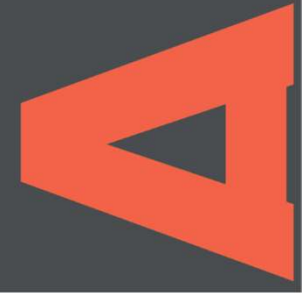


Town Centre Regeneration

Nick Selwyn, Matt Brushett and Meleri Bethell –
Audit Wales



The Auditor General for Wales and the Wales Audit Office



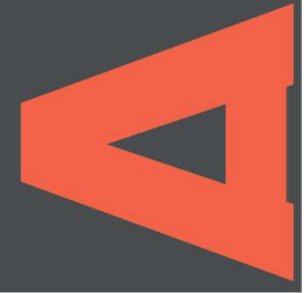
The Auditor General for Wales is the statutory auditor of:

- Welsh Government and its sponsored bodies.
- Health service bodies in Wales.
- Local government bodies in Wales.

Legal basis for Auditor General's work:

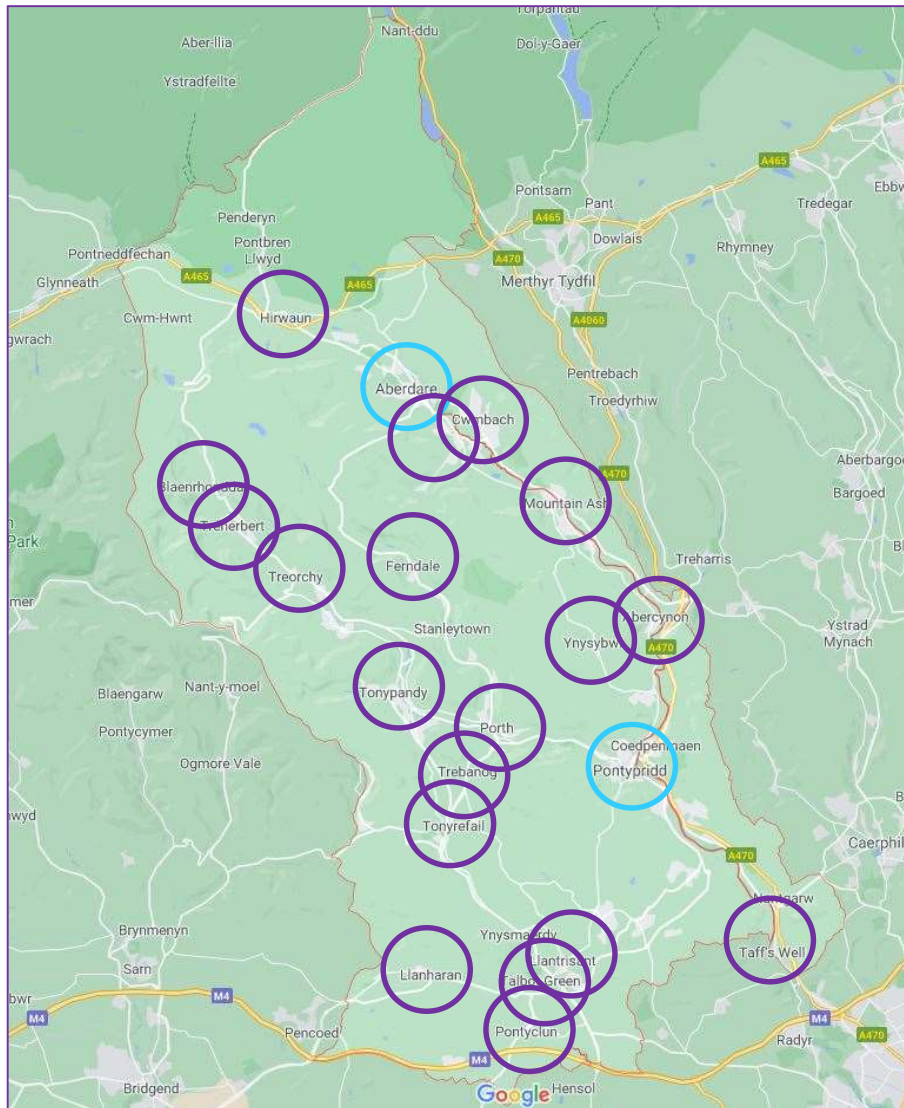
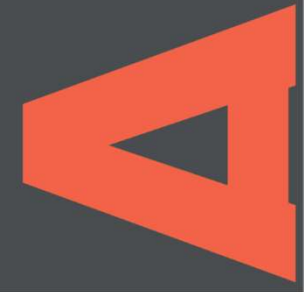
- Duty to audit accounts (provide opinion on them).
- Powers to examine and report on economy, efficiency and effectiveness (“value for money” or “VfM”) and to make recommendations for improving VfM.
- Statutory **discretion** in the way powers and duties are exercised.
- Is not directed by government — can, for example, pursue issues raised by the public.

