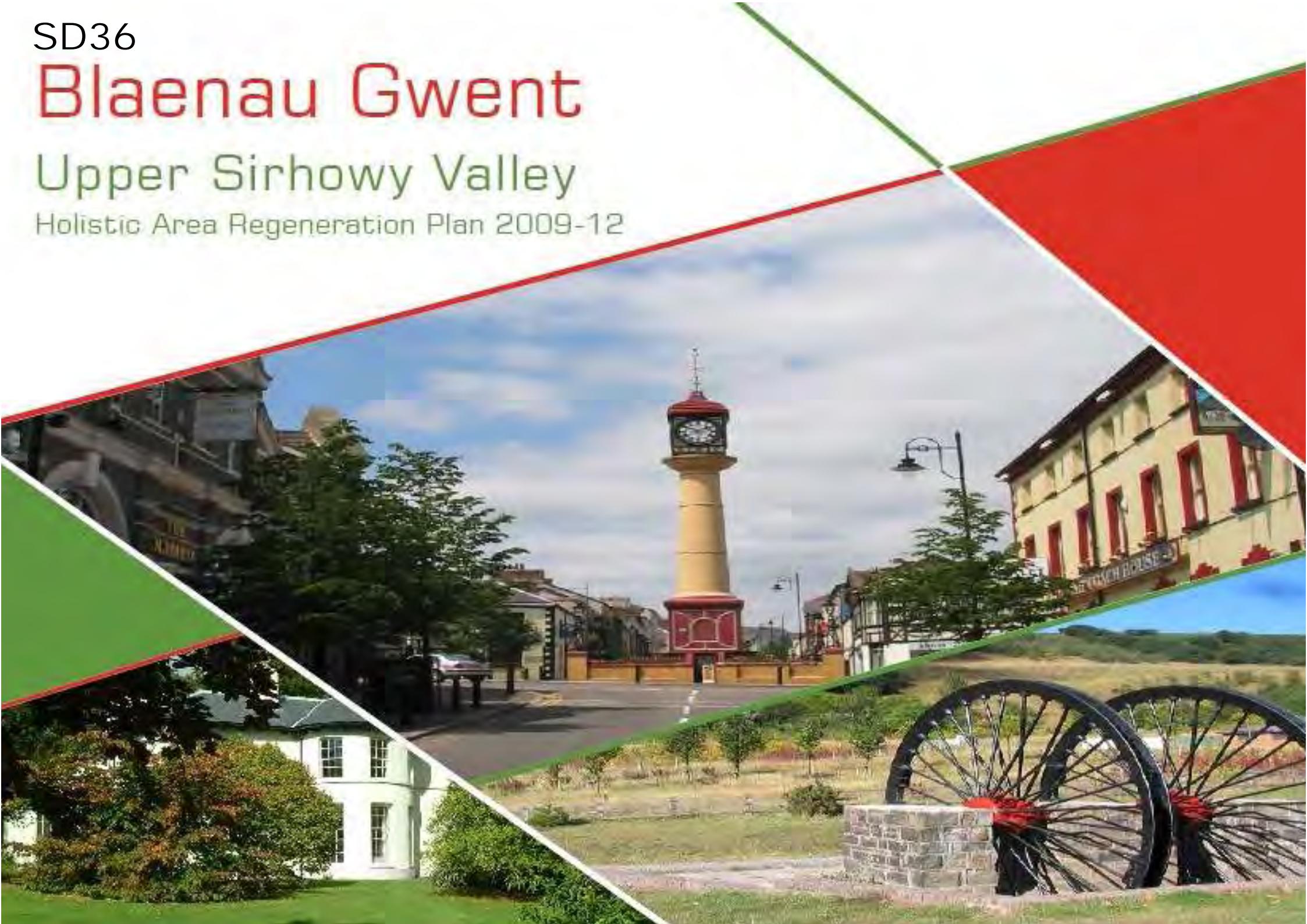


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# Blaenau Gwent

## Upper Sirhowy Valley

Holistic Area Regeneration Plan 2009-12



# Draft Upper Sirhowy Valley Holistic Area Regeneration Plan



Prepared by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council  
in partnership with BTCV, Communities First, EVAD,  
GAVO, Local Health Board/National Public Health Service and WAG

December 2008

## **INTRODUCTION**

In early 2008 the Heads of the Valley Programme Team invited Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to prepare and submit Holistic Area Regeneration Plans (HARPs) by end of December 2008.

The Heads of the Valley Town Centre Group had been working on a Spatial Strategy for the area and as a result of this work four regeneration areas were proposed.

These are:

- Upper Sirhowy Valley centred on the town of Tredegar
- Ebbw Fawr Valley centred on the town of Ebbw Vale
- Upper Ebbw Fach Valley centred on the town of Brynmawr
- Lower Ebbw Fach Valley centred on the town of Abertillery

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council welcomed the opportunity to work closely with its partners to prepare and submit four HARPs.

It was acknowledged at the outset that the regeneration of the county borough requires a truly partnership approach tackling issues and opportunities presented by the physical make up of the area and quality of life issues faced by many residents. It is timely that the Regeneration Strategy for Blaenau Gwent has recently been drafted and the proposals contained within this HARPs complements this strategy.

The Council engaged with its partners through a series of meetings and workshops with the assistance of an independent facilitator. A report of the consultation events is available from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. How we consulted and what we consulted

on was overseen by a Steering Group comprising public and voluntary sectors organisations. Partners were invited to submit information and projects and were also given the opportunity to shape the prioritisation process. Throughout the process, officers of the Council have been available to discuss HARPs with any interested party. Working within time constraints the Council has strived to ensure that the process of preparing HARPs has been inclusive and have encouraged other organisations to adopt a similar approach. In fact in the Ebbw Fawr Valley, EVAD and GAVO have undertaken an exercise to inform all community groups in the area of this initiative and to invite suggestions for projects.

As the process emerged the role of Steering Group extended to devising the criteria for assessment of the projects and for undertaking the assessment.

The result of this work is a comprehensive assessment of the issues and opportunities faced by the area, projects underway and package of projects to be implemented.

## **BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH**

Blaenau Gwent is located in south east Wales and was formerly part of the county of Gwent. It is approximately 20 miles south to the city of Newport, 30 miles south west to the city of Cardiff and directly north is the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Blaenau Gwent is the smallest of all Welsh local authorities, at about 10,900 hectares. In Blaenau Gwent there are three distinctive valleys supporting five main settlements – Abertillery, Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale, Nantyglo & Blaina and Tredegar.

# **Section 1: Strategic Context**

## UPPER SIRHOWY VALLEY

The Upper Sirhowy Valley had a population of 15,057 in 2001 – a decrease of 3.7% since 1991. The main hub of the area is the town of Tredegar which is formed by a number of quite distinct communities; Ashvale, Cefn Golau, Dukestown, Georgetown, Nant-y-Bwlch, Sirhowy, Waundeg and Tynewydd. To the north is the village of Trefil and to the south the hamlet of Pochin.

The Sirhowy Valley sides are generally very broad but narrow and become steeper to the south. The area is amongst the most deprived in Europe – 2 of the 3 wards in the district are Community First wards.

### Main Settlements Roles & Functions 2006

**TREDEGAR** is ranked 53<sup>rd</sup> out of Wales' retail centres. It contains over 100 commercial units, a comprehensive school, leisure centre, training centre and a small community hospital.

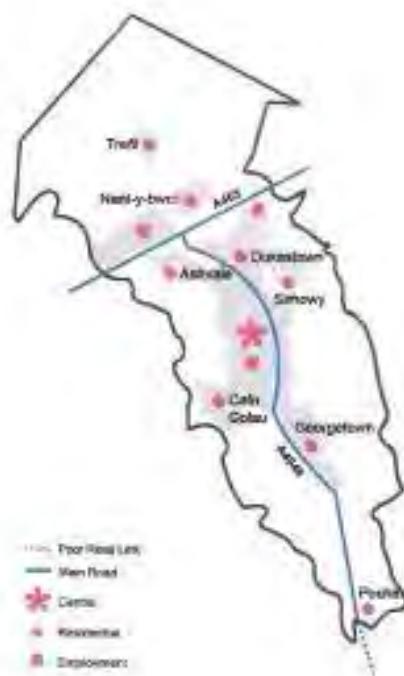
Residential areas: Ashvale, Cefn Golau, Dukestown, Georgetown, Nant-y-Bwlch, Sirhowy, Waundeg, Tynewydd, Trefil and Pochin.



### Employment areas

Large industrial estates are located to the north of Tredegar along the Heads of the Valleys Road (Tafarnaubach and Crown), giving Tredegar an important employment role. Tredegar also has a Business Park adjacent to the town centre.

## Local Transport network



The A4048 runs north to south through the district. It is a good quality road as far south as Georgetown but is of poor quality thereafter.

The A465 runs east-west across the top of the district. The western link to Dowlais has been improved to dual carriageway standard but the eastern link still awaits improvement.

