

# Aneurin Bevan Destination Strategy

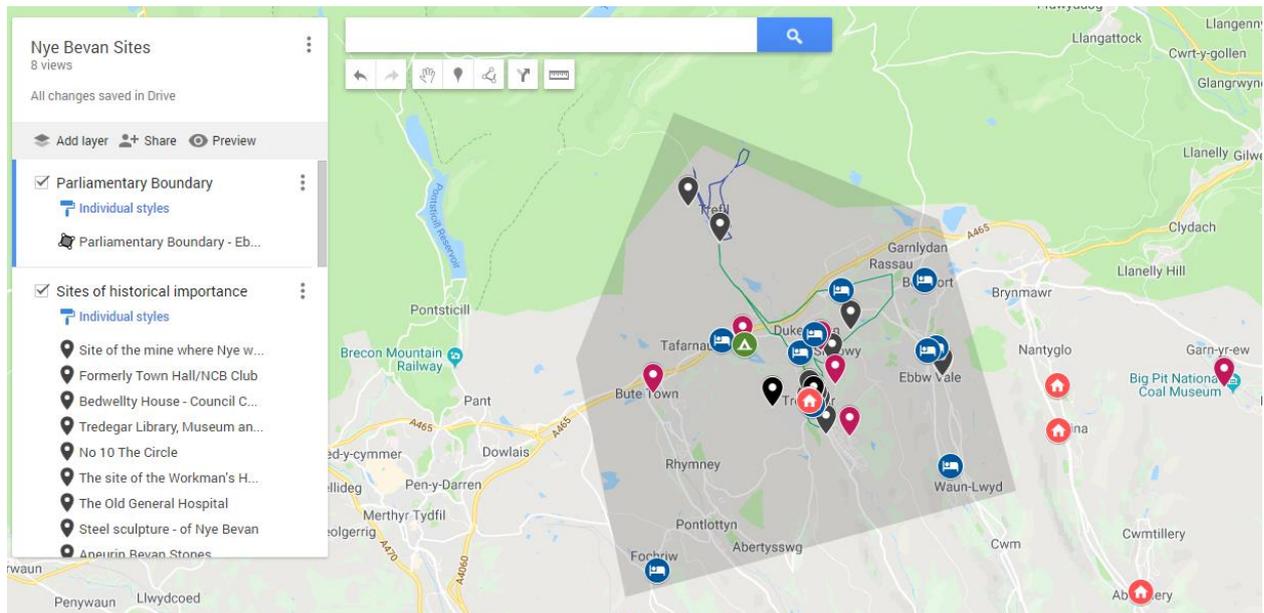
## Executive Summary

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This strategy has been commissioned by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and Visit Wales (Welsh Government) specifically to examine how the legacy of Aneurin Bevan can be harnessed to develop and expand the tourism sector primarily within the area that he represented, as well as challenging and changing the perception of the area.

### Review of the Current Situation

Across the area that Nye Bevan represented there are a range of memorials, buildings and collections that have a connection with him. There are also a few sites in other parts of Wales that add to the story.



There are currently a wide range of artworks and interpretation sources available about Aneurin Bevan and his connections to the area. However, most are:

- out of date
- poorly maintained
- and are not connected in their development or operation, leading to considerable duplication in the narrative, i.e. all saying about the NHS.

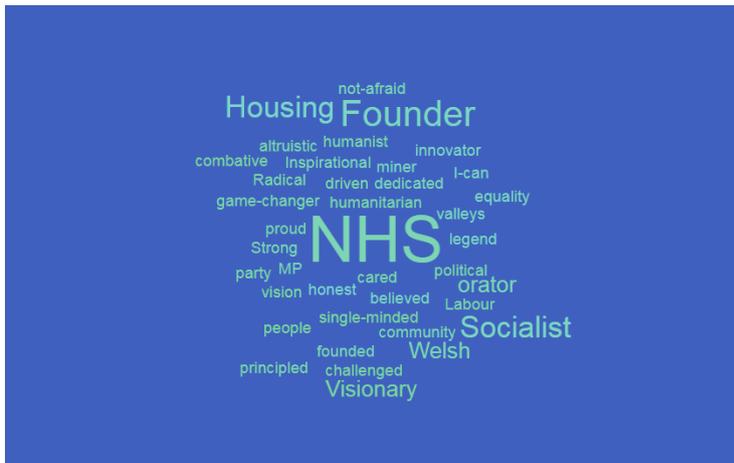
## Consultation

Consultation has been undertaken through a number of channels:

