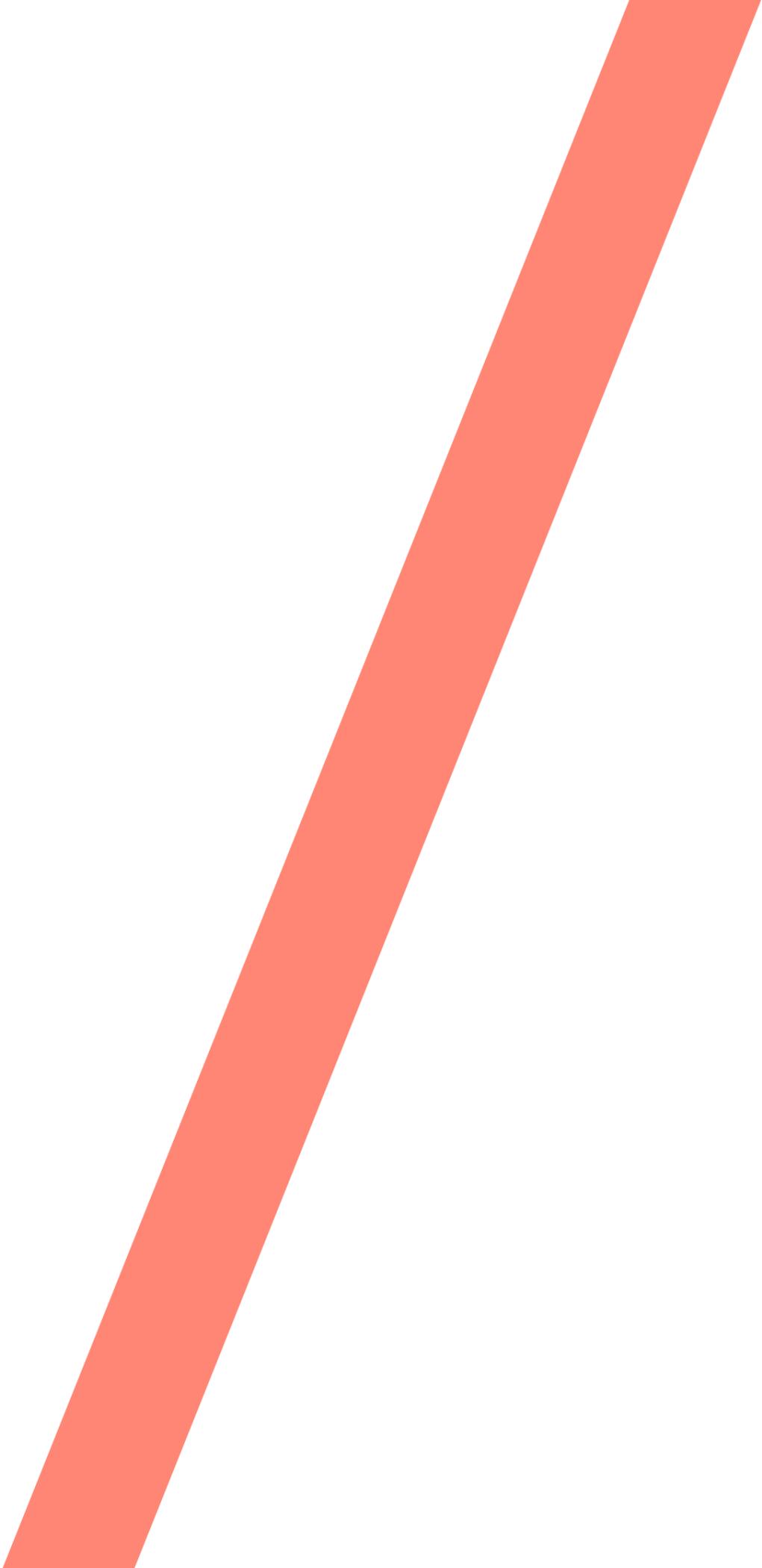
We recognise the role that landscapes can play in promoting well being and enriching people's experiences of a place. We are fascinated by the complex connection and relationship between people, place and landscapes, and enjoy exploring this in our work to create meaningful places which add delight to everyday life.

KEY OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of the process and outcomes of this initial phase of research and development through creative intervention is to:

- Raise awareness of and interest in the project across a broad and diverse range of groups and individuals in the Aber Valley;
- Elicit ideas, reveal local assets, needs and aspirations;
- Take a critical approach to working in the public realm that is responsive to the specific context of the project, locale and participating communities and moves beyond simple representation and ameliorative activities.
- Produce a high quality, aesthetic presentation/documentation that captures and communicates findings to feed into the development of and sourcing of funding for a future longer-term programme of arts interventions that respond to the needs, ideas and assets revealed through this initial phase of work.

This report documents the first phase of what is hoped will be a larger longer-term programme of works, that will have sustainable/long-term impacts on the Aber Valley area and its residents.



**INITIAL RESEARCH +
UNDERSTANDING**

INITIAL RESEARCH + UNDERSTANDING

In order to understand and interpret the context of the Aber Valley and its outdoor spaces at various scales and various levels, we began the project by visiting and exploring the valley for ourselves. We see this understanding of place as vital in informing the engagement ideas, conversations and future proposals, and a necessary step before conceiving the engagement activities.

Our initial research involved a combination of fieldwork techniques as follows:

- The landscape and settlement was walked and recorded to enable perception and an intuitive response to sense making
- Desktop research encompassing a number of fields of investigation including anthropology, history, ecology, etymology, to understand the relationship between the landscape and human intervention,

Walking route images:

- 1 St. Ilan's Church, Eglwysilan
- 2 View of spoil tip, Llanbradach from Mynydd Meio
- 3 Traces of Senghenydd Dyke, Mynydd Meio
- 4 View down the Aber Valley from Mynydd Meio
- 5 View over Senghenydd from foothills of Mynydd Eglwysilan
- 6 Industrial relics in the landscape, Senghenydd
- 7 Green amenity space along the valley floor, Abertridwr
- 8 Cycleway, Abertridwr
- 9 Housing with ad hoc allotment spaces to rear along Nant Cwm Parc
- 10 Land at Ss Peter and Cenydd church
- 11 Guerilla gardening/wildflower patch along High Street.
- 12 Under utilised green space, Byrn Aber estate
- 13 Green space and un-managed woodland, Abertridwr
- 14 Dan y Graig allotment spaces
- 15 Privately owned/run Dan y Graig allotment spaces
- 16 Forgotten space, Senghenydd
- 17 Disused quarry and allotment spaces, Senghenydd
- 18 Forgotten space, former school site, Senghenydd
- 19 Under-used green space, Alexandra Terrace
- 20 Forgotten space behind Alexandra Terrace
- 21 Forgotten space, redundant land at former Universal Colliery
- 22 Forgotten space, redundant land an former Universal Colliery
- 23 Under-used green space in front of Parc Terrace
- 24 Under-used community green space, Plas Cwm Parc



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WALKING + RECORDING

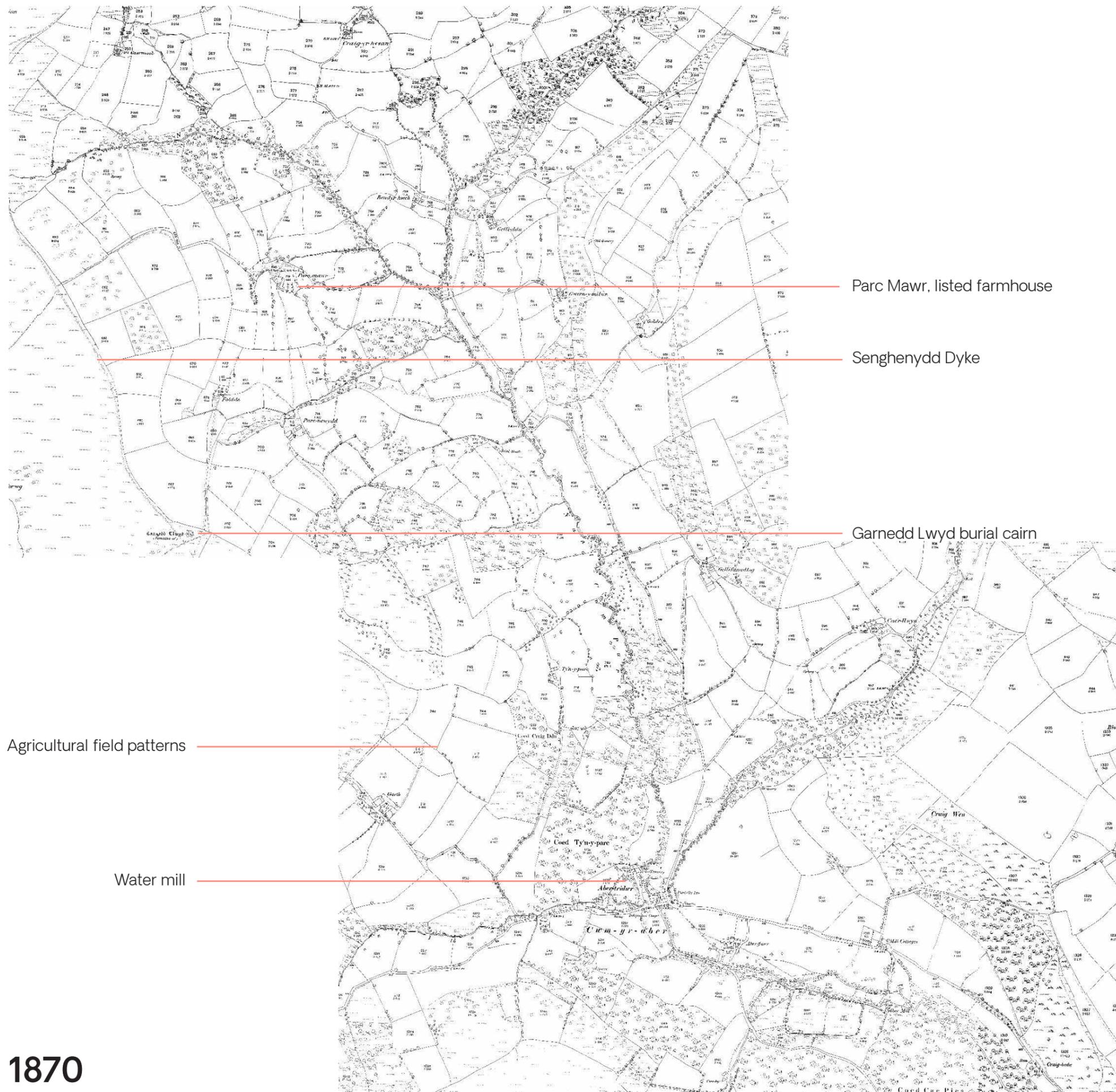
Walking the landscape gave us a better sense and understanding of the existing environmental and cultural assets of Aber Valley, which can only be achieved by experiencing a place first hand. Walking allowed us to experience the topography, observe nature and begin to 'read' the history of the landscape and morphology of the towns.

The process allowed us to start 'mapping' those existing assets which have potential to contribute to improved health, well being and social connection in the valley.

We were also able identify some 'forgotten spaces' and potential sites for future 'interventions'.



A view of Aber Valley from Mynydd Meio



LANDSCAPE LAYERS

For many centuries, that landscape of the Aber Valley has been shaped by and provided a resource for the people who inhabited it. Evidence of this history is found in the layers of marks which can still be found in the landscape today.

Garnedd Lwyd and Carneddi Llwydion are **burial cairns** probably dating from the bronze age.

