

# A development strategy for enhancing public conveniences in Llanidloes

March 2008



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## Summary

The purpose of this report is to investigate the economic and social impact of the closure of two sets of public toilets in Llanidloes; these are located at the rear of the Town Hall and at Bwlch y Gle (Llyn Clywedog). The impact of the closures has been felt across the whole community; in particular from the business community who have noted a significant drop in trade and an increase in the number of complaints they receive from visitors to the town who are looking for public conveniences. Much of the 'evidence' of the impact of the toilet closure has been anecdotal, this report seeks to quantify the impact in terms of the economic, social and environmental health.

A consultation exercise was held to gain the views of the businesses in town and members of the public. A total of 23 businesses responded to the consultation and 34 members of the public. In addition 729 signed a petition to say that they had been inconvenienced by the closure of the public toilets in Llanidloes.

This study has found that the closure of the toilets has had an impact on the three levels: economic, social and environmental health. Although the precise economic impact of the closure is impossible to identify, a likely impact has been shown to range from £19,852 to over £60,000, (this is due to a loss of coaches stopping in the town, a decline of visitors stopping in the town and a decline in local people spending as long in town). This is also costing the community between one and two and a half full-time equivalent jobs.

The social impact is most affecting the vulnerable in the community, increasing their risk of becoming excluded and reducing their opportunities for community participation. Elderly people are not coming in to town as frequently or as long because they need to go to the toilet before they can get home and the walk to the Gro toilets is too far.

The environmental health of the town is being damaged through street urination and associated health risks.

The recommendation of the study is to reopen the toilets in town as quickly as possible and certainly before the main tourism season gets underway. The costs of this should be met by a combination of a pay per use entry system, advertising and payment by local groups who would otherwise hire in toilets for events.

It is recommended that the toilets are run by the Town Council; if they are unwilling to do this the "Town Hall Toileteers Association" should take up the lease and would qualify for 75% discretionary rate relief from Powys County Council.

The toilets at Bwlch y Gle, while important, are not as high a priority. The high running costs associated with them make them hard to run unless continually subsidised.

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## 1.0 Background to study

The purpose of this report is to investigate the economic and social impact of the closure of public toilets in Llanidloes. Two sets of toilets were closed during 2006 as part of a rationalisation process by Powys County Council. These are located at the rear of the Town Hall and at Bwlch y Gle (Llyn Clywedog).

The impact of the closures has been felt across the whole community; in particular from the business community who have noted a significant drop in trade and an increase in the number of complaints they receive from visitors to the town who are looking for public conveniences. Some of the concerns and issues raised by the community include:

- Fouling around the toilet blocks
- A significant drop in business
- Increased number of complaints from visitors
- Increased number of enquiries asking for the location of the toilets - 2-10 enquiries a day (stated by Customer Service Point)

The aims of this report are:

- To bring together the views of the community
- To assess the impact that the closure has had on the local economy
- To identify options for reopening facilities

## 2.0 Methodology

The methodology comprised of several stages:

- Background research; to identify issues relating to public toilets and provide other examples of community action to safeguard other rural/urban toilets.
- Business consultation; to gain evidence from the businesses in town of how the closure has affected, and continues to affect trade and morale within Llanidloes.
- Public consultation; to gather evidence of impact of closure on residents of the town, in particular to document any changes local people have noticed since the closure.

Businesses and members of the public who were unable to attend the events were able to make their views known by post or email. Meetings were held in Llanidloes on the following dates:

- 13 February, 7pm. Primarily for businesses to attend
- 16 February, 10am - 12pm. Public consultation outside the Town Hall
- 18 February 2pm - 5pm. Open drop in session in the Town Hall

Two articles were put in the local press to draw people's attention to the consultation and to ask for views to be submitted

## 3.0 Background research

### Public toilets

The British Toilet Association asserts that,

“There are an increasing number people, whose lives are affected by the state of Britain’s public toilets. These include people with mental or physical disabilities and their carers; the infirm or elderly; people with babies or young children and people of all ages who are coping with a range of medical conditions.

- Britain has an increasingly significant ‘ageing’ population
- Residents travel more within the country, and the number of visitors to Britain increases each year, placing added pressure on our existing toilet facilities
- Public toilets are the ‘shop window’ for any area or establishment - where first and lasting impressions of levels of customer care are made
- Public health and hygiene, as well as environmental issues, are constantly in the news, with increasing media interest in all matters relating to public toilets “<sup>i</sup>

For these reasons communities across the UK are campaigning to save and reopen resources and in some cases argue for new facilities.

### Good Practice from across the UK and Beyond

From Scotland to Cornwall there are plenty of examples of communities who are fighting to save their local public conveniences and local councils refusing to take on the facilities when transfer is proposed by District Councils, as in Llanidloes. “Village Loo saved in Auchencairn” (South Oxfordshire) is just one of many similar headlines across the country.

Communities take up the fight to save a valued local resource because of the value placed on local facilities, for tourism and as a local amenity. The evidence of need for these actions is often gained through the Parish Planning process, common across much of Rural England.

There are many examples of parish-run toilet facilities across the country. In Powys, Llanyre Community Council has taken on the resource. In South West England, Witheridge in Devon and Mawnan in Cornwall are just two other examples.

West Devon Council is one of many local authorities auditing their provision and actively encouraging Town and Parish Councils to take on the responsibility.

Sible Hedingham in Essex transformed their public toilets after a £34,000 refurbishment. The funding came from a £5,000 grant from Braintree District Council, £8,000 from Essex County Council and £21,000 from the parish council. New facilities for the disabled have been added at the recreation ground block, which also includes toilets for men and women and a changing room. Paths to the block have been redone and new gates installed at each end of the ground which are easier for disabled people to use.

Parish Councils often employ a cleaner to service the facilities but in some areas, such as rural Scotland a number of community run facilities in rural areas are maintained by volunteers e.g. Whitehills in Aberdeenshire.

These parishes value toilet facilities for tourism promotion reasons, (e.g. Witheridge is in the Exmoor National Park), but for larger towns there are more substantial regeneration motives.

Waverley Borough Council, Surrey has pursued a programme of toilet transfers to larger Town Councils. Farnham (population 37,000) and Haslemere (population 10,500) have used the transfer of facilities as part of wider regeneration schemes (see below).