- Face to face meetings – see Appendix 1
- Public consultation event promoted by posters, direct messages and via various social media channels (related to history and the area)
- Online survey for the general public, promoted by direct messages, as well as through social media posts on pages related to history and the area.
- A targeted online survey to tour guides who bring visitors to south Wales (WOTGA members)

## Public Consultation

Public Consultation was undertaken to elicit the views of local people as well as some outside the area with a keen interest. The consultation took the form of a public meeting, survey monkey questionnaire and questionnaires left at Tredegar Museum. In total 20 responses were received.



### Summarising Nye

Respondents were first asked to identify key words that they felt described Bevan. These words were then analysed using a word cloud programme. This generated the following graphic. The larger the word/phrase appears, the more often it was cited by respondents. Clearly the NHS (and his role as founder of it) are the key messages that people associate with Nye Bevan. It is interesting to also note that he is remembered for his work on social housing and that he is remembered as a socialist, a visionary and an orator – as well as being Welsh.

## **How Tredegar Shaped Nye**

Respondents were asked “How do you think that Tredegar shaped Nye Bevan? What drove him and inspired him?”

People clearly thought that his experiences growing up and as a miner were very influential on him - in particular injustice, inequality, poverty/poor living conditions, ill-health and the exploitation of working people. Respondents also felt that he was influenced by the strong sense of community spirit he witnessed through things like the Medical Aid Society.

**“Seeing Tredegar Medical Aid Society in action he wanted to Tredegarise Britain”**

## **What aspects of Nye can be used to help engage, inspire and influence people today?**

Respondents were given a series of ‘storylines’ and were asked to rank them.

- i. Bevan’s Achievements - Establishing the National Health Service and his ambitious programme of building over 800,000 homes after WW2.
- ii. Bevan the Miner and Trade Unionist - Miner – miners’ agent – Trade Unions – helping miners on strike.
- iii. Charismatic Bevan – Part of the Query Club; securing power in council and parliamentary chambers; securing the BMA to establish the NHS. Also being an International Statesman – links to Soviet Union, USA, etc.
- iv. Bevan the Master Orator - Overcoming his stammer by reciting poetry and prose; learning a huge vocabulary; holding public meetings in village halls and open air meetings for election rallies to the huge gatherings in Trafalgar Square. His oratory is well documented.
- v. Bevan the Bibliophile - His love of reading, libraries, reciting poetry and prose to overcome his stammer.
- vi. Bevan the Politician - His journey from Trade Union representative to Tredegar Urban District Council then Monmouthshire County Council and ultimately to Parliament. His transition from representing miners to representing constituents.
- vii. Bevan’s personal life - His marriage to Jenny Lee. His love of walking. His love of music, plays, books – and good times. Overcoming adversity – his stammer, TICC, Mine owners, poverty etc.

As with the key words, it was the changes that Bevan made to the health and wellbeing of the nation – the NHS and Housing - that were felt to be the strongest storyline. What also became clear was that these storylines didn’t give the complete picture of the inter-related story of Bevan, Tredegar and the NHS, and as such, they were subsequently expanded upon to include:

- Bevan the Inspiration

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- How Tredegar shaped Nye
- Birthplace of the NHS
- Life before the NHS

### **Celebrating Bevan**

There are already a number of sites that tell part of Bevan's story. Respondents were presented with a list and asked to rank them. They were also asked to say what they thought could be improved at each one. The combined results are shown below:

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Bevan Stones:**

- There were concerns over the condition and maintenance of the site. It was also felt that it needed better interpretation and perhaps an outdoor classroom space. Signage needed and explanatory material needed

#### **Joint 2<sup>nd</sup> 10 the Circle:**

- It was felt the site suffered from lack of profile. People were unaware of the existing plaque.

#### **Joint 2<sup>nd</sup> NUM/Town Hall Building, Tredegar:**

- People were unsure of the condition/ownership of the site, but felt it was important in the story of Bevan and should be interpreted.

