

Regeneration & Community Services

Performance Report

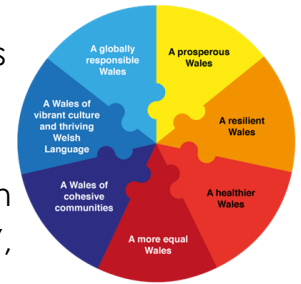


September 2022

Blaenau Gwent – a place that is fair, open and welcoming to all by working with and for our communities

Foreword

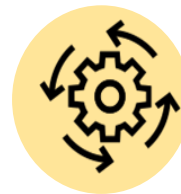
The purpose of this report is to present service activity which highlights how we are contributing to the Council's overall aim of delivering all seven national well-being goals.



The following overview pages set out Regeneration & Community Services performance for the period along with some associated achievements and challenges aligned to the priority areas identified in the Corporate Plan 2022/27, which are to :



Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent



An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place



Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities



Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient

This report is broken down into the themes below which have been identified for the Environment Services area and support delivery of the priority areas above:

- Improving the Local Environment;
- Managing Our Estate;
- Improving the Well-being and Resilience of our Communities;
- Healthy and Safe Communities; and
- Managing our Highways Network and Infrastructure.
- Housing;
- Employment and Skills;
- Destination Management and Tourism;
- Energy and Digital; and
- Town Centres.

Blaenau Gwent has a rich heritage and our buildings and countryside are part of Blaenau Gwent's attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit. Our local environment should be used to help improve the health and well-being of our families and communities and be enhanced for future generations to continue to enjoy. There is also a real desire to see the communities where people live kept clean, tidy and useable, creating areas that people can be proud of.



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.

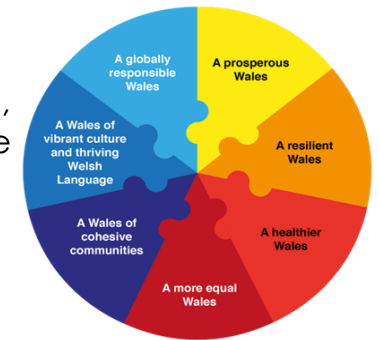


Increasing employability makes a fundamental contribution to reducing and tackling poverty and the economic status of the area. Supporting people to obtain and retain employment reduces reliance upon support services aligned to social well-being and poverty.



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.



Town Centres



Following the exterior of **Trinity Chapel, Abertillery**

being originally refurbished, Blaenau Gwent Council is working with Aneurin Leisure Trust and the Welsh Government to bring the Chapel back into community use. Funding is being sought from the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Programme for an internal refit of the landmark building, turning it into a new home for the **town's Library and Adult Education Courses**. If the funding application is successful it is expected that works will begin Spring 2023.



Development of
Town Centre regeneration Plans
are ongoing



Work on **Ebbw Vale Placemaking Plan** was approved by the Council's Executive Committee in December 2021. Work has continued on the delivery plan during 2022 and the next stage of work will be to undertake further stakeholder engagement on potential projects to be taken forward for implementation. Further consultation will also take place with the Design Commission for Wales.

The **Brynmawr Placemaking Plan** has also been progressed and builds upon the Brynmawr and Nantyglo Masterplan that was approved in late 2020. The placemaking plan will seek to recognise the commercial developments that have taken place on the periphery of the Town Centre and consider how these developments can become better connected and support the long term viability of Brynmawr Town Centre.

Funding was secured to undertake a **placemaking plan** for **Abertillery** and consultants have been appointed to help with its development. Initial stakeholder engagement has been undertaken to start to shape the placemaking plan and based on lessons learned for the other placemaking plans earlier stakeholder consultation will be undertaken on potential options. This will be scheduled to take place in late 2022/early 2023.

Work on the **Tredegar Placemaking Plan** has continued and the placemaking plan is scheduled to be submitted to the Place Scrutiny Committee for approval in November 2022. Initial consultation has been undertaken with the Design Commission for Wales.





Energy and Digital



LONG TERM - As a council we aim to develop effective digital infrastructure and improve connectivity within the borough by promoting digital participation. Within Planning Services we are looking to improve and streamline processes and data storage/accessibility resulting in a more efficient and effective way of working.

Following a detailed analysis of available systems and procurement process a **preferred supplier** has been identified as **Idox** and we are now moving to complete the procurement process by the end of quarter 3. This new planning system will enable us to have a web presence where the public can view and comment on planning applications online. Customers can also book Building Regulations appointments on line. By having a web presence we improve our customer services and can streamline processes more effectively.



Wind Generation Projects are ongoing. A planning application has been submitted for the installation of a wind turbine at Silent Valley former landfill site. The application is being considered by Planning Officers and will go through the normal determination process. Work will be undertaken on a business case for investment alongside the planning process. If planning consent is achieved the Council will be asked to consider a business case for investment.



Hydro Generation - Initial investigation and feasibility studies for small scale hydro generation opportunities within the wards of Cwm and Llanhilleth presented two sites with some potential for hydro generation. These were presented to Scrutiny and Executive for consideration and it was determined that the potential returns and payback were not sufficiently positive for the projects to be developed further at this time.

Funding is being sought to further develop the feasibility of a hydro generation scheme at Silent Valley. If the funding is secured work will be undertaken to investigate the option to utilise hydro generation to power electric pumps.

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



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





Energy and Digital

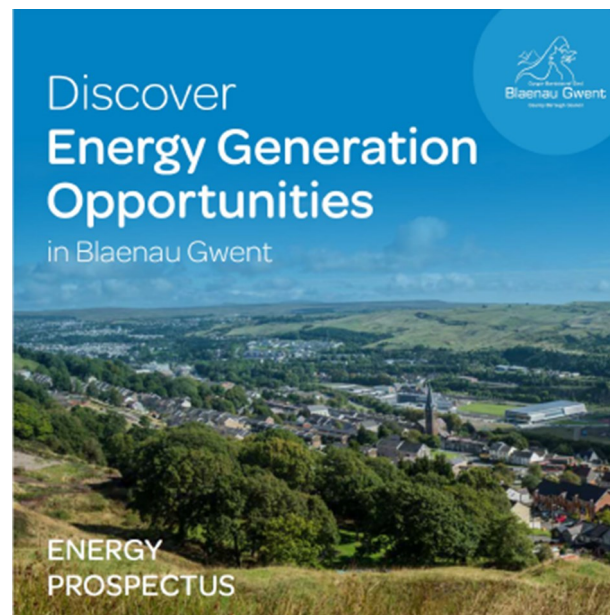


Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure – An initial Gwent project led by Blaenau Gwent installed a total of **73 charge points across 35 sites** in Gwent. We have also worked with Cardiff Capital Region City Deal on a number of projects to install further EV infrastructure across the region. This has included the **installation of a EV infrastructure at further 12 sites across in Blaenau Gwent.**

A further regional bid for funding has been submitted to the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) and if funding is agreed this will increase EV infrastructure across the region further.



