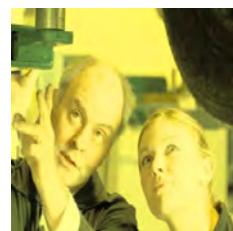
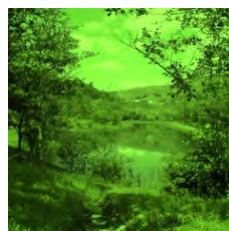




# Making a difference

The big 20 year plan for Blaenau Gwent

## 2010 to 2030





# Making a difference

## The big 20 year plan for Blaenau Gwent

# 2010 to 2030

This document is available electronically at <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/community/14723.asp> , and in hard copies at each of Blaenau Gwent's local libraries. If you would like this document in another format please contact:

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This document has been assessed for clarity by the Plain English Campaign.

**Crystal Mark to be confirmed.**

The document is the **Community Strategy for Blaenau Gwent** prepared under the requirements of the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2009.

# What is in this document?

Set out below is an overview of the content that can be found in this document, with relevant page numbers.

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# A welcome

Welcome to 'Making a difference', Blaenau Gwent's new community strategy.

The purpose is to set out the main priorities for our communities from 2010 onwards and what we will need to do to make Blaenau Gwent an even better place to live, work and visit.

Our shared vision is for an exciting future in which everyone experiences the benefits that will come from the regeneration of our communities.

This is just the beginning. Everyone in Blaenau Gwent has a role to play. We must make the most of the opportunities that will come from the significant investment that we have managed to get as we are unlikely to see the same scale of funding for at least another generation. This will have particular significance following the recent national government spending review, which is likely to place severe financial pressures on many organisations and groups operating within Blaenau Gwent.

Now more than ever, it is important that we build on our successes to make sure the whole of Blaenau Gwent benefits. By working together we can build first class services during what will be challenging times.

The Welsh Assembly Government has already shown its confidence in Blaenau Gwent through the massive investment they are prepared to make. I believe that when you have read this strategy you too will feel confident that together we will 'Make a difference'.



**Councillor Des Hillman**

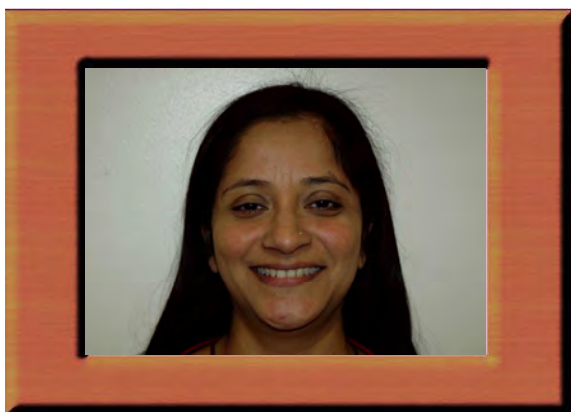
Chair of Blaenau Gwent Local Service Board

Leader of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

This Big Plan is all about the future of Blaenau Gwent. Many people have been involved in its development, and below are a few local faces, with their views on Blaenau Gwent and its future.



*"My name is **Daniel**, I am the youth Mayor of Blaenau Gwent and I have lived here my whole life. Blaenau Gwent is a good place for young people to have their views listened to via the youth forum, and gives opportunities to make a difference for other young people in the borough."*



*"My name is **Min**, and I have been a business owner in Blaenau Gwent for over 20 years. We aim to offer a great service to the kind and welcoming people of Blaenau Gwent. The area offers a great opportunity for business – not everyone would agree – but we have never looked back. Blaenau Gwent was our first stop and it is also our last stop, we are here to stay."*



*"I'm **Malcolm** and have been a volunteer since I was a teenager. We have some wonderful people in Blaenau Gwent, young and not so young. By having a philosophy that we can be of use to our friends, neighbours and community will make Blaenau Gwent and the world a better place."*

## Five reasons why you should read 'Making a Difference'



1. It is a plan that is easy to understand.
2. It sets out an overall plan for the whole area of Blaenau Gwent.
3. It takes into account the needs of our people.
4. It has been developed by a range of different people, organisations and groups.
5. It gives us a clear direction for Blaenau Gwent over a 20 year period.



# Introduction

Blaenau Gwent is changing.

The last 20 years have seen the area presented with a range of new social, economic and environmental challenges and opportunities as it has moved from its traditional industrial past, and looked to improve itself for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The main issue driving this change has been the loss of Blaenau Gwent's traditional economic base. Closing the main industries, such as coal mines and steelworks, has led to an overall loss in jobs, as we move towards an economy where our manufacturing and service jobs have to compete with all of the world's emerging regions and countries.

Also, the way we live our lives has changed. We are all influenced by technology, which has led to significant changes in the way we shop, communicate, enjoy our free time, and benefit from services such as health, care and education.

There have also been significant pressures worldwide, with factors such as population growth and a dependence on fossil fuels putting pressure on our environment. This has brought issues such as oil prices and climate change into every living room in Blaenau Gwent.

These are some of the central issues that our area has been challenged with in the last 20 years. Some of these challenges have been difficult and still give us cause for concern and problems today, such as low levels of employment. Others, such as improvements in our environment and technology have been more positive and have led to clear improvements in people's lives.

In 2010, the United Kingdom as a whole faced significant financial challenges. At a local level, the National Government Spending Review is likely to place severe financial pressures on many organisations and groups operating within Blaenau Gwent. Inevitably, this will present a challenge to the delivery of the intentions set out in this document, particularly in its initial years. However, it must also be remembered that this is a long-term plan that covers a 20 year period. When thinking about it in this context, we should of course remember all the excellent work that has been done over the last few decades. All of this will give us a solid foundation that will help us achieve our vision of making:

*'Blaenau Gwent a better place to live, work and visit'*

This document will set out a path towards this vision by highlighting a number of major work areas, known as themes, for the foreseeable future for Blaenau Gwent. It will also outline what needs to be done for each theme. All of these themes have been identified as important by residents and organisations in Blaenau Gwent.

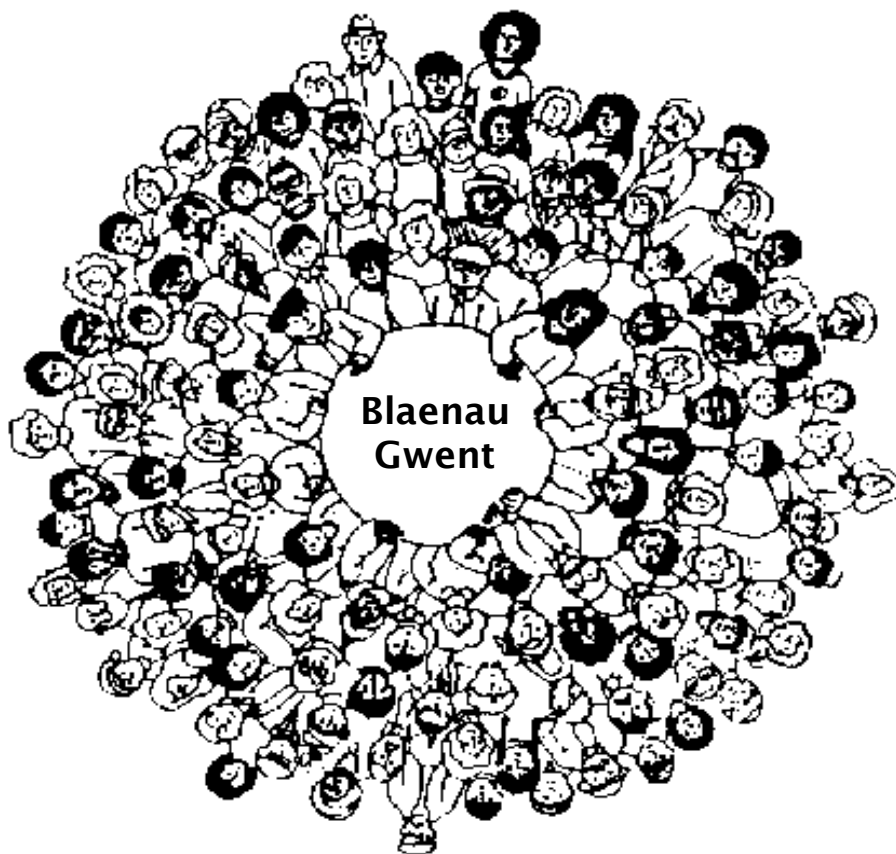


## A whole community approach

This document is about the *whole* area of Blaenau Gwent. It is therefore not meant to focus specifically on any particular neighbourhood, community, or group of people.

That being said, the action plan that will be developed to support this document may need to have specific actions that *will* be of benefit to a particular neighbourhood, community, or group of people. This will be an important part of building an approach that delivers benefits for the area as a whole.

As part of this work, consideration will be given to ensure we continue to take into account how decisions, projects and activities affect different groups of people, and our natural and built environment.



## Blaenau Gwent – a small area with big character

Blaenau Gwent is a place of heritage and dramatic change, with a sense of its past but its eyes firmly on the future. The area is relatively small geographically, being at most 15 miles north to south, and 8 miles east to west. Blaenau Gwent is defined physically by high hillsides dividing the three main valleys. These valleys are home to towns and villages which seem to merge together into one. However, each community proudly maintains its own character and traditions.

Although the towns give the county borough a busy, urban feel, Blaenau Gwent is actually a largely rural area. Wherever you are, beautiful countryside is never far away. The map below looks to give a visual representation of Blaenau Gwent, highlighting some of our distinctive local features.



# Blaenau Gwent – past and present

*A story of change over time*

## Blaenau Gwent's history

Before the early 1800s the area that is now Blaenau Gwent, was a quiet rural area dominated by farmland. The start of the industrial revolution in Great Britain was significant to the area, as people looked to take advantage of the plentiful supply of resources that could be found in the area. In the first instance this took the form of ironworks, quickly followed by coal mining and steel making.