In Haslemere, the public toilet was leased from Waverley Borough Council for a peppercorn rent. The proposed redevelopment is being undertaken by Haslemere Town Council at their expense. The Town Council will use income generated to finance the cost of the project and future cleaning and maintenance costs. Any excess income is to be used by the Town Council to provide grants to local businesses, such as hotels, restaurants and pubs with toilets suitable for use by the public, such grants being paid as a contribution towards their cleaning and maintenance costs, in return for making them available for public use and displaying signs to this effect.

Waverley revenue grant aids the transfer of public conveniences on a sliding scale for three years at 30%, 20% and 10% of the current cost to the General Fund, of water and electricity services, and for cleaning and repairs. In Haslemere's case this was estimated in 2006/07 to be £7,400.

Waverley and Haslemere Town Council fund their own legal costs, with Haslemere being responsible for obtaining any necessary planning or other permissions, including access and egress; relating to future use of the site and access to it.

### Funding Transfer

Most transfer schemes involve a sliding scale of incentives, normally based on the actual costs of running the facility and often after some capital investment by the current owners.

There are some examples of cost sharing on a more long term basis. The New Forest share costs with Town and Parish Councils as well as private sector interests such as Beach Hut owners.

### Shared Facilities

Some communities have tried to compensate for the lack of accessible public conveniences by trying to persuade other establishments to open facilities to the public. In the Highlands of Scotland, the community of Glenuig has opened their hall toilets to visitors in the summer months. So called "Comfort partnerships" are being developed across rural Scotland. Attempts to launch a similar scheme in Shetland have as yet had little success. Community halls here were asked whether they would be prepared to open their facilities for tourists, but were reluctant because of security fears.

Closer to home, the community of Llangadog, Carmarthenshire are planning to put toilets into the conversion of their church which, when completed, will provide a meeting space. The toilets will be open to visitors.

In the South East of England a number of "Community Toilet Schemes" have been developed. One of the first such schemes was in Richmond on Thames.

#### Richmond Community Toilet Scheme.

The scheme encourages local businesses like pubs, restaurants and shops, to work together with the Council to make more clean, safe and accessible toilets available to the public. Members of the public can use toilet facilities during the premises opening hours, without the need to make a purchase.

Participating premises display stickers in their window, showing whether they have male, female and /or wheelchair accessible facilities.

Some Councils have expanded this scheme. Westminster City Council launched a "SatLav" mobile phone service that alerts people to the nearest public toilets. Texting the word "toilet" to the number 80097 prompts a quick-response text with details of the nearest facilities and their opening times.

The Department of Communities and Local Government in England are so concerned about the issue that they are due to publish a review of public convenience facilities in Spring 2008. They are already using the Community Toilet Scheme as an example of good practice.

### Other Uses

Some communities have put their toilets to other uses, sometimes through necessity. Villagers in the hamlet of East Prawle, Devon form orderly queues to use the seat outside the public toilets because it is one of the few places in the community to receive mobile phone reception. Community leaders in the village are thinking of investing £100 to build a 'phone throne' because the park bench is in danger of collapsing.

In Weymouth, one former town toilet was marketed as being suitable for conversion to a house. Lanreath, Cornwall converted their former facilities into a village shop.

### Innovation

In other cases, toilets are part of community attempts to reduce their carbon footprint. The 1,000 residents of Ashton Hayes in northwest England plan to build a "MicroGrid" near the church to power the village using wind power, wood chips or methane from village waste. With help from local water provider United Utilities, they aim to generate methane from village sewage.

Ludlow toilets are one of several in South Shropshire that use rainwater harvesting technology.

### As Tourist Attractions

In rural New Zealand, one public toilet has become an art installation. In 1998, Kawakawa Community Board was looking to upgrade 40-year-old toilet facilities in the remote central township. Internationally renowned artist and architect Frederick Hundertwasser, who had made the area his home, offered a solution from his design palate. The finished product is a work of art, from the grass roof, to gold balls, ceramic tiles, bottle glass windows, mosaic tiling, copper handwork, cobblestone flooring, individual sculptures and a living tree integrated into the design structure. The town reports clear indications of an economic impact in the small town's retail sector.

There are also some examples of innovative architecture in Britain.

Allerdale Borough Council in Cumbria commissioned artists to design tiles/décor for their new public toilets in Workington.

The public loo in Brockenhurst Hampshire was nominated for an architectural prize.

### Gypsy Wood Park near Caernarfon - Fairytales and railways

Sharon Wilson decorated the Ladies at a woodland park in Gwynedd with fairyland forest scenes, with trains painted in the Gents. Gypsy Wood Park near Caernarfon, which opened in 2005, won the award in the theme park category. Owner Chris Evans said she was "very proud" of the honour, in the first year the park had entered the competition. She said spending a penny at the park's toilets had become an added attraction for the park's 25,000 visitors.

## 4.0 Present situation

### 4.1 The Public conveniences in Llanidloes town centre

The block in Llanidloes is located at the rear of the Town Hall, and is owned by the Town Council (this was only discovered during 2007 after the toilets were closed). The toilets are hidden from view of the main street and have had vandalism trouble in the past (graffiti and broken fixtures). However, following the installation of a gate to allow them to be locked at night (7pm) the trouble stopped.

#### Condition

The structure of the building is 'sound', however it requires repainting and internal refurbishment, with new fixtures and fittings, doors, toilets, sinks, etc. The exterior paint is also peeling off and needs removing and / or repainting.

There is a proposal to fit solar photo voltaic cells and solar panels on the roof to cover the heating and electrical requirement of the block. Dulas Ltd (installers of the solar equipment) believe the roof may not be strong enough to carry the weight of fitting the panels. The roof is made up of asbestos sheeting which has degraded and is delaminating. The recommendation is that they need replacing, which imposes an additional cost implication on the renovation of the toilet block.



### 4.2 The Public conveniences at Bwlch y Gle

These were closed at the same time as those in the town. They had recently had an electricity generator installed. If the toilets are not to be re-opened, they will be sold off by the Local Authority at a later date.

#### Condition

From the outside the structure appears in good condition. The keys for the building would not open the lock so an internal assessment cannot be given.



