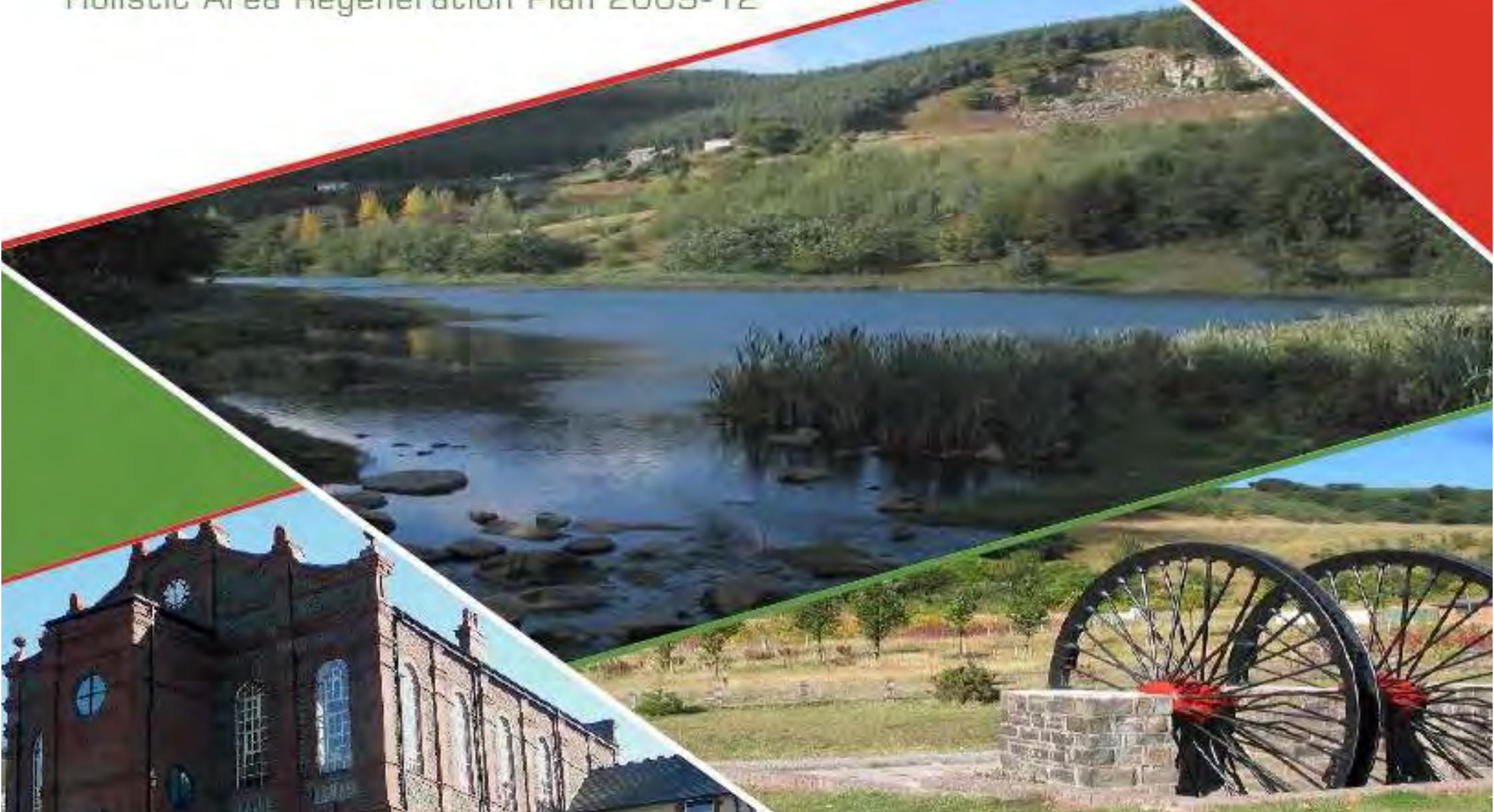


SD38

Blaenau Gwent

Lower Ebbw Fach Valley

Holistic Area Regeneration Plan 2009-12



Draft Lower 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

INTRODUCTION

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.

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 enclosed with this HARP. 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 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

BACKGROUND

The Lower Ebbw Fach Valley area had a population of 16,272 in 2006 – a decrease of 6% since 1991. It comprises the main settlement of Abertillery, together with Aberbeeg, Cwmtillery, Llanhilleth and Six Bells.

Main Settlements Roles & Functions 2006

Hub: Abertillery town, ranked 38th out of Wales' retail centres, is the hub of this HARP area. It contains over 125 commercial units, an Open Learning Centre, a three Rink Indoor Bowls Centre, and an award-winning Sport and Day Centre Complex offering state of the art fitness equipment and a swimming pool for adults and learners.

