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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a mandatory requirement in the preparation of LDPs, covering the social, economic and environmental effects of the LDP. A Strategic Environmental Assessment is also a statutory requirement with the aim of improving the environmental performance of the plan and providing strategic environmental protection. SA, incorporating SEA, was fully integrated into the preparation of the adopted LDP.
- 1.2 SA monitoring is undertaken on an annual basis to check whether the LDP is contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and to identify any unforeseen adverse effects. By keeping matters under review it has been possible to identify trends and incrementally update the baseline data that informed the preparation of the LDP.
- 1.3 Appendix 1 updates the baseline data for the SASEA indicators. The updated data seeks to use the original source, where this is not possible another source is used. The table states where there is no data available.
- 1.4 The following sections seek to summarise the data in relation to socio economic data and environmental data.

## 2.0 Socio Economic Data

### Economic

- 2.1 There has been no change in position for Blaenau Gwent in terms of GVA per head. In 2003 and 2015 Blaenau Gwent had the lowest GVA per head of all local authorities in Wales, behind the Isle of Anglesey and Caerphilly.
- 2.2 In 2006, men were earning over £130 a week more than women. However, in 2016 this had dropped to a £90 difference. The figures also show that there has been an increase in total weekly earnings since 2006, an increase of over £92. However total full time weekly pay in Blaenau Gwent remains less than the Welsh average and the gap in pay between Blaenau Gwent and Wales is greater in 2016 than in 2006. In 2016 the difference in pay was £60.70, whereas in 2006 it was significantly less with a £2.50 difference.
- 2.3 The percentage of the working age population unemployed has dropped significantly since 2008, falling from 9.2% to 5.8% in 2017. Although the percentage of unemployed remains higher in Blaenau Gwent than that for Wales, the percentage change, in terms of improvement is greater in Blaenau Gwent than that for Wales. The gap between Wales and Blaenau Gwent is narrowing with only a 1.4% difference instead of 2.9% in 2008.
- 2.4 Professional occupations in the County Borough has risen from 6.8% in 2008 to 11.4% in 2016, although in Wales as a whole they account for 18.2% of occupations and is the highest sector in terms of employee jobs. Employment in Blaenau Gwent continues to be dominated around the caring, leisure and service industry and manufacturing which may be the reason for the lower income rates. The lack of opportunities may lead to out migration and commuting elsewhere to work, particularly for those residents educated to degree level or higher.
- 2.5 The proportion of working population working mainly at or from home has increased slightly from 5.7% (Census 2001) to 6.1% (Census 2011). In Wales, 11.2% work mainly at or from home which is significantly higher than Blaenau Gwent.
- 2.6 The percentage of working age people claiming Job Seekers' Allowance in Blaenau Gwent was 2.7% in August 2016 which has significantly decreased since 2009 when the percentage was above 7%. The percentage for Wales has also decreased. The gap between Wales and Blaenau Gwent has narrowed with a 1.1% difference in 2016 rather than a 3.2% difference in 2009.

- 2.7 In 2016, the number of income support claimants in Blaenau Gwent is 8,910 (20.3%) this is significantly lower than in 2005 when the number was 12,170 which equated to 27.8%. This is higher than that in Wales (14.4%) and Great Britain (11.0%). However, the gap between Blaenau Gwent and Wales has narrowed, with a 5.9% difference in 2016 compared to a 9% difference in 2005.
- 2.8 Of the total claimants in Blaenau Gwent 59% claim incapacity benefit which has decreased since 2005 (62%); 7.6% claim lone parent which has significantly declined from 2005 (31%); and 15.5% claim carers and other related benefits, this is an increase from 8% in 2005. This is a new issue for Blaenau Gwent.

### **Crime**

- 2.9 In terms of type of crime, violent crime and criminal damage and arson, although violent crime is on a decreasing trend, seems to be higher than other crime rates, possibly reflecting poor urban design and planning for safe communities.

