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THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

10th September 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee will be held in Virtually via Microsoft Teams - if you would like to attend this meeting live via Microsoft Teams please contact committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk on Wednesday, 15th September, 2021 at 10.00 am.

Please note that a pre and post meeting will be held 30 minutes prior to the start and following the conclusion of the meeting for members of the committee.

Yours faithfully

Michelle Morris
Managing Director

AGENDA

Pages

1. SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION

You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required

We welcome correspondence in the medium of Welsh or English. / Croesawn ohebiaith trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.

should you wish to do so. A simultaneous translation will be provided if requested.

2. **APOLOGIES**
To receive.
3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**
To receive.
4. **SPECIAL REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** 5 - 10
To receive the minutes of the Special Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 9th June, 2021.

(Please note the minutes are submitted for points of accuracy only).
5. **REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** 11 - 20
To receive the minutes of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 30th June, 2021.

(Please note the minutes are submitted for points of accuracy only.)
6. **ACTION SHEET - 30TH JUNE 2021** 21 - 30
To receive the Action Sheet.
7. **SPECIAL REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** 31 - 36
To receive the minutes of the Special Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 15th July, 2021.

(Please note the minutes are submitted for points of accuracy only).
8. **PROGRESS UPDATE ON DECARBONISATION PLAN** 37 - 96
To consider the report of the Managing Director.
9. **REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT** 97 - 124

To consider the report of the Corporate Director
Regeneration and Community Services.

10. INVESTMENT IN MICRO-HYDRO DEVELOPMENT 125 - 146

To consider the report of the Team Manager
Regeneration Opportunities.

11. PARTNERSHIP DELIVERY APPROACH – TOWN CENTRES 147 - 156

To consider the report of the Team Manager
Regeneration Opportunities.

12. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 3RD NOVEMBER 2021 157 - 160

To consider the report.

To: Councillor J. Hill (Chair)
Councillor G. A. Davies (Vice-Chair)
Councillor M. Cross
Councillor M. Cook
Councillor G. L. Davies
Councillor P. Edwards
Councillor H. McCarthy
Councillor K. Hayden
Councillor S. Healy
Councillor W. Hodgins
Councillor J. C. Morgan
Councillor L. Parsons
Councillor G. Paulsen
Councillor K. Rowson
Councillor B. Willis

All other Members (for information)
Manager Director
Chief Officers

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: SPECIAL REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 9TH JUNE, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HILL (CHAIR)

Councillors G.A. Davies

M. Cook

M. Cross

P. Edwards

K. Hayden

S. Healy

W. Hodgins

J.C. Morgan

C. Meredith (*substituting for S. Healy*)

K. Rowson

B. Willis

AND: Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services

Head of Regeneration & Development

Service Manager Business & Regeneration

Team Manager, Connected Communities

Marketing & Communications Officer

Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

| ITEM | SUBJECT | ACTION |
|-------|--|--------|
| No. 1 | <p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p> | |
| No. 2 | <p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> | |

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| | Apologies for absence were reported for Councillor L. Parsons and the Corporate Director of Social Services. | |
| No. 3 | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declaration of interest was reported:</p> <p>Councillor G. Paulsen – Item No. 5 Community Renewal Fund (CRF)</p> | |
| No. 4 | <p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>The Committee AGREED that future meetings continue to be held at 10.00 a.m.</p> | |
| No. 5 | <p><u>COMMUNITY RENEWAL FUND (CRF)</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services.</p> <p>The Team Leader Connected Communities presented the report which provided an update on the Community Renewal Fund and associated local project assessment process. The report also outlined the proposed project shortlist that would form the Blaenau Gwent CRF application to UK Government; and recommend that the Executive formally endorse BGCBC involvement in the Regional Employability Project Proposal (CELT). The reported also provided an update in respect of the UK Levelling Up Fund and the Council's submission preparation, and further details of this bid would be subject to a further report.</p> | |

The Officer then went through the report and highlighted the key points contained therein.

A Member asked whether there would be opportunity to work with RSL's to potentially bring in investment for the Borough's housing estates.

The Officer explained that the timescale for submitting applications was challenging as they had to be submitted by 20th May, 2021. RSL's would have been provided the opportunity to put forward proposals but none were received.

In response to a further question raised by the Member, the Officer said the funding was available for pilot projects deliverable within 2021/22. The UK Government would then learn from these projects and test the different approaches on a 1 year basis.

Another Member asked whether it was possible to combine some of the projects listed in the report. The Officer said it would be up to individual partners to start those discussions, but unfortunately the tight timescales did not allow for that to happen. The Officer also confirmed that all projects were scored against the same criteria based on local strategic priorities.

A Member referred to the figure highlighted in section 2.18 of the report and asked how this would be allocated. He also referred to the CELT and enquired as to the functions of the group and the Council's representation.

He then referred to the fact that the successful projects would receive funding in two tranches, and asked there would be any funding implications for the Council in drawing down the second tranche of funding in the event of the project not delivering the anticipated outcomes.

In response the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services said the funding identified in section 2.18 of the report would be used to support development of the CRF. In relation to CELT he said this stemmed from work happening across the region and was established to

look at employability programmes. If the report was endorsed, the Council would sit on that group and ensure that discussions at a regional level are replicated locally.

The Team Leader Connected Communities confirmed that a plan would be put in place to safeguard the risk of non-delivery of a project to prevent recovery of any monies.

In response to a comment made by a Member regarding engagement with local businesses, the Officer pointed out that this was one of many funds administered by UK Government and WG over the last year in response to the Covid pandemic. She confirmed that Officers had continued to engage and support the business community, and whilst this activity had been held via Microsoft Teams due to Covid restrictions, she was confident that the support provided during the last year had been beneficial to local businesses.

A Member referred to section 5.2.3 of the report, namely staff resources, and the Corporate Director confirmed that a piece of work was being done to determine what resources were needed. He said when the initial stage was completed and targeted projects had been agreed, then discussions would take place with UK Government officials regarding the delivery arrangements for projects, and at this point the Council would have a clearer understanding of the scale of resources required.

A discussion ensued when a Member asked whether it was intended to seek Members views on projects, and the Corporate Director confirmed that when the CRF was set up, the next stage would be Member engagement around certain options for the Level Up Fund.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report which contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted, and supported Option 2, namely:-

- That the Scrutiny Committee recommend approval by the Executive Committee of the proposed project shortlist which would form the Blaenau Gwent CRF application to UK Government; and

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That the Scrutiny Committee recommend approval by the Executive, involvement in the Regional Employability Project Proposal (CELT). | |
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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 30TH JUNE, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HILL (CHAIR)

Councillors G.A. Davies
 M. Cook
 P. Edwards
 K. Hayden
 S. Healy
 W. Hodgins
 J.C. Morgan
 L. Parsons
 G. Paulsen
 K. Rowson

AND: Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
 Service Manager Business & Regeneration
 Team Manager, Regeneration Opportunities
 Marketing & Communications Officer
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

| ITEM | SUBJECT | ACTION |
|--------------|--|---------------|
| No. 1 | <p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p> | |
| No. 2 | <p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were reported for Councillor B. Willis and the Head of Regeneration & Development.</p> | |

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| <p>No. 3</p> | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p> | |
| <p>No. 4</p> | <p><u>REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the special Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 28th April, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>A Member referred p.7 of the minutes, i.e. the Officer's response to a question raised by a Member regarding the rail link improvements and the £70m loan. He said he had listened to the recording of the meeting, and reported that the Officer did not refer to the £70m in her response, but stated that 'this was separate money for each Local Authority to work on projects alongside the railway renewal'.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p> | |
| <p>No. 5</p> | <p><u>ACTION SHEET – 28TH APRIL, 2021</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the special meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 28th April, 2021 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Performance Review 2020/21 Q4</u></p> <p>A Member referred to page 8 of the minutes of the previous meeting when a Member asked who would be responsible for any shortfall in funding should passenger numbers not meet the loan repayments. He said as the Officer was unable to respond at that time it was requested that it be noted as an action point.</p> <p><u>Locations for electric vehicle charging points</u></p> <p>A Member pointed out that there were currently no locations identified for Tredegar.</p> <p>In response the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities explained that these were the original sites identified as the most affordable under the funding for the scheme.</p> | |

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| | <p>However, work was currently ongoing with City Deal for additional charging points, to include Tredegar, and also the provision of charging points at taxi ranks throughout the Borough.</p> <p>The Officer said she did not know the exact number of additional charging points at this time, but she reported there were companies willing to install them free of charge for a commercial return, and this option was also being explored. However, it was likely there would be a minimum of 2 charging points per taxi rank.</p> <p>A Member asked whether members of the public would be able to use the charging points at taxi ranks, and the Officer said this was unlikely due to safety reasons with the movement of taxis etc, and the requirements of the traffic regulation orders that would be required. The Officer also pointed out that signage was part of the programme and these would be erected prior to the charging points going live.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services said a briefing note on electric vehicle charging points would be beneficial for Members.</p> <p>A Member asked that Ward Members be consulted on the proposed locations for charging points moving forward, and the Team Leader Regeneration Opportunities confirmed that consultation would take place with Members in advance of any areas being identified.</p> <p>In relation to the Members Briefing Session, the Corporate Director reported that TFW had yet to confirm a date.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Action Sheet be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 6</p> | <p><u>PROPOSED SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the proposed Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for 2021-22.</p> | |

A Member suggested that the Aneurin Bevan Report be put back to coincide with submission of the Tredegar Town Centre Report/THI Report. He also suggested that a visit to 10 The Circle be arranged when the Covid restrictions are lifted.

Another Member said a report on the Borough's commercial units should be brought forward, in light of recent issues regarding the new lease arrangements.

A brief discussion ensued when the Corporate Director pointed out that details of arrangements between the Council and individual companies would not be included in the Annual Industrial Property Performance report. The report provided an overall position in terms of reviewing leases and the number of people who had converted to the new lease arrangements as part of the Bridging the Gap programme agreed by Council. However, a specific report on lease arrangements and what had been agreed by Council could be drafted.

A Member referred to the recent presentation to Members on the Community Renewal Fund and Shared Prosperity Fund, and requested that bids for Levelling Up Funding be reported to Scrutiny prior to submission to Central Government.

The Corporate Director reported that a decision on the bids submitted for Community Renewal Funding would hopefully be received later in July, and a report on the approved bids would be submitted to the September meeting of the Committee.

In relation to bids for Levelling Up Funding, these would be subject to separate reports to Scrutiny seeking agreement on the type of projects to be submitted.

In response to a further question, the Corporate Director explained that the deadline for submission of bids for Community Renewal Funding was the end of July, but he could not provide a specific date.

In relation to Levelling Up Funding he could not provide a deadline for the next round of bids, however, the end date

for the Fund was 2023/24. He also stressed the importance of only submitting bids that were ready to go as it was a very competitive process.

The Corporate Director said he was unable to provide any details of the Shared Prosperity Fund, but the Community Renewal Fund was a potential precursor to that Fund. However, a successful bid for CRF did not mean automatic access to Shared Prosperity Funding. He assured that Members would be informed when further information on the Shared Prosperity Funding was received.

A Member requested a report on the number of jobs that had been created/lost and the impact of the Covid pandemic on unemployment levels in Blaenau Gwent.

In response the Service Manager Business & Regeneration said this information linked with the Covid 19 Recovery report further on the agenda in terms of building mechanisms to monitor how the work of the Council was supporting the community in job creation and safeguarding of jobs.

The Member said an annual report on job figures would be helpful, and the Officer said this information could be highlighted within the regular performance reporting mechanism.

Another Member referred to the date for submission of the Blaenau Gwent Replacement LDP report, and asked whether this was feasible given to the delay in the process.

The Corporate Director said this was the timeline currently being worked to, however, due to current pressures within the Planning Service this may change. The Council had a delivery agreement with Welsh Government and Officers were working hard to meet that deadline.

In relation to previous comments around employment figures, he said the Performance Report could be used to draw out specific information, and the Covid 19 Recovery report on the agenda would be lifting some key headline data around unemployment rates and benefit claimant rates which could be used to analyse our recovery.

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| | <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the Forward Work Programme for 2021-22 be approved (Option 2).</p> | |
| <p>No. 7</p> | <p><u>COMMUNITY MUNICIPAL INVESTMENT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities.</p> <p>The Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities presented the report which sought approval to progress Community Energy Investment as a financial instrument to fund low carbon energy generation infrastructure and technology to provide energy and heat to Blaenau Gwent residents and businesses.</p> <p>The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member asked whether the Council would still be able to access EU funding, and what return people could expect on their investment.</p> <p>In response the Officer said a Member Briefing Session on European Funding would be beneficial. In terms of this funding, it was originally through Horizon 2020, and while the UK has left Europe there was agreement that the UK could continue to participate in this funding arrangement. This was also the case with Horizon European, its successor in the programme.</p> <p>In terms of the rate of return that could be expected, this was for the Council to determine. It was aimed to be below the Public Works Loan Board rate which tended to be between 2-4%. The Council would agree a rate slightly below that rate, and that would be the return given to residents.</p> <p>A Member referred to section 2.4 of the report and asked whether the bond fund could be used to provide loans.</p> <p>The Officer said the bond fund was a benefit for the Council to utilise rather than going to a bank or prudential borrowing.</p> | |

The Member then referred to section 2.5 and asked who would be responsible for approving projects.

The Officer said some Authorities had taken the approach of stating a specific project, or the Council may want to take a more generic approach, and state that money would go towards a number of projects included within our Energy Prospectus, with the assurance of a business case.

However, the risk would be with the Council to undertake those projects and have the money to repay the borrowing, so it was important not to access any money until projects were ready to proceed. The Council's normal structures could be used to govern that process.

A Member referred to the potential impact on projects should an investor decide to pull their money.

In response the Officer said bonds would normally be invested for a set period of time, generally 5 years. However, should an investor want to withdraw their money it would go back to the platform through Abundance and the bond would be re-advertised.

A brief discussion ensued when the Officer clarified points raised by Members.

A Member expressed concerns regarding the financial impact on the Authority in the event of the company failing, and asked whether the funding would be underwritten.

In response the Officer explained that the company was a platform to facilitate the investment, and the money was for the Council to invest. The Council's failure to deliver the project was the biggest risk to investors, however, this would be made clear as part of due diligence processes and discussions with our Legal Section.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the Scrutiny Committee:

- Endorse Option One as the preferred way to proceed;

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due diligence be commenced alongside the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance together with the Chief Officer Resources; • Endorse the launch of Community Municipal Bonds subject to due diligence and final sign off of the necessary agreements delegated to the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance in consultation with the Chief Officer Resources; and • That the Chief Officer for Resources be delegated to determine the date of the formal launch of the bond, bond length period and bond issue rate so long as it is below the PWLB rate. | |
| <p>No. 8</p> | <p><u>DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESS ENERGY MODEL TO ENABLE BUSINESS PARKS TO ACHIEVE NET ZERO OUTCOMES</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities.</p> <p>The Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities presented the report which provided details of the background to the project, and progress made as a demonstrator of the Welsh Government Smart Living Programme. The report also provided an overview of the newly established Whole System Business Research Innovation for Decarbonisation (WBRID) Project, and an overview of the Blaenau Gwent WBRID Competition.</p> <p>Members welcomed the report.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 9</p> | <p><u>COVID-19 RECOVERY – ECONOMY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Service Manager Business & Regeneration.</p> <p>The Service Manager Business & Regeneration presented the report which provided Members with a summary of work undertaken and proposals to support economic ‘recovery’ within Blaenau Gwent.</p> | |

The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.

A Member said he would have liked to have seen a link into current employability programmes in Blaenau Gwent, that could provide training opportunities to help businesses identify any skills gaps moving forward.

In response the Service Manager Business & Regeneration said the Council had very good relationships with a number of partners in this area, and existing networks would continue to play a key part in this work.

The Chair referred to previous comments and said it would be interesting to know how many businesses were in operation prior to the Covid pandemic and how many were still in operation.

The Officer confirmed that analysis of this data was a key part of the work currently being undertaken in terms of identifying the impact of Covid on local businesses.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be endorsed.

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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Action Sheet - Regeneration Scrutiny Committee – 30th June 2021

| Item | Action to be Taken | By Whom | Action Taken |
|-------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| 5 | <p><u>Action Sheet – 28th April 2021</u></p> <p>Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Performance Review 2020/21 Q4 - A Member referred to page 8 of the minutes of the previous meeting when a Member asked who would be responsible for any shortfall in funding should passenger numbers not meet the loan repayments, and asked that this be included as an action point.</p> <p>Electric Vehicle Charging Points – A briefing note to be provided, to include, number of additional electric vehicle charging points, access to taxi ranks, signage, etc.</p> | <p>Ellie Fry</p> <p>Amy Taylor</p> | <p>This point was covered in the July report on the WG funding for the Ebbw Vale Railway Dualling Report – Part 2</p> <p>“The document (Quadripartite Agreement) clearly sets out that WG are responsible for the provision of the loan and the financial liability for programme including overspend risks beyond the loan amount. In addition to the revenue funding to be paid to TfW that will flow through to the Council to allow the loan repayment, to enable the delivery of enhanced services when the project becomes operational.”</p> <p>This work is not part of the CCR Metro funding.</p> <p>The attached briefing note has been prepared and circulated to all Elected Members for information and feedback.</p> |
| 6 | <p><u>Proposed Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2021-22</u></p> <p>In relation to the Place Making Plans – when COVID regulations allow, Member visits to be arranged to 10 The Circle and the Medical Aid Society building.</p> | <p>Amy Taylor / Democratic Team</p> | <p>Agreed. Visit to be arranged when it is safe to do so.</p> |
| 7 | <p><u>Community Municipal Investment</u></p> <p>The transaction fee amount paid to the company to be provided.</p> | <p>Amy Taylor</p> | <p>The transaction fee paid to the company will depend upon the amount the Council seeks to raise. However, they have indicated that for £1million there would be arrangement and administration fees totalling around 0.25% = £2,500.</p> |

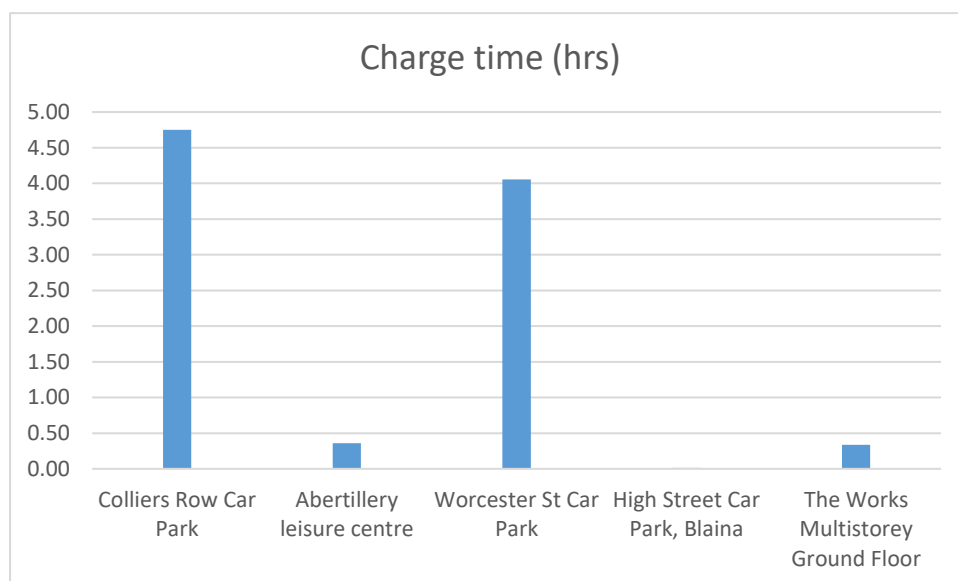
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Members briefing Note – Electric Vehicle Chargepoints

Over the last year the Council has been working with Silverstone Green Energy to provide Electric Vehicle chargepoints for public use. This has included:

- eight dual chargepoints funded through UK Government’s Office for Low Emission Vehicles on street residential grant scheme which went live the end of November
- replacement of damaged chargepoints at the Multi Storey Car Park, Lime Avenue, Ebbw Vale
- installation of two wall mounted chargepoints at the Council’s Depot to allow charging to the four new electric vans being purchased for the Council fleet.

Please see below usage data from November 2020 to July 2021 for these chargepoints:



There are also plans in place to install chargepoints at the new hybrid units and Boxworks on The Works site, Lime Avenue, Ebbw Vale within the next few months. The Council has entered into a Concession Agreement with Silverstone Green Energy to operate and maintain the chargepoints for the next 4 years with the option to extend this by 3 years in exchange for a profit share arrangement. We have agreed with Silverstone that we can add the new sites into the Concession Agreement.

Cardiff Capital Region City Deal

Following on from this work Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD) has secured funding from Welsh Government to install rapid chargepoints for taxi ranks, purchase electric taxis to be offered under a 30-day free trial for taxi drivers and install chargepoints for general public use. CCRCD went out to procurement for a supplier for the installation of rapid chargepoints for taxis earlier this year and appointed Swarco. As part of this contract they are installing 50kW rapid chargepoints at the following taxi ranks in Blaenau Gwent:

1. Carmel Street car park Abertillery. This location was chosen over the taxi rank itself due to the small size of the taxi rank, location of street furniture and pavement width.
2. Brynmawr taxi rank, Station Road Brynmawr. The charge point will be located at the rear of the taxi rank.

3. Ebbw Vale taxi rank. The charge point will be located at the rear of the taxi rank.
4. Tredgar taxi rank in Gwent Shopping Centre. The charge point will be located in the row behind the taxi rank.

CCRCD has purchased 50 electric taxis that will be available for trial across the region and are currently out for procurement for a management company to oversee this. Blaenau Gwent has taken delivery of two electric taxis which are parked at the rear of the Energy Centre.

As part of determining the sites to be included for general use by the public the Council has put forward 11 sites based on previous work undertaken and demand. These sites are:

1. Two car parks at the General Offices, Steelworks Road, Ebbw Vale



2. Council owned land opposite Rassau Industrial Estate, Ebbw Vale



3. Armoury Terrace car park, Ebbw Vale



4. Car Park opposite Blaentillery Club, Tillery Road, Cwmtillery



5. Llanhilleth Railway Station Car Park



6. Worcester Street / Somerset Street / Davies Street Car Park, Brynmawr



7. Ebbw Vale Parkway



8. Gwent Shopping Centre Car Park



9. ViTTC, Tredegar Business Park, Tredegar



10. Bryn Bach Park



11. Market Square Car park Brynmawr



We would appreciate your feedback on our site selection and any suggestions you have for new sites going forward.

Welsh Local Government Association – EV Infrastructure Grant

Within Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales, the Welsh Government (WG) has set ambitious targets for the decarbonisation of the public sector fleet. From this, the key target and ambition of current relevance requires that all new cars and light goods vehicles in the Public Sector fleet are ultra-low emission by 2025 and where practicably possible, all heavy goods vehicles are ultra-low emission by 2030.

Welsh Government has been able to award a £300,000 EV charging infrastructure grant to each Local Authority. This scheme is being administered by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and a condition of the WG grant is that each Local Authority must produce a ULEV Transition Plan and submit it to **WLGA by 22nd October 2021**.

Officers are currently looking into site selection on a wider basis than just the Council Depot due to the decision to relocate. We are considering the option of installing chargepoints at schools within the borough and working on a site appraisal to score based on set criteria in collaboration with colleagues in Education.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE
REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**SUBJECT: SPECIAL REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
- 15TH JULY, 2021**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HILL (CHAIR)

Councillors G.A. Davies
M. Cross
G.L. Davies
P. Edwards
K. Hayden
S. Healy
W. Hodgins
J.C. Morgan
L. Parsons
G. Paulsen
K. Rowson
T. Smith (*sub for B. Willis*)
S. Thomas (*sub for H. McCarthy*)

AND: Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
Head of Regeneration
Owen Ashton
Press and Communications Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

| ITEM | SUBJECT | ACTION |
|-------------|--|---------------|
| No. 1 | <p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p> | |

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| <p>No. 2</p> | <p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>The following apologies for absence were received:-</p> <p>Councillor H. McCarthy Councillor B. Willis</p> | |
| <p>No. 3</p> | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p> | |
| | <p><u>EBBW VALLEY RAILWAY</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>A Member noted that although the report had been deemed exempt some information was already in the press. The Member acknowledged the reason for the exemption, however he felt that due to the matters being considered and in the interest of the public the information should not be of an exempt nature. It was important that the Council was open and transparent with such transactions and the Member disagreed with the report being exempt.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that the original report presented to Council was exempt and could not comment on how the information was in the public domain. The report considered a commercial arrangement and contractual details held between individual parties which were confidential.</p> | |

A further concern was raised that there was no legal representative at the meeting and it was paramount when considering such matters that a legal officer be in attendance.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services spoke to the report which gave details of the loan agreement, risks identified and the contracting arrangements and the agreement of responsibilities between Welsh Government, Transport for Wales (Rail), Transport for Wales and the Council.

At this juncture the Chair invited questions from the Scrutiny Members.

A Member referred to the costings detailed in the report and the Corporate Director confirmed that any monies required to support alternative funding would be provided by Welsh Government.

The Member referred to the initial report presented to Council in March 2021 and advised that concerns had been raised in relation to the alternative funding which could fall back on Blaenau Gwent tax payers and noted that this had now been addressed. The Corporate Director advised that any alternative monies would now be met by Welsh Government.

Concerns were raised as Members had not been presented with the full analysis of passenger usage and if the revenue made from the additional trains would be sufficient to warrant the scheme. It was felt that if this scheme failed it would be a reputational risk to the Council and a Member proposed that the full analysis be presented to Members.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that there would be no risk to the Council as the scheme was being funded by Welsh Government and Transport for Wales. The Corporate Director noted that there was a national risk following COVID-19 around the resilience of public transport. The agile working arrangements taken forward by many organisations would see passengers accessing travel at different times.

The Corporate Director advised that going forward both Welsh Government and Transport for Wales were comfortable with the scheme and any risks had been taken away from the Local Authority. The Welsh Government was aware that the Ebbw Valley Rail Line had less frequency than other lines and investment was needed to bring this up to the standard of other valleys.

In response to concern raised in relation to the lack of information presented, the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that all the necessary information, to make a decision was contained in the report. In terms of passenger numbers, this data would not make a difference to the Authority as Welsh Government were content with the data and it was Welsh Government's intention to invest in public transport and address carbon footprint, therefore from an officer perspective, the Corporate Director confirmed there was no issues.

Further concerns were raised in the differing information presented from March and the lack of monies now reported for the Abertillery spur. It was felt that due to this significant change it was important that all documentation be presented to ascertain how these decisions were reached.

Another Member felt that all the relevant safeguards had been taken forward by the Authority and welcomed the improved rail service and connectivity to Newport. The Member appreciated concerns raised in relation to monies to be used for the scheme, however he was confident that no burden would be placed on Blaenau Gwent.

In relation to the Abertillery spur, the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services stated that there had been no change in the intention for Abertillery. It was hoped, as detailed in the March report that this would be delivered if the monies were available.

Members reiterated concerns that it was important for the full document be presented as issues had been raised with previous projects where not all the information had been presented to Members. A Member noted the lack of passengers on trains and felt that it would be a struggle to fill a further 4 trains and therefore the data should be presented to provide Member with these assurances.

Another Member welcomed the opportunity to improve public transport which would enhance the communities of Blaenau Gwent. The Member reiterated the officer's comments and stated that there was no risk to the Blaenau Gwent tax payers. Another Member concurred with the comments raised and noted that the monies had been guaranteed in writing by Welsh Government.

A further Member felt that this opportunity should be welcomed as it would improve public transport in and out of the Borough.

The Member agreed that the scheme improved public transport for the communities of Blaenau Gwent, however, the Member felt it was important that the evidence on how the decision was reached be available for scrutiny by Members.

Another Member noted that the scheme was welcomed by all Members and therefore there should be no issue if all documentation was presented.

The Chair referred to the options for consideration and an amendment to the options was proposed

At this juncture, Option 3 was proposed:-

The report be deferred in such a time that the full documentation could be presented to Members in order to fully scrutinise.

This alternative proposal was seconded.

A recorded vote was, therefore, requested.

In Favour of the proposed Option 3 – Councillors P. Edwards, M. Cross, K. Hayden, S. Thomas, J.C. Morgan, T. Smith

Against the proposed Option 3 – Councillors J. Hill, G.A. Davies, G.L. Davies, S. Healy, W. Hodgins, G. Paulsen, L. Parsons, K. Rowson

The vote on the proposal was not carried.

The Chair thereupon proposed Option 1 (preferred option).

This proposal was seconded.

A recorded vote was, therefore, requested.

Against Option 1 (preferred option) – Councillors P. Edwards, M. Cross, K. Hayden, S. Thomas, J.C. Morgan, T. Smith

In favour Option 1 (preferred option) – Councillors J. Hill, G.A. Davies, G.L. Davies, S. Healy, W. Hodgins, G. Paulsen, L. Parsons, K. Rowson

The vote on Option 1 (preferred option) was carried.