Senghenydd Dyke is a large earth bank and ditch enclosing Aber Valley. It is thought to have been constructed in the 13th Century to enclose a large **deer park** serving nearby Caerphilly Castle. The park would have been the setting for highly formalised aristocratic hunts.

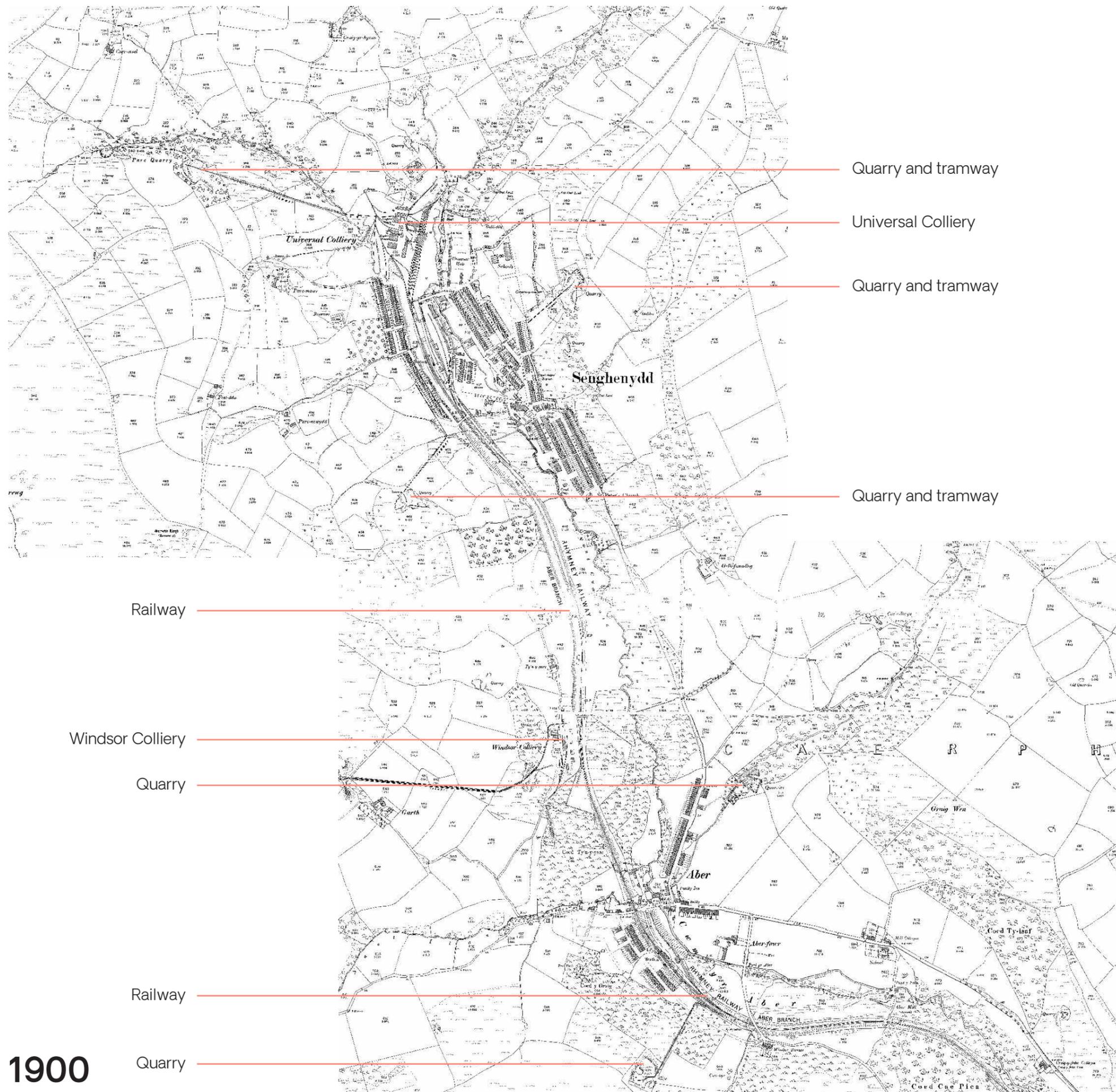
Before the industrial revolution and the arrival of coal mining, land use in the valley would have been mainly **agricultural**. The old title maps show a pattern of fields across the landscape. Overlaying old and current maps shows that many of the field boundaries remain today, and these can be seen on the hills surrounding the towns. Parc Mawr is a Grade II Listed 17th Century farmhouse to the west of Senghenydd. It is 'listed as a sub-medieval farmhouse and attached outbuilding, of a type once common in the area, retaining early plan form and detail'. (Cadw)

The name Abertridwr is from the Welsh language, meaning 'the mouth of the three waters'. **Water** would have been an important resource in pre-industrial times. The 1870 map shows a water mill at what is now the centre of Abertridwr.

Agricultural field patterns

Water mill

1870



LANDSCAPE LAYERS

Coal mining has probably had the biggest impact on the landscape of Aber Valley in recent history. The Universal Colliery in Senghenydd and the Windsor Colliery in Abertridwr attracted hundreds of new people to the area and led to the urbanisation of the valley floor. Although most evidence of the actual mines and colliery buildings is now gone, the communities of Senghenydd and Abertridwr are a legacy of the industry.

Numerous **stone quarries** can be found on the hills surrounding the valley. Large quantities of stone would have been required to build new houses and infrastructure to support the coal mining industry. There is evidence of tramways which transported stone down from the quarries to where it was required for building.

A **railway** was constructed to support the coal industry, with stations at Abertridwr and Senghenydd. Since the railway has closed, a cycle and foot path has been created along the route of the disused railway.

There is now scope to make better use of the landscape and outdoor spaces to support and promote **health and well being**.

1900

LANDSCAPE LAYERS

Top left: traces of Garnedd Lwyd and Senghenydd Dyke

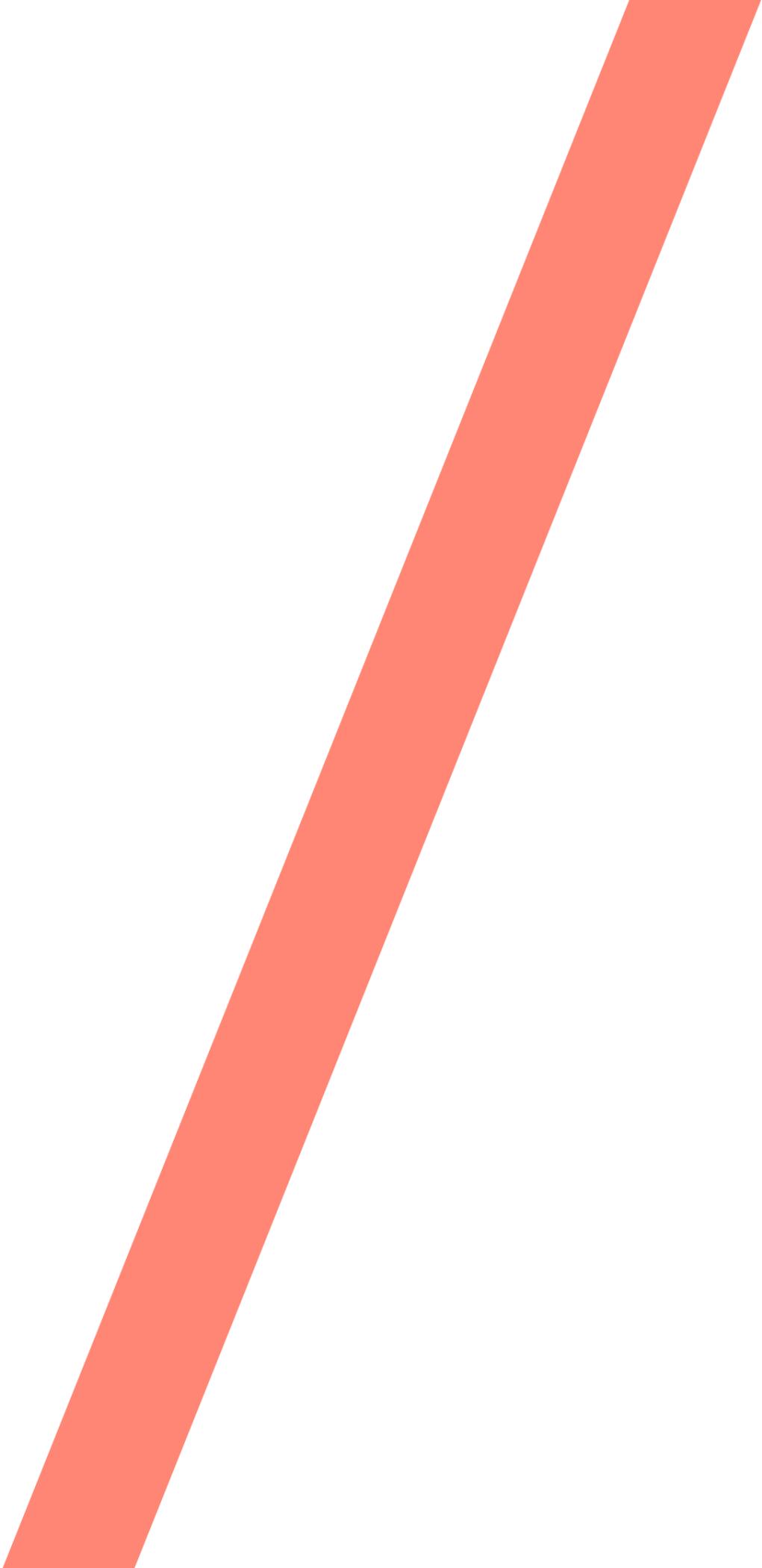
Top right: traces of Senghenydd Dyke



Bottom left: old agricultural field patterns are still visible in the landscape as hedges and stone walls



Bottom right: disused stone quarries are visible all around the edges of the valley



**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT**



26.08.21 - 30.08.21
Free and fun activities for all ages

26TH AUGUST
ABERTRIDWR SQUARE
From 1pm - 7pm

27TH AUGUST
SENGHENYDD SQUARE
From 1pm - 7pm

- join the free activities
- talk to us about Aber Valley's outdoor spaces
- share your photos and maps with us.

WE'LL HAVE SOME FREE AND REFRESHING DRINKS AT OUR STAND ON THE ABOVE DAYS



PHOTO CHALLENGE



GUIDE TO GETTING LOST
(IN A PLACE YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW)



POSTCARDS FROM 'MY FANTASTIC ABER VALLEY'

These events form part of UNDERCURRENTS - ON OUR DOORSTEP - a partnership project between Undercurrents - Arts in the Aber Valley community group, Caerphilly County Borough Council and Addo, which is funded by Arts Council of Wales Connect & Flourish grant fund for the development of collaborative proposals between organisations, individuals and creative professionals.

Additional funding has been kindly given by the Integrated Wellbeing Network (IWN), which is keen to support community wellbeing opportunities that emanate from across the project.

ALT / Architecture



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A key objective of the project was to work in an engaged and collaborative way with the communities who best understand the Aber Valley and surrounding landscape. We believe that a more meaningful connection is made if the design process is founded on two way dialogue.

We organised a series of events to engage with the community during August 2021. These aimed to develop creative story based mapping approaches, the identification of new narratives and potential sites for future interventions, and be the first step in empowering and engaging the community to take ownership of their outdoor spaces and participate in creative co-design initiatives.

We were in-situ in the Aber Valley in key locations in Abertridwr and Senghenydd on the 26th and 27th August, ready and willing to talk to the community about the project and their locality and host our creative mapping events, at our stand.

The three events, held over a 5 day period, were focussed around:

- * A photo Challenge
- * Guide to Getting Lost (in a place you thought you knew)
- * Postcards from 'My fantastic Aber Valley'.

