

Black Mountains College Ltd

Introduction

Black Mountains College required an Options Appraisal on the 4 following sites:

- The former Talgarth Mid Wales Hospital
- Talgarth Primary School, Bronllys Hospital and other sites within the town
- Brecon Barracks, Brecon
- Gwernyfed High School and adjoining land, Three Cocks

The Options Appraisal was set out to examine the feasibility and viability of the college on different sites, to consider, inter alia:

- Define the key attributes of a successful campus and model space requirements to include all elements - teaching, administration, student accommodation, catering, sport, services, other amenities, green space.
- How the sites or configuration of different sites can accommodate the space requirements of the college.
- What potential the sites hold for energy generation on site and the likely lifetime energy costs of different sites.
- How the features of different sites affect the viability of the project and provide amenity for the town – for example the potential for surplus land to be developed for housing, affordable or social, the potential for new transport infrastructure/routes, electric vehicle charging points, green spaces and other public benefits.
- The planning, heritage and access constraints of different sites
- Public consultations and stakeholder engagement on the potential sites.
- Valuations – current and lifetime.

Through the Options Appraisal Black Mountains College conducted the following activities:

- The commissioning of professional expertise to examine the opportunities and limitations of locating the college on different potential sites, to include:
- Master-planning the town of Talgarth to look at the overall Local Development Plan, to assess the current and necessary provision of services, transport infrastructure and model likely future flows from different site options for the college.
- A Traffic Assessment to ascertain the carrying capacity of various parts of Talgarth's road infrastructure.
- An energy survey to consider the likely energy generation potential and energy cost of comparison sites.
- Heritage consultants to examine the heritage potential of each site and the opportunities for funding or constraints to development that that might pose.
- A Structural engineer to examine the state of existing buildings and their suitability for refurbishment/re-use.
- Quantity Surveyor to estimate the potential costs and cost comparisons of proceeding on various sites.
- Architects to model space requirements, a schedule of accommodation and outline schemes for each site to enable a commercial determination to be made as to which would be the most appropriate site based on a range of factors – access, value for

money, attractiveness to students (viability), other commercial potential and other public benefit or amenity.

Challenge

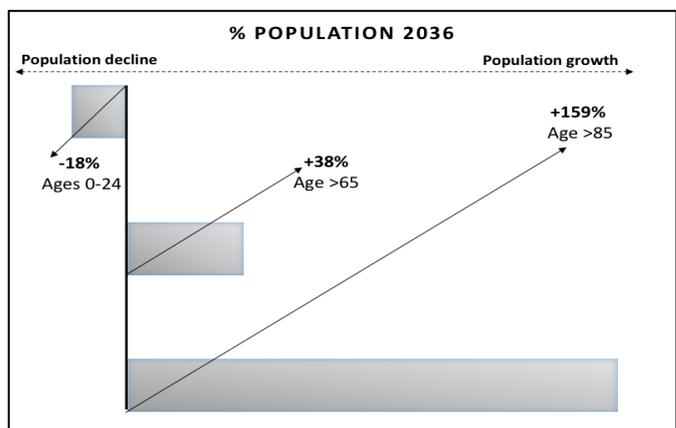
The Well-Being and Future Generations Act adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2015 sets out the grand challenges facing our society in future: large scale disruptive economic, demographic and climate change is coming. We will need to adapt. Yet our education system is mostly fitted for preparing young people for a world that is out of date. Robots are coming. The skills of those starting secondary school in 2018 and graduating in 2024 will need to be very different from what is on offer today. We need creative thinking.

The Global Challenge

Nearly every country acknowledges the need to de-carbonize economies but few have moved any great distance towards that goal. Climate change is not only a question of science but also of economy, society, politics and culture. Our fundamental assumptions and models will need to change. New ways of living and working will require, first of all, a leap of imagination.

The Local Challenge

Rural living and 'rurality' as a concept are in crisis due to a combination of huge demographic change, lifestyle shifts and a collapse in services. Coupled with Brexit there exists a massive risk to food and farming that has the potential to become a national security issue. Powys is the most rural county in Wales and faces big challenges due to an ageing population. By 2036 the **over 85 population will increase by 159%** and the over 65 population by 38%.



Meanwhile **the 0-24 population will drop by 18%**. This poses a range of urgent policy problems: in particular the need to retain young people in rural areas and to foster new models of rural regeneration, economic activity and new approaches to food and farming.

The Educational Challenge

Automation and rapid technological change mean that the jobs that will be available to children currently in primary school have not been invented yet. Future generations will need to deal with high levels of uncertainty and will in many cases need to create their own jobs. UK labour market projections to 2024 show that the rate of growth for **creative** and **STEM** (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) occupations will be more than double the average job growth across the whole UK economy. The future of work will be based on creativity and technology. The skills in demand will be collaboration, communication, creativity and cognition.

