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# Invitation to tender:

# What is Covid-19 teaching us about the resilience of Welsh places?

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# Summary

This is an invitation to tender for research into understanding what Covid-19 has taught us about the resilience of Welsh places. The research has a maximum budget of £6,000 (plus VAT) and a report is to be delivered within 14 weeks of awarding the contract. The research will encompass:

1. Case studies of a sample of towns across Wales using the Understanding Welsh Places categorisations of place. Bidders will need to set out the number of case studies to be undertaken within the budget.
2. An analysis of the resilience of the selected Welsh places during the Covid-19 pandemic using publicly available data and research
3. Survey or interview research into the experiences of people living and working in the selected places.

Responses to this invitation must be submitted by **10:00am** on **Friday 22 January 2021.**

# 1. Introduction

The Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA) is a think tank and charity, independent of government and political parties.

By bringing together experts from all backgrounds, we conceive ambitious and informed ideas which secure political commitments to improve our democracy, public services and economy.

We provide platforms for debate, opportunities for people to make their voices heard and agenda-setting research. We are funded by [our members](http://www.iwa.wales/about-us/support-us/individual-membership/), income from [our events and training sessions](https://www.iwa.wales/eventbrite-event/), and supported by [trusts, foundations and other funding bodies.](https://www.iwa.wales/about-us/annual-reports/)

The IWA has been funded by Carnegie UK Trust to deliver the Understanding Welsh Places project. [Understanding Welsh Places](http://www.understandingwelshplaces.wales/en/map/#alphabet) is a bilingual website that presents information on the economy, demographic make-up and local services of more than 300 places in Wales in a quick and easy format.

# 2. Background

## Understanding Welsh Places

Understanding Welsh Places is a bilingual website that presents information on the economy, demographic make-up and local services of more than 300 places in Wales in a quick and easy format. We see it becoming the first port of call for statistical information about towns in Wales. Currently, a lot of statistics collected about Wales are only available on a local authority level and too often, town communities are overlooked by public policy, because of the difficulty accessing data at that level.

Understanding Welsh Places allows people to explore and compare statistics on towns; including information on:

* Population, age distribution, ethnicity and national identity
* Number of primary and secondary school places per person
* The industry of employment, commuting distances and qualifications
* Number of hospitals, GPs and dentists per person.

Funded by the Carnegie UK Trust, and the Welsh Government, the website is a vital tool for community groups, planners and policymakers to help them understand the place where they live and work in greater detail and will enable communities to identify opportunities in their areas.

**What can UWP do?**

The site has information on every place in Wales with more than 1,000 residents and a comparative analysis of every place with more than 2,000 residents.

It categorises places in Wales into 7 different groups of similar towns, which allows people to make links and share ideas from across the country. For example, if a regeneration policy worked well in Crickhowell, could it also work in Penrhyn Bay? Both are towns in category 4. Understanding Welsh Places allows these links to be made and allows people to analyse areas from all corners of Wales – all on a single webpage.

The data has also been used to classify each town on a scale ranging from Independent to Dependent. Looking at economic and social factors (such as a reliance on a particular sector for jobs and the distances that residents travel to work) we can see if an area is reliant on neighbouring places or if they are ‘independent’.

We hope that Understanding Welsh Places will bridge the ‘data gap’ around towns and that this will, in turn, inform and influence the development of policies which will help the areas in which so many of us live.

## Policy landscape

In January 2020, Welsh Government announced ‘Transforming Towns’, a £90 million package of investment in order to help breathe new life into town centres. Within this the Welsh Government committed to a ‘Town Centre First’ approach, which means locating services and buildings in town centres wherever possible, as well releasing grant funding for greening projects which will deliver environmental benefits and make town centres more attractive places to visit.

This indicated a commitment from Welsh Government to revitalising town centres before the impacts of the pandemic were known.

In July 2020, the Welsh Government released ‘Building Better Places’, a document which set out the Welsh Government’s planning policy priorities to assist in taking action in the

recovery period after the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. This committed to the planning system in Wales delivering ‘Resilient and Brighter Futures’ for communities across Wales.