The events and the project and invitation to come and have a conversation with us were advertised by posters displayed around the villages, local community social media pages, and by email invitation.

The following community organisations were invited to attend:

- 1st Senghenydd Scout group
- Aber Valley Community Allotment
- Aber Valley Community Council
- Cllr John Roberts
- Cllr Charlotte Bishop
- Cllr John Taylor
- Aber Valley Heritage Group
- Aber Valley Women's Institute
- Aber Valley YMCA
- Abertridwr Community Centre
- Abertridwr Community Church
- Senghenydd Community Church
- Senghenydd United Reform Church
- Senghenydd Youth Drop-in Centre
- Abertridwr Library
- Cwmaber Infant school
- Cwmaber Junior school
- Ysgol Ifor Bach



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A handful of adults visited our stand during the two engagement days, and we had a few useful discussions. It was disappointing that more of the groups did not engage, but perhaps this was because it was the summer holidays. Any future phases will target conversations with relevant groups.

However, the events and our presence in the valley attracted engagement with many of the local children. They enjoyed doing the 'Postcard from My Fantastic Aber Valley' activity, and we were able to chat with them about their ideas for a fantastic outdoor space in the valley. The post cards and our conversations gave us valuable insight from the children's perspective. It seemed that no one had previously asked the children about outdoor spaces and what they would like to see happen in the valley, and they felt pleased to be involved and that their opinions were valued.

(Photographs on this page by Jon Pountney)





1. GROW



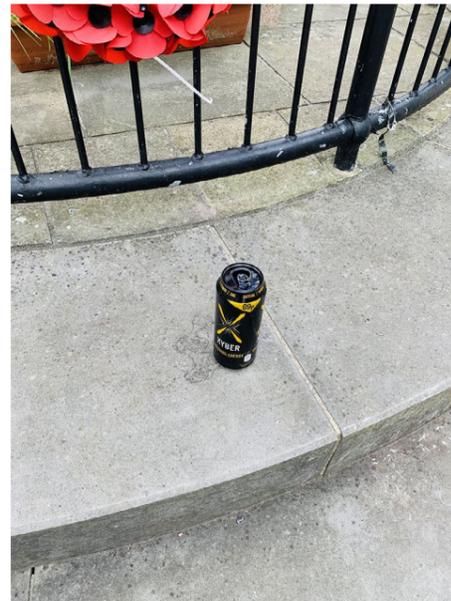
2. FORGOTTEN SPACE



3. COMMUNITY



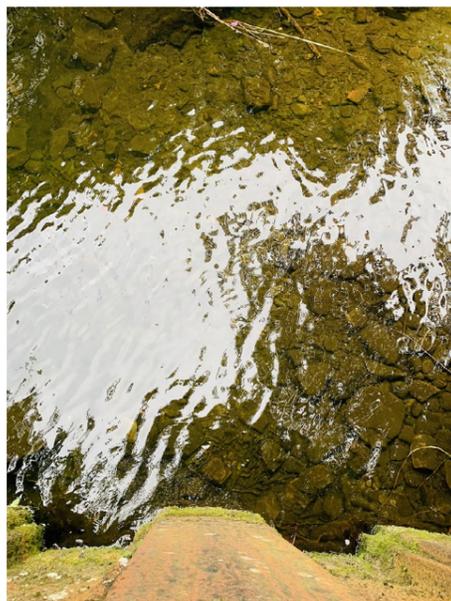
4. ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE



5. ANTI-SOCIAL



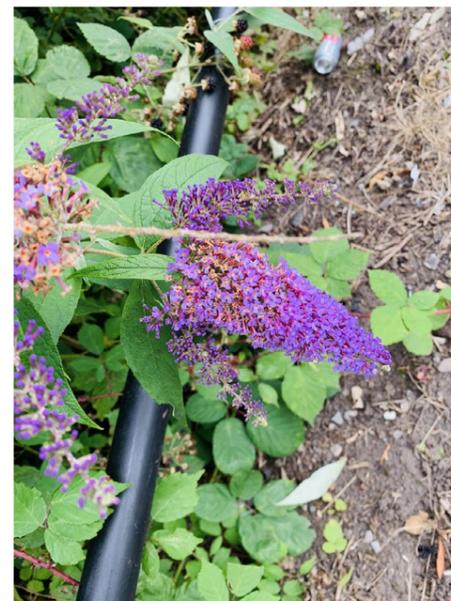
6. GREEN



7. REFLECTION



8. OUT OF PLACE



9. DELIGHT

PHOTO CHALLENGE

The photo challenge was based on the idea of a photo marathon, and the objective was to encourage the local community to explore the Aber Valley from a new perspective, using imagination to creatively respond to 9 themes in 9 photographs. The themes were as follows:

1. GROW
2. FORGOTTEN SPACE
3. COMMUNITY
4. ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE
5. ANTI-SOCIAL
6. GREEN
7. REFLECTION
8. OUT OF PLACE
9. DELIGHT

The objective was that the resulting photographs would be a unique and personal interpretation of the themes, that would reveal to us through conversation and the images, the locally distinct character of the Aber Valley and its community.

The photographs and resulting dialogue around them help tell the story of the Aber Valley in a compelling way.

26.08.21 - 30.08.21



**PHOTO
CHALLENGE**
ABER VALLEY

9 THEMES
9 PHOTOS

*A photography adventure
competition for all ages.*

*Explore and discover the
outdoor spaces on your
doorstep. See your valley
from a new perspective.*

- 1. GROW**
- 2. FORGOTTEN SPACE**
- 3. COMMUNITY**
- 4. ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE**
- 5. ANTI-SOCIAL**
- 6. GREEN**
- 7. REFLECTION**
- 8. OUT OF PLACE**
- 9. DELIGHT**

THE CHALLENGE

Take just one photo for each of the nine themes. Use your imagination. We are looking for your unique interpretation of the themes, so get creative and get out and explore.

WHO CAN TAKE PART?

The competition is open to anyone living or working in the Aber Valley (Senghenydd, Abertridwr and the surrounding landscape). All ages are welcome. You can enter by yourself, as a family or as a small team of friends. You don't need to have any photography training, or even a fancy camera. The camera on your phone will do!

*The winning Photo Challenge entry by
Ethan Collins, Logan Jones and Finley
Davies*



FORGOTTEN SPACE



GROW



ANTI-SOCIAL



ANTI-SOCIAL



DELIGHT



OUT OF PLACE



GROW



REFLECTION



COMMUNITY



FORGOTTEN SPACE

PHOTO CHALLENGE - OUTCOMES

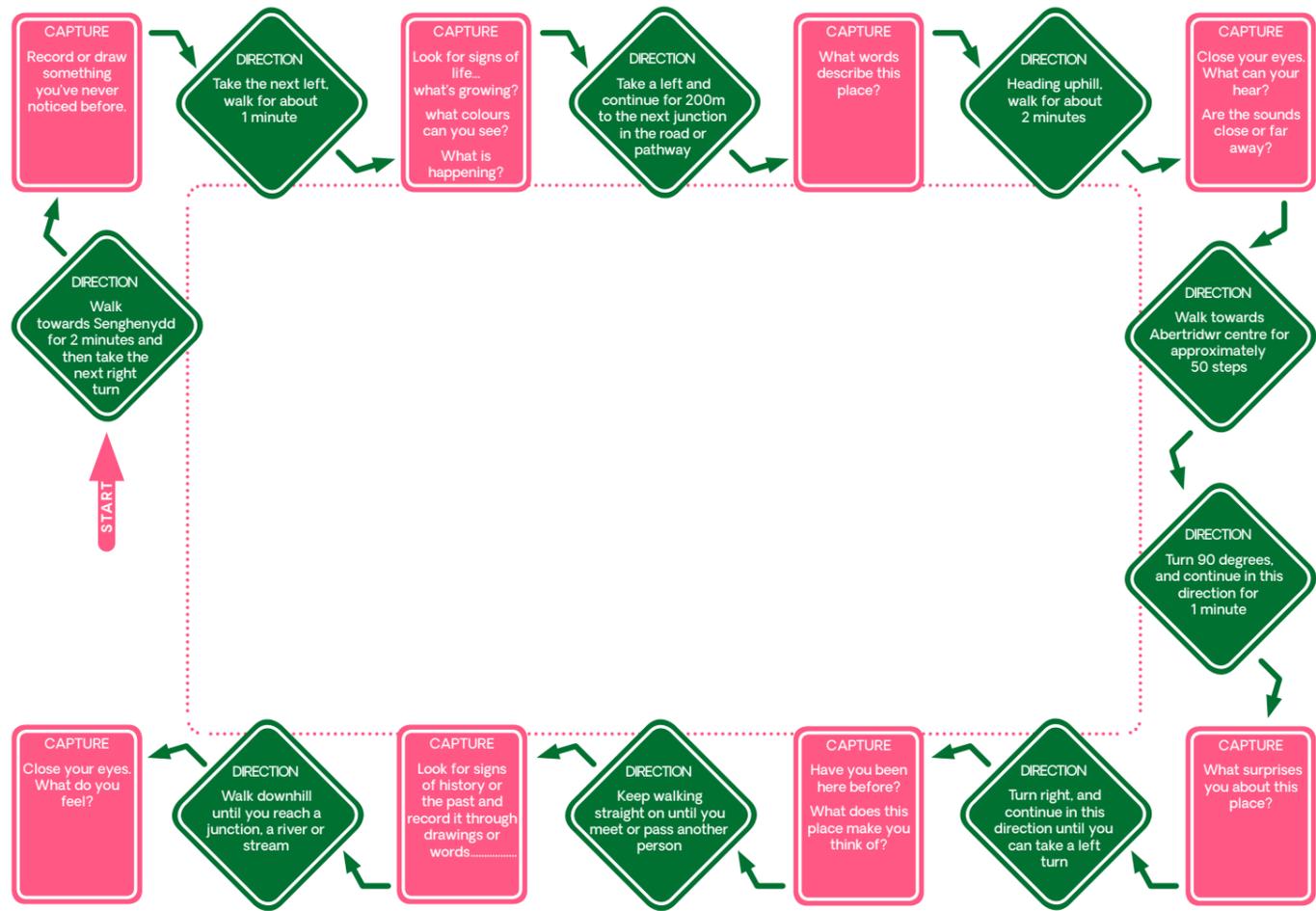
The responses to the Photo Challenge gave us a number of useful insights:

- Forgotten spaces which could become potential sites were identified: the redundant sawmill site which is located where the Universal Colliery once was; land around the disused Salvation Army building; and back lane spaces.
- People take delight in nature, flowers and wildlife.
- Community means different things to different people. To some it is about neighbours, to others it is about getting together with friends.
- The photos submitted for the 'anti-social' and 'out of place' themes identified problems with littering and neglected public spaces.

Participants of the Photo Challenge also made the following observations and comments:

- There are many examples of 'creative ingenuity' in the area, especially the old sheds made from anything to hand.
- There is a lack of activities for adults to do outdoors to keep active and healthy. Children enjoy the splash park, but it would be nice to have something for parents to do too.
- It would be good to have a better, safer cycle route out of the top of Aber Valley onto the moors. The existing narrow zigzag road can be dangerous.
- Walking and cycling on the common land should be encouraged. Welcoming paths connecting the residential areas with the landscape would help.
- The upper allotment at the top of the valley used to be a market garden, but is sadly not used for growing anymore.
- In the future it would be great to see... a community orchard or series of orchards; a wood or copse with trees grown from local seed; a wider pavement between The Fours and Nant y Parc school; a community farm; a business growing something in the valley and making use of unused land; a small, alternative place to bunk or stay in the landscape.