There are no direct rail services to the area but there is a railway station at nearby Rhymney.

## External Links



East. The A465 connects the district to employment opportunities at Rassau and the town centre of Ebbw Vale. Minor roads, from Sirhowy and Georgetown, provide alternative access to Ebbw Vale.

West. The A465 links the district to employment opportunities and a rail link to Cardiff at the historic town of Rhymney, as does a minor road from Cefn Golau. Further along the A465 is Merthyr - a sub-regional shopping centre.

South. The A4048 links the district to the residential areas of Hollybush, Markham and Argoed, the sub-regional shopping centre of Blackwood and employment opportunities at Oakdale.

North. There are no direct road links to the North where the county borough borders the Brecon Beacons National Park.

### Tourism and potential contribution to the Valleys Regional Park

The area has the potential to make a major contribution to the Valleys Regional Park & the tourism market.

Landscape: The hillsides are dramatic and magnificent views are obtained from minor roads and long distance footpaths along the ridgeways.

Biodiversity: Parc Bryn Bach is a Local Nature Reserve and the young woodlands provide an ideal habitat for the Willow Warbler; nearly twice the average density of breeding pairs have been recorded.

Country Parks: Parc Bryn Bach is a country park set in mixed grass and woodland and is classified as a Local Nature Reserve. It contains a countryside centre with licensed restaurant, 3 star accredited bunkhouse caravan and camping facilities, children's play area, 15 hectare lake providing coarse fishing, orienteering trails, national standard BMX track, 9 hole par 3 golf course with driving range, full range of adventure activity courses



and breaks which are accredited by the Adventure Activity Licensing Authority. An opportunity exists to develop a hotel on the site.

Cyclepaths; the east-west cyclepath from Ebbw Vale to Merthyr passes through Tredegar. A north-south cyclepath runs along the Sirhowy Valley walk to Newport via Blackwood.

Heritage; Tredegar features a famous Clock Tower which was erected in 1858. Close by is the historic Bedwellty Park and House,

a Victorian parkland that includes one of the very few remaining Ice Houses in Wales. Aneurin Bevan, the founder of the National Health Service was born in a small cottage in the town, his life is commemorated in the Aneurin Bevan Stones, which stand on the hillside between Tredegar and Ebbw Vale. The Sirhowy ironworks is an impressive reminder of the origins of the town. The layout of Tredegar town centre is thought to date back to the 1800s, and evidence exists that it was the first industrial planned town in Britain. Within the area are 23 listed structures of which 3 are Grade II\*

Footpaths; The Sirhowy Valley Walk is a 26-mile trail starting at the Aneurin Bevan Memorial Stones and finishing at the Transporter Bridge in Newport. In addition there are three local walks along the riverside and mountain paths providing varied landscapes, splendid views and a taste of the town's history.

Events; Parc Bryn Bach holds a series of events throughout the year based around water-based activities, BMX racing activities and nature.

Accommodation; Tredegar has a range of accommodation varying from Bunk Houses and a caravan and camp-site at Parc Bryn Bach to a holiday cottage and guest houses in the town.

## **Section 2: Analysis of Need**

## **An attractive and well-used natural, historic and built environment**

Biodiversity: There are no Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs) (Statutory International Sites) within the Blaenau Gwent Planning Authority boundary. There are however, two SACs within the Brecon Beacons National Park area of Blaenau Gwent:

There are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Statutory National) within the HARP area

A number of candidate Local Nature Reserves have been proposed for the County Borough area. In the Upper Sirhowy Valley area, these are: Parc Bryn Bach (Tredegar) and Sirhowy Woodlands (Tredegar/Ebbw Vale).

Heritage Interest: Blaenau Gwent has 53 listed buildings, recognised for their special historical and architectural importance. The majority are Grade II listed, although of the total, ten fall into the higher category of Grade II\*. There are eleven listed buildings in the County Borough that appear on Cadw's register of listed buildings 'at risk'.

Blaenau Gwent also has a number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs), which include Mynydd Bedwellty, Sirhowy Ironworks, Tredegar Ironworks and Tredegar Cholera Cemetery.

There are currently no designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within the Blaenau Gwent area. However, at the regional level there are AQMAs in place in Cardiff and Newport as a result of significant traffic flows and peak hour congestion.

Data relating to estimated carbon dioxide emissions in 2004 indicate that the County Borough per capita, compares favourably against the South East Wales average, producing 6.5 tonnes per capita as opposed to 9.8 tonnes per capita.

In 2007/08, the total municipal waste (MSW) arisings in Blaenau Gwent were 40,431 tonnes, of which 17.2% was recycled or composted. In terms of commercial and industrial wastes the figure for 2003 identified 56,971 tonnes, of which 69% was recycled. In order for Blaenau Gwent to meet their Landfill Allowance Scheme targets and 40% recycling and composting target by 2009/10 significant alterations to current waste production and management practices in the County Borough will be required

Blaenau Gwent consumed 4.6% of the South East Wales industrial and commercial energy use in 2003. The same percentage in respect of domestic energy consumption was 6.4%, with the statistic for transport based energy consumption being just 1%. It should be noted, that Blaenau Gwent has 4.8% of the South East Wales population.

Figures on national, regional and local gas consumption (Kwh) indicate that Blaenau Gwent uses a higher share of gas domestically when compared to the regional averages, but less industrially than neighbouring Authorities. This may potentially be a reflection of Blaenau Gwent's housing conditions - there is a considerable amount of older housing stock in the Local Authority area that, due to its age, may be less energy efficient. Another factor is the altitude which results in a relatively cooler climate than some neighbouring Authorities.

## **A vibrant economic landscape offering new opportunities**

Unemployment and Economic Inactivity is a particular problem throughout the South Wales Valleys area and the Upper Sirhowy Valley area is no different. In Blaenau Gwent 4.4% of the working age population claim Job Seekers Allowance. The rate is the highest in Wales. There are also higher proportions of people claiming Incapacity Benefits, Income Support and Pensions Credit in Blaenau Gwent than the rest of Wales.

Long term unemployment is a persistent problem. In 2006, 41% of claimants had been unemployed for over six months and over 20% for a year. The proportion of claimants under 25 has increased significantly.

The proportion of the working age population economically active is 69.6% - again much lower than that of Wales. However, the rate has improved slightly since 2002.

Out Commuting. Blaenau Gwent experiences the 6<sup>th</sup> highest level of net out commuting in Wales, suggesting that Blaenau Gwent is not offering its residents the job opportunities that they are looking for.

Income: For those persons in employment the pay received for their work is lower than in other neighbouring authorities. As measured by Paycheck The mean income is £26,559 which is significantly lower than the mean income for SE Wales at £31,108 and Wales at £30,231. Our neighbouring authorities have higher mean incomes - £27,106 in Merthyr Tydfil, £29,248 in Caerphilly and £29,344 in Torfaen. As a result personal disposable incomes are likely to be lower having direct impacts on life chances.

Enterprise: Only 4.8% of workers are self-employed compared to 8.6% in Wales. The three year survival rate for businesses is just 66%. The UK Competitiveness Index produced by the University of Wales Institute in Cardiff found that Blaenau Gwent is ranked 407<sup>th</sup> out of 407 local areas across the UK. The Index takes into account factors including research and development expenditure, business start up rates, proportion of the working age population with a degree, productivity, employment rates and gross weekly pay.

Industrial and Occupational Structures: The Blaenau Gwent economy has experienced major structural change moving from dependence on heavy industry towards manufacturing and services. In 2001 manufacturing accounted for 41% of jobs and now it is only 26%. At the same time there has been a small increase of 2,300 service jobs, but the sector is still smaller than in Wales. The largest number of these jobs is in public administration, education and health.

Transport: In terms of travel distances to work, in Blaenau Gwent the majority of the population travels less than 5km commuting distance. 31% of the County Borough's population relies on the private car for their work journey, with only 7% of the population walking or cycling to work. In terms of car ownership, 45% of the resident population owns one car only, with 35% of Blaenau Gwent's residents neither owning nor having access to a car or van. In comparison to regional and national statistics, in general terms car ownership levels are considerably below average in Blaenau Gwent and a considerably greater proportion of the population is without access to a car.

A new rail link to Cardiff has recently opened providing an hourly service to Cardiff with two rail stations serving Blaenau Gwent

(Ebbw Parkway & Llanhilleth). The line provides access to and from Cardiff, which is linked with the Great Western line giving links eastward to London and westward to Swansea, Fishguard and the Republic of Ireland.

Bus links connect the main towns with Newport and Cardiff and local bus services connect Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale, Abertillery and Tredegar. These bus links provide a good level of service during weekdays and on Saturdays. Conversely, Sunday service is limited and some lateral connections between valleys are poor.