As the industries grew, so did the demand for labour, and the population of Blaenau Gwent grew remarkably. Between the early 19th and early 20th century the population rose from around 1,200 to well over 110,000.

As our communities thrived, so did the need for services such as education, health, shops and leisure opportunities. This led to the growth of a network of communities and neighbourhoods throughout the area, which make up the towns and settlements that we know today.

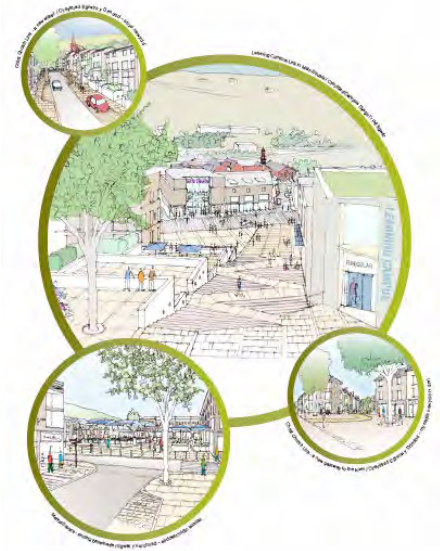
The people of Blaenau Gwent had a strong work and community ethic, and this was shown by them campaigning together to make improvements to their quality of life. Examples of this include the first ever board of health set up in England and Wales, campaigning for electoral reform, abolishing company-run shops, and the reduction in working hours, many of which influence the way people live their lives today.

Blaenau Gwent has a rich heritage which is reflected in our monuments, buildings and landscapes.

## Present-day Blaenau Gwent

The period from the late 1980s has seen the formation of Blaenau Gwent as it is known today. It became a county borough council in 1996 following local government reorganisation, changing from a district of the former Gwent County.

In the last 20 years the people of Blaenau Gwent have faced many challenges, with the closure of all the coal mines in the late 1980s, and the Ebbw Vale Steelworks in 2002 leading to many job losses.



In an attempt to reduce the effect of this, significant effort has been put into changing the focus of our economy towards the manufacturing and services industry. However, over the period there has been an overall loss of jobs and many of our young people and families have had to move away in search of work. This is highlighted by a 5% reduction in the population between 1991 and 2010. This is in contrast to the overall trend for Wales where there has been a 4% increase.

## Some of the main challenges facing Blaenau Gwent in 2010

- Some of the highest levels of unemployment and economic inactivity we have seen.
- Low levels of new businesses starting up, and poor survival rates for new businesses.
- High level of people who depend on benefits.
- One of the lowest income levels in England and Wales.
- Low levels of qualifications compared to other areas.
- Below average educational achievement for our children and young people.
- Lower than average life expectancy.
- High levels of long-term illness being reported.
- Housing stock getting older.
- House prices significantly below the national average.
- Low levels of tourism compared to other areas.

We cannot underestimate the effect of these issues. Even so, in the last 20 years the area has seen significant improvement, following major levels of investment.

## **Some of the major projects over the last 20 years**

- We have seen significant improvements in our natural and built environment, helped by projects such as the Garden Festival in 1992, and the regeneration of old industrial sites across the local area, for example, at Llanhilleth, Six Bells, Brynmawr and Tredegar.
- There have been improvements in the availability of quality modern housing, and the opportunity for more people to be able to own their own homes.
- We have seen improvements in our transport system, with the opening of the Ebbw Valley Railway, and significant road improvements including the Heads of the Valleys Dualling and major trunk roads and bypasses.
- There has been constant improvement in the educational achievement of our children and young people.
- There has been significant investment in training and re-training programmes.
- We have positive approaches to helping people back into work.

## **Significant recent investment in Blaenau Gwent**

- £102 million for the Learning Works Scheme at The Works.
- £12 million in new accommodation which also provides care services for elderly people.
- £111 million investment in housing as part of housing stock transfer.
- £50 million state-of-the-art hospital at The Works.
- The UK's first dedicated Green Skills Training Centre in Tredegar, training over 1000 people each year in renewable technology.
- Town centre renovation for all five towns through regeneration projects and grants.
- The next stage of Heads of the Valleys Dualling from Tredegar to Brynmawr.

The challenge we now face is how to make the most of the benefits these opportunities offer us for the people and communities of today, and the future. We continue our journey in becoming a better place to live, work and visit.



# Planning for our future

## Understanding our responsibilities

Each local council in Wales has a duty to lead a process called **community planning**. This involves working with other partners, some who have a duty in law, to develop and deliver a **community strategy**.

In simple terms, **community planning** is the process where local partners come together to identify the needs and issues of the local area, and outline a clear direction for the future. This includes developing a vision, and setting out what needs to be done and how it will be achieved.

This process leads to a document being produced called the **community strategy**. This brings together all the relevant information in one place. The community strategy should become the first place people go to find out what is planned for the area over a 10 to 20 year period. As a result, it is important that people can easily understand what the strategy is saying.

The community strategy cannot cover every issue that may be relevant to a local community. It should focus on those issues where partners, either together or individually, can make a difference over the longer term. However, an important part of the ongoing community planning processes will be for local partners to produce an **action plan** that outlines practically what will be done to make sure we achieve our vision. For further information about the action plan that will support this document please go to page 52.

As the intention set out in this document is over a 20 year period to help make sure progress is on right track, every year local partners must **review** what has been done. Once every four years a full-scale review must be carried out to see if the overall direction of the strategy is still the best for the area as a whole. Community planning is an ongoing process, which makes sure that the community strategy is kept relevant for the area and its communities.



## Community planning in Blaenau Gwent



To make sure we carry out our duty, and that the area has a clear direction for the future, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council started a new community planning process in early 2009.

Part of this process was to review the previous community plan '*Proud Past, Bright Future*' covering 2005 to 2009. The lessons that we learned from the last community planning process have helped shape the approach we have taken this time. We also needed to think about changing at the local, regional and national level, including meeting the requirements of the Welsh Assembly Government, such as the requirements in law and other changes to the way public services are delivered.

### Local Service Boards

Local service boards are part of a new approach to improve public service in Wales. The purpose of local service boards is to allow existing public service organisations to work together more effectively.

Their role is to support, encourage and follow up on joint working where it will mean better outcomes for local citizens. The development of the local service board in Blaenau Gwent has seen major local partners come together to focus efforts on the challenges we are facing, with the aim of unblocking barriers to improved services for citizens.

The Blaenau Gwent Local Service Board has been endorsed by all its members as the steering group which has the responsibility to oversee the development of this document.





## Building on solid foundations

The Welsh Assembly Government is encouraging public organisations to work together so that they jointly contribute to make a difference to local people.

### Welsh context



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

The [Local Government \(Wales\) Measure 2009](#), sets out an approach to draw together short-term business improvement and long-term local community planning.

At a national level, [One Wales: A progressive agenda for the government of Wales](#) is the high level document which aims to improve the quality of life for people all across Wales, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

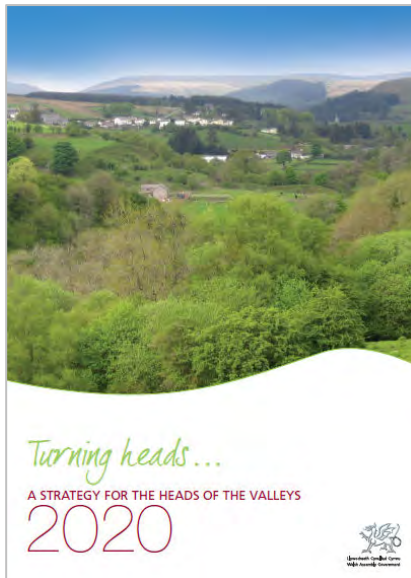
One Wales focuses around a number of key areas, including; *A Strong and Confident Nation; A Healthy Future; A Prosperous Society; Living Communities; Learning for Life; A Fair and Just Society; A Sustainable Environment; and a Rich and Diverse Culture.*

To support *One Wales*, the Welsh Assembly Government has outlined a number of specific plans, which include plans to stimulate the economy and business, reduce child poverty, manage spatial planning and improve health and well-being to name a few. A full list of all the national strategies is available at the Welsh Assembly Government website for information use the link below:

<http://wales.gov.uk/about/programmeforgovernment/strategy/publications/?lang=en>

### Regional context

For many years the Blaenau Gwent area has operated within the regional geographical boundaries of 'South Wales' and 'Gwent'. As a consequence of this, many organisations operating locally within Blaenau Gwent exist at a regional level, with some good examples being Heddliu Gwent Police, South Wales Fire, Aneurin Bevan Health Board, and the Gwent Association of Voluntary Associations.



As well as this, the new national approach to understanding the relationship between different places has removed some of our traditional barriers. This has helped us plan with others outside our local area in a better way. A good example of this for Blaenau Gwent is [Turning heads...a strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020](#). This is a focused strategy aimed at regenerating the Heads of the Valleys areas which includes the northern valley communities in the local authorities of Rhondda Cynon Taff, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen. Further information available:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/businessandeconomy/regeneration/strategicareas/HofV/?lang=en>

## Local context - working in partnership in Blaenau Gwent

In Blaenau Gwent, there are five main plans that we need to consider when developing the community strategy.

To develop and deliver each of these plans for Blaenau Gwent, a number of groups were set up. These groups are called partnerships and are made up of representatives from major organisations working in the area. Together these make up the partnerships in Blaenau Gwent as shown below:



The above partnerships have developed the following plans for Blaenau Gwent by assessing local need, and by involving local people, organisations and groups. Each plan sets out a series

of aims. Blaenau Gwent Local Land Development Plan is also supported by a regeneration plan which aims to improve our economy.