Cardiff Capital Region City Deal secured funding from Welsh Government to **install rapid charge points for taxi ranks and to purchase 44 wheelchair accessible electric taxis for trials** to take place across the region. The taxis were to be offered under a 30 day free trial for taxi drivers. **Two** of the 44 **taxis have been made available for Blaenau Gwent** and the trial will run until 30th November 2023.



In addition, the Council received a **£300,000 grant** from the Welsh Government towards the costs of **increasing Council EV charging infrastructure.** The scheme administered by Welsh Local Government Association requires a Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Transition Plan to be developed. This will build on work already undertaken to develop an Ultra Low Emission Fleet plan. Some of the funding will be utilised to provide EV charging infrastructure to support the running of new electric vans that are being procured for the Community Meals service.



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.

Wales online listed **SIRHOWY IRONWORKS** as one of the

[25 incredible ancient monuments with mind-blowing history you can visit in Wales - Wales Online](#)



Blogger visit in July covering camping, adventure activities, walking and food. Partnership project with Southern Wales. Stayed at Parc Bryn Bach Camp site. Visited Guardian, Tredegar Arms, and took a walk, a dip in the lake at PBB and evening meal at Tredegar Arms.

[Sheep Walking to Forest Bathing - Southern Wales on a Budget \(wordpress.com\)](#)

[A Welsh Adventure Itinerary \(wordpress.com\)](#)



Weatherman walking – Brynmawr to Abergavenny screened on BBC1. Repeat showings of 2 previous episodes in Blaenau Gwent



Out and about in the bountiful valleys of Blaenau Gwent



New destination page on Visit Wales web site [Things to do in Blaenau Gwent | Visit Wales](#)

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.



Developed new brochure for Travel Trade for Guardian and Abertillery. Short print run and digital.



Destination Management & Tourism



The Blaenau Gwent Destination Vision - “Visitors will be attracted to a destination where vibrant businesses work together to provide a warm welcome to everyone exploring the rich heritage, dramatic landscape, captivating towns and wide range of events and activities that Blaenau Gwent has to offer”.

We aim to bring Community and Business Tourism to Blaenau Gwent— Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events. Improvements to the transport network give the ideal platform to fully embrace the opportunities that exist.



AberFest held and Winterfest preparations in hand.

Steel House Festival held. Very successful with increased camping, glamping and attendance.



Launch of new Wales Events Strategy featured Steelhouse to highlight the importance of home grown events.



Jan Kjellström International Festival of Orienteering 2022 event successfully hosted in Blaenau Gwent.



The Bevan Festival was held, incorporating a week of events celebrating Nye, political, union history of Tredegar and the South Wales Valleys that gave us the NHS. Extended to family Day at Parc Bryn Bach and Music event at Bedwellty Park





Employment and Skills



Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme -

Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme – Recruitment and Induction of apprentices continues to be successful and there are currently 21 apprentices based within Manufacturing companies in Blaenau Gwent.....



Aspire Blaenau Gwent & Merthyr Tydfil's Shared Apprenticeship Programme won the Large Employer of the Year award in 2021— on the back of winning the award – **Aspire have been awarded further funding for the next 2 years from Welsh Government to facilitate apprenticeships across Blaenau Gwent South East & Mid Wales** Alongside this Aspire are now working Cardiff Capital City Region and have received funding to support this expansion.

16 internal apprentices are now employed by Blaenau Gwent in varying departments

4 Apprenticeships in Sogefi Filtration – Engineering & Logistics

1 apprentice at central fire & security

5 apprentices linked to new vacancies

Legacy funding has been secured to fund the Aspire internal Mentor to facilitate apprenticeships

1 Apprentice at Camtonics completing an engineering apprenticeship

3 apprentices at Continental inc engineering and Lab Technician

1 engineering apprentice at CES LTD

Runner up in **NTFW Awards** - Tomorrows Talent 2022



5 apprentices PCI inc Lab Technician and varying STEM pathways

1 apprentice in PMB

1 apprentice in Express contract drying



Discussions with Welsh Government to expand the Aspire offering and demonstrate demand for digital & engineering degree apprenticeships have taken place during the reporting period.



Employment and Skills



Refurbishment of the Monwell Building into a New High Value Engineering Centre (HiVE)

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 to be operational and welcoming first students is anticipated to be Easter 2024
- Business case submitted to UK Gov. Levelling up Fund for the associated refurbishment cost – announcement to be made late Jan 2023

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 is very successful with the

delivery of over 100 placements

and the team are looking to develop another programme alongside SPF funding from March 2023



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.

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 reporting period some of which are shown later in the document.



Housing



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 - Consultation and updating is continuing with residents. Support has been gained from Welsh Government – through the Land Release fund, to purchase the Pit Head Baths and to carry out preliminary studies due to the building being inhabited by bats. Project ongoing.



Six Bells Colliery - Following consultation in 2021, site was considered for various options including a Social Services project. A partner Registered Social Landlord (RSL) have expressed developing the site as a mixed tenure development.



Ashvale - Funds secured from Cardiff City Region to bring forward some **54 homes**. Currently within the planning process

Sofrydd Garage - Privately owned, placed the owner in touch with a partner Registered Social Landlord but no further commitment to development.

Abertillery Leisure Centre - Social Housing Grant allocated to the project for 2023/24, with partner RSL Melin. **Circa 18 affordable homes**, being worked up.





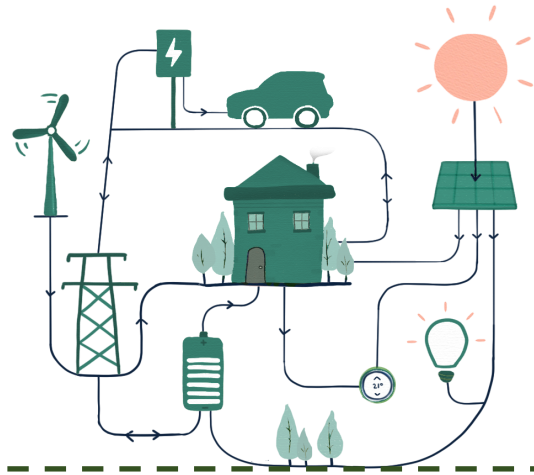
Housing



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 Social rented homes, bringing together home improvements and clever technologies to make these homes as easy and cheap to heat as possible.

Making homes more energy efficient helps to tackle the climate emergency and also helps people living in poverty save money on energy bills.