Councillor M. Cook was not permitted to take part in the vote as he had left the meeting prior to Option 3 being proposed.

The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report which contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted and Option 1 as detailed in the report be approved.

Agenda Item 8

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **15 September 2021**

Report Subject: **Progress update on Decarbonisation Plan**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor David Davies, Deputy Leader /
Executive Member Regeneration and Economic
Development**

Report Submitted by: **Michelle Morris, Managing Director**

| Reporting Pathway | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| 26.08.21 | 26.08.21 | 05.09.21 | | | 15.09.21 | 22.09.21 | | Decarb Programme Board 8 Sept |

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To outline progress made since the adoption of the Council's Decarbonisation Plan and the declaration of a Climate Emergency on 24 September 2020.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The [Decarbonisation Plan](#) set out how we would deliver our commitment to the ambition of the Welsh Public Sector to achieve net Zero by 2030. It outlined how we could reduce our organisational emissions across nine transitions, see Appendices A and B.
- 2.2 Since the plan was adopted a Decarbonisation Board (the Board hereafter) has been established chaired by the Managing Director consisting of a range of experienced officers from across the Council, for Terms of Reference, see Appendix C.
- 2.3 The Board agreed to carry out readiness assessments for each of the nine transitions to understand what was already being done, and to identify the key actions we need to take to progress. This process is being based on good practice from the Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN) at Leeds University. The transition areas are:
- Transport Direct
 - Transport Commissioned
 - Sequestration
 - Procurement Goods
 - Procurement Services
 - Procurement Works
 - Electricity
 - Heat
 - Waste

2.4 Making Good Progress

The Board agreed that the first readiness assessment to be examined would be 'Transport Direct' making up 8% of our gross carbon emissions. Key stakeholders from a range of service areas were involved in the process held in May and June 2021 via online workshops, bringing valuable knowledge on progress and insight on how challenges can be overcome. It is of note that staff energy and engagement in giving time to the readiness assessment was high. The initial approach has provided a very good start and something that can be used to build on developing and shaping the process using feedback and learning as we move forward.

2.5 The products from these workshops have been carefully considered by the Board and CLT in July 2021 with a number of high level actions agreed. These are outlined below with organisational leads identified:

2.5.1 Fleet

- Develop a fleet plan and resource its implementation by building costs into Corporate Medium Term Financial Plan. **(Lead: Community Services)**
- Develop and resource a low carbon depot. **(Lead: Community Services)**
- Ensure procurement arrangements are in place to support the plan. This needs to recognise the inter-dependant work on the new depot and collaborative opportunities at a regional and national level. **(Lead: Commercial Services)**
- Replace small fleet ULEV in phased way in line with available space, grid capacity and infrastructure. **(Lead: Community Services)**

2.5.2 Travel

- Embed the new operating model and assess its impact in terms of decarbonisation. **(Lead: Commercial Services)**
- Consider how to further reduce commute / travel impact in wider areas of the business e.g. Schools and Social Services. **(Lead: Commercial Services)**
- Investigate and identify staff demand to travel more actively and consider business case to meet this demand e.g. showers at main sites, secure shower facilities, safe storage and e-charging for cycles. **(Lead: Community Services – Active Travel)**
- Develop a plan for non-depot charging infrastructure for fleet and personal ULEV vehicles at key staff sites in the new operating model. **(Lead: Regeneration and Development)**
- Explore how staff can be encouraged to switch to ULEV. **(Lead: Commercial Services)**

The paper informing CLT decision making is attached at Appendix D.

2.6 In terms of next steps, further readiness assessments on the remaining transitions will follow. Work is already underway during August 2021 in undertaking assessments on transitions related to buildings: Electricity, Heating and Procurement (Works). These collectively make up 22% of our gross carbon emissions. Once again engagement and energy levels from the staff involved has been high with a real commitment to share their knowledge

and insight in informing corporate decision making. It is equally important to note however, that challenges are being identified and in terms of expectations the staff involved in identifying these rightly expect their observations to be given carefully consideration.

- 2.7 It is anticipated that all of the transitions will have been subject to a readiness assessment with high level actions identified for each during this financial year 21/22. Progress on agreed actions will be monitored via the Council's existing business planning process on an ongoing basis with updates provided by the identified leads on a quarterly basis.
- 2.8 **Welsh Government Net Zero Reporting Guidance**
In May 2021 the Welsh Government produced its guidance on its expectation in terms of content and reporting requirements for Net Zero Reporting for Local Authorities in Wales.
- 2.9 The Council is well placed to respond to this requirement and has been proactive in using the best advice and guidance available to develop accurate calculations of its carbon footprints for 2018/19 and 2019/20 which were instrumental in shaping an evidence based approach to our [Decarbonisation Plan](#). Furthermore, Officers representing the Council have provided insight into the calculations at a number of regional events during 2019 and 2020 having been identified as good practice by peer organisations such as Natural Resources Wales.
- 2.10 As a consequence of this, the Council is in a strong position to be able to respond to the Welsh Government reporting expectation. The Board in the July meeting agreed to set up a sub group of relevant officers to ensure work is undertaken to consider the minor recalculations required for our 2019/20 carbon footprint in-line with the guidance (now confirmed as the “base line” year), and to make arrangements for calculation for our 20/21 carbon footprint (and subsequent years which will follow).
- 2.11 The deadline set for this work (19/20 and 20/21) is 31 October 2021. On completion we will then need to calculate our 21/22 footprint by the end of June 2022 (and for every subsequent year). This updated position will be reported to Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.12 **National Policy Context**
The Council through its representation on the WLGA Decarbonisation Strategy Panel is kept up to date on emerging policy frameworks from Welsh Government. These include a number of proposed Local Government decarbonisation commitments which will form the Local Government contribution to the Public Sector Chapter of the Welsh Governments second delivery plan Net Zero Wales (NZW) 2021-2025 which is due to be published in October 2021. It is of note the proposed actions are being developed from the Decarbonisation Strategy Panel deep dives. It is worthy to note that insight gleaned from these deep dives has also being built into the readiness assessments being considered by the Board and CLT, which should place us in a stronger position by ensuring we are focussing our efforts on those things that will accelerate decarbonisation.

- 2.13 Members will be aware that the UK is hosting the 26th Climate Change Conference in Glasgow from 31 October 2021. COP 26, short for Conference of Parties, has published a number of goals for this summit and these and other information on what is planned can be found on its website: www.ukcop26.org
- 2.14 **Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly**
The Blaenau Gwent Climate Change Citizens Assembly was the very first of its kind in Wales. In March 2021, it brought together residents from the Blaenau Gwent area to consider the question: *'What should we do in Blaenau Gwent to tackle the climate crisis in a way that is fair and improves living standards for everyone?'*
- 2.15 44 participants from the area attended the Assembly meeting for a total of 23 hours to hear evidence from over 20 different experts, discuss the issues, and produce recommendations for what local public service organisations, communities and individuals could do to address the climate crisis and improve lives for people in Blaenau Gwent.
- 2.17 Following deliberation, the assembly members made a number of recommendations which are provided at Appendix E
- 2.18 An "all members" briefing session on the Climate Assembly was held earlier this year and a commitment was given to publish a Council Response to the findings and this work is underway and will be reported to Scrutiny Committee in due course.
- 2.19 The Council is also taking a lead role in developing the response provided to the Climate Assembly on behalf of the Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board and this work is also underway and will be completed this Autumn.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 Option One
That the Committee considers and scrutinises the progress made and supports the report to be presented to Executive Committee.
- Option Two
That the Committee considers the progress made and provides specific comments to be presented to Executive Committee.
4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 4.1 Welsh Government published a delivery plan 'Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales' that calls for public sector leadership, including the ambition for the Welsh public sector to be carbon neutral by 2030. In September 2020, Council has approved an evidence based Decarbonisation Plan for the organisation.
- 4.2 The Decarbonisation Plan is an important element of the Council providing public leadership on climate change. The long-term implications of climate change mean that is also central to the PSB's responsibilities under the Well-being of Future Generations Act. In particular, that in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

At this moment in time the Council has taken a business as usual approach to resourcing the Decarbonisation Plan. That said, as each transition is progressed and high level action agreed, costs will be identified to make this work happen and will, moving forward, form separate reports from business leads for consideration of any investment required. It is anticipated that investment decisions will need to be taken by the Council, Welsh Government and wider partners to enable local action.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Having declared a climate emergency, reputational damage is a risk if we do not respond to the challenges facing us as we implement our agreed Decarbonisation Plan. The systematic way in which we are approaching the transition work should enable us to arrive at well informed proposals on the actions we need to take to move towards Net Zero. These actions will though need to be fully integrated into our business planning processes and closely monitored to ensure progress is maintained.

5.3 ***Legal***

The legislative context around climate change is evolving with both UK and Welsh Government announcing new, more ambitious emissions reductions targets.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

The full human resources implications in implementing the plan are not yet fully known. These will become clearer as leads take forward actions that emerge from the readiness assessments. These might include the need for officers with specialist skills and knowledge to deliver key elements. It is also highly likely that staff engagement will be a key enabler in what is really a programme of transformational change.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

See supporting appendices:

Appendix A: All Transitions Infographic from Decarbonisation Plan

Appendix B: BGCBC Carbon Footprint by Transition Breakdown

Appendix C Decarbonisation Board Terms of Reference

Appendix D: Transport Direct Summary Paper and Data Appendices

Appendix E: Climate Assembly Report

<https://cynnalcyrmru.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Blaenau-Gwent-Climate-Assembly-Report-ENG.pdf>

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The Decarbonisation Plan helps to reduce the risks from climate change to service delivery, as well as identifying opportunities to develop a more resilient council for the public.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The development of the readiness assessments has at its core the involvement of key stakeholders from the relevant service areas. The Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly built on our existing public engagement with environmental issues, including recycling, nature areas and eco councils in schools.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The Decarbonisation Plan and the readiness assessment approach fully recognises the long term nature of some of the high level actions that will emerge from this process.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Addressing increasing revenue costs from rising energy prices and a reliance on fossil fuels. It is important that decarbonisation and whole life cycle costs (both financial and carbon) are considered in all capital spending decisions, so that the Council is not locked into new carbon intensive infrastructure with high long-term running costs.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working.***

We are working with partners on climate change in Blaenau Gwent through the PSB Climate Mitigation Steering Group and Well-being Plan and at the regional level through Climate Ready Gwent. Work on regional projects is already underway, where public bodies in Gwent face similar challenges and can pool resources, such as EV charging and Fleet Review. Procurement is a major element of our carbon impact and many of our suppliers also supply other local public sector organisations, so collaboration will be key to engaging them with cutting their carbon emissions.

More immediately we are currently working with Aneurin Leisure Trust to identify those emissions we will need to include within carbon footprint in line with recent Welsh Government Guidance.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

Integration remains a key element of the Decarbonisation Plan and our plans in tracking agreed actions through service area business plans demonstrates this.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

The Decarbonisation Plan is central to the Council's contribution to the Welsh Government ambition of a carbon neutral public sector by 2030.

6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

Not required as this is a progress report and does not relate to strategic decisions.

6.9b. ***Equality Impact Assessment***

An EQIA was carried out for the Decarbonisation Plan and separate EQIA's will be carried out for major decarbonisation actions by relevant business leads as part of usual reporting arrangements.

7. ***Monitoring Arrangements***

7.1 The Board will oversee progress against the transitions, and reporting accordingly through the Managing Director to CLT.

Key actions agreed by the Board will be built into the service area business plans. This will ensure Decarbonisation actions are integrated into the Council usual performance management arrangements. This has already been carried out for Transport Direct action noted above.

Furthermore, progress updates will be made through the forward work programmes of the Regeneration Scrutiny and Executive Committees.

The Council will report appropriately to Welsh Government in-line with their Net Zero Reporting arrangements.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

Appendix A: All Transitions Infographic from Decarbonisation Plan

Appendix B: BGCBC Carbon Footprint by Transition Breakdown

Appendix C Decarbonisation Board Terms of Reference

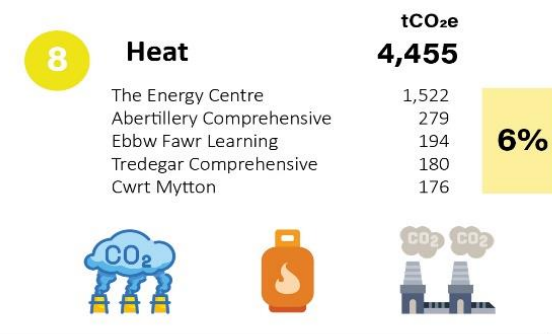
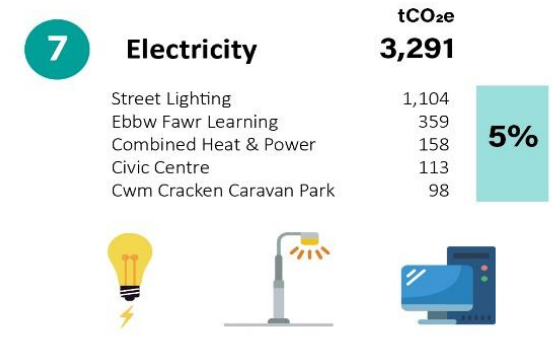
Appendix D: Transport Direct Summary Paper and Data Appendices

Appendix E: Climate Assembly Report

<https://cynnalcyrmru.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Blaenau-Gwent-Climate-Assembly-Report-ENG.pdf>

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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council: Transitions Summary 2019/20



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Appendix B: BGCBC Carbon Footprint by Transition Breakdown

| Transitions Breakdown | 16-17 | 17-18 | 18-19 | 19-20 |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Transition 1 - Transport Direct | | | | |
| Fleet Fuel Use | 1,057 | 1,105 | 1,039 | 987 |
| Employee Commute | | | 2,200 | 2,005 |
| Employee Business Travel | | | 294 | 279 |
| Vehicle Expenditure | | | 2,697 | 2,329 |
| Transition 1 Total | | | 6,230 | 5,600 |
| Transition 2 - Transport Comissioned | | | | |
| Onward Waste | | | 215 | 212 |
| Home to School Transport | | | 164 | 162 |
| Bus Service Subsidy | | | 105 | |
| Transition 2 Total | | | 484 | 374 |
| Transition 3 - Sequestration | | | | |
| Trees - Local Nature Reserves | | | -763 | -763 |
| Transition 3 Total | | | -763 | -763 |
| Transition 4 - Procurement Goods | | | | |
| IT & Office Machinery | | | 1,317 | 2,430 |
| Food and Drink | | | 1,276 | 1,335 |
| Equipment and Furniture | | | 945 | 1,000 |
| Machinery | | | 465 | 554 |
| Paper and Printing | | | 220 | 188 |
| Water Supply | | | 128 | 140 |
| Glass and Metal Products | | | 57 | 28 |
| Soap and Cleaning Materials | | | 40 | 39 |
| Clothing | | | 4 | 7 |
| Transition 4 Total | | | 4,452 | 5,721 |
| Transition 5 - Procurement Services | | | | |
| Social Care and Health | | | 12,546 | 13,161 |
| Education | | | 11,983 | 13,064 |
| Pensions/Investments | | | 8,100 | 6,018 |
| Public Administration | | | 4,530 | 4,653 |
| Legal and Consultancy Services | | | 2,505 | 2,331 |
| Computer Services | | | 309 | 289 |
| Post and Telecommunications | | | 261 | 276 |
| Miscellaneous | | | 287 | 201 |
| Transition 5 Total | | | 40,521 | 39,993 |
| Transition 6 - Procurement Works | | | | |
| Construction and Maintenance | | | 6,816 | 7,236 |
| Transition 6 Total | | | 6,816 | 7,236 |
| Transition 7 - Electricity | | | | |
| Street Lighting | 1,720 | 1,517 | 1,101 | 1,104 |
| Metered | 3,472 | 2,657 | 2,011 | 1,944 |
| Energy Centre | 174 | 329 | 247 | 243 |
| Transition 7 Total | 5,366 | 4,503 | 3,359 | 3,291 |
| Transition 8 - Heating | | | | |
| Heating | 3,974 | 4,463 | 4,423 | 4,455 |
| Transition 8 Total | 3,974 | 4,463 | 4,423 | 4,455 |
| Transition 9 - Waste | | | | |
| Recycled/Composted | -9,527 | -10,216 | -11,475 | -11,828 |
| Incinerated | 5,450 | 5,369 | 4,053 | 3,611 |
| Landfill | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.3 | 0.4 |
| Transition 9 Total | -4,077 | -4,847 | -7,422 | -8,216 |

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Appendix C: Decarbonisation Board Terms of Reference

Purpose

To oversee the implementation of the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Decarbonisation Plan.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities will include:

- Coordination
- Performance management
- Communication
- Delivery

Coordination

Board members will use their leadership positions to help direct and support their teams in the development of delivery projects aligned to the Decarbonisation Transition

This will include:

- supporting the development and completion of readiness assessments for each of the transitions and developing initiatives to respond to any development areas identified
- prioritising those projects and activities that will have the greatest beneficial impact on decarbonisation for BGCBC
- agreeing what existing and new initiatives that contribute to the BGCBC Decarbonisation Plan will be monitored by the Board e.g. assessing the contribution of existing programmes of work to the Net Zero Target
- ensuring complimentary programmes of work e.g. Active Travel and BGCBC work in supporting the Gwent Travel Charter are aligned to avoid confusion and or duplication of effort
- ensuring and supporting the development of robust programme management and governance arrangements are in place for the implementation of the plan
- ensuring appropriate systems are in place to achieve improvements and that staff and teams across the Council work effectively together
- ensuring all policy and service reviews align to the Net Zero Ambition. This will include the identification of contradictions and the development of mitigation plans to align them at a future date
- considering the impact of existing collaborative programmes of work and how they impact on / align with the Council's Decarbonisation Plan

Performance Management

Board members will:

- ensure transitional delivery plans are clear with measurable performance targets
- support the development of a performance dashboard to track progress towards Net Zero
- consider risks and barriers to progress and support cross organisational problem solving
- support the development and consider the findings of readiness assessments for work plans in transitions. This might include the need for capacity building for particular specialist skills
- monitor the delivery and progress of the Board's agreed programmes of work and ensure the reporting of progress as required e.g. by Welsh Government
- agree how Scrutiny is updated on progress and commit their teams to providing any requested reports as required by the Board in a timely fashion

Communication & Engagement

Board members will actively contribute to the development of a communications and engagement plan / strategy that supports the implementation of the Decarbonisation Plan.

Membership

Membership of the Decarbonisation Programme Board will be determined by CLT.

Meetings

Meetings will take place in the first instance on a bi monthly basis.

Decisions will be agreed by consensus. Where consensus cannot be reached a decision will be made on the basis of the views of the majority of those members.

Support Arrangements

Administrative support, action notes (not minutes), agendas and meeting appointments to be provided by Governance and Partnerships.

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Appendix D: Transport Direct Summary Paper and Data Appendices

From: Paul Symes, Daniel Wheelock Policy & Partnerships

To: Corporate Leadership Team

Date: 8 July 2021

Subject: CLT “check and challenge” Transition 1 Transport Direct,

BGCBC Decarbonisation Plan

1.Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to update CLT on the progress on the readiness assessment work relating to the Transport Direct transition overseen by the Decarbonisation Board and to provide CLT with a “check and challenge” opportunity on the proposed high level actions agreed by the Board at its meeting on 1 July 2021.

2.The Assessment Process

The readiness assessment on Transport Direct was collaboratively produced in accordance with a methodology agreed by the Decarbonisation Board. Its aim is to identify the main steps BGCBC needs to take to achieve Net Zero in this transition and how ready the organisation is to take these actions. Transport Direct is one of nine transitions identified in our Decarbonisation Plan 2020-2030 and makes up 8% of our gross carbon emissions.

Transport Direct includes all emissions associated with our fleet (energy use and manufacture), and all energy use from other journeys undertaken by BGCBC staff in their own vehicles, both as part of their job role and travelling to work. It does not include travel by other organisations delivering services on our behalf, travel associated with deliveries to or from us, or transport services we commission others to provide on our behalf, e.g. buses.

The below schematic shows the relative carbon emissions produced by each transition (the other two transitions, Transition 3 Sequestration and Transition 9 Waste produce negative emissions).



Further assessments on the remaining transitions will follow. Planning is already underway to undertake assessments on transitions related to buildings: Electricity, Heating and Procurement (Works). These collectively make up approximately 22% of our gross carbon emissions. Subject to availability of stakeholders, it is hoped we will be able to report the findings of this work in September 2021.

3. Involvement

Key stakeholders from a range of Directorates were requested to be involved in the creation of this readiness assessment through online workshops facilitated by the Policy and Partnership Team. Without their involvement this assessment would not have been possible and they have brought valuable knowledge on what is currently happening and planned and important insight into how certain challenges might be overcome.

4. Findings

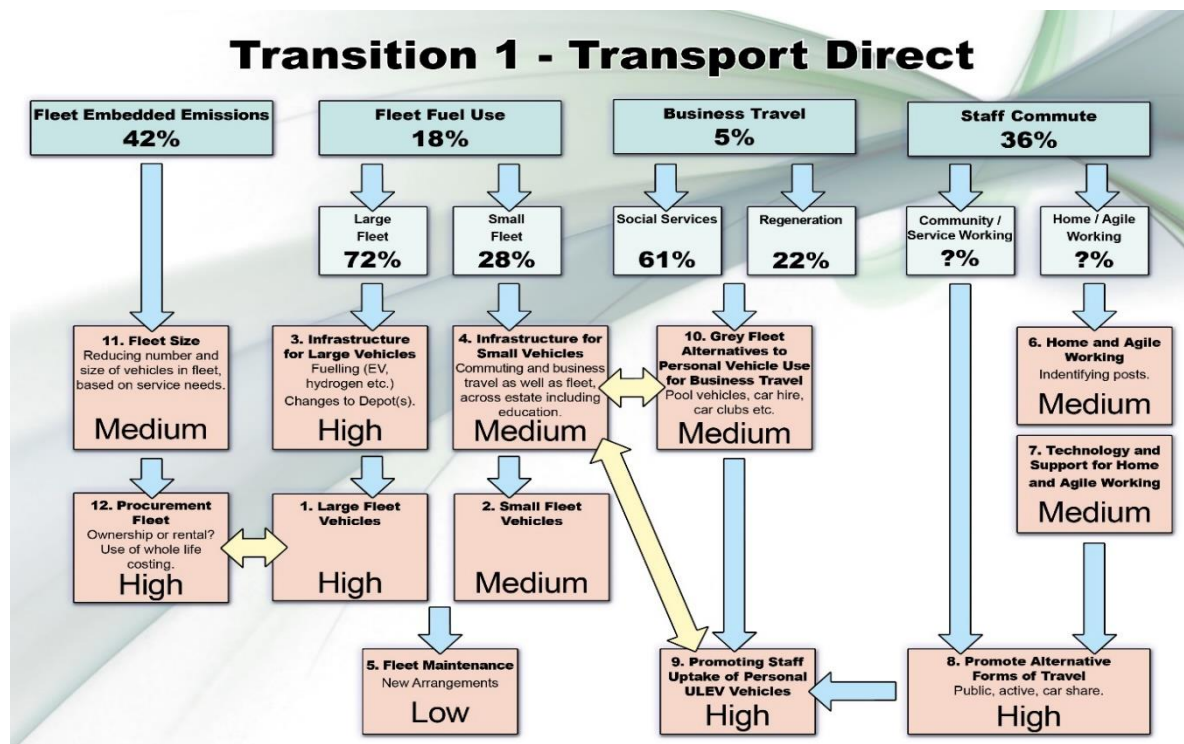
Participants in the workshops were provided with data about the main emissions sources within the Transport Direct transition (See Appendix 1). The assessment identified 12 key long-term transition actions that we will need to take to reach Net Zero. The difficulty level of each of these actions was assessed as one of the three following difficulty levels:

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Low Difficulty | Actions that are technically feasible and could be undertaken using existing, or limited additional, resources. |
| Medium Difficulty | Actions that are technically feasible but will require significant additional resources. |
| High Difficulty | Actions where best alternative is not yet known and/or not yet technically possible. |

These difficulty levels were based on discussions of our organisational readiness across five categories: (i) technical, (ii) policy, (iii) financial, (iv) workforce and (v) delivery readiness. (See Appendix 2 for full details).

The diagram below summarises the findings of the Readiness Assessment. The blue boxes on the top line show the proportion of emissions that come from each of the four main emission sources in the transition. For most of these emission sources the next line shows a secondary breakdown of where these emissions come from. For example, 5% of the emissions in the transition come from business travel, of those business travel emissions 61% come from travel by social services staff. (The break down for staff commute should be available shortly)

The 12 key transition actions that we will need to take to achieve Net Zero are in the pink boxes, which also include the difficulty level identified for each action. The blue arrows indicate which emissions source the action addresses and the order in which the actions reduce these emissions. Yellow arrows show interrelationships between actions. Continuing the previous example, the first action to reduce emissions from business travel is grey fleet alternatives to the use of personal vehicles, where this is not a suitable solution, then promoting staff uptake of personal ULEV vehicles is the next action. Both of these actions will also rely on charging infrastructure for small vehicles being provided.



These actions provide a long-term view of what we need to do to reach Net Zero, the readiness assessment workshops also considered what actions we could take now to continue and accelerate this transition. The next section details these actions.

5. Refined high level actions

These recommended “high level actions” have been drawn from detailed work initiated and considered by the Board. Further more detailed information on this work is available from the policy and performance team and will be of value to leads expected to develop the detailed work plans that will sit under the below high level actions.

5.1 Fleet

- Develop a fleet plan and resource its implementation by building costs into Corporate Medium Term Financial Plan. (Lead: Community Services)
- Develop and resource a low carbon depot. (Lead: Community Services)
- Ensure procurement arrangements are in place to support the plan. This needs to recognise the inter-dependant work on the new depot and collaborative opportunities at a regional and national level. (Lead: Commercial Services)
- Replace small fleet ULEV in phased way in line with available space, grid capacity and infrastructure. (Lead: Community Services)

5.2 Travel

- Embed the new operating model and assess its impact in terms of decarbonisation. (Lead: Commercial Services)
- Consider how to further reduce commute / travel impact in wider areas of the business e.g. Schools and Social Services. (Lead: Commercial Services)
- Investigate and identify staff demand to travel more actively and consider business case to meet this demand e.g. showers at main sites, secure shower facilities, safe storage and e-charging for cycles. (Lead: Community Services – Active Travel)
- Develop a plan for non-depot charging infrastructure for fleet and personal ULEV vehicles at key staff sites in the new operating model. (Lead: Regeneration)
- Explore how staff can be encouraged to switch to ULEV. (Lead: Commercial Services)

6. Recommendations

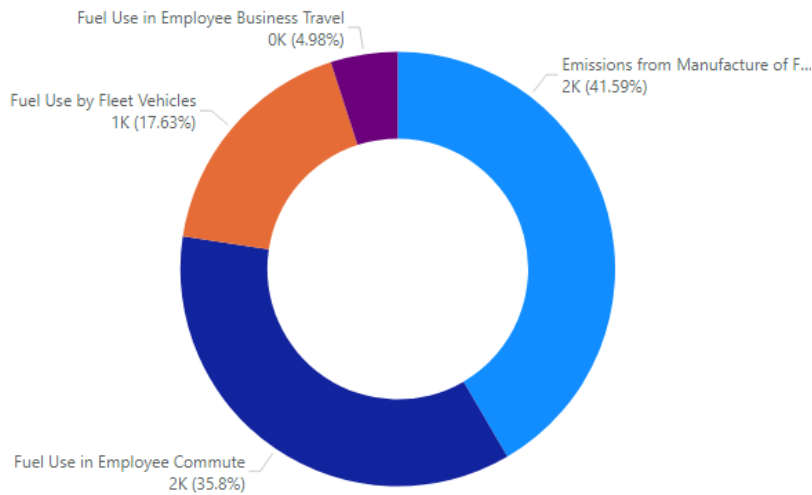
1. Consider Check/Challenge the high level actions;
2. Confirm Lead Services and ensure actions are embedded into Business Plans and work programmes;

Appendix 1: Transition 1 – Transport Direct Data

There are four main sources of emissions in this transition identified in the plan:

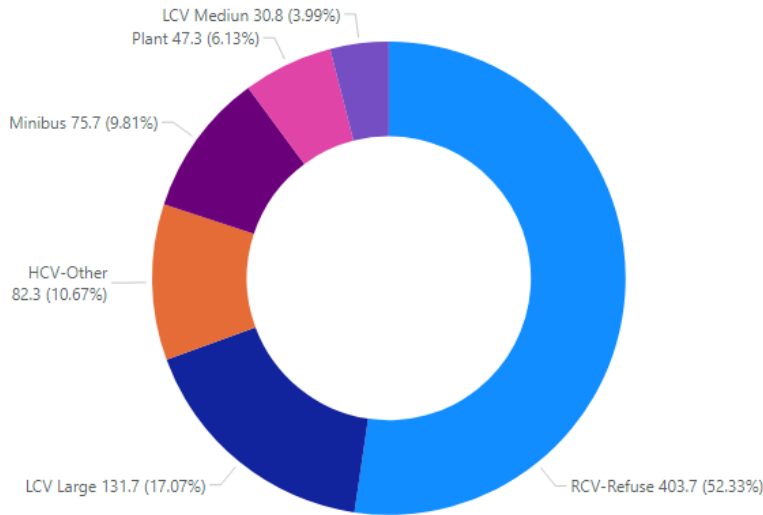
| Transitions Breakdown | 16-17 | 17-18 | 18-19 | 19-20 |
|---|-------|-------|--------------|--------------|
| Transition 1 - Transport Direct | | | | |
| 1. Fuel Use by Fleet Vehicles | 1,057 | 1,105 | 1,039 | 987 |
| 2. Fuel Use in Employee Commute | | | 2,200 | 2,005 |
| 3. Fuel Use in Employee Business Travel | | | 294 | 279 |
| 4. Emissions from Manufacture of Fleet Vehicles | | | 2,697 | 2,329 |
| Transition 1 Total | | | 6,230 | 5,600 |

19-20 by Transition 1 - Transport Direct



1. Fuel Use by Fleet Vehicles

Refuse vehicles make up over half of fleet fuel emissions, and large fleet vehicles contribute 72% of these emissions.



| Fleet | Fleet Size | Annual Mileage | CO ₂ e footprint (tonnes) | Total energy kWh (gross) |
|--------------|--------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| RCV – Refuse | 26 | 219,809 | 403.7 | 1,630,100 |
| HCV – Other | 15 | 63,617 | 82.3 | 332,200 |
| Minibus | 12 | 105,300 | 75.7 | 305,800 |
| LCV Large | 38 | 194,381 | 131.7 | 531,900 |
| LCV Medium | 12 | 77,198 | 30.8 | 124,400 |
| Plant | 5 | 27,442 | 47.3 | 191,100 |
| Grey Fleet | 959 | 1,202,402 | 319.1 | 1,324,600 |
| Total | 1,067 | 1,890,148 | 1,091 | 4,440,100 |

2. Fuel Use in Employee Commute

Nearly half of commuting mileage is associated with travel to education buildings, the potential for home working for education staff may well be lower.

