

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol Blaenau Gwent



Transport Background Paper

Papur Cefndir Cludiant

Deposit Local Development Plan
Cynllun Adeneuo Datblygu Lleol

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TRANSPORT BACKGROUND PAPER



1.0 INTRODUCTION

Aim of this Paper

- 1.1 To set out the background and evidence for how objectives, allocations and policies have been identified and developed.

Overview of how this Paper fits into Plan preparation

- 1.2 This paper will provide information for Officers and Members of the Authority, stakeholders, members of the public and the Inspector to help explain the approach taken on Transport.

Context

- 1.3 An efficient and sustainable transport system is a requirement for a modern, prosperous and inclusive society. The LDP can help deliver this through the establishment of a robust and meaningful policy context for the development of a modern, efficient and integrated transportation system in Blaenau Gwent.
- 1.4 In order to do so the LDP will provide a framework for the development of major new highway schemes, the provision of new public transport services, the creation of safer environments through improvements to traffic management and parking provision and the promotion of walking and cycling.

The background paper addresses:

2. **Policy Context** for transport,
3. **Current Transport situation** in Blaenau Gwent
4. **Consultation Responses** in respect of transportation, representations at Pre-Deposit Participation and Pre-Deposit Consultation stages, and
5. **Draft Local Development Plans Policy**, which provides the proposed planning policy context for transportation in Blaenau Gwent.

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

People, Places, Futures – The Wales Spatial Plan (July 2008)

2.1 The Wales Spatial Plan (WSP) provides a framework for the future spatial development of Wales, and integrates the spatial aspects of national strategies, including social inclusion, economic health, transport and environment policy. The purpose of the update was to reflect new drivers for change, including One Wales and to give status to Area work undertaken by each region. The Core themes remain Building Sustainable Communities; Promoting A Sustainable Economy; Valuing our Environment; Achieving Sustainable Accessibility; Respecting Distinctiveness and Working with Our Neighbours.

2.2 Blaenau Gwent along with the neighbouring authorities of Merthyr Tydfil, Torfaen, Caerphilly, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Cardiff, Bridgend, Newport and the Vale of Glamorgan have been identified as part of the South East – Capital Network Zone. The vision for the area is:

'An innovative skilled area offering a high quality of life – international yet distinctively Welsh. It will compete internationally by increasing its global visibility through stronger links between the Valleys and the coast and with the UK and the rest of Europe, helping to spread prosperity within the area and benefiting other parts of Wales.'

2.3 The South East Development Framework proposes distinct approaches for three areas in South East Wales. Blaenau Gwent is within the Heads of the Valleys Plus: an area facing some of the greatest economic and social change challenges created by economic restructuring of the late 20th Century. In terms of 'Building Sustainable Communities' Ebbw Vale is identified as being a key settlement that has a critical role to play in the success of the city region. It must be successful in its own right and, where appropriate, function as a service and employment hub for smaller settlements. It will provide the central framework around which high capacity sustainable transport links will be developed. Other settlements in the area need modern shopping, leisure, community and cultural facilities, more attractive and affordable housing, clean vibrant town centres, accessible open countryside and employment opportunities.

2.4 Three Strategic Opportunity Areas (SOA) have been identified in South East Wales and one of these is developments linked to the dualling of the Heads of the Valleys road (A465). The idea of identifying SOA's is to allow greater coherence to be brought to their development and the strengthening of public transport links.

2.5 In terms of 'Achieving Sustainable Accessibility' the overall priority is to make better use of the Area's existing transport infrastructure and to deliver more sustainable access to jobs and services. General principles guiding priorities include:

- stretching targets for improving journey times by bus and rail between the key settlements (Ebbw Vale is one of the key settlements);

- bus priority measures should be implemented on key routes to ensure buses offer rapid travel between the key settlements;
- bus services and community transport should link other communities to these main public transport corridors;
- public transport should operate sufficiently frequently that passengers have the confidence to “turn up and go”; seating capacity should be sufficient to meet normal demand, reducing the need for passengers to stand;
- the priority for road transport is to ensure that the existing road capacity is used with maximum efficiency. Innovative approaches to demand management will need to be part of this. For example, road charging is one feasible solution to congestion that will need to be considered; and safe cycling and walking routes should be identified for commuters and communities.

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 4, 2011)

- 2.6 Assembly Government Transportation policy is embodied in chapter 8 of Planning Policy Wales (2011). Further guidance in relation to Transportation is contained in Technical Advice Note 18.
- 2.7 The Assembly Government’s objectives for transportation is to extend choice in transport and secure accessibility in a way which supports sustainable development by encouraging the establishment of an integrated transport system which is safe, efficient, clean and fair. This will be achieved through integration:
- within and between different types of transport;
 - between transport measures and land use planning;
 - between transport measures and policies to protect and improve the environment; and
 - between transport measures and policies for education, health, social inclusion and wealth creation.
- 2.8 Land use planning can help to achieve the Assembly Government’s objectives for transport through:
- reducing the need to travel, especially by private car, by locating development where there is good access by public transport, walking and cycling;
 - locating development near other related uses to encourage multi-purpose trips and to reduce the length of journeys;
 - improving accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport;
 - ensuring that transport is accessible to all, taking into account the needs of disabled and other less mobile people;
 - promoting walking and cycling;
 - supporting the provision of high quality public transport;
 - supporting traffic management measures;
 - promoting sustainable transport options for freight and commerce;
 - supporting sustainable transport options in rural areas;
 - supporting necessary infrastructure improvements; and
 - ensuring that, as far as possible, transport infrastructure does not contribute to land take, urban sprawl or neighbourhood severance.

Technical Advice Note 18: Transportation (2007)

- 2.9 Technical Advice Note 18: Transport (TAN 18) supplements Planning Policy Wales (2002) and provides additional guidance on achieving a sustainable and integrated transport system.
- 2.10 TAN 18 emphasises that local authorities should consider the need for introducing or reviewing parking standards and requirements, and the parking needs of disabled people. Car parking policies should address the provision and management of both on-street and off-street parking, and the standards to be applied to new developments, reflecting the differing needs of various land uses. Additionally, neighbouring authorities should co-operate to achieve a more consistent regional approach. Guidance also states that polices should encourage the implementation of specific measures to develop safer cycling, including secure cycle parking at interchanges, and at all major developments.
- 2.11 TAN 18 also indicates that the extra traffic generated by a proposed development may produce the need for transport improvements in the vicinity, and beyond. It states that where improvements are necessary, local planning authorities may grant planning permission subject to a condition requiring that improvements are completed prior to the commencement / occupation of the development. Furthermore, it says that developers will be required to pay the cost of any highway improvements where the need is directly created by their development. Such improvements may be secured under section 278 of the Highways Act 1980, whilst the use of planning obligations may be appropriate in some circumstances.

