

# Economic Development and Regeneration

## Performance Report



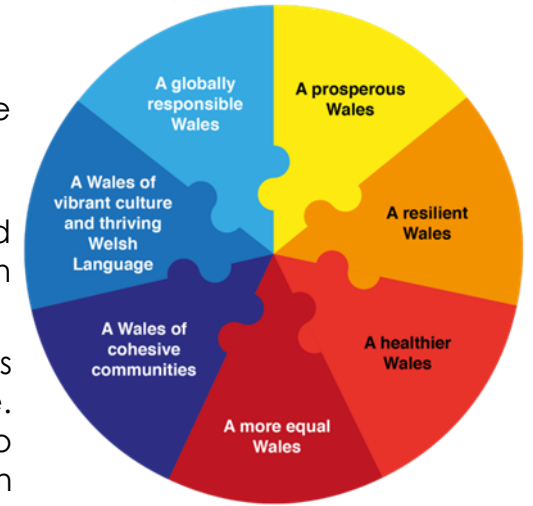
July 2021



# 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.

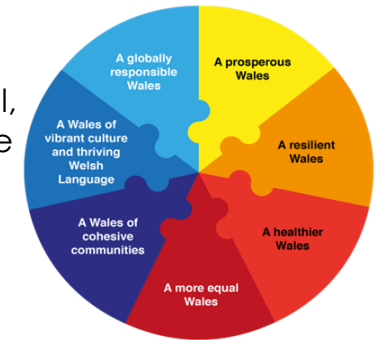
We will continue to invest in our neighbourhoods so that they are places where people are proud to live. We have prioritised economic development and regeneration in order to bring jobs, growth and opportunity to local people and businesses.



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**

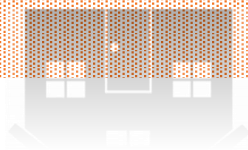


**Prevention**

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

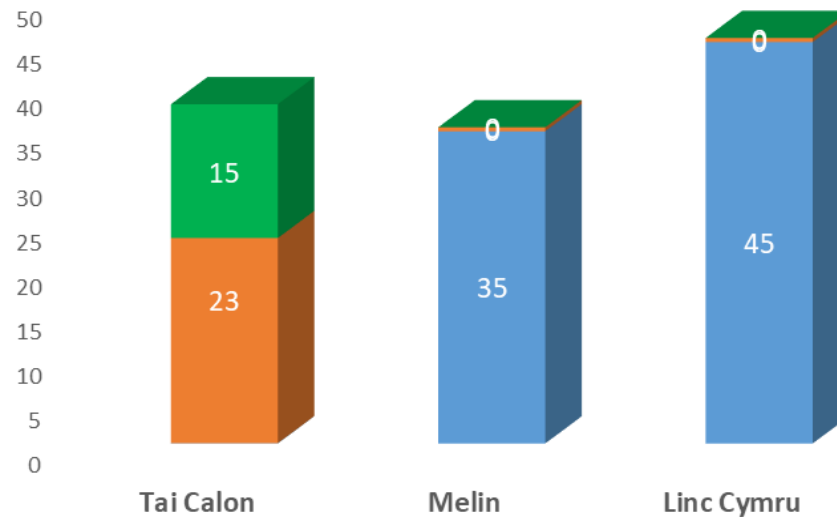
**107 Social Rent** properties; and **292 Open Market** properties

## COLLABORATION & INTEGRATION

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.