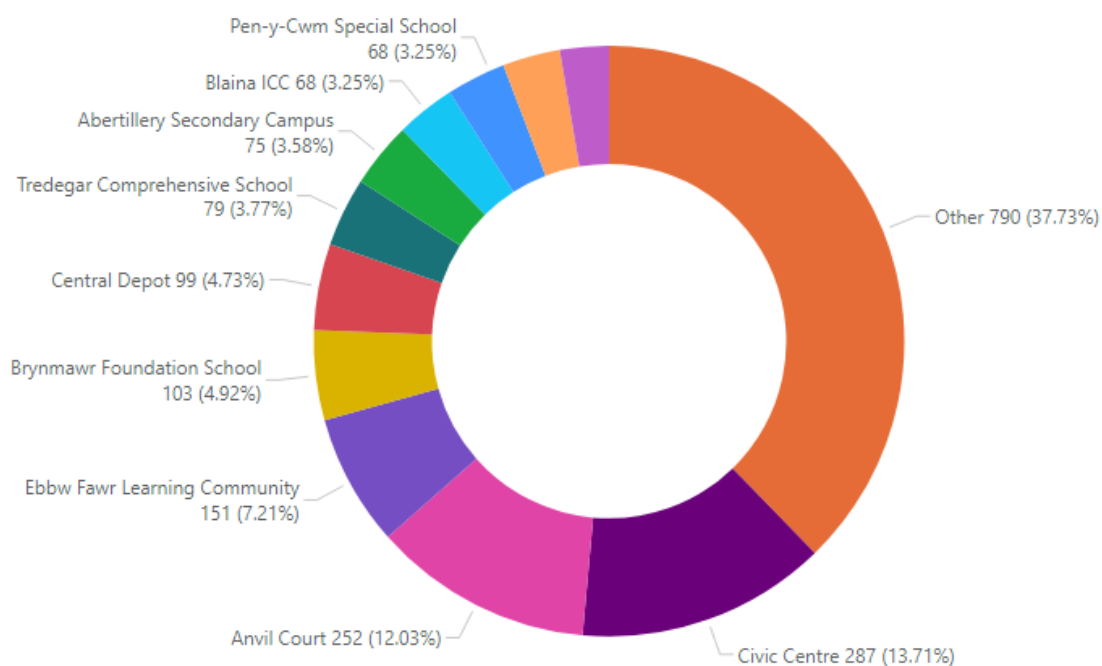
| Work Base (2019/20) | Estimate distance travelled per year - round trip to work miles | Yearly Carbon Footprint - metric tons of CO ₂ e |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Non Educational | 4,631,868 | 1,050 |
| Educational | 4,605,510 | 1,044 |

Travel to 11 work bases accounted for 62% of all commuting miles pre-Covid. These buildings may be priorities for EV and other transport infrastructure improvements. Closing the Civic Centre will have a large impact on these calculations. With this closure four of the top six commuting locations are secondary schools.

| Work Base (2019/20) | Estimate distance travelled per year - round trip to work miles | Yearly Carbon Footprint - metric tons of CO ₂ e |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Civic Centre | 1,263,564 | 287 |
| Anvil Court | 1,110,802 | 252 |

| Work Base (2019/20) | Estimate distance travelled per year - round trip to work miles | Yearly Carbon Footprint - metric tons of CO2e |
|--|---|---|
| Ebbw Fawr Learning Community | 665,929 | 151 |
| Brynmawr Foundation School | 452,088 | 103 |
| Central Depot | 435,792 | 99 |
| Tredegarr Comprehensive School | 348,907 | 79 |
| Abertillery Secondary Campus | 328,720 | 75 |
| Pen-y-Cwm Special School | 301,781 | 68 |
| Blaina ICC | 299,632 | 68 |
| The River Centre 3-16 Learning Community | 291,195 | 66 |
| Ebbw Vale Family Resource Centre | 247,642 | 56 |

Yearly Carbon Footprint - metric tons of CO2e by Work Base (2019/20)



3. Fuel Use in Employee Business Travel

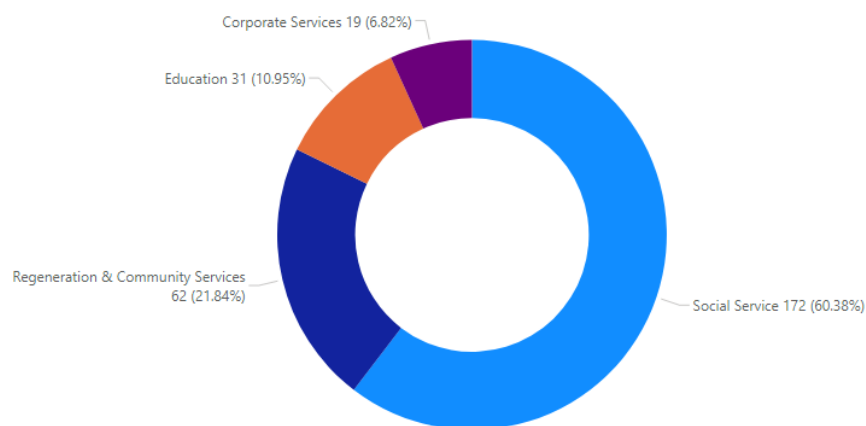


Table 6-1: Departmental grey fleet mileage claims

| Department | Mileage | % | Cost |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|-------|-----------------|
| Social Services | 725,974 | 60.4% | £326,688 |
| Regeneration & Community Services | 262,571 | 21.8% | £117,568 |
| Education | 131,714 | 11.0% | £59,271 |
| Corporate Services | 82,012 | 6.8% | £36,905 |
| Unknown | 131 | 0.0% | £59 |
| Total | 1,202,402 | | £540,492 |

As is often the case in local authorities the department that is responsible for most of the mileage claimed is Social Services.

The three largest work bases account for 55% of all business miles claimed. These figures will also inform calculation of EV infrastructure demand. Again the closure of the Civic Centre will have a significant effect.

Table 6-3: Mileage at the top three sites by department (mileage in thousands)

| Location | Social Services | Regeneration & Community Service | Education | Corporate Services | Site total |
|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Anvil Court | 266.2 | | 25.2 | 15.8 | 307.2 |
| Civic Centre | | 204.9 | | 50.7 | 255.6 |
| EVFRC | 104.9 | | | | 104.9 |
| Department Total | 371.1 | 204.9 | 25.27 | 66.5 | 667.7 |






4. Emissions from Manufacture of Fleet Vehicles

These figures are calculated on the basis of annual spend on vehicle purchase and hire. No further breakdown of these figures is currently available. In addition, information about the embodied emissions of specific types of vehicle is not widely available at the moment, so these figures have a wider margin for error than the other emissions sources. We also have less control over these types of procurement emissions.

Note on data. The data used in this section is drawn from a number of different sources and is for several recent years. For this reason, not all figures across different graphs match. It is the best available data, and is sufficient for assessing the relative importance of different elements of the transition.

Appendix 2 Transition 1 – Transport Direct Readiness

Readiness Categories

| | |
|--|--|
|  <p>Technical Readiness</p> | <p>Are the technologies/behaviours needed to reduce carbon emissions/energy use available and ready to deploy now?</p> |
|  <p>Policy Readiness</p> | <p>Are the policies/plans needed to support delivery in place now? Both within Blaenau Gwent Council and in the wider regional and national policy context?</p> |
|  <p>Financial Readiness</p> | <p>Are the funds available, are there investable options with business models ready to be deployed? How do these fit with existing budgets and financial processes?</p> |
|  <p>Workforce Readiness</p> | <p>Do we have the support and buy-in of the workforce? Will they require support or skills development?</p> |
|  <p>Delivery Readiness</p> | <p>Do we have the capacity, organisational structure and supply chains we need to deliver? How well do we understand where our emissions come from and can we measure reductions? Will changes be needed in how community uses our services?</p> |

Assessment of 12 Key Actions

1 Large Fleet Vehicles.

Difficulty Level: High

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| <p>Technical Readiness</p> | <p>In many cases the low carbon alternatives are not available for many of the large vehicle types that we use to deliver services at moment. Even when vehicles are on the market there are issues about practical performance against actual performance; particularly in relation to (i) the use of auxiliary equipment that draws on power such as lifting and heating and (ii) the topography of BG, hill starts and climbs are a major power drain. There are examples of Local Authorities procuring vehicles that not been able to deliver service.</p> <p>Also need to consider when vehicles may become available. Some of the large fleet may need to be replaced before low carbon alternatives are on the market, or when costs are greater than available budget. Also rapid pace of change in market may mean that want to avoid being tied into purchasing fleet, when significantly better alternatives may be available within the vehicles working life time.</p> |
|----------------------------|--|

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Financial Readiness | Large fleet models that are available are typically at least double the upfront costs. Even as ULEV prices drop, budgets will need to reflect that savings will come from lower running costs for fuel. Typically we have leased vehicles but WG funding has required purchase, leading to further up-front costs. Need to develop financial model for low carbon fleet. |
| Policy Readiness | Important to remember that vehicles only low carbon if power source is low carbon. This requires that charging infrastructure is supplied with green electricity, either generated by ourselves or via procurement. Will need to be changes to procurement policies to reflect new decarbonisation requirements (see 12 Procurement Fleet) |
| Delivery Readiness | ULEV vehicles will still need to provide departments with best vehicles to deliver services. Supporting infrastructure needs to be in place so new vehicles can deliver services. We need to learn from experience of other LAs who adopting ULEV large fleet. Need to understand vehicle charging needs and times so fleet can deliver services. |
| Workforce Readiness | Staff training required for use of alternative fuel vehicles. |

2 Small Vehicles.

Difficulty Level: Medium

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Technical Readiness | Greater availability of alternatives for small ULEV. Just begun with initial replacement of four small vans for highways inspections. |
| Financial Readiness | Welsh Government funding for initial vehicles only allow purchase which required departments to find additional budget. Even if purchase not always required and cost differentials not as great for larger vehicles, need to ensure that lower running costs are reflected in how set budgets and the balance between capital and revenue. Need to consider cradle to grave costs of vehicles, particularly if will be purchasing more vehicles and their potential resale value. |
| Policy Readiness | Decarbonisation need to be considered within tender process |
| Delivery Readiness | All LAs will have the same issues around fleet and work has been done at a Gwent level so we should work together to make the case for investment. Users need to understand the technology |
| Workforce Readiness | Training on vehicles for garage mechanics |

3 Infrastructure for Large Vehicles. Fuelling (EV, hydrogen etc.) and other changes needed to Depot(s).

Difficulty Level: Medium (for BG/CBC costs are high but technology exists), but High (for Grid Capacity that will be needed to supply energy which outside of our control)

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Technical Readiness | <p>Current Depot is restrictive, limited space, double parking etc. Will need to be space for all vehicles to park by charging points. New Depot would allow us to accommodate transition to fleet of EV's.</p> <p>New Depot will need to be a carbon neutral facility. In order to ensure that fleet running off renewable electricity will need both solar and storage battery capacity</p> <p>There is a wider issue of grid infrastructure that is needed - costs for installing could be an issue, also grid capacity is a significant issue. Heads of Valleys already running near capacity. This is larger issue than just BG, Western Power operates at larger scale covering number of other areas through same grid. Green Recovery Investment being explored for SE Wales including Rassau to address, available funding is £20million, but total costs could be £40-50 million.</p> <p>The space and cost implications of Hydrogen are even greater than electric. Hydrogen storage, production is difficult, costly and would need a lot of investment. Could BG achieve economically viable scale? Some investigation taking place for Hydrogen pipeline for Heads of Valleys.</p> |
| Financial Readiness | New Depot is significant investment, additional upfront cost to ULEV fleet. |
| Policy Readiness | |
| Delivery Readiness | Current work ongoing to replace existing depot with new future proofed facility for all plant and equipment. |
| Workforce Readiness | |

4. Infrastructure for Small Vehicles. Including for commuting and business travel as well as fleet, across all council estate including education.

Difficulty Level: Medium

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Technical Readiness | <p>There will be strain on local grid capacity from EV infrastructure at other council buildings. The local electric grid will need updating for all the demand, not just from BG/CBC.</p> <p>Need to ensure that use of infrastructure is optimised, right type of connections, in right place, digital system/booking to ensure that charging points available when needed by users.</p> |
| Financial Readiness | |
| Policy Readiness | Need to develop frameworks for procuring from companies who will be installing and running charging infrastructure. |

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| | Where drawing on grid supply need to make sure that this is renewable electricity. This issue of additionality important link to Transition 7- Electricity |
| Delivery Readiness | <p>Site-based assessments will need to be undertaken to consider potential demand (number of points required) and the implications of charging point installation upon access, parking availability etc. Parking on schools' sites is already limited.</p> <p>Unlike at Depot schools will not be able to generate all energy requirements via solar so more issues around ensuring that using renewable electricity. Accessible EV points around borough rather than at depot. Need to consider where and when vehicles will need to charge.</p> <p>EV Charge points have been installed throughout Gwent and Cardiff Capital Region are in the process of installing more charge points</p> <p>Large number of public bodies and other organisations in BG will be doing same transition. This will put additional strain on grid, but also opportunity to collaborate on procurement and share charging infrastructure.</p> |
| Workforce Readiness | |

5. Fleet Maintenance. New arrangements required for low carbon fleet.

Difficulty Level: Low

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Technical Readiness | Adaptations needed to current workshop |
| Financial Readiness | |
| Policy Readiness | |
| Delivery Readiness | |
| Workforce Readiness | Upskill and train existing mechanics to maintain ULEV Fleet Collaboration with Coleg Gwent |

6. Home and Agile Working. Identifying posts where possible and supporting.

Difficulty Level: Medium

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Technical Readiness | Specialist skills and technology at community hubs to enable public access to services. Could have more video phone capacity with public facing services, including public accessing technology at community hub. |
| Financial Readiness | |

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Policy Readiness | <p>Work currently on going in relation to role designations (Home / Agile / Service) further consultation required. Awaiting Approval of the Agile Working Policy due end of May. There are still a lot of unresolved questions about how different patterns of work in new model will work in practise, e.g. community roles.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustment is an important principle in considering the different forms of support and changes that may have to take place for individual staff members.</p> |
| Delivery Readiness | <p>The ability to work from home or agilely varies significantly. The scoring of this action is based on realising home and agile working for those who this is identified as being a possibility for. A significant number of staff will not be able to save carbon in this way.</p> <p>The scale of emissions reduction from shift to home and agile working will not be clear until posts identified, and there will also still be variation from individual circumstances within role delegations.</p> <p>There are a large number of elements to this change.</p> <p>There may be other elements of service delivery that potentially conflict with these changes, e.g. Education Recovery Plan.</p> <p>Paper based systems in some areas like planning require office presence (Social services example of digital already being in place)</p> |
| Workforce Readiness | <p>There are substantial issues around wellbeing and health and safety that need to be worked through</p> <p>Not all people have the right equipment, chairs, tables, space reliable internet, extra heating and electric costs etc, and will be impacted differently by changes.</p> |

7. Technology Support for Home and Agile Working. Network capacity, hosting virtual meetings, support for specialist software and other service requirements.

Difficulty Level: Medium

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Technical Readiness | <p>Digital storage, switching to cloud instead of physical server. One system for council, could enhance file sharing.</p> <p>Key theme identified has been limitations of Pulse, looking to shift towards a VPN that will be more stable, secure and allow greater access.</p> |
|---------------------|---|

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| | <p>Looking at software and hardware needed at home for areas such as GIS, looking at this over all service areas. Currently a report going to DMT identifying where there are pinch points for users of specialist systems.</p> <p>Teams telephony to replace land lines, or corporate mobiles, headsets, use of personal device securely. Contact Centre to work with Teams telephony.</p> <p>Bring your own device policy. Could have significant carbon savings, but also issues around device performance and working hours.</p> <p>Mobile worker functionality, stop repeat visits to office, reduce printed instructions. Use of Always on VPN to improve accessibility of server on move. Could all reduce number of journeys into work base.</p> |
| Financial Readiness | |
| Policy Readiness | Integrate carbon performance data into existing management/performance systems e.g. itrent. |
| Delivery Readiness | <p>Home working will be extremely challenging for school staff. However, we can consider options as part of our Education recovery plan.</p> <p>What will be impact of community workbases? Can technology be used to provide greater digital access to range of services at community hubs? I.e. Members of public without digital access/skills at home can talk to range of services via tech at community hubs.</p> <p>The technology and infrastructure needed for home/agile working vary significantly with service needs. Is there programme to identify needs? Service and individual level?</p> |
| Workforce Readiness | Need to recognise that there has been a significant element of making do in a crisis in the rapid transition to new digital arrangement for home working. Important that take time to make sure best arrangement are in place and upskill workforce. For example, Office 365 been rolled out largely during this period. Need to make sure that make full use of potential. |

8. Promote Alternative forms of Travel. Encouraging shift to car sharing, public and active transport for commuting and business travel.

Difficulty Level: High

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Technical Readiness | <p>There has been significant shift in commute and work travel patterns, this reduced demand will effect availability of car shares and public transport more permanently.</p> <p>The specific topography of BG is relevant, especially to active travel, also issues around viability of public transport compared to other urban areas.</p> |
|---------------------|---|

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Financial Readiness | Cost associated with promotion of these alternatives are not part of current budgets |
| Policy Readiness | <p>Need to consider incentives for staff who do choose active travel. For example, if want to cycle to work then should some of their changing time be part of paid work hours or rewarded in some other way?</p> <p>When providing facilities need to do assessments understand where demand is/will be. Educations/schools may be important given limited ability to homework.</p> <p>Currently very limited information about who this promotion might be targeted at, and how.</p> |
| Delivery Readiness | <p>The cycle to work scheme could assist here, however, we will need to be recognition of importance of infrastructure for active travel, such as security of bikes, most importantly showering facilities if going to travel into work this way. New Depot taking this into account for example.</p> <p>From a schools perspective, have traffic and travel assessments which we undertake when developing new sites to support engagement with staff around active travel, car sharing, parking and access requirements. These could be reviewed and adapted to capture the current context - but we will need to consider the timing of this, as currently, staff are discouraged from car sharing due to COVID-19</p> <p>Public transport could be a challenge for frontline staff that have specific start / end time of work. would need significantly improved public transport infrastructure.</p> |
| Workforce Readiness | COVID has a significant impact on this transition. Not clear when and how be possible to make full use of public transport and lift shares. |

9. Promoting Staff uptake of Personal ULEV vehicles.

Difficulty Level: High

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Technical Readiness | <p>Relatively short travel distances for BG staff mean that less issues with vehicle range limits, but also less potential for cost savings on energy use over time to offset initial purchase costs.</p> <p>Booking system optimisation to make charging available. Flags up availability, provide link to wider networks.</p> <p>Aware that housing stock in BG means that home charging may be more limited. We have started to see residential charging points installed, renewing charging points at Works, City Deal playing role. At early stage in terms of low total capacity, but are seeing good usage. However, charging costs will be higher than home charging.</p> |
|---------------------|---|

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| | Also issue of additionality, i.e. whether staff using green energy to charge vehicle. |
| Financial Readiness | Electric vehicles are much more expensive to purchase than conventional, and limited second hand market at moment. Provide incentive scheme for staff to purchase EV, but any loans must not be too expensive to pay back. |
| Policy Readiness | Need to consider financial arrangements around staff charging. Commonly estimates of cost savings for running costs are often based on home charging price of electricity. Can BG offer similar rates at work for those without potential for home charging? This would be very different from current situations where don't provide petrol to staff, a completely new policy area. Trial rides/try before you buy something that might be offered to staff, as has been done elsewhere and for BG Taxi drivers. |
| Delivery Readiness | Infrastructure plans will need to be in place to support staff take up. Major sites where many staff travel to will be important, New Depot considering, also Anvil Court. Schools, particularly secondary schools have large numbers of potential users, but also have limited parking/charging capacity Many staff work out in the community so need access to charging points at home and in accessible public place as well as at work base. |
| Workforce Readiness | Cost will be a major factor for staff Need to support staff by providing infrastructure in workplace car parks |

10. Grey Fleet Alternatives to Personal Vehicle Use for Business Travel. Pool vehicles, car hire, car clubs etc.

Difficulty Level: Low

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Technical Readiness | Availability of Newer electric vehicles in this area should not be an issue |
| Financial Readiness | Car pool / vehicles – would need to be resourced i.e. staffing / vehicle costs – is this needed now with the new ways of working? |
| Policy Readiness | For larger schemes such as pool vehicles it is achievable, the bigger question is whether there is sufficient demand to make viable both financially and in terms of saving carbon. This would require further investigation. Social Care most likely area might be beneficial. Car hire is down historically, but still has place for long distance travel, would be relatively simple to ensure that using ULEV vehicles for this. |

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Delivery Readiness | <p>Range of technical options that can reduce business travel: Mobile worker functionality, stop repeat visits to office, reduce printed instructions. Use of Always on VPN to improve accessibility of server on move</p> <p>Gwent are doing work around Grey Fleet - this is being supported by Welsh Government Energy Service this will help make the case to WG for funding to take things forward</p> <p>Will business use require charging points away from main workbase? Especially if vehicles in use throughout day</p> <p>Most crucial element in making work is the Digital booking system, route management system so meets service needs while not using vehicles inefficiently. Could route optimisation be used for grey fleet? Not area that been applied to yet</p> |
| Workforce Readiness | |

11. Fleet Size. Reducing number and size of vehicles in fleet, based on service needs.

Difficulty Level: Low (Medium corporate level)

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Technical Readiness | Route Optimisation. Including live updates with road closures and not miss addresses |
| Financial Readiness | |
| Policy Readiness | <p>Sharing vehicles across services, with system to manage.</p> <p>The number of minibuses have been reduced, historically was the case that some were underused, but most fleet reductions have been driven by austerity</p> <p>Where we have reduced the fleet within Community Options, potentially there is an increase in private cars on the road. as service users were accessing services via alternative means of transport in line with the Assisted Transport policy</p> <p>In some areas fleet is shared across several authorities with one serving as host hub.</p> <p>Schools do appear to be procuring more minibuses, these not hosted at council in same way as rest of fleet.</p> <p>More deliberate carbon led reduction of fleet size is more difficult, decisions have tended to be made on service by service, and case by case basis. More corporate oversight of service needs and fleet use would be needed to make this type of carbon led reduction.</p> |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Delivery Readiness | <p>Fleet requirements are service dependant and rely on each service area to determine what their needs are.</p> <p>Route Optimisation. Including live updates with road closures and not miss addresses</p> <p>Expand route optimisation to smaller vehicles.</p> <p>Improved use of mycouncil services, mobile worker technology. Visit frequencies/service demand info inform fleet size. E.g. Green waste collection seasonal demand.</p> |
| Workforce Readiness | |

12. Procurement Fleet. Ownership or Rental? Use of Whole Life Costing

Difficulty Level: High

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Technical Readiness | <p>Market forever changing, not just vehicles but associated infrastructure requirements.</p> <p>There are real supply shortages of suitable vehicles in some areas as large number of organisations looking to purchase.</p> |
| Financial Readiness | <p>Corporate Investment needed</p> <p>Term of ownership of vehicles need to be considered including cost analysis between purchase / lease and Contract Hire. If vehicles are leased, then the cost of the vehicle can be spread over its useful life reducing the initial cost impact on the Revenue budgets. If owned/bought outright, potential for a Capital Receipt at the end of its useful life if sold on.</p> <p>Ability to procure vehicles in most financially effective way constrained in number of ways, including grant funding conditions, also the shift in balance of revenue and capital costs of vehicles not being reflected in budgets.</p> <p>Grant funding may become available at a point in time, but it is not guaranteed to be available when the fleet needs to be replaced</p> <p>Even when Funding is available can have Impacts on Revenue budgets of services as may not cover whole cost.</p> <p>Capital grants - recent grant didn't allow us to lease / contract hire, therefore spread the capital cost over a number of years.</p> <p>How long before there are better and more efficient vehicles are produced so leasing may be the best option to renew the fleet to better vehicles every few years?</p> |
| Policy Readiness | <p>Will need to be significant and ongoing change to existing procurement frameworks and specifications as market evolves.</p> |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| | <p>This also relevant to consideration of issues such as whole life cycle carbon impacts. Availability of information about scope 3 impacts of vehicles, whole life costs may be limited. If/when available need to be considered in procurement decisions.</p> <p>May also include need to consider replacement batteries in decision making in future? Including their use as power storage solutions</p> |
| Delivery Readiness | |
| Workforce Readiness | |

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Cynulliad Hinsawdd
Climate Assembly

Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly



Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly Report

This report was drafted by [Cynnal Cymru](#) and the [Electoral Reform Society Cymru](#), two of the organising partners of the Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly.



Ebbw Vale



Abertillery



Tredegar



Brynmawr

1. Introduction

The Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly was held from 6 - 28 March 2021.

The Assembly took place online via Zoom. 50 residents of Blaenau Gwent were selected by sortition to address the question:

“What should we do in Blaenau Gwent to tackle the climate crisis in a way that is fair and improves living standards for everyone?”

44 participants attended the first assembly session and 43 participants were present at the final session for voting on recommendations. Attendance was stable throughout all sessions with 43 being the lowest attendance.

The members met for a total of 23 hours to hear evidence from over 20 different experts, discuss the issues, and produce recommendations for what local public service organisations, communities and individuals could do to address the climate crisis and improve lives for people in Blaenau Gwent.

The assembly members explored the following themes in the learning phase:

- Introduction to climate change
- Issues of fairness and the just transition
- How change happens
- Housing - retrofit, new build, fuel poverty, jobs & skills
- Nature and green space
- Transport

The agenda, videos of sessions and additional questions for speakers can be found [on the website](#).

In the deliberation phase, the assembly members made recommendations under the following themes:

- Housing retrofit
- Housing new build
- Nature and green space
- Transport
- Poverty*
- Communication*
- Education*
- Waste and recycling*

* Themes democratically selected by assembly members

2. Recommendations

5 recommendations received over 80% of the vote and were officially passed by the Assembly. The table below shows the recommendations as drafted by assembly members.

| Theme | Recommendation | % Support |
|------------------------|---|-----------|
| Transport | <p>Establish an affordable, integrated road & rail transport system accessible throughout BG.</p> <p>A one ticket system that links to bus, rail & cycle schemes - inclusivity for purchasing of tickets (digital or paper).</p> <p>Accessible all hours with safety via lighting, CCTV and to keep maintained.</p> | 91 |
| Transport | Establish & improve a safe, easily maintainable infrastructure for walkers & cyclists, for either recreational or work purposes, with access to the public transport network. Including lighting & CCTV & storage for bikes. | 88 |
| House retrofit | Train local tradespeople, create qualifications and upskill local businesses, involve FE colleges and local Universities, future proof it and provide the right courses to enable them to do the work in all green construction. | 86 |
| Green space and nature | Implement a programme of woodland preservation and reforestation of BG, using the right tree in the right place for the right reason, increasing opportunities for jobs, biodiversity and connecting woodlands. Making sure the skills are available so we can create green jobs, e.g. saw milling and timber framed housing. | 86 |
| Housing new build | Ensure that all new build properties are built using the latest sustainable technologies (E.g. Glanffrwd development as a template), employing local builders and providing a variety of accommodation types appropriate for all inc. homeless/single occupancy up to large families. | 81 |

A full list of recommendations voted on, ranked in order of support, is available in Appendix 1.

