

Local Regeneration & Community Services

Performance Report

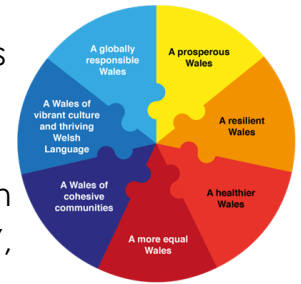


March 2023

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

Foreword

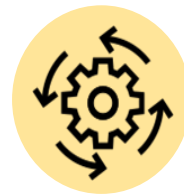
The purpose of this report is to present service activity which highlights how we are contributing to the Council's overall aim of delivering all seven national well-being goals.



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:

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

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.



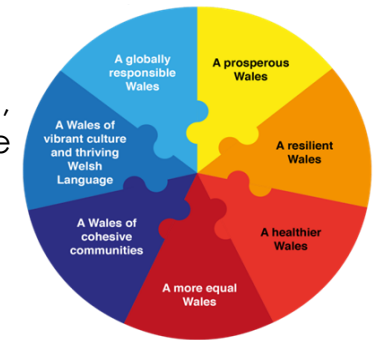
We will continue to invest in our neighbourhoods so that they are places where people are proud to live. We have prioritised economic development and regeneration in order to bring jobs, growth and opportunity to local people and businesses.

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



Welsh Government has asked authorities to produce **Placemaking Plans** where the authority wants to access a **Placemaking Grant** for those towns.

Trinity Chapel, Abertillery - 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 in 2023.



Development of **Town Centre regeneration Plans** are ongoing

Work on **Ebbw Vale Placemaking Delivery Plan** has continued during 2022/23 and further stakeholder engagement has been held on potential projects that can be taken forward for implementation. Some work on development options for key sites has commenced. Further engagement with Design Commission for Wales to be undertaken.

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. A draft of the placemaking plan has been prepared. Engagement took place with Elected Members in advance of it being submitted to Scrutiny for approval in March 2023.

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 has taken place along with work on the vision, ambition and strategy. Public consultation took place in January 2023.

The **Tredegar Placemaking Plan was approved in 2022**. Work continues on development of a delivery plan that will list the projects that need to be done to achieve the overall vision for the town.

Welsh Government Placemaking Grant for 2022/23 has been fully claimed.

Funding application has been prepared to cover costs of developing a **Blaina Placemaking Plan**.



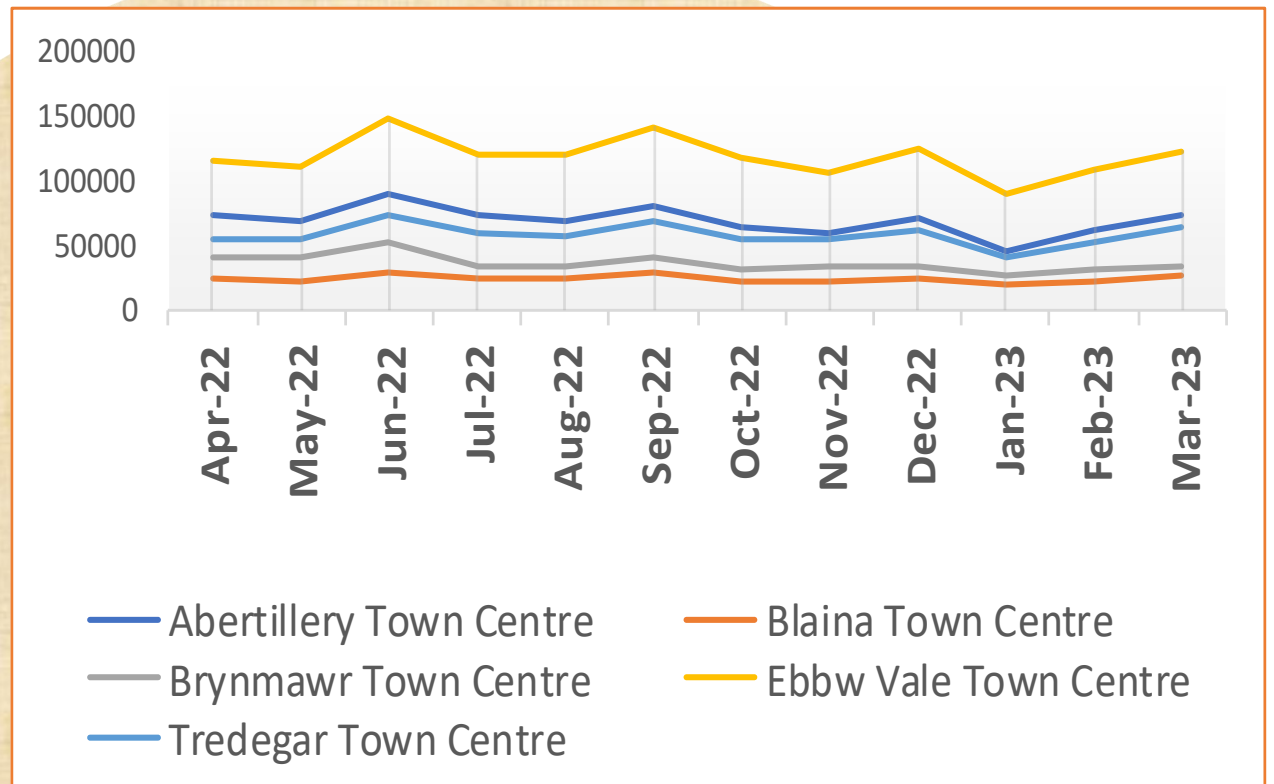


Town Centres



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 year footfall has fluctuated each month with the **busiest month in all towns being June.**

There was a **total Blaenau Gwent town centre footfall of 3,648,028 people** over the year (April 22—March 23).

An SLA is now in place between Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and Rhondda Cynan Taff County Borough Council as the Lead Authority for the Shared Prosperity Funding within the Cardiff Capital Region. Shared Prosperity Funding is now available to support projects under the Support for Local Business, People and Skills, and Community and Place themes.

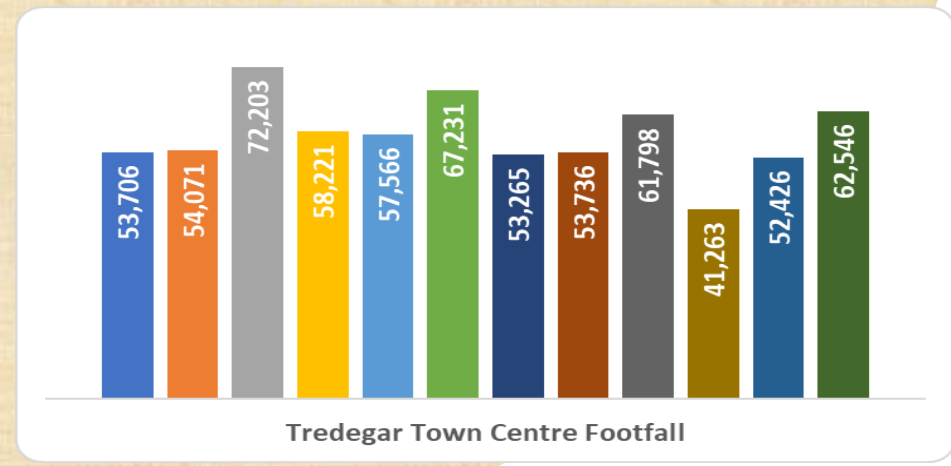
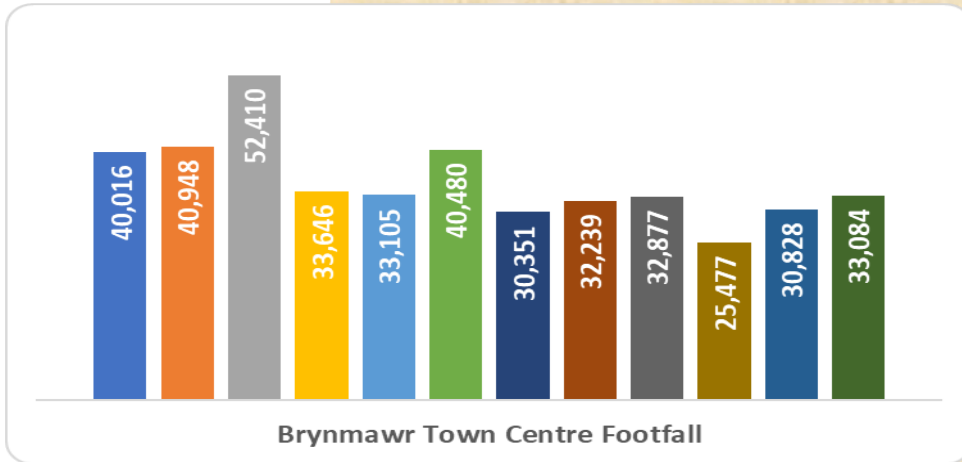
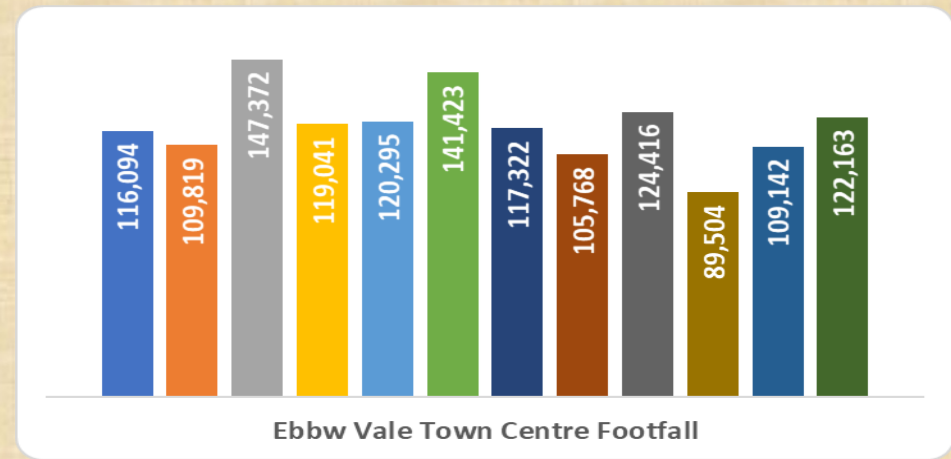
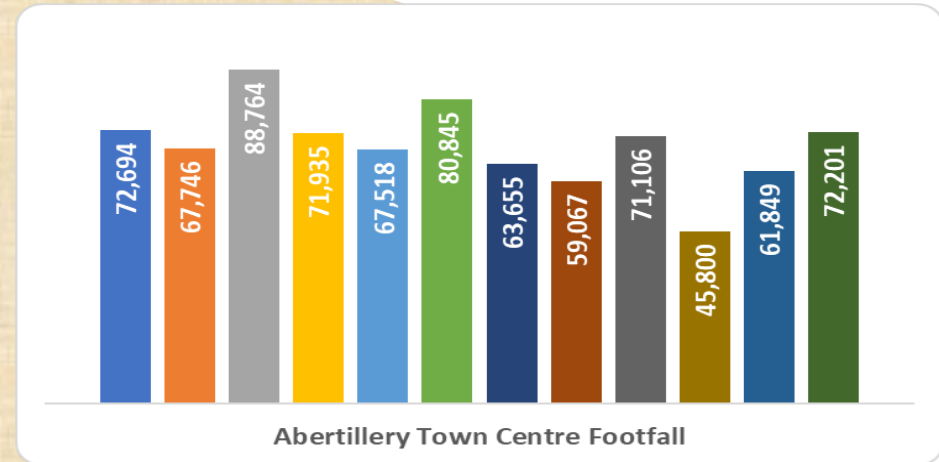
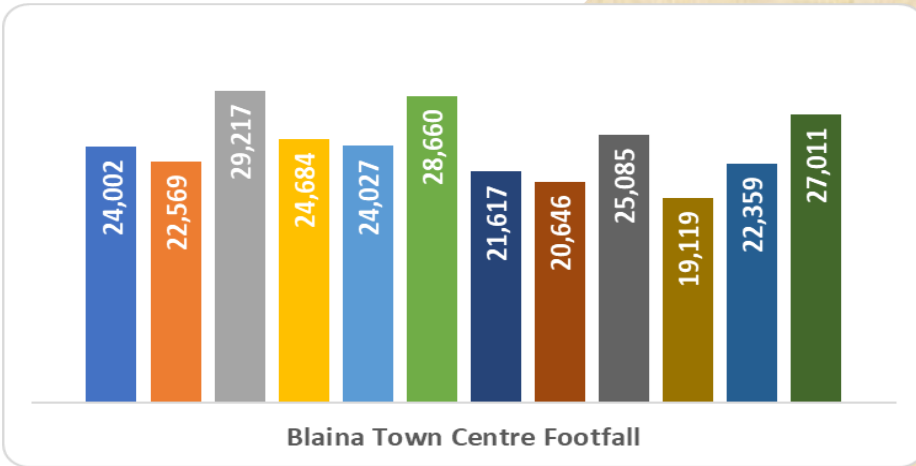
Our Shared Prosperity Fund aim is to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK.



Town Centres



The following graphs show the amount of footfall in each of our towns each month....



■ Apr-22
 ■ May-22
 ■ Jun-22
 ■ Jul-22
 ■ Aug-22
 ■ Sep-22
■ Oct-22
 ■ Nov-22
 ■ Dec-22
 ■ Jan-23
 ■ Feb-23
 ■ Mar-23



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.