### **Housing**

- 2.10 The average house price for Blaenau Gwent in 2006 was nearly £50,000 less than the Welsh average (£136,419). This difference has increased further as the average house price for Blaenau Gwent in 2017 was £79,642 compared to £147,184 for Wales. However, it is worth noting that average house prices have increased in Blaenau Gwent (Refer to Annual Monitoring Report 2016-17).
- 2.11 The percentage of household spaces which are unoccupied has declined from 5.7% in 2001 to 4.8% in 2011.
- 2.12 In 2001, 55% of Blaenau Gwent's housing stock consisted of terraced properties built pre1919. In 2011, although this house type remained the most significant in Blaenau Gwent at 52% there was a slight percentage decrease and a slight increase in semi-detached (27%) and detached (11%) properties.
- 2.13 The average household size has remained at 2.3 as shown in Census 2001 and 2011. This is also true of the average number of rooms per household which was 5.14 (2001) and 5.2 (2011). The average household size is similar to that of the Welsh average. However, the average number of rooms is slightly less than the Welsh average.

- 2.14 In 2017, 83.3% of housing in Blaenau Gwent is within council tax bands A and B, which is an increase of 0.96% since 2000. 0.206% of housing in Blaenau Gwent is within council tax bands G & H. This suggests that the overall size and quality of housing stock in the County Borough is relatively modest, particularly in the regional context.
- 2.15 According to the 2001 Census, a significant proportion of properties were owned outright (62.62%). This remained the same in 2011 (62.1%). There was however a significant decrease in the percentage of council housing rental from 24.34% in 2001 to 11.1% and an increase in rented households (36.8%).

### **Population**

- 2.16 An LDP objective relates to increasing the population from 68,914 (census 2011) to 70,849 (WG population projections for 2021) as a result of natural change and people being attracted to the area. The latest mid year estimate (2016) is 69,928 which, although is not increasing to the 2021 projection but is higher than that of 2012 (69,822) indicating that the population is stabilising. However, the South East of Wales and Wales as a whole has experienced more significant increases.
- 2.17 Blaenau Gwent, like the majority of places in the UK, has an overall population which is ageing. Generally, this is because less people are being born than before, and those people that are alive are living longer. The proportion of people aged 65 and over is increasing (17.9% in 2011) In 2015, 19.5% of the population were aged 65 years or over in the Gwent Region compared to 20.2% for Wales (Blaenau Gwent Well Being Assessment, 2016).
- 2.18 The 2011 Census statistics showed Blaenau Gwent's Black and Ethnic Minority population to be 2.6% of the total population and well below the Welsh average of 6.7%. In 2001 the percentage of people in Blaenau Gwent from minority ethnic groups was 1.8%, approximately 1,300 people, which shows a notable increase from 2001 to 2011. Even so, Blaenau Gwent still has one of the lowest levels of people from minority ethnic groups in England and Wales.
- 2.19 It is difficult to make direct comparisons between the 2001 and 2011 census data on the percentage of Welsh speakers given that the data collected is different. It is likely that the figure relating to either speaks reads and writes Welsh in 2011 is comparable to people aged 3+ with skills in 2001. Using these figures there have been a slight increase in people aged 3+ with skills since 2001. Blaenau Gwent has the lowest population who can speak Welsh across the Gwent region.