### **Children and Young People Plan 2008-2011/2011-2014**

The new plan for 2011-14 is currently being developed. For further information please use the link below:

<http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/education/10152.asp>



### **Healthier Future 2 – Blaenau Gwent's Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategy 2008-2011**

The new plan from 2011 is currently being developed. For further information please use the link below:

[http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/866/HealthierFutureStrategy\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/866/HealthierFutureStrategy_FINAL.pdf)



### **Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan**

The Local Development Plan is at pre-deposit stage with the deposit plan due in 2011. For further information please use the link below:

<http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/business/7726.asp>



### **Blaenau Gwent Regeneration Strategy**

The Regeneration Strategy sets out a 10 year plan for Blaenau Gwent from 2008 to 2018. For further information please use the link below:

<http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/regeneration.asp>



### **Blaenau Gwent Community Safety Strategy 2011**

The new plan from 2011 is currently being developed. For further information please use the link below:

<http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/community/116.asp>

## Living in Blaenau Gwent



The Blaenau Gwent Local Service Board paid a well-established research company to carry out the Living in Blaenau Gwent resident survey to understand how people felt about the area, and services they used, why they felt this way and what they thought could be improved.

In total, 1000 people from across Blaenau Gwent were interviewed face-to-face in their own homes. The findings of the survey were reported back to the local partners in July 2009 to help shape the services they deliver. The headlines were included in Blaenau Gwent's community magazine 'Connect', with a full report and public summary available.

Some of the main things we were told are shown below.

More than half of people (53%) told us that they thought Blaenau Gwent was a 'very good' or 'good' place to live.

Over the last 5 years, 11% of people thought the area had improved, 45% thought it had stayed the same, but the other 42% thought the area had got worse.

The top five things that people said needed improving were job prospects, activities for teenagers, road and pavement repairs, clean streets and crime levels.

The top five things that make somewhere a good place to live were said to be jobs, low crime, good housing, activities for teenagers, and clean *streets*.

More than half of people said their quality of life was very good or good (52%).

Nearly a third of people (30%) said they were 'optimistic' about the future of Blaenau Gwent.



## Involving our main partners and organisations

The next step of the community planning process saw the main partners and organisations involved in a series of events to consider the issues and to start building agreement on what the Blaenau Gwent 2010 strategy should focus on.

The first series of events took place in November and December of 2009. The events were well attended by over 70 people, representing a variety of local, regional and national organisations.



“Good opportunity to share thoughts and feed into developing the strategy”

**Representative for Sports Council for Wales**

“Certainly felt engaged. Thank you very much”

**Representative for Peacehaven Tenants and Residents Association**

Everyone had the opportunity to listen to a presentation featuring some important information about Blaenau Gwent, including:

- significant worldwide national and local issues that have affected the area in the last 20 years;
- the main issues, challenges and opportunities facing the local area today;
- thinking about how these things may affect the communities in Blaenau Gwent; and
- some possible situations and challenges that Blaenau Gwent may face in the future.

Following this, we asked everyone to think about what they had heard, and they also had the opportunity to look over and discuss more important information presented at the event on different stands. There is an example of this in the picture below.



Example of a stand highlighting issues relating to lively and accessible communities

Half (49%) of residents said that job prospects were a very important factor in making somewhere a good place to live - almost half (46%) thought it needed improving in Blaenau Gwent.



64% of you say that more affordable housing should be built in this area

5.7% vacancy rates in housing

71% of owner occupied houses are Pre-1919.

New residents rated Blaenau Gwent as a place to live!



Two thirds (64%) of residents agreed that the Heads of the Valleys Programme will help make Blaenau Gwent a better place to live and work.

43% of you agree there is a lack of specially adapted properties for older or disabled people.

35% of people do not live within 400m of Greenspace!

Two thirds of you (67%) described the natural environment in Blaenau Gwent as 'good', and most of you (81%) agreed that it was accessible.

59% of residents felt that the Ebbw Valley Railway had helped make Blaenau Gwent a better place to live and work.

27% of Blaenau Gwent Community Routes completed.

**Ageing Population**

**Declining Population**  
Homelessness and Prevention of Homelessness

**AFFORDABLE HOMES**  
Older People Living Independently  
Housing for Disabled People

**Supporting People to stay in their Homes**

**Quality of Housing Stock**  
Housing for Young People

**LACK OF EXECUTIVE HOUSING**  
Empty Properties

**Quality of Built Environment**  
Provision of private leisure facilities

**OPEN SPACE PROVISION**  
Making more use of Community Buildings

**Improved Accessibility**  
Sustainable Travel  
Demand for Travel

**Improved Connectivity**

**Reduced Emissions**

**HOUSING - £12 MILLION INVESTMENT IN NEW ACCOMMODATION FOR OLDER PEOPLE!**  
A total of 41 new care and two independent flats are being built by one of the Council's partner housing associations - Lee Cymru at College Road, Gwent Vale. The £2.5 million scheme will be ready for next summer.

Planning permission was recently granted for 30 flats in Blaenau Gwent, including 10 care flats and 20 independent flats. The scheme is being developed by a local company - Blaenau Gwent Housing Association.

**NEARLY A THIRD OF HOUSING IN BLAENAU Gwent TO BE IMPROVED**

The Blaenau Gwent Housing Association has agreed to improve the quality of the housing stock in Blaenau Gwent. The scheme will involve the improvement of 100 properties, including the replacement of roofs, windows and doors, and the installation of new heating systems.

**BLAENAU Gwent POPULATION**

The Blaenau Gwent Council has suffered from a population decline in the last 10 years. The population of Blaenau Gwent in 2001 was 17,100. In 2011, the population was 16,100. This is a decline of 6%.

The Council has agreed to improve the quality of the housing stock in Blaenau Gwent. The scheme will involve the improvement of 100 properties, including the replacement of roofs, windows and doors, and the installation of new heating systems.

**PROVISION OF MAIL LINK TO CARDIFF**

Only 20 minutes from the town, the opening of the railway and a railway passenger bus service has enabled us to see the arrival of 200 passengers every week. There are using it to see the people's eye of the high speed train.

**WALKING AND CYCLING**

In spring 2018, the third year of the Blaenau Gwent Cycle Network was completed after an effort made from the Blaenau Gwent Council, along the line of the 1000 Strong Trail was completed.

This project has been a success, and it has been a success for the Blaenau Gwent Council. The project has been a success, and it has been a success for the Blaenau Gwent Council.

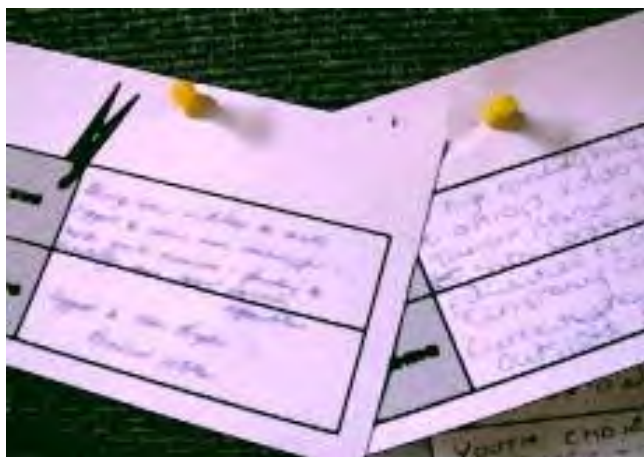
“Good way of focussing people on the importance of the decisions being made”

Representative for Communities First

"I felt really listened to, respected and that my view was as important as others"

**Anonymous**

We then asked everyone to share their views by writing down what they believed to be the real issues facing Blaenau Gwent. We also asked them to think about when it was important that we tackle these issues.



"Food for thought, I look forward to the next session"

**Representative for Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council**

We developed the information gained from the workshop into seven themes. At a second event in January 2010 we presented the themes and main issues back to everyone to consider. We held discussion groups to gain an agreement around the focus for the community strategy.

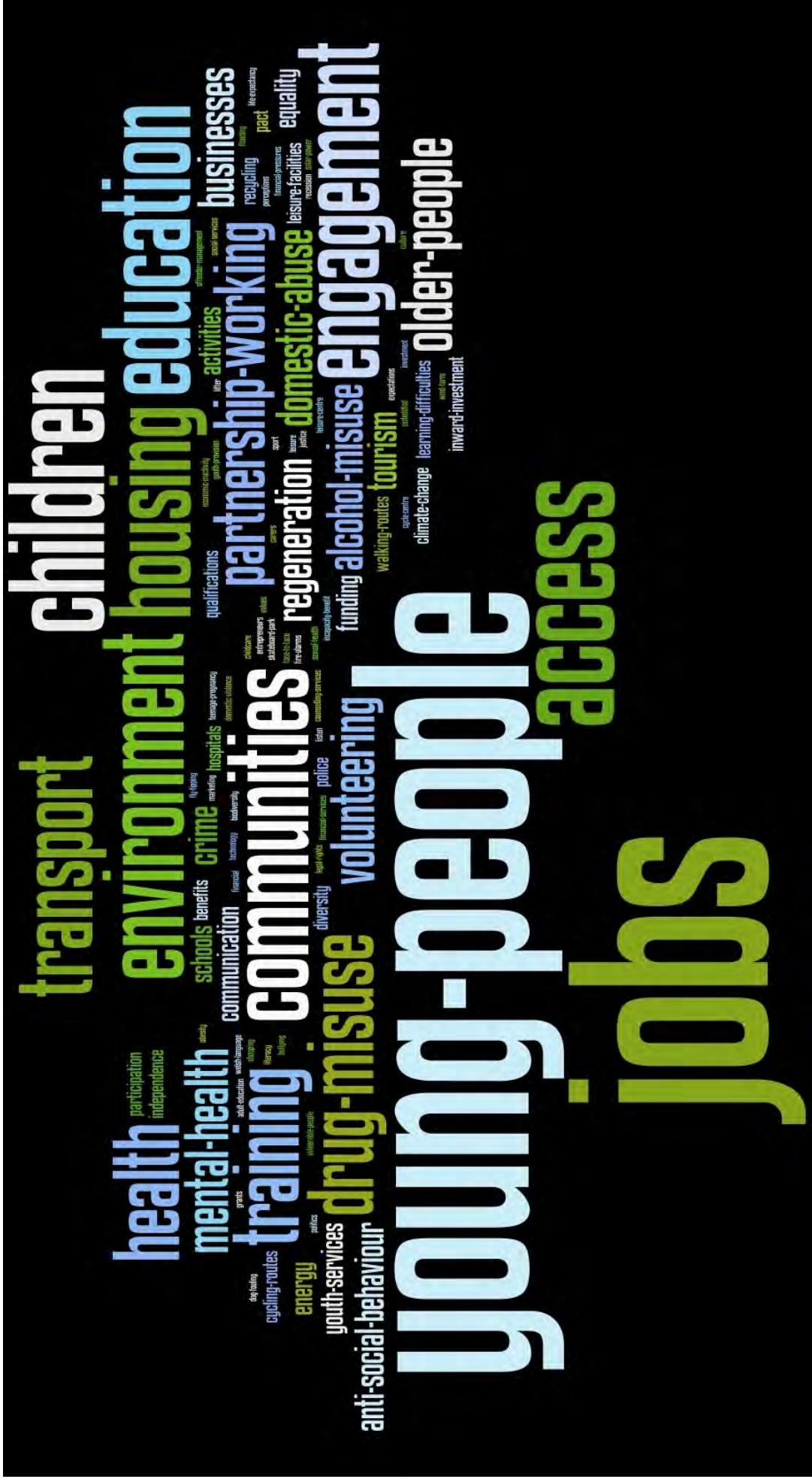
"I do feel that I have been able to engage with the shaping of the strategy. The events which I have attended have worked well"