One Wales Connecting the Nation – The Wales Transport Strategy – (2008)

- 2.12 One Wales: Connecting the Nation is the Welsh Assembly's Strategy for transport. It sets out a number of desired outcomes under three key themes which underpin the strategy.

Social Outcomes

- improve access to healthcare
- improve access to education, training and life-long learning
- improve access to shopping and leisure facilities
- encourage healthy lifestyles
- improve the actual and perceived safety of travel

Economic Outcomes

- improve access to employment opportunities
- improve connectivity within Wales and internationally
- improve the efficient, reliable and sustainable movement of people
- improve the efficient, reliable and sustainable movement of freight
- improve access to visitor attractions

Environmental Outcomes

- increase the use of more sustainable materials
- reduce the contribution of transport to greenhouse gas emissions

- adapt to the impacts of climate change
- reduce the contribution of transport to air pollution and other harmful pollutant emissions.
- improve the impact of transport on the local environment
- improve the negative impact of transport on our heritage
- improve the impact of transport on biodiversity

2.13 These long-term outcomes are then grouped in order to focus the Assembly's work to ensure it secures a net improvement. The priorities provide additional strategic direction for work towards the long-term outcomes, and maximise the scope for local solutions to transport challenges within a consistent national framework. They form the basis for the National Transport Plan and the four Regional Transport Plans, which set out in detail how the outcomes are to be achieved.

2.14 The priorities cover:

- reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts;
- integrating local transport;
- improving access between key settlements and sites;
- enhancing international connectivity; and
- increasing safety and security.

2.15 A series of key actions is set out for each of the strategic priorities.

REGIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

South East Wales Transport Alliance - Regional Transport Plan (RTP) (Dec 2008)

2.16 Sewta is an alliance of 10 South-East Wales local authorities working with others to deliver better transport in South East Wales region. It is constituted as a joint local government committee.

2.17 The Transport Act (Wales) 2006 requires the consortia to produce a regional plan for transport for all modes of travel. The RTP promotes a balanced programme of investment and support for all modes of travel; a programme of interventions which interlace transport planning with land use and public service planning and balances the conflicting requirements of protecting the environment, addressing problems of social exclusion and promoting the economy.

2.18 Sewta's vision for the RTP is to provide '*A modern, accessible, integrated and sustainable transport system for South East Wales which increases opportunity, promotes prosperity for all and protects the environment; where walking, cycling, public transport, and sustainable freight provide real travel alternatives.*' (

2.19 The priorities of the RTP are (in order):

1. To improve access for all to services, facilities and employment, particularly by walking, cycling and public transport.
2. To increase the proportions of trips undertaken by walking, cycling and public transport.

3. Minimising demand on the transport system.
4. To develop an efficient, safe and reliable transport system with improved transport links between the 14 key settlements in South-East Wales and between South-East Wales and to the rest of Wales, the UK and Europe.
5. To provide a transport system that encourages healthy and active lifestyles.
6. To reduce significantly the emission of greenhouse gases and the impact of the transport system on local communities.

Walking and Cycling Strategy

- 2.20 Sewta wishes walking or cycling to be people's preferred means of travel for shorter journeys. The RTP has policies and action that relate to both modes of travel. The RTP also proposes an investment programme to provide improved facilities for walkers and cyclists.

Existing Sewta Walking & Cycling programme for Blaenau Gwent

- 2.21 The following cycle improvements will be included in the Local Development Plan:
- BG12 Link to Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate from the existing Heads of the Valleys Cycle Route
 - BG13 Link between the proposed Heads of the Valleys Cycle Route extension and Rassau Industrial Estate
 - BG21 & T17 Royal Oak to Swffryd & Crumlin to Pontypool
 - BG3 & BG10 Link between NCN 46 and Cwm via Ebbw Vale following the route of the Ebbw Valley Railway in places; Link between Cwm and Aberbeeg to CCB
 - BG5 Links through Brynmawr town centre to NCN 46 - including link from Warwick Road to A467 footbridge.
 - BG6 & BG7 Links from NCN 46 into Ebbw Vale Town Centre west and east
 - BG8 Completion of NCN 46 following dualling of the A465

Rail Strategy

- 2.22 South East Wales has an extensive regional rail system that provides an effective service in connecting key settlements and many other places throughout the region to Cardiff and Newport. Sewta has a continuing role to play in promoting further improvements to the rail system, and to ensure that rail developments fit with wider sustainability objectives and the RTP. Together with WAG and industry partners Sewta will work to improve capacity and service quality of the regional rail system as well as extending the system through line and station reopenings. Former rail lines should be protected where future reuse is a possibility. Sewta's long term aspiration is for all railway stations in the region to have a minimum of an hourly service seven days a week (including evenings and Sunday mornings) and a turn-up-and-go service where connecting regional key settlements.

Ebbw Valley Line

- 2.23 Plans for the Ebbw Valley Line include the extension of the existing service from Ebbw Vale Parkway to a new Ebbw Vale Town station, and provision of a direct hourly service between Newport and Ebbw Vale Town, and further new stations on

the line (Phase 2 2014). In the short to medium term Sewta identifies a new line between Aberbeeg and Abertillery. These will be identified in the Local Development Plan.

Bus Strategy

- 2.24 The aim of the bus priority investment programme is to maximise the contribution that the bus network can make to improve the modal split in South East Wales, by improving end-to-end journey times and journey experience on core bus corridors, to benefit the greatest number of passengers.
- 2.25 It is intended that proposed bus priority corridors will be the focus of capital investment. Key investment on bus priority (lanes and junction priority), 'Red Routes' and decriminalised enforcement is needed to address the main constraints and causes of bus unreliability.
- 2.26 The main recommendation of the bus investment programme study was to focus on improvements to the following strategic network route in Blaenau Gwent: Brynmawr – Abertillery – Newbridge – / Blackwood – Sirhowy Valley – Crosskeys – Risca – Newport corridor
This route will be identified in the Local Development Plan.

Integration, Information and Interchange

- 2.27 Excellent integration and information are key features of sustainable public transport systems that provide a real alternative to car travel. Sewta seeks to improve integration through provision of high quality interchanges, integrated ticketing, improved information and provision of Park & Ride facilities. Sewta aims to create seamless journeys to provide transport users with better journey choices and to encourage greater use of public transport services. Public transport interchanges provide a central focus and point of integration for public transport services. The quality and safety of the facilities provided at interchanges is a key influence on passenger perception of public transport services and encompasses, for example the quality of the passenger-waiting environment and the travel information provided. The provision of high quality public transport interchange facilities often has important regeneration benefits. There are planned public transport interchange proposals for Ebbw Vale and Brynmawr and these will be identified in the Plan.
- 2.28 Park & Ride and Park & Share schemes are aimed at encouraging a modal shift away from single occupancy car travel. They will remove traffic from the existing road network and relieve existing congestion points. Park & Ride involves a transfer from car to public transport. This can involve both car to rail and car to bus. Improved ticketing arrangements are a key component of integration between services and between public transport modes.
- 2.29 The provision of information is also essential to delivering integrated public transport. The availability of reliable, accurate, accessible and timely information can help to improve the image and attractiveness of public transport, and helps to ensure journeys involving an interchange are easy and convenient. Good

information about public transport services enables passengers to know their options and make informed decisions, which removes uncertainty and increases passenger confidence.

