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Blaenau Gwent

Upper Ebbw Fach Valley

Holistic Area Regeneration Plan 2009-12



Draft Upper Ebbw Fach Valley Holistic Area Regeneration Plan



Prepared by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
in partnership with BTCV, Communities First, EVAD,
GAVO, Local Health Board/National Public Health Service and WAG

December 2008

HOLISTIC AREA REGENERATION PLANS

In early 2008 the Heads of the Valley Programme Team invited Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to prepare and submit Holistic Area Regeneration Plans (HARPs) by end of December 2008.

The Heads of the Valley Town Centre Group had been working on a Spatial Strategy for the area and as a result of this work four regeneration areas were proposed.

These are:

- Upper Sirhowy Valley centred on the town of Tredegar
- Ebbw Fawr Valley centred on the town of Ebbw Vale
- Upper Ebbw Fach Valley centred on the town of Brynmawr
- Lower Ebbw Fach Valley centred on the town of Abertillery

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council welcomed the opportunity to work closely with its partners to prepare and submit four HARPs.

It was acknowledged at the outset that the regeneration of the county borough requires a truly partnership approach tackling issues and opportunities presented by the physical make up of the area and quality of life issues faced by many residents. It is timely that the Regeneration Strategy for Blaenau Gwent has recently been drafted and the proposals contained within this HARPs complements this strategy.

The Council engaged with its partners through a series of meetings and workshops with the assistance of an independent facilitator. A report of the consultation events is available from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. How we consulted and what we consulted on was overseen by a Steering Group comprising public and voluntary sectors organisations (see page 33 for more details)

Partners were invited to submit information and projects and were also given the opportunity to shape the prioritisation process. Throughout the process, officers of the Council have been available to discuss HARPs with any interested party. Working within time constraints the Council has strived to ensure that the process of preparing HARPs has been inclusive and have encouraged other organisations to adopt a similar approach. In fact in the Ebbw Fawr Valley, EVAD and GAVO have undertaken an exercise to inform all community groups in the area of this initiative and to invite suggestions for projects.

As the process emerged the role of Steering Group extended to devising the criteria for assessment of the projects and for undertaking the assessment.

The result of this work is a comprehensive assessment of the issues and opportunities faced by the area, projects underway and package of projects to be implemented.

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH

Blaenau Gwent is located in south east Wales and was formerly part of the county of Gwent. It is approximately 20 miles south to the city of Newport, 30 miles south west to the city of Cardiff and directly north is the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Blaenau Gwent is the smallest of all Welsh local authorities, at about 10,900 hectares. In Blaenau Gwent there are three distinctive valleys supporting five main settlements – Abertillery, Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale, Nantyglo & Blaina and Tredegar.

Section 1: Strategic Context

UPPER EBBW FACH VALLEY

The Upper Ebbw Fach Valley located in top of the county borough's eastern valley had a population of 14,976 in 2006 – a decrease of 2.0% since 1991. Brynmawr is located at the head of the Ebbw Fach Valley and the Clydach Gorge. Although it is considered to be a valley town it is in fact quite elevated, with a distinctive open character. The Ebbw Fach is a very steep valley comprising the former mining communities of Winchestown, Nantyglo and Blaina. The northern part of the area is within the Brecon Beacons National Park. Two of the three wards in the district are Community First wards, namely Nantyglo and Blaina.

Main Settlements Roles & Functions

Hub: **BRYNMAWR** is the hub of the district. It contains over 106 commercial units, a comprehensive school, and a cinema – the only free standing cinema in the Heads of the Valleys programme area. The district Leisure Centre is in Nantyglo along with a Comprehensive School. In 2006 a large supermarket was constructed on the former Semtex works on land straddling the boundary between Brynmawr and Nantyglo wards. Further retail units have recently been constructed on the same site known as Lakeside.

Employment areas

Industrial estates are located to the south east of Brynmawr (Blaenant, and Noble Square) and at Nantyglo (Cwmcrachan, Rising Sun, Barleyfields and Pond Road). In Nantyglo, the Council runs a small complex of units aiming to offer pre-incubation, incubation and starter office and workshop space. The Council's central depot is also located in this HARP area.

Local Transport network

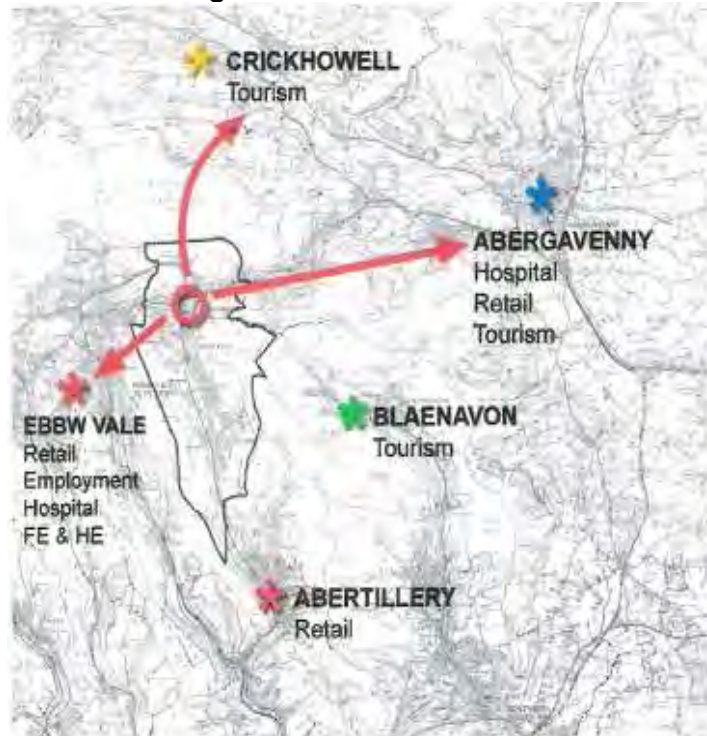


The A467 runs north south through the district, connecting the main settlements. It is a good quality road.

The A465 runs east-west across the top of the district. It is scheduled to be improved to dual carriageway standard.

There are no direct rail services to the area but there is a service from nearby Ebbw Vale

External Linkages



East. The A465(T) connects the district to the market town of Abergavenny. To the southeast a mountain road leads to Blaenavon with its world heritage site and Big Pit Museum.

West. The A465 links the district to employment opportunities, a new rail link, learning facilities, and retail provision at Ebbw Vale.

Further along the A465 is the sub-regional shopping centre of Merthyr.

South. The A467 links the town of Brynmawr to the residential areas of Nantyglo and Blaina.

North. The Brecon Beacons is a short distance to the north and can be accessed via Llangynidr from Beaufort or by way of the A465 and A40.

Tourism and potential contribution to the Valleys Regional Park

The area has the potential to make a major contribution to tourism in the Heads of the Valleys and contribute to the Valleys Regional Park.

Landscape: While Brynmawr is considered to be a Valley Town it is in fact quite elevated, with a distinctive, open character. The Brecon Beacons lie to the north, while to the southeast lies Coety Mountain and Mynydd Carn-y-cefn to the southwest. To the east lies the Clydach Gorge, which forms an attractive and dramatic approach to the Town.

The **Clydach Gorge** is the location for a number of visitor attractions, these include, waterfalls, nature reserves and caves unique to the area. The caves are known to be amongst some of the longest in the world, and include a number of unexplored chambers.



Cyclepaths: a Sustrans cycle route runs through Brynmawr to Newport and there is a proposal for an east-west cyclepath from Abergavenny to Swansea. Local links are to be provided to these routes.

Recently completed the Sustrans National Cycle Route 46 now runs between Abergavenny following the gentle incline of the former Merthyr to Abergavenny railway passing through natural and historic sites.

Heritage: The foundations of Ty Mawr Mansion, built in 1816, act as a reminder of the wealth of the 'Masters' of the iron industry. The round towers (in private ownership) at Roundhouse farm nearby

were built as a fortress to protect the ironmaster Crawshay Bailey in the event of a worker's uprising.

The Lakeside Area contains evidence of the industrial past. Originally part of the Nantyglo Ironworks and then part of the former Semtex works, Waun Pond with the listed Pump House is being developed as a community business providing recreation facilities in the form of fishing, sensory garden and wildlife observatory. Evidence of a more recent industrial heritage is evident in the former boiler house, a building listed because of the innovative use of curved concrete when constructed as part of the Semtex works.

Workers from the Nantyglo and Blaina area played an important role in the Chartist uprisings.

Footpaths: there is an extensive network of footpaths which link Brynmawr to surrounding communities, the Brecon Beacons, Clydach Gorge and the moorland areas to the south. Footpaths link to the World Heritage Site of Blaenavon.

Accommodation: is limited to a Guest House and Inn in Brynmawr and a Guest House in Blaina.

Section 2: Analysis of Need

An attractive and well-used natural, historic and built environment

Biodiversity: There are no Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs) (Statutory International Sites) within the Blaenau Gwent Planning Authority boundary. There are however, two SACs within the Brecon Beacons National Park area of Blaenau Gwent: Usk Bat Sites and Cwm Clydach Woodlands, each designated under the EC Habitats and Species Directives. Usk Bat Site is one of the best areas in the United Kingdom for the lesser horseshoe bat.