Wales is a country of small ‘interdependent’ towns



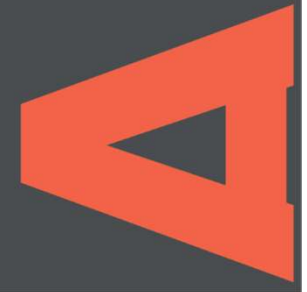
- What a town has and what it provides reflects the resident population's affluence and the towns geography.
- Towns are not standalone – they are interdependent for work, services, shops and leisure.
- However, towns are not always interconnected for access and usage.
- Towns reflect change overtime but also the impact of national/local government policy.

Towns are interdependent and close to each other – Rhondda Cynon Taf

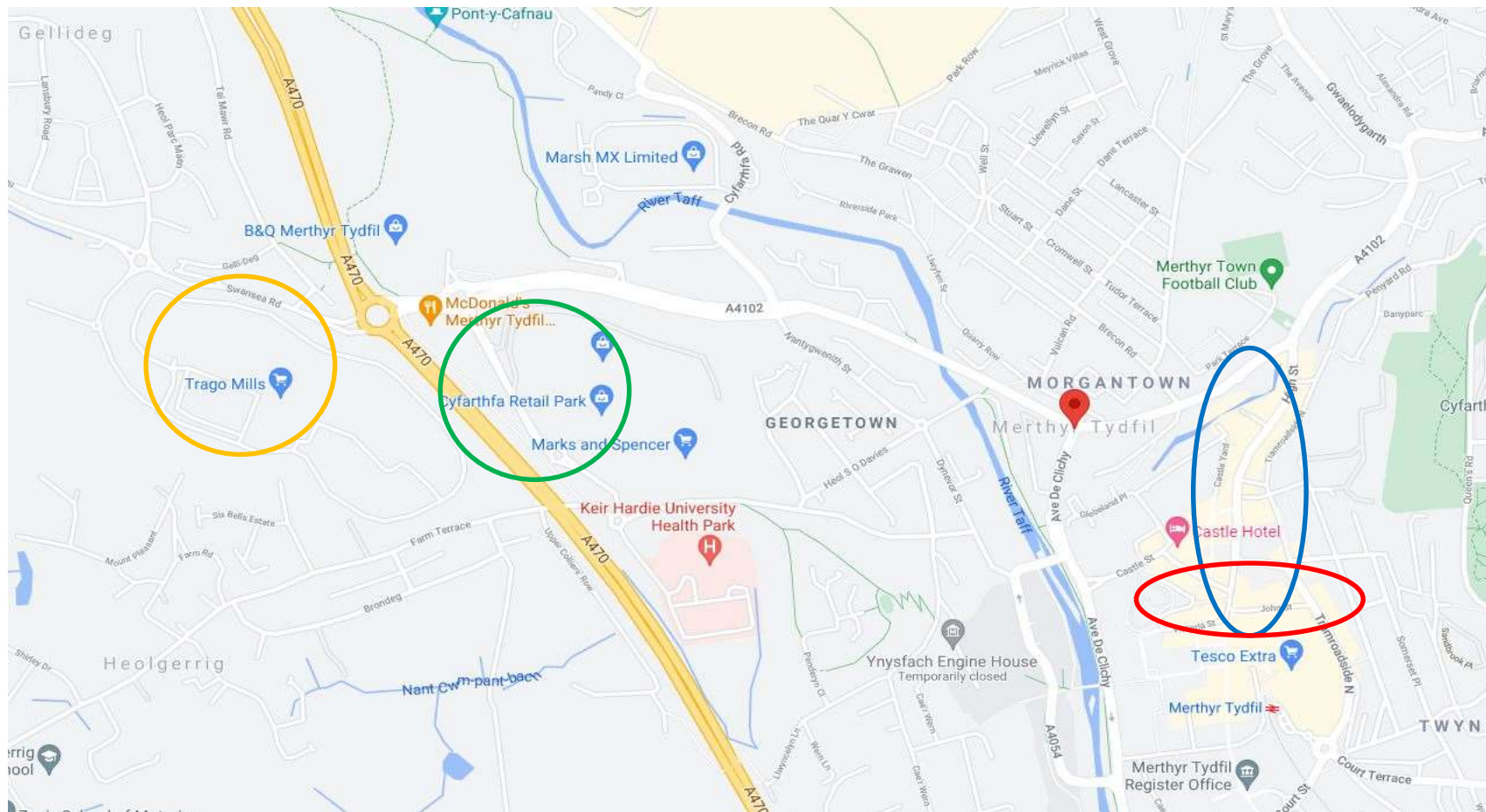
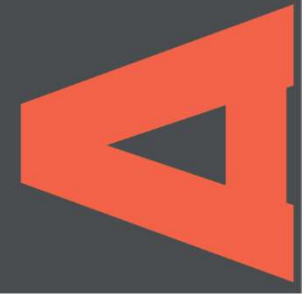