Roads Strategy

2.30 Sewta accepts that some new highway investment may be necessary where it can be shown to support our objectives, but the thrust of Sewta's highways policy is to protect what we already have and make best use of it. Single car occupancy is a major cause of concern and Sewta seeks to reduce use of the car where that is possible and also to increase car occupancy.

2.31 The Sewta highway strategy study has identified the following key problem area on the regional road network in Blaenau Gwent:

- A4046 The Works Ebbw Vale to A465 (Phases 1+2)

This constitutes 2 proposals for inclusion in the Plan, that is the Peripheral Distributor Road and online improvements between this new road and the A465.

Road Safety Strategy

2.32 Road safety issues are a major public concern, and whilst there is a general reduction in serious injuries and deaths from road traffic collisions, the further reduction in the number and severity of road traffic accidents is an important Sewta objective. A number of themes will underpin the development of a regional dimension to road safety delivery in the Sewta area. These are:

- Co-ordination of efforts: establish mechanisms for effective co-ordination of efforts and communications between partners.
- Building upon existing partnerships: seek to build upon and where appropriate, expand existing local and sub-regional partnership arrangements that deliver effectively.
- Building upon existing successes: identify things that work well and seek to build upon them/expand their coverage.
- Developing common approaches to problems and solutions: identify solutions/ways of working would have a positive impact on road safety if rolled out across the region;
- Targeting resources effectively: ensure that actions that have the greatest benefit are given priority for funding.

2.33 Sewta will develop a road safety strategic framework, which will outline the background to current road safety work in the region and set out policies on investigating collisions and casualties, on safety for children, speed management, safety for pedestrians and cyclists, safety for horse riders, safety for young drivers and safety for motorcyclists.

2.34 Delivery of specific road safety measures across South Wales is mostly in the hands of local authorities who are best placed to identify problems and devise solutions that meet local needs.

Car Parking

- 2.35** Parking is an essential part of both ends of most car journeys. Provision of parking facilities (or lack thereof), in particular at the non-home end of a trip, contributes to whether and how a journey is made. Parking provision can also affect the efficiency of the road network, and the ease of movement for all traffic, including road-based public transport. Parking policy therefore plays an important part in the regional transport strategy. At the same time parking provision is often a very localised issue.
- 2.36** Sewta is to develop a car parking strategic framework to lead and support the development of local car parking strategies and policies by individual local authorities (either as free standing documents or as part of their LDP process). The car parking strategic framework will address the issues of parking standards, quality of car parks, on-street parking and traffic management, provision for those with a disability, civil parking enforcement and parking on footways and verges. Sewta will be working with member authorities and stakeholders to spread best practice through their car parking strategies and LDPs. Blaenau Gwent intend to adopt the framework set by Sewta and adopt the document as Supplementary Planning Guidance alongside the Plan.

LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

Making a Difference – The big 20 year plan for Blaenau Gwent 2010 to 2030

- 2.37** The Community Strategy builds on the work undertaken by the Community Plan and takes forward the vision of making: Blaenau Gwent a better place to live, work and visit. The Community Strategy has 7 key themes and each theme has its own vision.

<p> Lively and Accessible Communities <i>Creating communities that people enjoy and want to live in</i></p>	<p> Thriving Communities <i>Offering the opportunities, support and resources in our communities for people to thrive</i></p>
<p> Fair and Safe Communities <i>Making people feel safer and included in our communities</i></p>	<p> Learning Communities <i>Giving people the skills to succeed</i></p>
<p> Healthy Communities <i>Helping people to be healthy and get the right care and support when they need it</i></p>	<p> Green & Sustainable Communities <i>Improving our environment today for tomorrow</i></p>
<p> Leading Communities <i>Working with, and for our communities</i></p>	

- 2.38** Transport is under Lively & Accessible Communities and the aim is to help people get around. This will be achieved by: providing safe, reliable and joined up transport; ensuring our public and community transport system is what our citizens need; encouraging the use of a range of transport including walking and cycling; and improving the transport network.

Blaenau Gwent Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan – Draft First Revision (December 2010)

2.39 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

Principle 2: Boost business support and enterprise

Principle 3: Promote learning and modern skills

Principle 4: Focus investment in key communities

Principle 5: Deliver The Works as a national flagship

Principle 6: Develop the transport Infrastructure

2.40 Under Principle 6 there are three transformational projects identified:

- Complete Heads of Valleys Road
- Complete Railway Network
- Connect The Works

2.41 Other projects and programmes identified are:

Other access improvement schemes

- A4046 from Cwm to Aberbeeg
- Abertillery to Aberbeeg
- Tredegar to Blackwood

Integrated Public Transport

- Sustainable services between The Works and the rest of the Borough – from the outset
- Maximise cycling and walking opportunities
- Ensure Travel Plans are developed and applied

2.42 These projects, schemes and principles have been incorporated into the Deposit Plan.

Blaenau Gwent Transport Plan (2000-2005)

2.43 The Blaenau Gwent Transport Plan sets out the transport policies for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. The document will be replaced when the Regional Transport Plan is adopted.

3.0 CURRENT SITUATION

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Rail

3.1 In 2008 a new rail link to the Ebbw Valley was opened, providing rail stations at Ebbw Vale Parkway and Llanhilleth in Blaenau Gwent. The current frequency of services between Ebbw Vale and Cardiff Central are as follows:

- Monday-Saturday: 1 train per hour (First train, 06.40, last train, 22:40);
- Sunday: 1 train every 2 hours (First train, 8.40, last train, 20:40).