#### **Joint 2<sup>nd</sup> Bedwellty House:**

- Respondents were complimentary about the site but felt that more could be done to emphasise the story of Bevan as a local politician.

#### **Joint 3<sup>rd</sup> Aneurin Bevan Trail and the 'In the footsteps of Nye Bevan' walking route:**

- People felt the routes could be enhanced/updated.

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Tredegar Museum:**

- People appreciated the role the museum plays but felt more could be done to help the story of Nye 'stand out'. They also felt it could be moved to bigger premises.

#### **5<sup>th</sup> Gwent Archives:**

- Most people appreciated the value of the collections held by the archive and felt they could be used to enhance the story.

#### **6<sup>th</sup> Artwork:**

- People felt it was of variable quality and sometimes needed explanation.

Participants also added the Bevan Festival.

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### **Bevan's Legacy and project ideas**

Respondents were asked "Where and how do you think Bevan's legacy should be celebrated"? The key ideas coming through included

- the creation of a multimedia experience/ National Museum of Health and Medicine/ new NHS heritage centre
- closer links to education and the curriculum
- setting up an annual Bevan award for achievement, aimed at young people
- development of the Bevan Festival
- Embedding the development of the NHS and the influence of the Medical Aid Society into courses for student nurses/doctors and health workers.
- Webpage
- Local guides/ambassadors
- An Ironbridge style tourist attraction pulling all the sites together
- Debating societies
- A statue.
- Innovation and technology centre linked to education
- To utilise the town and use the knowledge of the community

### **Conclusion re Public Consultation**

Although based on a small sample, it was clear from the consultation that people felt passionately about Nye Bevan and his legacy, epitomised by the NHS. They were all positive about the potential to use his story to improve the area and to engage with people and from the ideas generated it was apparent that they supported an ambitious approach.

### **Overall Summary of Consultation**

Across all the consultation strands it is very clear that there is pride and belief in Nye Bevan's legacy. Whilst people recognise his principles, skill as a visionary politician and as an orator, most define his legacy as the NHS, the first universal healthcare system in the world. In particular the key principles of the NHS, which separated what was delivered in 1948 from what had been talked about by all political parties beforehand,

- Universality, equality and quality of care.
- A comprehensive service.
- A centrally funded health service, free at the point of delivery.

It is also very clear that people see that the community in which he was born and brought up, made him the man he was; his experiences of hard work, poverty and unfairness left deep marks on him.

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There is a recognition that whilst there are numerous sites and resources that relate to Nye Bevan in and around Tredegar, most are in need to investment, reinterpretation and promotion. There is also a perceived need to link the sites and to integrate with other key facilities and projects across the Heads of the Valleys area.

Quality is defined as a key attribute that is essential to all elements of a visit to ensure that visitors have a good experience, comparable to other places that they might encounter in a 2 hour travel area.

Most of the people interviewed and who responded to the online survey have a great interest and enthusiasm in the area and in Nye. The comments from WOTGA are a bit of a reality check, that not everybody knows Nye, and that a visit to this area needs to be enjoyable as well as educational.

## Exemplars - Key Observations

A range of personality and medical destinations were examined; here are the key observations.

### *Geographic focal point*

A common thread in the most effective exemplars is that they all have a geographic/ physical focal point to hang their figure on and act as a base for their 'hero'. Some have a complete trail of locations, which can be a stately home, a family home, or a building repurposed because of its proximity to significant history related to the individual. Regeneration of an area is often a goal. The most effective product development work includes walking tours and 'discover X country' tours so that benefits are spread out from the focal point and visitor understanding of the context/setting is assisted.

### *Walking in their footsteps*

The strongest 'offers' are where the attraction or museum relates directly to the life events of the individual – where they were born, lived, worked, died, and where you really feel you are walking in their footsteps. The Churchill Trail is a very strong example of this.

### *Associated collection*

The strongest offers also have depth by having a 'collection'(s) associated with the hero/individual. This ranges from a ship (Brunel) to a library with 20,000 books (Gladstone). Artefacts and historical documents are common elements which help to back up learning opportunities.