### 4.3 Other toilet facilities

#### Gro car park

There are toilets located at the Gro car park. However these are 400m from the town centre and not convenient for young children, who are reported to be fouling themselves or using the area behind the toilet block in the town centre. The toilet block in the Gro is also down a slope, causing problems for those with reduced mobility to get back to the town centre.

#### Red Kite Café – Llyn Clywedog

There is a single toilet at the Café.

#### Gronwen - Llyn Clywedog

This block at Llyn Clywedog (owned by Severn Trent) was also closed in 2007.

#### Rhyd y Benwch - Hafren Forest

These toilets are owned by the Forestry Commission and are at the far end of the reservoir. They are closed in the winter, and not on the main Llanidloes to Machynlleth route.

#### Local Businesses

The businesses in town are frequently asked by visitors to use their toilets. However many businesses do not have toilets on their ground floors making access for anyone disabled or with poor mobility difficult. There are also potential insurance and liability issues in allowing the public to use their private facilities (however, the examples from the south of England prove that these can be overcome).

## 5.0 Consultation

### 5.1 Business consultation

A total of 23 businesses took part in the consultation, attending the meeting or consultation session, providing written statements or responding to a survey.

The key issues identified from consultation with businesses were primarily relating to the toilets in the town and were:

- 100% support for the toilet(s) reopening
- A reported drop in trade since the toilets closed due to people not stopping in town?
- An increase in frequency of visitors asking where the nearest public toilets are (and asking why the toilet block is shut)
- Visitors asking to use businesses toilets
- Declining image of the town

100% support from traders for the toilets reopening

There is a very strong commitment from within the business community to get the toilets reopened. The formation of a group called the 'Town Hall Toileteers Association' consisting of traders is evidence of this commitment and that they are prepared to take on the cleaning of the toilets if they were to reopen.

A drop in trade

For most businesses it was difficult to quantify how much trade has been lost since the closure of the toilets. There were strong feelings that there had been a gradual erosion of trade as people fail to return when they know there are no toilets, and that many visitors will not stop this year as they know the toilets are closed and will travel through to another town.

The lack of coaches now stopping was noted by many businesses, the major impact of this has been felt by the National Milk bar. Between one and two coaches a week were stopping in Llanidloes and taking a break in the journey to have a meal / snack at the Milk bar. However since the closure they have reported a 12% drop in income.

"One firm in particular - Jones International of Station Road, Llandeilo has informed us that he will not be calling at Llanidloes with his coaches until such time that public toilets are reinstated, they will instead continue either to Newtown or Welshpool." - National Milk Bar

The museum counts the number of visitors entering the building, and had noted a 2% drop in the number of visitors (approximately 200 visitors). Which although not enough to threaten its existence is a significant number of people.

The toilets at the Gro are not well situated for businesses, it does not encourage visitors to shop and stop in the town.

The frequency of visitors asking where the nearest public toilets are (why are the toilets closed)

Businesses reported being asked where the nearest toilets were from between once and twelve times a day.

During the summer and when festivals or events are held the number of requests is higher. - Shop owner

During the running of a summer exhibition staff at Minerva were being asked 12+ times a day - Minerva

People would ask where the toilets were 3 or 4 times a week and up to 10 times a week in the summer –Laura Ashley shop

Businesses felt embarrassed to have to say the toilets are closed in the town.

The increase in visitors asking for toilets has been since the closure of the toilets in the town; it is not therefore a question of poor signage.

Visitors asking to use toilets within business premises

On a weekly basis visitors are asking businesses if they can use their toilets. A pub in the town reported 40-50 people who were not customers using the toilets in a week, the smaller businesses being asked once or twice a week.

Generally businesses are allowing the use of the toilets particularly for the elderly and young children, for instance:

"I let a child into my shop the other week to use the toilet, as she was clearly distressed that there were no toilets in the town" - Hairdressers

"An elderly lady came into my shop to ask where the toilets were. She was unable to walk as far as the Gro, so I helped her up the stairs in our building" - Laura Ashley

"A 90 year old lady with her daughter stopped to ask to use our toilets as she was unable to walk down to the Gro" -Publican

"On a daily basis people both local and visitors (who are not customers) ask to use the toilets especially with young children or disabled people who can not 'wait' to get to the public toilets as they are some considerable distance from the cafe end of the town" - Café owner

Whilst businesses are trying to accommodate visitors to the town, this is not the impression that they want visitors to leave with – one of a desperate need for the toilet!

There were two main issues with the public using the business toilets: Health and Safety was the main concern, some toilets were up steep stairs, others allowed access to the building and private property. If someone slipped or had an accident whilst using the toilet people were concerned of legal action being taken, or else someone could steal from the premises whilst out of view.

This latter case was emphasised in the Minerva, during the summer their main exhibition is managed by volunteers. In the space of a few weeks 2500 visitors can pass through the doors. People ask for the toilets, which they are mainly allowed but access to them also allows access to other areas of the building including office and stores of art works. For many volunteers, particularly some of the older ones, this is not something that they are comfortable with.

There was also an issue of cost, in the increased cleaning, and water usage of the business from non-paying customers. For businesses on a water meter every toilet flush incurs a cost.

Saying 'no' was also difficult to people asking to use the toilets, and some businesses reported being verbally abused as a result.

Even if businesses are willing to let the public use their toilet, businesses close at 5pm, and earlier on some days. There are still visitors in the area at these times that need toilets.

“On a number of occasions people have knocked on my cafe to get access to toilets after we have closed for the day (at 4pm) desperate to find a toilet”  
Café owner

A final point on the use of Business toilets comes from a Help the Aged report <sup>1</sup>. The report found that whilst 84 per cent of respondents to their survey felt that shops and businesses should make more effort to provide toilet facilities for the public to use, many older people, particularly the most vulnerable, would feel intimidated going into a private business solely to use the facilities.

Declining image  
of the town

The closure of the toilets adds to a growing negative image and feeling following the closure of some businesses in town including, KTH and more recently the Tourist Information Centre and Laura Ashley.

Poor facilities make the town less attractive to stop and shop, and do not

give the right impression to visitors.

“Severn Trent Water has a policy of continuous upgrading of visitor centre toilets at their many reservoir sites in England and Wales. They recognise the vital first impression provide by clean, well equipped toilets, even in the most rural areas and have won many Loo of the Year Awards in the last ten years”

Other comments    The Gro toilets are poorly sited, a long walk for elderly, infirm or people with small children. They do not encourage visitors (and also locals) to shop in the town particularly at the weekly market, and also to attend large events held in the town including Fancy Dress night, Christmas Tree lights switch on and the Green Fair.