Bus

3.2 The following list identifies the main bus services that currently operate within Blaenau Gwent:

SERVICE	ROUTE AND TIMINGS	OPERATOR
X4	Cardiff-Merthyr-Tredegar-Ebbw Vale-Brynmawr-Abergavenny (every 30mins throughout the day)	Stagecoach
X15	Brynmawr-Abertillery-Newport (every 30mins)	Stagecoach
X18	Ebbw Vale-Newbridge-Risca-Newport (hourly service)	Stagecoach
X74	Crosskeys-Abertillery-Abergavenny (Tuesdays only 1 service)	Stagecoach
E2	Ebbw Vale-Hilltop (circular every 30mins)	Stagecoach
E3	Brynmawr-Abertillery-Ebbw Vale-Brynmawr (hourly service)	Stagecoach
E4	Brynmawr-Ebbw Vale-Abertillery- Brynmawr (hourly service)	Stagecoach
E8	Ebbw Vale-Rassau-Garnlydan (every 30 mins)	Stagecoach
E11	Ebbw Vale-Tredegar via Ysguborwen (hourly service)	Clarks Coaches
E12	Ebbw Vale - Tredegar / Tredegar – Peacehaven (hourly Service)	Clarks Coaches
E13	Tredegar-Ebbw Vale via Peacehaven (hourly service)	Clarks Coaches
4	Tredegar – Rhymney – Pontlottyn (hourly service)	Stagecoach
20	Cefn Golau – Tredegar – Rhymney Station (hourly service)	Stagecoach
21	Cwmbran-Pontypool-Blackwood (hourly service)	Stagecoach
22	Ebbw Vale-Pontypool-Newport (hourly service)	Stagecoach
30	Brynmawr-Blaenavon-Pontypool-Newport (hourly service)	Stagecoach

SERVICE	ROUTE AND TIMINGS	OPERATOR
48/49	Tredegar-Troedrhivair (taxi 3 services per day Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday)	Met Taxis
52	Cwmtillery-Abertillery-Trinant-Newbridge-Blackwood (every 30 mins)	Stagecoach
56	Tredegar-Blackwood-Newport (30 mins at busy times otherwise hourly)	Stagecoach
C20	Rhymney Station - Tredegar (hourly)	Clarkes
3/S	Abergavenny-Gilwern-Brynmawr (hourly service)	Clarkes
1	Abertillery-Cwmtillery-Brynithel-Hillcrest-Tesco (hourly service)	Henleys Bus Service
1/S	Abertillery-Gelli Crug (1 service per day)	Henleys Bus Services
3	Abertillery-Arael View (every 30 mins)	Henleys Bus Services

- 3.3 Coverage of services within Blaenau Gwent and from Blaenau Gwent to other key settlements is good, with links across the heads of the valleys and to strategic destination such as Cardiff. However, there is a major gap in service provision on a Sunday. There is also an issue with infrastructure provision at bus stops. This includes the need for new bus shelters, raised boarding platforms, information displays, signing and improved access to stops.

Community Transport

- 3.4 There are currently two community transport schemes operating in Blaenau Gwent, both under section 19 permits: Blaenau Gwent Council for the Disabled, and GAVO Dial-a-ride. Both only provide transport for registered clients who are the elderly and disabled and unable to use public transport. Both receive funding from the Council to support their activities. Communities First undertook a research project into community transport as a social enterprise as a way of tackling the perceived gaps in provision of public transport.

WALKING AND CYCLING

- 3.5 The plan attached at appendix 1 identifies the existing and proposed community route (cycle/footpath) network for Blaenau Gwent.
- 3.6 Within Blaenau Gwent, there are over 300 kilometres of rights of way that serve the needs of walkers and horse riders, including specific trails such as the Sirhowy Valley Walk, the Ebbw Valley Walk and the Rhymney Ridgeway. The distribution of rights of ways are set out in the table below:

	Footpath	Bridleway	CRB*	CRF**	BOAT***
Ebbw Vale	56	1	18	1	0
Tredegar	41	8	1	2	0
Upper Ebbw Fach	46	4	12	0	1
Lower Ebbw Fach	61	42	6	0	1

Carriage Road bridleway **Carriage Road Footpath *Byway Open to all traffic*

- 3.7 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 footpaths. The Council has prepared a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) which sets out an action statement and work programme for 2008 to 2017. It aims to bring the access network to life and connect all people with the countryside.

ROADS

Trunk Road – A465 Heads of the Valleys

- 3.8 The A465 is a key strategic link in the national trunk road network connecting West Wales with the Midlands and the North of England. It also forms a major sub regional artery along the Heads of the Valleys corridor from Swansea in the west to Abergavenny in the east. It runs in an east-west direction across the northern part of the County Borough.

Principal Route – A4048

- 3.9 The A4048 runs south along the Sirhowy Valley linking the A465 through Tredegar to Blackwood and Newport.

Principal Route – A4046

- 3.10 The A4046 runs along the Ebbw Fawr Valley in a north south direction and connects the Heads of the Valleys with Ebbw Vale Crumlin, Newbridge, Crosskeys, Risca and Newport.

Principal Route – A4047

- 3.11 The A4047 runs along the Ebbw Fach Valley in a north south direction and connects the Heads of the Valleys Road through Brynmawr, Nantygo, Blaina and Abertillery to Crumlin Newbridge, Crosskeys, Risca and Newport.

Primary Distributor Roads

- 3.12 A number of primary distributor roads create links through residential areas. A map of the road hierarchy is attached as appendix 2.

4.0 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

PRE-DEPOSIT PARTICIPATION

The Issues Paper (July 2007)

4.1 The Issues Paper (July 2007) identified a number of issues the Plan needed to address:

- 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 provide a transport system that encourages healthy and active lifestyles, is safer and supports local communities.
- To make better use of the existing transport system
- To improve the transport system to assist in the regeneration of the area
- To reduce emission of greenhouse gasses and air pollution.

4.2 A consultation exercise on the Issues Paper asked a number of questions around four key issues:

Spreading the benefits of regeneration through integrated transport

4.3 **Question 5.1 What policies can be put in place to ensure that the new rail access and facilities proposed at the former steelworks site and the regeneration of the wider area?**

It was considered that policies were required to ensure integrated transport options including bus, cycleway and footpath links to stations. The provision of adequate parking and a park and ride service was proposed by several respondents. Also, bus links to peripheral employment areas, e.g. industrial estates would be a useful way to regenerate the wider area. Other ideas put forward were to use the new railway station as a central hub and link other important sites to it, including the town centre and to locate housing development close to public transport routes, the main road network and the key settlements. The design and build of the rail access and facilities should minimise harm to the environment.

4.4 These views were taken into account in the identification of the Preferred Strategy and the methodology for the Candidate Site Assessment Process. The idea of spreading the benefits of regeneration through integrated transport is a key part of the strategy as is creating a network of linked hubs.

Improving Accessibility

4.5 **Question 5.2 Are there specific measures, which could be taken to encourage the use of a range of different forms of transport?**

A high quality transport system, including promoting bus provision (possibly using mini-buses) for commuters to larger industrial estates was considered the best way

to encourage the use of a range of different forms of transport. Also, locating development near to other land uses that currently benefit from public transport and good road access. Other potential measures cited were to reduce the provision for cars, to introduce safe routes to stations (bus and rail), schools and workplaces, to promote walking and cycling for shorter trips.

- 4.6 The aim of improving the quality of the transport system will be included in policy. The Candidate Site Methodology favours development which is well located in terms of public transport. The promotion of a range of different forms of transport, (including and emphasis on walking and cycling) and the creation of safe routes, is also being taken forward in policy (Policies SP6, DM1 and T1).