There is one Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Statutory National) within the HARP area

- Brynmawr Sections (geological site)

There is also a SSSI in the Brecon Beacons National Park area of Blaenau Gwent:

- Mynydd Llangatwg

There are no National Nature Reserves (NNR) (Statutory National) within the Blaenau Gwent Planning Authority boundary though there is one in the Brecon Beacons National Park area called Cwm Clydach.

A number of candidate Local Nature Reserves have been proposed for the County Borough area. In the Upper Ebbw Fach Valley area, these are: Parc Nant y Waun (Brynmawr); Trevor Rowson Heritage site (Nantyglo);

Heritage Interest: Blaenau Gwent has 53 listed buildings, recognised for their special historical and architectural importance. The majority are Grade II listed, although of the total, ten fall into the higher category of Grade II*. There are eleven listed buildings

in the County Borough that appear on Cadw's register of listed buildings 'at risk'.

Blaenau Gwent also has a number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs), which include Clydach Railroad Bridge, Brynmawr; Clydach Coal Levels in this area.

There are currently no designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within the Blaenau Gwent area. However, at the regional level there are AQMAs in place in Cardiff and Newport as a result of significant traffic flows and peak hour congestion.

Data relating to estimated carbon dioxide emissions in 2004 indicate that the County Borough per capita, compares favourably against the South East Wales average, producing 6.5 tonnes per capita as opposed to 9.8 tonnes per capita.

In 2007/08, the total municipal waste (MSW) arisings in Blaenau Gwent were 40,431 tonnes, of which 17.2% was recycled or composted. In terms of commercial and industrial wastes the figure for 2003 identified 56,971 tonnes, of which 69% was recycled. In order for Blaenau Gwent to meet their Landfill Allowance Scheme targets and 40% recycling and composting target by 2009/10 significant alterations to current waste production and management practices in the County Borough will be required

Blaenau Gwent consumed 4.6% of the South East Wales industrial and commercial energy use in 2003. The same percentage in respect of domestic energy consumption was 6.4%, with the statistic for transport based energy consumption being just 1%. It should be noted, that Blaenau Gwent has 4.8% of the South East Wales population.

Figures on national, regional and local gas consumption (Kwh) indicate that Blaenau Gwent uses a higher share of gas domestically when compared to the regional averages, but less industrially than neighbouring Authorities. This may potentially be a reflection of Blaenau Gwent's housing conditions - there is a considerable amount of older housing stock in the Local Authority area that, due to its age, may be less energy efficient. Another factor is the altitude which results in a relatively cooler climate than some neighbouring Authorities.

A vibrant economic landscape offering new opportunities

Unemployment and Economic Inactivity is a particular problem throughout the South Wales Valleys area and the Upper Ebbw Fach Valley area is no different. In Blaenau Gwent 4.4% of the working age population claim Job Seekers Allowance. The rate is the highest in Wales. There are also higher proportions of people claiming incapacity benefits, income support and pensions credit in Blaenau Gwent than the rest of Wales.

Long term unemployment is a persistent problem. In 2006, 41% of claimants had been unemployed for over six months and over 20% for a year. The proportion of claimants under 25 has increased significantly.

The proportion of the working age population economically active is 69.6% - again much lower than that of Wales. However, the rate has improved slightly since 2002.

Out Commuting. Blaenau Gwent experiences the 6th highest level of net out commuting in Wales, suggesting that Blaenau Gwent is not offering its residents the job opportunities that they are looking for.

Income: For those persons in employment the pay received for their work is lower than in other neighbouring authorities. As measured

by Paycheck The mean income is £26,559 which is significantly lower than the mean income for SE Wales at £31,108 and Wales at £30,231. Our neighbouring authorities have higher mean incomes - £27,106 in Merthyr Tydfil, £29,248 in Caerphilly and £29,344 in Torfaen. As a result personal disposable incomes are likely to be lower having direct impacts on life chances.

Enterprise: Only 4.8% of workers are self-employed compared to 8.6% in Wales. The three year survival rate for businesses is just 66%. The UK Competitiveness Index produced by the University of Wales Institute in Cardiff found that Blaenau Gwent is ranked 407th out of 407 local areas across the UK. The Index takes into account factors including research and development expenditure, business start up rates, proportion of the working age population with a degree, productivity, employment rates and gross weekly pay.

Industrial and Occupational Structures: The Blaenau Gwent economy has experienced major structural change moving from dependence on heavy industry towards manufacturing and services. In 2001 manufacturing accounted for 41% of jobs and now it is only 26%. At the same time there has been a small increase of 2,300 service jobs, but the sector is still smaller than in Wales. The largest number of these jobs is in public administration, education and health.

Transport: In terms of travel distances to work, in Blaenau Gwent the majority of the population travels less than 5km commuting distance. 31% of the County Borough's population relies on the private car for their work journey, with only 7% of the population walking or cycling to work. In terms of car ownership, 45% of the resident population owns one car only, with 35% of Blaenau Gwent's residents neither owning nor having access to a car or van. In comparison to regional and national statistics, in general terms car ownership levels are considerably below average in Blaenau

Gwent and a considerably greater proportion of the population is without access to a car.

A new rail link to Cardiff has recently opened providing an hourly service to Cardiff with two rail stations serving Blaenau Gwent (Ebbw Parkway & Llanhilleth). The line provides access to and from Cardiff, which is linked with the Great Western line giving links eastward to London and westward to Swansea, Fishguard and the Republic of Ireland.

Bus links connect the main towns with Newport and Cardiff and local bus services connect Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale, Abertillery and Tredegar. These bus links provide a good level of service during weekdays and on Saturdays. Conversely, Sunday service is limited and some lateral connections between valleys are poor.

The dominant feature of the highway network in Blaenau Gwent is the Heads of the Valleys Trunk Road (A465) located at the northern end of the County Borough. The proposal to upgrade the road between Hirwaun and Abergavenny to dual carriageway standards has commenced. On completion of this work the A465/A40 route between Neath and Monmouth will be to a standard commensurate with its strategic nature. The completion of the section within Blaenau Gwent is expected to commence by 2010. This road combined with the A470 connects Blaenau Gwent to the Midlands, the South East, South West of England and the rest of Wales.

The nearest airports to Blaenau Gwent are Cardiff International, Bristol and Birmingham. Locals are largely reliant on private transport or car hire to access the airports, as public transport links are limited.

A well educated, skilled and healthier population

Population: The population of Blaenau Gwent has been in decline since 1921 mainly caused by the decline of the coal and steel industries, leading to movements out of the county borough to find employment elsewhere. One of the main problems of outward migration is that it tends to be biased towards those people most mobile and economically active such as those falling into the younger age groups.

Blaenau Gwent has witnessed steady population loss over recent years. The most recent figures suggest that there are 69,300 living in the area (ONS Ward Estimates 2006). This compares to 70,100 in 2001 and * in 1991.

In 2006, 23% of the HARP population was over pensionable age (60+) compared to 24% in the county borough. Conversely the young people's population (ages 0 –19) was 26% in the Upper Ebbw Fach area compared to 25% in the county borough.

UK population projections as far ahead as 2051 show that the numbers of 65+ are to increase by 86% and for adults aged 85 and over by 275%, this clearly has major implications for care needs for the elderly in the county borough.

Deprivation: Two out of the three wards in this area are Communities First areas, namely Nantyglo and Blaina, as a result of their high levels of deprivation. Six out of the nine Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in this area are within the top 25% of LSOAs, indicating high levels of overall deprivation as measured by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2008. All the LSOAs in Nantyglo fall into this category and further analysis shows that within Nantyglo there are real issues of income, employment, health and education and skills deprivation. Other areas such as Blaina 1 and Brynmawr 2 also exhibit particular deprivation issues. The area

of Nantyglo has ranked as one of the most deprived areas in Wales in the previous WIMDs.

Child Deprivation & Issues:

Research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that in the ward of Nantyglo 47.9% of children were in households living on benefits compared to the national average of 21%. This is the highest in Blaenau Gwent. There has been consistent increase in the percentage of babies born with low birth weight across Wales from 7.5% in 1998 to 7.7% in 2002. The increase in Blaenau Gwent as been more marked rising from 7.5% in 1998 to 10.1% in 2002. As a result Blaenau Gwent has the highest proportion of LBW babies in Wales. LBW is strongly connected with poor health and deprivation and LBW babies are more likely to experience health problems through child and adulthood. Recent evidence of causes of LBW includes mothers smoking during pregnancy, poor diet and excessive alcohol and drug consumption during pregnancy.