3. Why a climate assembly in Blaenau Gwent?

The Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly was commissioned by a consortium of civil society organisations and housing associations.

The organising partners were:

- [Cynnal Cymru - Sustain Wales](#)
- [Electoral Reform Society Cymru](#)
- [Linc Housing Cymru](#)
- [Melin Homes](#)
- [Tai Calon Community Housing Association](#)
- [United Welsh Housing Association](#)



In early 2020, in the context of other existing and future decarbonisation initiatives in the housing sector¹, Cynnal Cymru, ERS Cymru and United Welsh Housing met to discuss how housing tenants and wider communities might be more involved in decarbonisation plans of Housing Associations, public bodies and other anchor organisations.

The idea for the Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly was a result of these discussions between organising partners. It was funded through Welsh Government's Innovative Housing Programme – Optimised Retrofit Programme.

We also worked closely with [Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council](#) (BGCBC) and [Blaenau Gwent Public Service Board](#) (PSB) from the early stages of the project.

Why Blaenau Gwent?

The four commissioning Housing Associations share 24% of the housing stock in Blaenau Gwent and were already collaborating on an initiative to strengthen and support local suppliers in Blaenau Gwent through the Welsh Government's [Foundational Economy Challenge Fund 2020](#).

In 2020, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council declared a climate emergency. The PSB agreed to establish a Climate Mitigation Steering Group to develop a long term plan to reduce carbon emissions in Blaenau Gwent.

Blaenau Gwent therefore had a framework in place under which an action plan was being developed and key local stakeholders who were looking at how to involve the community.

¹ [Carbon Literacy Cartrefi Cymru](#), [Welsh Government's Optimised Retrofit Programme](#)

4. Organisation of the Assembly

Confirmation of funding for the Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly was received in November 2020.

A Steering Group was formed shortly after to (i) decide on the overall question and core themes for the Assembly (Housing, Transport, Nature and Green space) and (ii) ensure the impartiality and fairness of the process. In the early stages, the theme of food was also included, however, it was later excluded as a core theme due to time constraints.

The Steering Group met eight times prior to the start of the Assembly, once at an interim review and once at a final review.

Members of the Steering Group are at **Appendix 2**.

In addition to the organising partners, Steering Group members and experts, the following groups and organisations also played key roles in the Assembly process:

- [Sortition Foundation](#) - sortition
- [Mutual Gain](#) – support with agenda development and lead facilitation
- [Involve](#) - advisory capacity, providing training for facilitators and scribes
- [Wales Co-operative Centre](#) - Zoom training
- Volunteer facilitators, scribes and tech support drawn from the organising partners and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council



5. Who are the Assembly members and how were they selected?

Assembly members were selected at random from the general public through sortition.

Sortition allows the selection of members to be stratified by local demographics, in this case: gender, age, ethnicity, geographic location, residence status, attitude to climate change and [Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation](#). This random selection combined with representative sampling meant that the wider community could be confident that assembly members were fellow citizens and were not representing special interests.

January 2021

Bilingual invitations sent to 10,000 households across Blaenau Gwent (living in 1 in 3 homes in the borough) providing information about the Assembly process and compensation (£250 in cash or vouchers).

February 2021

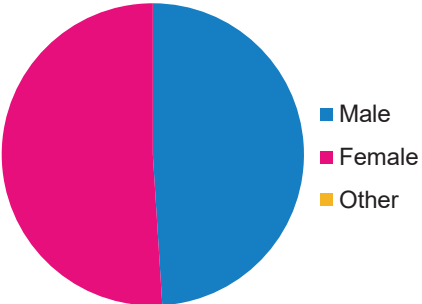
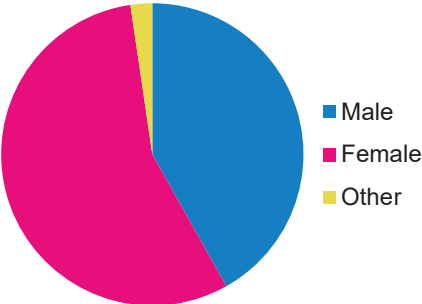
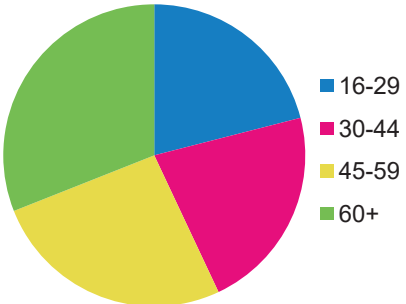
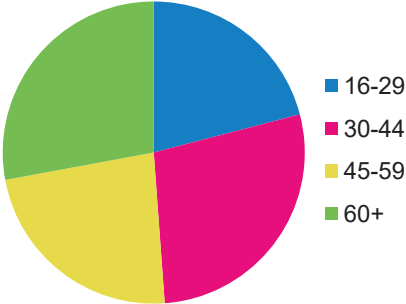
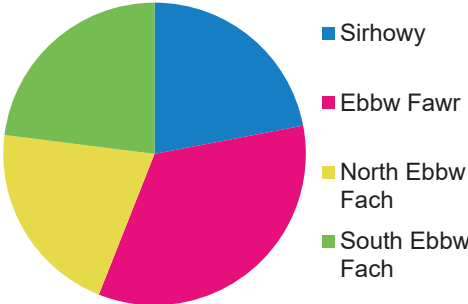
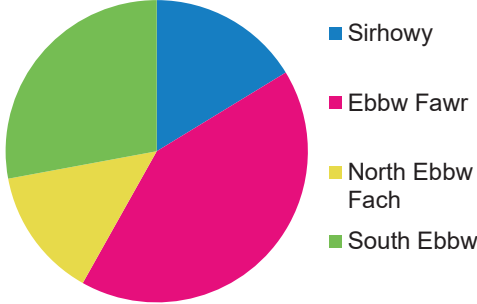
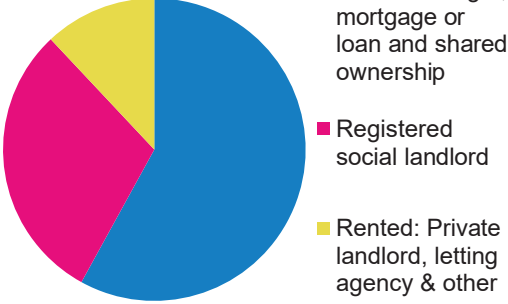
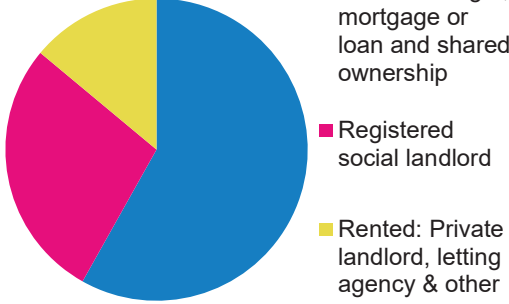
From 264 interested respondents, 50 participants were selected who were representative of the demographics mentioned above.

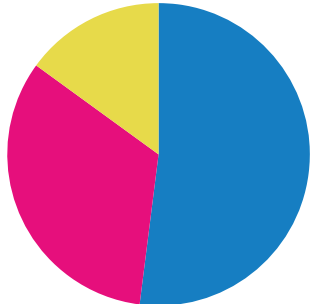

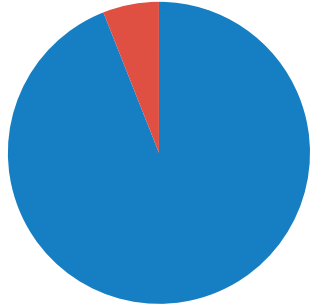
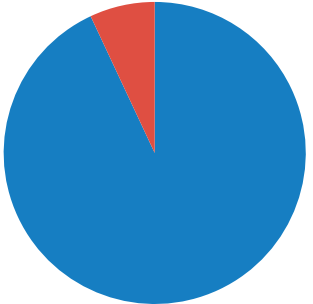


Sortition Foundation provided a breakdown of information and contact details of those selected and the remaining interested persons to the organisers.

From the final selection, several people told us they could no longer participate due to family and work commitments. These places were offered to others on the reserve list corresponding to the same demographic criteria, where possible.

The final number of participants at the first session of the Assembly was 44. Throughout sessions, the number of participants varied between 43 to 44 with 43 being present at the final vote.

The demographics of the 43 members are shown in the following pie charts.

| | Target Demographics of BG | Selected (Final Confirmed) |
|--------|--|---|
| Gender |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male Female Other |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male Female Other |
| Age |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16-29 30-44 45-59 60+ |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16-29 30-44 45-59 60+ |
| Locale |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sirhowy Ebbw Fawr North Ebbw Fach South Ebbw Fach |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sirhowy Ebbw Fawr North Ebbw Fach South Ebbw Fach |
| Tenure |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owner: outright, mortgage or loan and shared ownership Registered social landlord Rented: Private landlord, letting agency & other |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owner: outright, mortgage or loan and shared ownership Registered social landlord Rented: Private landlord, letting agency & other |

| | Target Demographics of BG | Selected (Final Confirmed) |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Attitude to climate change |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Very concerned ■ Fairly concerned ■ Not very concerned/Not at all/other/don't know |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Very concerned ■ Fairly concerned ■ Not very concerned/Not at all/other/don't know |
| Ethnicity |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ White ■ Ethnically diverse communities |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ White ■ Ethnically diverse communities |
| WIMD Decile |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ "1" ■ "2" ■ "3" ■ "4-5" ■ "6-10" |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ "1" ■ "2" ■ "3" ■ "4-5" ■ "6-10" |

Data on target demographics, selection and final participants can be found [here](#).

A range of support was provided prior to and during the Assembly to ensure it was accessible. This included providing assembly members with tablets in the absence of owning hardware, establishing an internet connection via Wifi dongles and three hours of tech drop-in sessions to ensure members were able to fully access Zoom.

6. Engaging the wider community

It was important that the wider community was engaged in the process to (i) inform the Assembly's discussions, and (ii) as a means of ensuring accountability for implementation of the recommendations.

Engagement with the wider community was undertaken through the following methods:

i The BG Assembly website had the option to register via email to receive bilingual updates on the Assembly via Mailchimp. Interested respondents to the invitation were also invited to sign up to receive these updates. In total, 66 people signed up to receive updates.

ii Anyone living or working in Blaenau Gwent was able to respond to the question for consideration by the Assembly via Pol.is

Pol.is is an interactive surveying tool which invites users to agree/disagree with statements relating to an overall question. It also allows users to add their own statements for others to vote on.

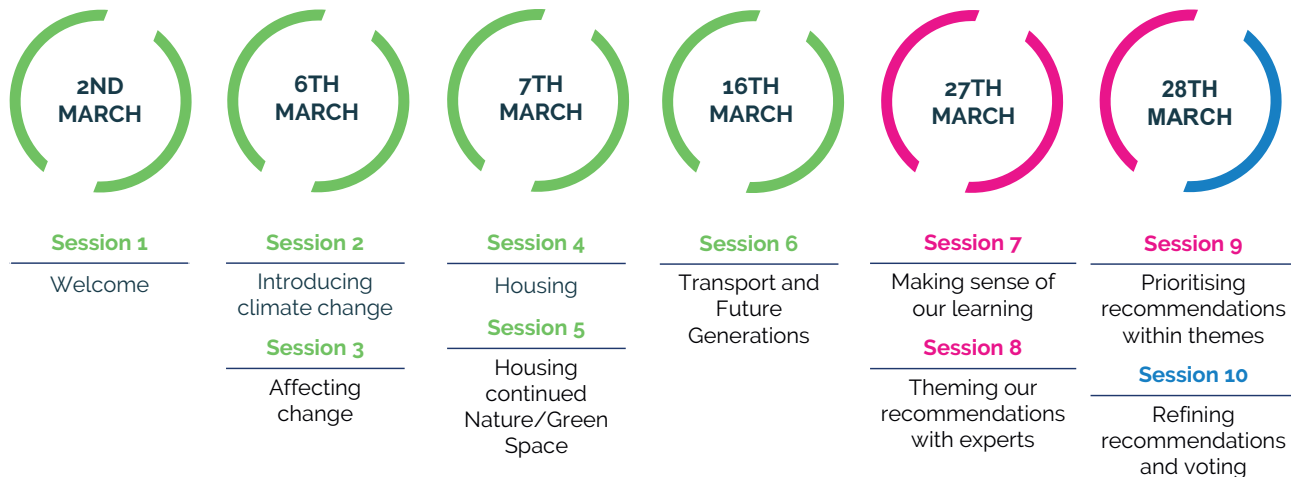
The interactive survey ran for three weeks and closed on 22 March 2021. 135 people voted. 5,594 votes were cast and 132 statements were submitted to respond to the assembly question. The [results of the survey](#) were presented to the Assembly during the deliberation phase.

iii Social media accounts of the organising partners and BGCBC were used to communicate about the climate assembly.



7. Assembly Process

The Assembly process was in three phases; learning, deliberation and voting.



The learning phase consisted of:

- Introduction to critical thinking.
- Speakers giving evidence and their expertise on the themes of the assembly.
- Assembly members asking questions of speakers and engaging in discussion with them.

Learning was supplemented by [‘speaker templates’](#) (additional information on the speaker and their topic) and any questions not answered in session were answered via email. At the end of the learning phase, assembly members voted on the speakers that they thought could help them answer the question the best. These speakers were brought back for more in depth discussions with small groups of assembly members.

In the deliberation phase:

- Assembly members voted on four additional themes to develop recommendations around.
- Members chose which theme they’d like to draft recommendations for. In groups, three recommendations per theme were drafted.
- Each group visited the seven other themes to ask questions and comment on the draft recommendations.
- Using these questions and comments, the original groups refined and amended their recommendations to be put forward for voting.

In the voting phase final recommendations were voted on by assembly members. 43 out of 44 Assembly members voted - with one member not attending the final sessions to vote because of health issues. Five recommendations received over 80% of the votes and were officially passed by the Assembly.

Throughout the process, facilitation was used to create conversations which were inclusive, respectful, to the point, honest and constructive.

8. Next Steps

The Assembly's recommendations were presented to the chief executives of the 4 commissioning Housing Associations on Tuesday 13 April 2021.

Assembly members presented the recommendations and took part in the discussions. The Housing Associations have committed to providing written responses to the five main recommendations setting out how they will incorporate or support them.

A further selected group of volunteer from the Assembly presented the recommendations to the PSB Climate Mitigation Group on 26 April 2021. The PSB Climate Mitigation Group will provide written responses to the five main recommendations setting out if and how they will support their implementation. These written recommendations will be presented to the wider PSB.

A number of members are staying in contact with each other via a Facebook group. Assembly members are also being kept informed about further participatory processes in Blaenau Gwent, including a participatory budgeting initiative led by Mutual Gain.

The organising partners will be tracking progress of implementation of the recommendations, particularly around the time of the election in 2022. We will also look to secure resources to maintain momentum around the recommendations and continued inclusion of assembly members in progress of implementation.

*This is our
Blaenau Gwent*

*We all have a
part to play*

*Get involved,
this is your
COMMUNITY*

*Help us make a
change*

*IF you are in
charge - do your
job, get off your
a** and do it!*

*Citizen
assemblies
are the way
forward*

Final messages from some Assembly members

9. Learnings

The following key learnings are a summary of those identified by project partners and through feedback provided by others involved, including facilitators, observers and members.

i Funding

The funding for this Climate Assembly came from a pot of engagement funding from Welsh Government's Innovative Housing Programme. The total funding for this assembly was £50,000. We know from work on other assemblies and discussions with other practitioners that this is a very low budget to try to deliver a deliberative project to this scale.

As a result of this limited budget organising partners made certain concessions including:

- A lower payment to assembly members- assembly members were paid at over living wage, above £10 per hour. However, we know from other assemblies that a higher rate of remuneration is often offered which might have been more likely to result in a higher sign up rate from the 10,000 letters sent to residents in Blaenau Gwent.
- A reliance on volunteers - The Assembly relied on volunteers for nearly all roles including facilitators and scribes, tech support and speakers. Ideally, we would have remunerated all of these roles in recognition of the time and effort given to this project.
- Limiting payment to the organising partners - only a small proportion of organisers' time has been remunerated for this 6 month long project.

It is also worth emphasising the difficulty in securing funding for a climate assembly might limit the potential for other such assemblies unless commissioned by local or national government.

ii Time vs. topics covered

The Assembly process had to strike a balance between time constraints due to funding, the amount of funding available, the number of participants and adequate time for learning and deliberation. The total time for the Assembly was two weekends (10 hours per weekend) and two evening sessions (3 hours).

It is clear from the evaluation responses that participants felt rushed at times during the three phases (learning, deliberation and recommendation) of the Assembly. In particular, the evening session on Transport on Tuesday 16 March was felt to be too much information from 4 speakers in such a short space of time. In contrast, the session during the learning phase with only three speakers in one afternoon (7 March) with more time to go into detail, received positive feedback.

“More time for the speakers to say what they needed to and information about the speakers given to us before they came to speak with us would have been helpful. It may have allowed us to prepare questions relevant to what they were telling us.”

“I thought it went fab not enough time granted but everybody was helpful.”

Facilitators and scribes also fed back to us that the time with assembly members was limited on some occasions.

“We covered a lot in a short period of time which although did feel a little rushed at times, I feel was the right thing to do. The range of topics engaged more people.”

(Quote from facilitator)

The [Involve guidance](#) suggests at least 30 hours for a citizens’ assembly and it is acknowledged by the organisers that more time would have been preferable to allow the Assembly to explore themes in more detail and to have more time for discussion. In retrospect, alternative formats such as exploring one main theme (e.g. Housing) and leaving additional time for the Assembly to invite speakers on topics suggested by them may have helped the Assembly feel less rushed in the time available.

In addition to the time spent online, the Assembly was also provided with [speaker templates and written responses](#) to questions that speakers had not been able to answer in the time available. It is recognised that not all members would have had the capacity to review these between sessions and therefore time spent on additional reading was not compulsory.



Administrative capacity and other roles

The Assembly administration needed was extensive.

ERS Cymru, Cynnal Cymru and United Welsh led on the administration which included:

- Communication with third party consultants
- Organisation of facilitators, observers and speakers
- Organisation and provision of tech support
- Communication with local and Welsh Government
- Communication with Assembly participants
- Liaising with lead facilitators (Mutual Gain)
- Coordination of Steering Group meetings
- Communications - including website, social media
- Engagement with commissioning organisations

Support for video editing and tech support during sessions was provided by consultants through Mutual Gain.

A key learning is to have a designated admin team in addition to project managers to ensure timely and efficient administration.

iv Involvement of local organisations

As national organisations, the organising partners engaged local stakeholders at an early stage in the process.

The most important of these was BGCBC and the PSB Climate Mitigation Steering Group. Organising partners met with both BGCBC and the Climate Mitigation Group early on to explain the context and their hope that the Assembly process and recommendations would inform decarbonisation plans of public bodies in Blaenau Gwent, as well as those of the housing associations.

BGCBC and the PSB Climate Mitigation Steering Group became collaborative partners in the Assembly process, with representatives sitting on the Assembly Steering Group and volunteering as scribes and facilitators.

The speakers whom the Assembly found particularly engaging were those with local knowledge and/or experience that they could see as relevant to issues needing addressed in Blaenau Gwent.

v Opportunity for engagement

A recurring theme raised by members was their need for more effective communication and engagement by local organisations in relation to the big changes required to decarbonise. For example, plans for local transport, electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure and retrofitting homes.

The presence of representatives from local organisations at the Assembly provided an opportunity for a two way process of listening and learning with a view to constructive discussion leading to the creation of recommendations.

This process helped to build trust which could be built on further with continued engagement and communication about implementation and progress of the recommendations.

vi Importance of facilitation

Due to budgetary constraints, we relied on volunteers to facilitate and scribe the sessions. All volunteers were provided with specific training via Involve, which took place over two half day sessions.

Feedback from the evaluation underlines the excellent job done by facilitators and scribes with 97% of respondents feeling included in small group discussions and 100% feeling respected by the facilitators. Assembly members also noted the important role of facilitators in ensuring discussions between members were conducted with respect.

“The facilitators were great and really helped get people to share their thoughts in a comfortable way”

However, none were experienced in facilitating citizens’ assemblies and required additional support in advance and following sessions. One member had felt a facilitator had not been bold enough in ensuring their voice was heard.

24% of respondents to the evaluation also felt that the facilitators tried to influence their group with their own ideas. This is likely due to inexperience and the need for more support and training, rather than any deliberate attempt to influence.

Feedback from facilitators also highlights the need for more information about the format and expectations of sessions.

“I think as facilitators it would have been useful to have the full rundown of the day a little sooner rather than later”

“There was a lot of confusion about the briefing notes not matching the detailed plan that was a bit confusing”

In the recommendations phase of any citizens’ assembly, facilitators have a key role in ensuring recommendations are clear. Further support for facilitators to ensure recommendation criteria were understood and facilitators felt confident in drafting recommendations would have been beneficial.

“I believe some of the very good recommendations failed due to their wording. Therefore much more time needed to refine and refine final proposals.”

vii Transparency of process

The lead facilitators provided an overview of the format and purpose of each stage of the Assembly to provide certainty to the members and ensure transparency of the process.

At the voting stage, there were two issues that led to confusion potentially undermining the transparency of the process for some of the Members. Both instances highlight the need to ensure assembly members fully understand the voting process (e.g. through Q&A, practice votes) before voting commences.

i) Confusion as to whether ‘neutral’ was counted as a vote for or against a recommendation

During the voting stage, assembly members were asked to vote on the recommendations by Zoom poll using ‘Strongly Agree’ - ‘Agree’ - ‘Neutral’ - ‘Disagree’ - ‘Strongly Disagree’.

Shortly after the first few votes, an assembly member raised concerns that it was not clear that a ‘neutral’ vote did not count towards support for the recommendation. As such, the voting process was restarted.

ii) Suggestion to lower the voting threshold from 80%

Of 24 recommendations formed by the Assembly, five received the 80% vote to pass as official recommendations (80% being the normal threshold for citizens’ assemblies’ recommendations). Approximately three quarters of the way through the voting process, a suggestion was made by the lead facilitator for assembly members to vote on whether the threshold should be lowered. A vote was held on whether to reduce the threshold, which secured 70% support and therefore did not pass.

The voting process should have been explained more clearly before members’ started to vote, in particular the threshold required for a recommendation to pass and that there is precedent for this being lowered if an 80% majority of Members voted to do so.

“I felt very frustrated at the end with the voting as felt that so much time had been spent working through the recommendations for them not to get the 80 percent”

The evaluation clearly shows members’ frustration at the voting process and the number of recommendations passed by the Assembly. On the latter point, it could be interesting in future assemblies to build in a mechanism for understanding why members voted in a certain way.

viii Other learning points

Summarised below are some additional learnings that we wanted to highlight:

- The Assembly process can inspire individual action as well as collective recommendations.
- The learning phase is a two way process between speakers and assembly members - through asking questions and challenging speakers, the Assembly bring theories and policy back to reality.
- Assembly members of local citizens’ assemblies bring their local knowledge, interests and lived experience to the consideration of issues. The expertise of local people is of real value and underlines the need for local assemblies.
- Local climate assemblies are not a replacement for a national climate assembly - If we are to tackle climate change at the scale required, we need both local assemblies and national assemblies to engage people of Wales in the processes that happen at different levels.
- This model of deliberative democracy should be used beyond climate- there are a number of significant issues facing Wales. Citizens’ assemblies should be used as part of a toolkit of policy process to address these issues.

“I feel worried for our future if we continue living as we are. I have already started making changes to my own lifestyle and have been encouraging others to do the same.”

“Heartening to see a cross-section of fellow BG people commit to taking part fully, to getting stuck in to such a crucial issue.”

10. Evaluation Responses

The members of the Assembly were invited to complete a short evaluation survey on 29 March (following final recommendations on 28 March).

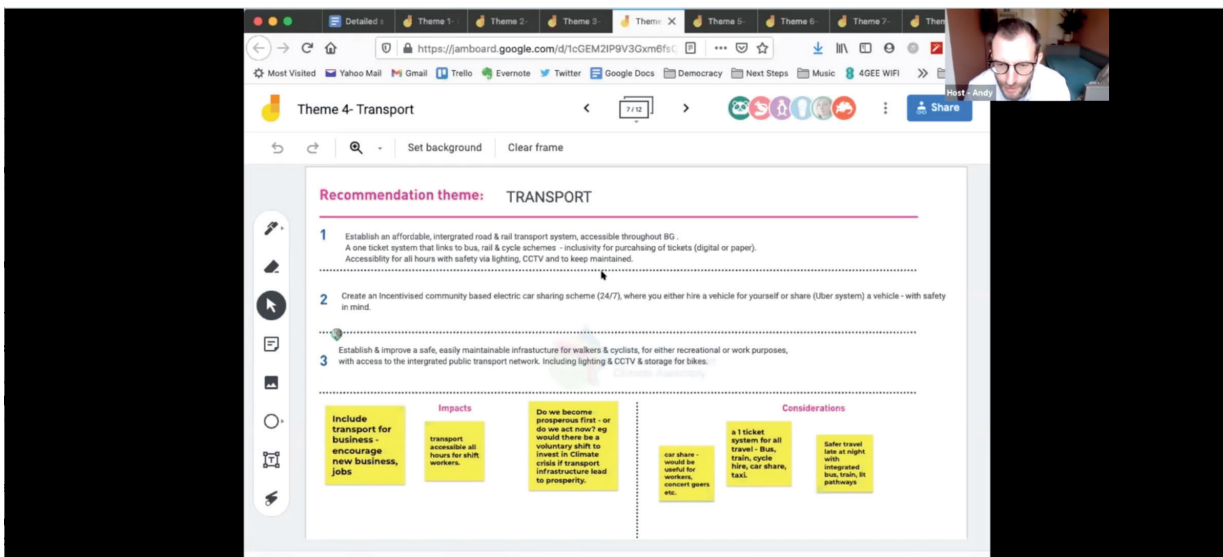
37 Assembly members completed the evaluation which had a total of 12 questions designed to gauge the members' emotional and practical experience of the Assembly.

Responses to the evaluation have been used throughout the report to highlight learnings.

In terms of process:

- Over 65% of participants felt that the Assembly increased their confidence with using technology
- 70% of respondents felt that there was sufficient time to learn about the issues before making recommendations
- 35% of respondents felt that there was enough time for discussion and deliberation
- 86% of respondents felt that information was presented in a fair and balanced way
- 95% of respondents rated their overall enjoyment of the Assembly a 4 or 5 on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being 'not at all' and 5 being 'very much')

The full evaluation survey results are available [here](#).



Recommendation theme: TRANSPORT

- 1 Establish an affordable, integrated road & rail transport system, accessible throughout BG. A one ticket system that links to bus, rail & cycle schemes – industry for purchasing of tickets (digital or paper). Accessibility for all hours with safety via lighting, CCTV and to keep maintained.
- 2 Create an incentivised community based electric car sharing scheme (24/7), where you either hire a vehicle for yourself or share (Uber system) a vehicle - with safety in mind.
- 3 Establish & improve a safe, easily maintainable infrastructure for walkers & cyclists, for either recreational or work purposes, with access to the integrated public transport network. Including lighting & CCTV & storage for bikes.

Impacts

- transport accessible all hours for shift workers.

Do we become prosperous first - or do we act now? eg would there be a voluntary shift to invest in Climate crisis if transport infrastructure lead to prosperity.

Considerations

- car share - would be useful for workers, council goes etc.
- a 1 ticket system for all travel - Bus, train, cycle hire, car share, taxi.
- Safer travel late at night with integrated bus, train, lit pathways

Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly votes on final recommendations

4 weeks ago | More

More from Cynnal Cymru

Autoplay next video

Blaenau Gwent C...
Cynnal Cymru

11. Carbon emissions of a virtual assembly

Throughout the process, we were mindful of the carbon footprint of the Assembly. For example, we chose not to print and send any materials to participants save for reasons of accessibility.



We calculated an approximate carbon footprint of the online assembly to be 55.193 Kg CO₂e. You can read more about how we calculated this and how this might compare to an in person assembly [here](#).