The dominant feature of the highway network in Blaenau Gwent is the Heads of the Valleys Trunk Road (A465) located at the northern end of the County Borough. The proposal to upgrade the road between Hirwaun and Abergavenny to dual carriageway standards has commenced. On completion of this work the A465/A40 route between Neath and Monmouth will be to a standard commensurate with its strategic nature. The completion of the section within Blaenau Gwent is expected to commence by 2010. This road combined with the A470 connects Blaenau Gwent to the Midlands, the South East, South West of England and the rest of Wales.

The nearest airports to Blaenau Gwent are Cardiff International, Bristol and Birmingham. Locals are largely reliant on private transport or car hire to access the airports, as public transport links are limited.

### **A well educated, skilled and healthier population**

Population: The population of Blaenau Gwent has been in decline since 1921 mainly caused by the decline of the coal and steel industries, leading to movements out of the county borough to find

employment elsewhere. One of the main problems of outward migration is that it tends to be biased towards those people most mobile and economically active such as those falling into the younger age groups.

Within the county borough Tredegar has the highest levels of economically inactive retired and sick people as well as the highest number of residents with a limiting long term illness (LIBG21C Page 26)

#### Deprivation:

The WIMD 2008 shows that the areas containing the residential areas of Cefn Golau (Tredegar Central & West 2) and Sirhowy estate are the most deprived in this HARP area and also the most deprived in the county borough. In particular the area of Cefn Golau is the 2nd most deprived LSOA in the whole of Wales for Education, Skills & Training. Tredegar Central & West 3 containing the residential area of Ashvale has a higher rank indicating high levels of deprivation particularly in the employment domain.

#### Children:

Research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that in the ward of Sirhowy 42.9% and Tredegar Central & West 42.1% of children were in households living on benefits compared to the national average of 21%. This is the highest in Blaenau Gwent. There has been consistent increase in the percentage of babies born with low birth weight (LBW) across Wales from 7.5% in 1998 to 7.7% in 2002. The increase in Blaenau Gwent as been more marked rising from 7.5% in 1998 to 10.1% in 2002. As a result Blaenau Gwent has the highest proportion of LBW babies in Wales. LBW is strongly connected with poor health and deprivation and LBW babies are more likely to experience health problems through

child and adulthood. Recent evidence of causes of LBW include mothers smoking during pregnancy, poor diet and excessive alcohol and drug consumption during pregnancy. Sub unitary research shows that LBW rates were slightly worse in Sirhowy.

From the needs analysis carried out for the Children's and Young People's Plan the following issues have been identified:

- Blaenau Gwent has the second worst record of all LHBs in Wales for percentage of 5 year olds with dental caries
- Levels of education attainments by the age of 7 are very low and are falling
- Key needs are to support families to address parents skills and ability to support their children's basic skills development. Basic Skills Agency in 2002 estimated Blaenau Gwent to have the second highest proportion of adults with poor basic skills in literacy (33%) and numeracy (38%) compared to Welsh averages of 28% and 32% respectively.
- Pupil aspirations are inextricably linked to their achievement and low expectations can contribute to underachievement. Often low expectations and poor self esteem can be part of familial patterns. From the Census 2001, Blaenau Gwent was the second worst area for percentage of 16-24 year olds with no educational, vocational or professional qualification
- The Communities that Care survey found that Blaenau Gwent young people showed high rates of regular drinking (21%) and binge drinking (31%) despite a high perception of future harm and a relatively higher proportion with a family member with serious drug or alcohol problems. Young people in Blaenau Gwent were significantly less likely than

the national average to have ever used illegal drugs or sniffed glue – 12% in comparison to 19%. Young people in Blaenau Gwent are more sensible about smoking than their peers across the UK.

- Overall the Communities that Care Survey 2005 showed that young people had lower risk factor scores and higher protective factor scores for future health and behavioural problems than the UK average. The only exceptions were – higher scores for community neglect as a risk factor largely due to a perception of 'lots of fights' and 'lots of empty and abandoned buildings'; higher scores for low commitment to school largely due to higher levels of exclusion, suspension and expulsion and higher scores for early problem behaviour largely due to greater use of alcohol and arrest rates.
- Blaenau Gwent children participate in physical exercise for an average of 16% (5x30 mins) per week which is below the national average of 34% even though the landscape and topography of Blaenau Gwent lends itself to a variety of outdoor play experiences

Community Safety: A postal survey was conducted by Crime Concern Cymru in April 2004, focusing on residents' perceptions of fear of crime and actual experience of crime. The purpose is to provide baseline data for future comparison. Although a high proportion felt "very safe" or "safe" going out in BG during the day (87.3%), this fell to 43.6% at night. Respondents were less worried about crimes against the person (48.7% "very worried" or "worried" about robbery/mugging and 51.2% about physical assault) than property related crime (78.2% "very worried" or "worried" about burglary, 80.1% about car crime and 81.7% about theft from a car). Responses from Tredegar consistently returned higher levels of

fear of crime, with general levels well in excess of corresponding statistics from the British Crime Survey.

Recorded crime figures published in Safer Blaenau Gwent Partnership Strategic Assessment 2008-2009 show that the ward of Tredegar Central & West have high levels of crime. In particular motor vehicle related crime, violent crime and criminal damage.

Anti social behaviour is a primary concern to all communities in Blaenau Gwent. Reducing harm caused by alcohol is a national and local priority as there is a strong causal link to other priorities such as violent crime and anti social behaviour.

Youth related incidents reported to Gwent Police account for 50% of all rowdy/nuisance behaviour calls, which in turn account for 73% of incidents reported to Gwent Police in the period Oct 06-Sept 07. However no correlation has been found between trends in rowdy behaviour and criminal damage or any strong match with school exclusion data. However, it should be noted that school exclusion data relates to the location of the school not the pupil's home address.

Recent figures from the Office for National Statistics show that men and women living in Blaenau Gwent have the lowest chance of survival to the age of 75 compared with other area in Wales. The survival rate for men is 59.6% in Blaenau Gwent compared to 70.6% in Ceredigion and for women 67.4% compared to Monmouthshire at 80.9%. Sadly the survival rate for women in Blaenau Gwent is the lowest in the whole of England and Wales.

Lifelong Learning: Data relating to education, skills and qualifications in the area indicates a considerable disparity between

Blaenau Gwent and South East Wales and Wales. In Blaenau Gwent, the proportion of people holding NVQ level 2, or above in 2003 was 41% compared to 43% for South East Wales and 60% for Wales. The situation is far worse in terms of the proportion of people holding the higher level 4 qualification or above: 10% for Blaenau Gwent compared to 17% and 23% for South East Wales and Wales respectively.

There is also a lower percentage of the population achieving a level 4/5 qualification (such as degree, HNC, HND) with only 14% in Blaenau Gwent compared to the Welsh average of 17%. Latest statistics also show that there was a lower proportion of 19 year olds with 5 GCSE's (A\*-C), with 43% achieving this compared to the Welsh average of 56%.

Surveys show that most adults would like to be involved in learning, but experience some barriers that stop them. The majority of employers who recruit school or college leavers report a significant skills gap.

#### **An appealing and coherent tourism and leisure experience**

Despite the rich industrial heritage of the locality, there are very few members of the population that identify themselves as Welsh, rather than British (12% according to 2001 Census). The use of the Welsh language in Blaenau Gwent is relatively low, when compared to Wales as a whole and other authorities.

However, there is a distinctive 'valleys' culture apparent in the Blaenau Gwent area – this has developed from a strong sense of community and social networks that are not linked to the Welsh language.

The public rights of way network in the County Borough is nearly 300km in length - 68% of this network is available to walkers. However, the distribution of the network is not even across the County Borough, and there are several factors arising from a lack of maintenance that have led to restricted usability of this facility.

Three factors have been identified namely:

- more circular routes – signed and advertised
- the need to link paths together
- more long distance routes.

Using the analysis of need and views from practitioners it is clear that Blaenau Gwent and in particular the Upper Sirhowy Valley has many issues to address. That said, there are a number of key opportunities for the area given rich industrial heritage.

### **Issues and Opportunities across Blaenau Gwent**

#### **Issues**

- Since the demise of heavy industry the towns and villages are seeking to redefine themselves
- Throughout Blaenau Gwent there are poor quality buildings, some dating from Victorian times, other more modern construction of the 1960s.
- Lack of visitor accommodation and provision
- Poor maintenance of public land and highways
- Lack of business confidence in the area
- Lack of community pride
- Poor signage to towns, villages and places of interest
- Low levels of income
- Smoking, poor diet and obesity rates are significantly higher than the Wales average
- Blaenau Gwent has the highest rates of hospital admissions for alcohol related conditions in Wales, with particularly high rates for women
- Adult population has a high rate of excess alcohol consumption
- Respiratory disease remains high, and death rates do not appear to be reducing.
- Poor mental health (mild level of severity)

#### **Opportunities**

- Rich industrial heritage
- Varied landscape

### **Issues and Opportunities across Upper Sirhowy Valley**

#### **Issues**

- High levels of deprivation concentrated mainly in public sector housing estates
- Lack of investment and pride in heritage interest

#### **Opportunities**

- Potential Townscape Conservation Area
- Refurbishment of Bedwelly House & Park
- Popularity of Bryn Bach Park
- A465 improvements
- Heritage interest as the birthplace of Aneurin Bevan
- Landscape interest eg Sirhowy Woodlands
- Active communities supported by Communities First
- VITCC providing opportunities for business and training

## **Policy Overview**

The actions that need to be taken to improve the Lower Ebbw Fach Valley and the county borough as a whole are captured in a number of strategies and plans. These actions are a result of individual need assessments and consultation. Many of these plans will influence the outcomes for the HARP.