Past events had to rent toilets to place them next to the closed ones

## 5.2 Public consultation

The public consultation was undertaken on a Saturday morning and Monday afternoon. The researcher stood on the steps of the Town Hall inviting comments from shoppers and the latter was held in the Town Hall offices. A total of 34 people took part in the consultation; attending the meeting, drop in session, providing written statements or responding to a survey. It should be noted that this exercise was undertaken in mid February when there were few visitors in the town.

In addition to the consultation a petition “I have been inconvenienced by the absence of public toilets in Great Oak Street, Llanidloes” was put out in town, for a period of two weeks. In this time 729 signatures were collected. While most signatories were local to Llanidloes others came from Birmingham, Machynlleth, Essex, Telford, Aberystwyth, Clevedon, Shrewsbury and Germany

The key issues identified from the public consultation were again primarily focused on the toilets in the town:

- 100% support from people for the toilet reopening
- Impact upon the length of time spent in the town; i.e. decreasing
- The frequency of visitors asking where the nearest public toilets are
- Declining image of the town

100% support from people for the toilet reopening	There was unanimous support from the local community for the reopening of the public toilets in the town and Bwlch y Gle.
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<p>Impact upon the time spent in the town</p>	<p>Residents of the town gave examples of people they knew or personal accounts of how the closure of the toilets in the main street has effected their time in the town.</p> <p>“I used to come in shopping and have a coffee but since the toilets closed I do not stay as long”</p> <p>“My neighbour does not come into town any more as there are no facilities for her to use”</p> <p>This information is supported by a report published by Help the Aged.<sup>ii</sup> 52% of the 1000 people questioned, said that the lack of public toilets in their area stops them from going out as often as they would like.</p>
<p>Toilets at Bwlch y Gle</p>	<p>The toilets at Bwlch y Gle whilst not receiving as much comment as those in town, offered examples of the high levels of use the toilets used to get when they were open particularly in the summer.</p> <p>“During the summer there are cars stopping every 5 minutes or so” - Local angler.</p> <p>“I’d pay 50p to use the toilets there” - Cyclist</p> <p>“There are normally six or more cars stopped there during the summer”</p>
<p>Town Morale</p>	<p>The closure of the Tourist Information office, Laura Ashley and now the toilets, was felt to have a negative impact upon the town and give the wrong impression to visitors.</p> <p>“ We are supposed to be a tourist town, it does not look good when you have to tell them that there are no toilets in the town”</p> <p>“It is embarrassing having to tell visitors that there are no toilets in the centre of town”</p> <p>“What next, Llanidloes is dying!”</p>

### 5.3 Other consultations and issues raised

Below are additional comments made during the consultation.

#### Angling Club

The Angling Club did use the toilets at Bwlch y Gle. The club presently has 130 regular members and a total of 4000 seasonal permit holders (costing up to £165 for adults), primarily attracting people on day visits from Aberystwyth and south Wales. The club also holds a European fishing competition each year; last year this attracted 130 entrants. Many bring family who spend time in the town. The closure of the toilets in 2007 forced the club to rent toilets for this at a cost of £200.

The club is therefore attracting significant revenue into the local economy; the lack of toilets may threaten the large number presently visiting.

## Events / Activities

### Llani Fancy Dress

Fancy Dress is a major event in the Llanidloes calendar. The event attracts 5000 people from the surrounding area. However, the lack of toilets in 2007 raised concerns for local shops.

“Cafe toilets become a public toilet for people most of whom are not my customers!”

“People won't use porta loos when there are local businesses with toilet access”

“There is a constant queue from 6pm till 1am when we close and means that the cafe customers couldn't get to the toilets because of the dozens of people in the queue (often holding drinks from other establishments!)”

### Enduro competition

There is the potential of an Enduro motorbike event coming to Llanidloes and previously the RAC rally has stopped in the town. These events both attract hundreds of visitors. The lack of toilets makes Llanidloes a less attractive place to hold such events.

### Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust

Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust have been taking people up to the same site (and others in the area, I believe) to work on the peat bog. They meet the volunteers, officers, etc at Bwlch y Gle as it is the last chance to use a proper loo!

## 6.0 Impact of the toilet closure

The impact that the closure of the public toilets in town and Bwlch y Gle has had can be measured in three ways:

- Economic
- Social
- Environmental / Health

Each of these is discussed below.

### 6.1 Economic

The ceasing of coaches stopping in Llanidloes to visit the National Milk bar is perhaps the most visible economic impact upon the town. A reduction of 1 or 2 coaches a week each with 50 people on board (a loss of between 2500 and 5000 visitors a year) is a large loss in any small economy. However, there are other smaller losses to the economy that also have an impact:

- Hire costs of portable toilets for events (e.g. £200 for the Angling competition)
- Increased cleaning costs of businesses toilets from use by visitors
- Loss of market traders
- Non-returning visitors (precise numbers are impossible to quantify, however anecdotal evidence suggests it is significant)
- Reduced visitor shopping in town
- Local residents spending less time (and money) in town due to there being no toilet facilities in the town centre

The Llanidloes 2006 visitor survey<sup>iii</sup> shows:

- 71% of visitors are returning visitors
- 67% of visitors are on a day trip (78% of which spending over 2 hours in the town, therefore likely to be eating in the area)
- 15% of visitors come for an event / festival
- 95% visitors were satisfied with the availability of toilets before they closed

There is a high proportion of returning day visitors. These are the visitors most likely to be effected by toilet closures, perhaps not returning for another visit if the facilities are no longer there. However, as there are now fewer toilets, visitors satisfaction is likely to fall, affecting their overall enjoyment and therefore likelihood of stopping / visiting again.

15% of visitors are coming for events / festivals. The consultation highlighted the shortage of toilets during such events last year; the lack of facilities may reduce attendance for future events.