A selection of photographs from the runner-up entries by Emily Allin, Sian Northey and Rachel Gladstone.



GUIDE TO GETTING LOST (*in a place you thought you knew*)

The idea behind the 'Guide to Getting Lost' is based around setting a series of random prompts to follow, intended to lead participants on a unplanned walk, potentially along routes they wouldn't ordinarily take.

The guide to Getting Lost is a way for the community to let go of control and intentionally get 'lost' in their locality. The objective is that participants would lose themselves in a familiar geography, discover new or forgotten outdoor places in the Aber Valley, enriching the mapping process.

Participants were encouraged to see their surroundings with fresh eyes by following the unfamiliar prompts they were given. This process encouraged contributors to have conversations with us about their area, allowing us to hear their reflections on space, place and community.

Each participant was asked to draw their own personal maps of the routes taken, and to give names to the places stopped at along the way, recording observations and experiences.

This enables us to build up a deeper understanding of place through the mapping exercise, and to look beyond the technical and physical representation of a place; to explore the outdoor spaces of the Aber Valley through experience, culture, and the fictional imagination of stories, myth and legend, as well as through more orthodox methods of measuring and recording.



- 1 Start your walk from your favourite place in the Aber Valley
- 2 Follow the **DIRECTION** prompts on the map
- 3 At each of the **CAPTURE** prompts, complete the task, and draw the route you have taken to get to this point.
- 4 Next, give a name to each place you stop at, and label this on your map.
- 5 Complete all the directions and prompts, and note down where you finish.



POSTCARDS FROM 'MY FANTASTIC Aber Valley'

'My Fantastic Aber Valley' celebrates our connection with nature and outdoor spaces in lots of different creative ways.

The community were asked to think about their favourite place in nature, real or imagined. This could be a real outdoor place in Aber Valley, a place they have visited in the world, or a magical place in their imagination.

Participants were asked to think about specific things such as "what's special about My Fantastic Place?" What amazing things are there? What exciting things happens there? How does it make you feel? What can you see, hear and smell?

And, using the blank postcards provided, to find a creative way to show or tell us about their Fantastic Place. This could be a drawing or painted picture, a collage, a story or write a poem.

The intention was to add the Fantastic Places, real or imagined to our project map, and to help us understand the community's dreams and wishes for the future.

As well as learning from the images the children drew on their postcards, we were also able to chat with them about the activities they like to do outdoors and the kind of places they would like to see more of in the future.

The following pages show the postcards, followed by some notes and anecdotes from our conversations.



A postcard from...



MY FANTASTIC

ABER
VALLEY

'My Fantastic Aber Valley' celebrates our connection with nature and outdoor spaces in lots of different creative ways.

26TH AUGUST

ABERTRIDWR SQUARE 1pm - 7pm

27TH AUGUST

SENGHENYDD SQUARE 1pm - 7pm

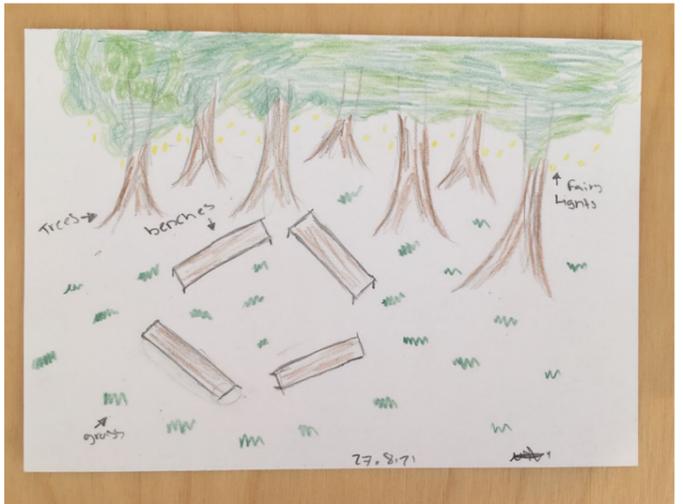
- 1 Think about your **favourite** place in **nature, real** or **imagined**.
This could be a real outdoor place in Aber Valley, a place you have visited in the world, or a magical place in your imagination.
- 2 Ask yourself, "what's **special** about **My Fantastic Place**?"
What amazing things are there? What exciting things happens there? How does it make you feel? What can you see, hear and smell?
- 3 Using a blank **postcard**, find a **creative** way to **show** or **tell** us about your Fantastic Place.
You could draw or paint a picture, make a collage, tell a story or write a poem.
- 4 **'Send'** your postcard by **posting it** into one of the special My Fantastic Aber Valley **postcard post boxes**
Send before 10pm on 30th August. You can find the post boxes at our stall or some of the local shops.
- 5 We'll add your **Fantastic Places** to our **project map**.
You can create your My Fantastic Places postcard at our stall, or take it away to do at home. All ages welcome.





Kwag

Wales





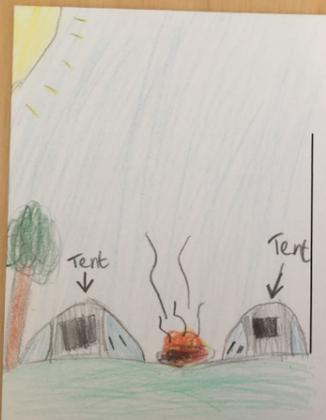
Its a bit like a camping site, but its a place where you can sit and chat with your friends and enjoy nature.





Ethan C

 This is where me
 and my friends
 go camping.






Mafnie

Colourful houses in my street in Sengherydd





kylan

10

 A beautiful beach with waves oh so high.



Luke
Age 5

Looking
for bugs
in Nans
garden

ABER VALLEY
JULY 2014



My legend says, that
if you dig under the
Sands of Egypt. A
little meadow lies
under an artificial sky.

Amelia
10

A mysterious place in
a fantasy land, through the
deserts of Egypt, full through
the sand.

ABER VALLEY
JULY 2014

I Like playing
Rugby with
my friends.

ABER VALLEY
JULY 2014

This is where
my friends
do camping
Finley

ABER VALLEY
JULY 2014

Top rock

ABER VALLEY
JULY 2014



Kay

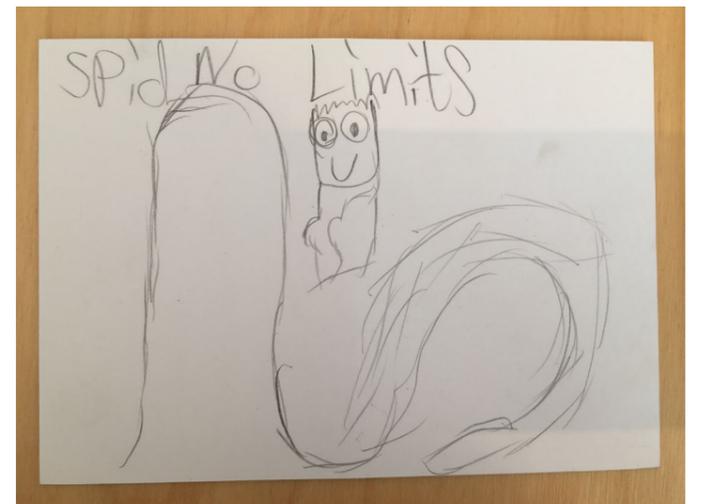
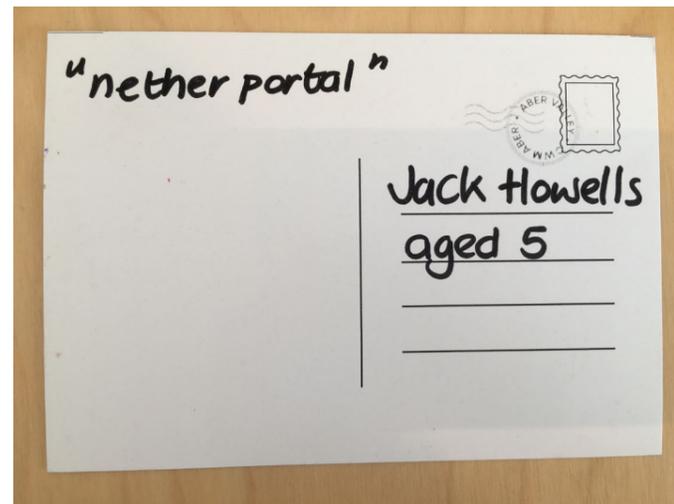
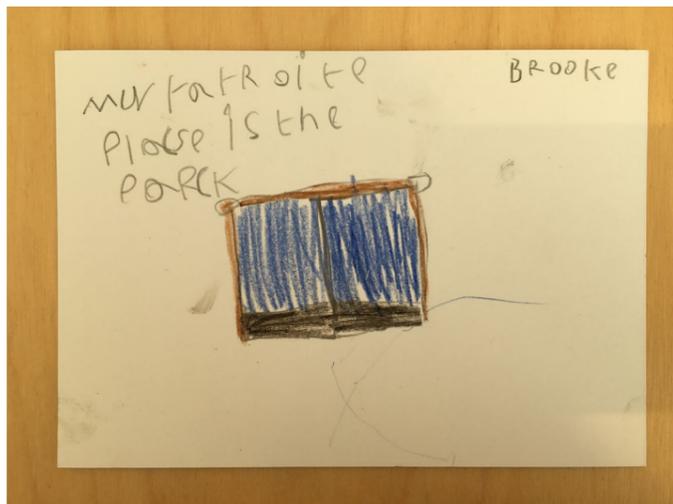
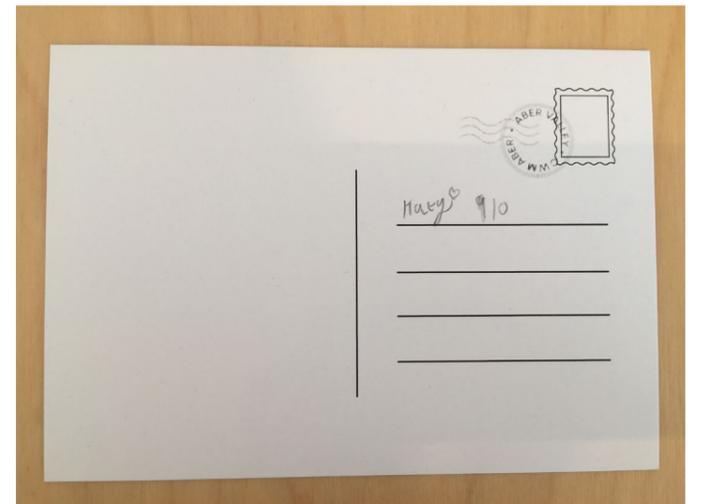
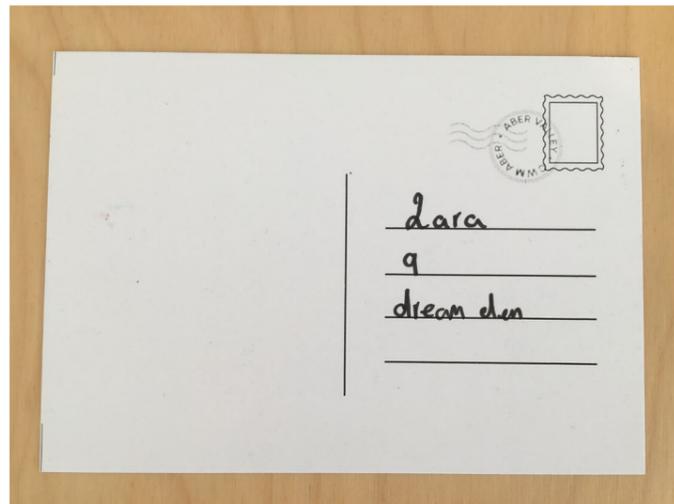
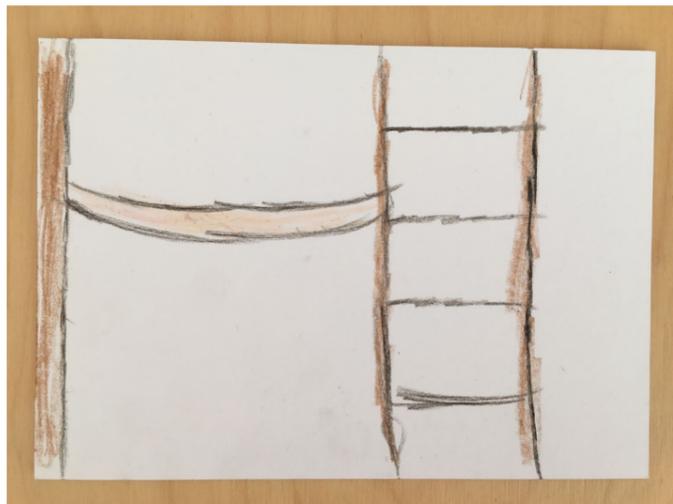
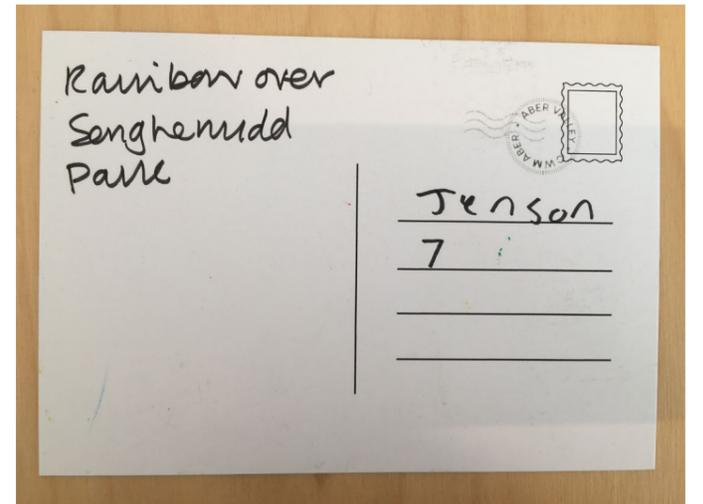
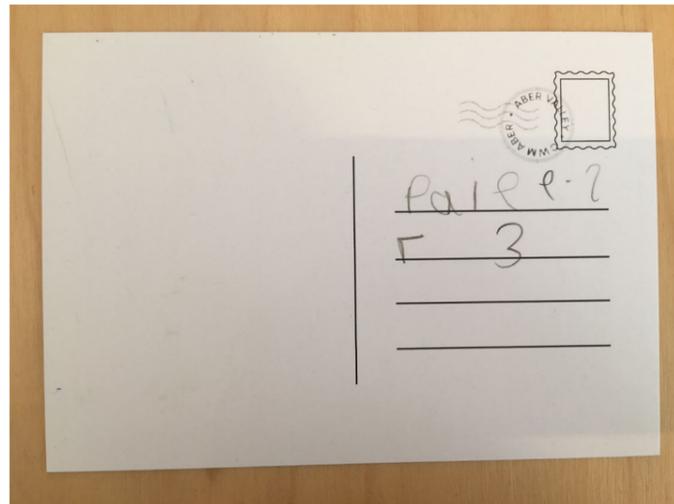
ABER VALLEY
JULY 2014