Appendix 1

Recommendations

The table below shows the recommendations as drafted by the Assembly.

| Theme | Recommendation | % Support |
|------------------------|--|-----------|
| Housing Retrofit | Train local trades people, create qualifications and upskill local businesses, involve FE colleges and local Universities, future proof it and provide the right courses to enable them to do the work in all green construction. | 86 |
| | Blaenau Gwent must create an accessible, practical, well publicised information platform for all (an upgraded website, an app, information lines and local one stop 'retrofitted shops/hubs' for advice and demonstrations on all things green throughout the area. | 70 |
| | Every home below EPC 'c' must have a retrofitting survey by 2023, with a view to implementing the actions that are recommended and starting the work within 12 months where funding options are in place. | 67 |
| Housing Newbuild | Ensure that all new build properties are built using the latest sustainable technologies (E.g. Glanffrwd development as a template), employing local builders and providing a variety of accommodation types appropriate for all inc. homeless/single occupancy up to large families. | 81 |
| | Prioritize brown field sites over green belt for new builds and ensure green space created within new developments | 79 |
| | Provide green energy grants to assist all new build purchases to all people and provide green incentives for all energy efficient properties. T's + C's stipulate 5 yr occupancy otherwise grant to be repaid. | 56 |
| Nature and Green Space | Implement a programme of woodland preservation and reforestation of BG, using the right tree in the right place for the right reason, increasing opportunities for jobs, biodiversity and connecting woodlands. Making sure the skills are available so we can create green jobs, e.g saw milling and timber framed housing. | 86 |
| | Create roles for coordination, cultivation and support of the use of green spaces (allotments, woodlands and urban green spaces) by the community to benefit all generations and create a sense of community ownership. Supporting communities in activities including food growing, recreation, bio-diversity, green prescribing, green space planning and aesthetics (e.g Blaenau Gwent in Bloom). | 77 |

| Theme | Recommendation | % Support |
|------------------------|---|-----------|
| Nature and Green Space | Develop a community owned/part-owned green energy programme e.g. solar farms, wind farms, or hydro electric. Supported by community green bonds. Making sure bonds are accessible and provide beneficial return. | 74 |
| Transport | Establish an affordable, integrated road & rail transport system accessible throughout BG. A one ticket system that links to bus, rail & cycle schemes - inclusivity for purchasing of tickets (digital or paper). Accessible all hours with safety via lighting, CCTV and to keep maintained. | 91 |
| | Establish & improve a safe, easily maintainable infrastructure for walkers & cyclists, for either recreational or work purposes, with access to the public transport network. Including lighting & CCTV & storage for bikes. | 88 |
| | Incentivise a community based electric car sharing scheme (24/7) where you either hire a vehicle for self or share (Uber system) a vehicle with safety in mind. | 33 |
| Education | Set a goal and support schools to source Welsh/British, sustainable produce and increase the use of these products over time, to include more vegetarian options. | 74 |
| | Make climate change and its impacts mandatory, interactive (e.g. competitions, prizes, rewards), relevant to the local area in the school curriculum. The council should assist schools with projects relevant to the age and practical involvement by the young people with the wider community. | 62 |
| | Offer short courses on climate change to individuals, local businesses, tradespeople, and decision-makers through educational institutions or by children in schools. | 57 |
| Waste and Recycling | Establish local Repair hubs to Re-use/re-purpose/upcycle items. | 79 |
| | Reinstate community skips - to robustly address fly-tipping & litter - siting of more litter bins that are emptied more often. Install & monitor more CCTV/enhanced measures at known fly-tipping spots. Re-direct fly-tipping & CCTV costs to community skips and in time it would pay for itself. | 65 |
| | Set up an enhanced information website, newsletter & community boards to promote transparency and sharing of information about recycling and how to access these services - this would improve awareness for future consultation on these issues. | 63 |
| Communication | Develop a local Climate Change Communications Strategy for promoting climate change action within the community at all levels by 2022 to be reviewed annually. | 67 |

| Theme | Recommendation | % Support |
|---------------|---|-----------|
| Communication | Set up a Climate Change Communications Network that oversee the evolving Strategy (to be cross sector including citizens and youth representatives) sharing best practice, information and knowledge. | 63 |
| | Employ dedicated local Communication Officer(s) to lead on the Climate Change Communication Strategy. | 53 |
| Poverty | Providing infrastructure, training and funding to businesses (new, growing and existing) within the local economy – e.g apprenticeships, employment and volunteering opportunities. | 72 |
| | Providing centralised grants to improve energy performance of all homes and reduce fuel poverty and energy usage by 2027. | 70 |
| | Providing advice, space and funding for communities to create their own local hub with a network of Outreach Officers. | 58 |

Please note that % support for some recommendations have been updated due to review of raw data.

Appendix 2

Steering Group Members

- Ben Saltmarsh (NEA Cymru)
- Bethan Proctor (CHC Cymru)
- Bev Jones (Melin Homes)
- Chris Blake (The Green Valleys CIC)
- Daniel Wheelock (Blaenau Gwent CBC)
- Darcey Howell (Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum)
- Jess Blair (ERS Cymru)
- Joe Frampton (United Welsh)
- Judy Phipps (Blaenau Gwent over 50s forum)
- Professor Julie Froud (University of Manchester)
- Justine Scorrer (Linc Cymru)
- Lorraine Whitmarsh (Director, Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformation)
- Luke Penny (Cynnal Cymru)
- Mara Moruz (Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum)
- Matthew Matthias (ERS Cymru)
- Nia Thomas (ERS Cymru)
- Owain Israel (Linc Cymru)
- Richard Thomas (United Welsh Housing)
- Sarah Freeman (NRW)
- Sarah Hopkins (Cynnal Cymru)
- Steve Cranston (United Welsh Housing)
- Tim Daley (Digital Public Services Wales)
- Trisha Hoddinot (Melin Homes)



Cynnal Cymru - Sustain Wales

Cambrian Buildings
Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff Bay
CF10 5FL

02920 192021

Agenda Item 9

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **15th September 2021**
Report Subject: **Regeneration & Development Performance Report**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr D Davies, Executive Member Regeneration and Economic Development**
Report Submitted by: **Richard Crook, Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services**

| Reporting Pathway | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| | 26.08.21 | 05.09.21 | | | 15.09.21 | 22.09.21 | | |

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To present the annual service activity from April 2020 to July 2021 and highlight how the Department is contributing to four of the Council's Corporate aims of delivering a:

- Prosperous Wales
- Resilient Wales
- Healthier Wales
- More equal Wales
- Globally responsible Wales, and
- A Wales of more cohesive communities.

2. Scope and Background

2.1. The Regeneration and Development Department has gone through a year of changes and temporary restructuring to manage Covid-19 work, whilst still delivering some of the main priorities for BG. The teams continue to focus on delivering a more structured program of work based around the priority areas identified in the Council's Corporate Plan 2018/22.

- Housing
- Employment and Skills
- Destination Management and Tourism
- Energy and Digital
- Town centres

2.2. The performance report makes reference to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which not only underpins the Council's aims, but also guides the ways in which sustainable development can be delivered through:

- Collaboration
- Integration
- Involvement
- Long term
- Prevention

- 2.3. From the report the achievements Housing continues to show a marked improvement in numbers of affordable and private homes delivered and delivery of new sites for housing; with high numbers of homes accessing funding for making them more energy efficient. Alongside this the early intervention for homelessness means 73% of potentially homeless households were prevented from becoming homeless. Planning enquiry responses were down due to IT issues that are being addressed.
- 2.4. Employment and Skills showcases the Aspire shared apprenticeship scheme with success being demonstrated through businesses taking on a second apprentice following a productive first experience. The Council's industrial portfolio is at 85% occupancy rate, supporting 615.5 jobs and newly developed units coming to market offering an additional 26,000 sq ft. Start-ups in BG higher than this time last year by 6.7% and community benefits to a number of communities delivered through physical projects. STEM delivery in schools is increasing through a successful bid to Tech Valleys for more resource and the future skills academy being progressed further for the former Monwell building. Covid-19 related support grants to businesses amounted to £1.9M (894 grants) delivered alongside other priorities.
- 2.5. The 2020-25 collaborative Destination Management Plan has been completed plus Covid-19 response through grants and support has continued for Tourism across BG. Work with individual businesses to help them maximise their tourism potential and working across the Head of the Valleys on events and festivals has also been undertaken.
- 2.6. The Energy Prospectus has been completed 'Energy Generation Opportunities' is now in the market place. Funding for electric charging points in BG has been successful enabling 73 charge points across 35 sites for the community and visitors in addition to workplace, taxi and bus points. Work on the Refit program of works continues – 6000 non-LED street lights have been replaced with LEDs and will generate energy savings for the Council. Hydro and wind generation projects are being investigated in detail. The GovTech Catalyst project is in the last stages of development and final reporting will enable BG to assess the suitable tech for us. £20million National Digital Exploitation Centre (NDEC) is running and has started to assist SMEs and micro businesses with cyber security and digital design – the first R&D facility of its kind in Wales.
- 2.7. Placemaking plans for all towns are now in train. Footfall has been increasing in towns over the last 3 months with a total of 864,612 people. Grants and loans for privately owned property continue to be successful with around £2M in total being approved. Heritage Lottery Funding in Tredegar Town Centre continues with NCB Town Hall and ongoing funding discussions with HLF continue. Rail improvements are gathering pace for both Ebbw Vale and Abertillery as funds from WG have been secured and funds from UK Govt are awaited. Key, are complex buildings and structures like Big Arch, Trinity Chapel and Truck Shop have all been progressed during this period.

2.8 A series of case studies are included to highlight some of the work that has been outlined in the performance report.

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 Option 1:
That Members consider the information provided and make specific comments / recommendations to the Executive Committee.

Option 2:
That Members accept the report as provided.

4. Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan

4.1. This proposal supports the amendments made to the Outcome Statements within the Corporate Plan in its review in October 2019.

Corporate Plan 2020/22 Outcome Statements:

- Protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure to benefit our communities
- Support a fairer sustainable economy and community
- To enable people to maximise their independence, develop solutions and take an active role in their communities
- An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1. *Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)*

There are no short term budget implications associated with the report.

5.2. *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

There are no risks directly associated with this report

5.3. *Legal*

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5.4. *Human Resources*

There are no additional implications for human resources.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1. *Performance Information and Data*

The Six Month Performance report is attached as Appendix 1.

- 6.2. ***Expected outcome for the public***
Improved economy and community benefits from the work undertaken in the last 6 months
- 6.3. ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***
The strategy and action plan is designed to be a method to organise support to target areas of need identified through business and take account of changing and future business needs of Blaenau Gwent.
- 6.4. ***Collaboration / partnership working***
The areas of collaboration are outlined in the performance report.
- 6.5. ***Integration (across service areas)***
Integration is outlined in the performance report
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
Monitoring will be done through the Council's Corporate Plan and Service business plan

Background Documents /Electronic Links

*Appendix 1 – Economic Development & Regeneration Q1 and 2
Performance Report*

Economic Development and Regeneration

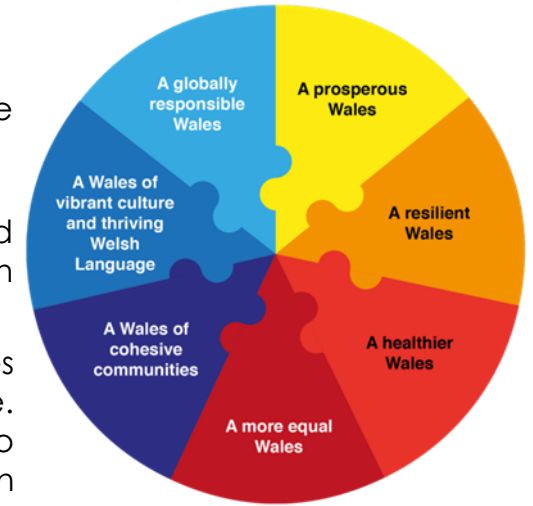
Performance Report



Foreword

The purpose of this report is to present service activity which highlights how we are contributing to the Council's overall aim of delivering all seven national well-being goals.

The following overview pages set out our performance for the period along with some associated achievements and challenges aligned to the priority areas identified in the Corporate Plan 2020/22, which are:



► To build a collaborative culture between services, partners and communities working together and with people directly to shape and deliver services. i.e. (Community Asset Transfers), ► To develop a partnership approach to maximising income reducing the impacts of Poverty, ► To actively participate in partnerships such as Tech Valleys and CCRCDD to attract investment, ► To work with partners to provide a variety of homes, ► To work with partners to provide effective employment support and access to skills development (Apprenticeships), ► To increase the start-up business rate, retention and growth of local businesses and attract new inward investment, ► To develop excellent digital including internet and mobile network connectivity that can support the needs of the whole community, ► To develop a portfolio of potential energy opportunities to deliver economic, business and community benefits, and ► To work with partners to develop a new vision for our town centres ensuring their long term future.

This report is broken down into the themes below which have been identified for the Regeneration and Economic Development Service area and support delivery of the priority areas above:

- Housing;
- Employment and Skills;
- Destination Management and Tourism;
- Energy and Digital; and
- Town Centres.

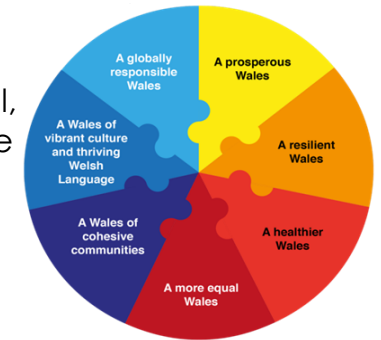
We will continue to invest in our neighbourhoods so that they are places where people are proud to live. We have prioritised economic development and regeneration in order to bring jobs, growth and opportunity to local people and businesses.

Increasing employability makes a fundamental contribution to reducing and tackling poverty and the economic status of the area. Supporting people to obtain and retain employment reduces reliance upon support services aligned to social well-being and poverty.



Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is legislation which aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The vision of this legislation is expressed in the seven National well-being goals.



The Act also puts a duty on public bodies to apply the sustainable development principle which states they 'must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

The sustainable development principle is made up of the following five ways of working, pictured below:



Collaboration



Integration



Involvement



Long Term



Prevention

Throughout this report some areas of performance that meet these ways of working are demonstrated by the above images.

Housing

The **Social Housing Grant Programme** supports delivery of affordable housing provision. In 2021/22 an increased Social Housing Grant award of **£5.5m** has been allocated to Blaenau Gwent to support delivery of social housing.



Greenacres, Tredegar
completion
Sept 2021

Golwg Y Bryn, Ebbw Vale
completion
August 2021

Ebbw Vale School Site

- The development has been named **Cefn Y Garn**
- Groundbreaking event scheduled for the period July to September 2021.
- Show home complete and open within the Autumn period 2021
 - first homes occupied April to June 2022

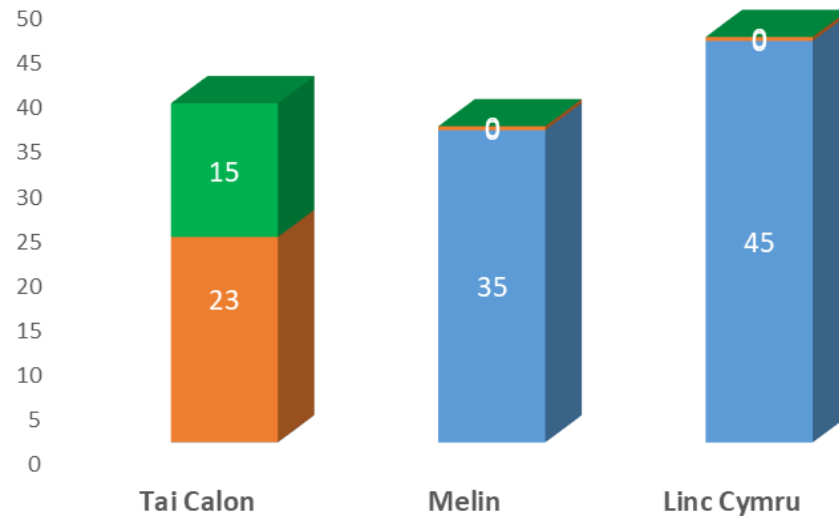
The following three social housing grant funded projects are on site and will deliver

107 Social Rent properties; and **292 Open Market** properties

Blaenau Gwent continue to work in partnership with housing partners Tai Calon, Linc Cymru, and Melin Homes to provide people with affordable homes within the Borough.



Number of social rent housing units being delivered with partners



- on site and progressing
- pre-app consultation stage
- Acquisition & Development stage



Housing

The Council works to improve homes across Blaenau Gwent with the aim of increasing energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty.



The following scheme targets improvements to homes where households are more likely to be living in severe fuel poverty. The scheme also provides a range of advice to help householders reduce their energy usage and utility bills:

► The Arbed 3 scheme was completed in 2021, following an investment of

£2,736,358 to improve the energy

efficiency of 577 properties

within the Lower Ebbw Fach area. The scheme also included a community benefit investment of £7,500 that resulted in a Poly Tunnel being installed at Tillery Campus, Abertillery.

Officers are currently working with Arbed Scheme Managers to identify a further scheme to implement.



Local Development Plan (LDP)

A Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) is currently being developed which will be used to guide development within the Borough until 2033.

The LDP identifies where new developments such as housing, employment, community facilities and roads, will go.



Development of a new plan is underway, however, delays to the consultation on the 2nd call for candidate sites due to Covid restrictions has delayed the overall timetable for the plan.

Covid-19 and restrictions meant that the consultation process was put on hold and then had to be re-started.



During the quarter 1 period (April - June)

16%

of planning consultations and enquiries were responded to within deadlines (21 days and 10)



Housing

HOMELESSNESS - During quarter 1, 30 households met the threshold for being threatened with homelessness. Of these, 22 were successfully prevented from losing their accommodation - 73%.

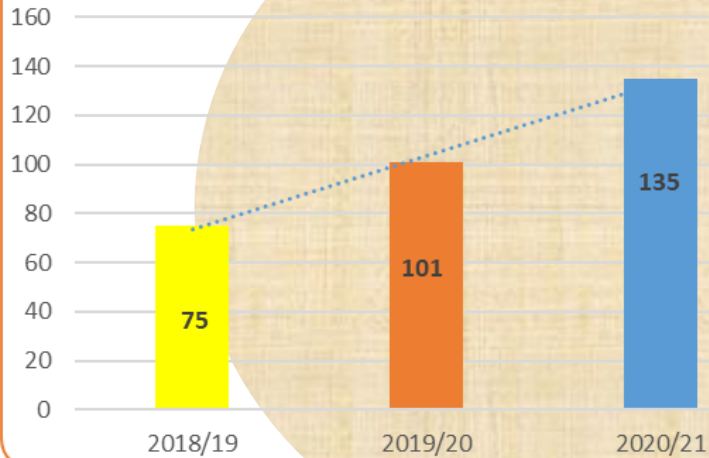


This high prevention rate has been achieved by targeting early intervention initiatives to prevent homelessness at a very early stage.



LONG TERM - Development of a Blaenau Gwent Prospectus to support social housing delivery is underway and will be produced in Quarter 2.

House building completions



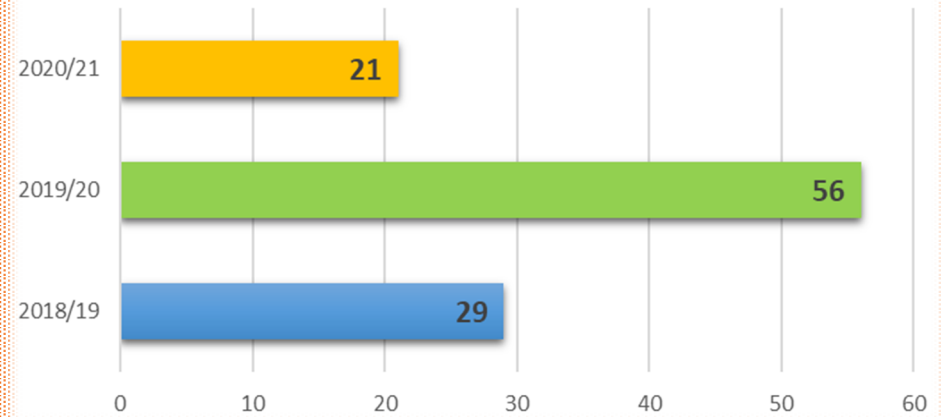
The 2020/21 figure remains below the Local Development Plan target of 233 but is the highest figure since 2016.



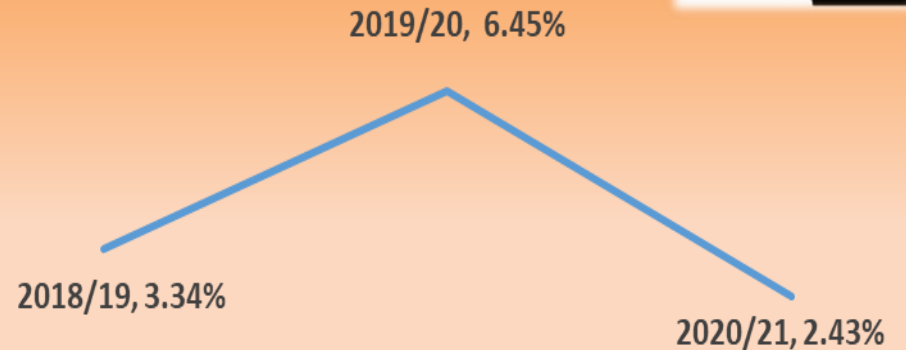
Empty properties lead to social, economic and environmental concerns. Our aim is to alleviate these concerns and in turn increase the housing supply by reducing the number of empty homes....

There is on average **867** long term empty properties yearly.

Number of empty homes brought back into use via action by local authority



The percentage of private sector dwellings that had been vacant for more than 6 months at 1 April that were returned to occupation during the year through direct action by the local authority.



Employment and Skills

The former **Abertillery** library is to be turned into a **Training Centre** especially for young people, providing them with skills to start businesses and obtain jobs in the local economy.

The Training Centre will also incorporate a jobs and training advice service. It will also house a Community Shop and Café, doubling up as a training facility and promoting healthy foods and nutrition.

Upskilling our future

Children and parent engagement sessions have been held in relation to apprenticeships and careers in engineering.



Supported work place visits for all Blaenau Gwent Schools delivering Engineering BTEC's.

LONG TERM / PREVENTION / INVOLVEMENT - The use of the Former Library building is aligned to the Council's priorities in promoting health and well-being and building fairer sustainable communities by working with local people to address poverty and unemployment.

Page 107



An apprentice has been shortlisted for the **Finance Awards Wales** (Accounting Technician)



An apprentice within our Transport section has won a **silver award** at the prestigious Skills Competition Wales

Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme -

Recruitment and induction of apprentices continues to be successful. 4/5 new companies have joined already, and some of the first companies in 2015 are now recruiting 2nd apprentices off the back of the initial success.

3 of the 7 original apprentices have successfully completed their **qualification level**

1 new apprentice and company PMB

2 Multi-skilled engineers at continental Teves

1 new apprentice and company Central fire and Security

1 new apprentice within Community Services,

1 on a full traineeship for with the internal parks department

1 completed work experience - now seeking full time employment

2 on work experience with Aneurin Leisure

Discussions with Welsh Government to expand the Aspire offering and demonstrate demand for digital apprenticeships have taken place during this quarter.

Employment and Skills

Refurbishment of the Monwell Building into an Advanced Engineering Centre

The Tech Valleys programme has a vision;

"In 2027 the South Wales Valleys and Blaenau Gwent in particular, will be a globally recognised centre for the development of new technologies, to support cutting edge industry"

In support of this vision BGCBC and Coleg Gwent have proposed to develop an Advanced Engineering Centre which will create an environment that will attract hi-tech inward investors within the Advanced Manufacturing sector.



- The proposed date for the centre to be operational and welcoming its first students is September 22.
- Work on the preparatory phase continues.
- Business case submitted to Welsh Government for the funding associated with the development phase, including the associated purchase of the equipment needed.

INVOLVEMENT - Blaenau Gwent CBC were represented and invited to speak at a Be the Spark 5-9 Club Celebration where a local Blaenau Gwent based business won Social Enterprise Start-up of the year – (Lundby Juniors) – **over 90 attendees**



Kick Start Plus is aimed at supporting new businesses from 6 months up to 3 years old, to help them develop and expand. The implementation of the programme continues, and the work undertaken by the team in their role as a gateway provider has proven successful with a number of businesses supported, **offering in excess of 80 placements.**

Industrial units, office accommodation and commercial land property portfolio is currently operating at

85% unit occupancy rate

With

615.5 jobs supported

Employment and Skills

Links with local community groups continue to be established to understand and record local need. This allows opportunities in the area to be effectively matched with known local need when contracts are awarded.

A number of benefits have been achieved during the first quarter some of which are shown later in the document.

8

Effect Funded case studies have been publicised on Social media to raise profile of funding available or business start-ups in Blaenau Gwent



The Box Works project is now nearing completion with only the final snagging stages outstanding.



The 23 custom-designed containers have been built to a high specification and include sustainable wood panelling and a special insulation layer to ensure they are warm in the winter and naturally cool in the summer. A super-fast high capacity internet connection comes as standard in all units. Tenants will also be able to enjoy the business lounge, café and chance to work with academics from the adjacent Ebbw Vale Learning Zone, in addition to

occupying office/meeting provision at the General Offices. The units will act as a hub for businesses to develop and then graduate into the higher value office provision.

- ⇒ **There is active interest in the Box units, with 8 companies showing interest to date.**
- ⇒ **An open day will shortly be arranged to show perspective tenants around the facility.**



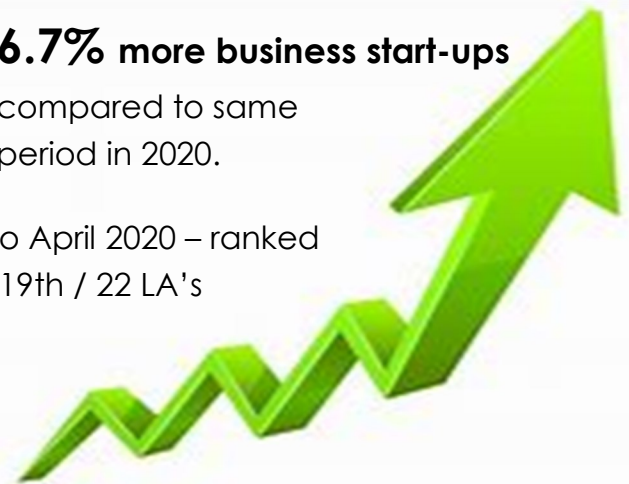
INVOLVEMENT - Women's Business Network held - attendees included 3 local business start-ups and stakeholders



COLLABORATION - The **Employment and Skills Strategy** has been produced and agreed; The plan will provide opportunities to raise aspirations and support economic growth through partnership working. It outlines a range of priorities to ensure individuals and businesses have access to the right support in terms of skills and employment.

6.7% more business start-ups compared to same period in 2020.

o April 2020 – ranked 19th / 22 LA's

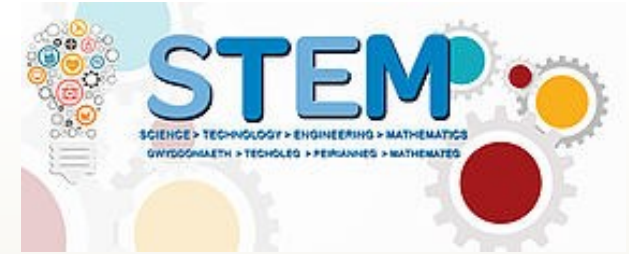


o April 2021 – ranked 9th / 22 LA's

Employment and Skills

The STEM Facilitation project continues within our schools preparing pupils for the modern work environment.

Key skills such as problem solving, digital literacy, critical analysis, communication and independent thinking are among the new skills being delivered to create a competitive workforce capable of adapting to the changing workplace.



- **Mapping of external STEM providers has been completed.**
- **Over 20 businesses consulted so far and 11 firm commitments have been made to work with schools.**
- **Discussions are in progress for a 5G project with BT and to pilot the 5G classroom.**
- **9 STEM audits have been completed.**
- **Plans have been drafted for 7 schools and include a range of business links and use of external providers, along with plans for the Enthuse programme (schools wishing to work together).**



The Lime Avenue Business Unit development is now nearing completion with only the final snagging stages outstanding.

The development comprises of 8 modern and high quality hybrid style business units to support the development of small and medium enterprise (SMEs). The units provide an open workspace arrangement on the ground floor with a mezzanine floor providing associated office provision.