- Two principle towns in RCT: Pontypridd and Aberdare – **Blue Circles**. These are 12.6 miles apart.
- There are other communities with 2,000+ people **Purple Circles**.
- The furthest geographical distance between these is 23.5 miles - Hirwaun to Pontyclun.
- No journey within RCT is over 1 hour.

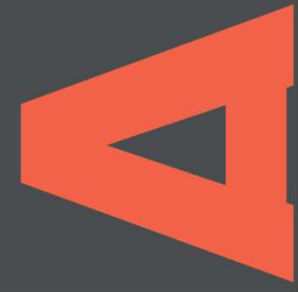
Town Centres and retailing continually change - e.g. Merthyr Tydfil



Changing town centre landscape in Merthyr Tydfil

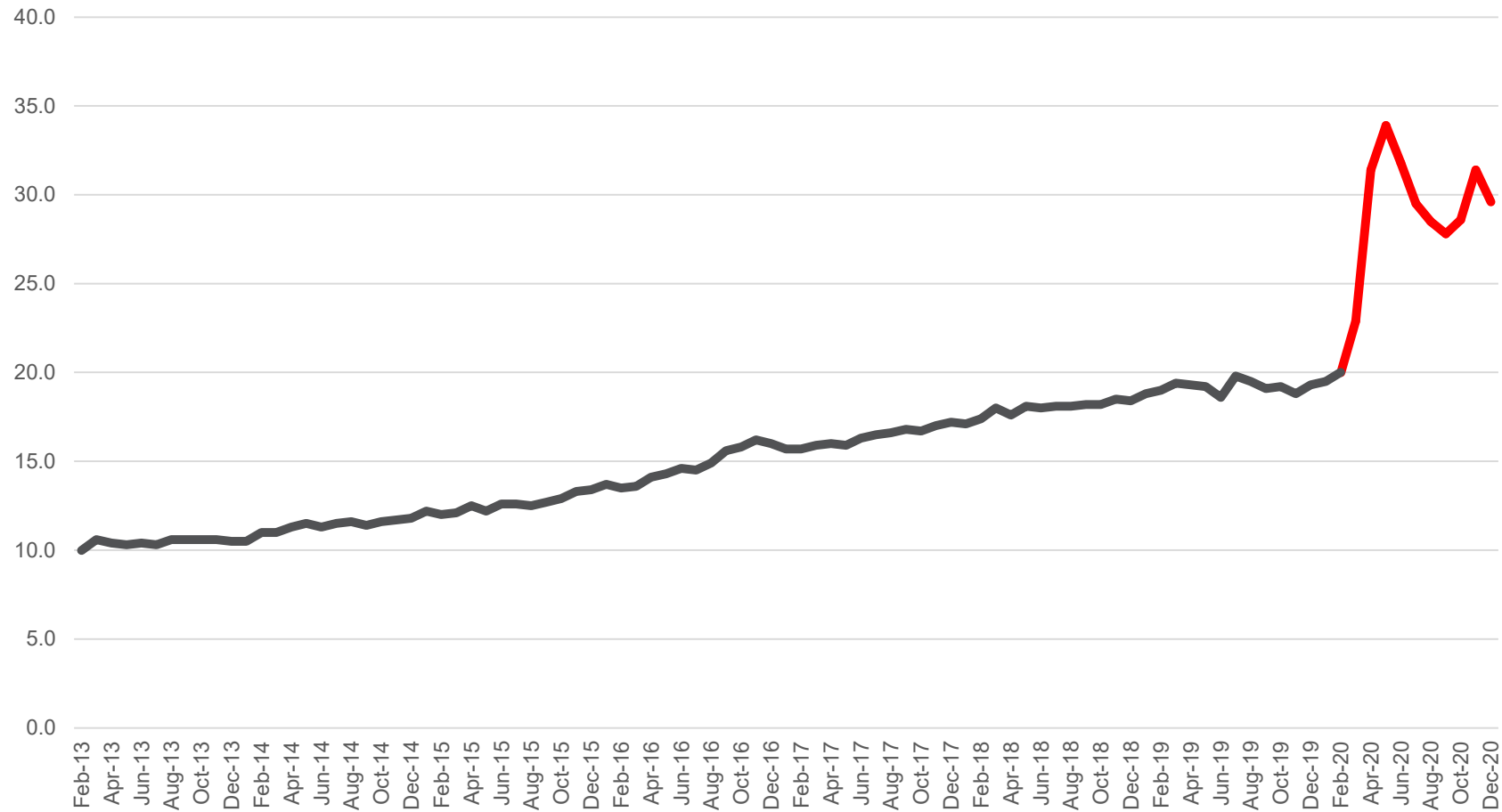
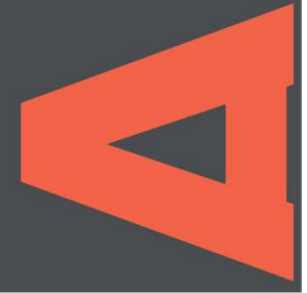