Idox has now been procured and we are currently cleansing data ready for migration. 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. Training of system has started to be rolled out within the team and work has commenced identifying quantum of data to be cleansed and migrated.



Wind Generation Projects are ongoing.

- An application has been submitted for planning consent for the development of a **wind turbine at Silent Valley** and we are awaiting a planning determination.



Hydro Generation -

Consultants Dulas have carried out a feasibility study to utilise hydro generation to power electric pumps at Silent Valley. This will be taken to a draft planning stage where the case for investment is determined.

Initial scoping study started for potential solar scheme at Parc Bryn Bach .

Grid application submitted jointly with Caerphilly County Borough Council before taking the work on the project any further. This is being

delivered by Welsh Government Energy Service.



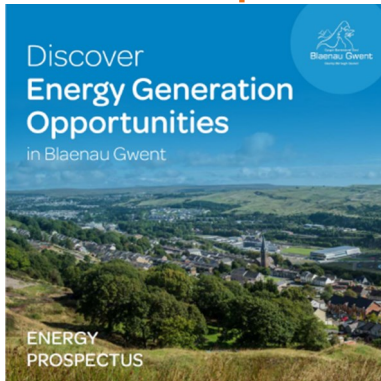
Gwasanaeth Ynni Energy Service



Measurement and verification activity for the **REFIT** project is ongoing.



Energy and Digital

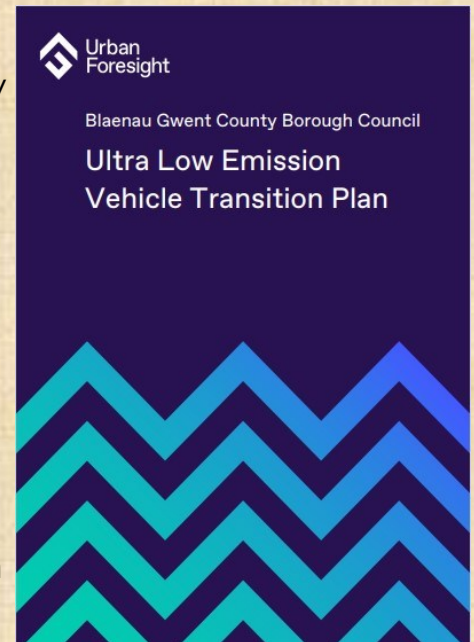


Cardiff Capital Region City Deal secured funding from Welsh Government to install **rapid charge points for taxi ranks and to purchase 44 wheelchair accessible electric taxis for trials** to take place across the region. The taxis were to be offered under a 30 day free trial for taxi drivers. Two of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

Funding to deliver projects is limited - funding options are explored for all projects.

The Council received a **£300,000 grant** from the Welsh Government towards the costs of **increasing Council electric vehicle charging infrastructure.** The scheme administered by Welsh Local Government Association requires a Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Transition Plan to be developed and during the period Urban Foresight completed the draft ULEV transition plan for the whole of Blaenau Gwent, which is due to be taken through the scrutiny and political approval process shortly.

Work is continuing on development of infrastructure for Blaenau Gwent fleet, schools and Council buildings. Funding will be utilised to provide electric vehicle charging infrastructure to support the running of new electric vans that are being procured for the Community Meals service. Chargers have been installed to support with transitioning these community meals vehicles to electric vehicles but we are awaiting metering installation before they can be commissioned.





Energy and Digital



Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure – Close working with Cardiff Capital Region to provide public charge points continues, with further funding being secured for a phase 2 rollout that will provide **electric vehicle charge points at an additional 9 sites** across Blaenau Gwent for which works are due to be completed in the next 2 months. This is in **addition to the 11 sites delivered under phase 1 which are now live and available for the public.** The charge points that have been installed will be maintained by Cardiff Capital Region's appointed contractor Connected Kerb. The contract has provided a Frequently Asked Questions page about their EV charging points – ranging from how to charge a vehicle, length of time it takes and the price of use. The FAQs can be accessed here: <https://www.connectedkerb.com/charge-your-car/drivers/>



We have also installed charge points at the following locations with Silverstone:

- Depot – two wall mounted charge points
- Coed y Garn Primary School
- Glanhwy Primary School
- Pen Y Cwm
- Willowtown Primary School
- Deighton Primary School
- Georgetown Primary School
- Ystruth Primary School
- Augusta House

A further regional funding bid is due to be submitted shortly to OZEV and if approved will provide charge points at a further 11 sites across Blaenau Gwent.




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.

Japanese Familiarisation visit with Visit Wales, took place on Monday 27th March 2023 in glorious spring sunshine. The visit was with MIKKI the top inbound company visiting UK from Japan hosting small to large groups, fully inclusive tours and educational groups. They visited The Aneurin Bevan Trail, Tredegar Medical Aid Heritage Centre, Tredegar Arms and Bedwellty House and Park. They loved the cultural element of the visit. The superb afternoon tea in Bedwellty ended a perfect visit. The MIKKI group were accompanied by experienced Blue Badge Guide, Stella Thomas who was able learn more about Nye Bevan and the home of the NHS. These will be included in her Cardiff tours.





Railway extension to Abertillery at design stage. Works to extend the platform at Llanhilleth well underway.

From couch to Blaenau Gwent

JANINE PRICE
Born in Blaenau Gwent, she is a local business woman who loves adventures, sunsets and photography. Co-founder of Blaenau Gwent Solo Sisters, she is a proud advocate of her local area.

Where: SOUTH WALES
Tag: WELLNESS ACTIVITIES, MOUNTAINS, MY PLACE, CAMPING / CAMPSITE




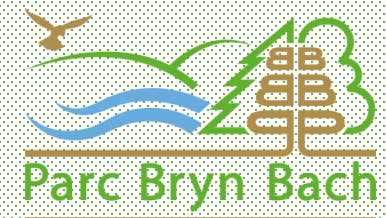
[Blaenau Gwent | Walking, running, cycling | Visit Wales](#)

Final building regulations being implemented to enable the Bunkhouse to open at Park Brynbach (anticipated June 2023) [Bunkhouse — Parc Bryn Bach](#)

HOME DESTINATIONS SOUTH WALES SOUTH WALES VALLEYS

Out and about in the bountiful valleys of Blaenau Gwent

[Things to do in Blaenau Gwent | Visit Wales](#)

WELLBEING WORKHUB

New remote working hubs have been opened at Parc Bryn Bach to provide the local community with facilities where they can work closer to home, while enjoying the calming beauty of a glorious local nature reserve



Welcome to Parc Bryn Bach's Wellbeing Workhubs



Destination Management & Tourism



The 2021 STEAM report received with data showing huge annual increases across all key performance indicators, however, this should be taken with caution as they are compared with the 2020 figures that were heavily impacted by Covid 19. It does show a steady recovery across day and stay visitors and the revenue they generate:-



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.

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".

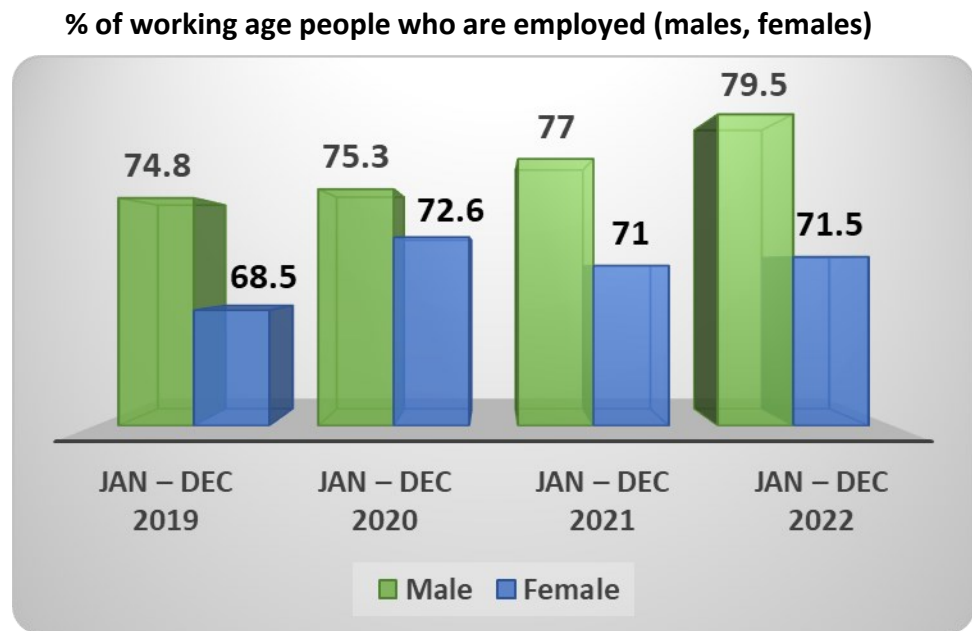
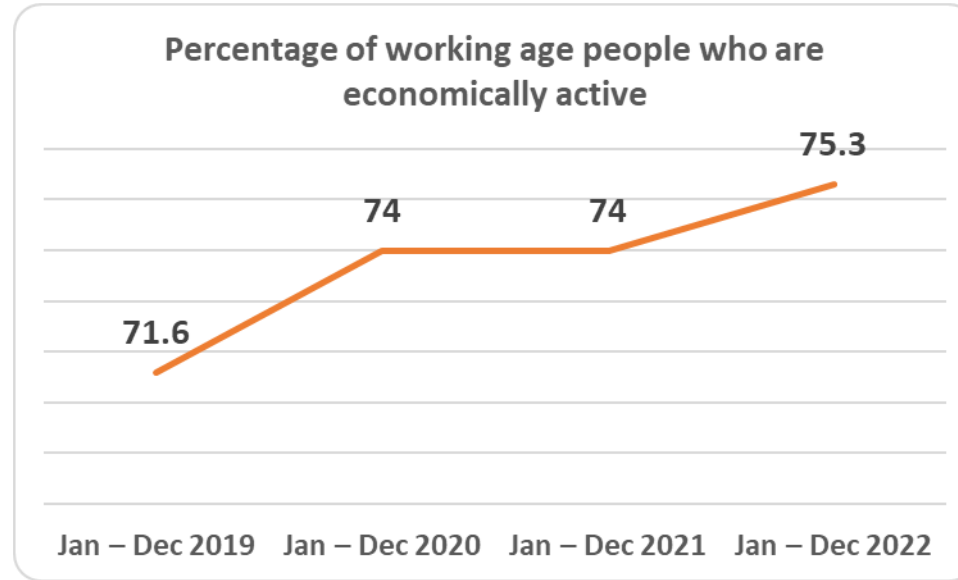




Employment and Skills



The Shared Prosperity **People and Skills** investment priority will help reduce the barriers some people face to employment and support them to move towards employment and education. Places can also target funding into skills for local areas to support employment and local growth. Blaenau Gwent's funding allocation over the 3 year delivery programme against this investment priority is **£8,599,836**.



Employment and Skills



Kick Start

NUMBER OF KICKSTART PARTICIPANTS

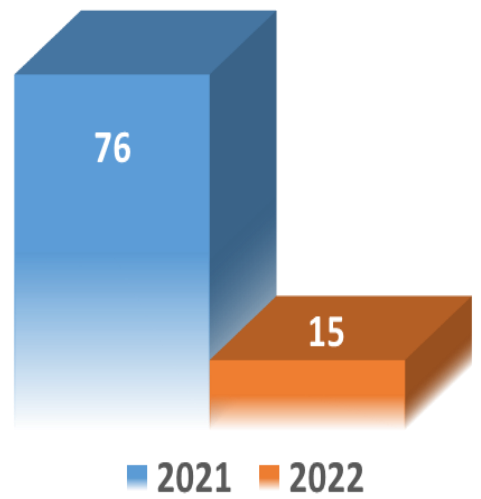
Outcomes following placement



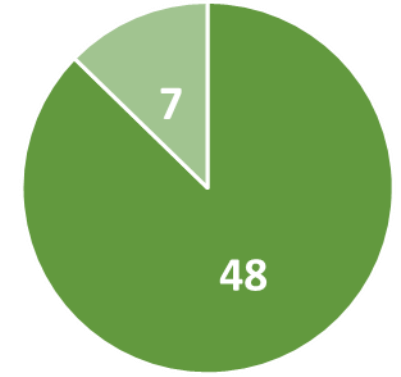
was a 2 year programme (2021 & 2022) which was aimed at supporting new businesses from 6 months up to 3 years old, to help them develop and expand.

The implementation of the programme has been very successful with

21 Blaenau Gwent businesses receiving this funding to support work placements



■ Employed ■ Training / Education



*This scheme will be replaced with the **Quickstart** Programme from April 2023*




BLAENAU GWENT
RASSAU INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

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

Community Benefits

Once operational the Ciner plant would help provide a range of long-term benefits to the local community, including:

- A £390m investment in a state-of-the-art glass recycling manufacturing plant.
- Up to 600 jobs when the plant is operational plus an additional 400 jobs during the construction phase.
- Create a centre of engineering excellence in glass technology for Wales, which can compete with the best in the world.
- Provide thousands of new job opportunities for young people over several decades.
- Contribute to both Blaenau Gwent and the Welsh Government's net-zero ambitions by drastically reducing the levels of glass imported.

Employment and Skills

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 are developing an Advanced Engineering Centre which will create an environment that will attract hi-tech inward investors within the Advanced Manufacturing sector.