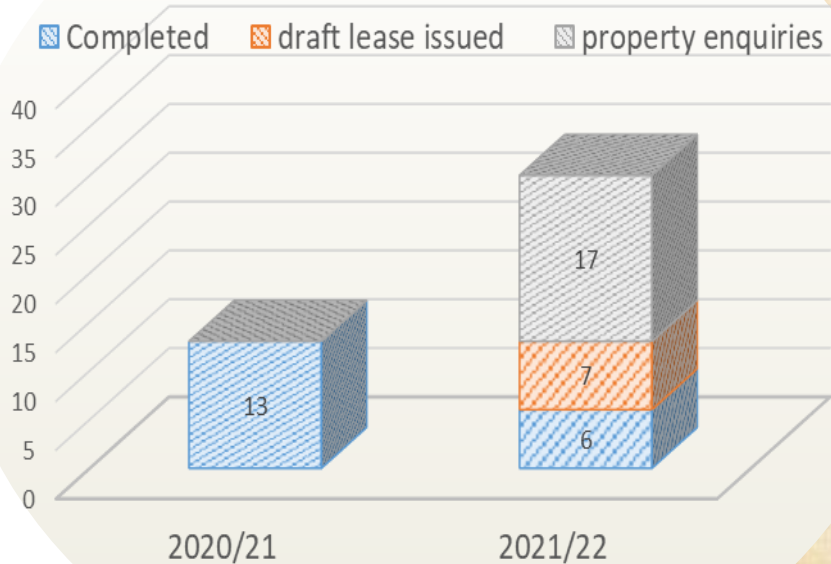
⇒ **Thales has expressed interest in taking occupation of two buildings on the development site to form part of a Thales 'campus'.**



Employment and Skills

An **additional 26,000 sq. ft.** has been added to our industrial property portfolio with the **introduction of hybrids (23,000) and 3k box hub (3k)**

BUSINESS LETTINGS



Page 111

£1.9 million Grants administered by Business and Innovation Team

| Grant scheme | No of Grants Awarded | Total Value of Grants | Status |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Self-Employment Bursary | 30 | £75,000.00 | Closed |
| Freelancer & Cultural | 74 | £185,000.00 | Closed |
| Freelancer & Cultural 'Top Up' | 56 | £140,000.00 | Closed |
| Lockdown Discretionary | 213 | £420,500.00 | Closed |
| Restrictions Discretionary (Round 1) | 226 | £452,000.00 | Closed |
| Restrictions Discretionary (Round 2) | 222 | £444,000.00 | Closed (10th March) |
| Freelancer & Cultural | 43 | £107,500.00 | Closed |
| Economic Resilience Fund | 30 | £80,000.00 | Closed (30th June 2021) |



3000+ enquiries

received and dealt with since start of pandemic to date
- **financial support, start up and property.**



894 grants provided

Destination Management & Tourism

The **Destination Management Plan 2020-25** is the strategic document that sets out our vision for a visitor-focussed way forward for tourism development in the area. It's main output is a Destination Action Plan which sets out practical steps that if taken forward jointly by all stakeholders, can make a positive difference; improving the quality of the visitor experience and growing the visitor economy in Blaenau Gwent.

The Blaenau Gwent Destination Management Plan could benefit local businesses, residents and visitors alike through developing a more prosperous economy, pleasant environment and inspiring pride in our heritage.

Work has continued with local developers to grow tourism and deliver new hospitality and retail businesses

Bunk house at Parc Bryn Bach redeveloped, also new play area and mini golf.

Worked with hospitality sector on safe operations post Covid.

4 new self-serviced accommodation businesses developed.



Promotion and encouragement has been carried out to businesses to adopt **Barod Amdani/ Good to Go.**

The 'We're Good To Go' scheme has been developed to ensure a standard-led approach to tourism across the UK with input from more than 40 industry bodies including UK Hospitality, the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, British Holiday & Holiday Parks Association, the British Beer and Pub Association and the National Caravan Council as well as destination management organisations across the UK.

Blaenau Gwent has been awarded over **£500,000** from Welsh Government to improve & create active travel routes.

Active Travel is walking, running or cycling on everyday journeys – better for health & the environment.

The **heritage and culture** of the area is one reason for visitors coming to the area. We have a special and proud history, a landscape that tells of the earliest settlers in the area and a wealth of historical sites, museums and archives that draw in visitors on a daily basis.



PREVENTION - Without a Destination Management Plan for Blaenau Gwent there will be no focus and monitoring of tourism delivery in the area. Regular business and community engagement addresses issues at an early stage or prevents them occurring in the first place.

Destination Management & Tourism

The Southern Wales consortium has put together a film highlighting places to stay and visit across the region. Guardian in Six Bells represents Blaenau Gwent.

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLg9E8ui64f_SmAywFxfQ15VC1Vi14fHDK

This quarter has been a busy time in the film industry. We are one of several areas across the UK who are working with a major producer on relocating their series production to a new site.

Extinction TV fantasy thriller series (2022) spent a weekend filming locally; Trapper Keeper a Disney fantasy series used locations in Trefil and Abertillery; BBC natural history department filmed at Trefil; Weatherman walking filmed a Brynmawr to Abergavenny walk using several local experts that met Derek along the way and visiting Parc Nant Y Waun and Brynmawr Museum.

Photography of new product took place in April focusing on walking, accommodation and hospitality. On this occasion an older couple were used as models and sites covered were Roundhouse Farm holiday lets, The Railway and the Top House.

Hosted author of the next Rough Guide for Wales

The Rough Guide to Wales is being updated and the author and his family came to cover Southern Wales in June. They stayed for a week spending the first part of their stay in Vale of Glamorgan and the second half at the new holiday lets at Roundhouse Farm. They visited the Guardian, Brynmawr Museum and Festival Park Owl Sanctuary. They requested vegan options and ate out at The Railway Trefegar and Top House, Trefil. The guided walk was the 'In the Footsteps of Nye' to Chartist Cave. The author is going to return later in the year to write a piece on 'Home of the NHS'



INVOLVEMENT - Attendance at Travel Trade showcase.—The webinar took place on 1 July with 42 travel trade and group organisers registered. We were one of 36 businesses and organisations that took part. In advance of the on line event, each group organiser received a "tastes of Southern Wales" hamper. None of the Blaenau Gwent Product took up the offer to take part so a Top 10 destination guide was presented instead.

Destination Management & Tourism

Summer Story Safaris are being set up to run in all of our town centres. Hidden in 10 shop windows in each town will be a popular children's book. The first safari has an animal theme and includes Judith Kerr's, *The Tiger who came to tea* and David Walliams *The slightly annoying elephant*.

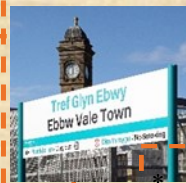
Executive member for Regeneration, Cllr Dai Davies said:

"Our town centre businesses have had a tough time with lock downs and on line shopping. We hope that our Summer Story Safaris will encourage families to explore our town centres again and while they are there find out what is available on the doorstep. You can't get an ice cream in the post or get that instant lift that a bag of pick and mix gives but our towns have lots of new shops and fun activities for children."

Ongoing **connectivity improvement work** is

positive, with works to increase rail services and complete the Heads of the Valleys dualling.

Work to link these to walking and cycling trails continues.



Work is ongoing with Costain to secure continued pedestrian access around the dualled route.



* Work with Cwm a Mynydd Local Action Group to develop trails that link to Halls Tramroad with Bryn Oer Tramroad are currently on hold.



Partnership work -



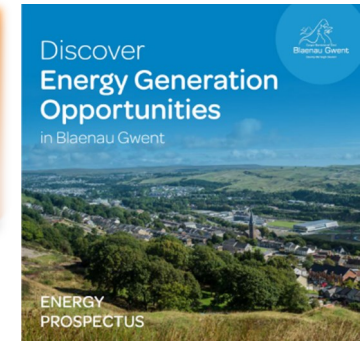
Collaborative work has taken place, with 3 Southern Wales businesses, on stills photography, destination film, hosting author and a Showcase event where 21 tourism products were promoted.

Working with Aneurin Leisure Trust on town centre Placemaking project.

Work is ongoing with Town Centre Business Development Officer on Increasing Footfall.

Energy and Digital

The **Energy Prospectus** outlines a commitment to supporting Blaenau Gwent to become a local low carbon borough through enhancing energy and carbon efficiency, reducing fuel poverty, improving the resilience of the local distribution network and maximising revenue generation potential.



Despite ongoing challenges to secure investment needed to carry out development of the energy opportunities within the prospectus, the following progress has been made so far.....

Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure – Initial regional project completed with all EV charging points having been installed across Gwent. In total **73 charge points across 35 sites** in Gwent have been installed.

As an addition to the initial project **additional residential, workplace, taxi and bus charging points** will be **installed** across Blaenau Gwent.



Hydro Generation - Initial investigation and feasibility studies are being carried out for small scale hydro generation opportunities within the borough.

Two potential sites within the wards of Cwm and Llanhilleth have been identified and up to two further sites from across the borough are to be identified for a feasibility analysis.

Where suitable opportunities exist this work could provide us with a small **portfolio of hydro generation projects that can be considered further for investment and delivery.**



Low Emission Fleet - work is ongoing to develop a plan for the transition of our current fleet to low carbon emission vehicles and the energy infrastructure that will be required to support this transition. This will include fleet and employee charge points in key locations that link with the Councils future working model.



Wind Generation projects are ongoing – Silent Valley investment approach has been agreed, the planning application will be submitted later this year.

PREVENTION - Direct Transport emissions are the first of the nine energy transitions being considered within the Decarbonisation Plan which targets us becoming Carbon Neutral by 2030. A readiness assessment has been carried out and will be used to form key actions to reduce the impact of the Councils direct transport emissions .



Energy and Digital



LONG TERM - We aim to support the development of power infrastructure for business investment readiness and to support this, discussions are ongoing with Western Power Distribution regarding the power infrastructure across Blaenau Gwent.

Opportunities to utilise Community Municipal Bonds as a way of funding **green energy related investment projects** within Blaenau Gwent will be explored going forward.



Development of Business Energy Model to enable Business Parks to achieve Net Zero Outcomes

BGCBC has become a challenge owner in the Whole System Business Research Innovation for Decarbonisation (WBRID) pilot seeking to identify innovative solutions which will support energy supply, demand and storage and to work towards creating zero energy parks as a Unique Selling Point (USP) for Blaenau Gwent.

In total 11 submissions were received from suppliers wishing to work with Blaenau Gwent in Stage 1 and following a detailed evaluation **four companies were selected** to proceed. Between February and April 2021 they worked with the Council and Welsh Government on the development of solutions that will support delivery of our challenge.

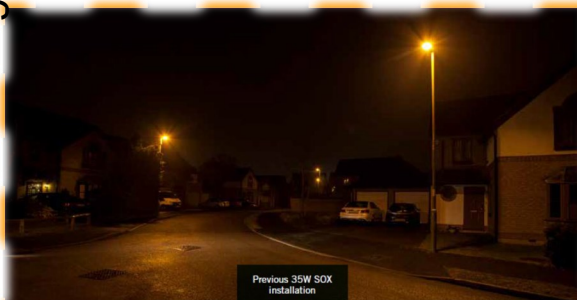
Results of Stage 1 are currently being considered in conjunction with Welsh Government, Smart Living Team with a view towards securing funding for Phase Two and selecting the preferred suppliers.

The **Refit** programme continues, installing energy efficiency measures throughout the borough.

Street Lighting replacement is now also completed. In total

6000 non-LED street lights have been replaced with LED lights.

INTEGRATION - Discussions taking place with Community Services to look at options for **f u r t h e r** phases of the Refit project.



Energy and Digital

GovTech Catalyst is a £20 million fund from Government Digital Service, UK Government to work with suppliers to solve public problems using innovative digital technology.

Working together with Durham County Council and Government Digital Service we are looking at how we can use our assets to collect information about what is going in the streets and relay that information to help deliver public services more efficiently.

'Eyes on the Street': enabling Blaenau Gwent Borough Council's vehicle fleets to collect and report data as they travel around the borough concerning recycling participation, deterioration of the highways as well as monitoring and identifying highways violations.

- Phase One confirmed that detection of pot holes, road markings and road defects was possible.
- Phase Two has focused upon deployment of the technology across the two areas of Blaenau Gwent and Durham. Technology has been installed on two vehicles used by frontline services including highways and refuse.

Phase two will continue until the summer of 2021, and once this is complete we will be able to assess whether the technology is suitable for wider scale deployment across a greater number of vehicles and coverage across the borough.



LONG TERM - We aim to develop digital infrastructure and improve connectivity within the borough by promoting digital participation.

The Blaenau Gwent Energy Catalyst Project

seeks to consider how we can generate local energy, distribute it locally and how we can use it to benefit Blaenau Gwent businesses and residents

The cover of the 'Cardiff Capital Region Energy Strategy' document. It features a large red arrow pointing right. Logos for 'Prifddinas Ranbarth Caerdydd' and 'Cardiff Capital Region' are at the top. Text includes 'Item 8 Appendix 1', 'Cardiff Capital Region Energy Strategy', and 'Funded & supported by: Gwasanaeth Ynni Energy Service'.

A Regional Energy Strategy has been developed by Cardiff Capital Region City Deal with additional support from regional stakeholders, including Local Authority Officers. Work will now commence on next steps.

INTEGRATION - If the **'Eyes on the street'** project is successful, it is hoped that with machine learning and further development it may be possible to also support the service area to consider the business case of short term patching versus long term investment in repairing road surfaces.



Town Centres



PREVENTION - The Town Centre Strategy seeks to ensure that town centres are safe and friendly communities for our residents and visitors to shop within.

This includes projects to maintain and enhance the local environment, increase business occupancy and create an environment in our town centres that encourages our residents to spend time there for work, learning and leisure. The strategy establishes a long term plan for the future of our town centres.



Trinity Chapel, Abertillery

Following the exterior of Trinity Chapel, Abertillery being originally refurbished, Blaenau Gwent Council will now work with the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, Aneurin Leisure Trust and the Welsh Government to bring the Chapel back into community use .



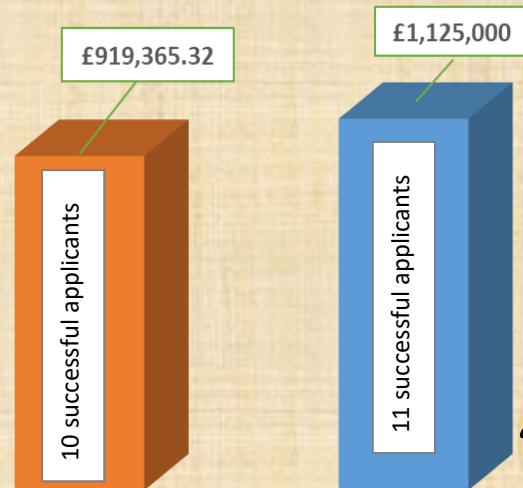
Funding from the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Programme will be used for an internal refit of the landmark building, turning it into a new home for the **town's Library and Adult Education Courses; an art gallery and a support hub offering employment and health advice.**

In addition, SmartMoneyCymru Credit Union will provide a new weekly financial loans and savings service from the Hub. There is also a plan to locate an ATM cash machine within the building.



Work is ongoing to engage with potential town centre properties across Blaenau Gwent to participate in the town centre loans and grants scheme.

Successful applications to date (funds approved)



Grants

Loans

Number of grant applications are up compared with the same period 6 months ago.

Town Centres

Work on **Ebbw Vale Placemaking Plan** continues with the first round of stakeholder engagement completed with Officers, Elected Members, Land/ Building Owners, Welsh Government, Transport for Wales, Coleg Gwent, Tech Valleys Board and Design Commission for Wales.

A draft Placemaking vision document has been circulated amongst stakeholders for their review and feedback.

Work on **Tredegar Placemaking Plan** continues. Some initial stakeholder engagement has taken place including Officers, Elected Members, Land/Building Owners, Welsh Government. The Tredegar Advisory Group have also been part of the engagement process.

Initial discussions with stakeholders are taking place regarding **placemaking** work to be undertaken in **Abertillery**. An application for funding is to be prepared.

The development of a **rail link to Abertillery** from the existing Ebbw Vale Railway (EVR) has been proposed.

The existing EVR has opened up a range of options for local residents in terms of employment opportunities and access to services and facilities, both within area and in the wider region.

The link to Abertillery, alongside increased frequency, will help improve the economic prosperity for the area and have a transformative impact for residents, businesses and the town centre through increased footfall.



LONG TERM - Tredegar Townscape Heritage Initiative - works to the NCB Town Hall (Grade 2 listed) have been delayed and a new contractor is being sought to complete the works.

Discussions regarding Heritage Lottery Funding are ongoing with Heritage Lottery Fund.



Big Arch, Ebbw Vale

- Remedial works have been completed and **CADW approval received due to its listed building status.**

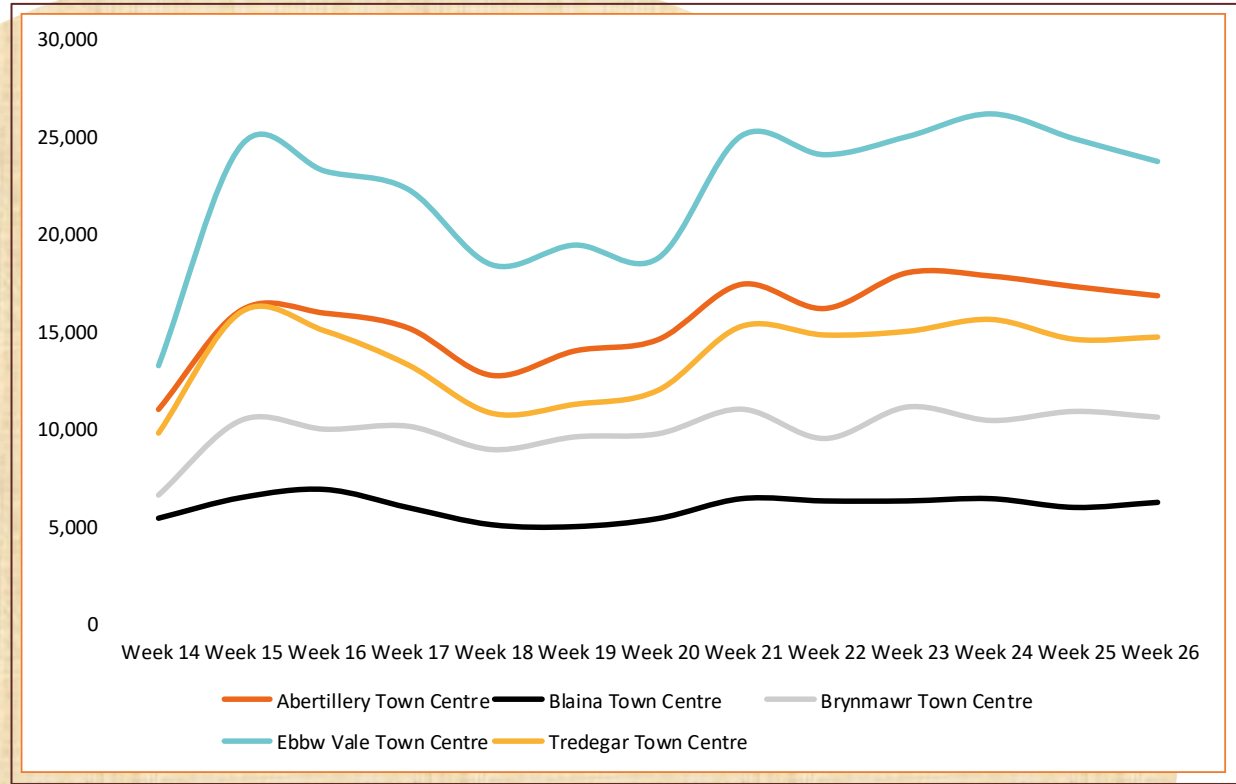
Liaison with the specialist contractor about the works is now in progress and work on site is intended to commence later this year,



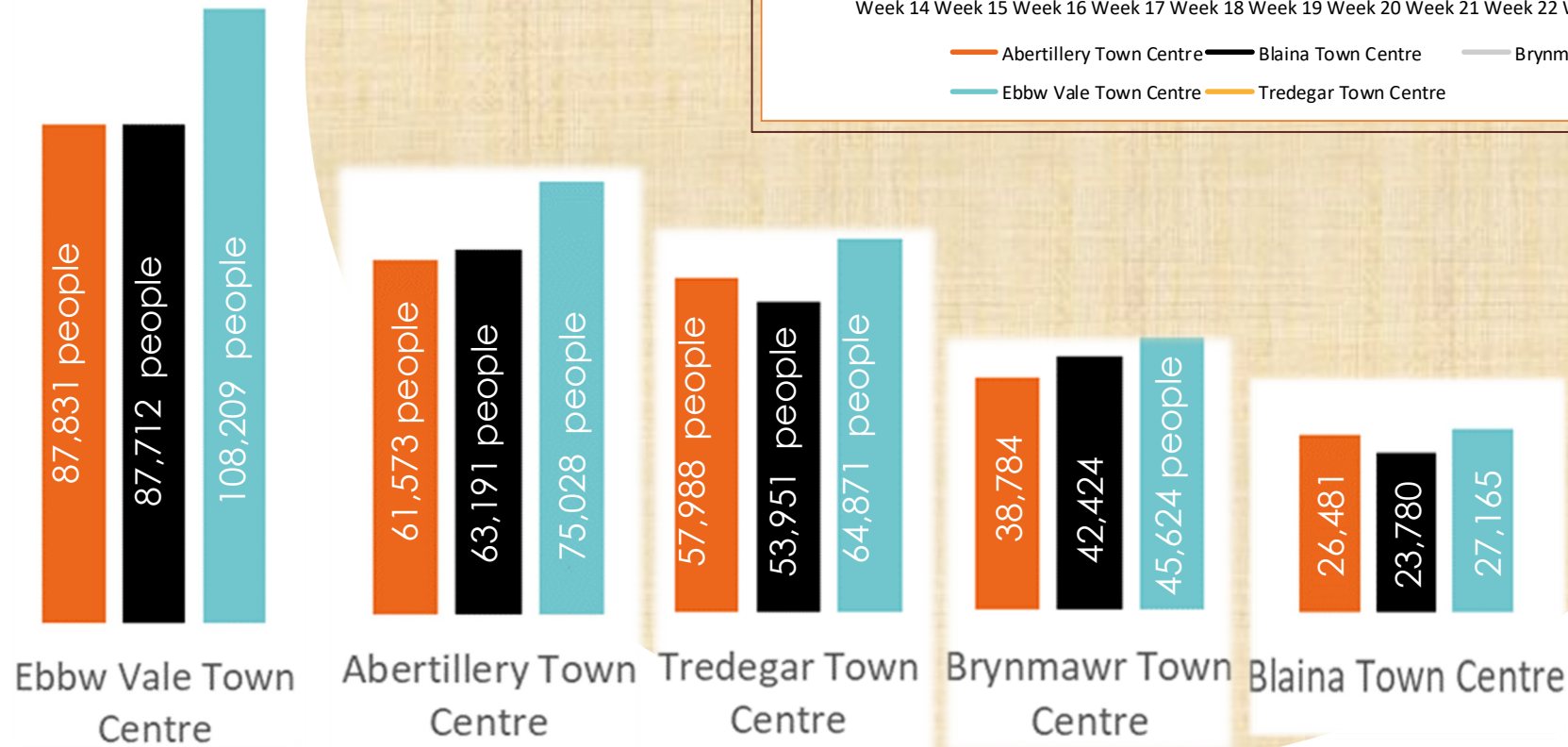
Town Centres

Footfall is an important factor influencing our town centre vitality and viability. Sensors count the number of shoppers visiting our town centres and provide analytical data on how individual town centres are performing and how shoppers are using them.

The data from footfall monitoring allows the Council to be better equipped to make evidenced based decisions on the popularity and effectiveness of current and future projects in Town Centres.



■ April ■ May ■ June



During the quarter 1 period footfall has increased each month within every town with a **total Blaenau Gwent town centre footfall of 864,612 people** over the 3 month period

Case Study - Housing Development Sites

We are committed to the regeneration and economic future of Blaenau Gwent and to working with partners to bring disused sites in the county borough back into use.



Pithead Baths, Llanhilleth - A consultation process has started and an initial consultation with residents undertaken in early 2021 to obtain their views on a residential-led development. The survey was sent to approximately 262 households. 58 responses were received with 73% rejecting the proposal on the basis of concerns around anti-social behaviour and parking. Further consultation will be undertaken with residents responding to their initial feedback on the proposal, looking at how the proposal can be designed to address the concerns raised. This will be an ongoing process with the aim of identifying an appropriate and deliverable proposal for the Pit Head Baths site.



Six Bells Colliery - Public consultation was undertaken tail end of 20/21; responses varied and will be considered in plans moving forward .



Ashvale - Work to discharge conditions associated with the funding opportunity progressing.

Civic Centre Site - The Urbanists have been commissioned to undertake an options appraisal and development framework to support the progression on the site for future development, following the Civic Centre Closure and de-cant. Commission will be concluded during Quarter 2 to inform next steps.



Sofrydd Garage - Sold to a private developer, with aspiration to develop retail and possible residential development. Council involvement going forward will be dependent on the owners aspiration.

Abertillery Leisure Centre - Surveys to determine compliant access undertaken. Registered Social Landlord engaged to consider access design options and associated traffic management to facilitate a compliant access to the site.



Case Study - Blaenau Gwent Community Benefits

Wild Flower and tree planting with Earth Science Partnership at Georgetown Primary School

esp

ENGINEERS
GEOLOGISTS
SCIENTISTS



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A donation has been made to the Community Investment Fund of £625.00 to support community activity


GRIFFITHS



Case Study - Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme celebrates National Award

The success of a pioneering Apprenticeship Programme that is breathing new life into the advanced manufacturing sector across two South Wales local authority areas has been recognised with a prestigious national award. Aspire Blaenau Gwent & Merthyr Tydfil's Shared Apprenticeship Programme won the Large Employer of the Year award at the virtual Apprenticeship Awards Cymru 2021 ceremony in June.



The Shared Apprenticeship Programme was created six years ago to tackle high unemployment and relatively low skill levels within the manufacturing industry .

The programme has directly benefited 123 apprentices as well as companies that have adopted its innovative approach. Learners are rotated around host employers to plug skills gaps by training on-the-job and working to achieve units towards their apprenticeship.

Celebrating outstanding achievement in training and apprenticeships, the Apprenticeship Awards Cymru 2021 saw 35 finalists compete in 12 categories.

Highlight of the work-based learning calendar, the awards showcased businesses and individuals who have excelled on the Welsh Government's Apprenticeship and Traineeship Programmes and gone the extra mile to achieve success during these unprecedented times.

Jointly organised by the Welsh Government and the National Training Federation for Wales (NTfW), the awards had Openreach, the UK's digital network business and passionate supporter of apprenticeships, as the headline sponsor.

The Apprenticeship Programme in Wales is funded by the Welsh Government with support from the European Social Fund. Welsh Government apprenticeship programmes have benefitted 50,360 people across South East Wales since May 2016.

Aspire's Shared Apprenticeship Programme was first established in 2015 when Ebbw Vale Enterprise Zone Board identified a significant lack of employees with skills at Level 3 and above in Blaenau Gwent. Two years later, Merthyr Tydfil joined to develop its business growth and enhance skills whilst tackling unemployment.

Aspire is now working with both Coleg y Cymoedd, who link with Coleg Gwent, and Coleg Merthyr Tydfil to foster the next generation of skilled workers through apprenticeships covering Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, ICT, Applied Science, Quality Engineering as well as Business/Commercial Administration and Finance.

With a target to recruit 20 new apprentices every year, Aspire has achieved a 100% success rate through a team facilitating their employment with hosts and then dealing with any issues as they occur. More than 30 employers have engaged with the programme.

Case Study - Electric vehicle charge points



Work is now complete on 8 new dual electric vehicle charging points in Blaenau Gwent, and they are available for use.

In partnership with its fellow local authorities in Gwent, the Council was awarded a share of £465,000 funding from the UK Government's Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) to start to develop the infrastructure for the vehicles of the future.

A joint bid was put together by the authorities, supported by the Energy Saving Trust and submitted by Blaenau Gwent Council. The project has also been supported by the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales.

In Blaenau Gwent there are now charge points installed in car parks in:



**Colliers Row, Ebbw Vale,
NP23 6ES**



**Abertillery Sports Centre,
NP13 1QD**



**King St/Worcester Street,
Brynmawr, NP23 4FD**



**High Street, Blaina,
NP13 3AF**

Blaenau Gwent Council's Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development, Councillor Dai Davies, said:

"Our commitment as a Council to protecting our environment and helping to address the climate emergency remains strong, and we continue to support renewable energy and the move towards becoming a carbon neutral organisation in the future. The use of electric vehicles is very important in this vision and we're delighted to have worked with partners across the region on this exciting project, which is a milestone in establishing an infrastructure across Gwent that will provide our residents with the opportunity to drive electric vehicles."

The Council will also shortly be consulting over the introduction of Control of Use Orders for the bays in order to ensure they are used for the intended purpose of charging vehicles.