The loss of essential 'anchor' services in Wales



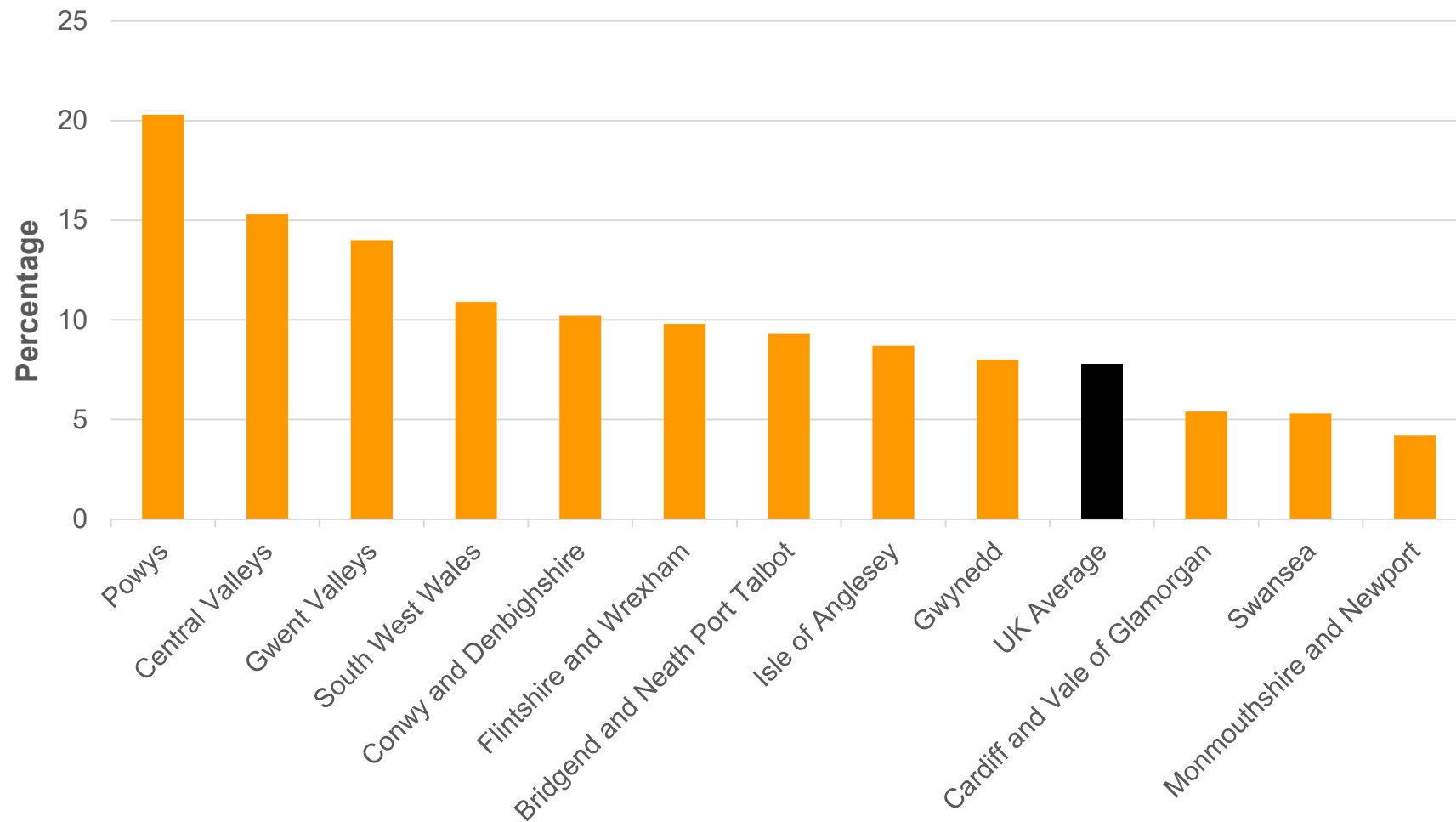
Year - 2020	Banks	Building Societies	Post Offices	GP surgeries	Pharmacies
Number remaining and % change in last 10 years	332 – 43% reduction in last 10 years	200 – 2.4% reduction in last 10 years	925 – 3.9% reduction in last 10 years	240 – remained stable	716 – remained stable