"mine craft
candy seaside village"

Liam Howells
aged 4

ABER VALLEY
JULY 2014



"I'm not allowed to play on the street outside my house because it's dangerous. The road is too busy with cars."

Safe places for children to play in the street or close to home.

A 'portal' to another place - somewhere for children to escape to.

Places to go camping and spend time with friends in nature.

The splash park, formal playgrounds and sports pitches are already enjoyed by many of the children.

Places at the seaside or near water are calming and tranquil.

Sitting round a camp fire.

"We enjoy wildlife, gardening and growing food but we would like someone to teach us more about them; maybe an after school club."

Very young children have to walk quite far and cross busy roads to get to the parks.

Places to make dens, explore and have adventures.

"It's fun to go foraging on the hills. We sometimes collect wimberries and blackberries."

Outdoor meeting places for groups and clubs, such as the Scouts, would be welcome. There is currently nowhere safe for the Scouts to have a campfire.

Rope swings over the stream and waterfalls are fun places to hang out with friends.

"I like to relax and enjoy the hills and clouds."

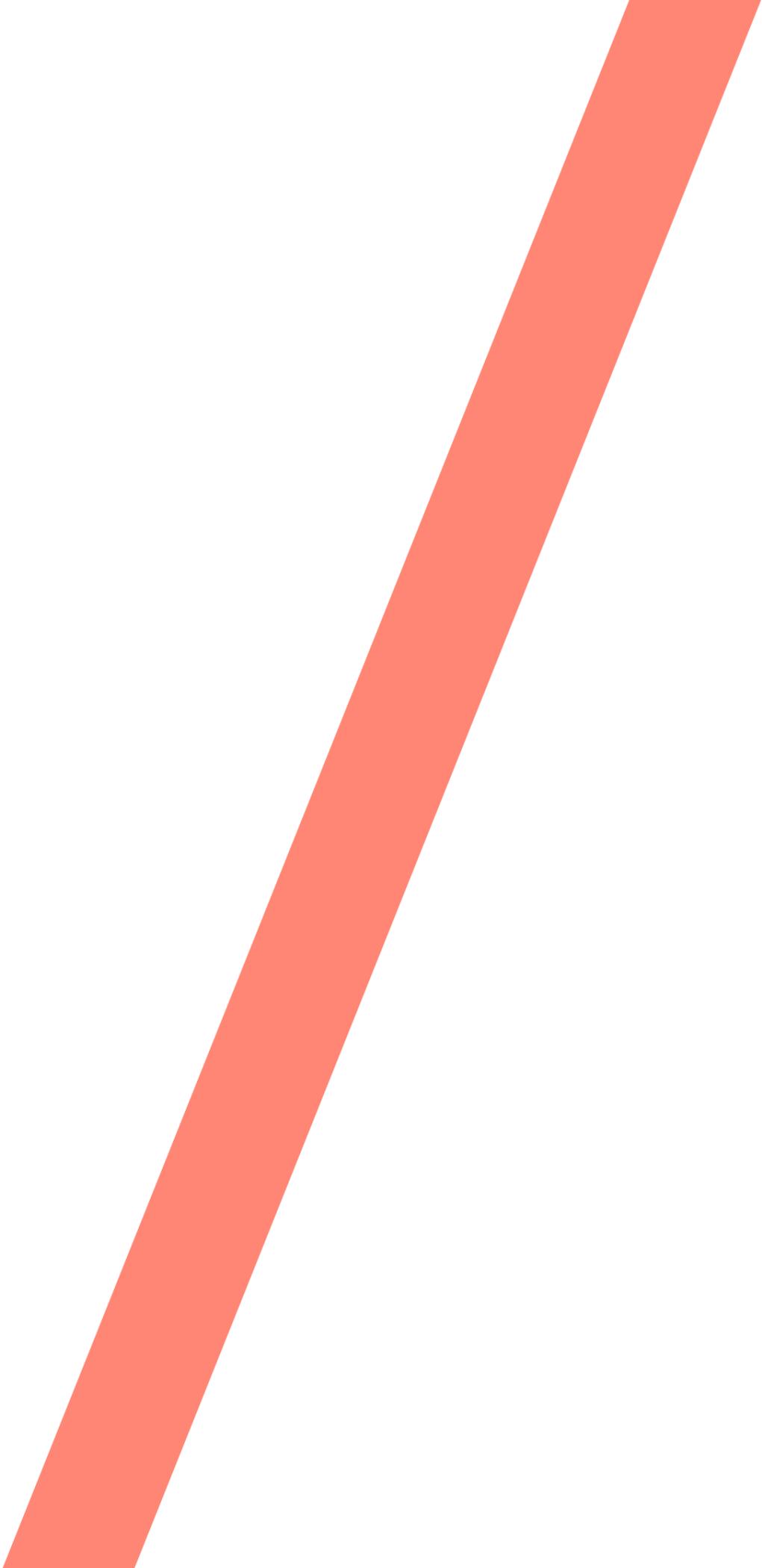
A peaceful, magical place to sit and chat with friends and enjoy nature.

'Top Rock' is a popular place with rocks and a waterfall which many children like to visit.

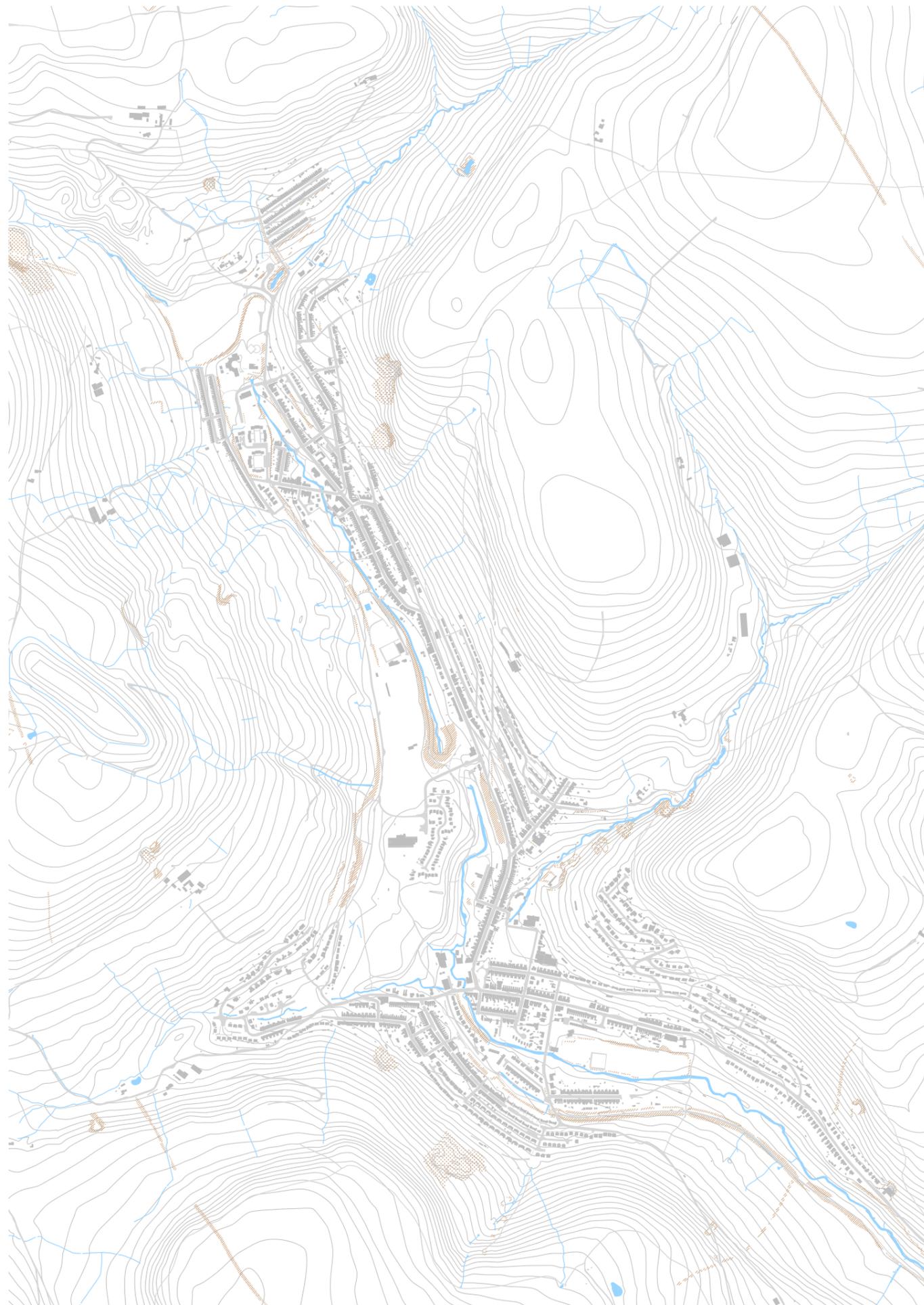
"I would like there to be a bike shop so I can get my broken bike fixed and use it to cycle to the park."