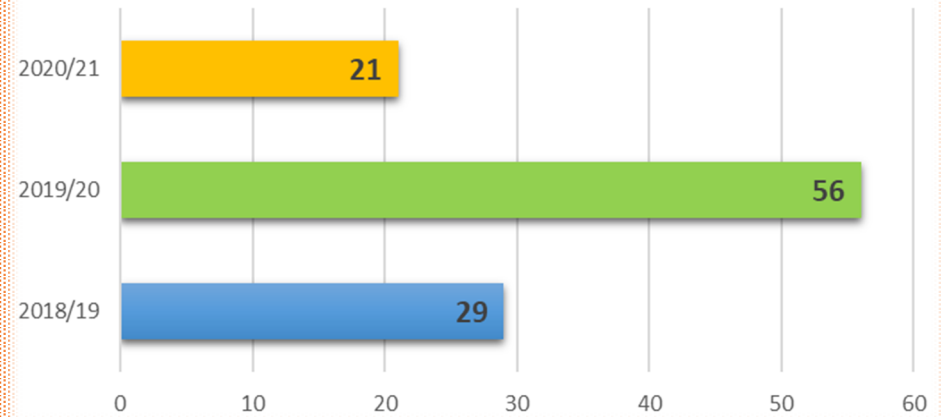


**LONG TERM** - Development of a Blaenau Gwent Prospectus to support social housing delivery is underway and will be produced in Quarter 2.

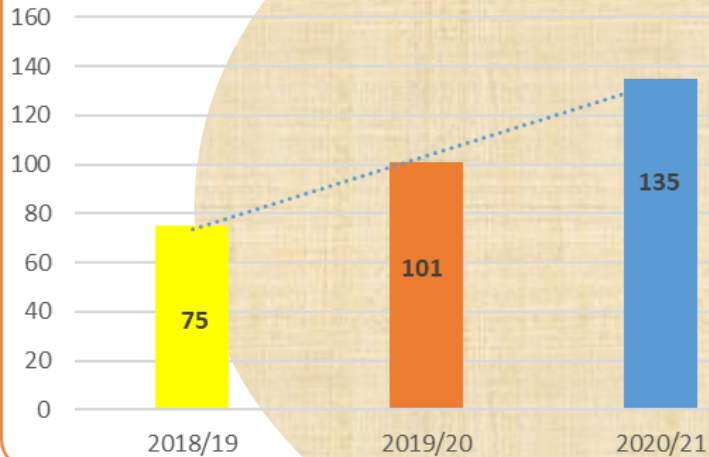
Empty properties lead to social, economic and environmental concerns. Our aim is to alleviate these concerns and in turn increase the housing supply by reducing the number of empty homes....

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

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

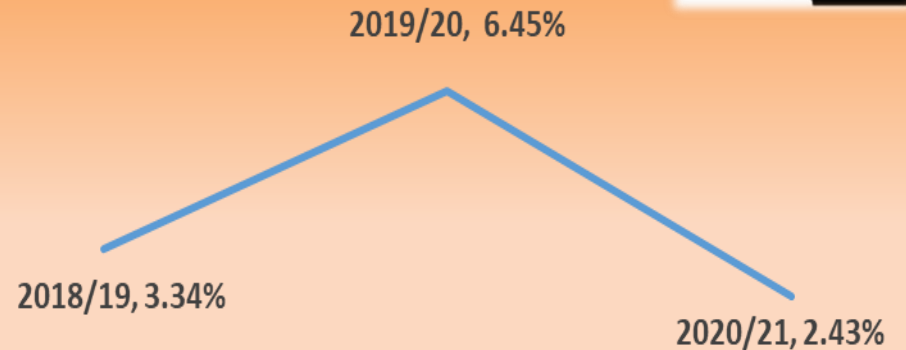


House building completions



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

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.



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



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.

**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

## Community Benefits

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.



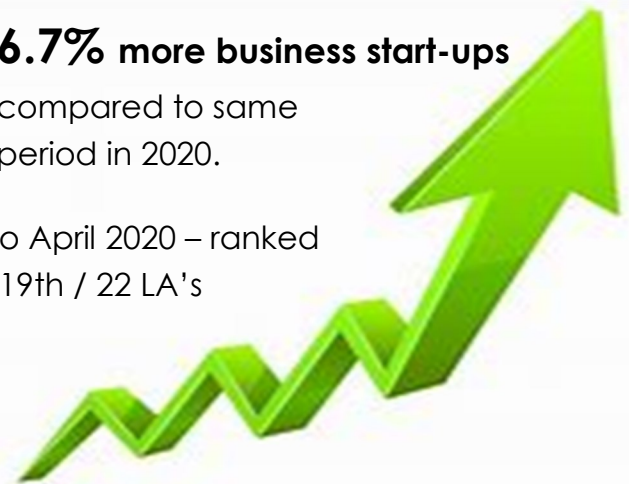
**INVOLVEMENT** - Women's Business Network held - attendees included 3 local business start-ups and stakeholders