Funding to deliver this project is broken down as follows:-

<p>Welsh Government Pre Approval 1 (Money to develop scheme prior to Tender):</p> <p>£200K</p>	<p>Welsh Government Pre Approval 2 (Money to develop scheme prior to Tender):</p> <p>£160K</p>
<p>Welsh Government Tech Valleys:</p> <p>£2,989,082</p>	<p>Levelling Up Funding: £9,360,000</p>

Progress so far.....

- Levelling Up Funding (LUF) has been awarded;
- Contracts with the preferred contractor ISG, are in the process of being signed with the aim of being on site towards the end of July 2023 and contract completed end of May 2024. The contract period is 42 weeks;
- The date the campus will be open and welcoming students is anticipated to be **September 2024.**
- Contract sum **£12,709,082**



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





Housing Development



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.

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.

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 - Cardiff Region City Deal, Housing Viability Gap Funds of £1.7M, have recently been secured in order to remediate a site in Ashvale, Tredegar. The site will bring much needed homes, to the area, comprising of **54 open market and 6 affordable, homes.**

An application has been made to Welsh Government for Social Housing Grant, to bring forward **22 homes**, to a **brown field site in the lower Ebbw Fach Valley**, which we are supporting. The planning application has recently been lodged, with the hope of gaining planning to commence construction early 2024/2025.



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



Former Nantyglo School - Options to ensure that the former Nantyglo School is brought forward for residential development are currently being formulated.





Housing Development



Work continues to identify and prioritise future housing opportunities (mix of tenure) working with Tai Calon and partners to identify schemes.

- ◆ A Local Housing Market Assessment is underway in order to inform a revised Housing Strategy and Local Development Plan.
- ◆ A cross cutting Housing Strategy Group has recently been set up to take forward the revised Housing Strategy.

▶ Tai Calon now have one new residential development under construction, with another about to be submitted for planning. With the aim to formulate an ongoing future programme of development.

▶ Constant review with all registered social landlord partners is undertaken to ensure a pipeline of residential development is identified and brought forward.





Housing Development



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.



During the financial year 2022 -23, 5 units were delivered via the Social Housing Grant and occupied by customers.



33 homes, consisting of 46 units (32 single properties and one with 14 units), were brought back into use via action by the local authority during the reporting period.

► 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).

Work has continued delivering **61 Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)** this year. This work provides major home adaptations for disabled people for the purpose of providing access into and around their homes.

The **average number of calendar days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant in private homes** to support independent living this year was **334 days**.

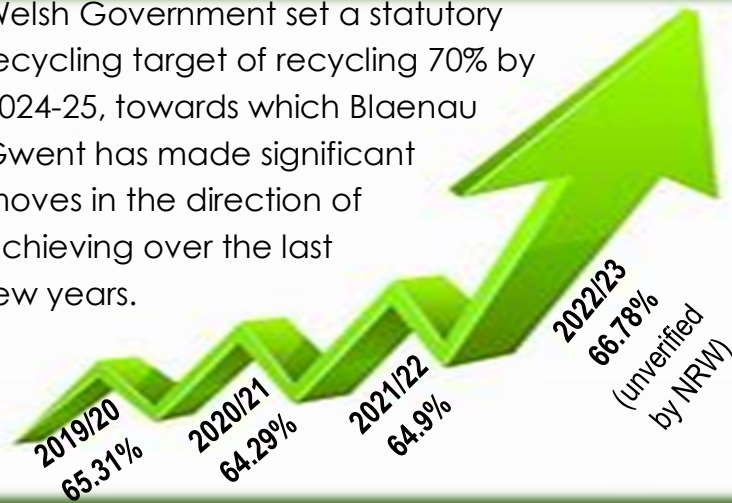




Improving the Local Environment



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.



In order to achieve the 70% target, further work will be needed including enforcement, behaviour change campaigns and a review of kerbside collections.

Unfortunately **Keep Wales Tidy's** "Caru Cymru" scheme came to an end on March 31st 2023. Although KWT continue to provide resource support the funding for the proactive officer engagement ceased. However, a successful application for SPF (Shared Prosperity Fund) funding has meant the council could employ a dedicated full time LEQ Officer. The role of the LEQ Officer is to continue and increase the engagement programme within schools, the community and businesses. As engagement forms only one element of the strategy objectives, the officer will also deliver the other specific objectives of the strategy being, raise awareness, community empowerment and education. As part of the education programme the officer also works closely with the Waste Strategy team to support the delivery of the Waste Strategy to promote and encourage recycling behaviours within schools, workplaces and communities. The officer continues to work in collaboration with KWT along with other internal and external agencies to create an environment that is clean and attractive for current and future generations. ✓

The **Communities and Place investment priority** of the Shared Prosperity Fund will enable places to invest to restore their community spaces and relationships and create the foundations for economic development at the neighbourhood-level.



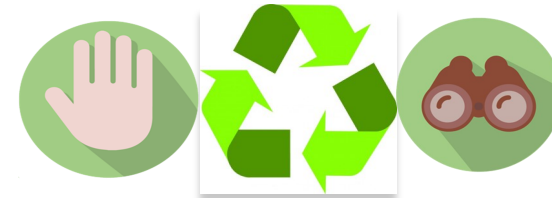
The intention of this is to strengthen the social fabric of communities, supporting in building pride in place. Blaenau Gwent's SPF funding allocation over the 3 year delivery programme against this investment priority is **£7,837,618**



Following analysis of waste composition where 23% of residual waste was identified as food, an engagement campaign with all of the residents of Blaenau Gwent will begin in June 2023. Keeping up with the Joneses campaign will be suspended on round 3 until the food campaign is complete.

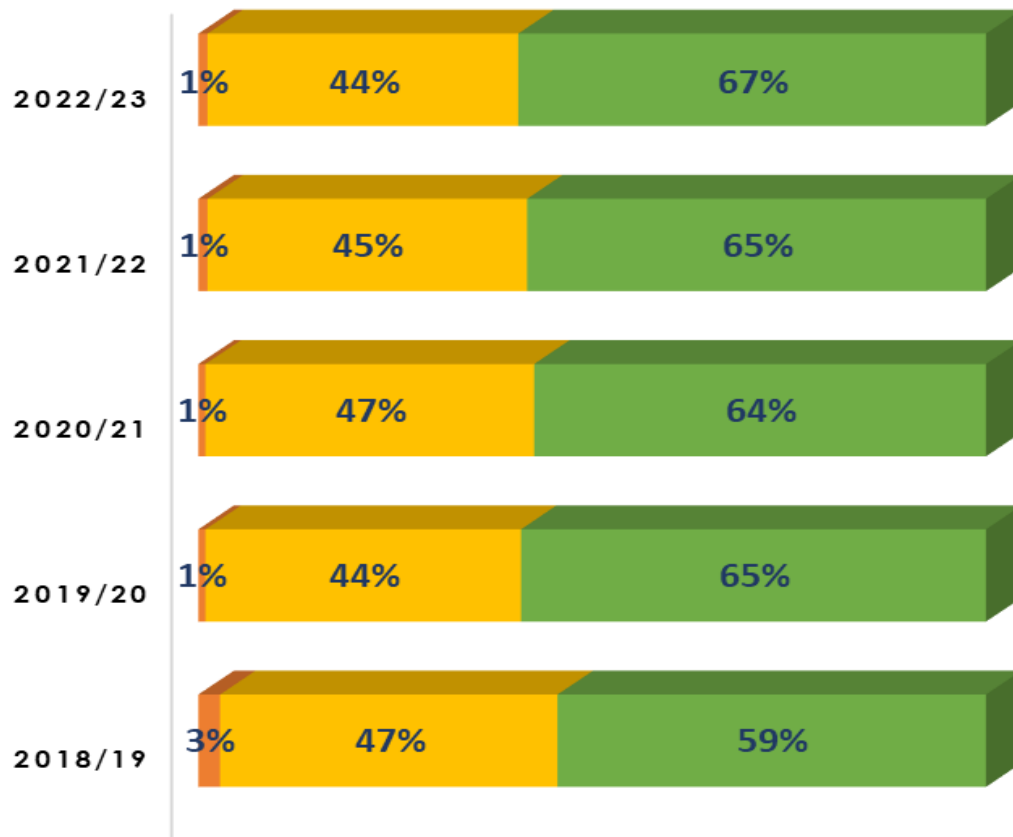


Improving the Local Environment



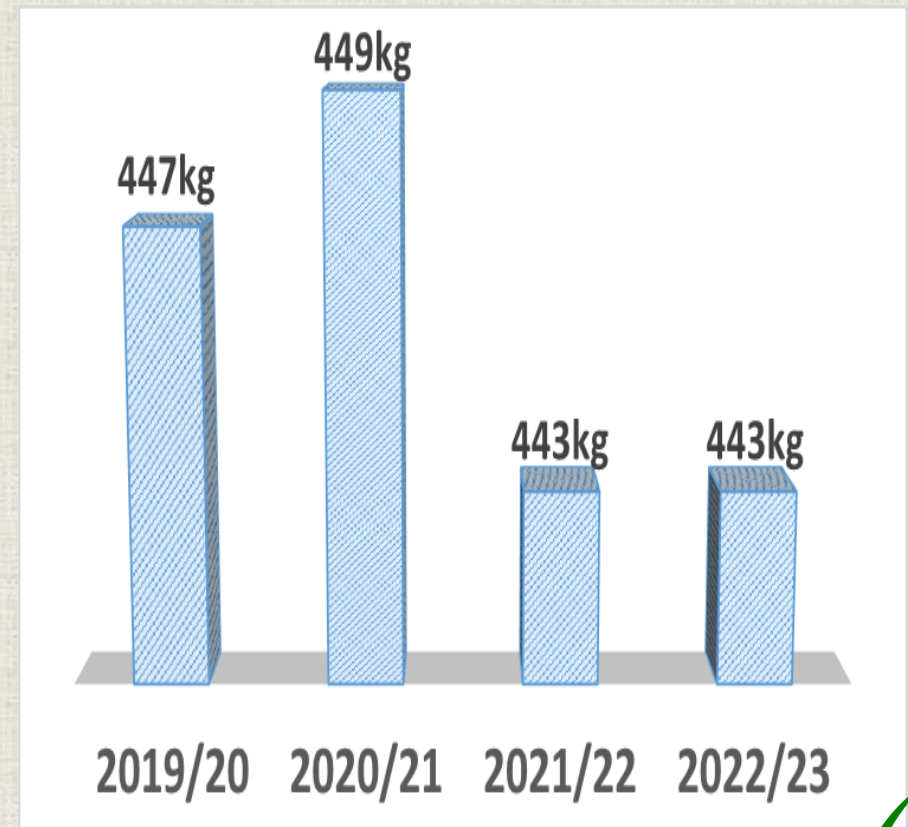
WHAT HAPPENS TO OUR WASTE?

- Municipal waste sent to landfill
- Municipal waste sent to Energy from Waste
- Waste reused, recycled or composted



- 2022/23 Data unverified by Natural Resources Wales
- The Energy from Waste indicator is based on collected waste and we claim a % back from the Incinerator Bottom Ash which also contributes to our recycling rate.

Average amount of waste produced per resident during a financial year (kg)





Improving the Local Environment



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

Clean-ups were completed across 5 town centres



Work continues with WRAP on the Battery Trail / campaign with the aim to increase tonnage of batteries collected at the kerbside - Baseline data is being gathered with roll out of campaign on 17th April 2023.

✓ Yes please

✓ Household batteries, such as AAA, AA, B, C, D, DD and 9V batteries



LONG TERM - Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions

The decarbonisation agenda is considered when putting individual projects together. Some of the interventions in the Community and Place investment priority of the SPF Fund support work within the community around decarbonisation and could support locally owned renewable energy projects to come forward. Likewise, the support for local business will look to help them in decarbonising their activities.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is committed to delivering front line services in an effective and efficient manner.

A new Centre of Operations form part of this and is also integral to Blaenau Gwent transitioning to a low carbon fleet.

Ground Investigation (GI) works of the Cwm Colliery site are scheduled to be carried out in the new financial year which will then allow us to progress the project to planning stage.



New Centre of Operations Plan Image



Improving the Local Environment



By utilising in cab devices, refuse and recycling crews are now electronically recording excess side waste and recycling contamination issues for referral to the Authority's Enforcement Wardens, who are following up these referrals with enforcement action or advice visits as appropriate. This is freeing up officer time to allow more proactive initiatives to be conducted such as the current Food Campaign.

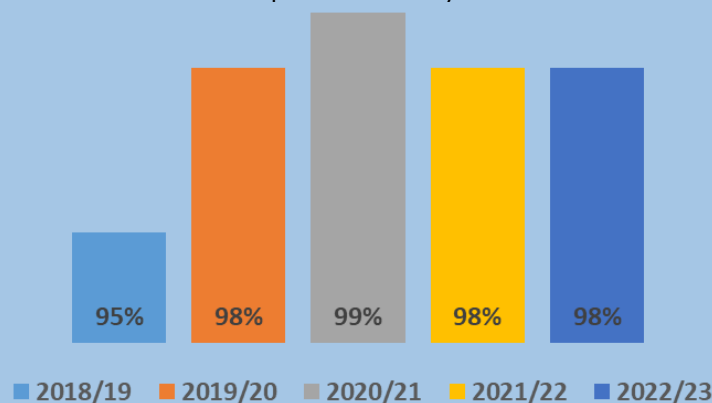
Involvement / Engagement—

There was an increase in wardens enquiries in 2022/23 as a result of the introduction of engagement with residents for issues identified by recycling crews with recycling presented for collection.