Formal play space exist but children would like more places for adventure and imaginative play.

"I would like a theme park in Aber Valley." Places which encourage adventure and risk-taking in play.



FINDINGS



FINDINGS - LANDSCAPE ASSETS

The project findings bring together our initial research and understanding with our interpretation of the outputs of the community engagement activities. These allowed us to start mapping assets, and have informed our proposal for a multi-layered and long-term masterplan for outdoor spaces in the valley.

We identified many elements of the existing landscape of Aber Valley which have the potential to contribute to a strategy which will benefit local communities by improving health and well being and social connection.

TOPOGRAPHY

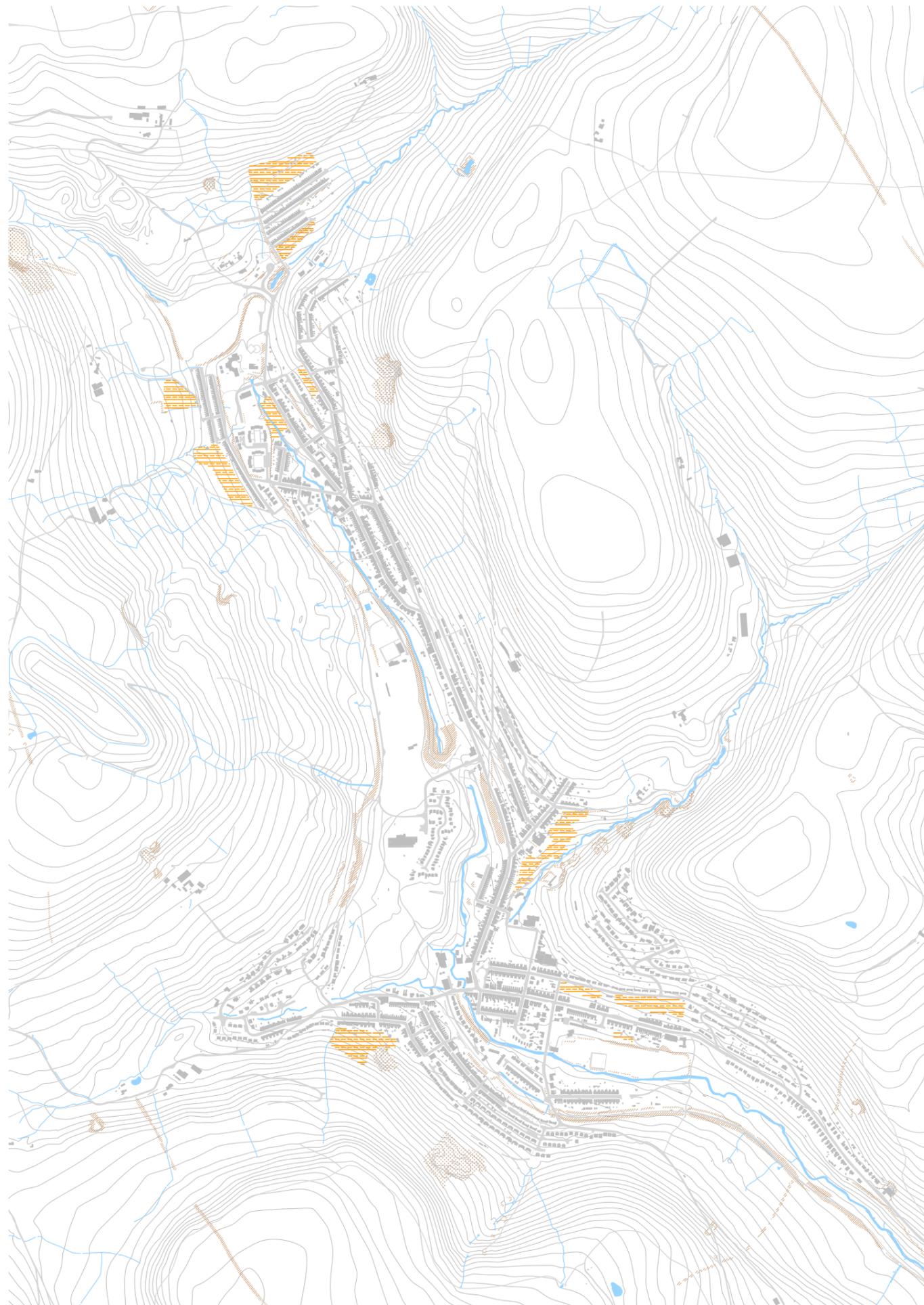
The urbanised areas of Senghenydd and Abertridwr sit at the bottom of the valley. The sloping sides of the valley are relatively gentle, meaning the hilltops could be very accessible on foot. The high points offer spectacular vistas across the valley.

WATER

The network of streams and rivers which run through the valley are an important asset, and offer an opportunity to connect with nature. Children said they enjoyed playing or camping near the water, swinging on rope swings over the stream and visiting the waterfall at a spot know locally as Top Rock.

EARTHWORKS

The burial cairns, traces of Senghenydd Dyke and the numerous disused quarries are interesting landscape features. We learned that one of the old quarries is set up for rock climbing, but not many people do it because of the equipment and expert assistance required.



FINDINGS - ALLOTMENTS

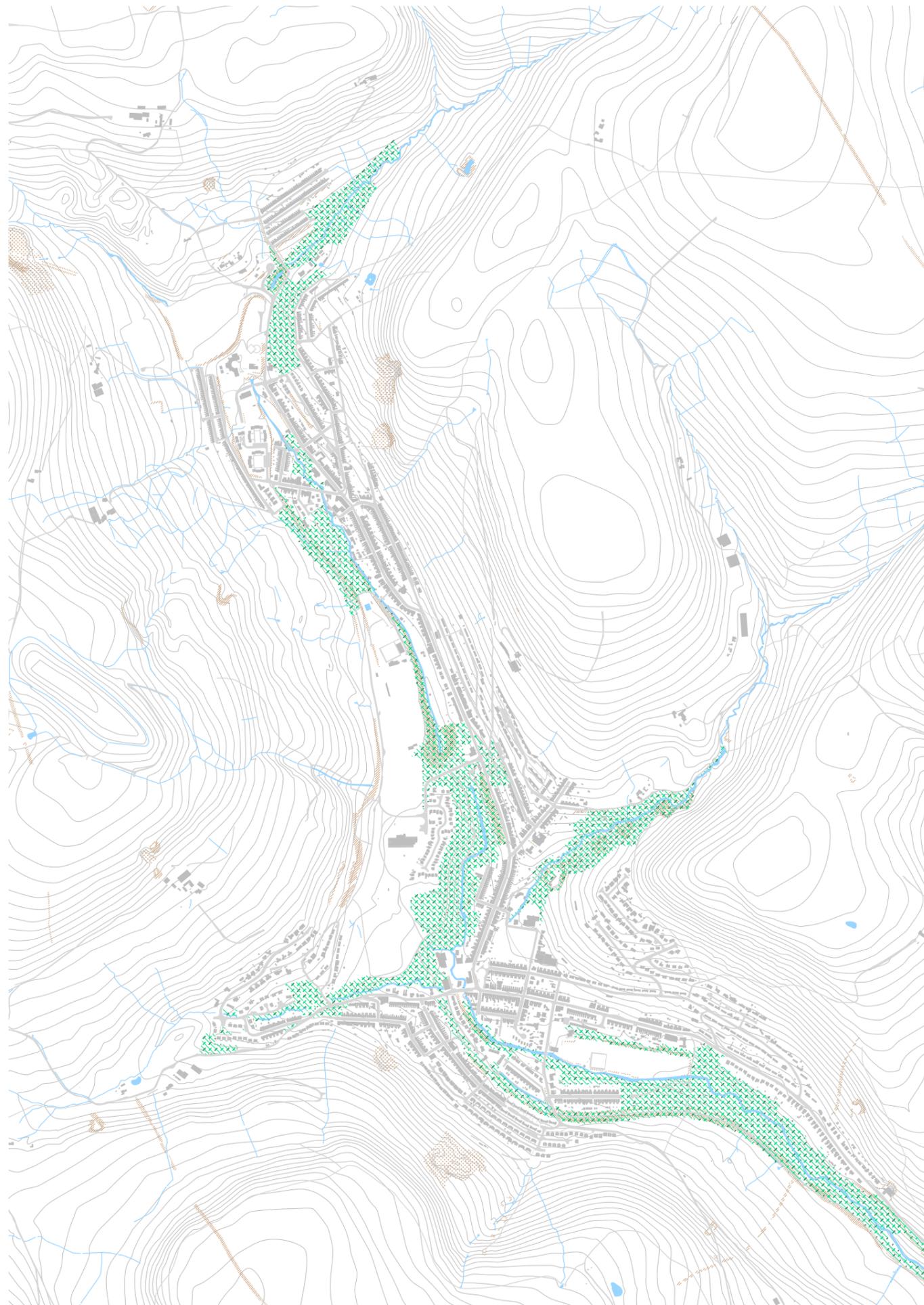
Both our walk and desktop study of maps revealed a large number of allotment sites in the valley.

Through conversations with the local community and councillors, we understand that, whilst some of the sites are well-used, others are under-utilised or completely abandoned.

There is a Community Allotment, and other sites have allotment associations, but there is a sense that the allotments are not for everyone

The project partners, especially the Integrated Health and Well being Network, are keen to increase allotment use and access and food growing as a means of promoting well being and healthy eating.

Children said they would like to learn more about growing through after school clubs.