### Measuring the economic impact - Multiplier analysis

Tourism is a significant element of the local economy in Llanidloes and according to the GB Day visits survey 2004; the average amount spent per day trip in Wales was £14.40<sup>v</sup>

The true impact of this expenditure is however even greater when the 're-spend' of this money in the local economy is taken into account. Multiplier analysis is an economic tool that can be used to measure the overall impact of the 'injection' of expenditure into an economic system<sup>v</sup>. Such expenditures can include visitors' expenditure on food, gifts, transport etc. The injection of these expenditures into the local economy will stimulate an increase in the level of economic activity

that, in turn, will generate additional income and employment to the area. Multiplier analysis can be used to measure the size of these impacts.

The theory underlying multiplier analysis is as follows. There is an initial round of spending created by the original injection into an economy (known as direct expenditure), such as expenditure of visitors. As the recipient businesses of this direct expenditure then re-spend this money in successive indirect rounds (for instance purchasing more gifts, paying staff), the number of transactions rise and the overall output expands. With this expansion in output comes an increase in the wealth of local residents, who consequently increase their consumption expenditure (known as induced effects).

The overall impact on the level of economic activity is expressed in terms of the changes in output, income or employment that arise in the recipient economy. This is expressed numerically by the multiplier coefficient, which is calculated by dividing the sum of the direct, indirect, and induced effects with the direct effects. The ultimate size of the multiplier coefficients is reflection of the extent to which injections of expenditure are retained within the local economy.

Small-scale tourist businesses such as B&Bs tend to generate higher multipliers than national businesses such as hotel chains<sup>vi</sup>, meaning that they retain money more effectively with the locality. Remote rural locations also tend to have a higher multiplier effect since poorer communications reduce leakages from the local economy.

Past research<sup>vii</sup> has shown that typically, £1.00 of visitor expenditure generates between £0.24 – £0.45 income within the local economy and also that one fulltime equivalent (FTE) local job is created per £15,000 – £25,000 of visitor expenditure. The number of small local businesses and rural nature of Llanidloes would suggest that it would generate at the top end of this scale, i.e. £0.45.

Therefore for every £14.40 spent by Day Visitors an additional £6.46 worth of income is generated, and for every 1041 visitors (each spending £14.40) an additional full time job is created.

#### Estimated economic impact

The table below provides an estimate of the economic impact of the toilet closures. Two figures are given, a high and low estimate

	Low	High
Stopping of coaches <sup>A</sup>	One coach loss £12,000	Two coach losses £24,000
Hire of additional toilets <sup>B</sup>	£200	£500
Loss of visitors <sup>C</sup>	0.5% reduction in visitors £3600	3% reduction in visitors £21,600
Loss to local trade <sup>D</sup>	0.5% reduction £210	3%reduction £1,259
Total	£16,010	£47,359

<sup>A</sup> The figure is based upon the number of people on coaches over a year (1 coach - 50 people \* 50 weeks of the year) multiplied by a third of the average day trip spend (£4.80p), a third was used as an approximate figure on the basis that

the coach was stopping in other areas and therefore it was felt unlikely that all the visitors spend would be in Llanidloes. The second figure is based on 2 coaches a day.

<sup>B</sup> This is based upon the cost to organisations and events having to hire additional toilet facilities due to the lack of public toilets, based on a cost of £25 a week per toilet

<sup>C</sup> Approximate loss of trade from visitors, based on 100,000 visitors a year, spending £7.2 (half the estimated day visitor spend), the museum notes a 2% drop in visitor numbers, this has been used as a guide to the percentage drop in numbers.

<sup>D</sup> This is based upon the 16+ population of Llanidloes, spending £18.10<sup>viii</sup> in town, and a drop in trade to as above.

The economic impact can be seen to be a loss of trade of £16,010 to £47,359. This rises to £19,852 and £68,670 if the multiplier effect is taken into account. In addition the closure of the toilets is losing between 1 and 2.5 Full time jobs.

## 6.2 Social

The older members of the community, those with young children or people with a disability particularly feel the social impact of the closure of public toilets. In Llanidloes 24% of the population are over 65, 10% of the population have a limiting lifelong illness and 12% of households have one or more children under four.<sup>ix</sup> It is therefore a significant proportion of the population that are most affected by the closure, and also the most vulnerable members.

The closure of the toilets has had two impacts. The most detrimental to both the economy and people welfare is people not coming into town. Those, particularly the elderly, are not coming in because they need to go to the toilet before they can get home and the walk to the Gro toilets is too far. As a result they are having their independence reduced as they need to rely upon neighbours or family to do their shopping and they are also reducing their social networks, increasing the likelihood of them becoming excluded. In addition if people are not coming into the town they are not spending their money on other items, chance purchases that they may otherwise have spent.

“My neighbour does not come into town any more as there are no facilities for her to use”

“My mother aged 85 can't come into town anymore as she can't walk to the toilets out of town.” And “I can't walk up the slope from the Gro toilets to the main street”

The other social effect of the closure is people not spending as long in the town. For example, only coming in to do their shopping and no longer stopping for a drink and chat with friends. This again is limiting people's social opportunities and networks, reducing their ability to be engaged with community life.

“I used to come in shopping and have a coffee but since the toilets have closed I do not stay as long”

## 6.3 Health / Environmental

For older people, those with medical conditions such as diabetes and parents with young children, public toilets are an important factor for quality of life. Indeed it is not just an issue of "Inconvenience", it is about people's dignity and quality of life.

The fouling around the toilets is the main environmental health issues resulting from the closure of the toilets.

"Every time you go there you see someone coming out the bushes after going to the toilet" - user of Bwlch y Gle toilets

In town this also extends to shop doorways (including cafes and food shops) being used as toilets

Clean, private toilet facilities are vital - health care professional

The lack of toilets impacts increasingly on public health and environmental issues, such as street cleanliness, social disorder and infections associated with poorly maintained, or non-existent, toilet facilities. (No toilet facilities - no hand washing facilities either)

"It is worth reminding ourselves why it matters. We are a country, thankfully, that has taken sanitation for granted. However around the world 2.6 billion people do not have adequate sanitation. As the United Nations Millennium Development Goal for Sanitation points out - sanitation is dignity, and every 6 seconds a child dies of diarrhoea. We are talking about a very basic need for good sanitation as part of good public health". Phil Woolas MP, Minister of State Minister for Local Government (May 2006 - June 2007)

Research by Encams<sup>x</sup> (Keep Britain Tidy) has identified the closure of public toilets as a factor in decreasing local environmental quality. Street fouling is an increasing problem as public toilet provision decreases. This can also contribute to increased cleansing costs, related health risks and can cause damage to buildings and footpaths through staining and erosion reducing local environmental quality.