**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

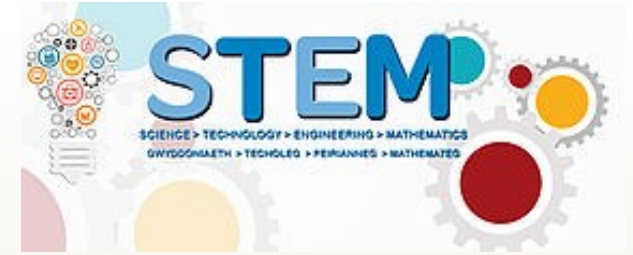


o April 2021 – ranked 9th / 22 LA's

# 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'.**

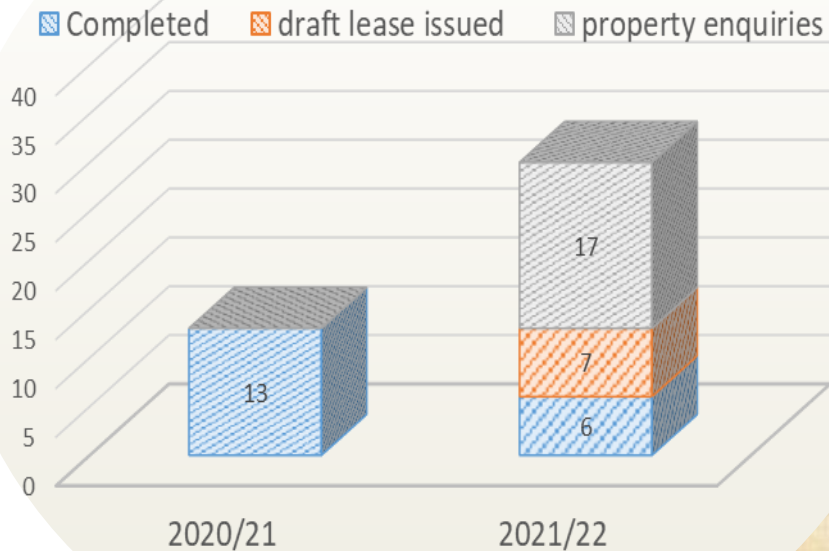




# Employment and Skills

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



## £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.

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.



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.



**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](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

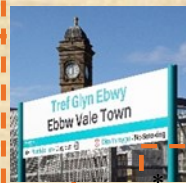
**Summer Story Safaris** are being set up to run in all of our town centres. Hidden in 10 shop windows in each town will be a popular children's book. The first safari has an animal theme and includes Judith Kerr's, *The Tiger who came to tea* and David Walliams *The slightly annoying elephant*.

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.

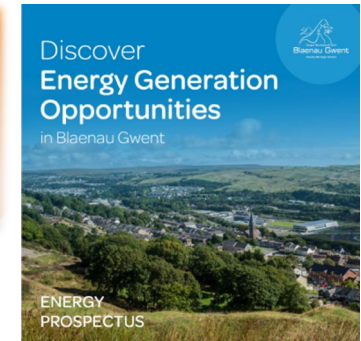
Work is ongoing with Town Centre Business Development Officer on Increasing Footfall.



# 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.



**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 .



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

# 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.

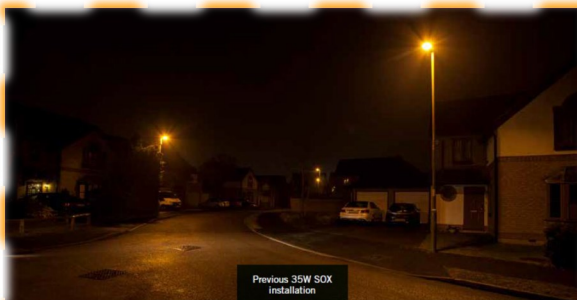
Results of Stage 1 are currently being considered in conjunction with Welsh Government, Smart Living Team with a view towards securing funding for Phase Two and selecting the preferred suppliers.