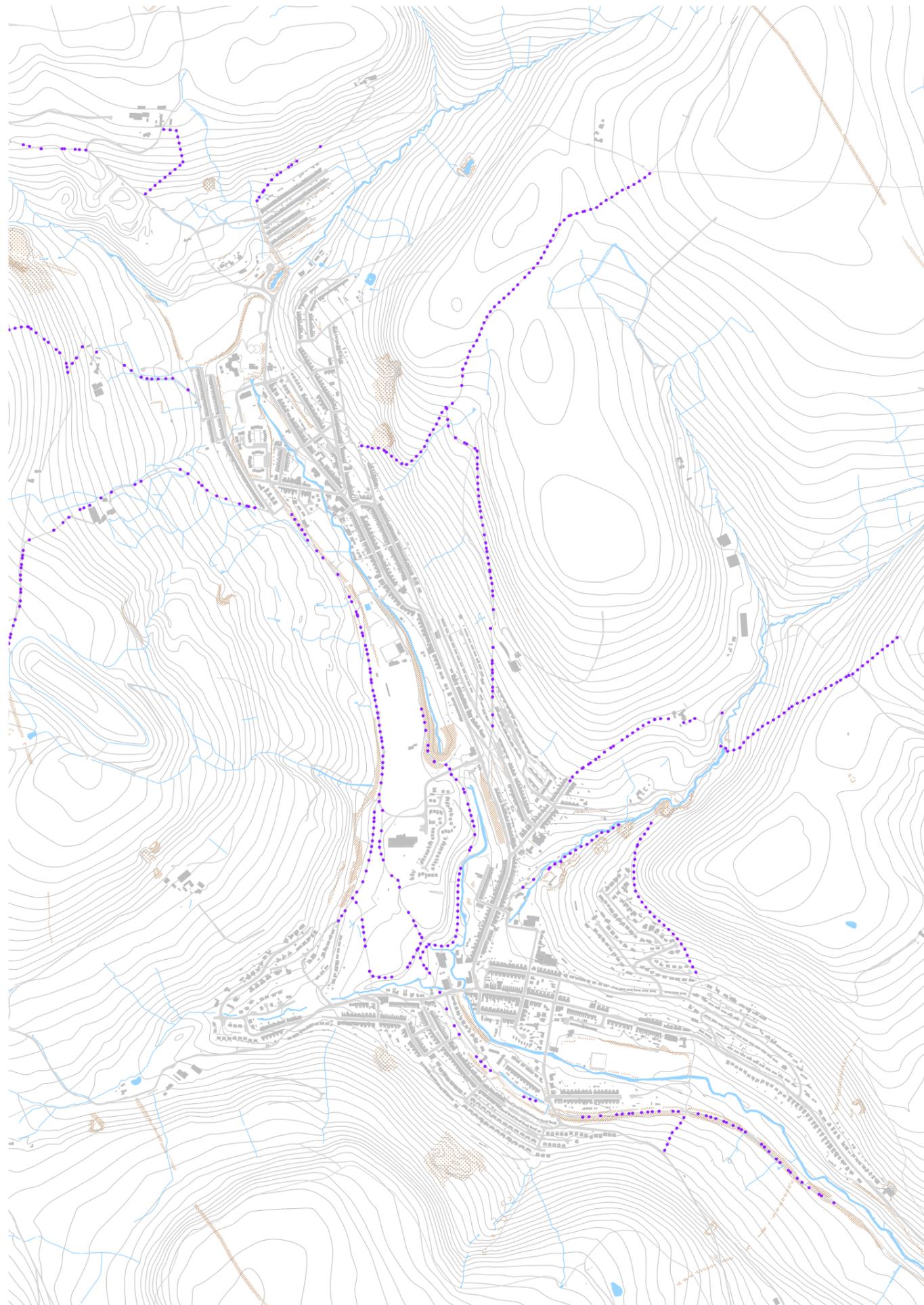


FINDINGS - WOODLAND LINK

A thread of woodland and network of paths already weaves its way through the bottom of the valley linking the communities of Senghenydd and Abertridwr, offering another valuable opportunity for connecting with nature and improving social connections.

However, most of the woodland is poorly kept and not currently a space which feels safe and enjoyable. Some paths are overgrown, signage is old and broken, there is evidence of anti-social behaviour and limited infrastructure which would make this a positive space in the valley.

Many of the children we engaged with said they enjoy exploring and adventures. The woodland offer potential for this kind of play as an alternative to the formal play opportunities which already exist at the playgrounds and splash park.



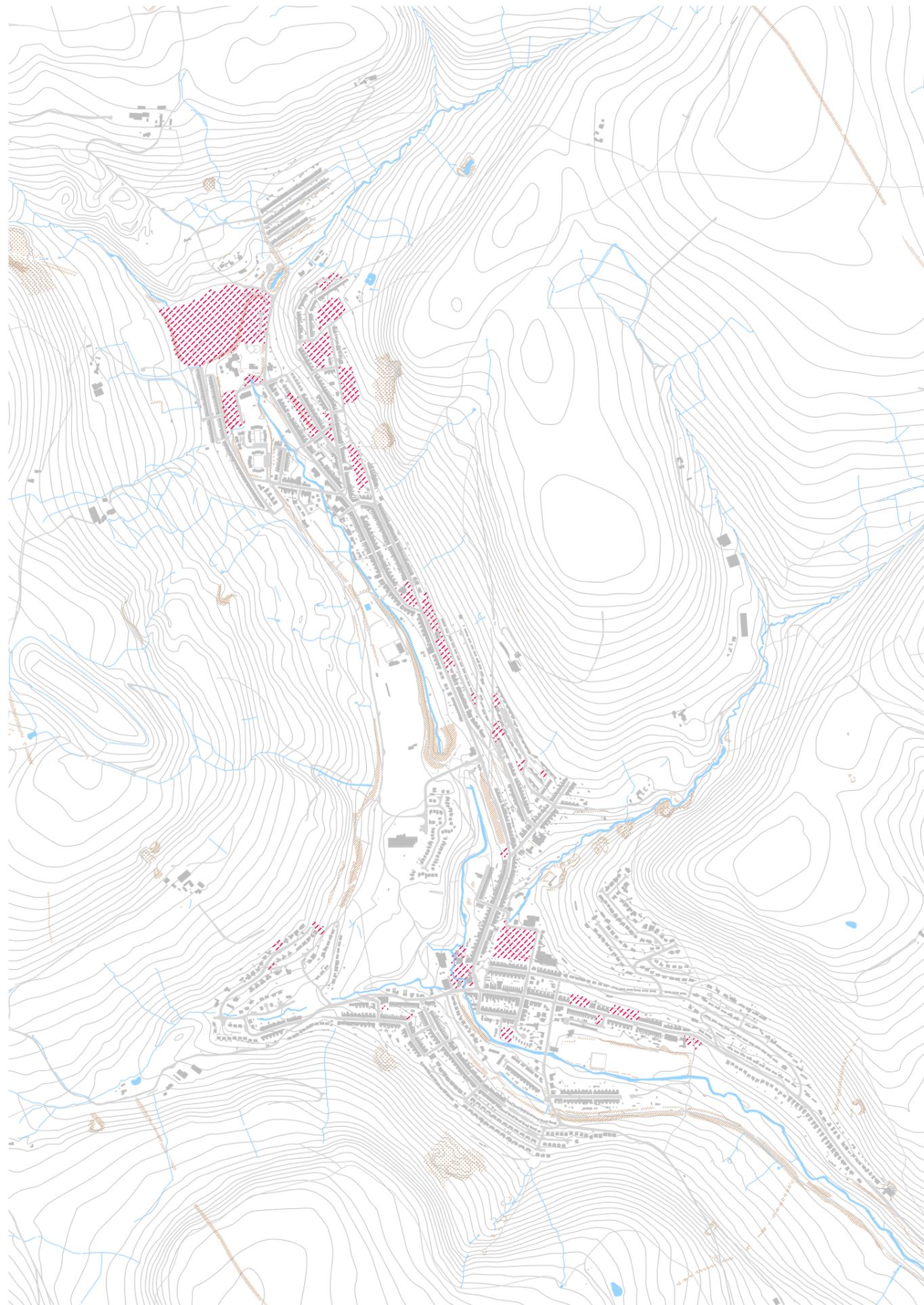
FINDINGS - LANDSCAPE FOOTPATHS

Maps show a network of footpaths which connect the towns with the wider landscape.

A number of the people we spoke to talked about liking the idea of making more of the wider landscape to keep active and healthy. However, we understand access is often blocked and unwelcome by farmers and landowners, and it is not always clear which land is common land and accessible to the public.

One Senghenydd resident told us about a near neighbour, Mary, who died a few years ago. She remembered walking over the moors to go to dances when young, then back late at night, in Pontypridd, Nelson, etc! She also recalled taking her children to play and picnic by the stream 10 minutes walk from The Four Terraces.

Children were keen to explore the wider landscape and some of the older children go camping there with friends.



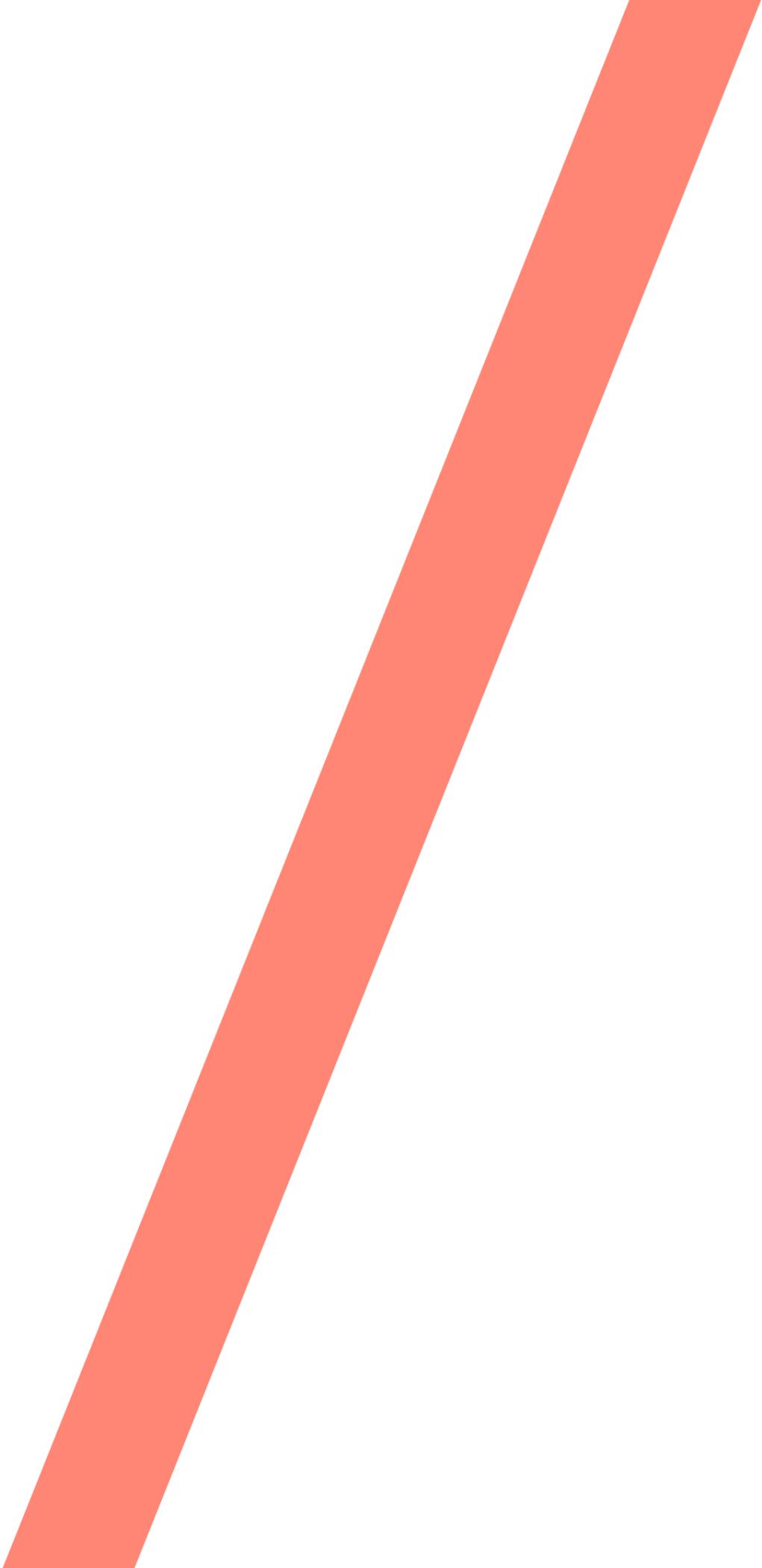
FINDINGS - FORGOTTEN SPACES + POTENTIAL SITES

Our own walk, the Photo Challenge and conversations with local people have allowed us to identify a series of 'forgotten spaces' which have the potential to be sites for new outdoor community spaces.