**Representative for Gwent Police Authority**



## Key issues raised at community planning engagement events

During the events, the main partners and organisations outlined the issues that are important to Blaenau Gwent now and in the future. These issues can be seen in the picture below where the bigger the word, the more times that issue was raised.



## How people had the chance to give their thoughts on the draft strategy



As part of the commitment to make sure that people had the opportunity to contribute to the development of this document, the Draft Community Strategy for Blaenau Gwent '**Making a Difference**' was put out for formal consultation for 12 weeks from Monday 14th June until Sunday 5th September 2010.

To help people send in their views, a consultation pack was available that included things such as guidance notes, a talking presentation, short and full questionnaires (paper and web-based), and details of how extra support could be requested.

This gave interested people, organisations and groups the opportunity to give their views on the draft strategy in their own words. To give as many people, organisations and groups as possible the chance to become involved a wide range of opportunities were offered, including:

- Speaking to local residents and letting them know about the strategy and consultation process in local towns and markets, and the Eisteddfod 2010 held in Ebbw Vale;
- Regular electronic communication e.g. email and the web;
- Consultation material readily available at local libraries, with staff support to help people send in their response;
- Press Releases through the local media, e.g. Gwent Gazette;
- Sessions with the Blaenau Gwent Children's Grand School Council and the Youth Forum – Talk it Up, which used interactive handsets to help children and young people give us their thoughts;



- Using new technology platforms such as Facebook and YouTube;
- A number of sessions held with people from minority communities living in Blaenau Gwent led by the Valleys Regional Equality Council;
- Elected Member Workshops; and
- Presentation to key partnerships and groups e.g. partnerships, Communities First and the voluntary sector.



*"I am glad that I have had the opportunity to look at this strategy...I think it is a good plan for the future."*

**Member of the public attending Valleys Regional Equality Council events**

Overall, the feedback on the draft plan was positive, with lots of comments of support and helpful feedback to improve the final document.

*"Good plan. Lets make it work!"*

**Member of Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum**

All the information received was considered, and where appropriate this has been used to improve the document. As explained in the consultation process we specifically looked for key and consistent messages, and therefore not all the comments have been able to be included as part of this document.

*"We welcome the opportunity to comment on your draft strategy which was clear, easy to read and focussed on the right themes. We look forward to continuing to work with [you] as the strategy moves to action."*

**Representative for Environment Agency Wales**

A summary report, highlighting the main points from the consultation process has been produced, and will be available at <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/community/14723.asp>

# The seven themes for Blaenau Gwent

## *Setting a clear direction from the issues*

The community planning process has allowed us to identify seven themes for the Blaenau Gwent community strategy. Each theme is focused on the community and has its own vision.

The themes are not in any particular order, and no theme should be considered more important than another. That said, as the document is a long-term plan covering a 20 year period, it is likely that at any given time some of the themes will have more significance than others.

The themes are also not meant to cover the complete responsibilities of the partners in Blaenau Gwent. We have listed the seven themes below.



### **Lively and accessible communities**

*Creating communities that people enjoy and want to live in.*



### **Thriving communities**

*Offering the opportunities, support and resources in our communities for people to thrive.*



### **Fair and safe communities**

*Making people feel safe and included in our communities*



### **Learning communities**

*Giving people the skills to succeed.*



### **Healthy communities**

*Helping people to be healthy and get the right care and support when they need it.*



### **Green sustainable communities**

*Improving our environment today for tomorrow.*



### **Leading Communities**

*Working with, and for our communities.*

## How the themes fit together

Many of the issues facing Blaenau Gwent are complicated with no one solution or individual organisation able to solve them on their own.

By taking a themed approach this document helps us make sense of how the things that matter to Blaenau Gwent fit together in an understandable way.

It is clear that the identified themes are related to each other, and that work carried out for one theme often will have a positive impact on some, or all of the other themes.



## Some examples of how the themes can relate to each other



It is widely accepted that a person's home can have a significant effect on their quality of life. For example, if someone's home is cold and damp it is likely to have a negative effect on their health.

Research estimates that as many 1 in 4 people experience some mental health problem in a course of a year. Mental health problems can have a significant impact on quality of life affecting anyone, of any age and background. For example, not having a job can lead to issues such as low esteem and anxiety for some people.



Learning is something that lasts a lifetime. We learn new things everyday, and by doing this we are able to build opinions and change our behaviour. In recent years, many people have learnt more about climate change and the important role they have as individuals to reduce their carbon footprint through things like recycling.

What follows in this section is the main body of this strategy. It provides more detail on each of these themes, and sets out what needs to be done. As part of the ongoing community planning process, an action plan will be produced which will support this document. For information go to <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/community/14723.asp>





# Lively and accessible communities

*Creating communities that people enjoy and want to live in*

## Why does Blaenau Gwent need this theme?

The different people that live in a neighbourhood are one of the main factors that shape people's lives. Issues such as housing, transport, and available activities as well as the look and feel of an area are highlighted as things that make somewhere a good place to live.

Like many other places in South Wales, the neighbourhoods of Blaenau Gwent have been influenced by our industrial heritage and local landscape. On a positive note, this means we already have many well-established neighbourhoods and communities where there is strong community focus and spirit.

Moving forward into the future, we need to make sure we build on what already exists, while meeting any new challenges.

The people of Blaenau Gwent told us, through the *Living in Blaenau Gwent Survey* in 2009, that:



*“having affordable decent housing, clean streets and activities for children and young people were all top factors in making somewhere a good place to live “*

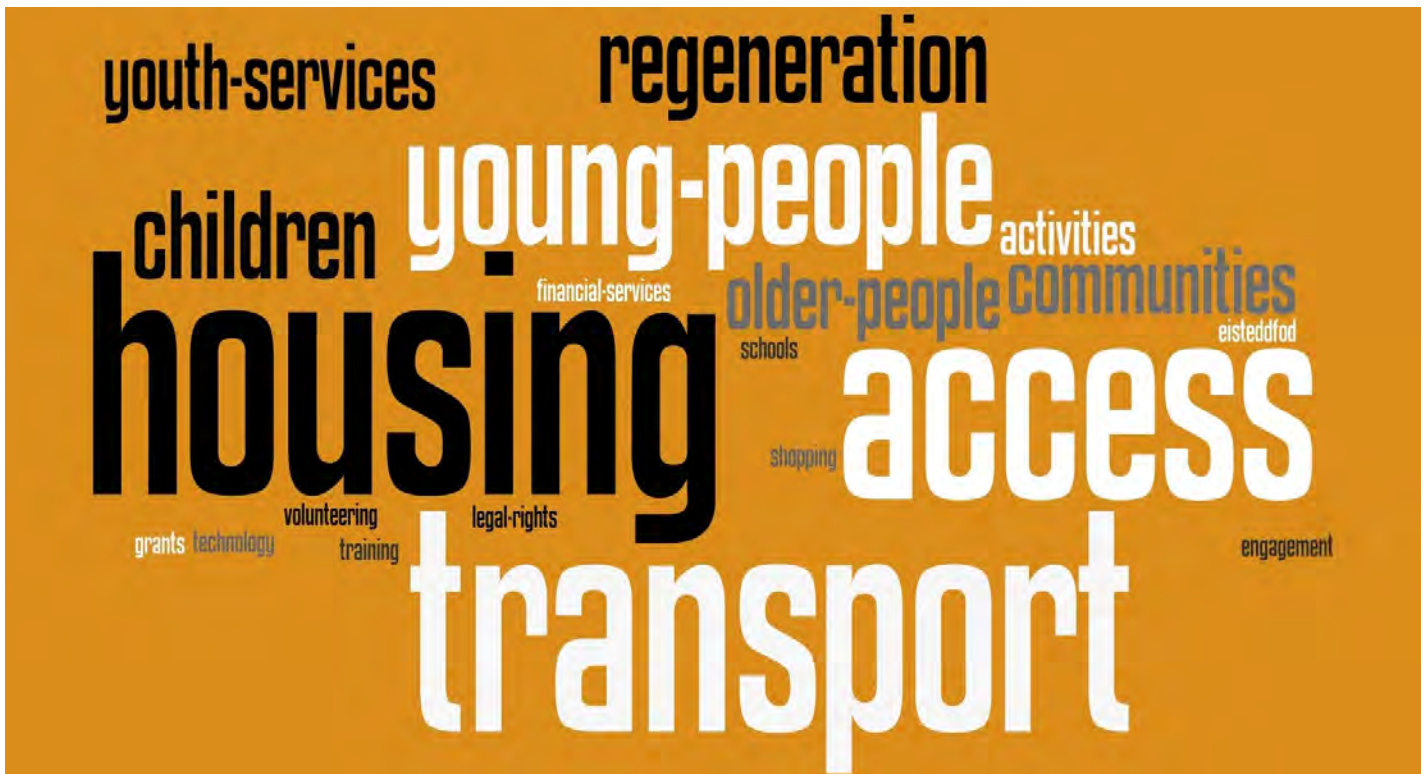
*“some of the top priorities for improvement in Blaenau Gwent were activities for children and young people, clean streets and affordable decent housing.”*

Also, we know the following about Blaenau Gwent from a number of good sources of information:

- The population has reduced by around 3500 since the early 1990s.
- We expect the population to grow by around 2000 people by 2031 because people are expected to live longer.
- By 2031 the area will have more people over 50 than ever, and fewer children, young people and those of working age.
- There are many old houses in the area, many built before 1919.
- One in five houses were identified as either unfit or in need of substantial repair.