The Social Housing Grant Programme supports delivery of affordable housing provision. In 2022/23 an increased Social Housing Grant award of **£7m** has been allocated to Blaenau Gwent to support delivery of social housing. This will be maintained at this rate until 2024/25



Works at **Greenacres, Tredegar and Golwg Y Bryn, Ebbw Vale** have now been fully completed

The three social housing grant funded projects shown here will deliver

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

► **The Optimised Retrofit Programme**, funded by Welsh Government was introduced this year as part of the Innovative Housing Programme – Funding, direct to Registered Social Landlords, is there to **improve the energy efficiency and reduction of fuel poverty of social rented homes in Blaenau Gwent**. All 4 partner Registered Social Landlords in Blaenau Gwent are taking part. (tai Calon, Linc Cymru, United Welsh and Melin)

Ebbw Vale School Site
named **Cefn Y Garn** -

- Open Market (Persimmon) site in partnership with United Welsh. **A total of 277 units** which will be build out in 4 phases. **34 units have already been handed over to residents** with another 24 units due late December 2022. Of the 277 units **55 are social rented** – which we have supported with Welsh Government Social Housing Grant.





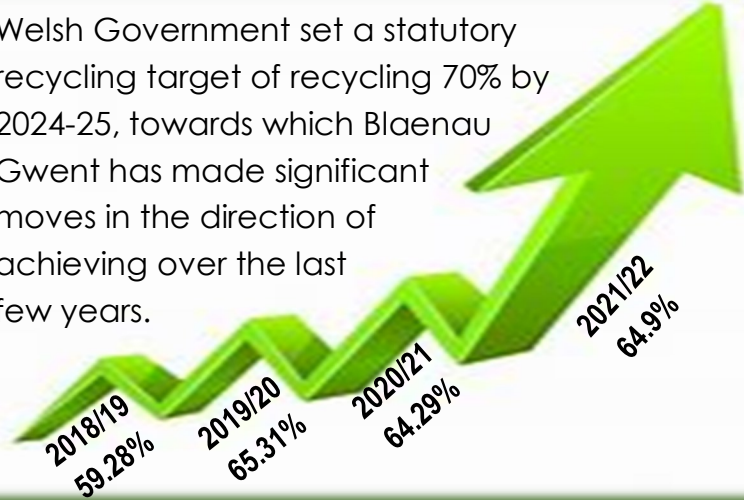
Improving the local Environment



Our recycling performance target figure is 70% and Stats Wales shows that our 2021/22 performance places us **at 65%**



Welsh Government set a statutory recycling target of recycling 70% by 2024-25, towards which Blaenau Gwent has made significant moves in the direction of achieving over the last few years.



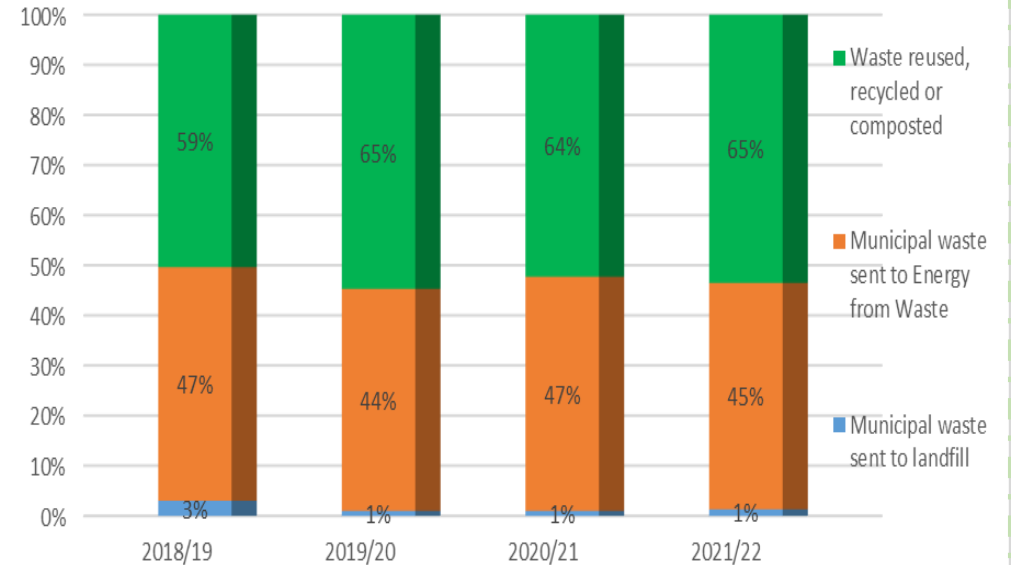
67.8%
of waste produced in Quarter 1 of 2022/23.

Work with schools has continued in respect of the Keep Wales Tidy "Spring Clean" Initiative with **30 workshops** being held over the period.

Also **4 community litter picks** have been held where **2471 bags** of **general waste** and **248 bags** of **recycling** was collected



What happens to our waste?



Recycling promotion work is on-going with monitoring of Round 1 utilising Keeping up with the Joneses process underway.





Improving the local Environment



For the 3rd year, funding has been secured for **town centre clean-ups** through the Caru Cymru programme and Keep Britain Tidy.

Clean-ups will be carried out during quarter 3



A Battery Trail / campaign will commence early 2023 in collaboration with WRAP with the aim to increase tonnage of batteries collected at the kerbside, To support this, work is ongoing to evaluate the amount of batteries currently collected at the kerbside prior to the trial / campaign commencing in order to provide a baseline for review.



New Centre of Operations Plan Image



Two of the transition pathways identified within the Decarbonisation plan directly relate to waste:

- Transport direct – transition to ultra-low emission vehicles and the related infrastructure;
- Waste – working towards zero waste and a circular economy.

Ultra-low emission vehicles have been trialled with front line services

and will be considered with the fleet replacement programme. However,

the new Centre of Operations is integral to Blaenau Gwent achieving a low carbon fleet

as we cannot transition to a low emission fleet without the appropriate infrastructure in place to support it.

Significant funding will, however, be required in

order to deliver the transition to ultra-low emission vehicles.





Improving the local Environment



Monitoring of excess side waste has continued across the County Borough throughout the reporting period along with the utilisation of statutory powers to deal with waste misplaced for collection.

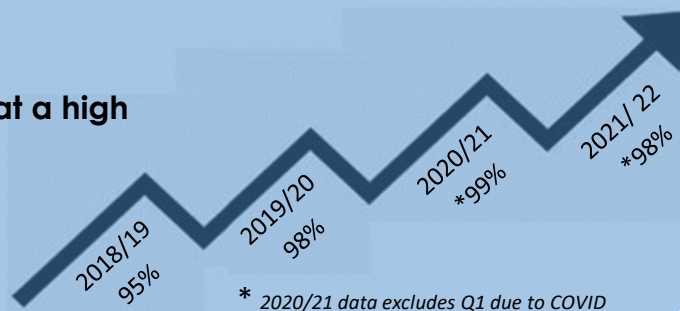


Preventative focus - The Frontline Enforcement service will be utilising CCTV to target highway lay-bys subject to prolific fly tipping, proactively carrying commercial waste disposal checks and proactively targeting known unofficial domestic waste collection locations to reduce and prevent negative behaviours in the Community.