From the needs analysis carried out for the Children's and Young People's Plan the following issues have been identified:

- Blaenau Gwent has the second worst record of all LHBs in Wales for percentage of 5 year olds with dental caries
- Levels of education attainments by the age of 7 are very low and are falling
- Key needs are to support families to address parents skills and ability to support their children's basic skills development. Basic Skills Agency in 2002 estimated Blaenau Gwent to have the second highest proportion of adults with poor basic skills in literacy (33%) and numeracy (38%) compared to Welsh averages of 28% and 32% respectively.
- Pupil aspirations are inextricably linked to their achievement and low expectations can contribute to underachievement. Often low expectations and poor self-esteem can be part of

familial patterns. From the Census 2001, Blaenau Gwent was the second worst area for percentage of 16-24 year olds with no educational, vocational or professional qualification

- The Communities that Care survey found that Blaenau Gwent young people showed high rates of regular drinking (21%) and binge drinking (31%) despite a high perception of future harm and a relatively higher proportion with a family member with serious drug or alcohol problems. Young people in Blaenau Gwent were significantly less likely than the national average to have ever used illegal drugs or sniffed glue – 12% in comparison to 19%. Young people in Blaenau Gwent are more sensible about smoking than their peers across the UK.
- Overall the Communities that Care Survey 2005 showed that young people had lower risk factor scores and higher protective factor scores for future health and behavioural problems than the UK average. The only exceptions were – higher scores for community neglect as a risk factor largely due to a perception of 'lots of fights' and 'lots of empty and abandoned buildings'; higher scores for low commitment to school largely due to higher levels of exclusion, suspension and expulsion and higher scores for early problem behaviour largely due to greater use of alcohol and arrest rates.
- Blaenau Gwent children participate in physical exercise for an average of 16% (5x30 mins) per week which is below the national average of 34% even though the landscape and topography of Blaenau Gwent lends itself to a variety of outdoor play experiences

Community Safety: A postal survey was conducted by Crime Concern Cymru in April 2004, focusing on residents' perceptions of fear of crime and actual experience of crime. The purpose is to provide baseline data for future comparison. Although a high

proportion felt “very safe” or “safe” going out in BG during the day (87.3%), this fell to 43.6% at night. Respondents were less worried about crimes against the person (48.7% “very worried” or “worried” about robbery/mugging and 51.2% about physical assault) than property related crime (78.2% “very worried” or “worried” about burglary, 80.1% about car crime and 81.7% about theft from a car).

Recorded crime figures published in Safer Blaenau Gwent Partnership Strategic Assessment 2008-2009 show that Brynmawr had higher levels of motor vehicle crime and violent crime. Nantyglo was a hotspot for theft of motor vehicle and vehicle interference and burglary in buildings other than dwellings.

Anti social behaviour is a primary concern to all communities in Blaenau Gwent. Reducing harm caused by alcohol is a national and local priority as there is a strong causal link to other priorities such as violent crime and anti social behaviour.

Youth related incidents reported to Gwent Police account for 50% of all rowdy/nuisance behaviour calls, which in turn account for 73% of incidents reported to Gwent Police in the period Oct 06-Sept 07. However no correlation has been found between trends in rowdy behaviour and criminal damage or any strong match with school exclusion data. However, it should be noted that school exclusion data relates to the location of the school not the pupil’s home address.

Recent figures from the Office for National Statistics show that men and women living in Blaenau Gwent have the lowest chance of survival to the age of 75 compared with other area in Wales. The survival rate for men is 59.6% in Blaenau Gwent compared to 70.6% in Ceredigion and for women 67.4% compared to Monmouthshire at 80.9%. Sadly the survival rate for women in Blaenau Gwent is the lowest in the whole of England and Wales.

Lifelong Learning: Data relating to education, skills and qualifications in the area indicates a considerable disparity between Blaenau Gwent and South East Wales and Wales. In Blaenau Gwent, the proportion of people holding NVQ level 2, or above in 2003 was 41% compared to 43% for South East Wales and 60% for Wales. The situation is far worse in terms of the proportion of people holding the higher level 4 qualification or above: 10% for Blaenau Gwent compared to 17% and 23% for South East Wales and Wales respectively.

There is also a lower percentage of the population achieving a level 4/5 qualification (such as degree, HNC, HND) with only 14% in Blaenau Gwent compared to the Welsh average of 17%. Latest statistics also show that there was a lower proportion of 19 year olds with 5 GCSE’s (A*-C), with 43% achieving this compared to the Welsh average of 56%.

Surveys show that most adults would like to be involved in learning, but experience some barriers that stop them. The majority of employers who recruit school or college leavers report a significant skills gap.

An appealing and coherent tourism and leisure experience

Despite the rich industrial heritage of the locality, there are very few members of the population that identify themselves as Welsh, rather than British (12% according to 2001 Census). The use of the Welsh language in Blaenau Gwent is relatively low, when compared to Wales as a whole and other authorities.

However, there is a distinctive ‘valleys’ culture apparent in the Blaenau Gwent area – this has developed from a strong sense of community and social networks that are not linked to the Welsh language.

The public rights of way network in the County Borough is nearly 300km in length - 68% of this network is available to walkers. However, the distribution of the network is not even across the County Borough, and there are several factors arising from a lack of maintenance that have led to restricted usability of this facility.

Three factors have been identified namely:

- more circular routes – signed and advertised
- the need to link paths together
- more long distance routes.

Using the analysis of need and views from practitioners working in the county borough, it is clear that Blaenau Gwent and in particular the Upper Ebbw Fach Valley has many issues to address. That said, there are a number of key opportunities for the area given its location and rich industrial heritage.

Issues and Opportunities across Blaenau Gwent

Issues

- Since the demise of heavy industry the towns and villages are seeking to redefine themselves
- Throughout Blaenau Gwent there are poor quality buildings, some dating from Victorian times, other more modern construction of the 1960s.
- Lack of visitor accommodation and provision
- Poor maintenance of public land and highways
- Lack of business confidence in the area
- Lack of community pride
- Poor signage to towns, villages and places of interest
- Low levels of income
- Smoking, poor diet and obesity rates are significantly higher than the Wales average
- Blaenau Gwent has the highest rates of hospital admissions for alcohol related conditions in Wales, with particularly high rates for women
- Adult population has a high rate of excess alcohol consumption
- Respiratory disease remains high, and death rates do not appear to be reducing.
- Poor mental health (mild level of severity)

Opportunities

- Dualling of A465 trunk road

- Rich industrial heritage
- Varied landscape

Issues & Opportunities across the Upper Ebbw Fach Valley

Issues

- Limited variety of housing type
- The area has 16% of the county borough identified empty properties
- Brynmawr town needs to vary the range of shops in the town, saturation of take-away establishments
- Lakeside development – transfer of business away from the town centre
- Juxtaposition of relatively affluent ward (Brynmawr) and one of most deprived (Nantyglo)
- Nantyglo & Blaina have high levels of deprivation
- Ageing population

Opportunities

- Good road communication to A465
- Rich industrial heritage with significant tourism potential
- Close to Blaenavon World Heritage Site
- Varied landscape setting
- Community based green spaces e.g Parc Nant-y-Waun, Trevor Rowson Park, Cwmcelyn Lakes
- Cycle route link to Sustrans route
- Brynmawr is gateway town
- Integrated Childrens Centre Blaina
- Lakeside development – attracting more shoppers to Brynmawr
- Listed buildings refurbishment for Salem Chapel in Blaina, Boiler House in Brynmawr
- Brynmawr has the only cinema in the county borough
- Development of Nantyglo Regeneration Action Plan
- Development opportunity on current Welsh School site

Policy Overview

The actions that need to be taken to improve the Lower Ebbw Fach Valley and the county borough as a whole are captured in a number of strategies and plans. These actions are a result of individual need assessments and consultation. Many of these plans will influence the outcomes for the HARP.

The key documents and a brief summary are set out below.

Blaenau Gwent Community Plan 'proud past, bright future' 2005-2009

The Community Plan sets out the vision of making Blaenau Gwent a better place to live, work and visit. The Plan aims to develop new ways of working by building partnerships with local communities, voluntary and business sectors, the local authority and other agencies, in order to change the area and meet community needs and ambitions.

The Community Plan identifies 7 key themes under which are aims, key projects and a monitoring body. The key themes are:

- Regeneration
- Health, Social Care and Well-being
- Lifelong Learning
- Environment
- Housing
- Transportation
- Culture and Sport

The Community Plan provides the overarching strategic framework for all other plans and strategies for the Local Authority. Local Development Plans should express, in appropriate land use planning terms, those elements of the Community Plan that relate

to the development and use of land, provided that they are in conformity with national and international policy obligations.

The LDP will play an important role in assisting the delivery of many of the projects contained in the Community Plan.

Local Development Plan

Currently at the Preferred Strategy stage the LDP sets out a series of objectives which will form the basis of future policy development. They are not listed in any order of priority.

- Develop Ebbw Vale as the main service and retail hub for the County Borough.
- Create a network of vibrant district/local centres (secondary hubs), well linked to the main hub of Ebbw Vale, that provide a range of local services and facilities for their local communities.
- Support and deliver the regeneration of the former Ebbw Vale Steelworks ensuring that the benefits are spread across the borough.
- Increase economic activity through facilitating diversification of the economic base and support for the manufacturing sector by encouraging specialisation.
- Provide a range of employment sites and premises to meet the needs of businesses of all sizes in manufacturing, the technological and service sectors.
- Stem out-migration and attract people to the area to create a more balanced population.