- House prices have risen sharply since 2004 leaving many local people unable to afford new homes. On the other hand, the area has some of the lowest house prices in Wales.
- About one in 10 people find it difficult to get around the area.

During the community strategy events, the main partners and organisations outlined the main issues that are important to Blaenau Gwent now and in the future for this theme. We can see these issues in the picture below where the bigger the word, the more times that issue was raised.



## What good things are we building on?

Below are just a few of the good things which have been done in Blaenau Gwent in the last five years.

- The *Ebbw Valley Railway* serving Blaenau Gwent was opened
- The *A465 Heads of the Valley Dualling* programme has continued
- The Regeneration of *The Works* in Ebbw Vale
- Council Tenants voted to transfer to *Tai Calon Community Housing* to meet housing quality standards
- Over 300 new private houses were built throughout Blaenau Gwent



# The plan for lively and accessible communities

## *Creating communities that people enjoy and want to live in*

### What do we need to do?

Our aims are to:

1. Make suitable housing available for people
2. Make sure our neighbourhoods are places people want to live
3. Help people to get around

### How do we intend to do it?

1. We will **make suitable housing available for people** by:

- a. Improving the quality of housing
- b. Making available an appropriate mix of housing types and size to meet need
- c. Making sure housing is affordable

2. We will **make sure our neighbourhoods are places people want to live** by:

- a. Focusing improvement in all of our neighbourhoods
- b. Making our neighbourhoods look more attractive
- c. Protecting and improving places and buildings that are important
- d. Offering a range of activities that fulfil people's lives

3. We will **help people to get around** by:

- a) Providing safe, reliable and joined-up transport
- b) Making sure our public and community transport system is what our citizens need
- c) Encouraging the use of a range of transport options including walking and cycling
- d) Improving the transport **network**

### What difference do we want to make?

- People enjoy living in Blaenau Gwent
- People live in good quality homes
- Neighbourhoods look better
- People feel the benefit of participating in a range of activities
- People can get around easily
- People are less isolated

### What are some examples of the projects and activities that will help us make this difference?

This is not meant to be a complete list, but just gives an idea of some of the things that will help deliver the lively and accessible communities theme:

- A new plan for local land development (LDP), supported by neighbourhood regeneration programmes (HARPS)
- The next phase of the A465 Heads of the Valley Dualing (Tredegar to Brynmawr)
- Delivering highway improvements that link the A465 to The Works
- Improving the condition of the highway network
- Offering a range of activities within our communities including things such as arts, music, sports and recreation.
- Outcomes from the Local Authority Partnership Agreement (LAPA) with the Sports Council for Wales
- Clean Streets Campaigns
- Improvements to the transport system including the bus & rail network
- Improve housing range and quality through social housing, private sector housing investment and schemes such as extra-care housing
- Completion of cycle network in area

Further detail on projects and activities will be included in the Blaenau Gwent Community Strategy Action Plan which will support the delivery of the intention set out in this document. Work with partners on the action plan will take place in 2011 (see Page 52 for further details).

# Thriving communities

*Offering the opportunities, support and resources in our communities for people to thrive.*

## Why does Blaenau Gwent need this theme?

The economy of any area is key to ensure that the whole area thrives. This is particularly relevant to Blaenau Gwent as the area stands at an economic crossroads. Blaenau Gwent is faced with new challenges and opportunities following the loss of a traditional economy centred on primary industries such as coal and steel.

The legacy of this loss is still felt throughout the area, even after the area has been successful in attracting many new manufacturing industries, and changing the focus of the economy more towards service based jobs.

Moving forward into the future we need to ensure we create an economic base that keeps the jobs that already exist and creates new jobs by helping new and existing businesses to thrive.

Blaenau Gwent people told us through the *Living in Blaenau Gwent Survey* in 2009 that:



*Having good job prospects is the top factor that makes somewhere a good place to live.*

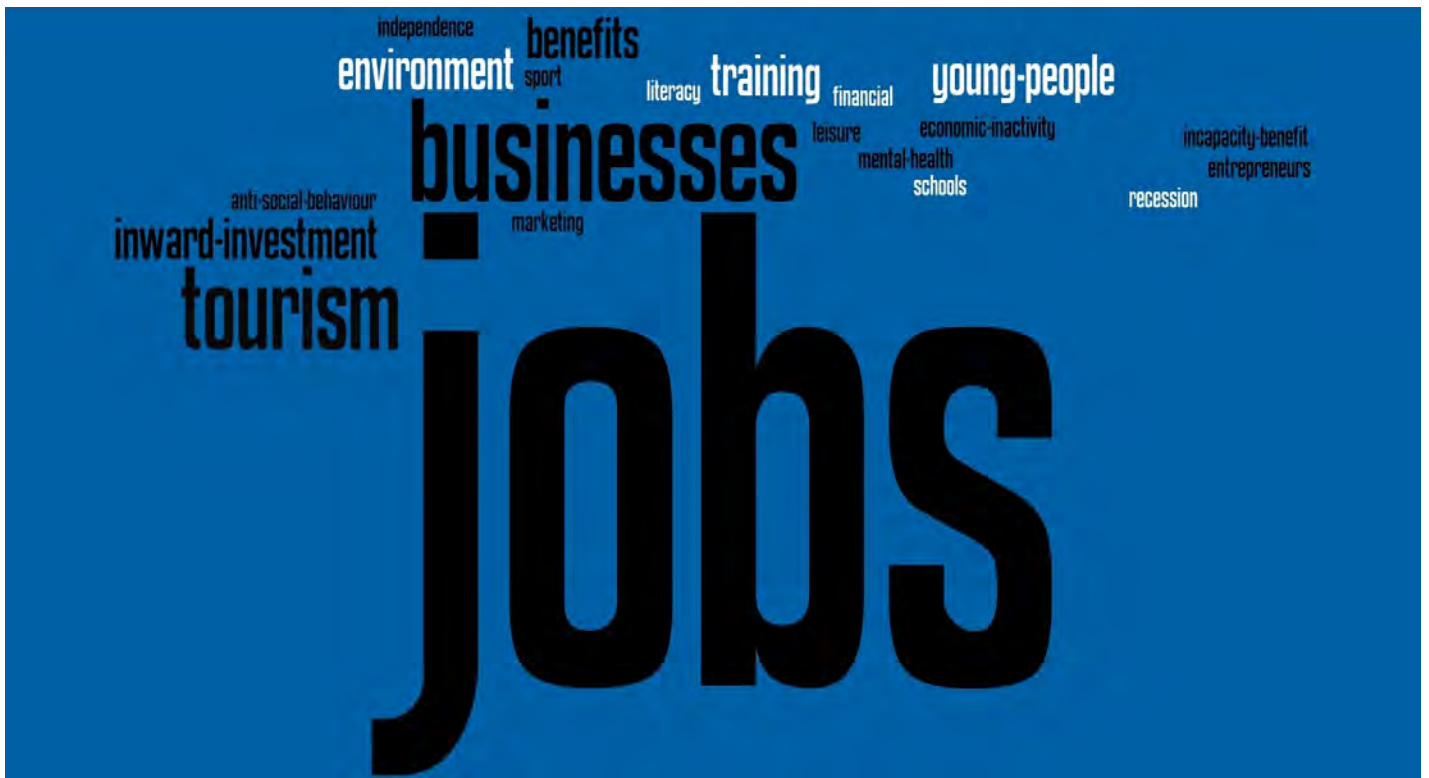
*Job prospects were identified as the issue that is the most in need of improvement to make Blaenau Gwent a better place.*

Also, we know from a number of good information sources the following about Blaenau Gwent:

- There is a low level of employment – 57% compared to 66% for Wales
- There is a high level of unemployment - 15% compared to 8% for Wales.
- Levels of self employment are low - 4% compared to 8% for Wales.
- There are low numbers of business start-ups every year.
- Over one-quarter of people who live in Blaenau Gwent (28%) work in manufacturing jobs. This is well above the average for Wales (14%).
- A high proportion of working age people claim some kind of benefits - 27% compared to the 19% for Wales.

- Low levels of household income - £25,800 compared to £30,600 for Wales.
- There are high numbers of vacant shops and buildings in our town centres.
- Two out of five people rate the retail opportunities in our towns as poor or very poor.

During the Community Strategy Events the key partners and organisations outlined the key issues that are important to Blaenau Gwent now and in the future for this theme. These issues can be seen in the picture below where the bigger the word, the more times that issue was raised.