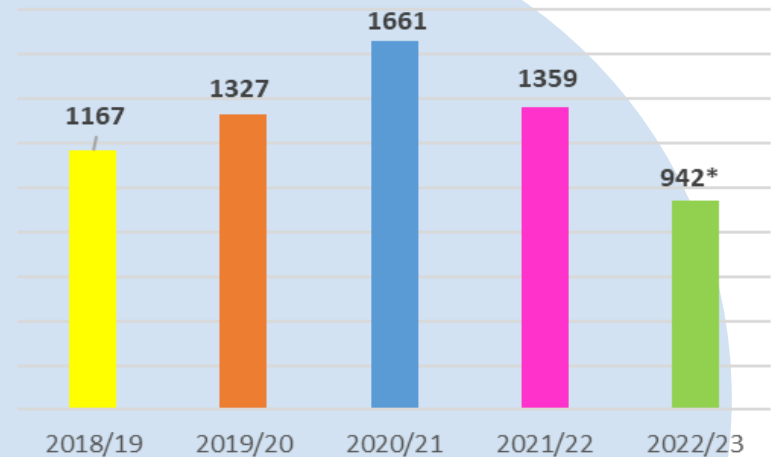


During the period April to March 2023, **180 streets** were inspected by Blaenau Gwent Officers / Keep Wales Tidy.

Of these **98%** were rated **at a high or acceptable standard on cleanliness.**



Total recorded fly-tipping incidents



* 2022/23 Data unverified by Natural Resources Wales

942 Fly-tipping incidents were reported during the year, the average number of days taken to clear was **4.3 days**

28% reduction in fly tipping since 2020/21- lowest level of fly tipping recorded in 2022/23 for 4 years.

During the year (April 22 to March 2023) there were **79 £400 fixed penalty notices** issued for Fly Tipping

Over 400% increase in fly tipping fixed penalty notices issued since 2021/22 to 2022/23



Healthy and Safe Communities



Our Transitional Capital Funding Programme involves working with Registered Social Landlords to identify properties for homelessness/resettlement schemes. During the year 8 additional properties have been included and a further 3 properties have been identified in partnership with Tai Calon for inclusion in the scheme for which a bid was submitted to Welsh Government for funding.

HOMELESSNESS - During the reporting period, 288 households met the threshold for being threatened with homelessness. Of these, 183 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.

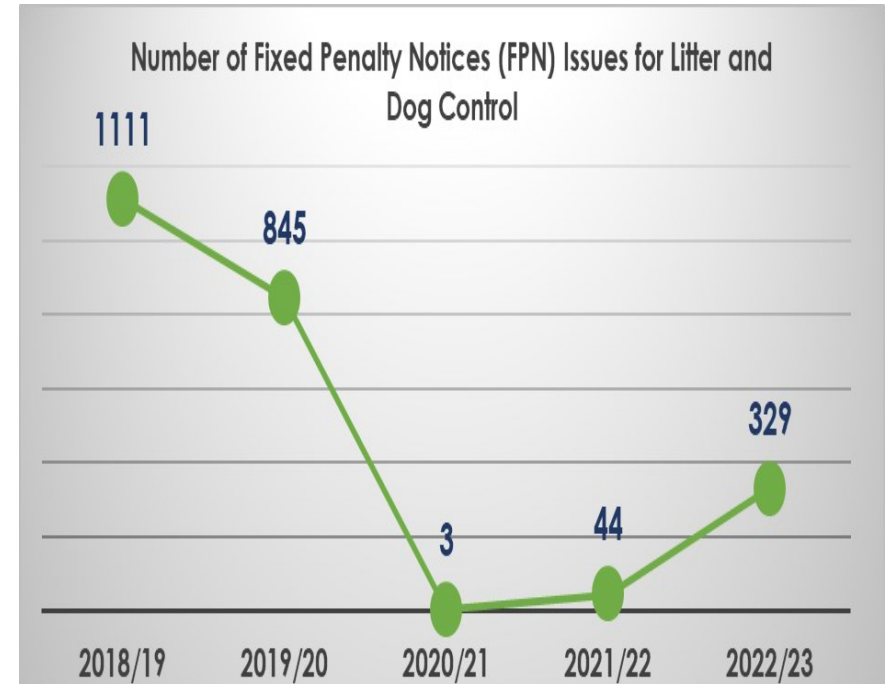


LONG TERM - It is a priority for us to raise the profile of Play by improving the quality and equity of play provision throughout the Borough for all our children and young people. To achieve this we are looking to refurbish and maintain existing play provision to acceptable levels and develop new initiatives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

Chartist way play area has been confirmed as needing to be relocated and the contract for this work has been let, meeting with contractor will be held shortly to develop programme of installation.

Discussions are ongoing regarding **Garnlydan play area**. - Progression is reliant on funding.

On the 26th October 2022 Blaenau Gwent CBC met and discussed the introduction of a new public space protection order for dog controls and the specific locations affected. The public space protection order for dog controls was approved by Blaenau Gwent CBC with a start date of the 1st November 2022.



During the year

there were

310 fixed penalty notices issued for litter and **19** for dog control.





Healthy and Safe Communities



Environmental Health responded to **316 Housing Safety/Standards service requests** relating to sub-standard Privately Rented Sector accommodation, damp nuisance, Warm Home Nest Inspections, including the **approval of 4 New Landlord loans. (total £160k).**

In addition, Housing Solutions dealt **with 9 owner occupier loans (£61,500) and 20 empty property grants (£600,000).**

Environmental Health responded to:

358 service requests related to **accumulations of waste in gardens – mostly household waste**

95 related to **smoke from domestic fires/bonfires**

22 service requests relating to **alleged filthy and verminous premises**

417 Noise Nuisance Complaints

52 Other Nuisance Complaints

297 Planning Consultations

74 Licensing/Temporary Event Notice Consultations

5 high risk premises with Private Water Supplies were subject to **statutory inspection**



Pest Control was delivered in partnership with Rentokil. 1,946 free rat treatments were completed along with 75 treatments for other pests. The contract with Rentokil has been renewed.

Support has been provided for the local response relating to the resettlement scheme for Ukrainian people by **inspecting 41 properties** to ensure they are **safe and suitable.**

UKRAINE
How you can help





Healthy and Safe Communities



Blaenau Gwent's **Food Hygiene** Service continue to deliver interventions at food businesses within the Borough. During 2022/23 a **total of 218 interventions**

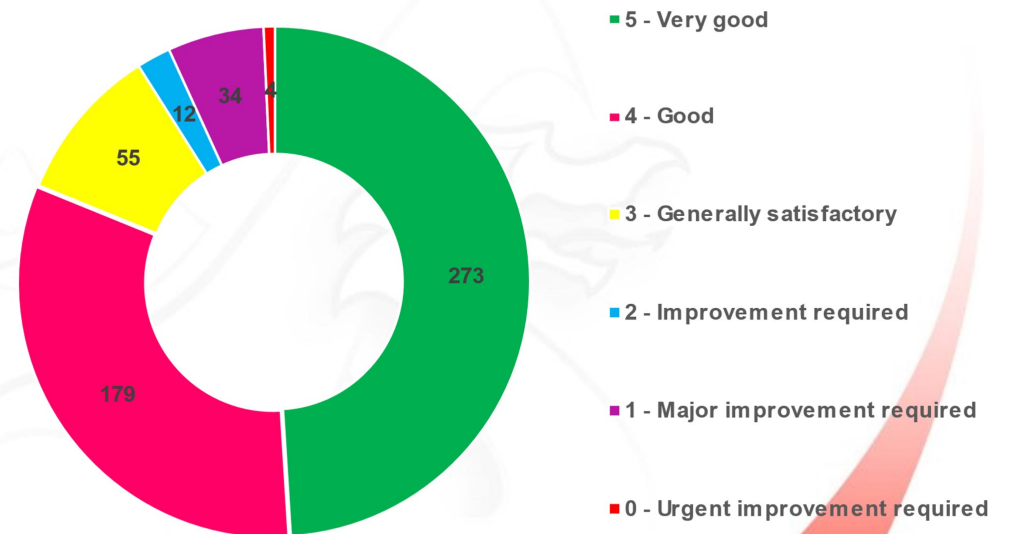
were completed at high risk premises meeting one of the challenging targets that was set in the Food Standards Agency recovery plan. This work has been completed alongside our other continuing programmed and reactive workload. We still have a significant backlog of food hygiene interventions to deliver which are a legacy of the impact of the COVID pandemic. We are continuing to work through these. At present we have a backlog of 225 D and E rated premises that are overdue an inspection. We are currently considering options to address this backlog. This figure does not include new businesses.

During 2022/23 we saw **98 new food businesses open** in the Borough. We continue to prioritise for inspection those that are likely to present a higher risk in terms of food safety in-line with guidance from the Food Standards Agency. Of those that opened during and prior to the 31st March 2023 we still have **46 new businesses which require inspection.**



At the close of the reporting year 2022/23 **92.6% of food premises were broadly compliant with food hygiene standards** with an increase in the number of re-rating requests.

Total Number Of Premises By Food Hygiene Rating





Healthy and Safe Communities



Case Study—E.coli 0157 in a Nursery

- September 2022, 1 case of E. coli 0157 reported in a resident of BG
- Case interview revealed they attended a children’s nursery out of area
- Investigations found there were a number of cases identified within the setting and may be linked to a variety of sources including: holidays, environmental exposure (Farm) and an ongoing national E.coli incident
- Partnership working with other neighbouring L.A’s to identify sources of the infection and support the affected families
- Resulted in the whole nursery including staff being screened (faecal posts - 100 samples)
- Multiple Incident Management Meetings held with Public Health Wales, Food Standards Agency and Local Authorities (Blaenau Gwent and LA where nursery was based)

During the reporting period there was only 1 E. coli 0157 disease notification. This was responded to within one working day



Infectious Disease:

We responded to **155 notifications of infectious disease and 5 infectious disease incidents (outbreaks / clusters) during 2022/23.**

These figures do not include notifications of COVID-19 cases or clusters and do not include clusters of other infectious diseases that we have responded to with advice / guidance but which did not reach incident criteria stage.

Case Study - Legionnaires Disease Case

- October 2022, 1 case of Legionnaires Disease in BG resident reported
- Case interview revealed they worked in a meat packing factory outside of our area
- Investigations found they had an Evaporative Condenser on site, which had isolated Legionella bacteria in a recent sample
- Contact made with other nearby English LA’s to find out current Legionella cases (South Gloucester, Herefordshire, Gloucester) - no links identified
- Multiple Incident Management Meetings held with Public Health Wales, Health and Safety Executive and Local Authorities (Blaenau Gwent and LA where factory was based)





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%** (15) of identified vulnerable potential scam victims during the period.

Closure Order- Abertillery Mini Market

A shop in Abertillery was ordered to close by a Judge sitting in Newport Magistrates Court following a Trading Standards investigation that revealed the

sales of illegal cigarette and tobacco.

Abertillery Mini Market, Somerset Street, was served a Closure Notice by Blaenau Gwent Council following a prolonged period of intelligence gathering, inspections of the premises and test purchases which supported concerns raised by the public about the sales of illegal cigarettes and tobacco from the store.

Despite the owner of the store contesting the notice the Court accepted the evidence. The Council utilised statutory powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 to issue a Closure Notice and the court granted a **closure order** for three months until 2 August 2023, or until a further order is made.



Licensing Prosecution

The Council's Licensing Team prosecuted an individual for driving a Hackney Carriage vehicle without the requisite Hackney Carriage driver's licence and without the appropriate insurance.

The individual pleaded guilty to the offences and was sentenced as follows :

- **Licence offence - £180 fine, reduced to £120 for the early plea;**
- **Insurance offence - £180 fine, reduced to £120 for the early play;**
- **Victim surcharge applied of £34.**
- **Costs in the sum of £300. TOTAL £574**

in addition to the sentence above, 6 points were also endorsed on the individuals licence



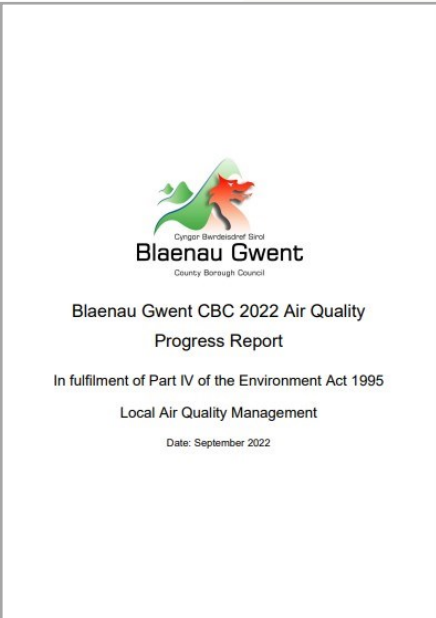
Healthy and Safe Communities



The Environmental Health Section is responsible for monitoring **air quality within Blaenau Gwent**. Air Quality is the term used to describe and classify the concentration of certain pollutants in the air. These pollutants have the potential to adversely affect human health at elevated concentrations.

An air quality management is declared when there is an exceedance of air quality standards and the local authority must take legal steps to improve the situation.