Further research from Encams identified that the lack of or poor maintenance of public toilets can have a very negative impact and reduce the possibility of tourists returning. In research conducted by Encams over 60% of visitors decided on beach locations from the availability of public toilets. It must therefore never be underestimated the image a place can make on a visitor and the impact on a local economy especially where tourism is a major factor.

## 6.4 Summary of impact

The closure of the toilets has an economic, social and health impact. The precise economic impact of the closure is impossible to identify, however a likely impact has been shown to range from £19,852 to over £60,000, and costing the town between one and two and a half full-time equivalent jobs. The social impact is most affecting the vulnerable in the community, increasing their risk of becoming excluded and reducing their opportunities for community participation. The environmental health of the town is being damaged through street urination and associated health risks.

## 7.0 Legislative issues

Although only a few there are some important legislative issues that should be addressed.

### Ownership / leasing

The toilets in the town centre are owned by the Town Council and those at Bwlch y Gle owned by Powys County Council.

Powys County Council will lease the toilets at Blwch Y Gle to any group wishing to take over their running on a 21-year lease with an option to relinquish the lease after three years. The lease will be on a "peppercorn" rent.

Severn Trent are responsible for the land on which the toilets are situated, and should therefore be informed of any changes in ownership, leasing and plans to re-open them

The only lease issues in the town will occur if the Town Council does not wish to have responsibility for the toilets in the future, in which case a lease will be needed. It is suggested that the lease used for the Local Authority by Powys County Council would be appropriate to use.

### Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliance

All public toilets should have disabled access; however this does not have to be a RADAR key operated toilet. "Burgess" undertook an access audit on both sets of public toilets. The report estimated a cost of £895 to bring the toilets up to standard in the town centre and £5,250 at Bwlch y Gle. These costs are further broken down into priority 1 and 2, Priority 1 should be done and Priority 2 recommend actions to be done. The table below identifies the work needed at each toilet.

#### Town Centre

Priority 1	Estimated cost
Step nosing on the external step, Replace hand drying facilities, Fit additional hand rail in disabled toilet	£195
Priority 2	
Contrasting colour on perimeter of sanitary fixtures and fittings, Contrasting bolts colours on doors, Grab rails to be installed, Improved signage	£700

#### Bwlch y Gle

Priority 1	Estimated cost
Improved access from car park, Disabled parking space near the toilet, Handrail in male toilets, Ramp entrance should have slip resistant finish on female toilet, No external handle on disabled toilet, Contrasting colour on perimeter of sanitary fixtures and fittings, Contrasting bolts colours on doors, Grab rails to be installed, Clearance of pathways*	£4,260
Priority 2	
Move hand basin / towel dispenser, External lighting, New / improved signage	£990

\* The clearance work was suggested as £1000 a year to pay someone on a weekly basis to sweep and clear paths.

This gives approximate figures of the level of work needed to ensure the toilets comply with the DDA and should be incorporated into any refurbishment costs.

#### Water management

The water for Bwlch y Gle is taken from a well in the neighbouring farmer's field. This agreement would need to be renegotiated if a new organisation took over the toilets.

## 8.0 Future operation of the toilets

### National Best Practice

The London Assembly Health and Public Services Committee conducted a review into public toilets in London in March 2006. This identified that good public toilets should be:

- Open - if it's not open it's no use.
- Clean –clean porcelain and dry floors are a priority for wheelchair users.
- Safe – good lighting, a location that feels safe and busy and no visible signs of anti-social behavior. An attendant, up to date cleaners' 'ticksheets' or CCTV can also give reassurance that someone is 'keeping an eye out'. The 'vandal-proof' stainless steel appearance of some automatic toilets are sometime viewed as a good response to vandalism but sometimes as 'giving in' to antisocial behaviour.
- Well stocked – with toilet paper, soap, water, and towels for reasons of public health and hygiene but also to show the toilets are looked after.

Other important factors identified included:

- Location, including demand for the service, duplication of facilities, proximity to bars and clubs to reduce street fouling.
- The more toilets the better but they should be of a usable standard.
- The service provider does not matter to the service user.
- 24 hour provision depending on need and toilets should be designed to deter vandalism and anti social behaviour.
- Many people would be willing to pay to use a toilet of a higher standard, but this may deter other service users, resulting in maintenance costs not being met.
- Actively seeking regular feedback from service users is vital.

## Opening times

There are essentially two options; leave the toilets open 24hrs a day or lock them up at specified times. For the toilets at Bwlch y Gle, 24 hr opening is suggested. There has been little vandalism there in the past and the cost/time/inconvenience of sending someone up there to open and close the toilets each day is not justified.

The toilets by the Town Hall however have been subject to vandalism in the past. Therefore having them open from 8am - 6pm (possibly later in the summer) is recommended.

## Cleaning

Cleaning at Bwlch y Gle was carried out by a local person for one hour a day, but changed for health and safety reasons to a mobile cleaning unit. A new agreement will need to be established for the toilets if they reopen.

The toilets in the town would be cleaned by the 'toileteers' who are willing to open, close and clean the toilets each day.

## Fixtures and fittings

The British Toilet Association awards for Innovation (2003) awarded the following companies prizes for their products.

- Wallgate<sup>xi</sup> - Hand Washing Units. For efficiency and being vandalism proof
- Excel Dryer UK<sup>xii</sup> - Air Dryer - The drier is very cost effective, being 80% cheaper than a conventional drier

## 9.0 Cost

The table below shows the running costs of the toilets before they were closed:

	Manweb	Severn Trent Water	PHS hand driers	C & G Water management	Cannon Hygiene sanitary bins	Insurance	Total
Town Centre	£260	£450	£180	£40	£92	£200	£1,222
Bwlch y Gle	£200	£440 to farmer £25 EA for abstraction	£80	£40	£92	£200	£1,099
Total							£2,321

In addition to these costs there are rates and cleaning and maintenance cost to be considered.