## What good things are we building on?

Below are just a few of the good things which have been done in Blaenau Gwent in the last 5 years:

- *British Gas Green Skills Training Centre* for renewable technologies in Tredegar
- *Alchemy Suite for Budding Entrepreneurs* at Lakeside Business Centre, Nantyglo
- Programmes to help people back into work such as *JobMatch* and *Bridges into Work*
- New high quality Business Units at *Roseheyworth North Business Park*

# The plan for thriving communities

## Offering the opportunities, support and resources in our communities for people to thrive

### What do we need to do?

Our aims are to:

1. Get more people into work
2. Nurture our people and business to succeed
3. Provide support and guidance to help people facing financial pressures

### How do we intend to do it?

#### 1. We will **get more people into work** by:

- a) Widening our economy to attract new businesses
- b) Ensuring people have the right range of support and opportunity to work
- c) Helping existing businesses become stronger to preserve local jobs

#### 2. We will **nurture our people and businesses to succeed** by:

- a) Providing the right support for businesses
- b) Helping entrepreneurs develop and succeed
- c) Growing social enterprise to maximise the benefits to our communities

#### 3. We will **provide support and guidance to help people facing financial pressures** by:

- a) Reducing barriers to work
- b) Ensuring people know what they are entitled to
- c) Supporting people to become better at managing their money

### What difference will it make?

- More people are in work
- There are more job opportunities
- Local businesses succeed
- There are more social enterprises
- Higher household income
- People manage their money better

### What are some examples of the projects and activities that will help us make this difference?

This is not meant to be a complete list, but just gives an idea of some of the things that will help deliver the thriving communities theme:

- Promoting 'Green Jobs' –e.g. via the British Gas Green Skills Training Centre
- Promotion of tourism in Blaenau Gwent
- JobMatch, Bridges into Work/Working Skills for Adults, and the School Gates Employment Projects
- Development of the Rhyd y Blew strategic employment site
- Further Development of Business Park at Tredegar and New Business Park at *The Works* in Ebbw Vale
- New Business Incubation Facilities
- Town Centre & Out-of-Town Retail Developments
- Provision of Careers Advice and Guidance within Blaenau Gwent.
- Projects to support young people that are, or at risk of becoming classed as 'Not in Employment, Education or Training' (NEETS)
- Securing Funding for *Ebbw Vale Northern Corridor*
- The MoneyMadeClear Initiative

Further detail on projects and activities will be included in the Blaenau Gwent Community Strategy Action Plan which will support the delivery of the intention set out in this document.

Work with partners on the action plan will take place in 2011. (see Page 52 for further details)



# Fair and safe communities

*Making people feel safe and included in our communities*

## Why does Blaenau Gwent need this theme?

People want to live in communities that are fair and safe.

We will need to challenge ourselves to ensure that our communities are fair places to live. All people living, working or visiting Blaenau Gwent should feel valued and included, with key issues being tackling social exclusion, creating understanding and acceptance amongst people, and making sure that justice is seen to be done.

Generally, Blaenau Gwent is seen as a safe place to live. However, in recent years overall levels of crime and anti-social behaviour have been slowly rising. This coupled with people's perception of crime and anti-social behaviour has meant that making Blaenau Gwent safe will be an important issue to get right for our people.

Blaenau Gwent people told us through the *Living in Blaenau Gwent Survey* in 2009 that:



*"Low levels of crime was one of the top factors that make somewhere a good place to live".*

*"Level of crime was identified as one of the key factors that is most in need of improvement to make Blaenau Gwent a better place".*

Also, we know from a number of good information sources the following about Blaenau Gwent:

- Overall, level of crime has decreased since January 2009.
- Above average number of crimes per 1,000 people.
- Criminal damage to vehicles, theft from vehicles and actual bodily harm make up a third of all crime.
- Anti-social behaviour is decreasing – down by 9% from 2009 to 2010.
- The big anti-social behaviour issues for people include rubbish and litter, anti-social use of vehicles, and children and young people hanging around on the streets.

- Just below half of Blaenau Gwent people (48%) agree that the local police and council are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in the area.
- Almost all people feel safe walking alone during the daylight (97%), but only 61% feel safe walking alone after dark.
- Three out of five people know many people in their local area (61%).
- Some adults in Blaenau Gwent have a poor perception of young people (38%).

During the Community Strategy Events the key partners and organisations outlined the key issues that are important to Blaenau Gwent now and in the future for this theme. These issues can be seen in the picture below where the bigger the word, the more times that issue was raised.



### What good things are we building on?

Below are just a few of the good things which have been done in Blaenau Gwent in the last 5 years:

- Involving Blaenau Gwent people in the *PACT* process about their issues
- *Neighbourhood Policing* to be more responsive to people in Blaenau Gwent
- Specific projects to improve safety in Blaenau Gwent, e.g. *Bobby Van Scheme*, *Streetsafe*, and *Neighbourhood Watch*
- Projects to improve justice e.g. the *Community Reparation Scheme*

# The plan for fair & safe communities

## Making people feel safe and included in our communities

### What do we need to do?

Our aims are to:

1. Create a community where people are safe and secure
2. Ensure people feel valued and included in our communities
3. Deliver fairer communities

### How do we intend to do it?

1. We will **create a community where people feel safe and secure** by:

- a) Tackling crime & anti-social behaviour
- b) Reducing the harm caused by drugs and alcohol misuse
- c) Assuring people that issues that affect them are being dealt with

2. We will **ensure people feel valued and included in our communities** by:

- a) Removing the barriers that cause exclusion
- b) Building on our strong community spirit
- c) Celebrating what makes Blaenau Gwent special

3. We will **deliver fairer communities** by:

- a) Recognising and promoting people's rights
- b) Promoting understanding and acceptance within our communities
- c) Making sure that justice is seen to be done

### What difference will it make?

- People feel safe
- There is a strong community spirit
- People appreciate Blaenau Gwent more
- People know their rights
- Blaenau Gwent is a fair place to live
- People feel included in their community
- People feel that justice is seen to be done

### What are some examples of the projects and activities that will help us make this difference?

This is not meant to be a complete list, but just gives an idea of some of the things that will help deliver the fair and safe communities theme:

- Neighbourhood Management supported by effective PACT community engagement
- Safeguarding vulnerable people, with a focus on children and young adults
- Continuing effective Crime Prevention Initiatives
- One Stop Shop for Domestic Abuse
- Tackling disability inequality via the Access for All Forum
- A plan for improving community cohesion, including projects like promoting work between different generations
- Detached Youth Team
- Projects to support people to understand their rights, e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau
- Work to tackle all forms of discrimination

Further detail on projects and activities will be included in the Blaenau Gwent Community Strategy Action Plan which will support the delivery of the intention set out in this document. Work with partners on the action plan will begin early in 2011(see Page 52 for further details).



# Learning communities

*Giving people the skills to succeed*

## Why Blaenau Gwent needs this theme?

Education and learning are the key building blocks of opportunities for all people. By providing high quality education and learning opportunities we will secure the long-term social and economic well being of Blaenau Gwent.

We need to prepare our children and young people with the right skills that prepare them physically, mentally and socially for work in later life by having excellent school and vocational training opportunities, as well as pathways to further and higher education. We also need to ensure that opportunities are available for people who need to re-train or learn new skills in later life.

Blaenau Gwent people told us through the *Living in Blaenau Gwent Survey* in 2009 that:



*“Education was in the top ten factors that make somewhere a good place to live”.*

*“One of the top barriers to work is a lack of qualifications”.*

*“One in 10 adults participate in learning opportunities, such as day, evening or distance learning classes”.*

Also, we know from a number of good information sources the following about Blaenau Gwent:

- One in 10 households in the area had children under the age of 5.
- One in three households in the area have children or young people in full-time education (under the age of 19).
- There are significant gaps in antenatal education across Blaenau Gwent.
- Education attainment at the age of seven is well below the Welsh average. Girls out perform boys in literacy, maths and science.
- The qualification level of parents is known to be particularly important in determining later outcomes for the child. Many parents in the area have poor basic skills.
- There are very low levels of aspiration for many children and young people in Blaenau Gwent, however this is difficult to prove.

- Blaenau Gwent has the second highest level in Wales of young people not in education, employment and training.
- Despite improvements since 2002, Blaenau Gwent still suffers from low levels of adult skills, with one in five adults having no qualifications (19%).
- Fewer people have higher qualifications e.g. at least 2 'A' levels (35%) when comparing to Wales as a whole (46%).

During the Community Strategy Events the key partners and organisations outlined the key issues that are important to Blaenau Gwent now and in the future for this theme. These issues can be seen in the picture below where the bigger the word, the more times that issue was raised.



### What good things are we building on?

Below are just a few of the good things which have been done in Blaenau Gwent in the last 5 years:

- The Learning Works Scheme
- Flying Start programme
- Learning Pathways 14- 19 and vocational opportunities for young people
- Improved attendance and attainment of local pupils at GCSE and A Level standard
- Developed Learning Action Centres in towns across the area and BiG Learning Community
- Increased number of childcare places, and the Integrated Children's Centre in Blaina

# The plan for learning communities

## *Giving people the skills to succeed*

### What do we need to do?

Our aims are to:

1. Give children a good start in life
2. Ensure people are aiming high and achieving
3. Make people feel good about themselves and able to meet life's challenges

### How do we intend to do it?

1. We will ***give children a good start in life*** by:
  - a) Preparing and supporting people to be good parents
  - b) Getting opportunities right for early years provision and encouraging family participation

2. We will ***ensure people are aiming high and achieving*** by:
  - a) Raising people's aspirations
  - b) Offering people a choice from a wide range of education, training and learning opportunities, and supporting to help them succeed

3. We will ***make people feel good about themselves and able to meet life's challenges*** by:
  - a) Helping people develop pride and confidence
  - b) Providing support to help people so they can deal with life changes

### What difference will it make?

- Children get a good start to life
- Improving educational attainment
- People are more confident
- People want to succeed
- People are more adaptable
- People have better life skills

### What are some examples of the projects and activities that will help us make this difference?

This is not meant to be a complete list, but just gives an idea of some of the things that will help deliver the learning communities theme:

- Flying Start and Sure Start programmes
- Foundation Phase Learning
- 14-19 Pathways
- Prevent project aimed at reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETS)
- School Transformation agenda and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools
- Delivery of the 2 year childcare plan and development of an additional Integrated Children's Centre
- Adult and community learning for example through Learning Action Centres, local libraries and community facilities

Further detail on projects and activities will be included in the Blaenau Gwent Community Strategy Action Plan which will support the delivery of the intention set out in this document. Work with partners on the action plan will begin early in 2011 (see Page 52 for further details).