Improving Connectivity

- 4.7 **Question 5.3 Are there specific road, rail or other infrastructure improvements that are required?**

Improvements identified were to:

Ebbw Vale Town Bypass.

A return to an integrated rail and bus transport system

Public transport links to Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan Hospital and the planned Specialist and Critical Care Centre.

- 4.8 The Ebbw Vale Town Bypass (PDR) was included in the Preferred Strategy and will be included in the Deposit Plan. The aim of creating an integrated rail and bus transport system has been included in Deposit Plan Policy. Public transport links to the hospital are planned.

- 4.9 **Question 5.4 How should transportation policies influence the future location of development?**

Existing and future transport routes should be a key determinant of where future development is located. It was considered that policies should support frequent and convenient bus and rail networks, cycle paths and pedestrian routes.

- 4.10 As stated previously the Candidate Site Methodology favours development which is well located to public transport routes. The Preferred Strategy and Deposit Plan will support improvements to the public transport network.

Safer Neighbourhoods for people to Walk and Cycle

- 4.11 **Question 5.5 What actions/policies are needed to create safer neighbourhoods for people to walk and cycle?**

A number of measures were put forward:

- Presence of Countryside wardens and police patrolling on foot;
- Footpaths and cycle tracks through residential areas should be illuminated;
- The urge to close off alleyways should be resisted;
- Footpaths and cycleways should be separated from roads;
- Directing growth close to services and infrastructure can promote walking and cycling trips

- To have an appropriate network of routes across the 3 main valleys with links to regional routes;
- Improved design in terms of safer neighbourhood planning; and
- By converting old railway lines to cycle paths.

4.12 Deposit plan policies have, where appropriate, taken these views into account. It should be noted that a number of the issues raised are not land use issues.

Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 4.13 The Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment identified the following constraints:
- Limited public access to airports;
 - Limited public access to Cardiff
 - Threat that dualling will lead to increase in traffic flow through the area rather than visiting it;
 - Local bus service poor on weekends;
 - Lateral links across valleys poor; and
 - Fragmentation of Public Rights of Way network.

PRE DEPOSIT CONSULTATION

The Preferred Strategy

4.14 The Draft Preferred Strategy was subject to public consultation for a period of six weeks from 7th November until 19th December 2008, during which time a total of 18 exhibitions were also held covering every ward across the County Borough. In total, 58 respondents made 414 representations on the Preferred Strategy, 278 of which were comments/objections and 136 expressions of support. The Preferred strategy provided the following policy framework for transportation in Blaenau Gwent:

Objectives

2. 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.
8. Improve accessibility to services through the promotion of sustainable modes of transport, particularly, public transport, walking and cycling.

Issue - Sustainability

4.15 One comment considered that explicit reference to sustainable transport that reduces dependency on the use of cars should be made in objective the objective.

Response

4.16 It is agreed that the objective would benefit from the inclusion of a reference to sustainable transport. The draft Deposit Plan incorporates this change.

SP11 – Transport Infrastructure Improvements

- 4.17 The Council will safeguard land for the following improvements to transport infrastructure:
- phase 2 of the rail link from Parkway to Ebbw Vale Town (including land for a new station);
 - extension to the Parkway Park and Ride facility;
 - extension of rail link to Abertillery;
 - a network of walking and cycling routes;
 - dualling of the Heads of the Valleys Road (A465);
 - peripheral distributor road (PDR) through the former Steelworks site;
 - online improvements between the PDR and the A465;
 - online improvements to the A4048 south of Tredegar;
 - online improvements to the A4046 south of Cwm through to Aberbeeg; and
 - online improvements to the A467 south of Abertillery.

4.18 Five comments were made on this policy.

Issue - Links to Transport Plan

4.19 It was suggested that clear links be made to the Regional Transport Plan.

Response

4.20 This document has clearly shown the links to the Regional Transport Plan and the Deposit Plan.

Issue - Core Road Hierarchy

4.21 The Plan should identify the core highway network.

Response

4.22 Agree to identify the core highway network in the Deposit Plan.

Issue - Deliverability of Transport Proposals

4.23 The deliverability of some of the schemes identified was questioned.

Response

4.24 Whilst some of the schemes are not identified in the Regional Transport Plan (RTP) this is a five-year plan whereas the Local Development Plan covers a 15 year period. These schemes are considered to be priority schemes for the authority and will be submitted for consideration for RTP funding in future years. Where possible local improvements, for example, to remove car parking off the street may be considered in the short term by the Council.

Issue - Improvements to the A467

4.25 One comment suggested that reference to the improvement of the A467 needed to be more specific whilst another comment was received on the lack of identification of improvement through Warm Turn.

Response

4.26 More information is provided in the Deposit Plan. The proposed A467 online improvement includes the route through Warm Turn.

SP12 Transport Requirements for new Development

- 4.27 Three objections were received to this policy all related to the bus service; the buses are difficult to access as buses still have steps to enter the vehicles; the bus service is poor as it is impossible to travel around the Borough at night; and an efficient service is required so that no community is left isolated.
- 4.28 These are all operational matters which the planning system has little influence over. They are, however, issues that are being addressed by the Regional Transport Consortium and the Council's Highways Division.

5.0 DRAFT LDP POLICY

5.1 To address the issues raised with the objective and policies the following is proposed.

Objective 1

By 2021, Ebbw Vale will be the main service and retail hub for the County Borough supported by a network of vibrant district/local hubs that provide a range of local services and facilities for their local communities. The district hubs will be well linked to the principal hub of Ebbw Vale through sustainable modes of transport

Objective 4

By 2021, the use of sustainable modes of transport, particularly public transport, walking and cycling, will have increased and the quality and frequency of the public transport system improved.

Strategic Policy

SP6 Ensuring Accessibility

The Council will work with partner organisations, including the Welsh Assembly Government, South East Wales Transport Alliance, public transport operators, community transport providers, Network Rail and neighbouring Authorities to deliver a sustainable transport network which:

1. Increases connectivity through improving rail, bus and road links:
 - a. With other key settlements in the South East Wales Region, Wales, the UK and Europe;
 - b. Between the principal hub of Ebbw Vale and other identified district hubs (Tredegar, Brynmawr and Abertillery);
2. Facilitates and supports economic growth, regeneration and development priorities; whilst minimising harm to the built and natural environment and local communities;
3. Promotes Ebbw Vale as a regional public transport hub which integrates cycling, walking, bus and rail networks;
4. Facilitates an integrated and safe system of cycle and pedestrian routes connecting settlements with employment areas and town centres;
5. Facilitates the transportation of freight on the core network whilst encouraging the use of rail; and
6. Secures appropriate provision for people with special access and mobility requirements.