Agenda Item 10

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **15th September 2021**
Report Subject: **Investment in Micro-Hydro Development**
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor D. Davies, Executive Member for
Regeneration and Economic Development & Deputy
Leader**
Report Submitted by: **Amy Taylor, Team Manager Regeneration
Opportunities**

| Reporting Pathway | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| 23.08.21 | 26.08.21 | 05.09.21 | | | 15.09.21 | 22.09.21 | | |

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide members with an update on progress of the Micro-Hydro Feasibility Study for Cwm and Llanhilleth wards and seek support for the next steps for this part of the Project.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 In October 2015, the Council's Executive Committee received a report on the proposed development of a Regeneration Energy Projects Programme and agreed to support the proposal for the Environment and Regeneration Directorate to continue the development of a series of Projects.

- 2.2 The series of Projects were to be designed in order to address a number of challenges including:

- Supply of lower cost energy (smarter selection of providers);
- Reducing energy losses (such improvements to building fabric);
- Reducing usage through behavioural change (using less); and
- Potentially through the generation (and movement) of energy.

- 2.3 Aligned to this, Regeneration has a commitment to managing a sustainable future energy delivery programme to allow a choice of affordable energy and to reduce fuel poverty for future generations, with the aim of:

- Improving the choice of supply;
- Developing models that enable community ownership of energy; and
- Meeting the energy needs of vulnerable households.

- 2.4 A range of measures are in place, as part of efforts to mitigate these key challenges and meet the aims set out within the Corporate Plan, including:

- Development of a local energy prospectus, as a tool to prompt and stimulate proactive engagement with the energy sector;
 - Managing a research and development programme, to support delivery of affordable renewable energy provision for business, commercial and communities; and
 - Exploring collaborative working opportunities to stimulate development including partnership working across the commercial, industrial, private and public sector.
- 2.5 As part of these measures, the Regeneration Opportunities Team have been exploring the potential to develop a range of renewable energy generation opportunities, including small scale hydro (micro-hydro) generation projects across the Borough.
- 2.6 Hydropower Generation is the term used for harnessing the energy stored in moving water and converting it into useful energy. The two main elements affecting the amount of energy that can be produced are the flow rate of the water and the height that the water will drop (the 'head'). Micro-hydro is generally defined as having an output of between 2 and 50kWp (power at full capacity).
- 2.7 In 2017, Carbon Trust reported on Hydro potential in Blaenau Gwent as part of a borough wider study of potential renewable energy generation including wind, solar and hydro schemes. Subsequently in 2018, researchers at Cardiff University were tasked with identifying sites worthy of further exploration for hydro generation. Through this work Cardiff University identified eleven sites for further identification.
- 2.8 The eleven sites identified by Cardiff University were further narrowed down by researchers at Bangor and Dublin Universities under the Dŵr Uisce project. Researchers used the estimated flows provided by Cardiff University to determine suitable turbines and the payback they would represent. Sites with high paybacks were ruled out leaving the below sites remaining:
- a) Anvil Court
 - b) Sirhowy Tributary
 - c) Cwmtillery Lake
 - d) Carno Reservoir
 - e) Silent Valley
- 2.9 The sites above were then identified as potential projects within the Blaenau Gwent Energy Prospectus which was approved by Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee in December 2019.
- 2.10 In September 2020 an application was submitted to the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme under the LEADER scheme for funding to undertake a Community Hydro Study of potential opportunities within the electoral wards of Llanhilleth and Cwm.

- 2.11 The funding was awarded in December 2020 and together with funding from within the Council we issued a Contract Notice for a supplier to undertake two work packages:
- A review of the sites previously identified through the work of Cardiff and Bangor Universities and develop full feasibility studies for up to two sites.
 - Review sites within the Cwm and Llanhilleth Wards to identify potential opportunities and select up to two sites to develop full feasibility studies.
- 2.12 As a result of the tendering process, a preferred supplier: Dulas Ltd were appointed to undertake the two work packages as detailed above. As a result of funding deadlines, Dulas started with analysis of the Cwm and Llanhilleth Wards and this report will cover the outcomes of this work package. A further report will be presented to cover the second work package and sites identified within the Energy Prospectus later this year.
- 2.13 Under the commission Dulas were asked to provide full feasibility studies for up to two sites worth further investigation and their objectives were to:
- a) Establish all sites with the potential for hydropower from an initial desk based assessment;
 - b) Site walkover visit and confirmation/revision of layout options;
 - c) Undertake catchment analysis and hydrological estimation of flow data;
 - d) Review technical options;
 - e) Estimate power output and energy generation for each site;
 - f) Carry out initial consultation with Natural Resources Eales, Western Power Distribution and the Local Planning Authority.
 - g) Estimate budget costs and revenue
- 2.14 Dulas have identified two schemes worth further investigation which are:
1. Cwm Cnyw
 2. Cwm Big
- Cwm Cynw
- 2.15 The Feasibility Study identified there is potential for a 15 – 25kW hydro scheme at Cwm Cynw with a power output of 17kW and average generation of 55MWh a year. This is the equivalent of powering 14 average homes for a year.
- 2.16 The scheme design is based on an intake 200m or so upstream from where the stream enters the culvert and a powerhouse next to the railway line in 'Granny's Wood'. The pipeline would be ~ 1,000m in length and run behind houses and across a brown-field site next to the Pit Head Baths, before crossing the B4471 via an existing underpass which is used to access

'Granny's Wood'. Please refer to **Appendix One** for site location plan and proposed site layout plan.

2.17 Dulas has provided estimate budget costs for the scheme based on quotes for equipment and grid connection costs from Western Power Distribution (WPD). The estimate cost of the scheme ranges from £120k to £240k based on a lower and upper estimate of costs based on the type of technology and equipment options available. The proposed scheme would have a design life of around 40 – 50 years. Please see **Appendix Two** for a breakdown of the costs.

2.18 Dulas has modelled the annual revenue based on a range of scenarios which includes:

- Export only at a rate of 5.5p/kWh - £3,025
- Sleeved Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) at 11p/kWh - £6,050
- Internal PPA at 13p/kWh - £7,150
- Internal PPA during a wet year at 13p/kWh - £7,930
- Internal PPA during a dry year at 13p/kWh - £6,110

Cwm Big

2.19 The Feasibility Study identified there is potential for a 20 – 30kW hydro scheme at Cwm Big with a power output of 28kW and average generation of 62mWh a year. This is the equivalent of powering 16 average homes for a year.

2.20 The scheme design is based on an intake just inside the Cwm ward boundary at Aberbeeg and a powerhouse near the A4046. The pipeline would follow an existing forestry track that services Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Cwm Big plantation. The Feasibility Study identified there is plenty of space for site compounds and construction access which would make the construction process straight forward. Please see **Appendix Three** for site location plan and proposed site layout plan.

2.21 Dulas has provided estimate budget costs for the scheme based on quotes for equipment and grid connection costs from WPD. The estimate cost of the scheme ranges from £150k to £350k based on a lower and upper estimate of costs based on the type of technology and equipment options available. The proposed scheme would have a design life of around 40 – 50 years. Please see **Appendix Four** for a breakdown of the costs.

2.22 Part of the reason for the difference between the lower and upper cost estimates for this scheme is due to the grid connection cost. Currently there is only a single phase supply to the nearby dwellings with a grid pole near the culvert entrance. This would need to be upgraded for the new grid connection which would consist of laying a new HV cable in the verge of the main road near the medical centre to a pole near the powerhouse plus installation of a 50kVA pole mounted transformer. The budget estimate received from WPD for this is £100k plus VAT.

2.23 Dulas has identified another option which could be considered for the grid connection which is a split phase connection. Dulas has indicated this option could reduce the cost of the grid connection. WPD have confirmed they will not carry out further assessments of the options without the Council commissioning a feasibility study.

2.24 Dulas has modelled the annual revenue based on a range of scenarios which includes:

- Export only at a rate of 5.5p/kWh - £3,410
- Sleeved PPA at 11p/kWh - £6,820
- Internal PPA at 13p/kWh - £8,060
- Internal PPA during a wet year at 13p/kWh - £9,490
- Internal PPA during a dry year at 13p/kWh - £6,500

3. **Options for Recommendation**

Option One – Do Nothing

3.1 The Council could choose not to take these schemes forward for further investigation and development. The projects would be closed from the current point and would only be revisited should costs significantly reduce or new technologies become available.

Option Two – Proceed with further investigation and development of one scheme

3.2 This option would consist of the Council moving forward to business stage with one of the two schemes identified. Due to the complexities of the grid connection issues at Cwm Big it would be easier to move forward with the Cwm Cynw scheme in the short term. The WPD Feasibility Study for the grid connection at Cwm Big could be commissioned at the same time to allow for full understanding of the scheme costs.

3.3 It would require the Council to secure some initial capital funds for the development of a detailed Micro-Hydro scheme to enable the preparation of a business case to proceed. This would include procurement of technical design services and surveys required with a view to developing a business case for installation and commissioning stage. As outlined in section 5 it is expected that between £15k to £30k would be required for the business case development.

3.4 Even with further work to develop the business case it is not likely that the system size would increase significantly beyond the current estimates of 17kW if at all.

Preferred Option – Option One

3.5 The preferred option based upon the findings of the feasibility study is Option One. Whilst the development of hydro generation would provide

some renewable energy to support local energy demands the level of production is extremely low when compared to the level of investment required for its initial development and ongoing operations. The scheme at Cwm Cynw offers the best potential but even with this it is likely to only be able to accommodate a 17kW system. By way of comparison a general domestic shower would be around 10kW.

3.6 It is therefore recommended that Scrutiny endorse the preferred option to not proceed further with investigations into hydro generation within the Cwm and Llanhilleth wards.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

4.1 Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 was released in February 2021 and it is the framework for planning the change and development needed in Wales over the next 20 years. It will be used to guide planning decisions made in Wales across a range of areas including energy supplies.

4.2 Every house and workplace needs heat and energy. Future Wales aims to get them in a clean way. This means using ways that don't involve things that are running out and bad for the environment such as coal and oil.

4.3 Welsh Government has set the following targets for the generation of renewable energy:

- For 70% of electricity consumption to be generated from renewable energy by 2030
- For one gigawatt of renewable energy capacity to be locally owned by 2030
- For renewable energy projects to have at least an element of local ownership from 2020

4.4 One of the future Wales Outcomes is to create 'A Wales where people live in places which are decarbonised and climate-resilient'. Decarbonisation commitments and renewable energy targets will be treated as opportunities to build a more resilient and equitable low carbon economy, develop clean and efficient transport infrastructure, improve public health and generate skilled jobs in new sectors.

Policy 17 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and associated infrastructure.

4.5 Welsh Government strongly supports the principle of developing renewable and low carbon energy from all technologies and at all scales to meet our future energy needs.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- 4.6 Welsh Government 'Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – directly aligns with local renewable energy generation. Under The Act it states:

'A prosperous Wales' goal, striving towards creating an innovative, productive and low carbon society, which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work'.

- 4.7 There is also a direct link to the well-being goal for 'A globally responsible Wales' in tackling climate change. The Act encourages long term generation thinking by public bodies to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Corporate Plan Refresh 2020-2022

- 4.8 This topic supports the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan Refresh 2020-2022 in the following areas:

- To create strong and environmentally smart communities we are taking a strategic approach to the management of our land in different ways;
- To be a carbon neutral Council by 2030;
- To develop a portfolio of potential energy opportunities to deliver economic, business and community benefits; and
- To develop a more commercial organisation to generate income and deliver cost reductions to make local services sustainable and raise money to re-invest in our priorities.

Energy Prospectus

- 4.9 The Energy Prospectus identified opportunities for energy projects across Blaenau Gwent including hydro powered energy generation, Wind Energy generation, EV charging infrastructure and district heating. The proposed Micro-Hydro scheme is one of these opportunities.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 *Impact on Budget*

The cost estimate breakdown for the schemes are contained in Appendices Two and Four. Final costings will not be known until a full detailed scheme design including identification of the technology to be purchased has been undertaken.

Option One – Do Nothing.

- 5.2 There would be no financial costs associated with Option One.

Option Two –Proceed with further investigation and development of one scheme

- 5.3 Financial costs associated with Option Two will depend upon the final size of the scheme, complexities of the scheme and who is appointed to undertake the work. For the purposes of this report we have assumed that the scheme would remain at 17kW.
- 5.4 The detailed design stage of the Project would cost between £15k to £30k. This would be used to support development of an overall business case for the implementation of the scheme.
- 5.5 As the focus is on providing the energy generated to the local community it has been considered that the energy generated from the Cwm Cynw scheme could be provided to either Llanhilleth Industrial Estate or Llanhilleth Institute. This would be based on the sleeved PPA scenario above. However, this would only generate approximately £6,000 p.a.
- 5.6 The table below provides a simple payback analysis of the project. It shows that the project would have payback of around 40 years.

| | |
|--------------------|-------------|
| Total Capital Cost | £240,000 |
| Annual Revenues | £6,000 p.a. |
| Simple Payback | 40 Years |

- 5.7 The costs and payback period calculated above do not make provision for operational costs and lifetime replacement costs. Although the turbines could last up to 40 years within this lifetime there will be parts that will require replacement. This could include major replacements e.g. main turbine. The life and/or maintenance requirements of the pipework is currently unknown.

Risk including Mitigating Actions

- 5.8 There is a risk that once the detailed design stage has taken place that the Council decides not to take these scheme forward.
- 5.9 There is a risk that planning consent and abstraction consent is not be approved for the project. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council would be the planning authority for the project. If the planning consent is refused there would be no opportunity to appeal the decision.
- 5.10 There are risks around landownership for the project. The land that the pipework and infrastructure will need to cross is currently in mixed ownership therefore negotiation and agreement with landowners will be required in order for the project to proceed.
- 5.11 Although technology continually improves there is a risk that there would be noise pollution to nearby receptors. The turbine when operating may generate noise that could present a slight disturbance to nearby properties. This may result in negative feedback from local residents in close proximity.

5.12 There is a risk that ongoing maintenance would likely be high and whilst the turbine would have an overall life of around 40 years it would need some significant replacements of parts during this period.

5.9 Risk will be managed throughout the project in line with the Council's risk management strategy and a risk register shall be established following approval of this report.

Legal

5.10 Procurement to appoint suitably qualified consultants was completed in line with the Council's Contract and Procurement Rules (CPRs) and Procurement regulations. The procurement was advertised on Sell2Wales and other required platforms.

Human Resources

5.11 Project management would be led within Regeneration with support from other departments including Finance, Procurement, Estates and Planning.

5.12 Technical and design support will be provided from within the Council's technical service team where possible and where parts of the technology are outside of their area of expertise support will be sought from Welsh Government Energy Service and/or external technical specialists in the area of hydro generation technology.

6. Supporting Evidence

Performance Information and Data

6.1 Welsh Government have set the following targets for the generation of renewable energy across Wales:

- For 70% of electricity consumption to be generated from renewable energy by 2030.
- For one gigawatt of renewable energy capacity to be locally owned by 2030.
- For renewable energy projects to have at least an element of local ownership from 2020.

6.2 Alongside installation of the Micro-Hydro scheme we would also look to monitor overall performance, energy generation, carbon savings and financial savings. Performance monitoring arrangements will be established during the development stage of the Project and would start being monitored once the installation has been commissioned.

Expected outcome for the public

6.3 Increasing the amount of renewable energy generated locally and providing this to the local community will help reduce fuel poverty for local businesses and allow them to benefit from access to local renewable energy sources.

6.4 By offering the community green bond shares in the Project through the CMI scheme will provide community ownership of renewables and raise awareness of the work the Council is undertaking with local residents.

6.5 Increasing local renewable energy will also help to reduce the amount of carbon the Council utilises and our impact upon the global environment.

Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)

6.6 Council Officers have been providing support and background information of the ward areas to consultants Dulas and feedback on proposed schemes. Recommendation of sites from Elected Members were provided to Dulas to investigate.

6.7 Officers from within Technical Services have been consulted on this report and have confirmed that they support the preferred option of this report.

Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)

6.8 Targets around renewable energy have been set by Welsh Government and these will also be supported by Carbon Reduction targets. Development of locally owned renewable energy will help Blaenau Gwent meet these targets.

6.9 The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and in order to decarbonise for the future we need to look for a range of projects including renewable energy generation and energy efficiency.

Preventative focus

6.10 Climate change can be prevented by reducing our overall impact upon the Planet. Increasing locally generated renewable energy would help to reduce our overall impact and mitigate against climate change.

Collaboration / partnership working

6.11 Opportunities for collaboration with partnership working will be explored with a range of potential partners including Dwr Cymru and potential local energy users.

Integration (across service areas)

6.12 Officers from across several service areas have involved in discussions on the project and kept up to date on progress. It is intended that officers will continue to be involved throughout the development of the designs and overall business case for the Project.

6.13 The Team Manager Natural Environment has participated in discussions with the consultants Dulas and given support for the Cwm Cynw Scheme which would link up with the active travel route at 'Granny's Wood'. Opportunities to utilise the energy generated by the scheme locally have been considered. The more energy that is used locally the more the financial case for the Project improves. This will be discussed further in the impact on budget section of this report.

Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions

6.14 Development of renewable energy generation will support the Council to meet its decarbonisation targets and support overall reduction of carbon emissions.

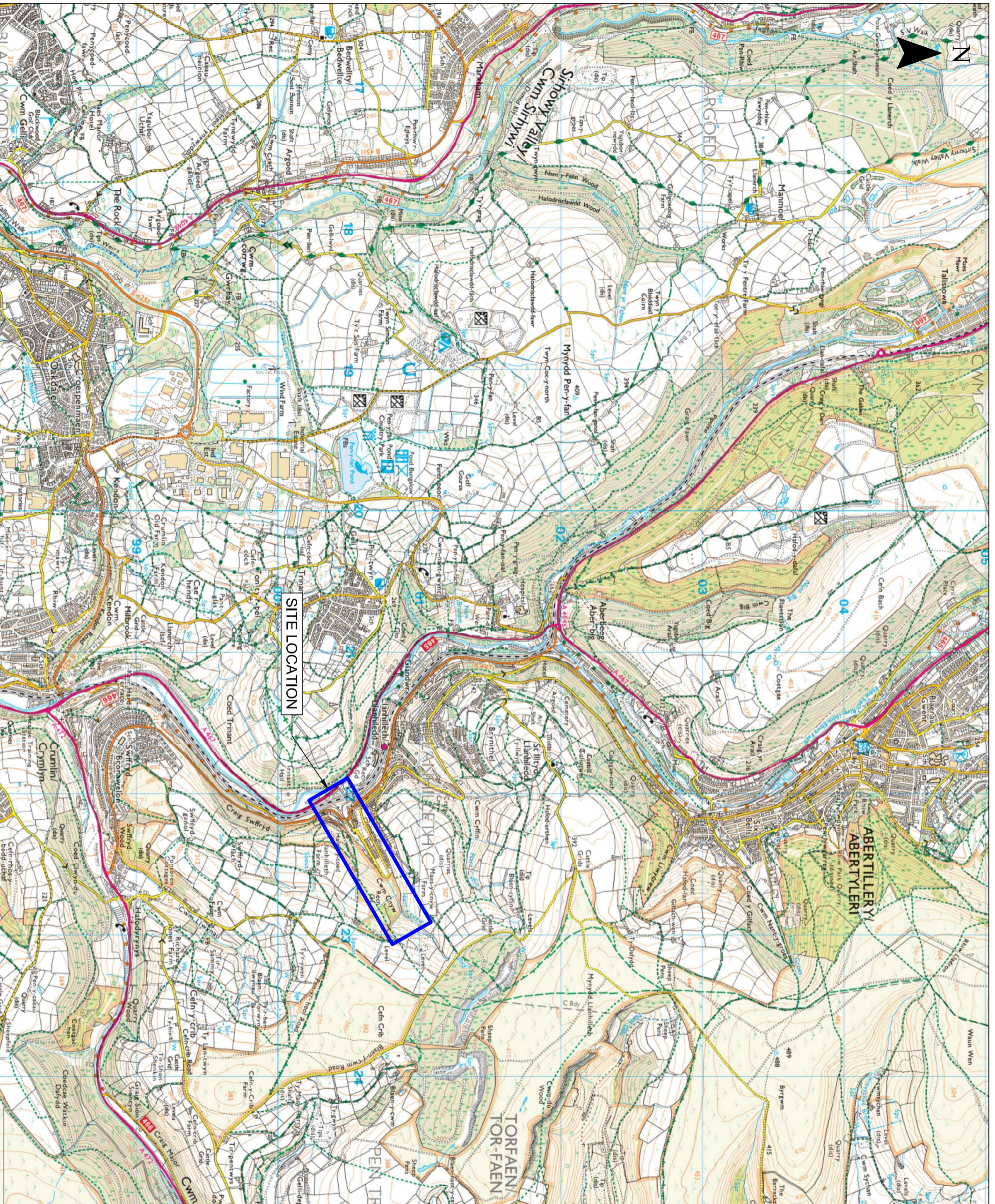
7. Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 Monitoring of the project will be done through the Council's business plan reporting process and by providing progress reports through the political process.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix One – Cwm Cynw Site Location Plan and Proposed Site Layout Plan*
- *Appendix Two – Cwm Cynw Cost Breakdown*
- *Appendix Three – Cwm Big Site Location Plan and Proposed Site Layout Plan*
- *Appendix Four – Cwm Big Cost Breakdown*

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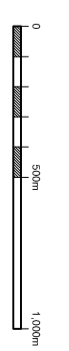


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LOCATION OF PROPOSED CWM CNYW HYDRO SCHEME

NOTES
FOR SITE LAYOUT SEE HD03136-MAP-15



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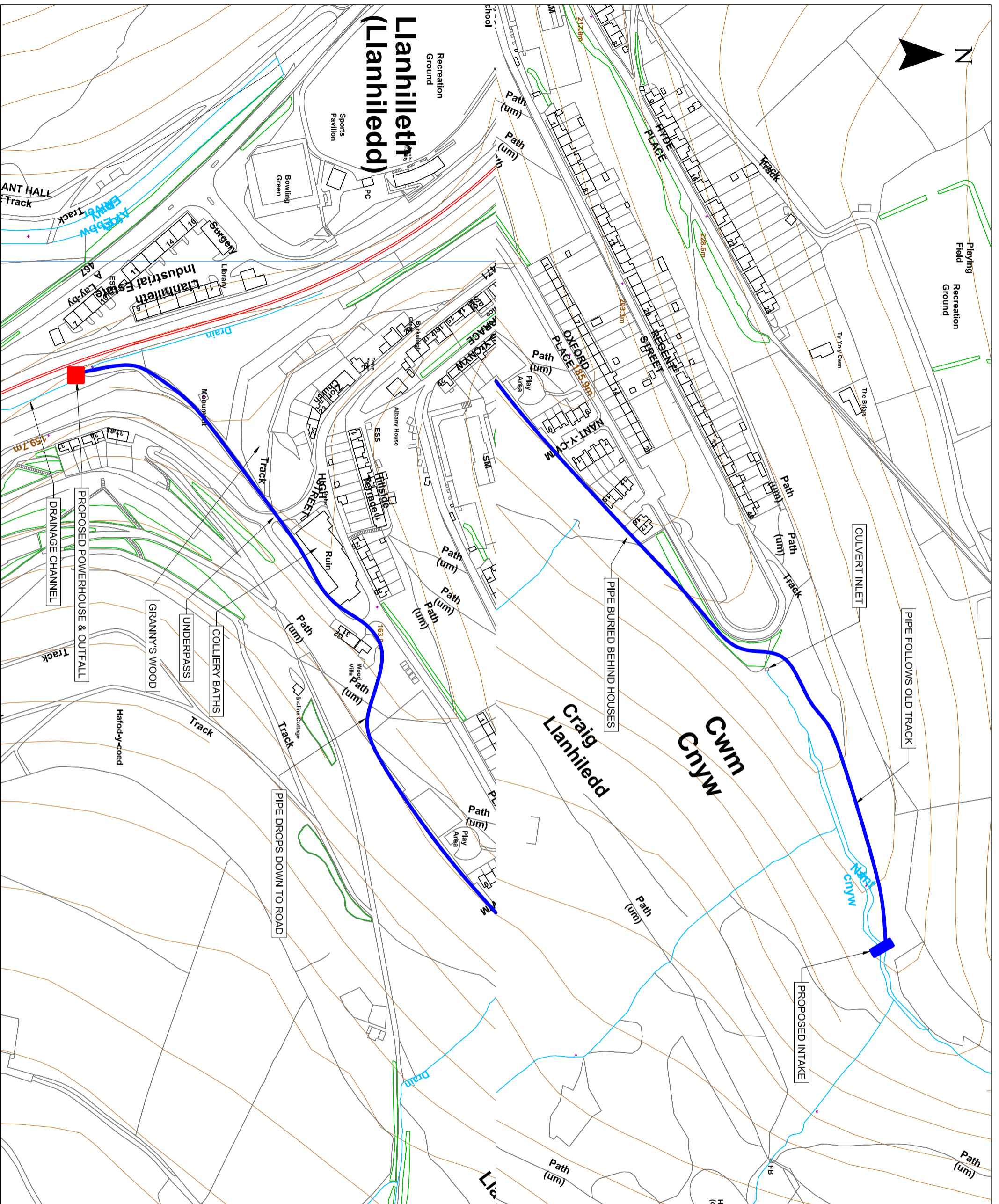
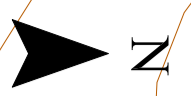
| REV | DATE | NAME | CHKD | DESCRIPTION |
|-----|-----------|------|------|-----------------------------|
| A | 26 MAR 21 | MP | - | FIRST ISSUE FOR FEASIBILITY |



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POWYS, SY20 8AX, UNITED KINGDOM
TEL: +44(0)1654 705000 FAX: +44(0)1654 703000
www.dulas.org.uk

CLIENT: BLAENAU GWENT CBC
PROJECT: HYDRO RESOURCE ASSESSMENT
LOCATION: BLAENAU GWENT, SOUTH WALES

PROJECT No: HD03136 SCALE: 1:25,000 at A3
DRAWING No: HD03136-MAP-14 SHEET: 1 of 1 REVISION: A



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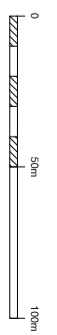
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PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT FOR CWM CNYW HYDRO SCHEME

NOTES

- INTAKE SO 22807 00867
- POWERHOUSE SO 22080 00342
- OUTFALL SO 22087 00335

— PIPELINE



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CLIENT: **BLAENAU GWENT CBC**
 PROJECT: **HYDRO RESOURCE ASSESSMENT**
 LOCATION: **BLAENAU GWENT, SOUTH WALES**

PROJECT No: **HD03136** SCALE: **1:2,500 at A3**

DRAWING TITLE: **CWM CNYW HYDRO DETAILED SITE LAYOUT**
 DRAWING No: **HD03136-MAP-17** SHEET: **1 of 1** REVISION: **A**

Appendix Two – Cwm Cynw Cost Breakdown

Following receipt of budget quotes the budget costs for the Cwm Cynw scheme is as follows:

| | Lower estimate | Upper estimate |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Detailed design & tender pack | £15,000 | £30,000 |
| Project management & site supervision | £15,000 | £25,000 |
| Turbine, generator & control | £20,000 | £30,000 |
| Pipeline material | £15,000 | £25,000 |
| Civil works | £30,000 | £100,000 |
| Grid connection | £20,000 | £25,000 |
| Commissioning | £5,000 | £5,000 |
| Total budget cost (exc. VAT) | £120,000 | £240,000 |

Operational Costs

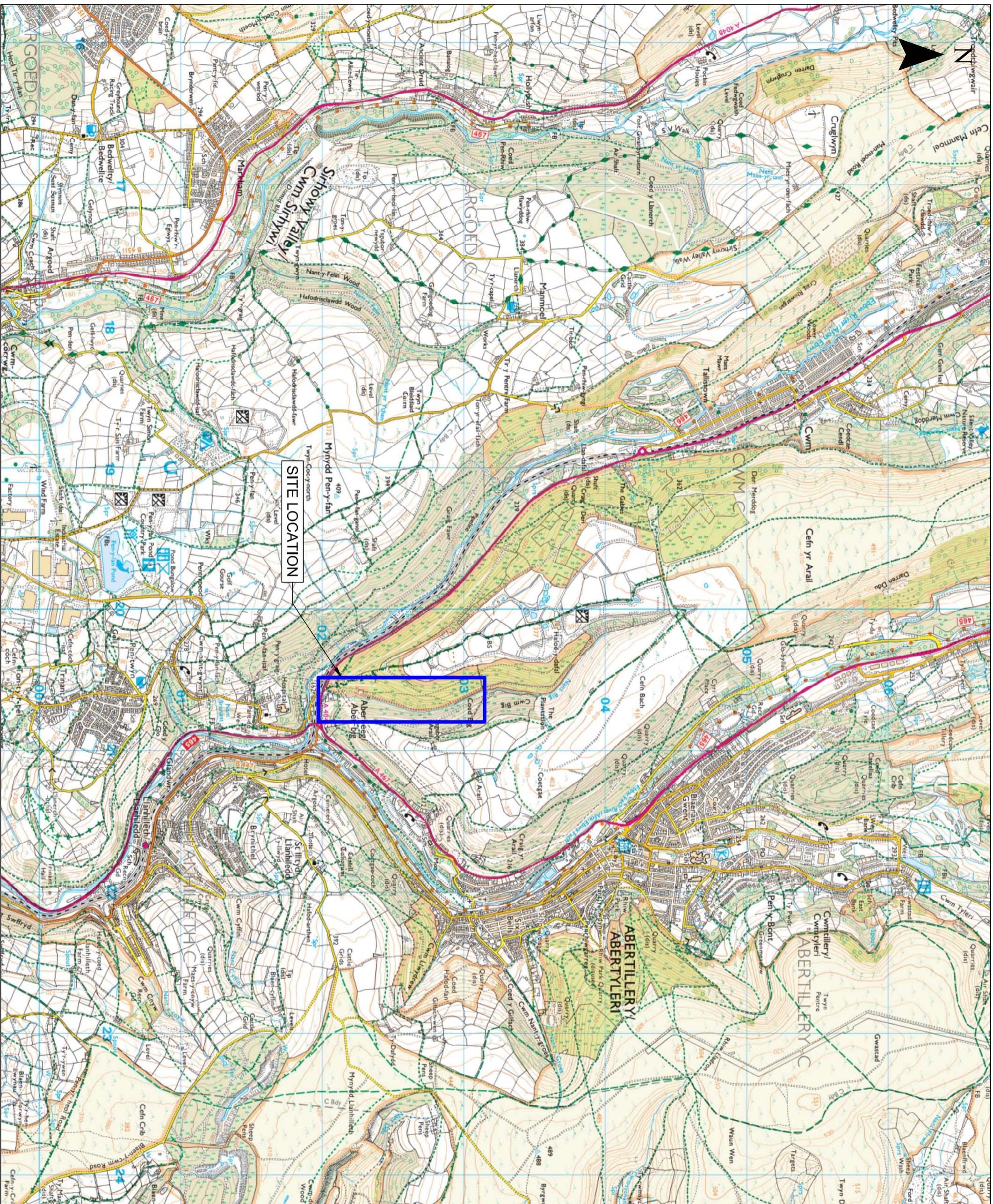
Operating costs have been taken as a nominal 20% of revenue – actual costs will vary depending on site specific variable as well as Council protocols for infrastructure management.