The key documents and a brief summary are set out below.

### **Blaenau Gwent Community Plan ‘proud past, bright future’ 2005-2009**

The Community Plan sets out the vision of making Blaenau Gwent a better place to live, work and visit. The Plan aims to develop new ways of working by building partnerships with local communities, voluntary and business sectors, the local authority and other agencies, in order to change the area and meet community needs and ambitions.

The Community Plan identifies 7 key themes under which are aims, key projects and a monitoring body. The key themes are:

- Regeneration
- Health, Social Care and Well-being
- Lifelong Learning
- Environment
- Housing
- Transportation
- Culture and Sport

The Community Plan provides the overarching strategic framework for all other plans and strategies for the Local Authority. LDPs should express, in appropriate land use planning terms, those elements of the Community Plan that relate to the development and use of land, provided that they are in conformity with national and international policy obligations.

The LDP will play an important role in assisting the delivery of many of the projects contained in the Community Plan.

### **Local Development Plan**

Currently at the Preferred Strategy stage the LDP sets out a series of objectives which will form the basis of future policy development. They are not listed in any order of priority.

- Develop Ebbw Vale as the main service and retail hub for the County Borough.
- Create a network of vibrant district/local centres (secondary hubs), well linked to the main hub of Ebbw Vale, that provide a range of local services and facilities for their local communities.
- Support and deliver the regeneration of the former Ebbw Vale Steelworks ensuring that the benefits are spread across the borough.
- Increase economic activity through facilitating diversification of the economic base and support for the manufacturing sector by encouraging specialisation.

- Provide a range of employment sites and premises to meet the needs of businesses of all sizes in manufacturing, the technological and service sectors.
- Stem out-migration and attract people to the area to create a more balanced population.
- Provide a range of types and tenures of new homes to meet local housing needs and attract people to the area.
- Improve accessibility to services through the promotion of sustainable modes of transport, particularly, public transport, walking and cycling.
- Improve education levels and skills through supporting infrastructure development of the Learning Campus, new schools and integrated education services, including life-long learning.
- Create an accessible network of green open spaces and high quality leisure infrastructure to promote participation in sport and active recreation to improve health and well-being.
- Capitalise on the unique landscape and natural heritage, foster sustainable tourism and promote community pride.
- Protect, enhance and manage the diversity of the biodiversity resource of Blaenau Gwent through the identification of ecological corridors
- Raise the standard of design to improve the quality of the physical and natural environment; and protect and enhance Blaenau Gwent's historic and cultural environment.
- To minimise further climate change contributions and mitigate its predicted effects on the County Borough.

#### **Health Social Care and Well-Being Strategy Healthier Future 2 (Draft)**

Healthier Future II is the second Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategy for Blaenau Gwent, developed in partnership between Blaenau Gwent Health Board, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and its partners. The strategy sets out a continued commitment to working together to improve the health, social care and well-being of all people living and working in Blaenau Gwent.

The Strategy sets out 18 local priorities for action, many of which are based on working arrangements and implementing existing strategies in terms of older people, young people, maternity care, mental health, learning disabilities, substance misuse, diabetes and coronary heart disease.

## **Draft Children and Young People's Plan for Blaenau Gwent 2008-2011**

The draft Children and Young People's Plan is a 3-year plan, which sets out how all agencies in Blaenau Gwent working with children and young people will cooperate to achieve common goals, to improve outcomes for children and young people. The plan articulates the Partnership's vision, and details the actions it will take, in order to bring about changes in children and young people's lives. The vision for the Partnership is: "Working together we will strive to ensure that all children and young people will be supported to achieve their full potential".

The Plan represents a new way of thinking about how local services need to change in offer to ensure that all children and young people achieve the Welsh Assembly Government's seven core aims by ensuring that young people:

- Have a flying start in life
- Have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities
- Enjoy the best possible health and be free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation
- Have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities
- Are listened to, treated with respect and have their race and cultural identity recognised
- Have a safe home and community which supports physical and emotional well-being
- Are not disadvantaged by poverty.

## **Blaenau Gwent Regeneration Strategy (Draft 2008)**

The Regeneration Strategy identifies an overarching aim and six principles along with proposals to translate them into action. The overarching aim is to 'Share Benefits of Regeneration Widely' and this will be achieved by ensuring that the benefits of regeneration are shared by all those in Blaenau Gwent. The six principles are:-

### Principle 1: Diversify the Economy and Develop Manufacturing

Build on the diversification of the local economy by promoting and supporting new areas of opportunity, and developing the strengths of Blaenau Gwent's manufacturing industry.

### Principle 2: Boost Business Support and Enterprise

Scale up targeted business support and promote enterprise and self-employment as a means of growing economic output and raising activity rates.

### Principle 3: Promote Learning and Modern Skills

Create a lifelong learning culture with a commitment to improving basic and essential skills through participation in higher education for all.

### Principle 4: Focus Investment in key Communities

Focus investment in Blaenau Gwent's key communities so that they are more desirable places to live, learn, and work.

### Principle 5: Maximise the Ebbw Vale Opportunity County Wide

Maximise the value of the Ebbw Vale opportunity by linking the Corus site and the town centre and by ensuring that other towns and villages can benefit from the transformational opportunity.

#### Principle 6: Develop the Transport Infrastructure

Invest in key projects to enhance external connections and to support accessibility throughout the Borough.

#### **Blaenau Gwent Local Housing Strategy – Quality Streets (2007-2012)**

The overall aim of the Local Housing Strategy is to:-

*“provide a strategic framework to ensure that everyone in Blaenau Gwent has the scope and choice to attain a home that is decent, affordable and is situated in a healthy and safe environment.”*

The strategy sets key housing objectives across tenure for the period to 2012, together with an action planning framework for the achievement of those objectives. The objectives are based around:

- Tackling Inequality
- Land Use Planning Framework
- Affordable Housing
- Private Sector Renewal Policy
- Sustainable Development
- Energy Efficiency
- Homelessness
- Supporting people
- Housing Management
- Community Regeneration

#### **Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2001-2006)**

The Blaenau Gwent Local Biodiversity Action Plan translates national government targets on biodiversity into targets which can

be delivered locally. It includes lists of nationally and locally important species and action plans on how to conserve them. Species for which action plans have been prepared include: Great Crested Newt; Skylark; Grey Partridge; Lapwing; Pearl-bordered Fritillary Butterfly; Brown Hare; Otter; Pipistrelle Bat; and the Lesser Horseshoe Bat. Habitats for which action plans have been prepared include: Calcareous Grassland; Dwarf Shrub Heath; Blanket Bog; Mesotrophic Lakes; Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures; Upland Mixed Ashwoods; Upland Oakwood; and Wet Woodland.

#### **South East Wales Regional Transport Plan**

The South East Wales Regional Transport Plan vision is:

*“to provide a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system for South East Wales that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and protects the environment; where public transport, walking, cycling and sustainable freight provide real travel alternatives.”*

SEWTA's (South East Wales Transport Alliance) priorities build on this vision, tackle problems and set the general direction of the Plan:

- To improve access to services, facilities and employment, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling.
- To provide a transport system that increases the use of sustainable modes of travel
- To reduce the demand for travel.
- To develop an efficient and reliable transport system with reduced levels of congestion and improved

- transport links within the SEWTA region and to the rest of Wales, the UK and Europe.
- To provide a transport system that encourages healthy and active lifestyles, is safer and supports local communities.
- To reduce significantly the emission of greenhouse gases and air pollution from transport.
- To ensure that land use development in South East Wales is supported by sustainable transport measures.
- To make better use of existing transport system.

of investment, based on real identified need, opportunity and practicality.

**Tredegar Townscape Initiative – Conservation Area Appraisal & Design Guide 2005:** This document identifies a series of actions that provide a new basis for sustainable regeneration.

**Tredegar Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan.** Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in conjunction with the Welsh Assembly Government is to procure a specialist Consultancy Service to prepare a Tredegar Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan. The document will review previous commissions and focus on the Town Centre and surrounding areas linking closely with the HLF area to the south of the town. The Strategy will guide the Client Group (BGCBC & WAG), any future consultancy and end user Project Management Group, in the formation and development of project proposals.

Focusing on the towns fundamental problems this document will form the decision making framework for Tredegar Town Centre and strategy area over the next 5 years. The Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan will be time bound, help secure funding and direct the work load of the Regeneration Division during this potential period

## **STRATEGIC OUTCOMES**

The policy framework is dominated by county borough level plans, with few plans or strategies at a sub unitary level. In ten out of the sixteen wards Community First Action Plans have been prepared.