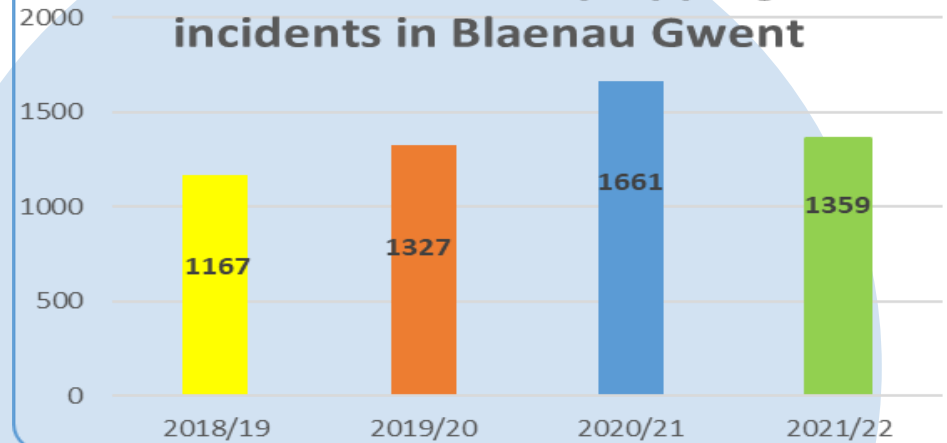
During the period April to September 2022, **90 streets** were **inspected** by Blaenau Gwent Officers / Keep Wales Tidy.

Of these **99%** were rated **at a high or acceptable standard on cleanliness.**



FLY-TIPPING ACTION WALES

Total recorded fly-tipping incidents in Blaenau Gwent



484 Fly-tipping incidents were reported during Quarter 1 & 2 2022, the average number of days taken to clear was **3.8 days**

The numbers of recorded fly-tipping incidents decreased in 2021/22 for the first time in 6 years

During the **Quarter 1 & 2** period (April to September 2022) there were **30 fixed penalty notices** issued for **Fly Tipping**



Managing Our Estate



A long term programme of works continues across the Blaenau Gwent estate to reduce the annual carbon emissions and energy costs of our buildings.

VITCC— A new Photovoltaic (PV) system was installed on the roof of the VITCC building in 2019 and will save approximately 9303 kilograms of CO2 per year.



Some new builds have had new photo voltaic systems installed as shown here on the VITECC and Ebbw Vale Leisure Centre



Ebbw Vale Sports Centre—A new Photovoltaic (PV) system was installed on the roof in 2020 and saves approximately 67,895 kilograms of CO2 per year.

And a boiler replacement programme of works is continuing across our school buildings

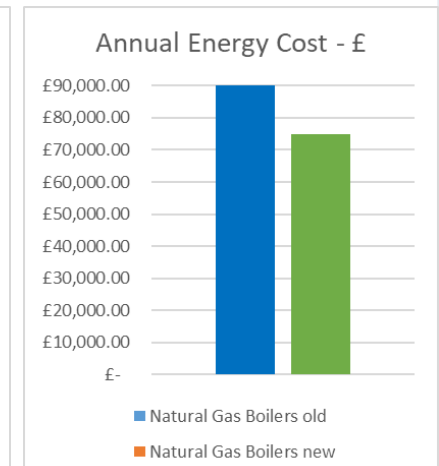
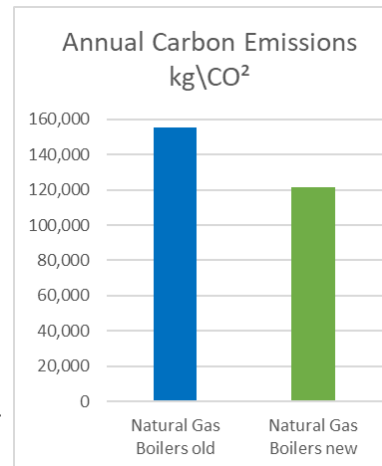
Roseheyworth Primary School

The original heating system had a seasonal efficiency of approximately 75% (E rated).

The old system was replaced with two A rated condensing boilers with a seasonal efficiency of 96% (A rated). The existing hot water calorifier was also replaced along with a new mains gas connection and new flue.



The average differences in running costs and CO2 emissions between the old and new appliances using the predicted rise to 13.33p per kW in the cost for gas for 2023-24 can be seen here :





Managing Our Estate



For 2022/23 financial year here has been almost

£800,000

allocated in the Councils Capital Programme for the

Cemetery Capacity Works

associated with Cefn Golau, Dukestown, Brynmawr and Brynithel Cemeteries.



PREVENTION - We continue to manage Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to deal with stormwater locally (as close its source as possible), to mimic natural drainage and encourage its infiltration, attenuation and passive treatment . **All SuDS applications, enquiry responses and inspections are ongoing throughout the borough. Various meetings with developers to discuss regulations and options available to developers.**



Progress continues to deliver the Councils

Flood Management Plan

and natural flood risk management continues .

Other works to support this during the period include:-

Burial capacity is becoming a major issue for the area - Cemetery expansion works are being explored with site investigation works being completed in June 2021 for the majority of sites. Initial designs for Dukestown have been drafted in readiness to go through planning.

New drainage to alleviate flooding has been completed at Newchurch Rd / Beaufort Terrace Roundabout.

Investigations relating to flood incidents and requests for assistance ongoing at Pantypwlyn Rd, Reservoir Rd, and Brynithel Estate.

Ongoing Schemes include Glanfrwyd Avenue, Ebbw Vale, culvert renewal (waiting for commencement date). Trash screen renewal at Newchurch Rd. (waiting for commencement date).



Improving the Well-being and Resilience of our Communities



In order to enhance and stimulate economic development within the Borough it has been identified that it is a priority to improve the corporate commercial property portfolio

Tredegar Business Park and Pond Road employment units awaiting funding confirmation from **Welsh Government**

Regain 2 -The team are working with Tech Valleys to develop an Enterprise Hub for Blaenau Gwent. The development is currently named Regain 2. The facility will support individuals and new businesses by creating a managed workspace with hot and warm desk spaces and will also include separate offices for hire on the first floor. Meetings have been held with various stakeholders to develop business case and consider management options.

The Welsh Government is set to **build a 52,582 sq. ft. manufacturing unit at the Rhyd y Blew industrial site at Ebbw Vale** as part of plans to develop the remaining 30 acres available on the site. **Work to build the RYB1 unit will commenced Autumn 2022** and will be available to let in the second half of 2023

REGAIN2 works commenced on site during this period and are proceeding well.



With the anticipated contract sum being £5,484,996.99

REGAIN2



Improving the Well-being and Resilience of our Communities



The Greater Gwent Nature Recovery Action Plan



A Nature Recovery Action Plan for the Greater Gwent Area

The final full month of the Welsh Government ENRAW funded **Resilient Greater Gwent project** saw actions associated with the **Nature Recovery Action Plan** being implemented in addition to coordination of Gwent wide activities on urban biodiversity, sustainable communities, rivers and invasive non native species.

Resilient Greater Gwent - Gwent wide collaborative project supporting Ecology, Invasive Species & Sustainable Communities which Blaenau Gwent acted as lead authority on concluded in July and project monitoring and evaluation was collaborated upon.