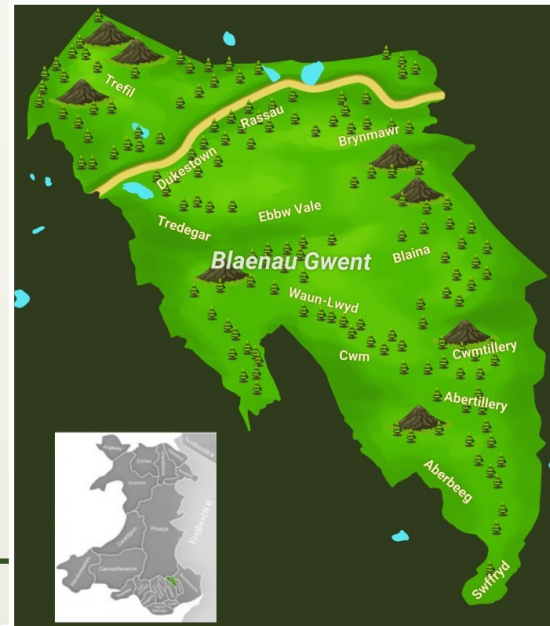
In Blaenau Gwent we have good levels of air quality so we have not declared any air quality management areas.



The completion of the 2022 Air Quality Assessment has been completed and submitted to Welsh Government

We currently carry out **air quality monitoring at 28 locations** within the borough at residential properties and schools.

These locations are selected by officers **due to them being in close proximity to busy roads, industrial estates and specifically at schools due to the school run effect.**



<https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/environmental-health/pollution/air-quality/>

Environmental Health **successfully regulated 22 industrial processes to minimise pollution** without the need for any formal enforcement





Managing Our Estate



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

Increased installation of PV systems to existing and new builds:

Ebbw Vale Learning Action Centre - So far in five months Ebbw Vale LAC CO2 Emission saved is 600.1kg which is equivalent to 36 trees planted.



Any general maintenance throughout the year included upgrades to improved energy efficient parts.

**Brynmawr Learning Action Centre
Brynmawr LAC CO2 emission saved is 698.2kg which is equivalent to 42 trees planted.**





Managing Our Estate

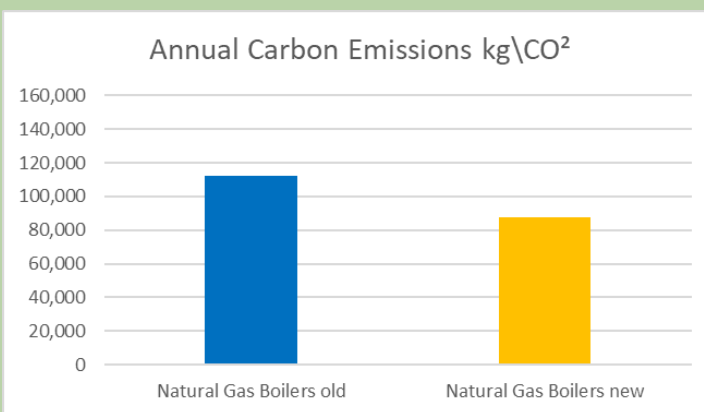
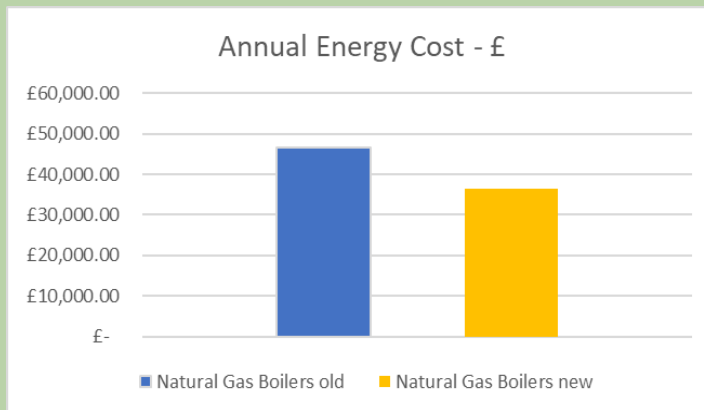


Beaufort Hill Primary School Gas Boiler Upgrade

The original heating system comprised of two gas boilers with a seasonal efficiency of approximately 75% (E Rated). These old boilers were replaced with two new high efficiency condensing gas boilers with a seasonal efficiency of approximately 96% (A Rated)



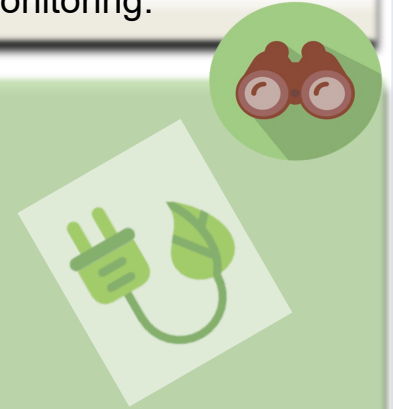
The average differences in running costs and annual carbon emissions using the predicted pence per kw for gas at £0.09p for 2023 -2024 can be seen in the charts :-



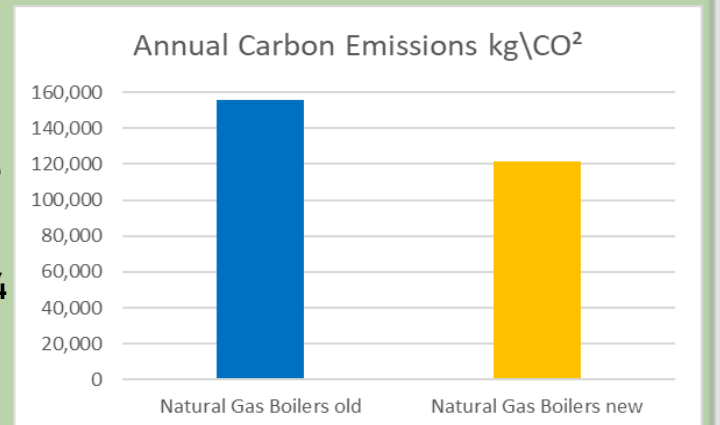
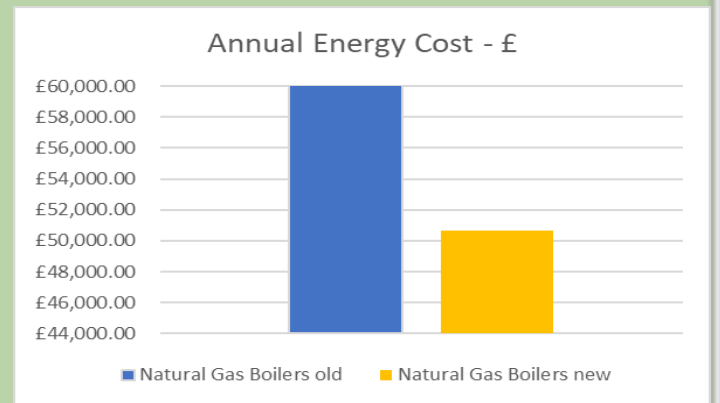
2022-23 saw the start of a **school kitchen upgrade programme** and the decommissioning of gas powered appliances. With all new sites added to the estates Building Management System (BMS) for efficient energy adjustment and monitoring.

Sofrydd Primary School Gas Boiler Upgrade

The original heating system comprised of two gas boilers with a seasonal efficiency of approximately 75% (E Rated). These old boilers were replaced with two new high efficiency condensing gas boilers with a seasonal efficiency of approximately 96% (A Rated)

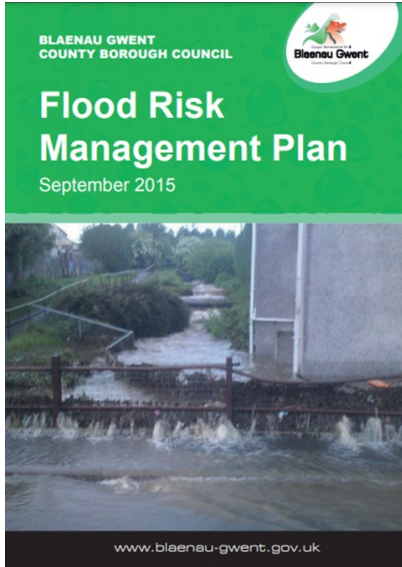


The average differences in running costs and annual carbon emissions using the predicted pence per kw for gas at £0.09p for 2023-2024 can be seen in the charts :-





Managing Our Estate



Progress continues to deliver the Councils

Flood Management Plan

and natural flood risk management continues .

Other works to support this during the period include:-



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.**

Capacity issues within Caerphilly have led to delays in administration of SuDS applications. Changes in legislation from Natural Resources Wales / Welsh Government have led to additional requirements and regular inspections of more of the water bodies in Blaenau Gwent, This has not been accompanied by any increase in budget from Welsh Government so has resulted in a budget pressure to undertake the work in compliance with the legislation.



Enforcement cases progressed at George Street and Princess Street.

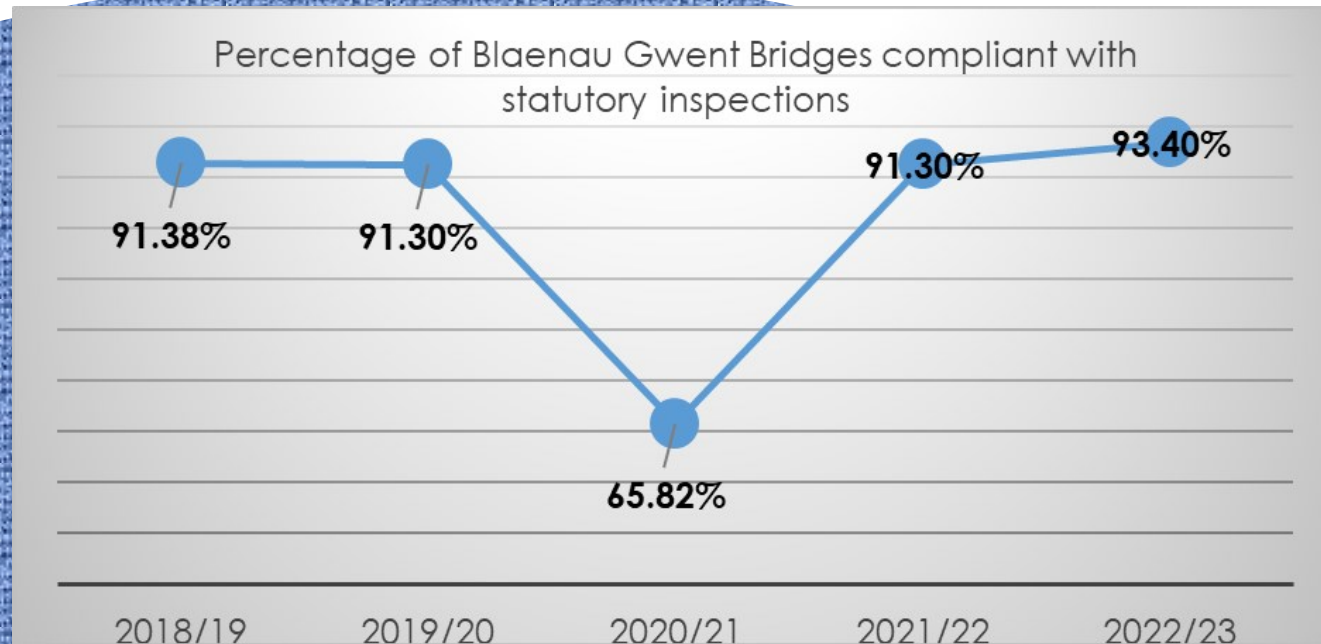
Natural flood risk management investigations relating to flood incidents and requests for assistance are ongoing at Pantypwlyn Rd, Reservoir Rd, and Brynithel Estate.

Contracts for renewal of culverts & ditches completed at Glanffrwd Court, Attlee Avenue and Yard Row Ebbw Vale and trash screen renewal at Newchurch Rd.

New Trash Screen installed at Blaencuffin.



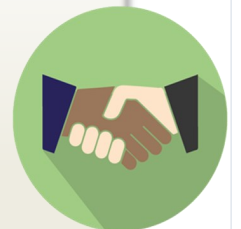
Managing Our Estate



The **Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP)** sets out how the Council manages and treats its property and land, ensuring that it is well placed to manage expectations, budgets and services going forward.

Audit Wales has recently carried out a 'Springing Forward' review which included the Council's arrangements for managing its assets and resulted in recommendations being identified covering a few areas including developing a longer-term asset strategy.

It was agreed at the Corporate Asset Management Working Group (CAMWG) that a revised SAMP would commence with recommendations coming back to CAMWG for review. Corporate Leadership Team is leading on a review of accommodation, and the demand for buildings, the findings of which will be incorporated into the SAMP. Meetings have been arranged with Service Heads to discuss accommodation needs and corporate Asset & Property Meetings are convened on a monthly basis to review property needs.





Improving the Well-being and Resilience of our Communities



Work to **build a 52,582 sq. ft. manufacturing unit at the Rhyd y Blew industrial site at Ebbw Vale** is underway and is **on target for completion Autumn 2023.**

The **£8.5m** Welsh Government **Investment** forms the first phase of a wider site masterplan, and helps satisfy huge demand for such industrial space in the South East Wales area.

Companies in the automotive and food sector have already expressed an interest in the development, which also sits within the Ebbw Vale Enterprise Zone.