The Steering Group felt that part of the consultation exercise should focus on what the outcomes for the HARP areas should be. These outcomes would be based on the needs identified from existing plans and strategies and from the analysis of need as part of the HARP preparation.

Firstly the plans that have a direct contribution to make to the themes under the Turning Heads strategy were determined via a mapping exercise. The plans used were:

- Children's and Young Peoples Plan
- Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategy
- Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy
- Blaenau Gwent's Draft Regeneration Strategy
- Living Independently in Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century
- Safer Blaenau Gwent Partnership Strategic Assessment 2008-09
- Turning Heads – A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020
- Communities First Action Plans
- Blaenau Gwent 2010

The Community Plan was not included in this list as it was considered out of date.

Secondly, common outcomes were identified from all these plans and a form of words agreed to capture the actions that individual service areas, partner organisations are seeking via their individual plans. The outcomes for each HARP area were broadly similar therefore there was no difference in the consultation undertaken in each HARP area.

Each strategic outcome is a statement for what should change in the area in order to address some of the needs/issues in the area. Fourteen draft strategic outcomes were agreed and these formed the basis of discussions at the four workshops. Participants were asked to add/amend the draft strategic outcomes and to suggest new outcomes if they felt that there were major omissions.

The strategic outcomes presented at the workshops area as follows:

### **In three years time:**

1. Adults will have fewer barriers to participation in employment, training and education

*In all areas of Blaenau Gwent we have many adults of working age who are not economically active due to real or perceived barriers, such as access to child care, transport issues, levels of basic skills, etc.*

2. Young people will have increased educational awareness and aspirations with more taking part in education, training and employment

*In all areas of Blaenau Gwent we have too many young people who drop out of education, and fail to enter either employment or training for employment. We also have too many young people who do not reach their full potential in terms of levels of education, income and job satisfaction.*

3. There will be more employment opportunities in the service sector including tourism and leisure

*While manufacturing remains an important part of the employment in Blaenau Gwent, many more jobs and services could be provided through an expansion of service industries, particularly tourism and leisure. At present there is recognised under-provision of hospitality services and considerable opportunity for local entrepreneurship.*

4. The natural environment will be more widely used for recreation and leisure

Blaenau Gwent has a diverse array of green space both within and outside of our towns and villages. This green space is currently undervalued and underutilised. Improving sympathetic usage by both visitors and local people will create opportunities for mental and physical health improvement and enjoyment.

5. More people will be physically active

Blaenau Gwent has high levels of people with chronic illnesses, many of which are partly caused by obesity and lack of physical activity. Increasing physical activity will help people to become physically and mentally healthier and feel better.

6. People will be eating more fruit, vegetables and salad

Blaenau Gwent has high levels of people with chronic illnesses, many of which are partly caused by an unhealthy diet. Increasing fruit, vegetable and salad consumption will help people to improve their diet and reduce the risk of many common illnesses.

7. People will drink alcohol more responsibly, in less risky quantities

Many people in Blaenau Gwent drink large quantities of alcohol, damaging their health and contributing to antisocial behaviour and community safety issues. There is a real need to address these issues, while retaining the community and mental health benefits undoubtedly associated with some traditional drinking environments.

8. People's knowledge of how to manage their money has improved

Debt and high interest loans are a major concern for many people, leading to both stress and further reductions in income. Local initiatives such as basic

financial skill training and credit union facilities can help.

9. There is a greater mutual respect and understanding within the community

This needs to be between groups of all kinds which make up communities – different age groups, public and professional, etc to reduce the real and perceived fear of crime and sense of lack of control over people's own lives and destinies which is detrimental to mental health.

10. There are fewer derelict, neglected buildings or patches of land

These are unsightly, encourage vandalism and antisocial behaviour, and detract from a sense of pride and community within an area.

11. Information on and support for participating in organisations that impact on community life will be more widely available.

*Several local surveys have shown that people are often unaware of services and opportunities in their own neighbourhoods, and are unaware of information and opportunities to become involved.*

12. There will be increased support for families and young children

*Many of the issues which contribute to problems in Blaenau Gwent are deep rooted, and passed on through generations. Helping the next generation to lead healthier lifestyles, have better mental health, and achieve their full potential in life will be important in regeneration of the area.*

13. Schools will be a valued resource for communities that lack other facilities and used out of school hours for a range of activities for all ages

*Community focussed schools have been shown to help tackle issues such as child poverty and regeneration by reducing some of the barriers to education and training within their communities*

14. There will be more businesses set up and managed by the community

*Social enterprise and other forms of community business can be successful in both addressing local needs and in providing training and employment for local people.*

**Following suggestions from the workshop, changes were made to the strategic outcomes and three additional ones added.**

The final list is as follows:

1. Adults of all ages will have fewer barriers and more opportunities to participate in employment, training, retraining and education

2. Young people will have increased educational awareness and aspirations with more taking part in education, training and employment
3. There will be more training and employment opportunities in the service sector including tourism and leisure
4. The natural environment will be protected, enhanced and more widely used by all for recreation and leisure.
5. More people will be physically active
6. People will be eating a balanced and healthy diet which includes more fruit, vegetables and salad
7. People will be better informed and able to improve their own physical and mental well being by eating more healthily, smoking less and enjoying alcohol more responsibly
8. People's understanding of their finances will be improved, leading to better financial management
9. There is greater respect, awareness and understanding within the community promoting community integration and pride
10. Due to either demolition, landscaping or high quality renovation schemes there are fewer derelict, neglected buildings or patches of land
11. There are more opportunities to access information and support from organisations that impact on community life
12. There will be increased support and practical measures for families and young children
13. Schools will be a valued resource for communities that lack other facilities and used out of school hours for a range of activities for all ages
14. There will be more businesses set up and managed by the community
15. There will be more support for starting and sustaining local businesses
16. There will be increased support for and take up of local sustainable energy and recycling initiatives
17. More varied cultural activities and facilities are available aimed at all ages, residents and visitors

## **Section 3: Projects**

## WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The Council and its partners are making significant investment into the leisure and tourism facilities in this area. In recent years Bryn Bach Park has seen development of a 9 hole golf course, BMX track and improved access around the lake. Work has recently started on a £5million refurbishment of Bedwellty House and Park, the former home of the Homfray family the co-founders of the Tredegar Ironworks.

Tredegar also has an important heritage as the first planned town in Britain and more recently as the birthplace of Aneurin Bevan MP the founder of the National Health Service. Recent celebrations of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NHS and other activities are contributing to raising the awareness of the rich industrial heritage of this area.

In 2005, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) received Physical Regeneration Funding (PRF), from the Welsh Assembly Government, to procure a specialist consultancy service to advise on the potential for a 'Tredegar Townscape Initiative'. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council felt there was a justified need to preserve and enhance the distinctive character and appearance of Tredegar, which has already suffered some damage by the loss of historic buildings through demolition or dereliction, insensitive shop front designs, and unsympathetic modern infill development. To this end Capita Symonds were appointed to recommend a strategy for the Tredegar Town Centre area that will support and complement key projects already implemented in the town, and to identify a series of actions that provide a new basis for sustainable regeneration. This was to be achieved by identifying Tredegar's unique historical past and carrying out a Conservation Area based appraisal and a complementary Design Guide. It is the

intention to use these mechanisms to allow the opportunities offered by the townscape to provide economic and social benefits.

The Council recently submitted a Townscape Heritage Initiative application for development funding for a potential £3 million regeneration grant scheme focusing on 'The Circle' and Castle St.

The need to address poor health has already been identified as a priority in this area with a number of projects developed or in progress. At Bryn Bach Park a fitness trail and cycle route has been developed and Tredegar Development Trust has secured lottery funding for a 'Feeling Good' project. The Feeling Good project seeks to increase the capacity of community members to improve their own health, through gaining skills in healthy cooking, activity leadership and through activity in the outdoors.

The appointment of a Town Centre Manager, with HoV funding, has already made an impact in the town with regular events such as a continental market and the establishment of a Business Forum.

In November 2008, Tredegar Library was reopened after a £100,000 refurbishment with new features including a self-service checkout, better access and improvements to the adult education and local studies areas. The new look includes vibrant images of local landscapes.

The restoration of Bedwellty House will include offices, workshops and educational space, as well as a café to encourage the local community to use the house for group meetings, social events and lectures. The house will have exhibitions and interpretation panels to help bring the industrial and social history of the site to life for visitors.

The restoration of the Bedwellty Park landscape, which includes a number of significant listed structures such as the icehouse, the bandstand, the boundary stone, the war memorial and the world famous 1851 Great Exhibition block of coal – 15 tonnes hewn in a single block, arboriculture works and restoration of the long shelter, kitchen garden, fishponds, grotto and cast-iron fountain are also proposed. All these features help make the park popular with visitors.