Since then Welsh Government has stated its long-term ambition to see 30% of Welsh workers working from home or near from home, including after the threat of Covid-19. As part of this, they are exploring a network of community-based remote working hubs, where people would be able access a work space in their local community within walking and cycling distance of their homes.

This indicates a commitment from Welsh Government to create communities that are resilient, pleasant to live in and which shift towards people living more locally beyond the pandemic. The IWA wants to use the insights generated by UWP to create well evidenced recommendations to Welsh Government, local authorities and other decision makers regarding how best to deliver this aim.

# 3. What would we like to understand?

Towns are vital to environmental, economic, social and cultural well-being in Wales. Around 40% of our population live in small towns of less than 20,000 people and nearly everyone identifies emotionally with a town or city in some way.

Over the past few years many town centres have faced huge difficulties in the wake of retail closures, online shopping, public sector cutbacks and continued lack of investment.

Yet some places have managed to harness this change and have begun to thrive. For example, Cardigan was named as one of the UK's nine Carnegie Trust ‘Turnaround Towns’ in 2019 and described as being ‘home to a number of entrepreneurs and community-led organisations who are addressing the challenges towns face head-on, grasping the best of what the area has to offer and building businesses and ventures that make the most of local, sustainable resources: the food, the environment and the culture.’

The pandemic has almost acted as a ’natural experiment’, which could give us insights on how resilient our places are, and what they need to be more resilient in future.. Some of the problems being exposed by the pandemic have been deeply embedded in our communities for a long time, and some of the successful solutions have been born out of the pandemic as well.

For this piece of work, the IWA defines resilience as the ability of a community to withstand shocks, stress and challenges. Resilience encompasses the ability to adapt and survive adverse circumstances such as environmental, societal, or economic shocks, or to cope and thrive given the challenges of everyday life.

We would like to understand why particular places across Wales may have coped differently with the effects of the pandemic, whether that be in regard to the response to the pandemic itself, the economic resilience of a place, or the wellbeing of people in their communities. For instance, can we identify particular assets or characteristics some communities have, which can help them navigate successfully this new world we find ourselves in?

The pandemic presents an opportunity to re-think streets, spaces and buildings to support new models of social engagement and interaction focussed on making the best use of public and civic resources and connecting people. This can create a lasting impact, improving both the physical environment but also creating sustainable and vibrant town centres that are focused on improving people’s wellbeing.

The pandemic can therefore be a catalyst to make change for a better future, but before we do that we need to understand the building blocks that will help us along the way.

# 4. Outline methodology

1. Using UWP and other publicly available data, build a picture of what the selected places and communities across Wales looked like prior to the pandemic, in respect of their assets, economy, health and wellbeing, and how that picture has changed since. Bidders will need to set out the number of case studies they can deliver within the budget.
2. Undertake original qualitative research to understand how communities view the experiences of their places during the pandemic.
3. Analyse these data sets to identify particular assets that made places across Wales more resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Your proposal should include a more detailed outline of how you will collate, create and analyse these data sets. We will work with the successful bidder to finalise and agree a methodology which will form the basis of our contract.

# 5. Research outputs

We anticipate the project will be divided into three main components as below. We welcome any suggestions from bidders as to alternative approaches which will deliver our research objectives. However, bidders must still provide costings for the methodology outlined below to enable us to compare tenders, and bidders will need to set out the number of case studies to be undertaken for the budget.