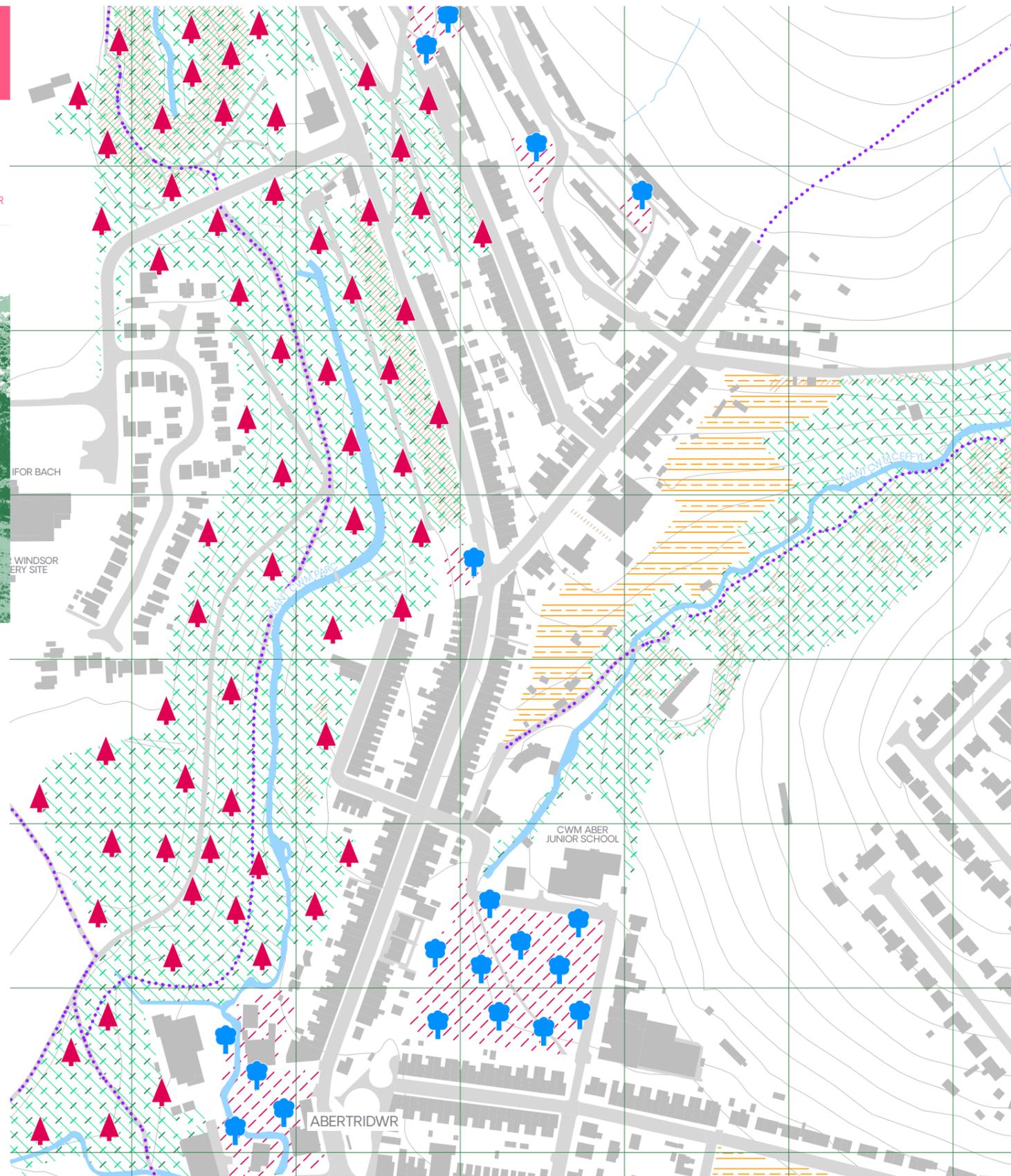
There are many 'forgotten spaces' which are disused, overgrown and unloved. They do not currently make a positive contribution to the communities.

Other potential sites are not derelict, but are under-used and have the potential to be much more useful, positive spaces than they are currently.

At this stage, we have not investigated ownership of all the potential sites. It will be important to understand this, and other constraints, as part of the process of developing any proposal to use them.



PROPOSALS



KEY

-  ENHANCED WOODLAND
-  ALLOTMENTS
-  POTENTIAL SITE/COMMUNITY ORCHARD
-  EXISTING BUILDINGS
-  WATER
-  SLOPE/CUTTING
-  DISUSED QUARRY/LANDWORKS
-  ROAD/PATH
-  LANDSCAPE FOOTPATHS
-  CONTOURS

PROPOSAL - MASTERPLAN MAP

Our research and interpretation of the community engagement activities have informed a vision and 'masterplan' for future outdoor spaces in Aber Valley which will create a network of social places for growing, food production, gathering, imaginative play and adventure in nature.

The long-term proposals and vision are presented as a map of Aber Valley which accompanies this report.

This visionary 'masterplan' aims to stitch into the existing settlement pattern, through utilising forgotten and redundant spaces, a patchwork of community orchards, community growing spaces, enhanced woodland for adventure, imaginative play spaces, and built interventions for community use.

There are four layers to the proposal:

1. A series of COMMUNITY ORCHARDS will utilise the 'forgotten spaces' and potential sites identified. The patchwork of orchards will be stitched into the existing fabric of Senghenydd and Abertridwr, offering open spaces for all of the community to use for growing and harvesting fresh, healthy food. Interventions within the orchards will support a variety of activities such as play, social gathering and performance.
2. The thread of green space, trees and streams which already weaves its way through the valley will become an ENHANCED WOODLAND. It will provide walking routes which connect with nature and wildlife, and places for imaginative play and adventure which are distinct from the formal play opportunities already available at the playgrounds and splash park.
3. Existing, redundant ALLOTMENTS will be brought back into use, providing further opportunities for growing and gathering healthy food and supporting mental and physical health. Facilities and interventions which support education and accessibility will help to increase engagement across the community.
4. Access to the wider landscape and hills surrounding the valley will be improved through a network of LANDSCAPE FOOTPATHS. Along with interventions, existing routes will be improved and promoted to encourage access to the landscape for exercise, leisure and well being.

It is envisaged that elements of the masterplan map can be gradually developed over the coming years and decades through continued conversation and creative engagement with communities. This will empower the local community to take ownership of their outdoor spaces, transforming redundant spaces into social places, centred around food production, networks for sharing food, mental health and well being, skill sharing, cultural exchange, adventure and imaginative play.



PROPOSAL - THE NEXT PHASE

Our proposal for the next phase of the project is a continuation of the development of ideas and relationships we began building with the community of Aber Valley in this first phase. We will carry out further research and development and creative engagement via a test site aimed to facilitate experimentation, pop up events, community dialogue and temporary installations. This pilot project will act as a catalyst for development of the long-term vision for future change and co-creation. It will also allow us to identify, define and develop priority ideas.

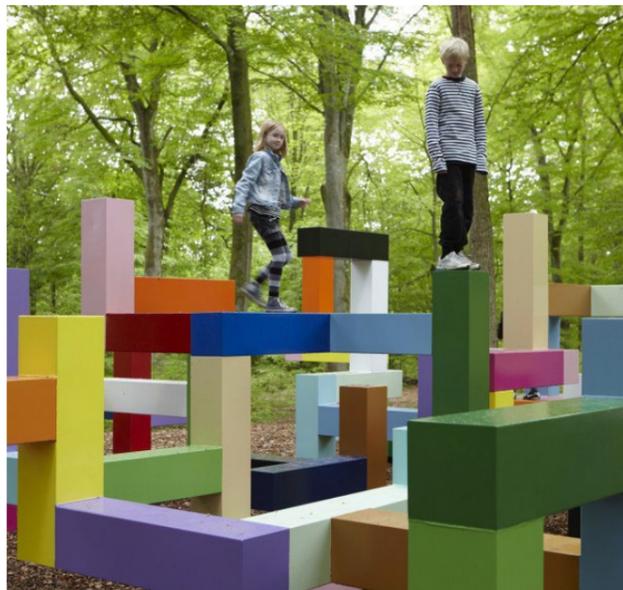
In this first phase of engagement we identified the potential to reconnect the community with place, landscape and nature, and promote health and well being, through a multi-layered and long-term masterplan to utilise forgotten and redundant spaces to create a patchwork of community orchards, community growing spaces and places for imaginative play and adventure. The proposed next phase aims to appraise the identified potential sites in further detail to shortlist priority sites, and build more targeted relationships with community groups and interested parties through community creative engagement events and pilot site.

Our proposal for the next phase is place specific and community based, and aims to address issues relating to social isolation, food poverty and health through the activities of cultivating, foraging, harvesting and gathering, and by linking with community food initiatives.

In the next phase we hope to further develop relationships and ideas with the local community through targeted conversations with community groups, schools, land owners and the local authority to assess the viability of the identified sites and potential ideas.

A triangular shaped 'forgotten space' in Senghenydd, which was once the site of a church has been identified as a potential site, but this will need further investigation to establish whether it is suitable. (See grid squares L20 and L21 on our Aber Valley Outdoor Spaces Map.)

We see this pilot project as a catalyst in a longer term vision for Aber Valley over multiple potential sites, as outlined on the previous pages.

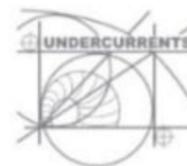


Precedent examples of pop-up community orchards, growing spaces and events.

ALT-Architecture's OUTDOOR SPACES project forms part of UNDERCURRENTS – ON OUR DOORSTEP – a partnership project between Undercurrents – Arts in the Aber Valley community group, Caerphilly County Borough Council and Addo, which is funded by Arts Council of Wales' Connect & Flourish grant fund for the development of collaborative proposals between organisations, individuals and creative professionals.

Additional funding has been kindly given by the Integrated Wellbeing Network (IWN), which is keen to support community wellbeing opportunities that emanate from across the project.

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PROPOSAL – THE NEXT PHASE

The activities we envisage undertaking in the next phase are outlined below:

- Research potential sites (already identified in Phase 1) to establish ownership, planning status, history, condition etc.
- Carry out targeted creative engagement and conversations with relevant groups (SYDIC, Schools, Allotment Associations, churches etc.) to assess existing facilities and identify gaps, needs and ambitions. This will help build local support for the project.
- Engage decisions makers (Community Council, Caerphilly CB Council, Planning Authority etc.) through Walk + Talk event to further understand potential sites and build support for the project.
- Site options appraisal and feasibility to decide the best site for the pilot/test events. Potential sites would be scored against feasibility and project ambition criteria, e.g. impact, location, condition, accessibility, cost, permissions required.
- Develop, plan and deliver 3 pop-up/temporary installation events on the pilot site. The purpose is to test ideas and gather feedback through creative engagement to inform concept designs for the first permanent interventions. The events will vary in nature and length, but will be based around the key themes identified in the R+D phase:
 - Community growing spaces/community orchards
 - Imaginative play
 - Connecting with nature
 - Social connection and well being
- Recording, evaluation and reporting of events.
- Develop concept level designs for the first permanent interventions. This will give more certainty to the scope, costs and timescales required to deliver the first, catalyst sites in the following phase. This activity would include:
 - Identifying priority sites
 - Designing permanent interventions to concept level
 - Establishing high level cost estimates for delivering the interventions (cost consultant)
 - Production of visual material (drawings, model etc.) to communicate the vision, maintain and build local enthusiasm for the project and support future funding applications

ESTIMATED TIMESCALES

- Months 1-3: Site research and appraisal, engagement with groups and decision makers
- Months 4-8: Test events – planning, delivery, evaluation, reporting
- Months 9-12: Concept designs