- Provide a range of types and tenures of new homes to meet local housing needs and attract people to the area.
- Improve accessibility to services through the promotion of sustainable modes of transport, particularly, public transport, walking and cycling.
- Improve education levels and skills through supporting infrastructure development of the Learning Campus, new schools and integrated education services, including life-long learning.
- Create an accessible network of green open spaces and high quality leisure infrastructure to promote participation in sport and active recreation to improve health and well-being.
- Capitalise on the unique landscape and natural heritage, foster sustainable tourism and promote community pride.
- Protect, enhance and manage the diversity of the biodiversity resource of Blaenau Gwent through the identification of ecological corridors
- Raise the standard of design to improve the quality of the physical and natural environment; and protect and enhance Blaenau Gwent's historic and cultural environment.
- To minimise further climate change contributions and mitigate its predicted effects on the County Borough.

Health Social Care and Well-Being Strategy Healthier Future 2 (Draft)

Healthier Future II is the second Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategy for Blaenau Gwent, developed in partnership between Blaenau Gwent Health Board, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and its partners. The strategy sets out a continued commitment to working together to improve the health, social care and well-being of all people living and working in Blaenau Gwent.

The Strategy sets out 18 local priorities for action, many of which are based on working arrangements and implementing existing strategies in terms of older people, young people, maternity care, mental health, learning disabilities, substance misuse, diabetes and coronary heart disease.

Draft Children and Young People's Plan for Blaenau Gwent 2008-2011

The draft Children and Young People's Plan is a 3-year plan, which sets out how all agencies in Blaenau Gwent working with children and young people will cooperate to achieve common goals, to improve outcomes for children and young people. The plan articulates the Partnership's vision, and details the actions it will take, in order to bring about changes in children and young people's lives. The vision for the Partnership is: "Working together we will strive to ensure that all children and young people will be supported to achieve their full potential".

The Plan represents a new way of thinking about how local services need to change in order to ensure that all children and young people achieve the Welsh Assembly Government's seven core aims by ensuring that young people:

- Have a flying start in life

- Have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities
- Enjoy the best possible health and be free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation
- Have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities
- Are listened to, treated with respect and have their race and cultural identity recognised
- Have a safe home and community which supports physical and emotional well-being
- Are not disadvantaged by poverty.

Blaenau Gwent Regeneration Strategy (Draft 2008)

The Regeneration Strategy identifies an overarching aim and six principles along with proposals to translate them into action. The overarching aim is to 'Share Benefits of Regeneration Widely' and this will be achieved by ensuring that the benefits of regeneration are shared by all those in Blaenau Gwent. The six principles are:-

Principle 1: Diversify the Economy and Develop Manufacturing
Build on the diversification of the local economy by promoting and supporting new areas of opportunity, and developing the strengths of Blaenau Gwent's manufacturing industry.

Principle 2: Boost Business Support and Enterprise
Scale up targeted business support and promote enterprise and self-employment as a means of growing economic output and raising activity rates.

Principle 3: Promote Learning and Modern Skills
Create a lifelong learning culture with a commitment to improving basic and essential skills through to participation in higher education for all.

Principle 4: Focus Investment in key Communities

Focus investment in Blaenau Gwent's key communities so that they are more desirable places to live, learn, and work.

Principle 5: Maximise the Ebbw Vale Opportunity County Wide
Maximise the value of the Ebbw Vale opportunity by linking the Corus site and the town centre and by ensuring that other towns and villages can benefit from the transformational opportunity.

Principle 6: Develop the Transport Infrastructure
Invest in key projects to enhance external connections and to support accessibility throughout the Borough.

Blaenau Gwent Local Housing Strategy – Quality Streets (2007-2012)

The overall aim of the Local Housing Strategy is to:-

“provide a strategic framework to ensure that everyone in Blaenau Gwent has the scope and choice to attain a home that is decent, affordable and is situated in a healthy and safe environment.”

The strategy sets key housing objectives across tenure for the period to 2012, together with an action planning framework for the achievement of those objectives. The objectives are based around:

- Tackling Inequality
- Land Use Planning Framework
- Affordable Housing
- Private Sector Renewal Policy
- Sustainable Development
- Energy Efficiency
- Homelessness
- Supporting people
- Housing Management
- Community Regeneration

Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2001-2006)

The Blaenau Gwent Local Biodiversity Action Plan translates national government targets on biodiversity into targets which can be delivered locally. It includes lists of nationally and locally important species and action plans on how to conserve them. Species for which action plans have been prepared include: Great Crested Newt; Skylark; Grey Partridge; Lapwing; Pearl-bordered Fritillary Butterfly; Brown Hare; Otter; Pipistrelle Bat; and the Lesser Horseshoe Bat. Habitats for which action plans have been prepared include: Calcareous Grassland; Dwarf Shrub Heath; Blanket Bog; Mesotrophic Lakes; Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures; Upland Mixed Ashwoods; Upland Oakwood; and Wet Woodland.

South East Wales Regional Transport Plan

The South East Wales Regional Transport Plan vision is:

“to provide a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system for South East Wales that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and protects the environment; where public transport, walking, cycling and sustainable freight provide real travel alternatives.”

SEWTA's priorities build on this vision, tackle problems and set the general direction of the Plan:

- To improve access to services, facilities and employment, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling.
- To provide a transport system that increases the use of sustainable modes of travel
- To reduce the demand for travel.

- To develop an efficient and reliable transport system with reduced levels of congestion and improved transport links within the SEWTA region and to the rest of Wales, the UK and Europe.
- To provide a transport system that encourages healthy and active lifestyles, is safer and supports local communities.
- To reduce significantly the emission of greenhouse gases and air pollution from transport.
- To ensure that land use development in South East Wales is supported by sustainable transport measures.
- To make better use of existing transport system.

The Brynmawr Urban Design Strategy and Masterplan was commissioned by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and the WDA in September 2001. The Lakeside Park Development Masterplan having been produced in 2004.

The Masterplans have, and continue to, guide the regeneration of Brynmawr through economic, commercial and housing development and urban environmental improvement

The major challenge to be implemented is the integration of the Lakeside development and the adjoining commercial development into the town centre. This will involve acquisition of key strategic town centre sites which will result in the relocation of the Stagecoach bus station and NMC company.

Nantyglo Regeneration Action Plan: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has recently commissioned the preparation of a Nantyglo Regeneration Action Plan aimed at focusing on investment in the area over a five year period.

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

The policy framework is dominated by county borough level plans, with few plans or strategies at a sub unitary level. In ten out of the sixteen wards Community First Action Plans have been prepared.

The Steering Group felt that part of the consultation exercise should focus on what the outcomes for the HARP areas should be. These outcomes would be based on the needs identified from existing plans and strategies and from the analysis of need as part of the HARP preparation.

Firstly the plans that have a direct contribution to make to the themes under the Turning Heads strategy were determined via a mapping exercise. The plans used were:

- Children's and Young Peoples Plan
- Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategy
- Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy
- Blaenau Gwent's Draft Regeneration Strategy
- Living Independently in Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century
- Safer Blaenau Gwent Partnership Strategic Assessment 2008-09
- Turning Heads – A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020
- Communities First Action Plans
- Blaenau Gwent 2010

The Community Plan was not included in this list as it was considered out of date.

Secondly, common outcomes were identified from all these plans and a form of words agreed to capture the actions that individual service areas, partner organisations are seeking via their individual plans. The outcomes for each HARP area were broadly similar

therefore there was no difference in the consultation undertaken in each HARP area.

Each strategic outcome is a statement for what should change in the area in order to address some of the needs/issues in the area. Fourteen draft strategic outcomes were agreed and these formed the basis of discussions at the four workshops. Participants were asked to add/amend the draft strategic outcomes and to suggest new outcomes if they felt that there were major omissions.

The strategic outcomes presented at the workshops area as follows:

In three years time:

1. Adults will have fewer barriers to participation in employment, training and education

In all areas of Blaenau Gwent we have many adults of working age who are not economically active due to real or perceived barriers, such as access to child care, transport issues, levels of basic skills, etc.

2. Young people will have increased educational awareness and aspirations with more taking part in education, training and employment

In all areas of Blaenau Gwent we have too many young people who drop out of education, and fail to enter either employment or training for employment. We also have too many young people who do not reach their full potential in terms of levels of education, income and job satisfaction.

3. There will be more employment opportunities in the service sector including tourism and leisure

While manufacturing remains an important part of the employment in Blaenau Gwent, many more jobs and services could be provided through an expansion of service industries, particularly tourism and leisure. At present there is recognised under-provision of hospitality services and considerable opportunity for local entrepreneurship.

4. The natural environment will be more widely used for recreation and leisure

Blaenau Gwent has a diverse array of green space both within and outside of our towns and villages. This green space is currently undervalued and underutilised. Improving sympathetic usage by both visitors and local people will create opportunities for mental and physical health improvement and enjoyment.