We expect three key research outputs:

1. Provide case studies of a number of towns across Wales. These towns will be selected by using the Understanding Welsh Places categorisations of place, the UWP website has classified 193 places into seven groups (1 – 7) based on K-means analysis of the variables. You can find out more about the categorisations [here.](http://www.understandingwelshplaces.wales/en/methodology/#category_1) Your tender should set out how many towns you will be able to include, within the indicated budget.
2. Each case study will include a review of publicly available data and research relating to the experience of the selected Welsh places during the covid-19 pandemic. For example, [ONS data and analysis on coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK and its effect on the economy and society](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases), and [Centre for Towns research into the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on our towns and cities.](https://www.centrefortowns.org/reports/covid-19-and-our-towns)
3. Each case study will include survey or interview research into the experiences of people from the selected places, based on a topic guide to be developed in collaboration with the IWA. Interviewees will be agreed with the IWA, and might include:

* Town and Community Councils
* Local decision makers
* Local authorities
* Local businesses
* Third sector organisations
* Community groups
* Faith based groups
* Informal mutual aid groups

The supplier is expected to produce a report in accordance with the IWA house style, targeted at a public policy audience.

# 6. Uses of the research

This research will be used to inform the development of a series of policy recommendations for the next Welsh Government and local authorities. We anticipate these recommendations focusing on which assets policymakers should prioritise for investment to build the resilience of Welsh places in the long term.

The IWA promotes evidence-based policy making, and as such recommendations will make close reference to the evidence presented. We anticipate that the research report will be presented as an annex to a set of policy recommendations which will be used as an influencing tool. The recommendations will be shared with interested stakeholders.

The recommendations will be developed by, and attributed to, the IWA. The supplier will not be expected to develop policy recommendations as part of the research exercise. However, the supplier will be asked to review and comment on the recommendations during their development, both in writing and in a meeting (this will be reflected in the contract).

# 7. Milestones for delivery of the contract

Following the award of the contract:

* (within one week of the award) attendance at an inception meeting via zoom. This will be an opportunity for the supplier to confirm their proposed approach and methodology, identify which towns to focus on, and raise any questions with the IWA.
* (within five weeks of the award) attendance at an interim findings meeting via zoom. This will be a chance to present interim findings from initial quantitative based research outlined in point 1 and 2 in the outline methodology and propose any necessary amendments to the approach or timescales.
* (within ten weeks of the award) submit a first draft report of the report. This will be reviewed by the IWA and by the Welsh Places Influencing Group responsible for the influencing work surrounding the Understanding Welsh Places project.
* (between 10-12 weeks of the award) address any comments from the IWA’s review of the first draft findings report, and provide comments on draft policy recommendations produced by the IWA (in writing and as part of a meeting with IWA staff and the project advisory group)
* (within 14 weeks of the award) submit a final report of publishable quality in line with IWA house style and have submitted any comments on the IWA's proposed recommendations.
* (within 20 weeks of the award) present a summary of the findings at an online launch event for the report.

# 9. Resource and Structure

Amount for organisation/consultant: **up to £6k plus VAT.** Bidders must provide a breakdown of the costs alongside their submission.

# 10. Evaluation criteria

Responses to this invitation must be submitted by **10:00am** on **Friday 22 January 2021.**

Selected applicants will be asked to discuss their proposals with IWA staff on **Monday 1 February 2021.**

Applicants are asked to submit a written proposal (no more than 10 A4 pages not including CVs) addressing how they would approach the research questions and outputs described above, an outline implementation plan, and budget for the work. . In addition, applicants should provide information about their previous experience and how it relates to this work.

Proposals and any comments or queries should be directed to: [ellen.jones@iwa.org.uk](mailto:ellen.jones@iwa.org.uk)

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| Technical experience | Evidence of providing  similar services to other  organisations and  particular skills/experience  relevant to the problem | 15% |
| Methodology/approach | Details and suitability of  suggested approach,  proposals for case studies, methodology and other sources.  Plans for dealing with any  risks and contingencies | 20% |
| Understanding of need and policy context | Indication of a clear  understanding of the policy area, knowledge gap and the research objectives | 15% |
| Implementation plan | Details of your implementation plan to  meet the timescales, including staffing. | 10% |
| Quality | Details of how you ensure  that a high quality service  is maintained throughout  the contract period | 20% |
| Price | A full breakdown of all  costs should be given | 20% |