A Resilient Greater Gwent

The Active Travel grant programme has been awarded and progressed

ACTIVE TRAVEL

Scheme	funding	Update
Ebbw Vale Town Centre Sustainable Link - WelTAG (250k)	£250,000.00	Consultants commissioned for the development of WelTAG stage 3 (business case for scheme including preliminary design and illustrations)
A4047 Toucan Crossing Design & Installation	£80,000.00	Detailed design has been carried out in-house with costs estimates developed. In process of tendering for work.
Future Routes Audit	£40,000.00	Commissioned via Sustrans work has commenced and ongoing.
Cycle Barrier Audit	£7,200.00	Commissioned via Sustrans.
Abertillery Shared Use Upgrade	£60,000.00	Initial scoping commissioned (ecology and trees)
AT Monitoring	£30,000.00	Equipment and service contract to linetop for people counters. Engagement
Minor Works	£25,000.00	Ad hoc works undertaken (e.g. drop kerbs)
Glyncoed Ebbw Vale - upgrade footpath	£267,000.00	Design work and preliminaries completed, currently tendering for physical work
	£759,200.00	

INVOLVEMENT - Wales biodiversity week was used to promote the Greater Gwent Nature Recovery Action Plan, presentation being delivered at conference.



COLLABORATION - Collaborative work under the Gwent Green Grid Project's 'Nature isn't Neat' strand to improve grassland management and pollinators has been progressed, cutting regimes on verges being altered for ecological improvement.



the green grid™



Improving the Well-being and Resilience of our Communities



49 events were delivered to schools regarding **Natural Resource Management**

School	Number of pupils	Number of events
Blaen Y Cwm	193	9
Glanhowy	153	7
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg	47	2
Ebbw Fawr Primary Phase	144	6
Pen Y Cwm	29	3
Beaufort Hill	103	5
Sofrydd	12	1
St Mary's CiW	112	4
Willowtown	143	6
Coed Y Garn	84	3
Deighton	23	1
SHEP Roseheyworth	25	1
SHEP Willowtown	51	1

with a total of **1143 children** benefiting from these events



Pupils from Blaen Y Cwm and Deighton Primary took part in a **Bug Bonanza workshop** exploring insects and other small creatures in the school

grounds and from the local area.



Beaufort Hill pupils wanted to discuss **ways of managing the school grounds for wildlife.**

Pupils from Ebbw Fawr, Beaufort Hill and Willowtown Primary all took part in a **Super Seed workshop** where we took a close look at seeds from trees locally and in the school grounds.



Pupils pond dipping





Healthy and Safe Communities



Development of a Strategic document and action plan which will assist the Council to transition to a Homeless Rapid Re-Housing Approach. Rapid Rehousing is a recognised approach which ensures that anyone experiencing homelessness can move into a settled home as quickly as possible, rather than staying in temporary accommodation for long periods of time.

Successfully carried out **2 member briefings** in relation to Homelessness and the Housing Waiting List.



HOMELESSNESS - During the reporting period, 94 households met the threshold for being threatened with homelessness. Of these, 60 were successfully prevented from losing their accommodation - 64%. This high prevention rate has been achieved by targeting early intervention initiatives to prevent homelessness at a very early stage.



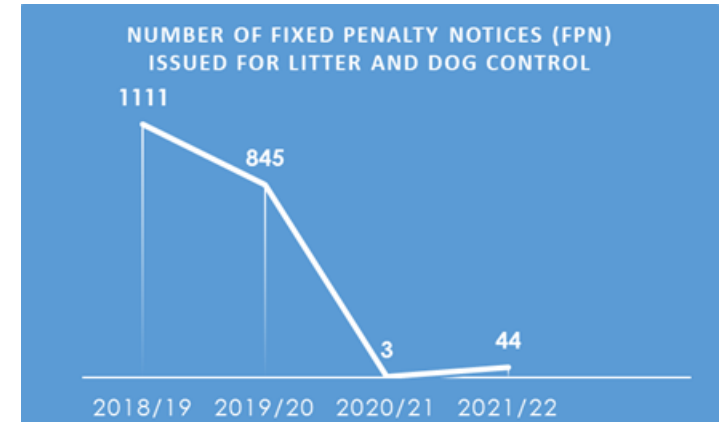
LONG TERM - It is a priority for us to raise the profile of Play by improving the quality and equity of play provision throughout the Borough for all our children and young people. To achieve this we are looking to refurbish and maintain existing play provision to acceptable levels and develop new initiatives based on identified need within the Borough.

Chartist way play area has been confirmed as needing to be relocated and tender for the works (value £120,000) was returned in September 2022.

Ongoing discussions have been held regarding Garnlydan play area with the MP, Tai Calon and the community.

A play company provided some outline schemes as requested for discussion.

During the reporting period a public consultation relating to a new Public Space Protection Order for Dog Controls commenced.



The **Fixed Penalty Enforcement Litter and Dog Control Service** was **suspended** in March 2020 due to the pandemic. Interaction with multiple clients needed to be avoided and also lockdown restrictions meant a reduction in littering. **The 2020/21 figure of 3 in the table above reflects this service suspension due to Covid 19.** Service reinstatement 6th September 2021.

During the **Quarter 1 & 2** period

(April to September 2022) there were

158 fixed penalty notices

issued for **litter**

and **19** for **dog control.**





Healthy and Safe Communities



The **Transitional Capital Funding Programme** – supported Tai Calon and Linc Cymru with funding bids to **refurbish 4 empty homes for Ukrainian Families**.

1 of which was accommodated in Q2.



We have successfully recruited an Environmental Health Officer and an Environmental Health Technician this period.

The completion of the draft

2021 Air Quality Assessment has now been completed and submitted to Welsh Government



Blaenau Gwent are continuing to provide support to the resettlement scheme for Ukrainian people. Once in initial accommodation, Ukrainian arrivals are supported to resettle into more medium and longer-term 'hosting' accommodation within communities. **Blaenau Gwent Council is working to seek new expression of interest hosts, and then inspect relevant properties to ensure they are safe and suitable.**

Cllr Steve Thomas, Leader of Blaenau Gwent Council says:

"On behalf of the local authority I would like to express a heartfelt thank you to hosts who are already supporting Ukrainians. It is heartening to see how the scheme continues to generate so much local support - which is testament to the level of generosity and goodwill within our communities."

The support hosts have extended to those fleeing the conflict in Ukraine has contributed to an astonishing national movement which has helped families rebuild their lives - for children to resume their education, for Ukrainians to find employment - and to forge lifelong friendships, but with hundreds more Ukrainians still residing in Welcome Centres we are seeking additional hosts."

UKRAINE
How you can help





Healthy and Safe Communities



Blaenau Gwent's **Food Hygiene** Service have been required to ensure that all high risk establishments (with the exception of broadly complaint C-rated premises) have received an inspection by the close of September 2022 (end of Quarter 2). We are pleased to report that we have met this challenging target with a **total of 82 interventions** having been completed, alongside our other continuing programmed and reactive workload.