5. More people will be physically active

Blaenau Gwent has high levels of people with chronic illnesses, many of which are partly caused by obesity and lack of physical activity. Increasing physical activity will help people to become physically and mentally healthier and feel better.

6. People will be eating more fruit, vegetables and salad

Blaenau Gwent has high levels of people with chronic illnesses, many of which are partly caused by an unhealthy diet. Increasing fruit, vegetable and

salad consumption will help people to improve their diet and reduce the risk of many common illnesses.

7. People will drink alcohol more responsibly, in less risky quantities

Many people in Blaenau Gwent drink large quantities of alcohol, damaging their health and contributing to antisocial behaviour and community safety issues. There is a real need to address these issues, while retaining the community and mental health benefits undoubtedly associated with some traditional drinking environments.

8. People's knowledge of how to manage their money has improved

Debt and high interest loans are a major concern for many people, leading to both stress and further reductions in income. Local initiatives such as basic financial skill training and credit union facilities can help.

9. There is a greater mutual respect and understanding within the community

This needs to be between groups of all kinds which make up communities – different age groups, public and professional, etc to reduce the real and perceived fear of crime and sense of lack of control over people's own lives and destinies which is detrimental to mental health.

10. There are fewer derelict, neglected buildings or patches of land

These are unsightly, encourage vandalism and antisocial behaviour, and detract from a sense of pride and community within an area.

11. Information on and support for participating in organisations that impact on community life will be more widely available.

Several local surveys have shown that people are often unaware of services and opportunities in their own neighbourhoods, and are unaware of information and opportunities to become involved.

12. There will be increased support for families and young children

Many of the issues which contribute to problems in Blaenau Gwent are deep rooted, and passed on through generations. Helping the next generation to lead healthier lifestyles, have better mental health, and achieve their full potential in life will be important in regeneration of the area.

13. Schools will be a valued resource for communities that lack other facilities and used out of school hours for a range of activities for all ages

Community focussed schools have been shown to help tackle issues such as child poverty and regeneration by reducing some of the barriers to education and training within their communities

14. There will be more businesses set up and managed by the community

Social enterprise and other forms of community business can be successful in both addressing local needs and in providing training and employment for local people.

Following suggestions from the workshop, changes were made to the strategic outcomes and three additional ones added.

The final list is as follows:

1. Adults of all ages will have fewer barriers and more opportunities to participate in employment, training, retraining and education
2. Young people will have increased educational awareness and aspirations with more taking part in education, training and employment
3. There will be more training and employment opportunities in the service sector including tourism and leisure
4. The natural environment will be protected, enhanced and more widely used by all for recreation and leisure.
5. More people will be physically active
6. People will be eating a balanced and healthy diet which includes more fruit, vegetables and salad
7. People will be better informed and able to improve their own physical and mental well being by eating more healthily, smoking less and enjoying alcohol more responsibly

8. People's understanding of their finances will be improved, leading to better financial management
9. There is greater respect, awareness and understanding within the community promoting community integration and pride
10. Due to either demolition, landscaping or high quality renovation schemes there are fewer derelict, neglected buildings or patches of land
11. There are more opportunities to access information and support from organisations that impact on community life
12. There will be increased support and practical measures for families and young children
13. Schools will be a valued resource for communities that lack other facilities and used out of school hours for a range of activities for all ages
14. There will be more businesses set up and managed by the community
15. There will be more support for starting and sustaining local businesses
16. There will be increased support for and take up of local sustainable energy and recycling initiatives
17. More varied cultural activities and facilities are available aimed at all ages, residents and visitors

Section 3: Projects

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The Council and its partners are investing in the town of Brynmawr to strengthen its position as a thriving market town and gateway to the area. WAG DE&T, Blaenau Gwent Local Health Board and others have significant investment plans for Brynmawr.

The challenge for all partners in this HARP area is to ensure that the area capitalises on its proximity to established tourism markets and exploits its unique environmental and heritage opportunities. The outlying areas of Nantyglo and Blaina need to benefit from the investment in Brynmawr and in their own right contribute to the regeneration of the Upper Ebbw Fach valley.

The area could offer residents and visitors alike a wide range of services and activities. Brynmawr provides the economic heart and Nantyglo and Blaina the base for recreation and leisure activities. In Nantyglo alone can be found a Golf Course, Leisure Centre with swimming pool, 2 fishing lakes, bowls club, all weather walks through varied landscapes, sections of cycleways. These are of variable standard and investment needs to take place in the marketing and upgrading of facilities to increase appeal locally and regionally.

HoV is invited to target its funding to assist the Council and others in this task.

Work has already started. In Brynmawr, BGCBC and WAG DE&T have redeveloped the former Semtex site into a retail park now occupied by a range of multiple stores. Further work is focussing on the area between this new retail park and town centre. The development of the retail park has had an impact on some shops in the town centre and the council through the work of the HoV funded Town Centre Manager is seeking to improve the appearance of the

town centre, attract shoppers, attract new shops and provide assistance to existing businesses.

Improvements to the public realm in Brynmawr have taken place over a number of years including an increase of parking provision in the town and artwork.

The major challenge to be implemented is the integration of the Lakeside development and the adjoining commercial development into the town centre. This will involve acquisition of key strategic town centre sites resulting in the relocation of the Stagecoach bus station and NMC factory.

The retail and housing development at Lakeside withstanding, Nantyglo has not seen any noticeable regeneration activity in the recent years. There is recognition by many agencies that this area faces major challenges particularly relating to the children and young people and that intervention is required. In 2008/09 United Welsh Housing Association in partnership with the Council is constructing a Extra Care Sheltered Housing complex on the former Hafod Dawel residential home site providing modern well equipped homes for older people to live independently. GAVO in partnership with the council is pursuing the construction of a Community Resource Building in the heart of the village on the former site of the recently demolished Garnfach school site and the Coedcae Community Centre is getting a new lease of life with new owners and investment through the Blaenau Gwent District Scouts. The preparation of the Nantyglo Regeneration Action Plan proposes a way forward for tackling a number of long standing issues relating to the physical fabric of the village whilst other initiatives through Communities First, BGCBC, LHB will tackle some of the community and social issues.

A new Welsh school for the county borough is to be constructed in Nantyglo as the current provision in Brynmawr is considered

inadequate to meet current educational standards. The relocation of the school will free up land in the centre of Brynmawr, the afteruse of the site is under consideration.

Blaina now benefits from the establishment of a Town Centre Management Service covering the town. Events and activities have been held and are planned. Further town centre regeneration opportunities have been identified and have started to be implemented.

The HoV Programme is supporting the environmental improvement of two key strategic sites located on Lower High Street. An attractive area of community open space will be provided as the southern gateway to the town.

An area has been identified to accommodate a town centre market and events area which when implemented will contribute to the vitality of the town centre. Funding for the implementation is being sought.

There are a number of community led initiatives being developed such as the Ebbw Fach Trail, Salem Chapel refurbishment, Waun Pond, Pump House restoration. The Ebbw Fach Trail Group has been formed by local residents involved in improving their local environment with the aim of seeking to improve access and interpretation of the landscape and development of biodiversity interest at Parc Nant y Waun, Waun Pond and Trevor Rowson Park.

WHAT'S PLANNED?

The challenges for this area are great and varied. The Council and its partners acknowledge that regeneration action needs to be targeted at specific initiatives which tackle issues relating not only to improving places but improving the lives of the people of this area.

Project Assessment Criteria

The assessment process has been agreed by the Steering Group. The assessment was based on the information provided in the proformas which was of variable quality.

Stage 1: From the workshops held in the Upper Ebbw Fach Valley Area a number of strategic outcomes were arrived at. These strategic outcomes have been used as the first stage of the project assessment process. Projects were required to meet at least 5 of the strategic outcomes before progressing to the next section.

Stage 2 of the assessment process scored the projects against deliverability, community support, leverage of funding and environmental impact.

The result of this assessment process has been the determination of priority projects, reserve projects and projects needing further development. Details of all the projects are set out below for your information together with the score. The maximum that a project could score is 20 points. The priority projects are shown on Plan 1.

Priority Projects

An attractive and well-used natural, historic and built environment

Brynmawr Town Regeneration: The projects proposed as part of the overall regeneration of the town centre will make a lasting and sustainable contribution to the town.

a. Market Hall & Market Square:

The Market Square is a strategically important area to upgrade and is located at the end of the recently refurbished Beaufort Street.

Proposed works include facade works to the Market Hall, improved public realm, pedestrian walkways, new street furniture, improved street lighting and fencing.

b. Community Links

To provide improved pedestrian links to and from the residential areas of Lakeside and Winchestown to the town centre and from the retail development to the town centre

c. Eastern Edge, Blaina Road

This area currently presents a very poor approach to the town centre. Proposals include tree planting and associated landscaping works, artworks and public realm enhancements

d. Tree Replacement Scheme

It is inevitable that trees will need to be removed for safety or other reasons. This project seeks to replace these unsafe, dying or dead trees with appropriate new trees to ensure continued presence of trees through the HARP area.

e. Hermon Community Garden

Nantyglo lacks a sense of focus and a space that belongs to the community. The Trustees of the Hermon Burial Ground have indicated their willingness for their ground to be used for a new community garden. This space could incorporate hard space, play space, flower beds, seating and a pedestrian through route. This area is directly opposite the former Garnfach school site where a new community resource building is proposed, together these projects will greatly improve this area and provide a focus for the village.