REGAIN2



REGAIN2 works are ongoing and on target for completion September 2023 with the anticipated contract sum being £5,484,996.99

The Box Hub

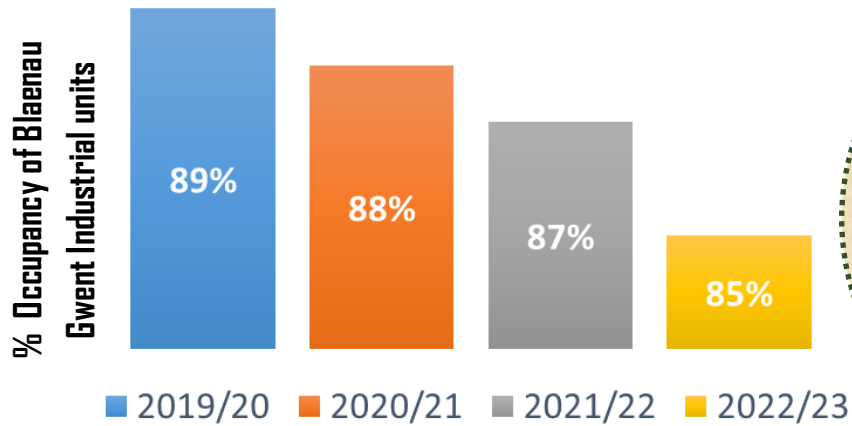
The site remains with the contractors and is expected to be handed over for management by the Business & Innovation team at the end of Summer 2023.



Improving the Well-being and Resilience of our Communities



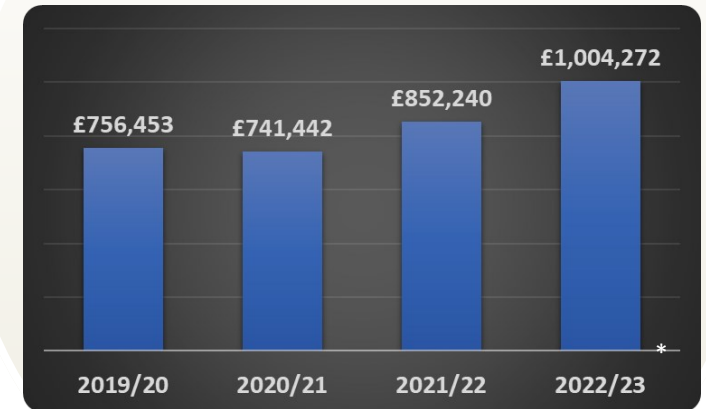
In order to enhance and stimulate economic development within the Borough it has been identified as a priority to support the Industrial portfolio management and development and in turn support inward investment, business start-up, retention and growth.



The Council's business units remain in demand - Stock in general remains an issue.

The most unmet demand are for units of 300—3000sq.ft. high., which remains an issue

Financial income received from the rental of Blaenau Gwent Industrial Units



*Including Welsh Government JVA Payment (Hybrid Units)

The Lime Avenue Business Unit development is now nearing full occupancy with work progressing to fill the remaining units .

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.





Improving the Well-being and Resilience of our Communities



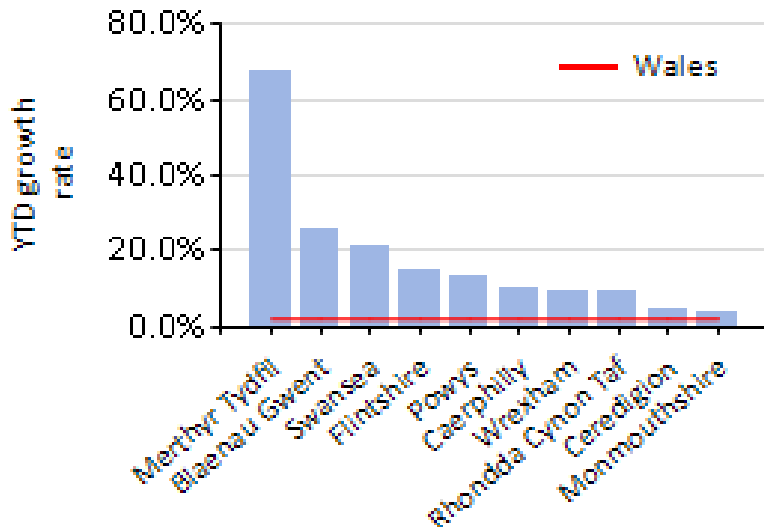
Small business start-ups Blaenau Gwent - March 2023



25.8% more businesses start-ups in Blaenau Gwent during the first three months of this year compared with the corresponding period of last year, according to latest data from BankSearch. This growth rate ranks Blaenau Gwent at 2 out of the 22 Welsh districts.

Growth in the number of start-ups across Wales has risen. So far this year Merthyr Tydfil (67.4%), **Blaenau Gwent (25.8%)** and Swansea (21.3%) have seen the strongest growth compared to the corresponding period in 2022.

Top 10 Welsh Districts YTD Growth



The make up of start-ups is **Limited Companies 67.6%, Sole Traders 29.4%, Other For Profit Start-ups (mainly Partnerships) 2.9% and Not For Profit 0.0%.**

The top 3 industries account for 70.6% of the starts.

The types of Areas that start-ups were established include; **Hard-Pressed Living 67.6%, Constrained City Dwellers 23.5%, Suburbanites 5.9%, Rural Residents 2.9%, Cosmopolitans 0.0%, Ethnicity Central 0.0%, and Multicultural Metropolitans 0.0%.**

Small Business Start-ups	March 2023
Blaenau Gwent	34
Wales	1,478

Legal Status Start-ups	March 2023
Limited Companies	23
Sole Traders	10
Other For Profit Start-ups	1
Commercial Enterprises	34
Not For Profit	
Total	34

Top 3 Industries	March 2023
Real estate, professional services & support activities	12
Wholesale & retail trade	8
Manufacturing	4

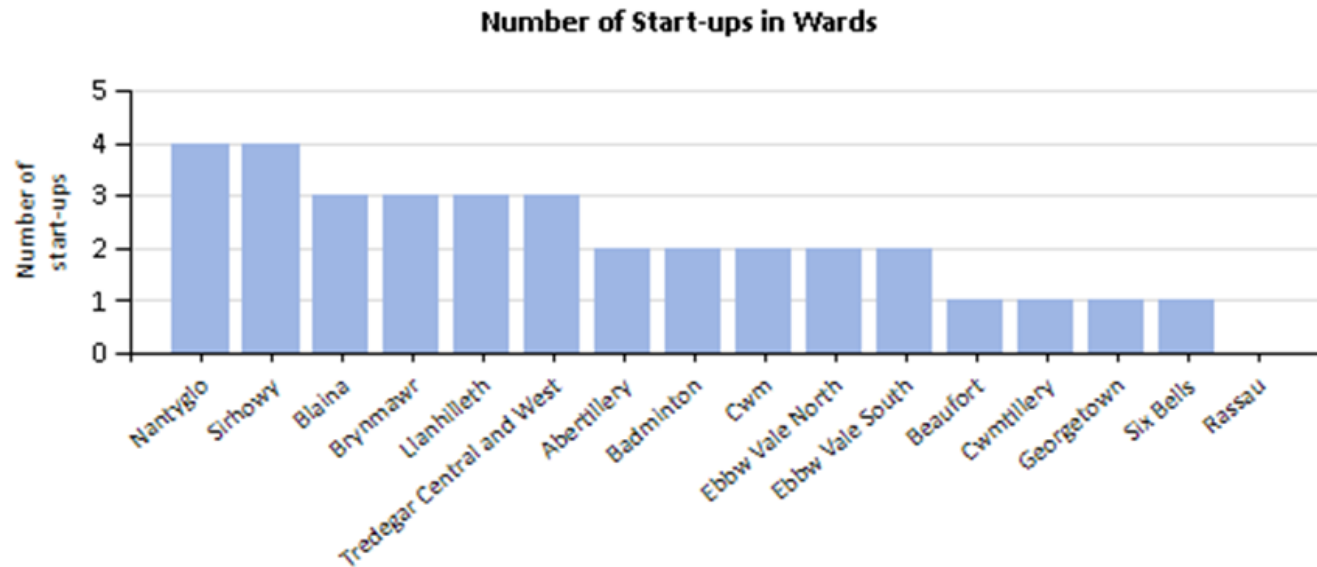
Top 3 Area Classification	March 2023
Hard-Pressed Living	23
Constrained City Dwellers	8
Suburbanites	2



Improving the Well-being and Resilience of our Communities



- In Blaenau Gwent **34 new businesses started up in March 2023**, 15 more than the previous month and 7 more than in March 2022. Nantyglo saw the most start-ups; Rassau saw the least.



- Blaenau Gwent accounted for 2.3% of all start-ups across the Wales.
- There are an estimated **43.6 thousand people of working age in Blaenau Gwent**; 2.3% of Wales working age population.
- In March 2023 there were **7.8 start-ups for every 10,000 working age in Blaenau Gwent** and this compares with a business start-up rate of 7.6 for the whole of Wales



The Shared Prosperity Fund **Supporting Local Business** investment priority will enable places to fund interventions that support local businesses to thrive, innovate and grow. Blaenau Gwent's funding allocation over the 3 year delivery programme against this investment priority is **£6,682,246**

As part of the People and Skills priority there is a dedicated and ring-fenced element of the UKSPF called **Multiply** which seeks to improve adult numeracy skills and has a 3 year fund allocation of **£3,874,171**





Improving the Well-being and Resilience of our Communities



Location of ash trees have been mapped and 60% of surveys in respect of Ash Dieback (a fungal disease that affects ash trees) has been carried out along A and B roads. Tenders have been received for roadside clearance.

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 22/23 has been awarded and progressed** - We received confirmation of a successful Active Travel Fund 2023/24 bid. In total, we have been awarded £802,000, which is a slight increase on the previous year.

We have been awarded £302,000 for our Main Scheme bids:

Scheme Name	Scheme Description	ATF Allocation (£)	Town
Ystruth Primary School AT Route Upgrade	Widening of existing route, street lighting, fencing	£247,000.00	Blaina
Cwmtillery Active Travel Links	Feasibility and design of new active travel links in Cwmtillery	£15,000.00	Cwmtillery
Glyncoed Phase 2	Feasibility and design of ramp	£40,000.00	Ebbw Vale

We have been awarded £500,000 for Core funding, which is to help develop scheme design and feasibility studies. The core schemes for 2023/24 have been identified as:

Scheme Name	Scheme Description	ATF Allocation (£)	Town
Crossing at Blaina Road Roundabout	Controlled crossing	Core	Brynmawr
Ebbw Vale Sustainable Link	WelTAG Stage 3: New Active Travel between The Works Site and Ebbw Vale Town Centre	Core	Ebbw Vale
Abertillery - Blaina Active Travel Links	Feasibility and design to improve existing AT route (widening, street lighting)	Core	Abertillery /Blaina
The Dingle, Brynmawr	Feasibility and design of extended NCN 46 to Interediate Road	Core	Brynmawr

ACTIVE TRAVEL

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, with surveys on some of our grassland sites being conducted and altered grass cutting regimes put in place.





Improving the Well-being and Resilience of our Communities



Schools' biodiversity events delivered across 22 Blaenau Gwent Schools to **3,026 pupils** between April 2022 and March 2023

School	Number of pupils	Number of
Blaen Y Cwm	324	15
Glanhowy	153	7
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg	177	6
Ebbw Fawr Primary Ph.	238	10
Pen Y Cwm	124	12
Beaufort Hill	272	10
Sofrydd	89	6
St Mary's CiW	172	10
Willowtown	143	6
Coed Y Garn	137	4
Deighton	23	1
SHEP Roseheyworth	25	1
SHEP Willowtown	51	1
Ebbw Fawr 2ndry LRB	26	1
Georgetown Primary	401	6
All Saints	21	1
St Josephs	77	3
Rhos Y Fedwen	33	2
ALC – Tillery St	157	6
St Illtyd's	92	5
ALC - Roseheyworth	140	5
ALC - Six Bells	151	8
Total	3,026	126

Our Local Places For Nature grant has been fully spent, delivering the following strands of work:



Nature on your Doorstep – funding value of £90,809;



Greening the public service estate – funding value £52,691;

And revenue funding of additional £62,400

This funding was spent on things such as:

- Fruit trees
- Hedging plants
- Bird boxes
- Bat boxes
- Management plans
- Biodiversity enhancement plans
- Tree thinning works and woodland management works

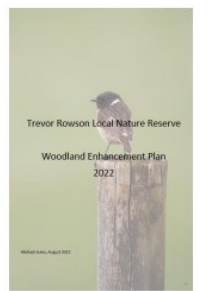
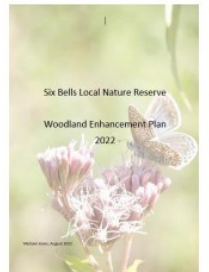
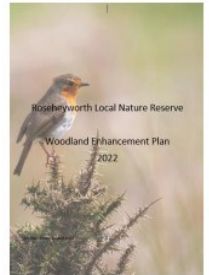
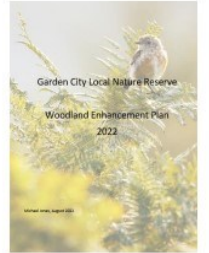
Hedgerow planting in Central Park in Blaina completed



Brilliant Bird workshops are being well received to SLA schools with **1,034 pupils engaged** with so far since January 2023



Woodland management plans have been completed for Trevor Rowsen, Six Bells and a number of other sites and work to implement those management plans has been completed, including tree thinning and Ash removal. Work completed on all sites with the exception of ongoing works at Six Bells Local Nature Reserve.