To ensure that Blaenau Gwent benefits from regeneration opportunities, it needs to be well connected with national and international transport links. The opening of the Ebbw Vale Rail line has improved public transport links but further improvements are required to the rail service in terms of the rail link to Ebbw Vale Town, the frequency of the service and the provision of a connection with Newport. It is also important that Ebbw Vale has a high-speed public transport service to other key settlements in the region, such as Merthyr, Abergavenny, Blackwood, Cardiff and Newport. The dualling of the Heads of the Valleys Road, due to be completed in the Plan period will improve road connections with the Midlands and West Wales and will provide regeneration opportunities for Blaenau Gwent.

Transport improvements can facilitate and support economic growth, regeneration and development priorities. Both the strategic sites rely on the provision of new or improved road links to enable development to take place. These are the Peripheral Distributor Road which serves 'The Works' and online improvements to the A4046 which will serve 'The Works' and Ebbw Vale Northern Corridor. In addition, many residential areas suffer from narrow streets which lack sufficient parking facilities resulting in environmental and safety problems. A number of small highway schemes are required throughout the County Borough to address these issues. It is important that in undertaking transport improvements harm to the environment will be minimised and where possible, environmental benefits will be sought.

A key element of the Strategy is to improve connectivity between Ebbw Vale and the district hubs of Tredegar, Brynmawr, and Abertillery. The re-introduction of a rail link from Ebbw Vale to Cardiff; the new role for Ebbw Vale as the principal town centre; and the provision of key services at 'The Works' reinforce the need to connect all parts of the County Borough to Ebbw Vale. The hub approach also provides an opportunity to integrate rail, bus services, walking and cycling in Blaenau Gwent. The connectivity of the hubs is key to sharing the benefits of regeneration across the area. If the benefits of regeneration are to be shared widely then all of the hubs must have good public transport connections with the principal hub of Ebbw Vale.

Blaenau Gwent's low car ownership rates lead to the provision of alternative modes of transport having greater significance. By working in partnership with varying bodies it should be possible to ensure that all areas are served by a number of different modes of transport and have access to local and regional services. At present there is a poor bus service at weekends and evenings and this needs to be addressed if people without cars are not to be socially excluded. Journey times, particularly on longer bus routes, needs to be reduced, if these are to provide an alternative to the car.

Increased cycling and walking is vital not only to offer alternative modes to the car and reduce carbon emissions but in improving the health of the local population. Blaenau Gwent has some of the highest levels of ill health and long-term sickness in Wales; an accessible network of routes together with a promotional campaign will improve the health of the local population. It is also vital that the network provides links to employment sites so that people have a choice of modes of travel to work. Although, Blaenau Gwent has an extensive network of footpaths these are currently

fragmented and not well maintained or signposted. This is to be rectified by actions set out in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2009-2014.

Whilst it is accepted that the vast majority of freight will travel by road, with the road network needing to cater for this, the opening of the Ebbw Vale Rail line offers an opportunity for rail freight at Marine Colliery, Cwm. Wherever possible, freight which travels by road will be encouraged to use the core network (See Appendix 6 for details of the road hierarchy and core network).

Transport is a major issue for people with special access and mobility requirements and needs to be addressed in the provision of public transport, pedestrian and cycle routes.

Development Management Policy

DM1

3. Accessibility

- a. The proposal has regard for the safe, effective and efficient use of the transportation network;
- b. The proposal ensures that new access roads within developments are designed to an appropriate standard that prioritises the interests of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport before that of the private car;
- c. The proposal secures appropriate provision for people with special access and mobility requirements;
- d. Parking, appropriate servicing and operational space has been provided in accordance with the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on Access, Car Parking and Design; and
- e. Where a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan is required by national planning policy, they must demonstrate that there will be no adverse impact on trip generation and travel demand.

Development can potentially adversely affect the safe and efficient operation and use of the transport network and services. Such impacts may arise from the level of traffic generated on the highway network and the potential effects upon, for example, the reliability of bus services or safety of cyclists and pedestrians. This Policy indicates the Council's intention to refuse applications for development that may hinder the safe and efficient operation and use of the transport network.

The establishment of a road hierarchy facilitates the efficient use of the highways network by ensuring that traffic is channelled onto the most appropriate routes in order to maintain appropriate environmental, amenity and safety conditions. The roads identified at each level of the hierarchy are set out in Appendix 6.

All new development should be highly accessible and this should be evidenced in the accompanying Design and Access statement submitted to support planning applications. The Assembly Government supports a transport hierarchy in relation to new development that establishes priorities in such a way that, wherever possible, they are accessible in the first instance by walking and cycling, then by

public transport and then finally by private motor vehicles. Walking and cycling have an important role to play in the management of movement across the County Borough, particularly reducing the number of short journeys taken by the car. Developers will be required to ensure that new developments encourage walking and cycling by giving careful consideration to location, design, access arrangements, travel 'desire lines' through a development, and integration with existing and potential off-site links.

Blaenau Gwent has plans for an extensive community network (shared cycle/walking routes). Whilst the proposed routes are identified on the proposals maps the full extent of the network is identified in Appendix 7. It is important that new developments are linked to this network.

In determining applications the Council will be able to ensure that developments take into account the needs of people with special access such as children and young people and the elderly and people with mobility requirements.

The provision of car parking is a major influence on the choice of means of transport and the pattern of development. The Council will seek to restrict developments that generate a high level of trips (e.g. offices, shops and leisure uses) to locations well served by public transport. Moreover, provision for parking will be reduced in line with improvements in public transport accessibility. Further guidance is contained in the Access, Car Parking and Design Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 18 provides guidance relating to when and where a Transport Assessment is required. Developers are encouraged to submit Transport Assessments to accompany planning applications for major developments, along with enough information necessary to assess the suitability of an application in terms of travel demand and impact. A Transport Assessment represents a comprehensive and consistent review of all the potential impacts of a proposed development or redevelopment, with an agreed plan to reduce any adverse consequences. Covering access by all modes, the purpose of a Transport Assessment is to provide information to enable decision-makers to understand how the proposed development is likely to function in transport terms.

Allocations

T1 Cycle Routes

The existing network of cycle paths and community routes will be extended, improved and enhanced by the completion of the following schemes:

1. HoV Route linking Nine Arches Tredegar to Brynmawr
2. Link from HoV to Rassau Industrial Estate
3. HoV to Ebbw Vale and Cwm
4. Cwm to Aberbeeg
5. Link from HoV to Trefil
6. Links from HoV to Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate
7. Bedwellty Pits, Tredegar to County Boundary
8. Hilltop to Ebbw Vale to Manmoel
9. Brynmawr to Blaenavon
10. Extension of Ebbw Fach Trail from Abertillery to Aberbeeg and completion of missing section through Blaina
11. Link to Cwmtillery Lakes
12. Aberbeeg to Royal Oak
13. Royal Oak to Swfrydd

A key factor in delivering more sustainable transport is realising a significant increase in the number of shorter trips by walking and cycling. The provision of a high quality strategic and local network of dedicated routes for these modes is an essential element in realising this growth.