A vibrant economic landscape offering new opportunities

f. Physical Infrastructure & Environmental Improvements:

Physical regeneration support helps assist existing and new business create or safeguard jobs.

g. NMC Factory & Bus Depot

These two sites are between the town centre and the Lakeside developments and have been identified as prime sites for redevelopment creating:

- Retail development linked to the existing town centre
- Car parking and ease of access to the town centre
- Pedestrian and cycle routes
- Landmark building at Blaina Road roundabout
- Improved Lake Road junction

Market Square, Blaina

This project is environmental enhancement on Queen Street/Hope Street resulting in the establishment of a market site to regenerate and significantly improve the physical appearance of the area. The current site is dilapidated, unsightly and underused by the public. The scheme will include resurfacing, landscaping, lighting, seating and creation of an attractive open community space to accommodate a regular outdoor market and a host of community benefiting town centre businesses, residents and visitors.

A well educated, skilled and healthier population

Community Resource Centre, Nantyglo

The Centre will provide flexible space for agencies to provide necessary services to the residents of Nantyglo through Flying Start, training courses, lifelong learning provision etc, a meeting place in the form of a cafe and an outside area. The Centre will become the office base for GAVO and Nantyglo CFP bringing employees and their spending into the local shop and post office in

the village. The centre will be run as a social enterprise and offer training opportunities in areas such as office administration, catering and marketing.

Welsh Medium Childcare Centre, New Welsh School Site, Nantyglo:

To provide a purpose built, high quality, child friendly accommodation with some features for school age children delivered through the medium of Welsh. The group currently operates from the Ysgol Gymraeg Brynmawr which is due to relocate to the new school site in 2010. The childcare group wishes to relocate with the Welsh School if funding can be identified. The playgroup currently work closely with the Welsh school providing early years childcare, after school, holiday care and children's evening clubs. The playgroup offers a wrap around childcare with the school's Sali Mali nursery providing an invaluable facility for working and training parents. This service is made possible with co-location on the same site. There is room on the site for this facility which would be a demountable building.

Revitalisation of Coedcae Centre

Nantyglo & Blaina District Scouts are relocating to the Coedcae Community Centre and they plan to develop the centre as a base for local and regional scout troops but also for residential training courses and outdoor activities with the inclusion of bunkhouse accommodation. To manage the facility the Scouts are seeking funding for a part time administrator.

An appealing and coherent tourism and leisure experience

Hafod Arch

This scheduled Ancient Monument, once part of the dram road linking Brynmawr with Clydach Ironworks is in need of urgent action. Temporary holding works have been carried out but

permanent works to refurbish the arch and enhance the user experience and view from the A465 road.

Waun Pond, Nantyglo:

The Friends of Lakeside was set up to regenerate Waun Pond, refurbish the historic Pump Tower and create a sustainable recreation area. The pond is already stocked and community projects in conjunction with Gwent Police have involved young people in fishing activities. Plans for the Pump Tower include a snack/cafe facility, interpretation and wildlife observation area. Increased access to the area is important and plans include provision of decking around the lake providing fishing platforms suitable for able bodied and disabled. Friends of Lakeside are investigating with Blue Lakes and other fishing areas the feasibility of a joint marketing initiative to attract visitors to the area.

Banna Park Pavilion:

The pavilion in Nantyglo is no longer suitable for today's uses and needs to be extended and refurbished to ensure that it can provide facilities for local football, rugby, bowls and other activities. As part of the refurbishment, BGCBC will seek to increase activity looking at youth provision and increasing the use of the MUGA. Activities such as coach education programmes and physical activity classes are also planned.



Blaenau Gwent

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Regeneration Division - Business Resource Centre

Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate

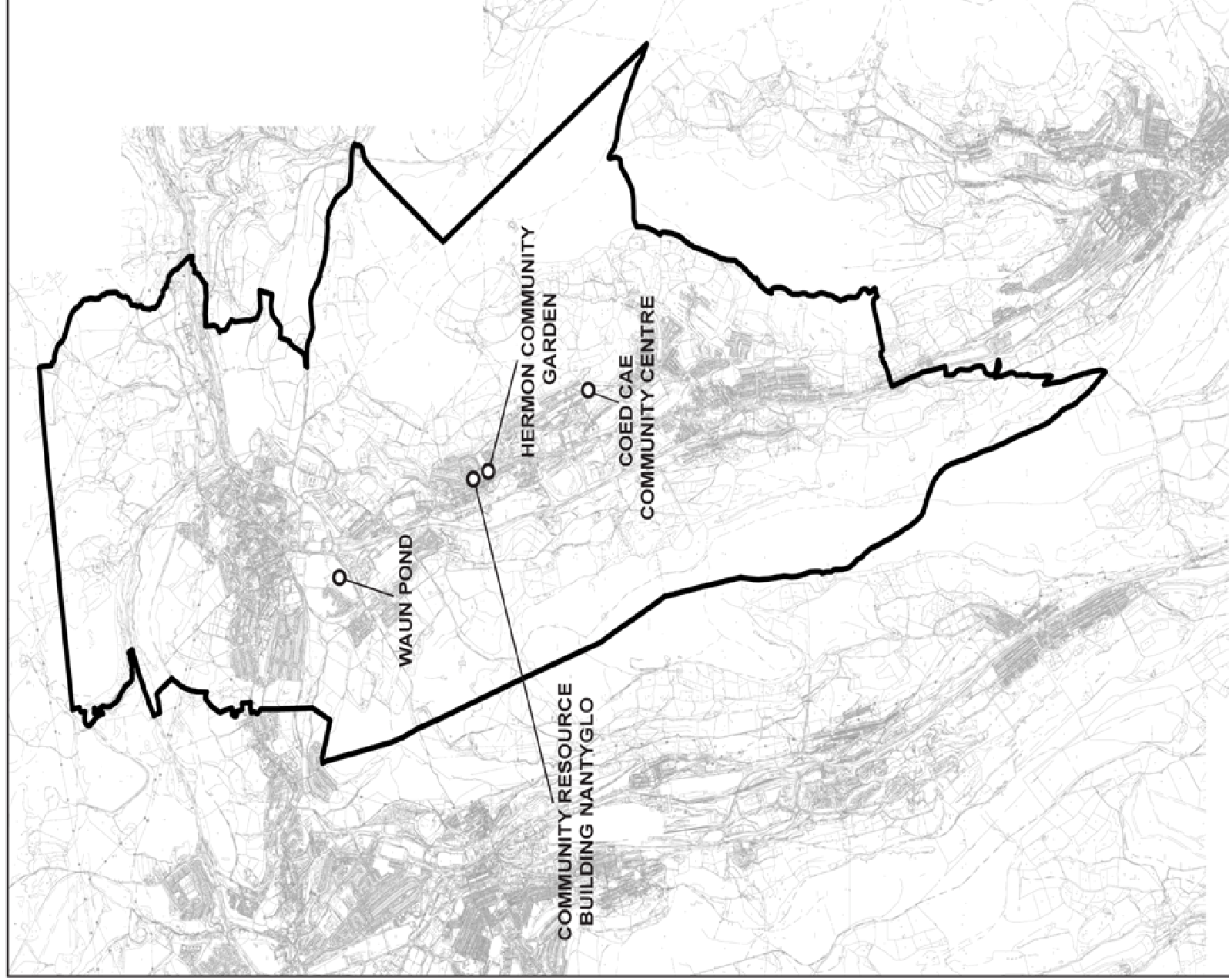
Tredeggar, Blaenau Gwent, NP22 3AA



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Title : Location of Priority Projects

Scale 1 : 15000



Reserve Projects

An attractive and well-used natural, historic and built environment

Garn Cross Comprehensive Improvement, Nantyglo

This scheme includes the afteruse of the site created following the demolition of the Social Club. The scheme will enhance the 'sense of place' and image of Nantyglo, pedestrian realm improvements, improvements to off street car parking.

A vibrant economic landscape offering new opportunities

Incubation Phase 2: The Lakeside Business Centre close to the town of Brynmawr already operates a 'pre-incubation' facility where people with business ideas for products and services are assisted from a very early state to the point where actual businesses are formed. This project would seek to set up a 'second stage' facility where businesses can be supported. To ensure a flow of successful businesses, it is crucial that support is available in the form of a Business Incubation Development Officer.

A well educated, skilled and healthier population

An appealing and coherent tourism and leisure experience

Chartist Information & Visitor Centre, Blaina:

The people of Nantyglo and Blaina had an important role in Chartist history and the Nantyglo and Blaina Town Council are proposing to refurbish the Salem Chapel, creating an exhibition area dedicated to

Chartism, re-creation of the Royal Oak beer house; an important meeting place for those involved in the Chartist uprisings and provision of space for community events as well as space for use of the Chapel for religious purposes. The Town Council also plans to construct a memorial to the Chartists in another area of the Town with appropriate interpretation. There is interest from throughout the UK in Chartism and these projects seek to capitalise on that interest and attract visitors to the area and to make residents aware and proud of their heritage. HLF monies are being sought for this project.