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.**



Work has been completed with dataMap Wales to finalise exception maps which will show which roads are to default to 20mph and those that will remain 30mph). To view roads affected by changes to the speed limit on restricted roads, please visit [Data Map Wales](#).



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



LONG TERM - Significant progress has been made over the past 10 years on improving the Highway network however the absence of Welsh Government funding for 2023/24 & the end of Blaenau Gwent Prudential Borrowing Programme has curtailed Capital investments in the highway network. The completion and formal adoption of the Highways Asset Management Plan 2023 - 2028 will support and drive the Authority's approach to maintenance over the next 5 years

Design work for new signage and road marking has been completed and the contract for the works was awarded to Noel Fitzpatrick. The contract tender price was £70,925.00 with Blaenau Gwent providing all the materials – signs/posts etc.





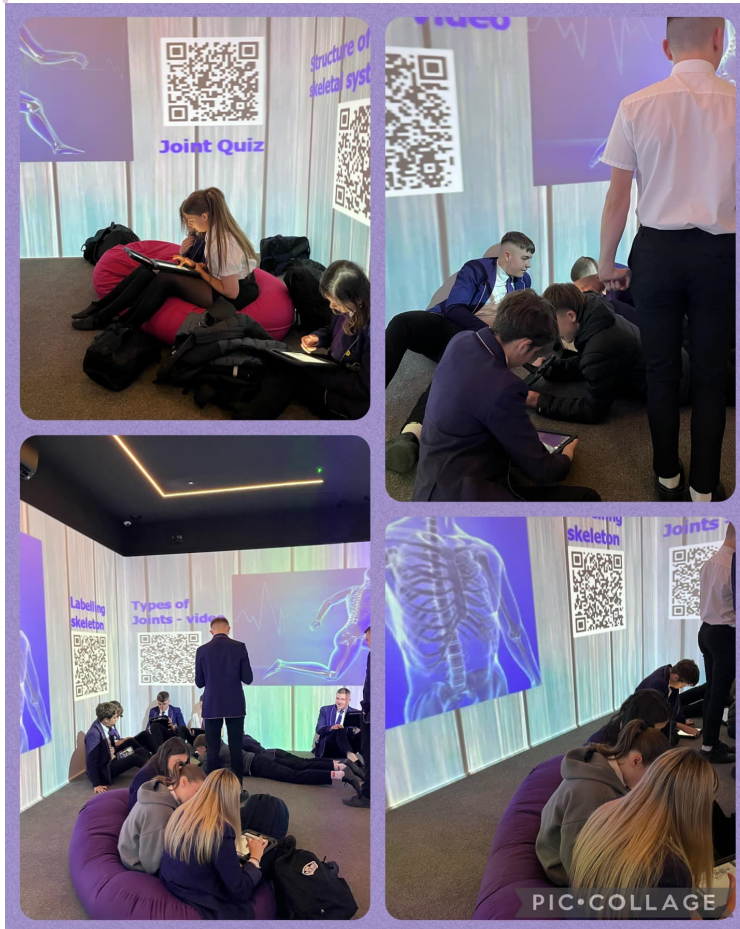
Case Study - 5G Immersive Environment in Ebbw Vale



Our digital champion has continued to engage with schools and some repeat visits to the immersive environment have taken place. A governance structure for future management of the immersive environment is being developed and a Strategic Advisory Group and Content Development Group is yet to be established.

Ebbw Vale 5G Immersive Environment 19 April

Not every class that come in can be photographed, but the [Ebbw Fawr Learning Community](#) Y10 GCSE PE class this morning were more than happy to be snapped while working. They watched videos together as a class then worked independently, scanning QR codes to various information sites, videos and quizzes about their current topic - bones and joints.



Funding for 2023/24 and 2024/25 has been secured to support ongoing management of the Immersive Environment.



5G immersive environment will need to become financially sustainable - this will include charging for usage by businesses, schools outside Blaenau Gwent going forward.

Ebbw Vale 5G Immersive Environment 26 April

Georgetown Primary went on a whistle stop world tour this week. Where in this Wonderful World would you like to visit?





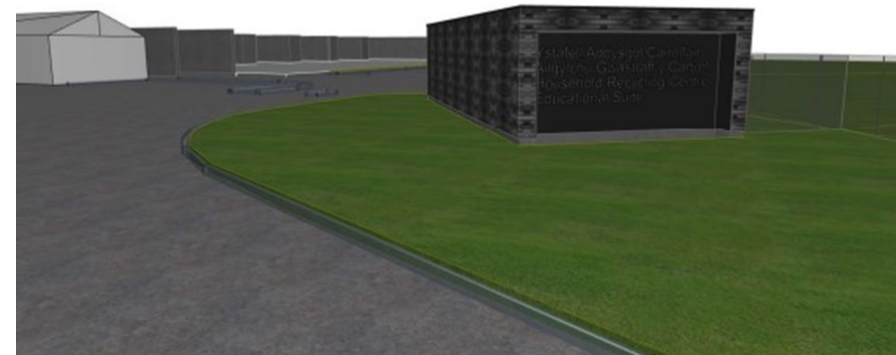
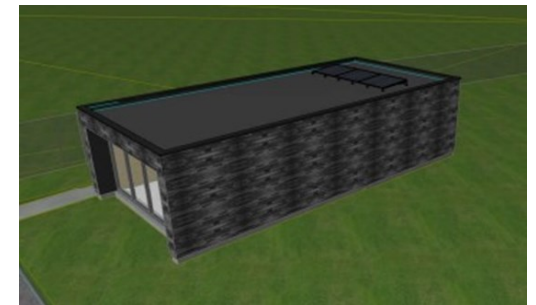
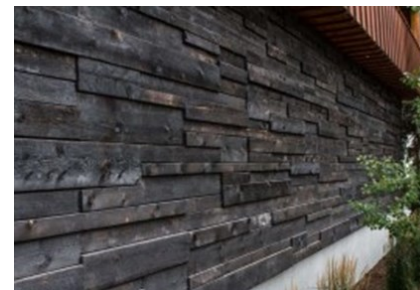
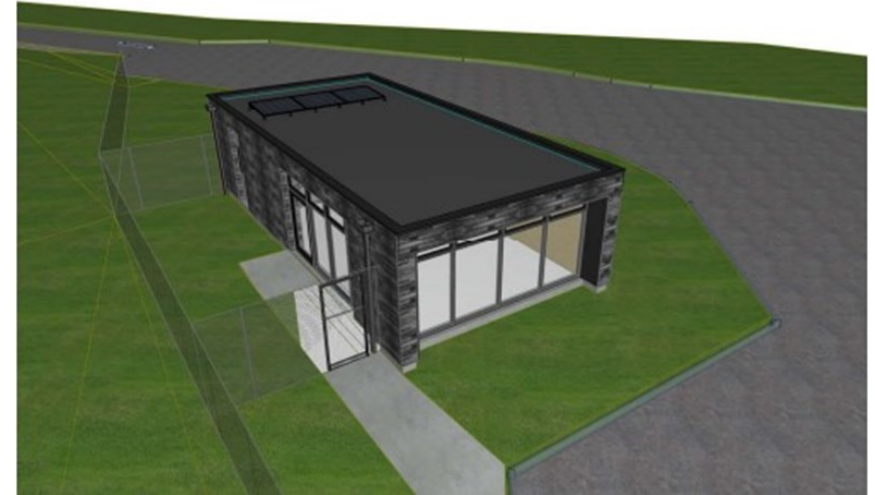
Case Study - Education Centre at Roseheyworth



The build process for a new **Education centre at Roseheyworth** Household Waste Recycling Centre is now completed with a School Education programme being finalised ready for September 2023 Roll out to schools.

The Education Centre will allow **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. The Centre was built following receipt of **Welsh Government Circular Economy Fund, totalling £280,000.**

A bid has been made to Keep Wales Tidy for a Wildlife pack to develop the grounds outside the centre with help from local Community Groups.





Case Study - Community Road Safety



The **Kerbcraft scheme** has been delivered successfully this year teaching pedestrian skills to 5 to 7 year olds, by means of practical road-side training rather than teaching in the classroom.




During 2022/23 we trained 421 children utilising this scheme.


Kerbcraft is built around teaching three skills;

- choosing safe places and routes;
- crossing safely at parked cars;
- crossing safely near junctions.

National Standard Cycle Training has also been delivered in 2022/23 to children aged 8 and above,

where we trained **320 children at**

 **Level 1**, which enabled them to gain basic cycle control skills including starting and pedalling, stopping, manoeuvring, signalling and using the gears on their bikes in an environment away from cars or traffic. and

 **Level 2**, which was delivered on the roads and gave them a real cycling experience so that they are able to deal with traffic on short journeys such as cycling to school or local shops.



Road Safety Grant funding bid submitted to Welsh Government for 2023/24

We bid for £40,000 of funding for 2023/24 and have successfully been granted

£26,598 Kerbcraft to train 429 children

£13,402 National Standard Cycling – to train 253 children in Level 1 and Level 2 training

(although we anticipate this figure being higher)



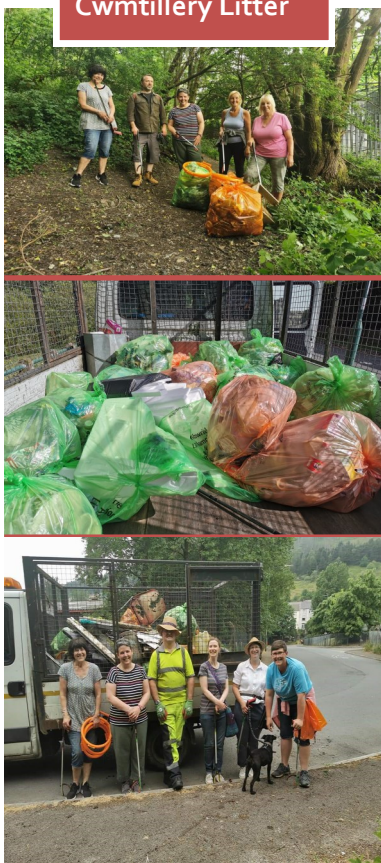
Case Study - Clean local environment



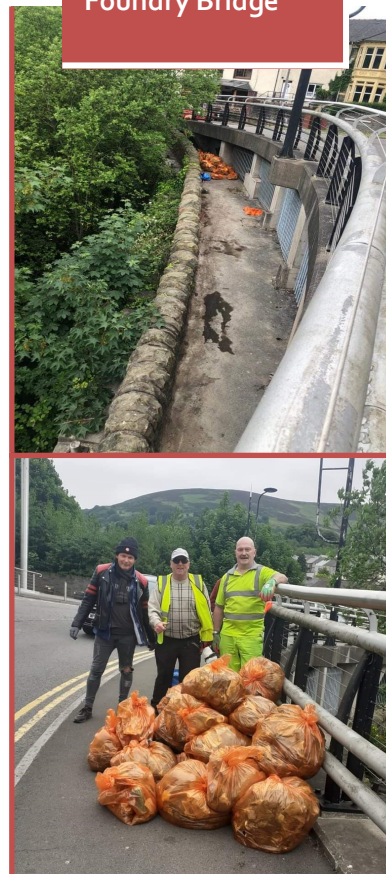
Delivery of key objectives, and actions within the Litter and Fly Tipping Strategy continues.

These support our goal of **improving of the local environmental quality for the future.**

Cwmtillery Litter



Foundry Bridge



- During 2022/2023 there were **33** visits to schools within the borough.
- There were **37** community litter picks.
- There were **5** events with Keep Wales Tidy.
- There were **7055** bags of general litter and **424** bags of recycling collected by the litter champions.