Cefn Golau Cholera Cemetery is a scheduled ancient monument and using EU Interreg funding the Council has recently undertaken conservation work, tarmaced the car park and installed an interpretation panel with brass rubbing plates. The site features in one of the Council's new walking trails.

Tredegar Development Trust is active in the area and is developing a number of capital projects which will provide a building for local communities to use in Cefn Golau, Sirhowy and Waundeg. The Trust is also involved in promoting volunteering activity and skill development in environmental and community projects.

## WHAT'S PLANNED?

The challenges for this area are great and varied. The Council and its partners acknowledges that regeneration action needs to be targeted at specific initiatives which tackle issues relating not only to improving places but improving the lives of the people of this area.

## Project Assessment Criteria

The assessment process has been agreed by the Steering Group. The assessment was based on the information provided in the proformas which was of variable quality.

Stage 1: From the workshops held in the Upper Ebbw Sirhowy Valley Area a number of strategic outcomes were arrived at. These strategic outcomes have been used as the first stage of the project assessment process. Projects were required to meet at least 5 of the strategic outcomes before progressing to the next section.

Stage 2 of the assessment process scored the projects against deliverability, community support, leverage of funding and environmental impact.

The result of this assessment process has been the determination of priority projects, reserve projects and projects requiring further development. Details of all the projects are set out below for your information together with the score. The maximum that a project could score is 20 points. The priority projects are shown on Plan 1.

## Priority Projects

### An attractive and well used natural, historic and built environment

#### Sirhowy Community Facility:

This is a partnership project with Sirhowy Tenants and Residents Association, United Welsh Housing Association, Tredegar Development Trust to create a community facility in the centre of

social housing on Sirhowy Hill. This is the 23<sup>rd</sup> most deprived LSOA in Wales. There are no other community facilities. The project will provide a base for many activities including education and skill building, health provision, youth activities, Flying Start provision.

#### Waundeg Community Facility:

Waundeg is an isolated community separated from Tredegar by the A465. There is already a community house but this has proved too small especially for youth facilities. As part of a multi phased affordable housing development by Melin Homes there is scope for a community facility to be provided.

#### Townscape Heritage

The Townscape Heritage Initiative will preserve and enhance the historic interest and special character of Tredegar for residents, businesses and visitors. Funding is sought for development costs of the project which will lead to a second application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the implementation of the project.

### **A vibrant economic landscape offering new opportunities**

#### Kidz R Us:

This project is to provide an extension to the rear of the existing building to accommodate more classes, meeting space and changing facilities. Currently the area is overgrown and attracts litter. The new facilities will mean that the children will have changing rooms for the 10 shows per year and more classes such as gymnastics, karate, homework club and guitar lessons can run on the same night. A small amount of revenue is sought to assist with the salary of the Administrator whilst the social enterprise becomes self sustaining.

#### **A well educated, skilled and healthier population**

#### **An appealing and coherent tourism and leisure experience**

#### The Tredegar Story:

Building on the views of people expressed during the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Town Clock and 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NHS, this project raises awareness of the political and social struggles in Tredegar. Elements include fingerpost signage to local heritage sites particularly linking from the cycle route, an interpretative map. Interpretation panels and training for local people to become heritage champions.

#### Restoration of Bedwellty House & Park (Phase 2)

This phase covers new and upgraded facilities – improved play provision, new bowls pavilion, upgrade to tennis courts, provision of a green gym, outdoor events arena, sculpture trail, architectural lighting and festival of light event and Phase 1 launch event.

#### Bunk House Accommodation, Parc Bryn Bach

To increase the bunkhouse accommodation at Parc Bryn Bach from 18 beds to a 40 bed facility meeting all requirements for disabled people and criteria set by Visit Wales. New facilities will include 10 bedrooms, new kitchen facility, new offices for park staff, storage area, extension to dining room, additional garage facilities, disabled showers, passenger lift to first floor, new equipment.



### Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Regeneration Division - Business Resource Centre

TaffarnauBach Industrial Estate

Tredegar, Blaenau Gwent, NP22 3AA

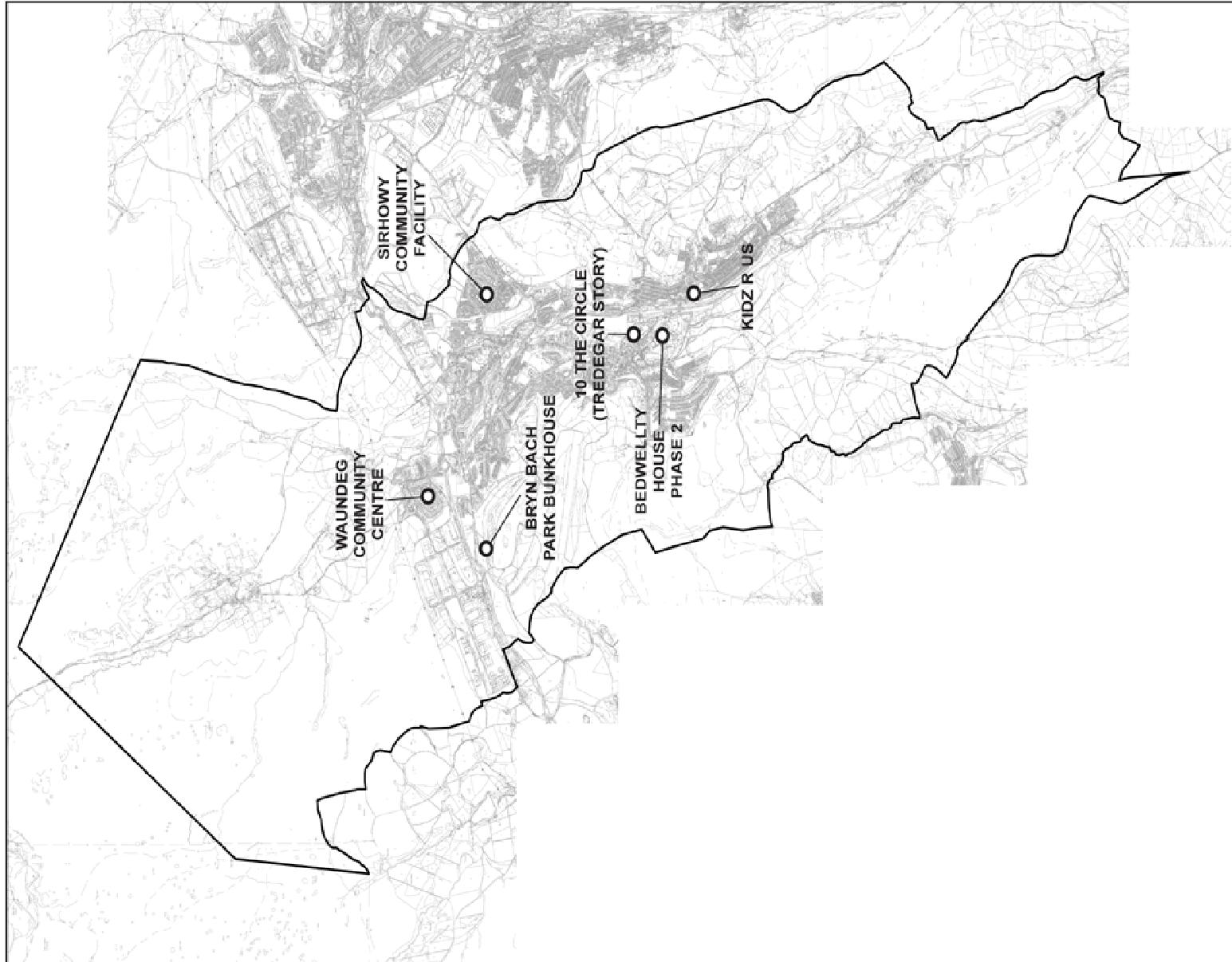
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N

### Title : Location of Priority Projects

Scale 1 : 15000



## **Reserve Projects**

### Bryn Bach Park Masterplan

The existing and proposed uses of the Park and its wider landscape setting will be assessed and a plan drafted. Funding is also sought for the implementation which may include signage, planting, access and boundary improvements.

### Implementing Priority Industrial Estate Regenerating Strategies

A regeneration strategy for the Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate has been produced and costed. This strategy details what is necessary to refresh and regenerate this important estate. Implementation will result in improving the estate for existing businesses and will maximise the potential for attracting new investment and associated employment.

## **Projects Requiring Further Development**

### Sirhowy Valley Landscape Partnership

This project aims to reconnect local people and their past with the landscape and tapping into, developing and honing heritage, countryside management, surveying and participative skills.

## **COUNTY BOROUGH WIDE PROJECTS**

### **Priority Projects**

Throughout the process of preparing the HARPs, one of the issues that constantly arises is that of county borough wide bids and how these can be assessed across 4 HARP areas. In each HARP we

have included all the county borough wide priority and reserve projects.