# Healthy communities

*Helping people to be healthy and get the right care and support when they need it*

## Why Blaenau Gwent needs this theme?

Health is one of the key factors that affect people's quality of life, therefore to get healthy communities we will need to have healthy people. Many things affect our health and the way we feel. These include personal factors such as our genes and biology, environmental factors such as our living environment and climate, and also our lifestyle factors such as alcohol and smoking, diet and physical activity.

Generally, the health of people from Blaenau Gwent is poor when comparing to the national average, with people from Blaenau Gwent more likely to have a lower life expectancy, and more likelihood of suffering from serious illnesses such as diabetes, respiratory diseases, cardiovascular diseases and musculoskeletal disorders and injuries. Therefore, we have considerable challenges to meet in order to improve the general health and well-being of the people of Blaenau Gwent, but also the opportunity to encourage people to take more personal responsibility.

Blaenau Gwent people told us through the *Living in Blaenau Gwent Survey* in 2009 that:



*"Good health was in the top ten factors that makes somewhere a good place to live".*

*"One-third of them felt that at best their health was fair".*

*"Almost two-thirds of people we spoke to had seriously attempted to make health changes in the last year".*

Also, we know from a number of good information sources the following about Blaenau Gwent:

- Compared to the rest of Wales, there are high levels of poor health caused by smoking, alcohol, poor diet and lack of physical activity.
- Other factors affect health and wellbeing, such as people being out of work, transport and the environment .

- As we expect the overall proportion of older people to increase, we will need to reshape the way we provide health and social care services.
- Carers need to be supported, as they make a major contribution to health and well-being.

During the Community Strategy Events the key partners and organisations outlined the key issues that are important to Blaenau Gwent now and in the future for this theme. These issues can be seen in the picture below where the bigger the word, the more times that issue was raised.



## What good things are we building on?

Below are just a few of the good things which have been done in Blaenau Gwent in the last 5 years:

- Development of *Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan*, the new local hospital
- Improving the quality of services people receive in primary care
- Improved services in areas such as mental health, long term health conditions, learning disabilities and substance misuse
- Stronger working relationships between Health and Social Services staff
- Helping parents to give children a healthy start in life through *Sure Start* and *Flying Start*
- Schemes for children and young people e.g. *Appetite for Life*, *Social and Emotional Aspect of Learning*, *Reach Out for Sexual Health* and *MEND - Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do It!*
- Helping adults to make lifestyle changes through *GP Exercise Referral*, *Mentoro Allan*, food cooperatives and healthy eating in practical cookery



# The plan for healthy communities

## Helping people to be healthy and get the right care and support when they need it

### What do we need to do?

Our aims are to:

1. Improve health and mental well-being and reduce inequalities
2. Improve the provision, quality, integration and sustainability of care provided

### How do we intend to do it?

1. We will **improve health and mental well-being and reduce inequalities** by:
  - a) Ensuring that the places where people live, learn and work impact positively on their health
  - b) Involving local people in decision-making and planning of services to improve health
  - c) Supporting skill development in personal and social skills to enable greater control over the factors that affect health and mental wellbeing
  - d) Developing and improving information services between health and the community to support people to make healthy and informed choices
2. We will **improve the provision, quality, integration and sustainability of care provided** by:
  - a) Ensuring that services focus on preventing disease and ill health
  - b) Enabling people to live happy, fulfilled and independent lives
  - c) Ensuring people receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time
  - d) Providing extra support to vulnerable people and those experiencing the most disadvantage

### What difference will it make?

- Babies are born healthy
- Pre-school children are safe, healthy and develop their potential
- School age children are safe, healthy and equipped for adulthood
- Working age adults live healthy lives for longer
- Older people age well into their retirement
- Frail people are happily independent

### What are some examples of the projects and activities that will help us make this difference?

This is not meant to be a complete list, but just gives an idea of some of the things that will help deliver the healthy communities theme:

- Launch of *Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan*, the new hospital
- New Health and Social Care Plans
- A *Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Alliance* to tackle the underlying causes of ill health
- Further development of '*Health Challenge Blaenau Gwent*'
- Review premises such as local GPs, dentists, opticians and pharmacies
- Developing integrated health and social care services for older people
- Extra Care Housing Scheme

Further detail on projects and activities will be included in the Blaenau Gwent Community Strategy Action Plan which will support the delivery of the intention set out in this document. Work with partners on the action plan will begin early in 2011 (see Page 52 for further details).



# Green and sustainable communities

*Improving our environment today for tomorrow*

## Why Blaenau Gwent needs this theme?

For over 100 years, the natural assets of Blaenau Gwent provided the area with prosperity through employment. However, the extraction and use of natural assets such as coal and steel came at a cost to our local environment. For many years the image portrayed of Blaenau Gwent was like many other South Wales industrial communities with issues such as smog, scarred landscapes and pollution of rivers not being uncommon.

However, these days are now long gone and over the last 20 years Blaenau Gwent's natural environment has become one of the areas biggest assets. The natural environment is now greener and more accessible to both residents and visitors.

Even with the improvements to our natural environment in recent years, Blaenau Gwent people are still subject to global pressures and threats, such as climate change and over-reliance of fossil fuels for energy. As a consequence, the challenge now is to sustain the good work by looking to continually improve and safeguard our natural assets. We must also ensure the people of Blaenau Gwent can play their part in this so that future generations can benefit. Blaenau Gwent people told us through the *Living in Blaenau Gwent Survey* in 2009 that:



*"Our natural environment was either very good or good".*

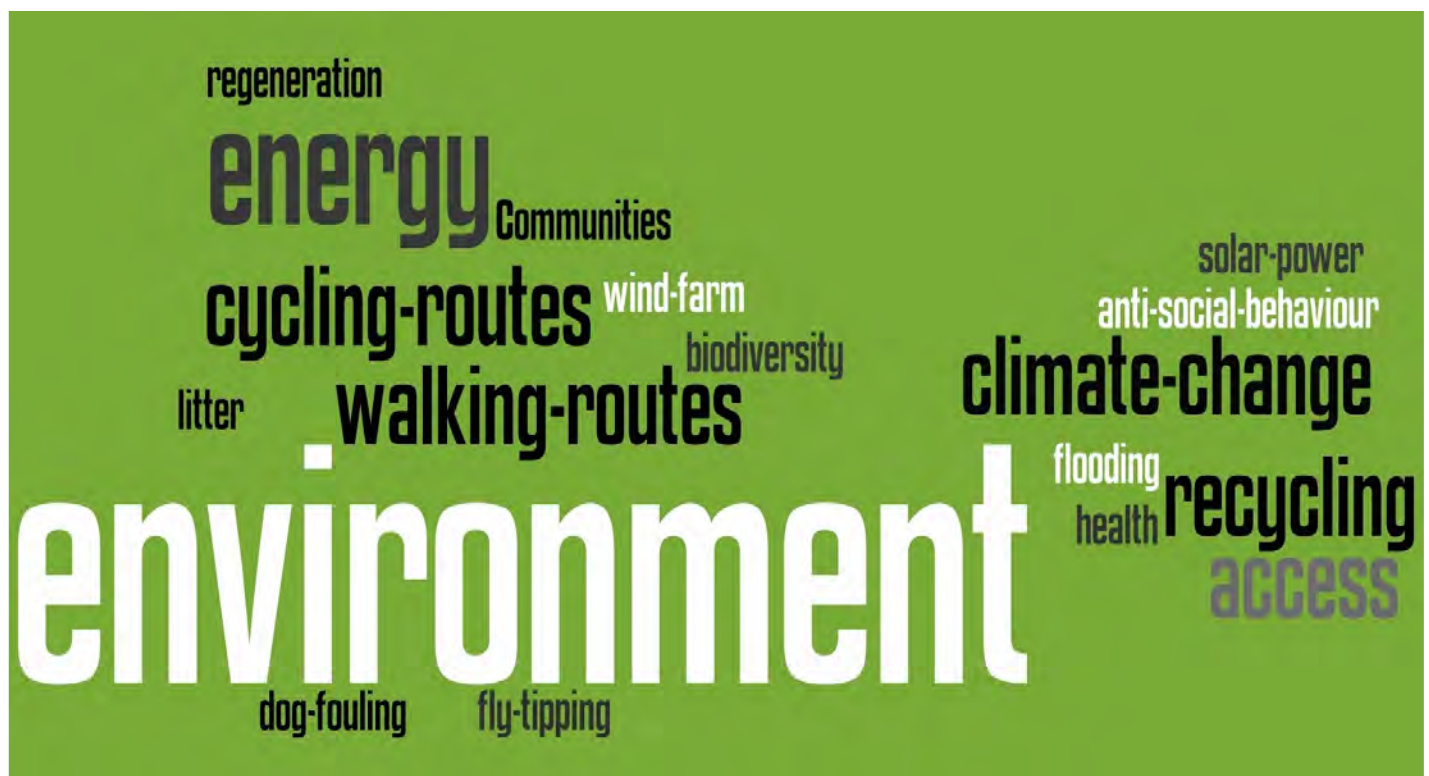
*"Our natural environment had improved in the last five years".*

Also, we know from a number of good information sources the following about Blaenau Gwent:

- The natural environment is accessible to 4 out of 5 people.
- The natural environment is well used by people living in the area, with over 50% doing some outdoor activities every month.
- People from Blaenau Gwent have major concerns about the cost of home energy (72%) and fuel for transport (52%).

- There are 2 Special Areas of Conservation, 2 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and 1 Local Nature Reserve. There are a number of proposed sites for 6 Local Nature Reserves.
- There are over 83,000 trees covering 9% of land. These include 14 Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland sites, and 3 Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites.
- 96% of people in Blaenau Gwent use kerbside recycling.
- Over one-third of people from Blaenau Gwent said nothing would persuade them to use their car less.