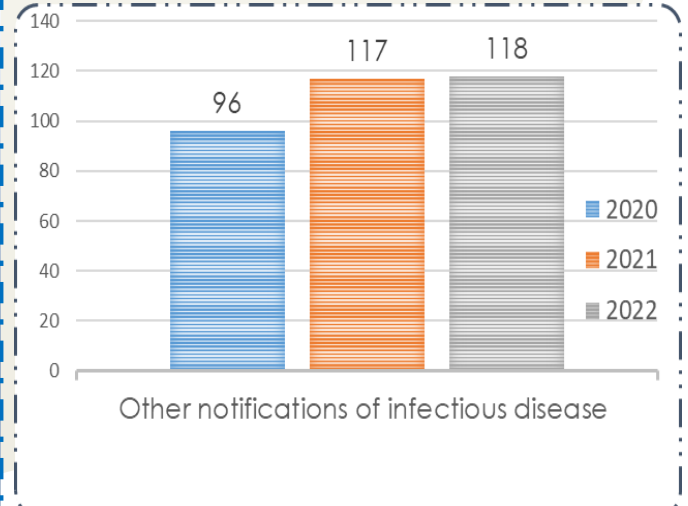
We continued to see new food business start-ups during the pandemic. **215 new food businesses were identified during 2020/2021, 231 during 2021/22 and 230 during Quarters 1 to 3 of 2022/23.** This was a mixture of existing businesses changing ownership and new start-ups. In-line with the FSA COVID-19 recovery plan we have risk rated the new businesses to ensure that those presenting the highest potential risk have continued to receive an inspection. Between the 1st April 2020 to the end of Quarter 3 2022 we have **completed 357 new business inspections.** We have continued to provide advice to the other remaining businesses wherever possible. We currently have **49 new businesses awaiting an inspection** of which approximately half of these are likely to be lower risk premises based on the initial intelligence gathered.

In addition to the above the Commercial Team continue to respond to other notifications of infectious disease for which the Local Authority have a duty to investigate. The number of recent reports of such infectious disease cases are provided here together with comparisons from previous reporting year periods (note these indicate Q1-3 only and do not include any requests for advice in respect of COVID-19):

Infectious Disease:

In-line with current operational arrangements across Gwent we continue to provide a limited COVID-19 response. Environmental Health Contractors operating within the Commercial Team, Public Protection provide expert support and guidance to the Gwent Contact Tracing Team. The Contact Tracing Team, with the support of Environmental Health, continue to provide notification and guidance in respect of positive cases at vulnerable settings such as residential and nursing homes. The contractors also continue to support internal colleagues where requests for advice are made or changes to guidance identified and we continue to respond to any requests for advice from businesses, childminders, etc.

These contractors have also recently been utilised to support our colleagues in Education to implement the recent guidance from Public Health Wales in terms of action and response to any identified Strep A and Scarlet Fever cases





Healthy and Safe Communities



Trading Standards aims to ensure a fair, safe and equitable environment for all who purchase and sell goods and services in Blaenau Gwent. This is undertaken through a range of intervention, advice and enforcement activities with businesses and consumers. The Team works closely with partner agencies in order to gather intelligence and enforce the legislation covering areas such as Weights and Measures / Food Labelling and composition / Counterfeit Goods/ Product Safety / Pricing/ Rogue Trading and Doorstep Crime /Consumer Credit/ Misdescribed Goods /Scams and Age Restricted Sales. More information on the work of Trading Standards can be obtained at

[:About Trading Standards | Blaenau Gwent CBC \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/about-trading-standards)

<https://tradingstandards.gov.wales/>



PREVENTION — Trading Standards activity contributes to crime reduction and protection of vulnerable people from scams and rogue traders. Intervention visits were made to **100%**

(32) of identified vulnerable potential scam victims during the period.

Seizures of Illegal Vape Products -

The Trading Standards Team recently visited 78 premises in the County Borough which were identified as likely to be selling disposable e-cigarettes/vapes. These visits resulted in a total



of 1499 disposable vapes being seized from 13 premises because

they failed to comply with a number of relevant product safety regulations. 674 of these were disposed of in November (photograph attached) following consultation with BG Waste/Recycling Section. The remainder are subject to ongoing work.

Trading Standards- Recent Raids -

Trading Standards Officers recently executed warrants to seize goods at 4 residential addresses in Blaenau Gwent. Working with partner agencies such as Gwent Police and Tai Calon, various goods were seized including counterfeit clothes, trainers and bags and sales records bearing various brand names - Armani, Nike, Northface, Balenciaga, Louis V.

Boxes of fireworks were also seized from properties which had been illegally stored in unsafe conditions and sold online.





Managing our Highways Network and Infrastructure



Senedd approved new legislation on 12th July 2022 that will

lower the speed limit from 30mph to **20mph** on residential roads and busy pedestrian streets;

This will **come into effect** **17th September 2023.**



LONG TERM - Investment in the residential highway network is identified to ensure sustainability for the future, bringing our roads up to a good standard and improving our highway infrastructure to meet the service requirements of the future.

The current gross replacement value of the Highway Network is estimated at £1.093 billion and is the Authority's most valuable material asset



Work is ongoing with dataMap Wales to finalise exception maps which will show which roads are to default to 20mph and those that will remain 30mph) when completed this will be hosted on our website so residents can view.



Surveys have been commissioned for the collection of data in relation to speed signs and road markings and for the digitisation of our existing Moving Traffic Orders. Design work has commenced for new signage and road markings, we will be looking to award a contract early spring for the works to commence.



Managing our Highways Network and Infrastructure



Ebbw Vale's historic Big Arch has been restored -

The Big Arch in Ebbw Vale, one of the largest early horse-drawn railway bridges in Britain symbolising the town's place in the history of iron and steel making in Wales, has been restored to its former glory.

Constructed in 1813, Big Arch was once the northern gateway to the Ebbw Vale Ironworks and then in later years to the sprawling Ebbw Vale Steelworks. It is now one of the few surviving tangible reminders of the area's rich industrial past.

In order to bring the 200 year old structure back to a safe condition the following works were undertaken at a cost of approximately £1.2 Million. These works commenced early January 2022 and allowed the road underneath the arch to be reopened early September 2022:-

- Removal of the temporary crash deck.
- Interstitial grouting through the masonry arch barrel to provide a waterproof barrier and prevent further delamination of the stonework and wash out of the mortar joints.
- Installing a grid system of reinforcement bars into the masonry arch barrel to pin and stabilize the masonry arch.
- Undertaking masonry repairs to the arch barrel, elevations, and upper arches.
- Waterproofing and repairing the brick pavements on both elevations of the arch.
- Removing the excess vegetation from the structure

BIG ARCH NORTH



BIG ARCH SOUTH





Case Study - Next-generation 5G immersive environment



New technology like 5G could help provide new opportunities for education in Wales, according to a new trial which launched today (10 March). 5G Wales Unlocked is the innovation project behind the new immersive 360-degree immersive environment in Ebbw Vale – just one of several trials demonstrating how ultrafast technology like 5G could transform rural communities, from powering tech innovations in agriculture, to improving rural transport and education and bolstering the tourism industry. Using a localised 5G network by project partners BT, the



classroom uses the high-speed connectivity to project inspiring and educational video content onto all four walls in a 360-degree format, providing an immersive experience. School lessons can be delivered across a variety of curriculum-related themes —taking children and young people on a journey of the senses as they ‘dive’ into the detail of a plant cell or explore the surface of a planet.