Percentage growth in online sales for the whole of the UK - January 2013 to December 2020



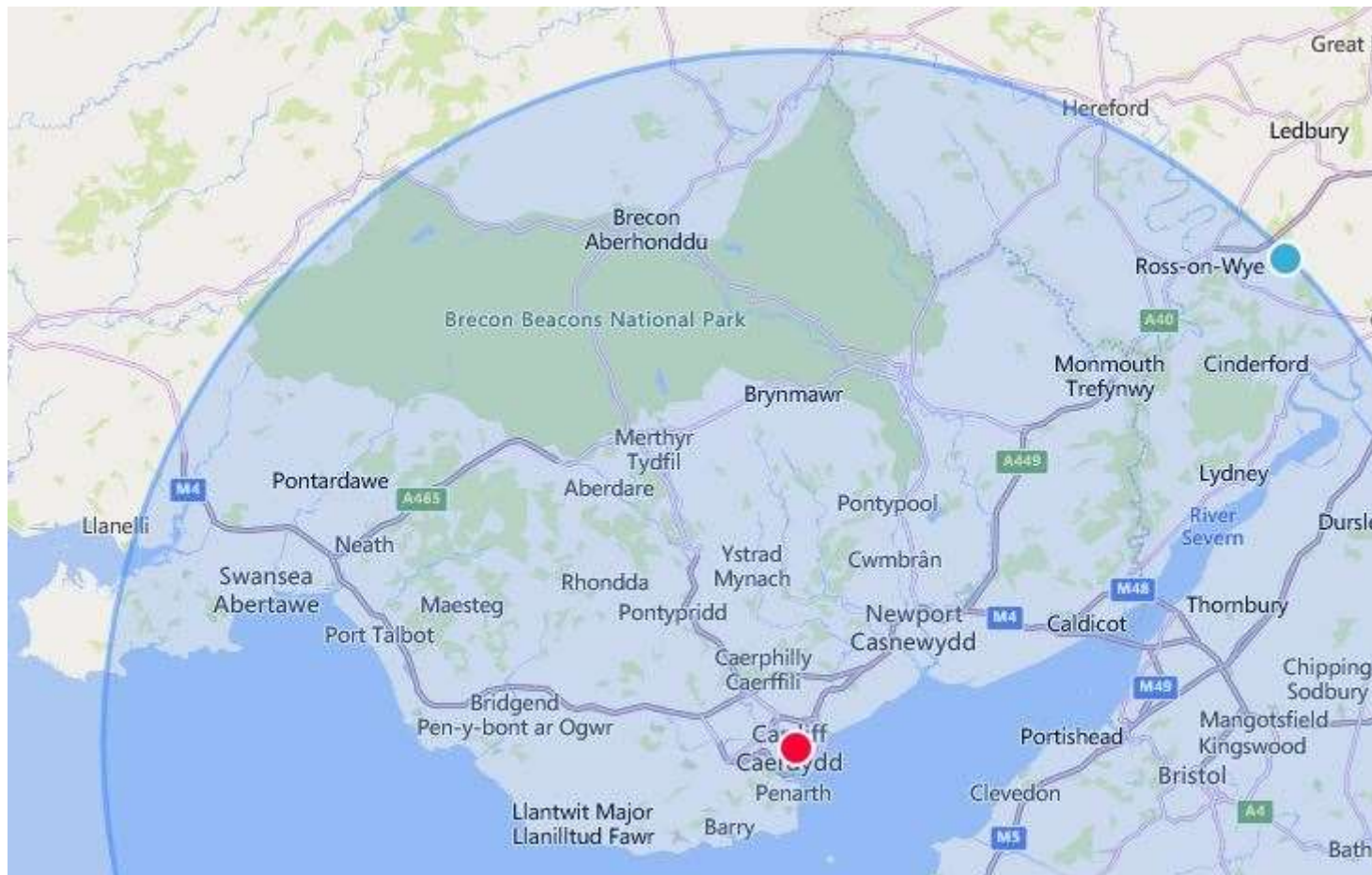
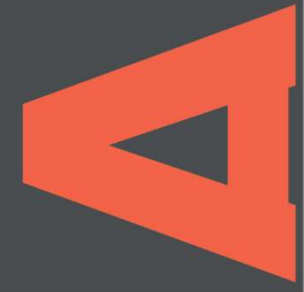
[ONS online sales data](#)