### Cleaning costs

Cleaning options for both toilets are made in above (section 8.0) both toilet blocks will need cleaning. For the toilets in town a cost will be incurred for cleaning products, but if volunteers are prepared to do the work there will be no wages to pay. The cost at Bwlch y Gle will be the largest cost, as a cleaner will need to visit the site. Paying a cleaner £6 for an hour, every day of the week will cost £2184 per annum. This is a significant cost to the overall running of these toilets. (A total of £3,283)

If a problem is reported at the town toilets this could be quickly dealt with by the 'toileteers' as they are all in the immediate vicinity. However at Bwlch y Gle the reporting of any problems will be harder to deal with. If there were a charge to use the toilets the necessity to keep them clean and problem free is more of an issue as people expect a higher standard for pay toilets.

### Maintenance costs

There will be ongoing maintenance to pay for, including repair of damaged fixtures and fittings and occasional repainting.

### Rates

The rates that apply to each building are: £1,800 at Bwlch y Gle and £1,600 for those in the town. A 50% discount is available for small businesses running the toilets. If a Charitable organisation runs the toilets there is a mandatory 80% rate relief and further 20% discretionary (from the Local Authority) relief available. A grant is available from the Local authority (£3000 over three years) to help organisations taking over the running of toilets. This is available for both toilets in Llanidloes. If a non-charity voluntary organisation runs the toilets, they can apply for a discretionary rate relief of 75% from the Local authority. The Town council is unable to have any rate relief.

### Running costs

Adding in the rate charge and cleaning cost to Bwlch y Gle to each toilet would increase the costs to:

	Full rates	75% rates	80% rates
Town Hall	£2,822	£1,622	£1,542
Bwlch y Gle	£5,083	£3,733	£3,643

## 9.1 Cost to renovate

### Basic costs

Three initial quotes have been obtained for the toilet block next to the Town Hall and these will be followed up accordingly.

Quote 1: £14,160.00

Quote 2: £8,500.00

Quote 3: £16,149.20

All three largely cover the basics including:

Labour: the removal and disposal of the asbestos roof and replacement with box profile roof panelling, plaster boarding and insulation, replacement of fascia boards, guttering, tiling and paint work.

In addition, this report has sought to obtain initial contacts for suppliers of fittings and fixtures (such as on page 25). These can be followed up imminently. Quotes for urinal bowls have also been obtained.

## 9.2 Income

There are some income generating possibilities with the toilets.

### Pay to use

A number of public toilets now have a charge of 10p / 20p. Either a toilet attendant collects money on site or a turnstile or coin operated door is in place. Having an attendant is not appropriate for either toilet due to the high cost of employing someone. Where there is a charge in place to use a toilet there is an expectation that they are of a higher standard.

The number of people that will use the toilets is hard to approximate. The table below shows the number of users needed to cover the costs identified above.

		Full rates	75% rates	80% rates
Town Hall		£2,822	£1,622	£1,542
Bwlch y Gle		£5,083	£3,733	£3,643
Number of users				
Town Hall	10p	28220	16220	15420
	20p	14110	8110	7710
Bwlch y Gle	10p	50830	37330	36430
	20p	25415	18665	18215
Total users needed for both sites	10p	79050	53550	51850
	20p	39525	26775	25925

Some people however will not be willing to pay a charge. At Bwlch y Gle, there is a free alternative! And as the site is secluded it will not be difficult for people to continue to use the bushes. Therefore charging at Bwlch y Gle may not be appropriate, if not everyone is paying, the

surrounding area will still be used as a free toilet, which will detract from the toilets and not improve the area.

In the town this is not such an issue as the toilets are in a public area, charging here should not cause such difficulties, although there will be those who do not want to pay.

A charge of 20p per use in town and free at Bwlch y Gle would require 25,925 users of the toilet a year to cover the costs or 39,525 users if full rates are paid.

#### Advertising

Both sets of toilets have potential to have advertising space for local businesses. A display board with 10 adverts for businesses, each charged £35 for a year would give £350 a year towards running costs. While this may not be the best advertising space, it is a good way for local businesses to support the opening of the toilets.

#### Organisational support

Organisations and events that are presently having to hire toilets should be asked to make a contribution towards the running of the toilets. This can be below the cost they presently have to pay to hire in toilets for events, therefore saving them money but also supporting the toilet blocks.

### 9.3 Meeting the costs

The table below shows the possible income that the toilets could generate.

	Pay to use	Advertising	Organisation support	Total	Full rates	80% rates
Town Hall	£2500	£350	£200	£3050	£2,822	£1,542
Bwlch y Gle	N/a	£350	£200	£550	£5,083	£3,643

As the Town Council own the toilets in the town, there is the option that they cover the costs of running them or at least underwrite any cost in their running. Considering the very strong public support for the toilets this would seem to be an expenditure that could be justified by the Council.

However, the high running costs at Bwlch y Gle, plus the more remote location make them a difficult proposition to maintain.

### 9.4 Funding opportunities

Below are some possible sources of funding for the development of the toilets

- Wales Assembly Government - Communities Facilities Activities Programme (over £100,000)
- Big Lottery - Awards for All (£5000)
- Enterprising Community Buildings available from PAVO (until 20<sup>th</sup> March 2008)

## 10.0 Recommendations

### Town centre

- Priority should be given to re-opening toilets in the town.
- The costs could be met by the Town Council, if they are unwilling to cover these costs then a pay per use entry system needs to be introduced (at 20p per use).
- The toileteers group to take on the lease of the toilets from the Town Council, this group can then apply for rate reduction to minimise the overall running costs of the toilets.
- Repair and redecorate as necessary.
- Introduce water saving and energy efficient appliances.
- Allow a local art group / school group to paint a mural in the toilet block. This will reduce vandalism and make the toilets a feature as well as an amenity in the town. This could be a competition of local artists or a school initiative.

### Bwlch y Gle

- Whilst recognising their importance, the toilets have additional costs that makes reopening them more costly and it is felt that with limited resources the toilets in town should be reopened as a priority.
- If money can be found to renovate these toilets the ongoing maintenance costs are hard to meet, due to the distance from town for cleaning on a daily basis (and being able to respond quickly to and problems).
- An alternative is that the toilets are purchased and that the block is converted to a kiosk. A couple of accessible toilets could then be made available for public use.