The specific route alignments for the above improvements have yet to be considered in detail and the schemes are at differing stages of development. Indicative route alignments are shown on the LDP Proposals Map and only represent the general direction of the route. The allocations on the Proposals Map, therefore, are not prescriptive.

The proposed cycle routes promote sustainability, encourage healthier lifestyles and increased physical activity, and contribute to the economic prosperity of the area.

T2 Rail Network and Station Improvements

Land will be safeguarded for the following rail network improvements:

- 1. Extension of rail link from Ebbw Vale Parkway to Ebbw Vale Town**
- 2. Provision of new station and bus interchange at Ebbw Vale**
- 3. Provision of new station at Cwm**
- 4. Extension of rail link to Abertillery**
- 5. Provision of new station and Park and Ride at Abertillery**
- 6. Rail freight provision at Marine Colliery**

The opening of the Ebbw Valley line for passenger services, provides an excellent opportunity to increase rail patronage. There is currently one train per hour but there are plans to increase this to two per hour with a service to Newport. Other improvements that will increase use and encourage car users to change to rail are: the extension of the rail link from Ebbw Vale Parkway to Ebbw Vale Town; the provision of a new station and bus interchange at Ebbw Vale Town; and a new station at Cwm.

The proposed extension to the Ebbw Valley line to Abertillery, provides an excellent opportunity to increase rail patronage in this area. The extension to the line will be complemented by the provision of a new station and park and ride facility.

There is an opportunity at the Marine Colliery employment site to develop a rail freight station.

T3 Safeguarding of Disused Railway Infrastructure

Disused railway infrastructure will be protected from development that would compromise its future transport use where reuse is a realistic prospect in the future.

There are a number of disused railway lines which could potentially be re-used for transport purposes. In line with national planning policy, this policy seeks to safeguard from development disused railway land where there is a realistic prospect of its reuse for transport purposes in the future. Under the provision of this policy, the Council will support use of such land in the interim, for pedestrian, cycle and bridle routes including shared facilities.

T4 Improvements to Bus Services

The following bus service improvements are identified:

- 1. Bus Priority Scheme along the Abertillery to Newport Bus Corridor**
- 2. Bus Interchange improvement at Brynmawr**
- 3. Bus Interchange improvement at Ebbw Vale**

This policy supports improvement to bus services in Blaenau Gwent. The Abertillery to Newport Bus Corridor is identified in the Regional Transport Plan for a bus priority scheme. It is intended that the corridor will be the focus of lane and junction priority measures. There are also plans to improve bus interchanges at Brynmawr and Ebbw Vale.

T5 New Roads to Facilitate Development

The following highway schemes are identified to facilitate new development:

- 1. Construction of a Peripheral Distributor Road through 'The Works'**
- 2. Online improvements between the Peripheral Distributor Road and the A465**

Whilst most development sites can be accessed directly from the existing highway network, the two strategic sites will require the highway schemes to facilitate their development. The construction of the Peripheral Distributor Road (PDR) through 'The Works' is required to enable access to 'The Works' regeneration site. Online improvements to the A4046 between the Heads of the Valleys Road and the PDR are required to alleviate the highway issues at Cemetery Road and to ensure the road can accommodate the extra traffic flow from 'The Works' and the 'Ebbw Vale Northern Corridor' Strategic Mixed Use Sites. Improvements will also take into account changes in traffic flows as a result of the dualling of the Heads of the Valleys Road.

T6 Regeneration led Highway Improvements

The following highway schemes are identified to facilitate the regeneration of the area:

- 1. Dualling of the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road (Tredegar to Brynmawr)**
- 2. Online improvements to the A4046 south of Cwm**
- 3. Online improvements to the A4048 south of Tredegar**
- 4. Online improvements to the A467 south of Abertillery**

The A465 is identified as part of the Trans European Network (TENS) and is a key strategic link in the national trunk road network connecting West Wales with the Midlands and the North of England. It also forms a major sub regional artery along the Heads of the Valleys corridor from Swansea in the west to Abergavenny in the east. The planned dualling of 40km of road is significant, as indeed is the potential impact on communities situated along and adjacent to the Heads of the Valleys corridor. There is the expectation that the improvement will generate new and sustained economic activity and investment.

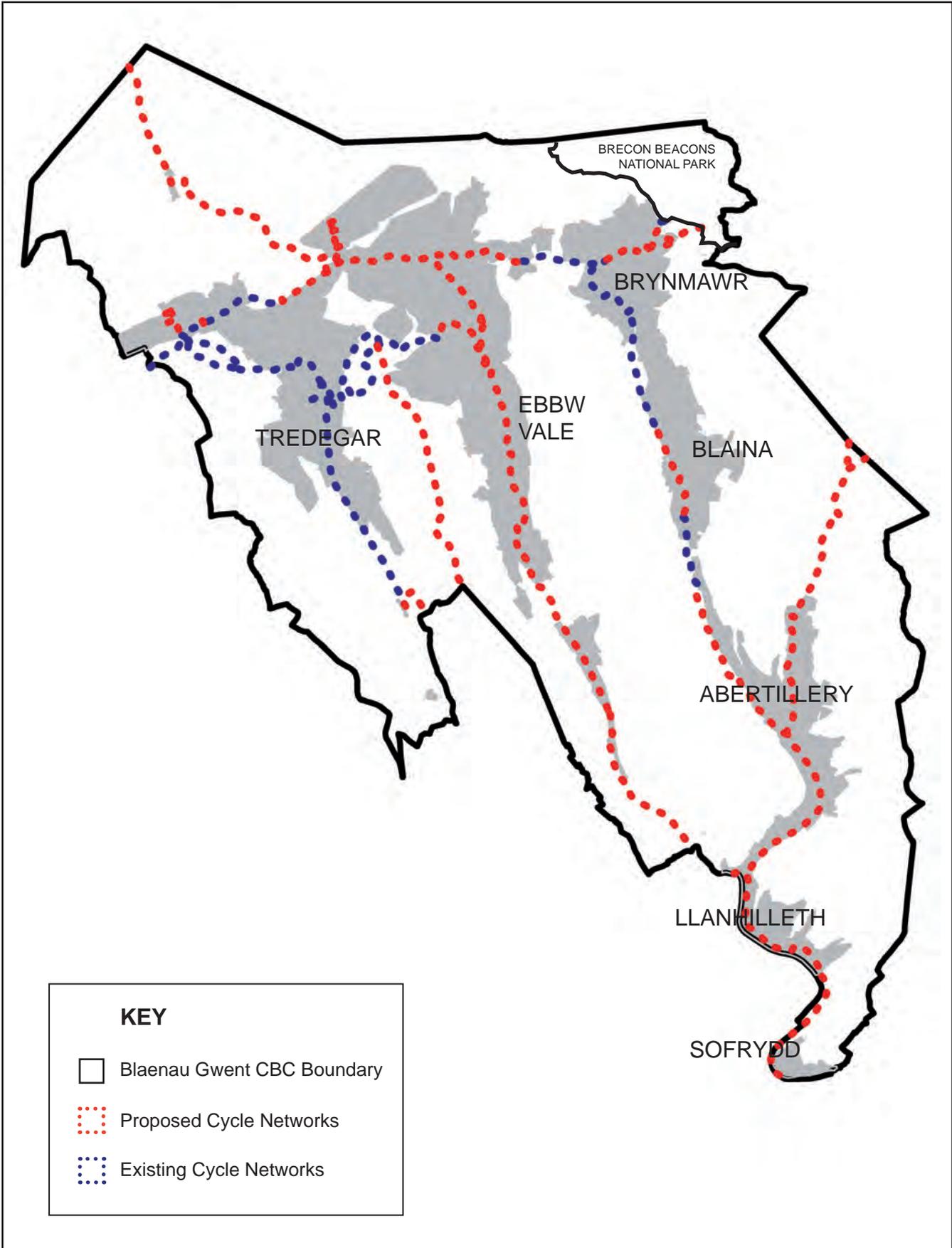
The Welsh Assembly Government plans to complete the dualling of the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road by 2020. To date, two sections have been completed, between Merthyr and Tredegar and Abergavenny and Gilwern. The next stage involves completing the stretch between Tredegar and Gilwern. This is to be undertaken in two phases, the Tredegar to Brynmawr section is expected to be completed by 2014 and work on the Brynmawr to Gilwern section is to start by 2014 (National Transport Plan, 2009).