### Healthy Neighbourhood Retailing – Catering for the needs of families

This project would provide support to businesses committed to promoting the health and well-being of children, young people and families. This could include reducing under age sales of alcohol, tobacco, promotion of healthy food and drink, create breast feeding friendly environments and become a Health Start outlet for pregnant women and families on low-income. Members of the assessment panel felt that there is merit in exploring a joint venture between the project sponsor of this project and the retail and service sector grant along with colleagues in Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Local Health Board.

### Woodland Management Plans

To ensure that Blaenau Gwent woodlands are managed in accordance with WAG's Woodlands for Wales strategy ensuring that over the next 40 years Wales becomes renowned for its high quality woodlands. The valley woodlands are quite unique in that they are readily accessible on foot to a large number of people.

### Protect, Progress & Promote:

Building on recent work on protecting and promoting the heritage of Blaenau Gwent, this project proposes further interpretation with site signage, artistic engagement pieces, interpretation of key sites and involvement in regional campaigns.

### Borough Wide Valleys Cycle Network

The Council, as part of SEWTA (South East Wales Transport Alliance) in partnership with Sustrans is seeking to deliver the

Valleys Cycle Network. Coupled with existing routes, this additional 277 mile network of walking and cycle routes will create 855km of routes regenerating former tramways, railways and canal towpaths to link together the main towns with key employment sites, bus and railways stations and visitor attractions. Part of this funding would be to create the Ebbw Fach Trail.

#### Community Focused Schools Extension

This project will expand out of hours learning and services in schools. The out of hours learning would be accredited under the 'Children's University' award scheme. The project would seek to promote health and nutrition and improve school grounds for community uses.

### **Reserve Projects**

#### Pre-Incubation Grants:

This grant regime complements the development of the pre-incubation facility as described above. Grants up to a maximum of £500 will assist with any necessary research and development activities prior to becoming an operating business. Although available in association with the pre-incubation facility, businesses across the county borough will be able to access the facility and grant scheme.

#### Indigenous Retail & Service Sector Grant:

To provide financial assistance to the indigenous retail & service sector businesses in the towns and villages. This grant will complement the Commercial Improvement Grants available for external works by providing grants towards marketing, internal fixtures and fittings, staff training and ICT. An influx of 'peripherally placed' retail outlets such as Asda, Tesco & Morrisons have had a

profound negative impact on trade of the smaller indigenous retail businesses. Linked with the physical regeneration of the town centres this grant scheme is seen as key to safeguarding and developing growth of retail and service sector businesses. Results from a previous grant scheme (2003-2006) and evidence collated from local retailers shows a significant demand. EU funding excludes retail and service sectors.

#### Borough Wide Bus Corridor Improvements

To provide new and upgraded bus corridor infrastructure to complement the existing bus services and further promote use of public transport as a means of travel. This would include new bus shelters, raised boarding platforms, information displays, signing and improved access to stops

#### Raising the Tourism Potential of Blaenau Gwent:

In 2010 Blaenau Gwent will host the National Eisteddfod at the Works site in Ebbw Vale. In the two years leading up to the festival the Council needs to maximise tourism potential and upgrade some existing facilities. The project proposes the development of a key headliner event – Abertillery Blues Festival – as well as the development of a specific event strategy for the county borough as recommended in the Blue Sail Event Strategy document commissioned by CRT for the HoV region. The Abertillery Blues Festival is mainly held at Abertillery Park. This project seeks to refurbish the Park to include an upgrade to the changing facilities, road access and utilities for camping facilities. Revenue support is sought to develop the Blues Festival and other cultural events.

#### Establishment of a Business Crime Partnership

The aim of this project is to establish a Business Crime Partnership and appoint a Business Crime Reduction Manager for the benefit of

a town centre communities. The manager would address high fear of crime, undesirables taking over street furniture, high levels of shop theft, perception of the town centre being out of control at night and a vicious circle of degeneration.

## **Projects Requiring Further Development**

These projects were not assessed as the panel felt that more information was needed on how these projects would be delivered.

### Improving The Health of Children & Parents Through Prevention:

The health of the children and young people is an issue and this project seeks to work directly with young children and their parents at the earliest opportunity – even at the antenatal stage. Existing programmes will be developed and new ones planned addressing healthy eating, active living & exercise, dental hygiene, children's play and speech and language programmes. For example antenatal support is available to parents at Nevill Hall hospital in Abergavenny not in the county borough. The programme will seek to accredit teenage mums with OCN Food & Nutrition and where appropriate provide advice and guidance on using this accreditation in the workplace.

### Raising Young People's Aspirations

This project seeks to improve emotional well being and raise aspirations in children, young people and families by organising a series of events and training for practitioners who work with children and young people. Emotional well being is vital for underpinning young people's ongoing development and ability to participate effectively in society.

### Improving Sexual Health & Relationships in Young People

Building on the success of current Reach Out for Sexual Health project, this project will increase work to reduce teenage conceptions, continue to provide condom card schemes and raise young people's awareness of sexual health issues. This work forms a vital component of the education and personal development of young people.

### Community Transport for Blaenau Gwent.

To undertake an audit into the current needs of communities , to develop targeted transport schemes, co-ordination of existing transport resources and to stabilise and build capacity of the existing transport sector to deliver a targeted transport programme.

### Green Open Space

Blaenau Gwent has been found to be grossly deficient in the basic provision that no person should live more than 300 metres from their nearest area of natural greenspace. Through BTCV projects (submitted separately) Family Employment Initiative and Green Exercise this could be achieved. Therefore a joint bid between BGCBC and BTCV is recommended.

Family Employment Initiative: This initiative is designed to engage families in targeted areas using local green space as a catalyst to economic activity. It is part of HoV employment and training strategy. It demonstrates that community led development of green space which is in close proximity of neighbourhoods has a positive social and well being affect on families living nearby. Up to three sites could be improved per annum at an average cost of £7,500 per site.

### Green Exercise – Site Improvements

The project will engage with people who are inactive due to long term health limiting conditions and encourage and support them in gaining an active lifestyle and ensuring they are ready to look for employment whilst receiving specialist support of through the project. The project will also offer a service to employers to assist their staff to commute actively, use company grounds for physical exercise. Up to 4 sites per annum could be improved at an average of £5,000 per site.

**Listed below are county borough projects which we feel should be assessed outside of the HARP process and perhaps could be considered as initiatives to be delivered across the HoV area not just Blaenau Gwent county borough.**

#### Children's University:

This project awards out of school hours learning in a variety of settings and is developing at various speeds throughout the HoV area. Development of this project results in people having access to a comprehensive range of academic and vocational education and learning opportunities and schools promote health, nutrition and fitness and offer out of hours learning. Kids College operates 5 to 8 yr olds, Children's University accredits 9 to 13 yrs and the Youth University operates for 14 to 19 yr olds. To develop this initiative in the county borough a full time administrator is required. This initiative would be suitable for roll out across the HoV area supported by a team of administrators.

#### Head for Arts

This is a collaboration between four local authorities providing a community arts service across the eastern HoV area as a medium

for stimulating regeneration. The projects aims to nurture and encourage the creative talent of participants and to embed arts and crafts skills into communities so that they can develop their own high quality community events and activities. This application for funding is to enhance the programme of activities with the purchase and maintenance of a van to transport the specialised equipment and materials to the various communities.

## **Section 4: Community Engagement**

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

BGCBC established an internal officer working group whose initial focus was the preparation of the HARPs. Through this meeting it was suggested that a series of meetings were held with our partners to explain what HARPs are and to discuss how best to work together. To this end three meetings were arranged. Firstly with all Communities First Co-ordinators in the county borough, the second with ‘third sector’ organisations such as the two Development Trusts, BTCV, Community Enterprise Wales, Housing Associations, GAVO. The third meeting involved our ‘Strategic Partners’ – LHB, NPHS, Gwent Police, CCW, WAG.

Simple proformas were designed internally to capture project information in a consistent format. These proformas were made available through existing networks. In some area of the county borough a further exercise was undertaken to capture all potential HARP projects. EVAD and GAVO jointly contacted organisations operating in the Ebbw Fawr Valley to inform them about HARP and to invite suggestions for projects.

The Council has sought to undertake a comprehensive programme of consultation and engagement. A Steering Group was established to support and guide independent consultants, Lynn Wetenhall Associates, who were commissioned to support the Council and its partners through this consultation process.

This Steering Group consisted of 10 officers from a range of public and voluntary organisations as listed below:

- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
- British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

- Communities First
- EVAD
- GAVO
- Heads of the Valley Programme
- National Public Health Service/Local Health Board
- Welsh Assembly Government

The Steering Group agreed that a series of workshops should be held, one in each HARP area. The purpose of these workshops would be to:

- Inform attendees about HARPs from a HOV and BGCBC perspective
- To discuss and comment on strategic outcomes for the area
- To comment on the process and how to continue engagement in the process

The Steering Group met with the consultants on 2 occasions prior to the workshops to agree content. A sub group of the Steering Group also meet to draft the strategic outcomes, the main focus of discussion at each workshop. For more information on Strategic Outcomes see section 2.