The UK Creative Industries Federation says creative subjects at Key Stage 4 and GCSE are in crisis. In Wales, the new **Donaldson Curriculum** aims to breathe new life into creative approaches within the formal school system but this means big changes for existing teachers and a challenge to existing teacher-training providers.

In Welsh further education, the **Hazelkorn review** has highlighted the need for diversification and innovation in education and collaborative working particularly in large rural areas.



Higher education institutions are urgently searching for ways of encouraging creativity in their curricula. Inter-disciplinary degrees are blooming across Europe and in North America but only to a limited extent in the UK.

The BMC Offer

BMC proposes a new kind of educational experience based around skills not subjects. Undergraduates will come to BMC to learn how to learn, how to think and how to communicate. They will study a common core curriculum for one year designed to open them to creative, collaborative and critical thinking before specialising in a 'major' area or theme and pursuing in their final year a real-world research problem in a local organization or business related to the goal of implementing the Well Being and Future Generations Act on the ground.

Students will come to BMC to find their talent and then learn how to apply it to the benefit of society and the planet.

Solution

The Options Appraisal culminated in a report on various site options and vocational courses for the region to fill gaps in current offerings by sparse delivery options at Brecon and Newton by Neath Port Talbot College. The Options Appraisal through a series of public consultations and research arrived at the following solutions:

Define Site Requirements

Based on student surveys, best practice literature and stakeholder consultation define key elements of successful campuses – ideal distances, maximum and minimum space requirements, service provision, broadband speeds, accommodation standards/configurations, transport connections, retail, recreation and health provision and so on.

Appraise context of Talgarth in relation to site criteria – opportunities and limitations

1. Examine the opportunities of locating the college on different potential sites, to include:
2. Master-planning the town of Talgarth – locating the proposed college in the context of other future developments and likely growth.
3. The Local Development Plan and planning context
4. Possibility of necessary land acquisition.
5. Services
6. Transport infrastructure/connections
7. Traffic Assessments to ascertain the carrying capacity of various parts of Talgarth's road infrastructure

Benefit

The Options Appraisal work was able to demonstrate that there is a gap in local vocational course provision and communities via a series of Drop-in sessions around Talgarth are open to BMC providing a solution to this. The site for a BMC campus, this formed a large part of the options appraisal, resounding noted a brownfield option in Talgarth was the optimum solution to a purpose built campus for vocational courses and would benefit the local communities around the region.

This is evident in the Report an output of the project highlights the following findings:



- Community and stakeholder would receive positive affirmation of the intention of regenerate a large derelict brownfield site 'The Mid Wales Hospital' site.
- Location of a local campus site in Talgarth would benefit the town both from students and staff and other services.
- Locating the campus initially on an existing farm site would fall under the Brecon Beacons National Park farm diversification criteria.
- A smaller campus site to start phasing in of the College would allow scope for proof of concept prior to embarking on major capital investment for a major site.
- Feedback from stakeholders suggests that the farm site would align closely with the ethos and vision of BMC.

Result

The Options Appraisal has had a positive impact on the communities in and around Talgarth and has enabled the public to actively engage in a series of scheduled consultation and events in order to have their say give their feedback on the shaping of the project. The final report will use all of this feedback to inform the Options Appraisal and demonstrate that the project has endeavoured to transform the community enthusiasm and academic and political support into a viable, professionally tested and costed funding bid to realise the vision of the College and its impact on the local areas.

The project itself directly engaged 509 participants and garnered feedback from 62 stakeholders all of which fed into the final report.

The scoping work has been a unique opportunity and platform for drawing together the unique experience, resources and talent of the region that post the ARWAIN funded project can support something of national and international significance.

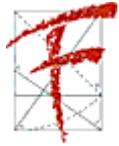
A direct result of the Options Appraisal BMC has been able to commence development of 2 vocational NVQ L2 courses with local employers and in conjunction with Neath Port Talbot Group of Colleges (NPTC) as accrediting body. Also as a direct result of the outcomes of the Options Appraisal BMC applied for National Lottery People and Places funding to support development of these courses and was successful in securing 2 years of funding for GBP97,000 that has now employed a community training coordinator. This is a direct result of the options appraisal. The 2 courses under development through support of the findings of the Options Appraisal courses are due to commence delivery in September 2020. This demonstrates how BMC have endeavour to maintain sustainability of the Arwain funded project post the funding and project ending. The courses under development are highlighted below:

Project Contact Details

For more information please contact Ben Rawlence on ben@blackmountainscollege.uk or alternatively visit www.blackmountainscollege.uk



Partners/Match Funders Logos



Project Details	
Delivered By:	Black Mountains College Ltd
Start Date:	March 2019
End Date:	January 2020
LEADER Theme:	Theme 3: Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services

Financial Details		
Total Expenditure:	£73,144.00	100.00%
RDP Funding:	£53,352.00	72.9410%
Match funding:	£19,792.00	27.0590