### Health and Well-being

- 2.20 In 2011, almost three quarters of the population felt that their health was ‘good’ or ‘very good’ (72.6%), but below that witnessed for Wales (77.7%). This data gap between Wales and Blaenau Gwent remains very similar at 5.1% in 2011 and 5.7% in 2001.
- 2.21 The proportion of people with a limiting long term illness has fallen slightly from 28.26% in 2011 to 27.2% in 2001 although the proportion remains higher than Wales (22.7%). The working age population in Blaenau Gwent (13.9%) with a limiting long term illness is also higher than Wales (10.8%). Between 2008 and 2014 long term sickness fell in Blaenau Gwent from 46.2% to 31.9%.
- 2.22 In relation to the people of working age with disabilities indicator no comparisons can be made as the source of information is different. The Annual Population Survey June 2016 shows that Blaenau Gwent has high levels of disability with a total of 31.6% of working age people being defined as disabled (economically active core or working limiting disabled) compared to 22.8% for Wales. The 2001 census records that the percentage of people of working age with disabilities in Blaenau Gwent as 21.2% and 15.2% for Wales.
- 2.23 Average male life expectancy, for babies born today, in Blaenau Gwent was 76 years (2010-14) slightly less than the Wales average of 78 years. Life expectancy for females is about four years more than males at 80 years which is also slightly less than the Wales rate of 82 years. These levels have increased for males and females from the Census 2001 data in line with Wales.
- 2.24 Deaths from circulatory disease are high in Blaenau Gwent compared to the majority of Gwent and Wales. The highest cancer mortality rate by local authority in Wales is in Blaenau Gwent. The rate is 12% higher than the Wales rate, whereas the local authority with the lowest cancer mortality rate is 16% lower than the Wales rate.
- 2.25 Rates of the majority of types of cancer in Blaenau Gwent are similar to rates in Wales. The exception is for lung cancer in women. Blaenau Gwent has a statistically higher rate of this type of cancer than Gwent and Wales. This is higher than other areas of Gwent (21% in 2014-15) and Wales (20% in 2014-15) but the rate has reduced from above 30% over the past decade.
- 2.26 The proportion of adult smokers has decreased in the last decade. In 2004 there were 31% of adult smokers in Blaenau Gwent, in 2014-15, the proportion of adult

smokers had dropped to 26% however it remains higher than in other areas of Gwent (21% 2014-15) and Wales (20% 2014-15).

- 2.27 However, in relation to obesity, the percentage of adults reported as overweight or obese in Blaenau Gwent has slightly increased from 2003-04 (59%) to 62% in 2014-15. This in part could be attributed to the proportion of people consuming five fruit or vegetables per day decreasing since 2003 from 35% to 26% in 2014-15. This follows a similar trend to Wales as there has been a 7% decrease between 2014-15 (32%) and 2003 (39%).
- 2.28 The percentage of babies born after 24 weeks with low birth weight (less than 2,500g) has fallen from 9.4% (65) in 2003 to 7.5% (58) in 2016. The percentage in Wales is on average less than Blaenau Gwent at 7.1% in 2003 and 6.7% in 2016. The gap between Blaenau Gwent and Wales has narrowed to 1.2% in 2016 compared to 2.3% in 2003.
- 2.29 The rate of teenage conceptions has fallen significantly since 2003. In Blaenau Gwent, the rate per 1,000 was 60.4, which was significantly higher than South East Wales. In 2014, the rate had fallen significantly to 26 which was only slightly higher than Wales (26).
- 2.30 There has been an increase in the provision of play areas in the County Borough. The number of static play areas has increased by 2 and the provision of multi use games areas have doubled. However there has been a slight decrease in the number of wheeled sports areas.

### **Education and Qualifications**

- 2.31 The proportion of the population with no qualifications has fallen significantly since 2003 from 30.4% to 14.8% (2016), although the proportion remains than Wales (9.6%). The gap between Wales and Blaenau Gwent has narrowed from 12.6% in 2003 to 5.2% in 2016.
- 2.32 The percentage of people aged 16-74 with at least an NVQ level 2 qualifications or equivalent has slightly increased from 57.1% in 2008 to 58.2% in 2016, although the percentage in Wales is significantly higher at 73.4%. The gap between Blaenau Gwent and Wales has widened. The percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE A\*- C or equivalent has also increased from 43% in 2000 to 50% in 2016. There is no data available to allow comparisons to be made with Wales.