### *Championing a cause*

The strongest offers have an element of championing/ campaigning/ being a vehicle for modern day activism. Several of the locations are striving to create a place where like-minded

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people can step out of day to day concerns and find a place to think, challenge, solve problems and generally champion the cause of their hero. The Gladstone Library has a commitment to looking forward, as do international examples such as the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the Martin Luther King & the National civil Rights Museum.

### *Status and Governance*

Most are charitable trust / membership organisations with common activities such as annual dinners, wreath laying ceremonies at graves and public sculptures, competitions (art/literature/ ideas). Those offering a lively programme of events seem to be the strongest (e.g. Gladstone Library).

### *Support network*

Each one has built a following of like-minded people who share admiration for or love the work of the public figure. Some form of society/ friends' organisation or association provides background impetus and energy, as well as a ready pool of volunteers and visitors.

### *Education*

Education is integral to almost all these examples. It ranges from school and National Curriculum targeted resources and activities to continuing education and life-long learning.

### *Digital presence*

Some of the best examples pay lots of attention to their digital presence. For example Gladstone's Library want to ensure that *'the online presence of the Library is as unique and distinctive as the physical institution'*. That's something to aspire to.

## Overall Strategic Approach

The public consultation clearly shows that people principally link Nye with the NHS – that is his primary legacy.

When you read about Nye it is very clear that he created the NHS around principles that he had developed from very early childhood; those principles were created through his contact with people in his home town of Tredegar, how he saw other people being treated and the inequalities that he witnessed. His reading and the debates he engaged with in groups such as the Query Club sharpened his arguments and ways of expressing ideas, as well as his ability to persuade people to his point of view.

So, we see the overall Strategy as working around a simple theme:

***“The place that made the man, who created the NHS”***

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This emphasises the connection of Nye to the unique history of the area that he represented and recognises that we are made by the community in which we live and grow up (*it is not intended to be the branding tagline*). In Nye's life, his past culminated in the NHS with his key, ongoing principles of:

- Universality, equality and quality of care.
- A comprehensive service.
- A centrally funded health service, free at the point of delivery.

In recognising that Nye is a more complex character and has links much wider than the NHS which can be explored, we are proposing that different stories are told at different sites, which then link together, as you find if you visit Ironbridge, where different museums tell different stories. This will allow visitors to explore some or all of the overall story in ways that they choose, over long or short periods of time, in any order that they decide. It will give unique storylines for different sites, removing duplication – creating an “**Ironbridge**” approach across the area.

## Interpretative Approach

Recognising that the NHS and Health have higher levels of recognition (than Nye) and that Nye Bevan is a more complex character than just the person who created the NHS, and that his views were influenced by the area in which he grew up, the people he met, the things that he witnessed, an overarching interpretative theme has been developed:

***“The place that made the man, who created the NHS.”***

This sits above a group of strong themes to be used under this overarching theme

***“Home of the NHS”*** (across the wider area allowing all of his constituency – or Blaenau Gwent to be associated with the creation of the NHS)

***“Tredegar – Home of the NHS”*** (in the town)

These sit above six sub themes which would be used to define the narrative at individual sites, create a rich narrative that is beyond simply linking Nye to the NHS.

1. **Bevan – Creator of the NHS**
2. **Bevan the Politician**
3. **Bevan – Son of Tredegar**
4. **Bevan the Miner and Trade Unionist**
5. **Bevan the Inspiring Orator and Debater**

## 6. Bevan the Bibliophile and Author

These sub themes will also allow sites across Blaenau Gwent CBC and further afield to be linked to sites in and around the constituency that Nye represented:

	<b>In Constituency</b>	<b>Across Blaenau Gwent</b>	<b>Wider Area</b>
<b>Bevan – Creator of the NHS</b>	No 10 The Circle, Gwent Archives, New Tredegar Health Centre, Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan, Museum/Centre of NHS (Future), Bevan Festival.	A465 highest point (sculpture – Future). Bevan Play	Medical Museums (London and Worcester), Wellcome Collection, Peoples Museum Manchester, St Fagans. Bevan Play
<b>Bevan the Politician</b>	Council Chamber - Bedwellty House, Bevan Stones, Former Town Hall, Bevan Festival, Ebbw Vale Works Museum, Steel Figures located at key sites across his constituency Festival of History and Politics (General Offices, Gwent Archives, EVI, Coleg Gwent)	Festival of History and Politics Brynmawr Cinema	National Assembly for Wales, Parliament, St Fagans (housing), Peoples Museum Manchester,
<b>Bevan – Son of Tredegar</b>	Tredegar Museum, Gwent Archives (Records) Various sites in Tredegar, Aneurin Bevan Trail, In the footsteps of Nye.	In the Footsteps of the Iron Makers	
<b>Bevan the Miner and Trade Unionist</b>	Sites where he was a miner, and where he served as a Union Rep including Ty Trist – Tredegar Comprehensive Tredegar Museum. Cwm Miners Memorial	Guardian, Ty Ebbw Fach, Six Bells Mining Memorial Mining exhibits in local museums – Abertillery and Blaina museums, Tyleri Trails, Mining sites in Cwmtillery, Llanhilleth	Big Pit, Rhondda Heritage Park, South Wales Miners Library, Senghenydd Memorial
<b>Bevan the Inspiring Orator and Debater</b>	Bevan Stones, Council Chamber, Guided walks, Bevan Festival (Future)	Debating Competition – Rotary ( EV, Abertillery, Brynmawr) (Future) BG Schools and colleges	National Debating Competition (Future) Wales and UK schools, colleges and universities.
<b>Bevan the Bibliophile and Author</b>	Tredegar Library, poetry and reading events across area Gwent Archives	Poetry and reading events at libraries, theatres and other venues across Blaenau Gwent.	National Library of Wales, Archives with Bevan docs

## Audiences

The NHS and Nye, as creator of this much-loved service are a strong subject to generate visits, if the quality, narrative and methods of delivery are attractive, engaging and enjoyable.

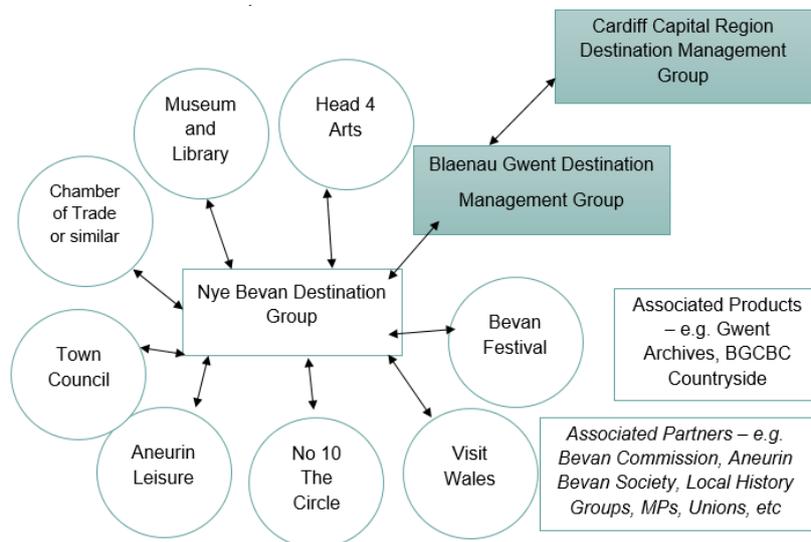
There is the potential, with the right product development to attract:

- General visitors – local, UK and overseas
- General Education visits – all age groups
- Specialist researchers re the history of the NHS and Nye

Another key potential audience is Business Tourism, in particular the health sector – the largest employment sector in Wales, and a significant sector across the UK. The potential to meet in the Home of the NHS is a unique draw for this sector. Even without product development, the Business Sector can be approached under a promotional campaign based around **“Meet in the Home of the NHS”**.

## Implementation Organisation

To achieve this strategy coordination is essential, in developing products and interpretation, and in delivering joint marketing and publicity.



It is proposed that a Nye Bevan Destination Group be established, which will sit within the wider Destination Management Partnership and include representatives from the Tredegar THI group and other interested groups and individuals. It is also proposed that the Bevan festival is to be expanded and refocused then an expanded organising committee should be created, to bring a wider range of skills, contacts and experiences to the future development of the Festival.

## Branding and Promotion

A key part of the Branding proposals is the creation of a suite of logos that can support the themes and sub themes – linking Nye to the NHS and in colours that are not party political.

A suite of logos were created with Nye, the beat of a heart to indicate the NHS and various words or symbols.