Wales has high numbers of people who do not have access to or regularly use the internet - 2020

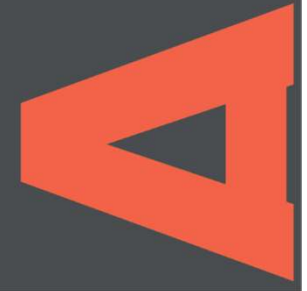


Source: [ONS](#)

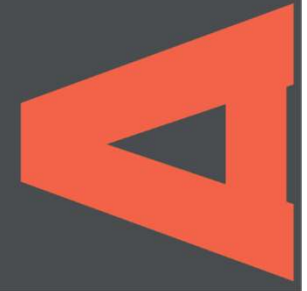
Roughly 50% of towns in Wales are within 1 hour of Cardiff



And then came the pandemic.....

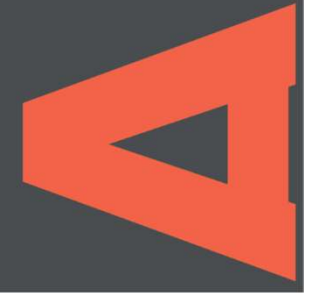


Our research shows that businesses adapted, and adapted well



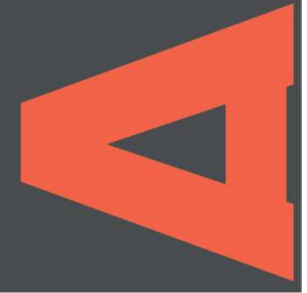
- **74%** diversified their offer to provide an online service.
- **35%** offered home delivery and take away services.
- **21%** introduced mobile/pop up services.
- **12%** converted premises for alternative use or trade.
- **90%** applied for and received Welsh Government money.

Support has been essential but not always effective



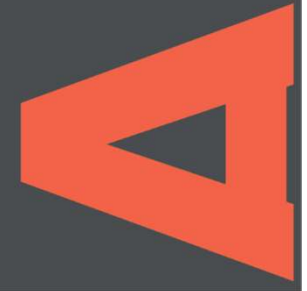
- ‘Red tape’, unnecessary bureaucracy and over regulation seen as major blocks by several businesses.
- COVID safety measures – mixed success.
- **76%** see the loss of Welsh Government support a major risk.
- But....most businesses (**61%**) and citizens (**57%**) expect to visit and use their town centre as they did before COVID19.

Welsh Government are investing in town centres



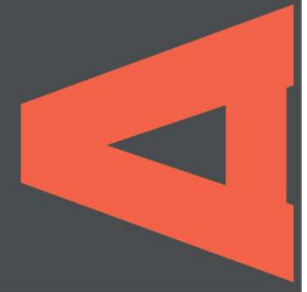
- 'Welsh Government has invested/levered in **£900 million** in regenerating town centres since 2014.
- Funding made available under **13** different streams.
- Funding is heavily focussed on physical regeneration.
- Plan for COVID recovery prioritises town centres.

Looking ahead



- The 'interventionist' council
- Council skills and capacity
- The role of other public and 3rd sector partners
- Involving businesses and local people
- Placemaking
- The opportunities presented by more home working
- Infrastructure and digital

Next Steps for our study



- This event – learn what works and why – successfully regenerating towns can be done!
- Conclude our research end of May 2021
- Drafting and clearing our report June/July 2021
- Publication August 2021