# Appendix

## Businesses consulted

Benji's	Benji
Arcadia Antiques	Roger & Linda Hallett
The Wool Shop	Ruth Townsend
Osteopath	John Wilden
Llani Leisure	Adele Hopkins
Elan Leisure	Keith Foster
National Milk Bar	Gwyneth Davies
Natural Foods	Miss F Hinks
Bradleys Peugeot	Jo Cumming
	Darren Tonks
Great Oak foods	Orysia Turkoniak
The Great Oak Cafe	Gerry Collins
Ptint Cut 2	Gwen and David Utting
Carols' Hair Salon	Carol Davies
Steve Payne	
Angela's and Angie's	Angela Darby
Earthlight Crystals	
Natwe Gallwy	
J Ayling	
Llanidloes Museum	
Angel Public House	Paul
Laura Ashley	Jane Griffiths
Red Kite Kiosk	Douglass and Christine Barley
Severn Trent	Richard Spence
Angling Club	
Disability Powys	
LLES	Diana Berriman
	Andy Warren
Powys County Council	
	John ward
	Hugh Davies
	Nigel Balwdyn

## Consultation responses

Below are the responses from the people responding to the public consultation exercise that demonstrate the

### Business

- A family with a couple of young children asked where the toilets were, they said they would not stop again in the town
- I let a child into my shop the other week to use the toilet, as she was distressed that there were no toilets
- The closure of the Public Toilets off Great Oak Street has caused great hardship to the many coaches who drive into Llanidloes on their way to North Wales, many with elderly passengers who would use the toilets and then use our cafe.

### Accessibility

- It is so inconvenient; they should never have been closed
- The toilets in the Milk bar are hard to climb
- I can't walk up the slope from the Gro toilets to the main street
- I can walk up the stairs in the shops to use their toilets
- Why should businesses pay for people to use their toilets?
- [Shop name] would not let someone use their toilet, as they had not bought anything from the shop
- When a child needs to go to the toilet, they need to go! It is too late by the time you have walked to the Gro

### Where are the toilets?

- We regularly have customers in our shop – often in some distress- enquiring re. toilet facilities
- I'm asked twice a week where the toilets are
- Twice a day I'm asked where are the toilets
- Every time I come in to town I'm asked where the toilets are (weekly) (and more in the summer
- I'm asked every time I come into town (twice a week) where are the toilets
- Traders in the market hall are asked 4/5 time a day where are the nearest toilets
- During an arts festival held in Minerva during the summer for 2 weeks they were asked 30-40 times where the toilets were. The toilets in the Minerva were allowed to be used but they are small and not really suitable
- The arts festival was open on Sundays and Bank holidays when other shops were shut, so no to her facilities available for people to use toilets
- I'm asked every time that I come into town if there are any toilets

### Decline of town

- I have seen the town go down hill in the years I have been here
- I moved here because the facilities were good, it is such a shame to see it go down hill like this
- We are suppose to be a tourist town, it does not look good when you have to tell them that there are no toilets in the town
- "It is embarrassing having to tell visitors that there are no toilets in the centre of town"

### Time spent in town

- I spend less time in town now, and go home when I need the toilet.
- I only pop in to use Summerfield now and do not stop in the centre
- I use to come in shopping and have a coffee but since the toilets closed I do not stay as long
- My neighbour does not come into town any more as there are no facilities for her to use
- My mother aged 85 can't come into town anymore as she can't walk to the toilets out of town

### Public perceptions of Llanidloes

- They [visitors] find it incredible that this basic facility is unavailable in the town centre, and comment that it is so unlike other aspects of the town, about which they are very complimentary

### Buses

- I use to see bus loads of people going to the Milk bar, but no more
- I see less buses stopping now

### Other Comments

- Install CCTV to prevent vandalism of toilets
- Bwlch y Gle - 2 dozen people a week using the bushes around the toilets . Lot of fishing
- Toilets in Gro are not pleasant
- Toilets should be free, I pay enough council tax - where do all our taxes go?
- Clun toilets are excellent example of what we could have
- There are a substantial number of individuals using the street and doorways, etc. as Toilets. There is a Public health risk which must be high as the food-shop doorways are frequently the sites chosen as toilets

## Excel hand drier cost comparison

<http://www.xlltd.co.uk/cost.html>

Paper Towels	Conventional Dryer	Xlerator Dryer
1 Case (4050 towels) Average cost £64.69 Assume 2 towels per use: £64.69/2025	1 Kw/hour electricity = 10 pence	1 Kw/hour electricity = 10 pence
	2.3 x 10=23 pence (cost per hour)	1.4 x 10=14 pence (cost per hour)
	Cost per minute=0.383 pence	Cost per minute=0.233 pence
	Cost per second=0.006 pence	Cost per second=0.0038 pence
	Drying time = 45 seconds	Drying time = 15 seconds
Cost per use = 3.194 pence	Cost per use = 0.29 pence	Cost per use = 0.06 pence
Cost per 1000 uses = £31.94	Cost per 1000 uses = £2.87	Cost per 1000 uses = £0.58
	Saving over paper per 1000 uses = £29.07 (91%)	Saving over paper per 1000 uses = £31.36 (98.2%)
		Saving over conventional dryer per 1000 uses = £2.29 (80%)

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- <sup>i</sup> British Toilet Association [www.britloos.co.uk](http://www.britloos.co.uk)
- <sup>ii</sup> Nowhere to Go: Public Toilet provision in the UK, Help the Aged, May 2007
- <sup>iii</sup> Powys Integrated Quality Management Research Project 2006 Visitor Survey: Llanidloes, Institute of Rural Science, Aberystwyth
- <sup>iv</sup> Leisure day visit expenditure, all visits
- <sup>v</sup> Christie M, Keirle I and Scott A (1998) The economic impact of Welsh national nature reserves. CCW: Bangor.
- <sup>vi</sup> Slee B, Farr H and Snowdon (1997). The economic impact of alternative types of rural tourism. *Journal of Agricultural Economics* 48(2), 179-192.
- <sup>vii</sup> Rayment (1995) Nature conservation, employment and local economics: A literature review. RSPB: Sandy
- <sup>viii</sup> Household expenditure survey 2003, National Statistics office
- <sup>ix</sup> National Statistics Office (2001) Census Data
- <sup>x</sup> <http://www.encams.org/home/>
- <sup>xi</sup> <http://www.wallgate.com/catalog.htm>
- <sup>xii</sup> <http://www.xltd.co.uk/index.html>