2.33 Within Blaenau Gwent secondary schools, there was a range of attendance rates. The lowest school attendance was 91.2% and the highest was 93.2%. Overall attendance in Blaenau Gwent primary schools was 94.4%, with an improvement of 1.3% on the previous year. This was below the Wales average of 94.8%.



### **3.0 Environmental Data**

#### **Energy Efficiency**

- 3.1 According to the data available from DECC, the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Blaenau Gwent per head of population has seen a decline since 2006 and is the lowest in Wales. The most recent data for 2015 shows an overall decrease in total emissions; industry and commercial; and domestic sectors. The level for transport emissions has remained the same.

#### **Historic Environment**

- 3.2 The boundary of the conservation area in Tredegar (Bedwellty House and Park) has been extended to include the southern end of Tredegar town centre (The Circle and Castle Street).
- 3.3 The number of listed buildings remains at 53. In terms of the listed buildings at risk, the number has decreased from 10 to 9, as the Ebbw Vale Education Centre is no longer at risk.
- 3.4 No further designations have been made in relation to Historic Park and Gardens. The baseline data recorded 9 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, this has increased to 13.

#### **Natural Environment**

- 3.5 There has been no change in terms of SACs in the County Borough. The Local Development Plan identifies 137 SINCs and designates them under Policy ENV3. In 2015, a further 11 were designated. The LDP identifies that there are 6 Local Nature Reserves. There have been a further 5 designated since 2012.
- 3.6 The 2015 Local Biodiversity Action Plan contains Habitat Action Plans for 26 priority habitats which have been identified within Blaenau Gwent. Six Species Action Plans have been prepared for individual species such as otter or groups of species such as bats.
- 3.7 The CCW LandMap data was updated in 2013 and records 23 Aspect areas in Blaenau Gwent. The Aspect Areas are rated the same as the baseline data.

- 3.8 The quality of the rivers in Blaenau Gwent has improved. The River Sirhowy is classified as good quality, and the rivers Ebbw Fawr and Ebbw Fach as moderate quality. No major watercourses are classified as poor quality.

### **Renewable Energy**

- 3.9 As part of the Local Development Plan evidence base, a renewable energy assessment was prepared in accordance with the WG toolkit. A policy was included in the plan to provide evidence of consideration to renewable energy as part of major planning application. Monitoring indicators were also included to monitor the capacity of renewable and low zero carbon energy installed per annum.
- 3.10 The latest figures (2017 Annual Monitoring Report) show that 13 MW of renewable energy has been installed between 2013 and 2017 and 2.79 MW of low carbon energy in the same time period.
- 3.11 The average domestic gas consumption has decreased since 2003 from 21,854 kwh to 14,852 kwh.
- 3.12 The annual road fuel consumption has increased slightly between 2002 and 2012 in terms of both personal and freight use.

### **Accessibility**

- 3.13 There has been a 2 km increase in public right of way since 2007.
- 3.14 There has been an increase in the total number of vehicles owned by households in Blaenau Gwent since 2001. In particular there are now more households owning 2 cars or van than in 2001, an increase of 4.6%. The number of households without a car remains higher than Wales but has fallen from 35.1% in 2001 to 28.9% in 2011. The most significant travel to work method remains by driving a car or van.

### **Waste**

- 3.15 The only available data in terms of waste relates to household waste arisings per person (tonnes). The amount of household waste arisings has fallen from 648 kg per person tonnes in 04/05 to 453 kg in April 2017.

## 4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 As demonstrated above, the majority of SASEA indicators have improved from the baseline data proving that the Plan is moving in the right direction. There are no new sustainability issues and for most issues the gap is narrowing with Wales. However, a further reconsideration of the baseline data, along with a review of other plans, policies and programmes will be required as part of preparing a revised LDP if a full revision process is to be followed. The SA framework will also need to be reviewed to ensure that it remains appropriate for the assessment of a revised LDP.