During the Community Strategy Events the key partners and organisations outlined the key issues that are important to Blaenau Gwent now and in the future for this theme. These issues can be seen in the picture below where the bigger the word, the more times that issue was raised.



## What good things are we building on?

Below are just a few of the good things which have been done in Blaenau Gwent in the last 5 years:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| ■ First area in Wales to roll out weekly food waste collection for all households        | ■ Improvements in access to <i>Rights of Way</i> across Blaenau Gwent |
| ■ Working towards exceeding the 65% Wales average for street cleanliness                 | ■ Heads of the Valley funding for Biodiversity in school grounds      |
| ■ <i>British Gas Green Skills Training Centre</i> for renewable technologies in Tredegar | ■ Eco-Committees developed at most schools                            |

# The plan for green and sustainable communities

## Improving our environment today for tomorrow

### What do we need to do?

Our aims are to:

1. *Protect, enhance and promote our natural landscape*

2. *Make a local difference to climate change*

### How do we intend to do it?

1. We will **protect, enhance and promote our natural landscape** by:

- a) Getting people to value and use what we have
- b) Enhancing our parks, open spaces and countryside
- c) Protecting our plants and animals

2. We will **make a local difference to climate change** by:

- a) Reducing our carbon footprint
- b) Reducing the negative impacts on our environment by making better decisions

### What difference will it make?

- People value our natural environment
- People use the natural environment more
- Plants and animals thrive
- Blaenau Gwent reduces its carbon footprint

### What are some examples of the projects and activities that will help us make this difference?

This is not meant to be a complete list, but just gives an idea of some of the things that will help deliver the green and sustainable communities theme:

- Introducing sustainable solutions for the way we dispose of our waste to reduce landfill, e.g. improved recycling and composting
- Heads of the Valley Low Carbon Programme
- Energy Saving Schemes, such as household insulation schemes
- The Works such as the Passiv Haus and low carbon commitments
- Joint Organics Waste Procurement
- Promote Blaenau Gwent as an area of natural beauty and a place for tourism
- Walking trails in Sirhowy and Ebbw Fach
- Restoration of Bedwellty House and Park
- Gwent Wildlife Trust Environmental Resource Centre
- River Improvements and Community Energy Schemes at The Works in Ebbw Vale
- Eco Schools Project

Further detail on projects and activities will be included in the Blaenau Gwent Community Strategy Action Plan which will support the delivery of the intention set out in this document. Work with partners on the action plan will begin early in 2011(see Page 52 for further details).

# Leading communities


*Working with, and for our communities*

## Why does Blaenau Gwent need this theme?

Blaenau Gwent is renowned for its strong political and community leaders. The area has long been at the heart of national and regional agendas, with decisions and actions taken in Blaenau Gwent changing the political landscape and how we organise and live our lives.

For Blaenau Gwent, leadership has never been more important, as we look to outline a clear and concise vision for the regeneration of the local area. The focus of this theme will need to ensure that key people, organisations and agencies deliver on their responsibilities to work together to ensure that Blaenau Gwent is a better place to live, work and visit. Additionally, we will look to ensure that local people are involved, allowing them to have a good understanding of the issues facing Blaenau Gwent, allowing them to give their opinions based on good, reliable information.

We need to ensure that local people can trust leaders and organisations driving forward change in Blaenau Gwent, so they can feel confident that the right decisions are being taken. A considerable amount of effort has already been made to help make this happen, however, we have a long way to go and we know this because Blaenau Gwent people told us through the *Living in Blaenau Gwent Survey* in 2009 that they :



*Do not feel informed about things such as services that could benefit them*

*Like to know what is happening, but are happy to let others get on with the job (67%)*

*Feel that public service providers do not have a good understanding of the issues & concerns that affect them and their families (36%)*

Also, we know from a number of good information sources the following about Blaenau Gwent:

- Very few people get involved in community meetings or consultations, or participate in voluntary activities (7%).
- Two out of three people have never expressed an opinion on the delivery of public services to the service provider.

- Most people that don't want to get involved say that it is because it won't make any difference.
- Most people (75%) that give opinions only give them on issues that affect them directly.

During the Community Strategy Events the key partners and organisations outlined the key issues that are important to Blaenau Gwent now and in the future for this theme. These issues can be seen in the picture below where the bigger the word, the more times that issue was raised.



## What good things are we building on?

Below are just a few of the good things which have been done in Blaenau Gwent in the last 5 years:

- A number of key initiatives to involve local people e.g. Living in Blaenau Gwent Survey, PACT process, 50+ Forum, Youth Forum and Access for All
- Improving volunteering opportunities
- Community development support from organisations to people in communities who want to make a difference
- Establishment of Blaenau Gwent Local Service Board
- Strengthening partnership working in Blaenau Gwent for Children and Young People, Health and Social Care, Regeneration and Community Safety
- Securing the Eisteddfod 2010 at The Works, Ebbw Vale
- The Blaenau Gwent Community magazine *Connect*
- Over £5million in efficiency savings



# The plan for leading communities

## Working with, and for our communities

### What do we need to do?

Our aims are to:

1. Get people more actively involved in their communities
2. Work together to provide better outcomes for people
3. Make people feel confident in public services

### How do we intend to do it?

1. We will **get people more actively involved in their communities** by

- a) Involving people in decision making
- b) Getting more people volunteering

2. We will **work together to provide better outcomes for people** by:

- a) Setting out clear priorities for the area
- b) Providing joined up services
- c) Getting better value for public money

3. We will **make people feel confident in public services** by:

- a) Working hard to offer excellent services that benefit people
- b) Ensuring people know what is happening

### What difference will it make?

- People feel informed
- More people involved as volunteers
- People are participating in community activities
- People feel part of their community
- People feel that they can make a difference in their community
- Better services available

### What are some examples of the projects and activities that will help us make this difference?

This is not meant to be a complete list, but just gives an idea of some of the things that will help deliver the leading communities theme:

- A joint organisation approach to communication and engagement
- A set of clear plans that local people understand
- Focusing service provision around our neighbourhoods
- Plans for joint commissioning of work
- Improving efficiencies with public money

Further detail on projects and activities will be included in the Blaenau Gwent Community Strategy Action Plan which will support the delivery of the intention set out in this document. Work with partners on the action plan will begin early in 2011(see Page 52 for further details).





# Community planning in Blaenau Gwent

## The next steps

### *Words into action*

An important part of the on-going community planning process will be for local partners to come together to produce an action plan. This will set out what will be done to make sure that we achieve our vision and turn the words and intentions in this document into action.

As described on page 10, the community planning process for Blaenau Gwent will be kept 'live' through an annual review of progress and a full-scale review carried out every four years. To support both of these the views of interested people, organisations and groups will be encouraged.

Following this document being formally agreed, a clear action plan will be developed working with key partners and organisations within Blaenau Gwent. The action plan will set out for each theme:

- What we will be doing;
- Who will make it happen;
- How will we know we are on track;
- What difference will it make;
- How to find out more; and
- How actions have an impact across the themes.

It is important to remember that the projects and activities which will be part of the action plan will need to be at an appropriate level to support this document. As described on Page 14, there are other key plans that will also have a range of projects and activities that will support the intention set out in this document for Blaenau Gwent. Therefore, an important part of on-going community planning work will be to make sure that the key plans fit together in a way that helps deliver positive outcomes for people.

Following this document being formally agreed, work will start in 2011 to bring partners together to develop and publish the action plan. For further information please go to

<http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/community/14723.asp> .



BWRDD GWASANAETH LLEOL  
**Blaenau Gwent**  
LOCAL SERVICE BOARD

# Taking forward 'Making a difference'

The Blaenau Gwent Local Service Board is the agreed steering group that oversees the Community Strategy, and is made up of the following organisations:



**GWENT  
ASSOCIATION OF  
VOLUNTARY  
ORGANISATIONS**

**Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO)** is the

County Voluntary Council that supports third sector organisations operating and delivering services in Blaenau Gwent. In Blaenau

Gwent GAVO support over 400 voluntary organisations including community groups, volunteers, self-help groups, co-operatives, social enterprises and religious organisations.



**Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council** is responsible for all local government services in Blaenau Gwent such as education, social care services, highways, leisure, and planning. The Council employs staff in many locations throughout the area in a wide variety of roles. 42 elected members represent Blaenau Gwent communities.



**GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES**

**Bwrdd Iechyd  
Aneurin Bevan  
Health Board**

**Aneurin Bevan Health Board** is responsible for the delivery of health care services to people living in Gwent. The Health Board has developed Locality Structures which provide a specific focus

for Blaenau Gwent. This ensures partnerships and local people are fully engaged in improving health and well-being.



**Heddlu  
Gwent  
Police**

**Gwent Police** operates an efficient, modern policing structure to serve the people of Blaenau Gwent. There is a Local Policing Unit for Blaenau Gwent, where a dedicated Superintendent operates 4 neighbourhood policing teams.

**DWP**

**Department for  
Work and Pensions**

**Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)** is responsible for welfare and pension policy in the UK. It is represented in Blaenau Gwent by the South Wales Valley District of Jobcentre Plus which provides services

that support people of working age from welfare into work, and helps employers to fill their vacancies. The DWP also has responsibility for the Pension Service and Disability and Carers Service.



**Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government**

The **Welsh Assembly Government's Heads of the Valleys Programme** is responsible for the delivery of a 15 year strategy to bring about the physical and social regeneration of the area. The aim is that the Heads of the Valleys region will become a rich, dynamic network of communities helping to drive the success of south east Wales.

The **Welsh Assembly Government** is also represented officially on the Blaenau Gwent Local Service Board by a senior Assembly Government official, whose role is to improve understanding, feedback to the Assembly Government, reduce bureaucracy, contribute to local problem-solving, resolve conflicts, and provide constructive challenge.