The proposed scheme would have a design life of around 40 – 50 years with electro-mechanical refurbishment every 15 – 20 years.

Grid Connection - WPD Budget Estimate

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| WPD Reference | 3985873 |
| Connection | 25kVA 3-phase 400v connection |
| Description of works | WPD to install new pole, stay & overhead span with a LV underground service |
| Contestable works | £18,515 |
| Non-contestable works | £1,223 |
| VAT at 20% | £3,948 |
| Total | £23,686 |

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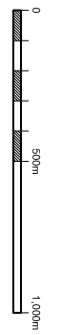
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LOCATION OF PROPOSED CWM BIG HYDRO SCHEME

NOTES

FOR SITE LAYOUT SEE HD03136-MAP-11



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 www.dulas.org.uk

CLIENT: **BLAENAU GWENT CBC**
 PROJECT: **HYDRO RESOURCE ASSESSMENT**
 LOCATION: **BLAENAU GWENT, SOUTH WALES**








DRAWING TITLE: **CWM BIG HYDRO SITE LOCATION**
 DRAWING NO: **HD03136-MAP-10** SHEET: **1 of 1** REVISION: **A**

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NOTES


Legend

-  Cwm Big Catchment
-  Cwm Big Pipeline
-  Cwm Big Structures
-  Site of Special Scientific Interest
-  Local Nature Reserve
-  Grade II Listed Building
-  Scheduled Monument

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| REV | DATE | NAME | CHKD | DESCRIPTION |
|-----|---------|------|------|-------------|
| A | 26/3/21 | RK | MP | FEASIBILITY |

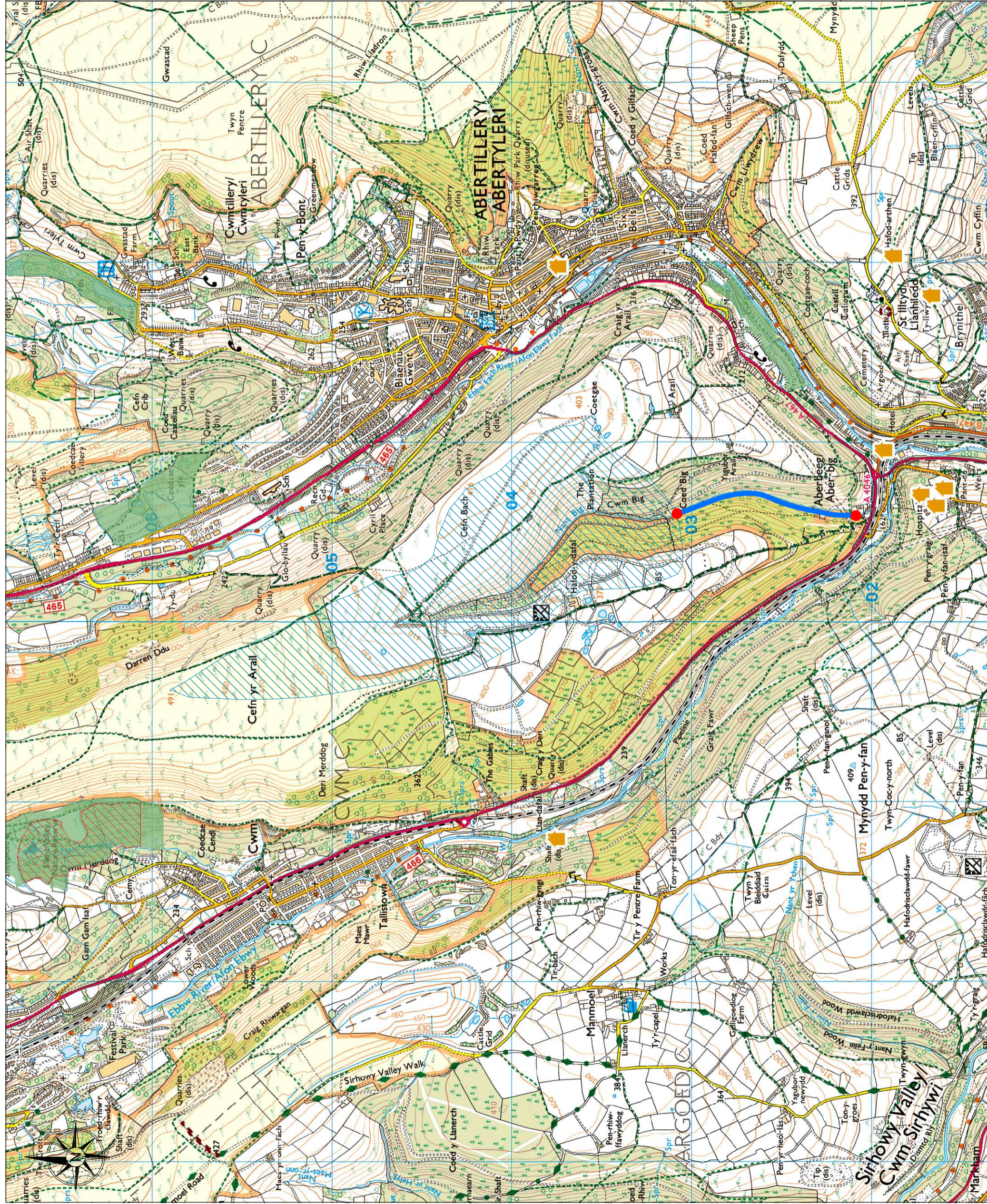


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CLIENT: **BLAENAU GWENT CBC**
 PROJECT: **HYDRO RESOURCE ASSESSMENT**
 LOCATION: **BLAENAU GWENT, SOUTH WALES**
 PROJECT No.: SCALE: 1:20,000 (A3)
 DRAWING TITLE: **CWM BIG CONSTRAINTS MAP**

| | | |
|----------------|-------|----------|
| DRAWING No. | SHEET | REVISION |
| HD03136-MAP-12 | 0 | A |



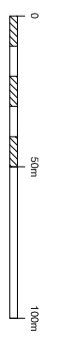
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PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT FOR CWM BIG HYDRO SCHEME

NOTES

- INTAKE SO 20615 03055
- POWERHOUSE SO 20590 02075
- OUTFALL SO 20595 02070

- PIPELINE
- BURIED ELECTRICITY CABLE



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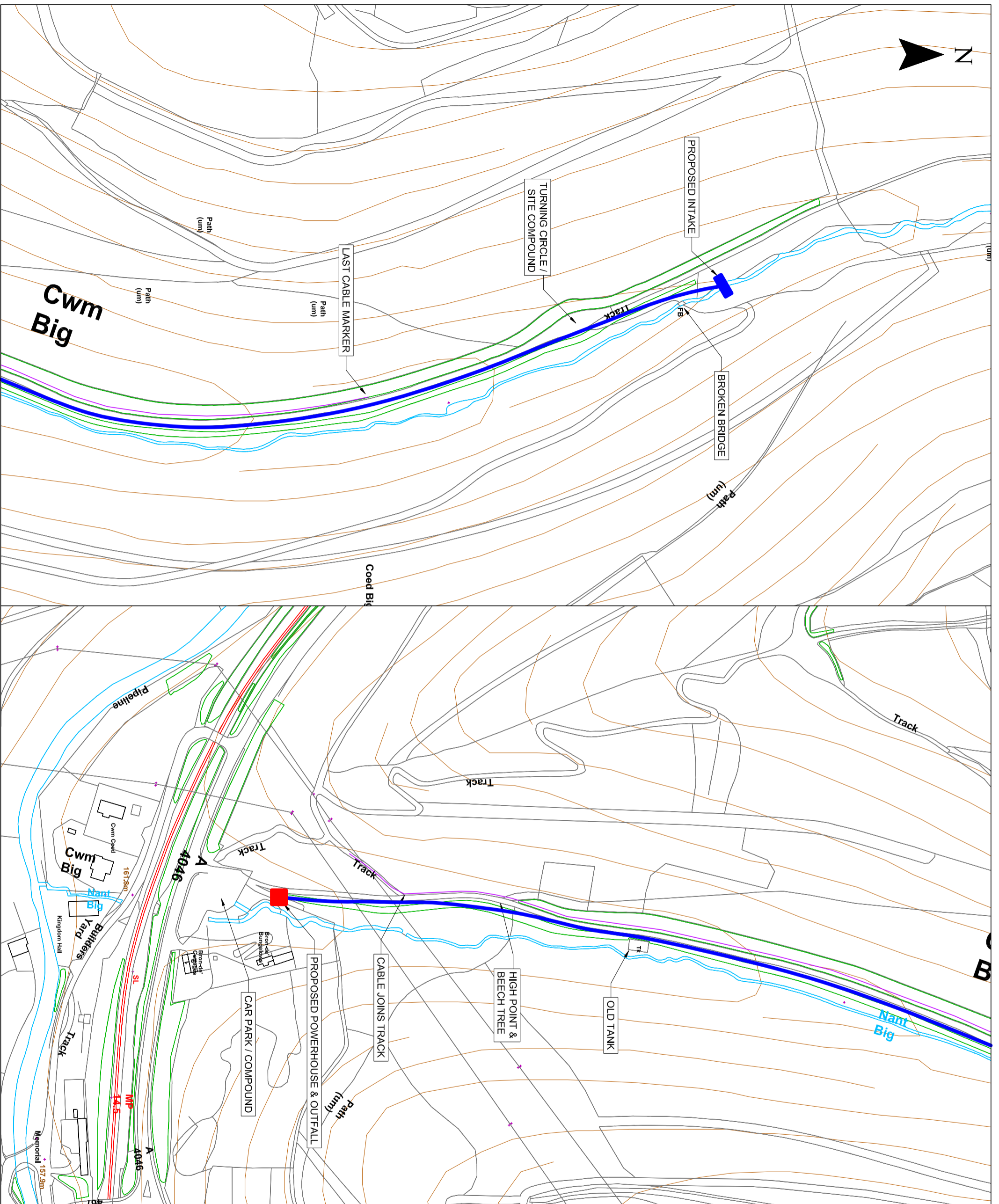
| REV | DATE | NAME | CHKD | DESCRIPTION |
|-----|-----------|------|------|-----------------------------|
| A | 26 MAR 21 | MP | - | FIRST ISSUE FOR FEASIBILITY |



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CLIENT: BLAENAU GWENT CBC
PROJECT: HYDRO RESOURCE ASSESSMENT
LOCATION: BLAENAU GWENT, SOUTH WALES

PROJECT No: HD03136 SCALE: 1:2,500 at A3
DRAWING TITLE: CWM BIG HYDRO DETAILED SITE LAYOUT
DRAWING No: HD03136-MAP-13 SHEET: 1 of 1 REVISION: A



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Appendix Four – Cwm Big Cost Breakdown

Following receipt of budget quotes the budget costs for the Cwm Big scheme is as follows:

| | Lower estimate | Upper estimate |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Detailed design & tender pack | £15,000 | £30,000 |
| Project management & site supervision | £15,000 | £25,000 |
| Turbine, generator & control | £30,000 | £50,000 |
| Pipeline materials | £20,000 | £40,000 |
| Civil works | £40,000 | £100,000 |
| Grid connection | £20,000 | £100,000 |
| Commissioning | £5,000 | £5,000 |
| Total budget cost (exc. VAT) | £150,000 | £350,000 |

Operational Costs

Operating costs have been taken as a nominal 20% of revenue – actual costs will vary depending on site specific variables as well as Council protocols for infrastructure management.

The proposed scheme would have a design life of around 40 – 50 years with electro-mechanical refurbishment every 15 – 20 years.

Grid Connection – WPD budget estimate

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| WPD reference | 3985868 | 3985883 |
| Connection | 25kVA 3-phase 400V | 30kW 3-phase 400V |
| Description of works | WPD to excavate & lay 11kV cable, establish PMT with connection for 25kVA | WPD to install a 11kV cable & PMT with a 30kW connection |
| Contestable works | £95,995 | £95,995 |
| Non-contestable works | £4,524 | £4,524 |
| VAT at 20% | £20,104 | £20,104 |
| Total | £120,623 | £120,623 |

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Agenda Item 11

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **15th September 2021**
Report Subject: **Partnership Delivery Approach – Town Centres**
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor D. Davies, Executive Member for
Regeneration and Economic Development & Deputy
Leader**
Report Submitted by: **Amy Taylor, Team Manager Regeneration
Opportunities**

| Reporting Pathway | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| 15.06.21 | x | | | | x | x | | |

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. To seek support for the formulation of Town Centre Advisory Boards across the Town Centres of Abertillery, Brynmawr and Ebbw Vale to support a partnership delivery approach for future project delivery.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1. In 2015, Members provided approval for the formulation of an Advisory Board to support delivery of the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) and Vibrant and Viable Places (VVP) Programmes within the Town of Tredegar.
- 2.2. The establishment of an Advisory Board was an obligation under the funding terms and conditions of both the THI and VVP programmes. It was intended that the Board would oversee the delivery of projects for both funding programmes and it would be a consultative body who would advise on the control and management of the THI and VVP initiatives in Tredegar.
- 2.3. Since 2015, the Advisory Board has worked alongside Council Officers and Elected Members to deliver projects in Tredegar and this approach has received positive feedback from all stakeholders involved.
- 2.4. A placemaking approach is being developed across the Towns within Blaenau Gwent. These will establish key visions and projects to deliver across each of the Towns but there are some challenges we face in order to deliver on these plans.
- 2.5. The Council only has limited financial and human resources in order to deliver projects. Therefore, we need to look at ways we can involve other key stakeholders and partners to achieve our vision.

- 2.6. The Tredegar Advisory Board has provided a platform for both discussion, development and delivery of projects. Adopting a similar approach across each of the other towns could help the Council to support projects across each of the Towns supported by a wide range of stakeholders.
- 2.7. Stakeholders could include potential funders, project delivery partners, Elected Members, business forms and any other key groups.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

Option One

- 3.1. That the Members support and recommend approval by the Executive Committee for the formation of a series of Advisory Boards for the Town Centres of Abertillery, Brynmawr and Ebbw Vale based upon the Tredegar Advisory Board approach and acknowledge the draft Terms of Reference (**Appendix One**). The Advisory Board shall act as a consultative body to oversee development and delivery of Town Centre Strategies and Plans.
- 3.2. Each shall start with a small membership identified by members of the Town Centres Task and Finish Group alongside Officers. The membership can then be expanded and developed further as discussions develop.

Option Two

- 3.3. No action is taken and delivery continues using existing approaches and mechanisms for engagement and consultation.

Preferred Option

- 3.4. Option one is the preferred option and we propose that the Advisory Board is initially established with members for a one-year term up until the Welsh Local Government Elections in 2022.
- 3.5. If the initial one-year term is successful, the boards would continue and board members would serve for up to a 3-year period.
- 3.6. The Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration will be invited to chair the first meeting of each of the Boards. In their first meeting each Board will then nominate and select a chairperson to oversee the term of the Board (initially one-year, three years thereafter).

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

- 4.1. The report supports the following Corporate Plan priorities:
 - To protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure to benefit our communities;
 - To support a fairer sustainable economy and community; and

- An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities.

The Town Centre strategy will consider existing infrastructure within our town centres and explore ways that this can change to support regeneration activity.

4.2. It also supports delivery of the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan:

- Safe and friendly communities;
- To look after and protect the environment;
- To forge new pathways to prosperity; and
- To encourage and enable people to make healthy lifestyle choices in the places that they live, learn, work and play

The Town Centre strategy will seek to ensure that our town centres are safe and friendly communities for our residents and visitors to shop within. This will include projects to maintain and enhance the local environment, increase business occupancy and create an environment in our town centres that encourages our residents to spend time there for work, learning and leisure.

4.3. In supporting our statutory responsibilities towards the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act, the Town Centre Strategy will support in creating:

- A more prosperous Wales;
- A resilient Wales; and
- A Wales of cohesive communities

5. Implications Against Each Option

Cost

5.1. There are no direct cost implications associated with this report.

Risk including Mitigating Actions

5.2. There is a risk that new Advisory Boards are not as successful as the Board that has been operating in Tredegar. To mitigate this, we will adapt and refine the Advisory Board approach to ensure that it continues to support project delivery. Should the Advisory Board approach not be successful and cause barriers to project delivery we will review the approach and any further changes that may be required.

5.3. There is a risk that the Advisory Board does not support a proposed approach for a Town Centre. In these cases we will be able to utilise the feedback from the Advisory Board to understand the issues/barriers and use this to adapt our approach to ensure a positive outcome.

5.4. There is a risk that we are unable to properly resource and support Advisory Board set up across all Towns identified in section 3.1. As a result of the placemaking work already carried out set up will start with the set-up of the

Advisory Boards in Brynmawr and Ebbw Vale. Once these are fully set-up we will move onto Abertillery.

Legal

- 5.5. A terms of reference will be established for the members of the Advisory Board and these will be reviewed alongside the stakeholders and the Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development at each of the initial meetings of the Advisory Boards.

Human Resources

- 5.6. Overseeing projects approved by the Advisory Boards may have implications on existing staffing resources from Officers in Regeneration and where possible we will seek to perform a supporting role to the Advisory Boards. It will act as a key stakeholder for Projects in each of the respective areas.
- 5.7. Setting up advisory boards across all the Towns at the same time could have resourcing issues and so we are proposing to start with Brynmawr and Ebbw Vale followed by Abertillery.

6. Supporting Evidence

Performance Information and Data

- 6.1. Annual reports of the Advisory Boards will be prepared and reported to the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee. This will enable monitoring of performance of the Advisory Boards and areas for further development.

Expected outcome for the public

- 6.2. It is hoped that by bringing Advisory Boards together we will be able to deliver projects that encourage future use of our Town Centres. Changing the way our Town Centres operate and offering a diverse range of uses would improve the variety of services that residents have access to.

Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)

- 6.3. Advisory Boards provide a mechanism for engagement with key stakeholders across each of the Towns. They can bring forward their own proposals / thoughts for projects for consultation with other Board Members and they can also provide their thoughts / feedback on proposals put forward by other Board Members or the Local Authority.

Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)

- 6.4. In the long term the Council needs to find ways to work with Stakeholders across Blaenau Gwent but with only limited resources we need to find ways of encouraging other stakeholders to develop and deliver projects. The Council

can still support these projects but accountability and resourcing could be brought forward from other organisations. This could result in projects receiving greater local support and increase long term sustainability.

Preventative focus

- 6.5. By establishing Advisory Boards now, we hope to prevent further deterioration of our Town Centres. They all face significant challenges to survive but bringing groups of stakeholders who want to support and help could prevent them from facing even bigger challenges in the future.

Collaboration / partnership working

- 6.6. The Advisory Boards rely on collaboration / partnership working in order to be successful. By bringing local stakeholders together it is hoped that they can all work together to identify and support projects that will benefit their Towns.

Integration(across service areas)

- 6.7. The Advisory Boards will be utilised by the Regeneration Team and other service areas as a means of engaging with key stakeholders across the Town Centres. It will set up the means of contact for engagement about potential projects across the Towns.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

- 7.1. As advised in section 6.1 performance monitoring will be carried out annually and reported through the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme. It will also be reported on through the Regeneration Business Plan.

8. Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix One – Terms of Reference, Advisory Board*

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[insert town name] Town Advisory Board

Terms of Reference 2021

1. Statutory Authority

- 1.1 The Advisory Board (which shall now be named “The [insert town name] Town Advisory Board”) is not constituted as a formal Committee of the Council under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and is not empowered to discharge any executive functions under the Local Government Act 2000.

2. Objectives

- 2.1 The [insert town name] Town Advisory Board will be responsible for overseeing the management of the Regeneration Programme and ensure the following key principles are applied to the methodology of the programme delivery:
- a. To assist in designing, programming and delivering events.
 - b. To assist the selection process.
 - c. To ensure the emergent interpretive and access proposals in accord with the underlying vision for the project.
 - d. To develop further the interpretive ideas and links with relevant audiences.
 - e. To develop further detailed briefs on:
 - Educational delivery
 - Community involvement
 - f. To advise on how the scheme might be best developed.
 - g. To have a long term advisory involvement in the planning, operation, and programming of the project.

3. Constituent Members

- 3.1 The [insert town name] Town Advisory Board shall consist of one representative of each of the following:
- Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development & Deputy Leader (BGCBC)
 - Ward Member
 - Town Council
 - Business Forum
 - Tai Calon
 - Coalfields Regeneration Trust
 - BGCBC Officers in an advisory capacity (as requested)
 - And any other local organisations that may be co-opted from time to time

4. Power of the Advisory Board

- 4.1 Subject to the overall policy and control of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Executive and Scrutiny Committees (or any other appropriate Committee of the County Borough Council) the responsibility of the Advisory Board shall be advisory and consultative only and for the avoidance of doubt the Advisory Board shall not be empowered to do anything which shall conflict with this role or with the Policy for the time being in force of the County Borough of Blaenau Gwent as applied to the act or matter under discussion.

5. Ownership

- 5.1 All properties deemed eligible for funding are will be a mix of public and private ownership. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council are responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the immediate public realm (including highway).

6. Membership of the Advisory Board

- 6.1 Membership of the Advisory Board shall be confined to members of the Organisations specified in Article 3.1 hereof. Each organisation shall in May of each year at their respective annual meetings appoint one representative to serve on the Advisory Board for the ensuing 12 months or during such time until they cease to be members of the appropriate organisation by reason of death, resignation, cease of membership, disqualification or otherwise.
- 6.2 Each organisation may nominate, under the hand of its proper officer, a deputy for any Member appointed by each organisation to attend and to vote at any meeting of the Advisory Board in place of the member so appointed.
- 6.3 If at any time any member of the Advisory Board shall cease to be a Member of the organisation by whom he was appointed to the Advisory Board, his membership of the Advisory Board shall forthwith determine provided that a representative member shall not be deemed to have ceased to be a member of the organisation by whom he was appointed if on or before the day on which he goes out of office, he has been re-elected a member of that organisation.
- 6.4 If by reason of death, resignation, loss of qualification disqualification, cessor of membership of the appointing organisation, failure to attend meetings or in any other manner there shall be a vacancy in the number of representatives of either of the organisations on the Advisory Board permitted under the terms of this Constitution, the organisation in whose representation the vacancy occurs may forthwith fill such vacancy, and the person so elected shall hold office as member of the Board until such time as the person whose place he fills would regularly retire and shall then retire.

7. Meetings

- 7.1 The Advisory Board shall hold 6 meetings at least in every year for the transaction of general business and may hold such other meetings at such intervals as they find necessary or convenient. The first meeting of the Advisory Board shall be held on a date to be determined by the Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development & Deputy Leader of Blaenau Gwent

county Borough Council, with subsequent meetings also being chaired by the elected chairperson.

8. Notice

- 8.1 Three clear days at least before a meeting of the Advisory Board, the Committee Clerk shall cause a summons to attend the meeting, specifying the business proposed to be transacted thereat and signed by him/her, to be left at, or sent by post to, the usual place of residence of every representative Member of the Advisory Board or such other place as may be requested by a representative member.

9. Chairman

- 9.1 The first business at the meeting shall be for the Executive Member to agree and confirm the terms of reference of the Advisory Board with its newly elected Board Members and to agree an elected Chairperson for the remaining duration of the programme.
- 9.2 If a representative member fails to attend three successive meetings of the Advisory Board, the organisation by whom he was appointed may forthwith declare his office to be vacant and his membership of the Advisory Board shall thereupon determine. Any such declaration of vacancy shall forthwith be signified in writing to the Management Board by the organisation concerned.

10. Special Meeting

- 10.1 The Chairman of the Advisory Board may call a Special Meeting at any time, and of the receipt by him of a requisition signed by at least three representative members of the Advisory Board, and setting forth the nature of the matter requiring consideration shall call a Special Meeting of the Board within seven days.
- 10.2 A notice summoning any special meeting shall have thereon the matter to be discussed at the said special meeting.

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Agenda Item 12

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **15th December 2021**
Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme: 3rd November 2021**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr David Davies, Deputy Leader and Executive Member Regeneration and Economic Development**
Report Submitted by: **Cllr John Hill, Chair of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**

| Reporting Pathway | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| x | x | | | | 15.09.21 | | | |

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present to Members the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 3rd November 2021 for discussion and agreement.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Scrutiny Work Programmes are key aspects of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and support the requirements of the Constitution.
 - 2.2 The topics set out in the Forward Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's revised Corporate Plan, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
 - 2.3 Effective work programmes are essential to ensure that the work of scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services.
 - 2.4 The Committee's Forward Work Programme was agreed in June 2021, recognising the fluidity of the document to enable the Committee to respond to urgent and emerging issues, and included timescales when reports will be considered by the Committee. The work programme is managed and implemented by the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer under the direction of the Chair and Committee.
 - 2.5 The forward work programme for the forthcoming meeting will be presented to Committee on a 6 weekly cycle in order that Members can consider the programme of work; request information is included within the reports, as appropriate and / or make amendments to the work programme.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1:** The Scrutiny Committee consider the Forward Work Programme for the meeting 3rd November 2021, and

- Make any amendments to the topics scheduled for the meetings;
- Suggest any additional invitees that the committee requires to fully consider the reports; and
- Request any additional information to be included with regards to the topics to be discussed.

3.2 **Option 2:** The Scrutiny Committee agree the Forward Programme for the meeting 3rd November 2021, as presented.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Forward Work Programme – Meeting on 3rd November 2021.

Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme

| Date | Topic | Purpose | Lead | Executive / Council |
|--|---|--|----------------|---------------------|
| Wednesday 3rd November 2021 Deadline: 20th October 2021 | Aneurin Bevan report | Pre-Decision To consider and support the report findings and recommend approval to the Executive. | Moe Forouzan | Executive |
| | Lime Avenue Business Units and Box Works Closure report | Performance Monitoring Members to receive the closure report. | Nick Landers | Executive |
| | Tredegear Place Making Plan | Pre Decision Endorse the proposals for placemaking in Tredegear | Amy Taylor | Executive |
| | STEM Programme | Performance Monitoring Performance Monitoring report for Members. | Beth McPherson | Executive |
| | Kickstart Employment Placement | Performance Monitoring Performance Monitoring report for Members. | Beth McPherson | Executive |
| | Performance Information on the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Quarterly | Performance Monitoring Members to consider the activity of Blaenau Gwent Council as part of the overall CCRC and influence areas of focus. | Ellie Fry | Council |
| | Ebbw Vale Placemaking Plan | Pre Decision Endorse the proposals for placemaking in Ebbw Vale | Amy Taylor | Executive |

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