What's more, the experience isn't limited only to the pupils using the Immersive Environment. Thanks to the ultrafast 5G connection, live link-ups have also been established — allowing learners to discover the fascinating history of heritage sites such as Raglan Castle, with a live virtual tour from a Cadw custodian located at the site. The live link-ups, using Cisco technology, can also be used to connect classrooms across the country — meaning pupils can work collaboratively with other learners, and educators can enhance their own lessons in partnership with other schools.

Minister for Education and Welsh Language, Jeremy Miles MS, said: *“It’s fantastic to see learners in Ebbw Vale benefitting from next-generation technology, thanks to this innovative project. It’s our ambition to see Wales leading the way in using digital technology to deliver high-quality education, and to raise attainment and skills of all learners, regardless of background. This trial will help learners in rural areas engage with the curriculum in an exciting, immersive environment.”*

Nick Speed, BT Group Director in Wales, said: *“We’re excited to be part of this pioneering project looking at the potential of 5G in rural areas. The immersive classroom is a brilliant example of how 5G’s greater bandwidth can help deliver rich, high quality content to inspire school pupils about the world, wherever they’re located. It has the potential to reduce the education gap between areas and make sure that all pupils have access to this kind of innovative learning material.”*

Peter Shearman, Head of Innovation for Cisco UKI, said: *“We believe in an inclusive future for everyone. This is especially important in education, where digital has become such an important part of teaching and learning. Cisco is delighted to have invested in the collaboration platform for these schools in the valleys and rural south Wales as part of the 5G Wales Unlocked project.”*

5G Wales Unlocked has been made possible by funding from the Welsh Government's Tech Valleys Programme and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Case Study -

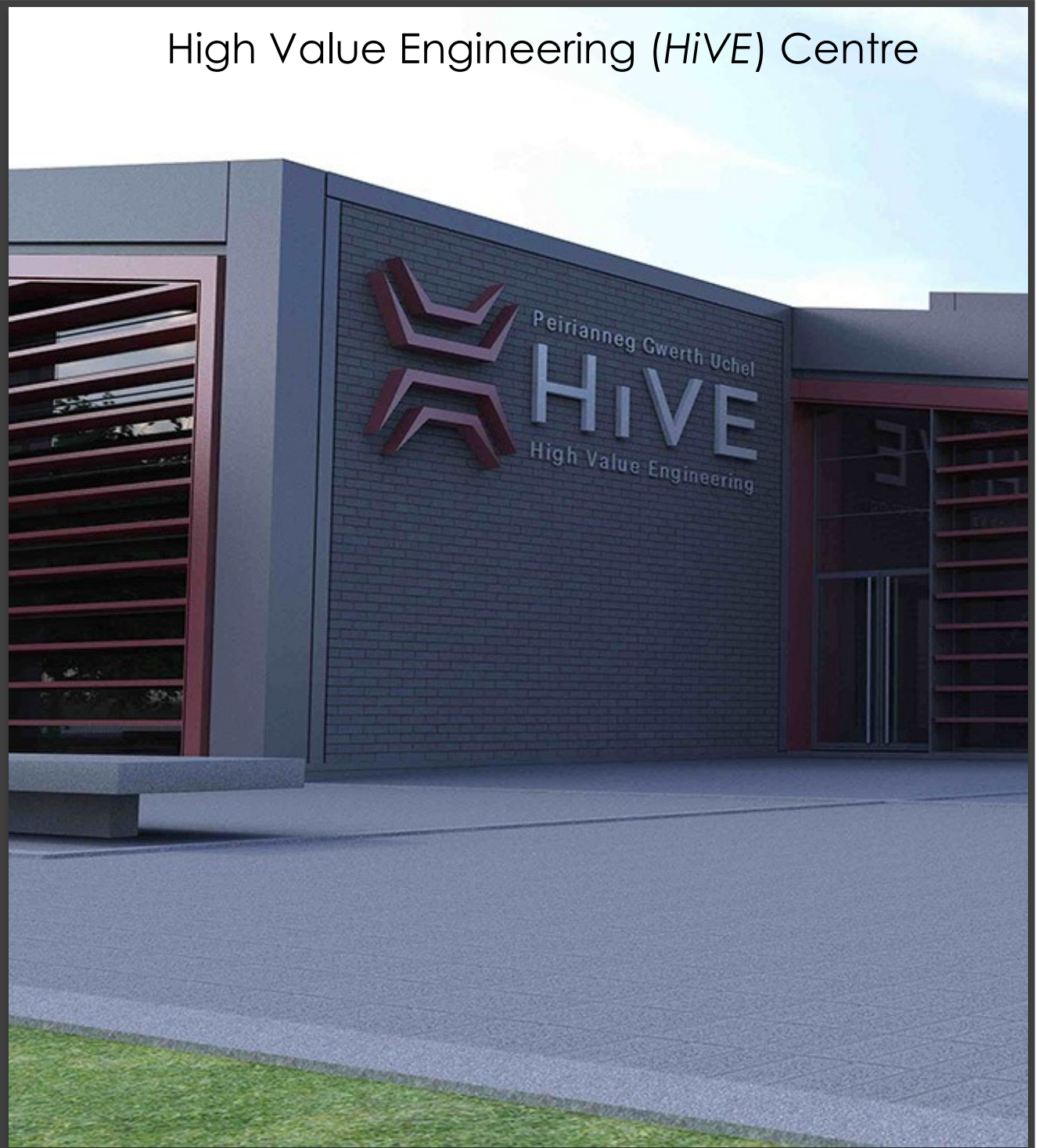
With a growing need for STEM knowledge and skills in the local economy, there is a need to educate the workforce of the future in a dedicated facility where learners will be surrounded by innovation and technology reflective of industry. We are therefore working in partnership with Coleg Gwent, Welsh Government, Tech Valleys, and education, to create a new High Value Engineering (HiVE) Centre in Ebbw Vale is due to open at the former Monwel factory site in the near future pending funding approval.

The **£12.5 million investment** will deliver an Advanced Engineering Centre close to our Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone campus, which will offer high-quality engineering education to equip young people with skills for the future.

The project involves A full refurbishment of the Former Monwell Building located on Letchworth Road, Ebbw Vale to create a state-of-the-art, carbon-neutral and entirely digital education facility, training the future workforce in advanced engineering disciplines such as robotics, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, autonomous manufacturing, simulation, and augmented reality.