COUNTY BOROUGH WIDE PROJECTS

Priority Projects

Throughout the process of preparing the HARPs, one of the issues that constantly arises is that of county borough wide bids and how these can be assessed across 4 HARP areas. In each HARP we have included all the county borough wide priority and reserve projects.

Woodland Management Plans

To ensure that Blaenau Gwent woodlands are managed in accordance with WAG's Woodlands for Wales strategy ensuring that over the next 40 years Wales becomes renowned for its high quality woodlands. The valley woodlands are quite unique in that they are readily accessible on foot to a large number of people.

Protect, Progress & Promote:

Building on recent work on protecting and promoting the heritage of Blaenau Gwent, this project proposes further interpretation with site

signage, artistic engagement pieces, interpretation of key sites and involvement in regional campaigns.

Borough Wide Valleys Cycle Network

The Council, as part of SEWTA (South East Wales Transport Alliance) in partnership with Sustrans is seeking to deliver the Valleys Cycle Network. Coupled with existing routes, this additional 277 mile network of walking and cycle routes will create 855km of routes regenerating former tramways, railways and canal towpaths to link together the main towns with key employment sites, bus and railways stations and visitor attractions. Part of the funding would be for the creation of the Ebbw Fach trail.

Healthy Neighbourhood Retailing – Catering for the needs of families

This project would provide support to businesses committed to promoting the health and well-being of children, young people and families. This could include reducing under age sales of alcohol, tobacco, promotion of healthy food and drink, create breast feeding friendly environments and become a Health Start outlet for pregnant women and families on low-income. Members of the assessment panel felt that there is merit in exploring a joint venture between the project sponsor of this project and the retail and service sector grant along with colleagues in Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Local Health Board.

Community Focused Schools Extension

This project will expand out of hours learning and services in schools. The out of hours learning would be accredited under the 'Children's University' award scheme. The project would seek to promote health and nutrition and improve school grounds for community uses.

Reserve Projects

Pre-Incubation Grants:

This grant regime complements the development of the pre-incubation facility as described above. Grants up to a maximum of £500 will assist with any necessary research and development activities prior to becoming an operating business. Although available in association with the pre-incubation facility, businesses across the county borough will be able to access the facility and grant scheme.

Indigenous Retail & Service Sector Grant:

To provide financial assistance to the indigenous retail & service sector businesses in the towns and villages. This grant will complement the Commercial Improvement Grants available for external works by providing grants towards marketing, internal fixtures and fittings, staff training and ICT. An influx of 'peripherally placed' retail outlets such as Asda, Tesco & Morrisons have had a profound negative impact on trade of the smaller indigenous retail businesses. Linked with the physical regeneration of the town centres this grant scheme is seen as key to safeguarding and developing growth of retail and service sector businesses. Results from a previous grant scheme (2003-2006) and evidence collated from local retailers show a significant demand. EU funding does not cover retail and service sectors.

Borough Wide Bus Corridor Improvements

To provide new and upgraded bus corridor infrastructure to complement the existing bus services and further promote use of public transport as a means of travel. This would include new bus shelters, raised boarding platforms, information displays, signing and improved access to stops

Raising the Tourism Potential of Blaenau Gwent:

In 2010 Blaenau Gwent will host the National Eisteddfod at The Works site in Ebbw Vale. In the two years leading up to the festival the Council needs to maximise tourism potential and upgrade some

existing facilities. The project proposes the development of a key headliner event – Abertillery Blues Festival – as well as the development of a specific event strategy for the county borough as recommended in the Blue Sail Event Strategy document commissioned by CRT for the HoV region. The Abertillery Blues Festival is mainly held at Abertillery Park. This project seeks to refurbish the Park to include an upgrade to the changing facilities, road access and utilities for camping facilities. Revenue support is sought to develop the Blues Festival and other cultural events.

Establishment of a Business Crime Partnership

The aim of this project is to establish a Business Crime Partnership and appoint a Business Crime Reduction Manager for the benefit of a town centre communities. The manager would address high fear of crime, undesirables taking over street furniture, high levels of shop theft, perception of the town centre being out of control at night and a vicious circle of degeneration.

Projects Requiring Further Development

These Projects were not assessed as the panel felt that more information was needed on how these projects would be delivered.

Improving The Health of Children & Parents Through Prevention:

The health of the children and young people is an issue and this project seeks to work directly with young children and their parents at the earliest opportunity – even at the antenatal stage. Existing programmes will be developed and new ones planned addressing healthy eating, active living & exercise, dental hygiene, children's play and speech and language programmes. For example antenatal support is available to parents at Nevill Hall hospital in Abergavenny not in the county borough. The programme will seek to accredit teenage mums with OCN Food & Nutrition and where appropriate

provide advice and guidance on using this accreditation in the workplace.

Raising Young People's Aspirations

This project seeks to improve emotional well-being and raise aspirations in children, young people and families by organising a series of events and training for practitioners who work with children and young people. Emotional well-being is vital for underpinning young people's ongoing development and ability to participate effectively in society.

Improving Sexual Health & Relationships in Young People

Building on the success of current Reach Out for Sexual Health project, this project will increase work to reduce teenage conceptions, continue to provide condom card schemes and raise young people's awareness of sexual health issues. This work forms a vital component of the education and personal development of young people.

Community Transport for Blaenau Gwent.

To undertake an audit into the current needs of communities, to develop targeted transport schemes, co-ordination of existing transport resources and to stabilise and build capacity of the existing transport sector to deliver a targeted transport programme.

Green Open Space

Blaenau Gwent has been found to be grossly deficient in the basic provision that no person should live more than 300 metres from their nearest area of natural greenspace. Through BTCV projects (submitted separately) Family Employment Initiative and Green Exercise this could be achieved. Therefore a joint bid between BGCBC and BTCV is recommended.

Family Employment Initiative: This initiative is designed to engage families in targeted areas using local green space as a catalyst to

economic activity. It is part of HoV employment and training strategy. It demonstrates that community led development of green space which is in close proximity of neighbourhoods has a positive social and well being affect on families living nearby. Up to three sites could be improved per annum at an average cost of £7,500 per site.

Green Exercise – Site Improvements

The project will engage with people who are inactive due to long term health limiting conditions and encourage and support them in gaining an active lifestyle and ensuring they are ready to look for employment whilst receiving specialist support of through the project. The project will also offer a service to employers to assist their staff to commute actively, use company grounds for physical exercise. Up to 4 sites per annum could be improved at an average of £5,000 per site.

Listed below are county borough projects which we feel should be assessed outside of the HARP process and perhaps could be considered as initiatives to be delivered across the HoV area not just Blaenau Gwent county borough.

Children's University:

This project rewards out of school hours learning in a variety of settings and is developing at various speeds throughout the HoV area. Development of this project results in people having access to a comprehensive range of academic and vocational education and learning opportunities and schools promote health, nutrition and fitness and offer out of hours learning. Kids College operates 5 to 8 yr olds, Children's University accredits 9 to 13 yrs and the Youth University operates for 14 to 19 yr olds. To develop this initiative in the county borough a full time administrator is required. This initiative would be suitable for roll out across the HoV area supported by a team of administrators.

Head for Arts

This is a collaboration between four local authorities providing a community arts service across the eastern HoV area as a medium for stimulating regeneration. The projects aims to nurture and encourage the creative talent of participants and to embed arts and crafts skills into communities so that they can develop their own high quality community events and activities. This application for funding is to enhance the programme of activities with the purchase and maintenance of a van to transport the specialised equipment and materials to the various communities.

Section 4: Community Engagement

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

BGCBC established an internal officer working group whose initial focus was the preparation of the HARPs. Through this meeting it was suggested that a series of meetings were held with our partners to explain what HARPs are and to discuss how best to work together. To this end three meetings were arranged. Firstly with all Communities First Co-ordinators in the county borough, the second with 'third sector' organisations such as the two Development Trusts, BTCV, Community Enterprise Wales, Housing Associations, GAVO. The third meeting involved our 'Strategic Partners' – LHB, NPHS, Gwent Police, CCW, WAG.

Simple proformas were designed internally to capture project information in a consistent format. These proformas were made available through existing networks. In some area of the county borough a further exercise was undertaken to capture all potential HARP projects. EVAD and GAVO jointly contacted organisations operating in the Ebbw Fawr Valley to inform them about HARP and to invite suggestions for projects.

The Council has sought to undertake a comprehensive programme of consultation and engagement. A Steering Group was established to support and guide independent consultants, Lynn Wetenhall Associates, who were commissioned to support the Council and its partners through this consultation process.