LONG TERM— Work is ongoing to deliver the goals of the litter and fly-tipping strategy



Case Study - Consultation on Ebbw Vale sustainable link and Active Travel

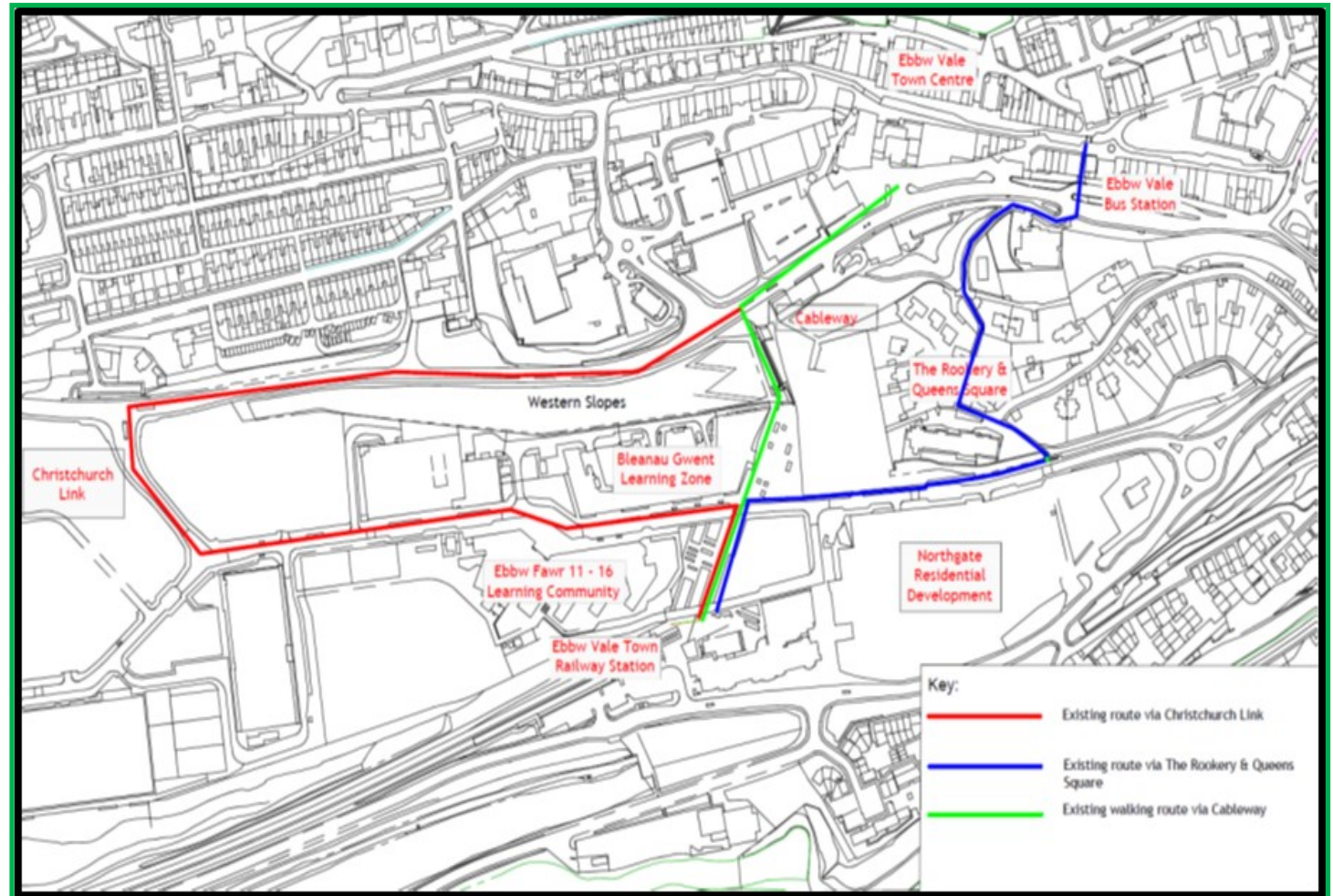


A consultation event was held in the General Offices on Wednesday 22nd March. The consultation was premised on the current lack of Active Travel compliant routes between Ebbw Vale Railway Station and Ebbw Vale Town Centre; the cableway having limited opening hours and other routes being too steep or indirect.

Blaenau Gwent commissioned WSP to undertake a study into the existing routes available for walking and cycling and provide an options appraisal of ways active travel could be improved within the area. A preferred option had been identified and consult with the public sought their views.

The consultation provided an opportunity for the public and members to see the designs and give an opportunity to make suggestions and raise any questions on our plans for the new Active Travel route in Ebbw Vale.

We also ran an online survey as part of our consultation for those unable to attend the event.





Case Study - Outdoor Accessibility



Works to ensure the provision of suitable outdoor access and rights of way have continued throughout the year and include:-

Works at Cwmtillery have provided improved connections onto the lakeside path from the carpark and also enabled a circle walk of the lake without entering onto the road in use by vehicular traffic. The improved surfaces have also enabled the route to be accessible by mobility scooters more easily.

Before



After

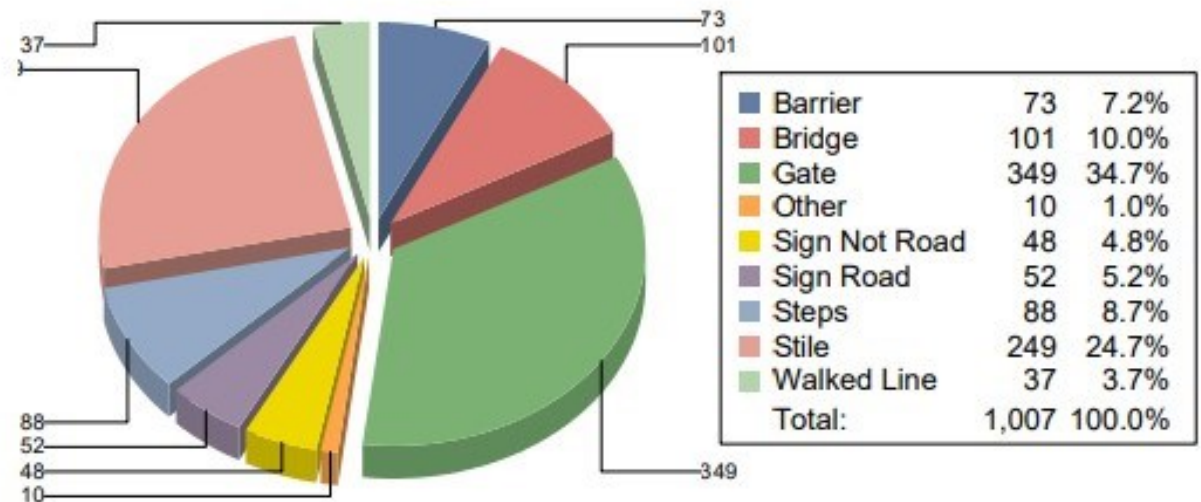


A condition survey has been commissioned to provide baseline data on our 500km of rural Public Rights of Way. The survey results have now been received which will assist us when prioritising future works:-

Issue Priority	Priority Description	No. of Issues
1	Immediate hazard to public safety	0
2	Operationally imperative issues (legal deadlines, emergency	0
3	Potential hazards to public safety.	14
4	Inaccessible route (obstructed)	549
5	Inconvenient route (disrepair)	323
6	Minor detriment to use of route (desirable)	786
	Total	1672

We further collected an inventory of all infrastructure (stiles, gates, etc) on the network:-

Furniture breakdown across network by Type



Work to complete the Glyncoed cycleway has now been completed at a cost of £426,001.65 in 2022/23

Before



After





Case Study - Town Centre Community Events



- Increasing footfall, bringing communities together and building positive relationships

The Town Centre Business Development Officer has continued to organise events which is proving very beneficial to our community as a whole. These free events are not only helping local businesses and increasing town centre footfall, it is becoming more and more apparent how important these events are in drawing the community together and the events are so welcomed by families in these difficult financial times.

Volunteers take part who help with the events, and we also have dance groups, brass bands, theatre groups all wanting to attend. A variety of departments with the Local Authority also attend events such as the family information service, the Police (when possible) come along and engage with the community, Hospice of the Valley, Scout groups, St Johns Ambulance attend. We welcome any group that wants to participate in future events.



At a recent Dinomania event the recycling department came along and had a wonderful day engaging with so many people on the importance of food recycling.



Events are varied and different activities are included continually. These include completing trails, providing opportunities for children to pet animals, classic car shows, along with activities geared at older children with beatboxing, breakdancing and a graffiti workshop.





Case Study - National Parks Tennis Project



We continually work to ensure that provision is available to support the positive health and well-being of our community. As part of this, there was significant investment into park tennis courts for Blaenau Gwent during the reporting period.

“These works have been grant funded as part of the National Parks Tennis Project, a joint investment by the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) Tennis Foundation and the UK Government, delivered by the LTA, to refurbish public tennis courts across Britain and support a new generation of players to get into the sport.

This investment is designed to open up tennis to people of all backgrounds, to level up sports provision across the nation, and provide greater opportunities for children and adults to be active. Park tennis courts are particularly important in providing affordable, engaging and accessible opportunities for more female players and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as being the most popular sport for women to play after they have left education.

Alongside this investment, Blaenau Gwent CBC and Six Bells Park Community Tennis Ltd. are working with the LTA and Tennis Wales to deliver a range of tennis activities catering to all ages and abilities. This includes free park tennis sessions where equipment is provided, and Local Tennis Leagues are organised.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council are delighted with the outcome of these works and the positive partnerships established with all parties concerned.

The Council are very grateful to the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and local community groups for their support in improving the Six Bells Park tennis courts. This refurbishment will now provide opportunities for the local and wider community to play tennis no matter at what level and at top quality facilities.”



Total investment at Six Bells Park of £38,000.



Case Study - Empty Properties



EMPTY PROPERTY - CROWN OWNED

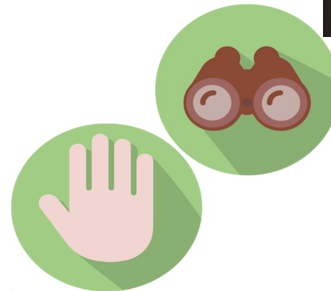
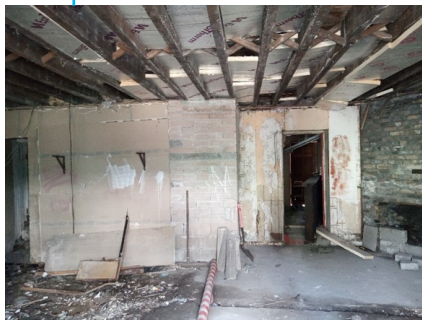
- Lewis Street, Swffryd – ongoing case
- Empty since approx. 2017
- Complaints received from neighbouring properties
- Limited Company owner dissolved - No Owner
- Property subject to Escheat and rests with The Crown
- No enforcement action possible
- Negotiating the purchase of the property for nominal £1 fee

- Payment of The Crown solicitor fees
- Immediate sale at public auction to private buyer
- Recover costs from proceeds of sale and return surplus to the Crown
- Work with new owner to renovate and bring back into use
- Enforcement Action if necessary
- Additional properties if process is successful



EMPTY PROPERTY - COMPLETED LOAN

- High Street, Blaina
- Landlord Loan
- £35,000 loan to let
- Conversion of a disused ground floor unit into a 2 bed self-contained flat





Case Study - Universal Primary Free School Meals



UNIVERSAL PRIMARY FREE SCHOOL MEALS

Did you know?
All children from full-time nursery up to Year 6 can have a healthy and nutritious FREE school lunch at no cost to you!

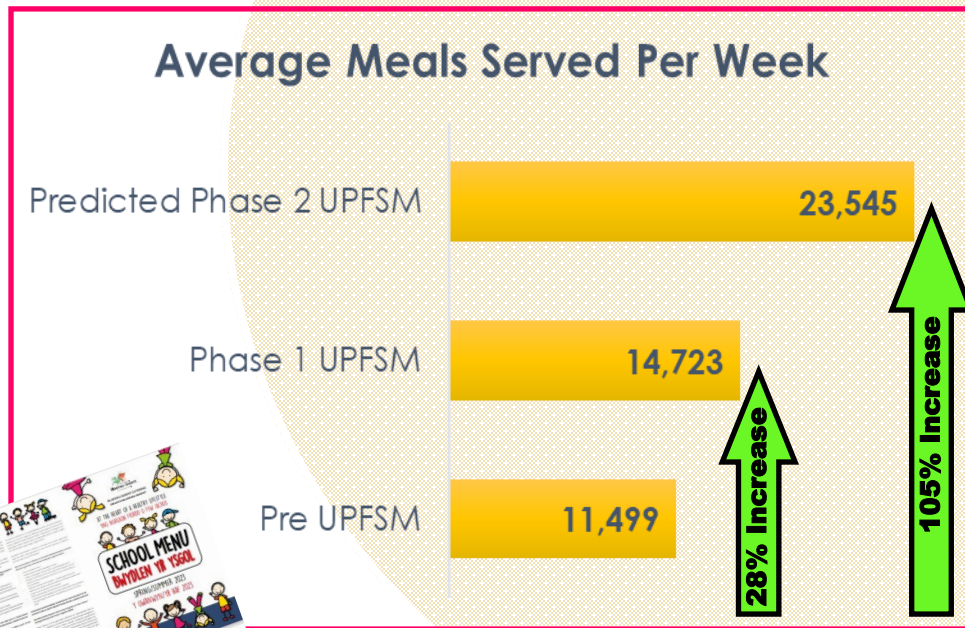
Claiming your free school meals can save you approximately £400 per year per child.

- Religious & Special dietary requirements catered for
- Freshly made meals
- Healthy Food choices
- Funded by Welsh Government

For more information please contact Blaenau Gwent School Meals Catering Service on Tel: 07790 344458 or 07790 30360

It was announced by Welsh Government in December 2021 to extend free school meal entitlement to all primary school children. The aim was to begin implementation in September 2022 with the youngest learners in primary receiving free school meals as part of phase one. The Welsh Government would then look to continue the roll-out in September 2023 so that all learners in primary schools can benefit from a free school meal as phase two. **Blaenau Gwent were one of 8 authorities to be able to offer Universal Primary Free School Meals to all pupils in full time nursery, reception classes and years 1 & 2 classes in Primary as part of phase one.**

To support delivery of both phases the school meals catering department are able to **employ additional catering staff, increase current catering staff working hours, develop current catering staff with their personal development learning skills** by on the job training into future assistant cooks and cooks.



The school meals catering department employ approximately 250/300 staff from our local community who strive to support all learners who attend breakfast clubs and lunchtime services in our schools.

The School Meals catering department works with the local health board, Dietician to support families and learners with special dietary and religious menus for the school meals service.



Certificate of Compliance

The evidence submitted by Angela Meredith indicates that the food and drink being provided by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in primary schools is compliant with [The Healthy Eating in Schools \(Nutritional Standards and Requirements\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2013](#).

Food in Schools Programme Coordinator

 Cara Lewis

Checks undertaken by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council confirm that the food and drink being provided by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in primary schools is compliant with [The Healthy Eating in Schools \(Nutritional Standards and Requirements\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2013](#).

Catering Manager

 Claire Edmunds

Issue date 11 July 2023
 Review date 10 July 2024