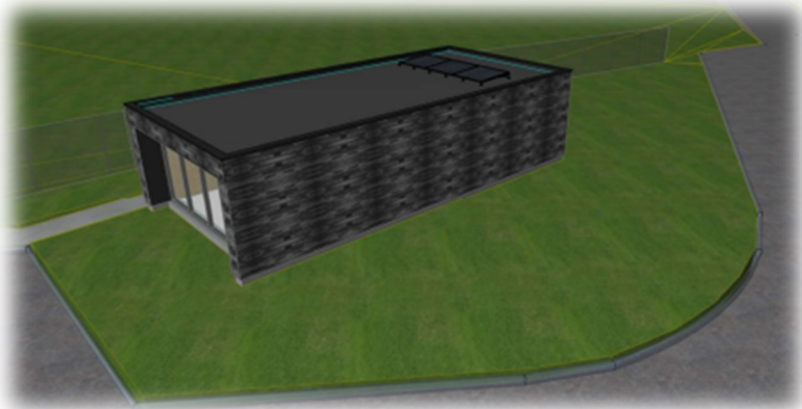
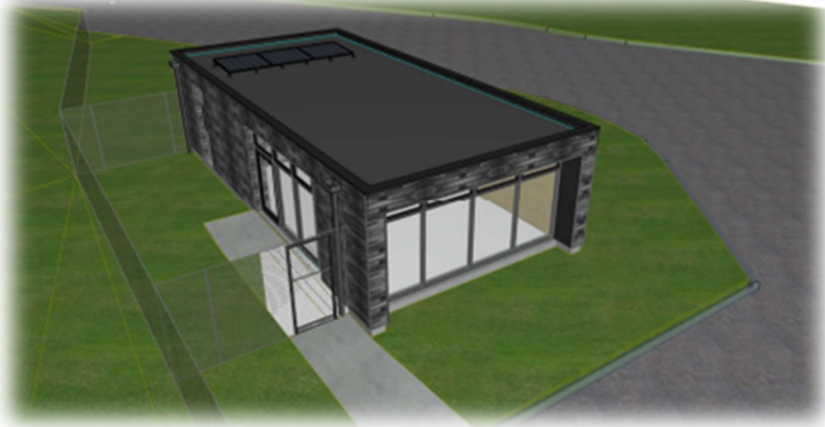
During Quarter 1 of this year the tender process was completed and we are now awaiting LUF funding approval before proceeding to contractor appointment and commencement stage.

High Value Engineering (HiVE) Centre





Case Study - Education Centre at Roseheyworth



The build process for a new **Education centre at Roseheyworth** Household Waste Recycling Centre is progressing well despite lead times having to be extended due to delays for construction materials and build costs higher than expected. It is proposed that the Education Centre is constructed on the site to allow opportunities for **school children and community groups to learn** about the benefits of **recycling**, what happens to **materials**, the benefits of a **circular economy** and encourage people to **take responsibility for their waste** through interactive materials, games and touch screen technology. Completion is expected in Quarter 3.

Capital cost is yet to be finalised but expected to be **in the region of £280,000** which has been funded by the Welsh Government Circular Economy Fund.



Case Study - Litter and Fly-tipping Strategy



As detailed in our previous report, Blaenau Gwent is only the

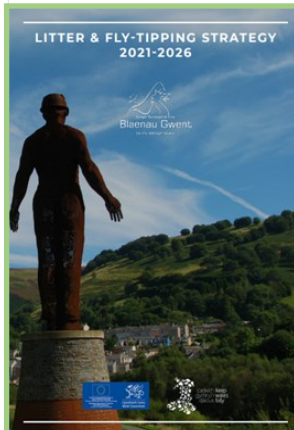
2nd council in Wales to develop its own litter and fly-tipping strategy.

The Strategy aligns with the councils key priority areas i.e. *Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient*

Following the Council's adoption of the strategy in June 2021 we have moved forward using the Strategy's outcome goals as reference, we have worked with our funding partners at Keep Wales Tidy to support the Caru Cymru (Love Wales) campaign which has seen our funded LEQ Officer develop and roll out a programme across Blaenau Gwent schools to Educate students on the impact of Litter on the environment and begin the challenge to "Change Behaviour" as a proactive measure in the fight against Litter. Included in this programme is the encouragement to recycle with the Officer taking them on a journey through the whole recycling process.

In addition to the educational element the officer has been building links and relationships with our amazing army of volunteers and community groups to not only support them in their efforts but to ensure the work they undertake is appreciated and valued.

Again as part of the strategy outcomes the Officer has commenced working with other Stakeholders and sectors to encourage all with a vested Interest or who are impacted or affected by Litter to be involved in the campaign. Already we have seen local and national businesses become involved including; making a commitment to contribute to a community litter pick and the provision of specialist bins at a known litter hotspot to encourage bins to be used.



Six Bells Litter Pick



Engagement & Litter Pick
Cwmcrachen



Cwmtillery Litter Pick



New trial bins going into
selected schools



Case Study - Planning approved for glass manufacturing facility in Ebbw Vale

Planning permission was granted in June 2022 for a glass bottle manufacturing facility in Ebbw Vale, which aims to bring around 600 jobs to the local area when it opens.

CiNER Glass Property Ltd, which already operates a facility in Turkey, was formally granted permission for the construction and operation of a purpose-built glass manufacturing facility, and associated development at Rassau Industrial Estate. The first part of the facility, which will be called 'Dragon Glass', is expected to be operational late in 2024. The application was granted subject to a number of detailed planning conditions imposed by Blaenau Gwent Council's Planning Committee.

Councillor John Morgan, Blaenau Gwent Council's Cabinet Member for Place & Regeneration says:

"This is really great news for Blaenau Gwent. The CiNER glass manufacturing facility is a major investment which will bring much needed jobs to Blaenau Gwent and the region, both during the construction phase and when fully up and running. It will also have benefits for local supply chains, and is a welcome and a major boost to the local economy as we recover from the damaging impact of the Covid pandemic.

"CiNER's business strategy is to be the world's largest glass producer using the latest and best technology; and to do so with a model that is environmentally friendly, sustainable, and values people. This will create significant employment opportunities within an economically challenged region as we work to tackle economic deprivation and create further economic opportunities for our communities.

"CiNER is committed to engaging with a range of local partners including colleges, the local authority and job centre plus/Careers Wales to develop opportunities around apprenticeships and work placements including during construction."

Head of Planning Steve Smith said planning was recommended to go ahead with a number of conditions which were designed to make the development acceptable; mitigate any impact on residents and the local area and exercise future control over the site. Air quality & pollution; visual impact; noise; highways issues and ecology and environmental issues were all addressed as part of the detailed report presented to members of the Planning Committee.

The
Environmental
Assessment
as part of the
Ciner Glass
Manufacturing Plant
Planning
Application has
been
completed