This Steering Group consisted of 10 officers from a range of public and voluntary organisations as listed below:

- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
- British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
- Communities First
- EVAD
- GAVO

- Heads of the Valley Programme
- National Public Health Service/Local Health Board
- Welsh Assembly Government

The Steering Group agreed that a series of workshops should be held, one in each HARP area. The purpose of these workshops would be to:

- Inform attendees about HARPs from a HOV and BGCBC perspective
- To discuss and comment on strategic outcomes for the area
- To comment on the process and how to continue engagement in the process

The Steering Group met with the consultants on 2 occasions prior to the workshops to agree content. A sub group of the Steering Group also meet to draft the strategic outcomes, the main focus of discussion at each workshop. For more information on Strategic Outcomes see section 2.

The invitations to the workshops were collated by the Council from information supplied by council officers, members of the Steering Group and Communities First officers. The workshops, which were half a day, were well supported and attendance ranged from Tenants and Residents Associations to BGCBC Councillors.

The workshops were held on:

- Upper Sirhowy Valley, Thursday 6th November
Attendees 20
- Lower Ebbw Fach Valley, Friday 7th November
Attendees 25
- Upper Ebbw Fach Valley, Thurs 13th November
Attendees 20

- Ebbw Fawr Valley, Friday 14th November
Attendees 24

Overall, the feedback received from all the workshops was extremely positive. Delegates were pleased to be made aware of and involved in the process. At these workshops ideas for future projects were also captured. These provide an early indication of projects that may need to be included in the HARP in 2010 onwards and contact details of those persons who wish to be kept informed of progress of the HARPS.

Through discussion at the Steering Group it was agreed that the workshops were not the appropriate setting for discussing the assessment process for the projects. Therefore it seemed appropriate for the cross sector Steering Group to undertake this role. The Steering Group met again on two occasions to agree the assessment process and then to carry out the assessments. BGCBC Executive endorsed this process following approval of a report in November 2008.

During the assessment process when a member of the Steering Group had an interest in a particular project the interest was declared and no further part in the assessment of the project took place.

This has been an extremely transparent process and one that all Steering Group members were signed up to. Thanks should be given to all those members of the Steering Group who provided days of their valuable time to ensure that this process resulted in Holistic Area Regeneration Plans that are truly a shared agenda for regeneration in Blaenau Gwent.

Section 5: Planned Expenditure

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Project	Number of Strategic Outcomes	Stage 2 Score	HoV Funding Required						
			2009/10 Capital	2009/10 Revenue	2010/11 Capital	2010/11 Revenue	2011/12 Capital	2011/12 Revenue	TOTAL
Community Resource Building, Nantyglo (<i>Nantyglo Action Plan</i>)	7	10	200,000		800,000				1,000,000
Brynmawr Town Centre Regeneration	6	9	1,920,000		1,312,500		715,500		3,948,000
Welsh Medium Childcare, Nantyglo	5	9	120,000	6,600		6,600		6,600	139,800
Heron Community Garden (<i>Nantyglo Action Plan</i>)	5	7			100,000				100,000
Coedcae Community Centre	5	12		18,500		18,500		18,500	55,500
Waun Pond	8	17	100,000						100,000
Banna Park Pavilion(<i>Nantyglo Action Plan</i>)	2	13	497,200						497,200
Market Square, Blaina	5	7	100,000						
TOTAL			2,937,200	25,100	2,212,500	25,100	715,500	25,100	5,940,500

RESERVE PROJECTS

Project	HoV Funding Required								
	Number of Strategic Outcomes	Stage 2 Score	2009/10 Capital	2009/10 Revenue	2010/11 Capital	2010/11 Revenue	2011/12 Capital	2011/12 Revenue	TOTAL
Garn Cross Improvements (<i>Nantyglo Action Plan</i>)	3		300,000		500,000		500,000		1,300,000
Incubation Phase 2	2		50,000	45,000	5,000	45,000	5,000	45,000	195,000
Nantyglo Countryside Links (<i>Nantyglo Action Plan</i>)	3			80,000		100,000			180,000
Chartist Information & Visitor Centre	4		68,000		12,000				80,000
TOTAL			418,000	125,000	517,000	145,000	505,000	45,000	1,755,000

PROJECTS REQUIRING MORE DEVELOPMENT

Project	HoV Funding Required							
	Number of Strategic Outcomes	Stage 2 Score	2009/10 Capital	2009/10 Revenue	2010/11 Capital	2010/11 Revenue	2011/12 Capital	2011/12 Revenue
Blaina Community Resource	Needs feasibility study							

COUNTY BOROUGH PRIORITY PROJECTS

Project	Number of Strategic Outcomes	Stage 2 Score	HoV Funding Required						
			2009/10 Capital	2009/10 Revenue	2010/11 Capital	2010/11 Revenue	2011/12 Capital	2011/12 Revenue	TOTAL
Healthy Neighbourhood Retailing	7	12	12,000	800	12,000	800	12,000	800	38,400
Head for Arts	6	18	17,850	4,000	6,500	4,000	6,500	4,000	42,850
Protect, Progress and Promote	5	12	82,000	29,000	182,000	29,000	82,000	29,000	433,000
Woodland Management Plans	6	13	37,500	2,500	37,500	2,500	37,500	2,500	120,000
Childrens University	5	9	1,000	16,000	1,500	17,000	2,000	18,000	55,500
Cycle Network	5	9	500,000		750,000		750,000		2,000,000
Community Focussed Schools	10	16	25,000	5,000	25,000	5,000	25,000	5,000	76,500
TOTAL			675,350	57,300	1,014,500	58,300	915,000	59,300	2,766,250

COUNTY BOROUGH RESERVE PROJECTS

Project	HoV Funding Required								
	Number of Strategic Outcomes	Stage 2 Score	2009/10 Capital	2009/10 Revenue	2010/11 Capital	2010/11 Revenue	2011/12 Capital	2011/12 Revenue	TOTAL
Pre Incubation Grant	4		5,000		5,000		10,000		20,000
Retail & Service Sector Grant	4		70,000		175,000		210,000		455,000
Bus Corridor Improvements	2		100,000		100,000		100,000		300,000
Improving Sexual Health	4		10,000	20,000	10,000	20,000	10,000	20,000	90,000
Business Crime Partnership	2		1,000	24,600		25,300		26,000	76,900
Raising Tourism Profile	4		135,000	75,000		75,000		75,000	360,000
Promoting the National Eisteddfodd	3			25,000		25,000			50,000
TOTAL			321,000	144,600	290,000	145,300	330,000	121,000	1,351,900

COUNTY BOROUGH WIDE – PROJECTS REQUIRING MORE DEVELOPMENT

Project	HoV Funding Required							
	Number of Strategic Outcomes	Stage 2 Score	2009/10 Capital	2009/10 Revenue	2010/11 Capital	2010/11 Revenue	2011/12 Capital	2011/12 Revenue
Emotional Resilience	Needs more development on delivery							
Community Transport	Needs more development on delivery							
Health of Children	Needs more development on delivery							
Green Open Space	Joint bid of Access to Green Open Space and BTCV projects – Green Exercise & Family Employment Initiative recommended Approximate cost £100,000							

Monitoring and Evaluation

Project Monitoring

It is envisaged that the HoV Programme will undertake monitoring on the individual projects. If BGCBC becomes aware of potential underspend, HoV will be notified as soon as possible. It is hoped that any underspend released from a project will be recycled into another project in that same HARP area.

Information from the HOV Programme Team will be useful in evaluating and revising the plan for 2010/11 funding.

Evaluation

From the workshops held in 2008, a database of contacts has been set up of those people who wished to be kept informed and involved in the development of HARPs.

Information was also captured at these workshops on what participants felt worked well with the 2008 process and what worked less well. These comments will then form part of evaluation of the 2008 process and will inform the process that will be put in place for 2009.

WELSH INDEX OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION 2008: UPPER EBBW FACH VALLEY

	Overall (Wales Rank out of 1896)	Income (Wales Rank out of 1896)	Employment (Wales Rank out of 1896)	Health (Wales Rank out of 1896)	Education & Skills (Wales Rank out of 1896)	Housing (Wales Rank out of 1896)
Lower Super Output Areas						
Brynmawr 1	967	998	880	385	1130	1724
Brynmawr 2	264	307	231	314	195	1689
Brynmawr 3	625	749	603	294	952	804
Nantyglo 1	244	218	139	546	284	1333
Nantyglo 2	273	448	217	102	278	1207
Nantyglo 3	154	140	100	505	189	879
Blaina 1	373	437	150	793	426	1174
Blaina 2	404	466	343	251	322	957
Blaina 3	536	704	474	541	464	1203

Six out of the nine LSOAs in this area are within the top 25% of LSOAs, indicating high levels of overall deprivation. All the LSOAs in Nantyglo are in this category and further analysis shows that within Nantyglo there are real issues of income, employment, health and education and skills deprivation. Other areas such as Blaina 1 and Brynmawr 2 also exhibit particular deprivation issues.

The WIMD 2008 shows that the LSOA Nantyglo 3 covering the southern end of Nantyglo ranks high for employment deprivation. This LSOA also has a high level of income deprivation.

(NB: Figures in RED denotes a rank within the top 25% quartile)