One of the main transport problems facing the Heads of the Valleys area is the poor access to the south, especially south of Cwm. In order to facilitate regeneration, and to fully enable the creation of a network of linked hubs and links with other settlements in the region, improvements in this corridor need to be undertaken.

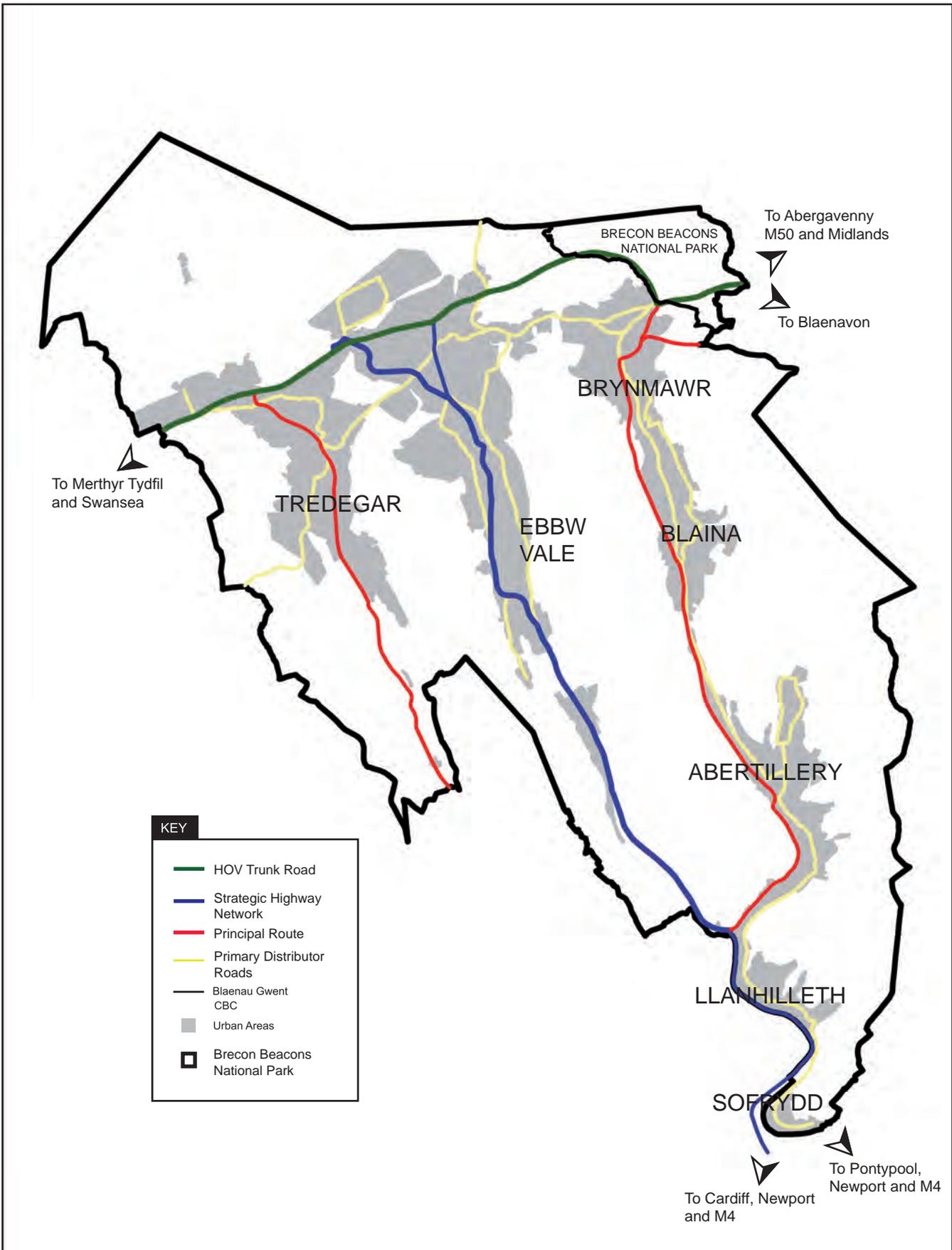
Similarly, the completion of the Tredegar by-pass has improved accessibility northbound but problems still exist on the A4048 south of Tredegar. In order to facilitate links with other settlements in the region improvements to this corridor need to be undertaken.

One of the main transport problems facing the southern strategy area is poor road access. Although road improvements have been undertaken on the A467 throughout its length, problems are encountered on the stretch south of Abertillery particularly at Warm Turn. There is a need for improvements to traffic flow and reduction in congestion. In order to facilitate regeneration, and to fully enable the creation of a network of linked hubs and links with other settlements in the region, improvements in this corridor need to be undertaken.

Date : 18/01/2010	Transport Background Paper	 Cynghor Blaenau Gwent Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Regeneration Division
Scale : 1:85000	Community Cycle Network	



Date : 18/01/2010	Transport Background Paper	 Blaenau Gwent <small>Gwynedd Borough Council</small> Regeneration Division
Scale : 1:85000	Road Hierarchy	



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