The invitations to the workshops were collated by the Council from information supplied by council officers, members of the Steering Group and Communities First officers. The workshops, which were half a day, were well supported and attendance ranged from Tenants and Residents Associations to BGCBC Councillors.

The workshops were held on:

- Upper Sirhowy Valley, Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November  
Attendees 20

- Lower Ebbw Fach Valley, Friday 7<sup>th</sup> November  
Attendees 25
- Upper Ebbw Fach Valley, Thurs 13<sup>th</sup> November  
Attendees 20
- Ebbw Fawr Valley, Friday 14<sup>th</sup> November  
Attendees 24

Overall, the feedback received from all the workshops was extremely positive. Delegates were pleased to be made aware of and involved in the process. At these workshops ideas for future projects were also captured. These provide an early indication of projects that may need to be included in the HARP in 2010 onwards and contact details of those persons who wish to be kept informed of progress of the HARPS.

Through discussion at the Steering Group it was agreed that the workshops were not the appropriate setting for discussing the assessment process for the projects. Therefore it seemed appropriate for the cross sector Steering Group to undertake this role. The Steering Group met again on two occasions to agree the assessment process and then to carry out the assessments. BGCBC Executive endorsed this process following approval of a report in November 2008.

During the assessment process when a member of the Steering Group had an interest in a particular project the interest was declared and no further part in the assessment of the project took place.

This has been an extremely transparent process and one that all Steering Group members were signed up to. Thanks should be given to all those members of the Steering Group who provided

days of their valuable time to ensure that this process resulted in Holistic Area Regeneration Plans that are truly a shared agenda for regeneration in Blaenau Gwent.

## **Section 5: Planned Expenditure**

**PRIORITY PROJECTS**

Projects	Number of Strategic Outcomes	Stage 2 Score	Heads of the Valley Funding Requested						
			2009/10 Capital	2009/10 Revenue	2010/11 Capital	2010/11 Revenue	2011/12 Capital	2011/12 Revenue	TOTAL
Restoration of Bedwellty House Phase II	8	15	425,000		400,000		200,000		<b>1,025,000</b>
Bunk House Accommodation, Bryn Bach Park	7	9	260,000		270,000				<b>530,000</b>
Sirhowy Community Facility	11	12	468,218	20,200		13,200		8,200	<b>509,818</b>
The Tredegar Story	6	12	26,500	15,000		15,000			<b>56,500</b>
Waundeg Community Facility	7	9	232,000		18,000				<b>250,000</b>
Townscape Heritage, Tredegar	6	9	36,000		170,000		170,000		<b>376,000</b>
Kidz R Us	8	12	163,222	10,000					<b>173,222</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1,610,940</b>	<b>45,200</b>	<b>858,000</b>	<b>28,200</b>	<b>370,000</b>	<b>8,200</b>	<b>2,920,540</b>

## RESERVE PROJECTS

Projects	Number of Strategic Outcomes	Stage 2 Score	HoV Funding Requested						
			2009/10 Capital	2009/10 Revenue	2010/11 Capital	2010/11 Revenue	2011/12 Capital	2011/12 Revenue	TOTAL
Bryn Bach Park Masterplan	3		460,000	70,000	260,000	70,000	210,000	70,000	1,140,000
Industrial Estate Regeneration (Tafarnaubach)	4		450,000						450,000
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>910,000</b>	<b>70,000</b>	<b>260,000</b>	<b>70,000</b>	<b>210,000</b>	<b>70,000</b>	<b>1,590,000</b>

## PROJECTS REQUIRING FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

			HoV Funding Required					
Failed	Number of Strategic Outcomes	Stage 2 Score	2009/10 Capital	2009/10 Revenue	2010/11 Capital	2010/11 Revenue	2011/12 Capital	2011/12 Revenue
Sirhowy Valley Landscape	More info required							

## COUNTY BOROUGH PRIORITY PROJECTS

Project	Number of Strategic Outcomes	Stage 2 Score	HoV Funding Required						
			2009/10 Capital	2009/10 Revenue	2010/11 Capital	2010/11 Revenue	2011/12 Capital	2011/12 Revenue	TOTAL
Healthy Neighbourhood Retailing	7	12	12,000	800	12,000	800	12,000	800	38,400
Head for Arts	6	18	17,850	4,000	6,500	4,000	6,500	4,000	42,850
Protect, Progress and Promote	5	12	82,000	29,000	182,000	29,000	82,000	29,000	433,000
Woodland Management Plans	6	13	37,500	2,500	37,500	2,500	37,500	2,500	120,000
Childrens University	5	9	1,000	16,000	1,500	17,000	2,000	18,000	55,500
Cycle Network	5	9	500,000		750,000		750,000		2,000,000
Community Focussed Schools	10	16	25,000	5,000	25,000	5,000	25,000	5,000	76,500
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>675,350</b>	<b>57,300</b>	<b>1,014,500</b>	<b>58,300</b>	<b>915,000</b>	<b>59,300</b>	<b>2,766,250</b>

## COUNTY BOROUGH RESERVE PROJECTS

Project	HoV Funding Required								
	Number of Strategic Outcomes	Stage 2 Score	2009/10 Capital	2009/10 Revenue	2010/11 Capital	2010/11 Revenue	2011/12 Capital	2011/12 Revenue	TOTAL
Pre Incubation Grant	4		5,000		5,000		10,000		20,000
Retail & Service Sector Grant	4		70,000		175,000		210,000		455,000
Bus Corridor Improvements	2		100,000		100,000		100,000		300,000
Improving Sexual Health	4		10,000	20,000	10,000	20,000	10,000	20,000	90,000
Business Crime Partnership	2		1,000	24,600		25,300		26,000	76,900
Raising Tourism Profile	4		135,000	75,000		75,000		75,000	360,000
Promoting the National Eisteddfod	3			25,000		25,000			50,000
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>321,000</b>	<b>144,600</b>	<b>290,000</b>	<b>145,300</b>	<b>330,000</b>	<b>121,000</b>	<b>1,351,900</b>

## COUNTY BOROUGH WIDE – PROJECTS REQUIRING MORE DEVELOPMENT

Project	HoV Funding Required								
	Number of Strategic Outcomes	Stage 2 Score	2009/10 Capital	2009/10 Revenue	2010/11 Capital	2010/11 Revenue	2011/12 Capital	2011/12 Revenue	
Emotional Resilience									
	Needs more development on delivery								
Community Transport									
	Needs more development on delivery								
Health of Children									
	Needs more development on delivery								
Green Open Space									
	Joint bid of Access to Green Open Space and BTCV projects – Green Exercise & Family Employment Initiative recommended								

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

### **Project Monitoring**

It is envisaged that the HoV Programme will undertake monitoring on the individual projects. If BGCBC becomes aware of potential underspend, HoV will be notified as soon as possible. It is hoped that any underspend released from a project will be recycled into another project in that same HARP area.

Information from the HOV Programme Team will be useful in evaluating and revising the plan for 2010/11 funding.

### **Evaluation**

From the workshops held in 2008, a database of contacts has been set up of those people who wished to be kept informed and involved in the development of HARPs.

Information was also captured at these workshops on what participants felt worked well with the 2008 process and what worked less well. These comments will then form part of evaluation of the 2008 process and will inform the process that will be put in place for 2009.

## WELSH INDEX OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION 2008: UPPER SIRHOWY VALLEY

	Overall (Wales Rank out of 1896)	Income (Wales Rank out of 1896)	Employment (Wales Rank out of 1896)	Health (Wales Rank out of 1896)	Education & Skills (Wales Rank out of 1896)	Housing (Wales Rank out of 1896)
<b>Lower Super Output Areas</b>						
Tredegar Central & West 1	832	900	659	628	717	1047
Tredegar Central & West 2	15	17	18	66	2	1214
Tredegar Central & West 3	103	113	38	118	346	1382
Tredegar Central & West 4	276	281	171	158	917	1573
Georgetown 1	661	521	447	803	749	1579
Georgetown 2	958	1060	531	1048	593	1364
Sirhowy 1	978	1037	619	981	1068	1714
Sirhowy 2	23	30	15	28	59	1764
Sirhowy 3	322	428	228	742	497	1444
Sirhowy 4	736	1026	435	934	864	1301

The WIMD shows that the areas containing the residential areas of Cefn Golau (Tredegar Central & West 2) and Sirhowy estate containing of Ysguborwen, Rhoslan, Bryn Pica and Ystrad Deri (Sirhowy 2) are the most deprived in this HARP area and also the most deprived in the county borough. In particular the area of Cefn Golau is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most deprived LSOA in the whole of Wales for Education, Skills & Training. Tredegar Central & West 3 containing the residential area of Ashvale has a higher rank indicating high levels of deprivation particularly in the employment domain

(NB: Figures highlighted RED indicates a rank in top 25% quartile)