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 &amp; 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



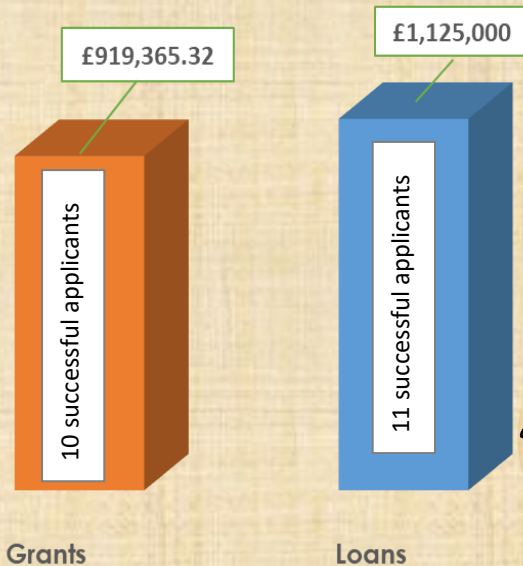
**PREVENTION - The Town Centre Strategy** seeks to ensure that town centres are safe and friendly communities for our residents and visitors to shop within.

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.

## TOWN CENTRE LOANS AND GRANTS SCHEME

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)



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



## 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.





# Town Centres

Development of Town Centre regeneration Plans are ongoing

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.**

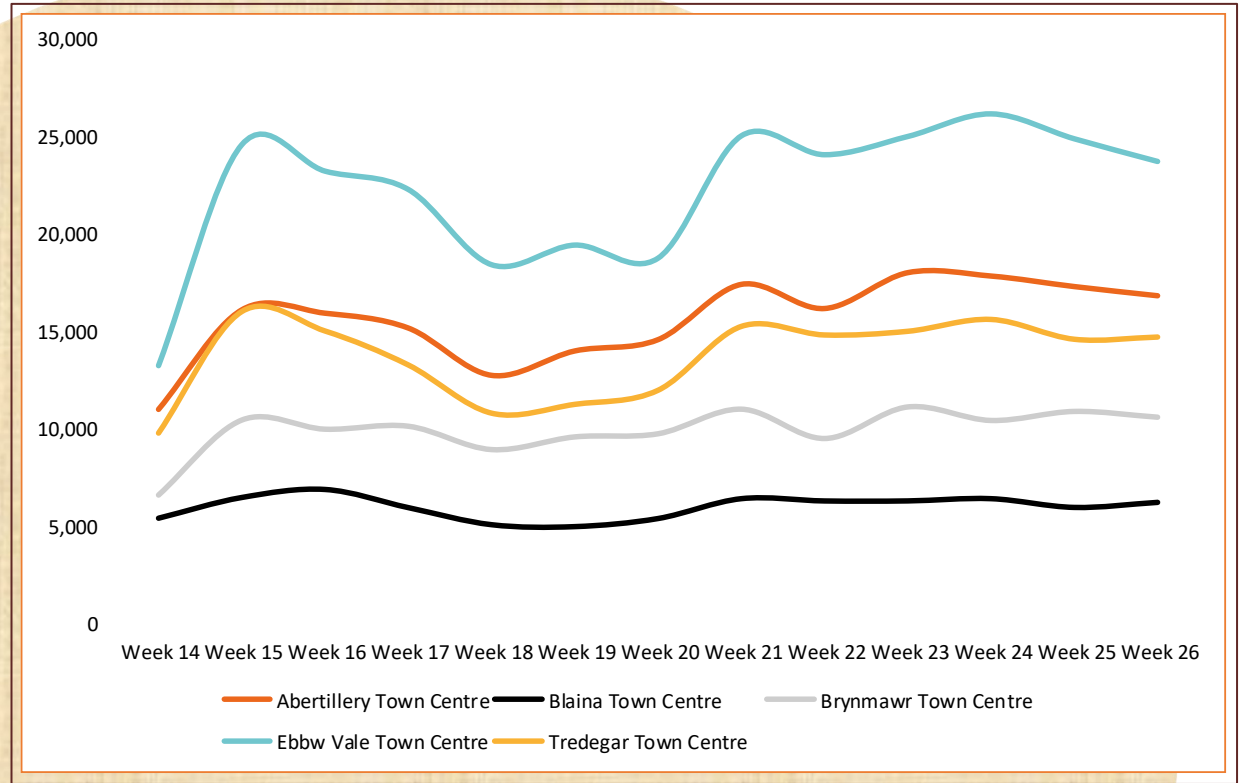
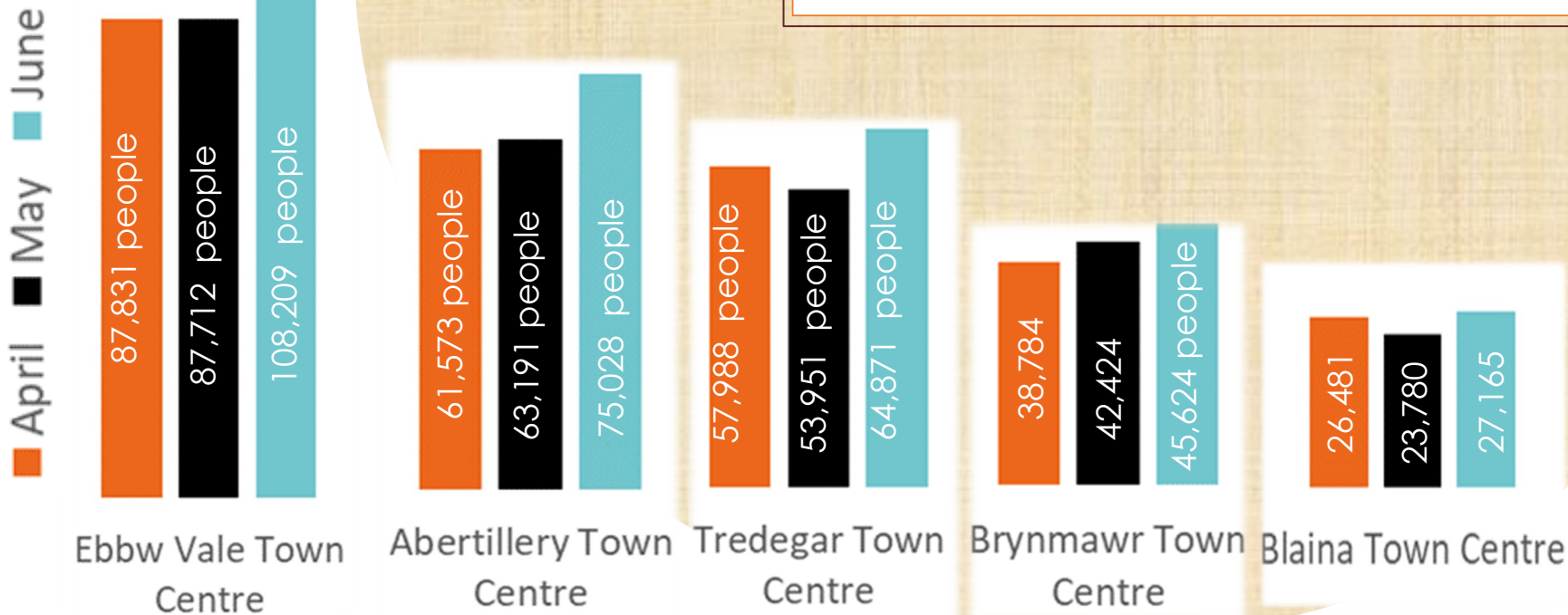
Liaison with the specialist contractor about the works is now in progress and work on site is intended to commence later this year,



# 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.



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



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

**G**  
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.