The logos can be used at sites, in promotional print and on commercial items.

Key in promoting the Nye Bevan narrative and the area will be the creation of a website to link all the sites and to show progress as the plan is implemented, as well as print.

## New/Major Projects

To really capitalise of the legacy of Nye the area needs to do something radical and bold, as well as improving existing products.

Three New/Major projects are proposed:

**1. Wales Museum of (Wales Centre for) the NHS – Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow**

This would be a hands on, fun experience, exploring the past but also the future. Using all sorts of displays and technology it would explore the creation of the NHS, as well as allowing visitors to find out about the NHS of today and the current research (Technique of Health). It would have meeting and conference facilities, as well as space for researchers and developers.

## 2. **Bevan Festival – Festival of Health and Well-Being**

This would be an expansion of the existing festival, allowing discussion and exploration of health and well-being issues; lots of things to have a go at, music and entertainment, the march to Bedwellty House and more. Throughout the year events would take place across Blaenau Gwent under the banner of the Bevan Festival, and a Festival shop in Tredegar would allow social activities to take place throughout the year.

## 3. **Art and Sculptures**

To create a different image for the area the use of art has great potential to challenge, to generate discussions and to champion issues that would have interested Nye. Several large-scale permanent installations or biennial/ triennial competitions are suggested.

## Improvement/Enhancement Projects

Suggestions are made for all sites – these can be summarised as:

- **Aneurin Leisure Trust** – Linking Parc Bryn Bach and other sites to the theme through the naming of events, holding of walks, and promotion at Visitor Centre
- **Bedwellty House and Park** – Rebranding the café with a theme related to NHS or Nye, inclusion of Nye in future guidebooks and the addition of medicinal planting in the Park.
- **Bedwellty House – Council Chamber** – A working chamber that is listed – suggestions include sound track of debates, hanging banners on the doors, and simple interpretative paddles about other local politicians.
- **Bevan Stones** – Essential maintenance work is to commence shortly. Interpretation around Nye the Orator with sound posts, benches with text, walk routes, new panels and a local group to keep an eye on the area.
- **Big Pit National Coal Museum** - Find artefacts for a cabinet entry about Nye the Miner and Union Representative.
- **Cefn Golau Cholera Cemetery** – Reminder of what life was like – needs cleaning and if possible, steps to make it easier for visitors to visit.
- **Debating** – A national debating contest for young adults on themes related to Nye Bevan, Health and NHS, in partnership with an organisation such as Rotary.
- **5DCinema – General Office** – Commission a film combining original footage and animation/layering to create an entertaining narrative that showing Bevan with his contemporaries.

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- **Ebbw Vale Works Museum** – Discover the images and narrative that links Nye to the Works as the areas MP.
- **Events and Performances** – A range of small and regular events primarily to link the local population to the theme, but some have the potential to attract visitors when established, for instance performances of Owen Sheers *“To Provide All People”* or a Hill Runners Marathon along the Sirhowy Valley Trail.
- **Gwent Archives** – Research, digitisation and annotation projects.
- **Tredegar Library and Local History Research Centre** – Highlight Nye’s love of books and Nye the author.
- **NCB Club/Town Hall** – Opportunity to integrate interpretation about Nye the Politician within the planned uses for the building.
- **No 10 The Circle** – The building restoration seems to be ready to start. There is a need for the interpretation plan and funding to be identified for integration into the restoration.
- **Physics Garden – Medicinal Planting** – Building on the age-old use of plants in medicine.
- **Roundels around the Clock** – Integrate into updated walks and place copies in sites that can be easily seen by all.
- **Sense of Place** – Develop a Sense of Place handbook for businesses and organisations to use the logo and to develop other associations with the Nye Bevan themes.
- **Steel Figures** – Install a series of Nye Steel Figures at key sites and with key people across Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney – promote as a trail.
- **The General Hospital (Closed)/New Health Centre** – Ensure that the Art Strategy supports the Nye themes.
- **Training for:**
  - **Teachers**
  - **Welsh Guides**
  - **Local People/Guides**
- **Tredegar Museum** – Develop panels that link Nye to the history of the area – Nye – Son of Tredegar
- **Tredegar Town Centre** -Work to making the town look more alive.
- **Walks** – Update and reprint the 2 existing walks.