Residential areas: Aberbeeg, Cwmtillery, Llanhilleth, Six Bells, Brynithel

Employment areas: The industrial estate and business parks located at Cwmtillery, Roseheyworth and Llanhilleth play an important employment role. Roseheyworth Business Park, in particular, is a high quality development.



Local Transport network

The A467 runs north-south along the length of the district. It is a good modern road as far as Abertillery.

External Linkages

East. There are no direct links to Northern Torfaen in the east.

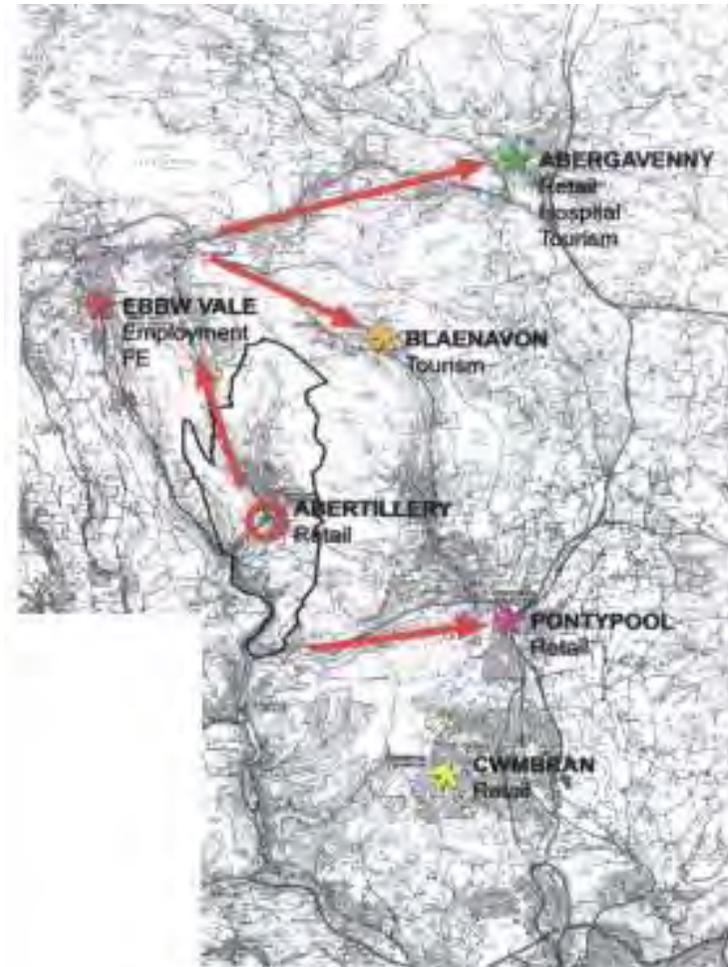
West. There are no direct links to the Ebbw Valley in the east.

South. Abertillery is accessed from the south by the A467 which connects to the A472 at Crumlin and continues east towards Pontypool, and west to Newbridge and Blackwood.

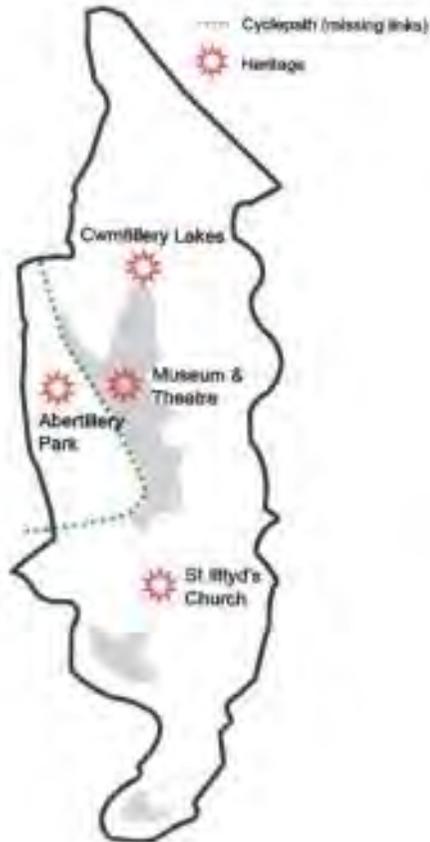
A winding minor road from Aberbeeg connects Llanhilleth to the major employment concentration at Oakdale/Penyfan in Caerphilly county borough.

The Ebbw Valley Railway Line was opened in early 2008 with a station at Llanhilleth. A Rail link to Abertillery may be reopened in the future.

North. The A467 links this district to the A465 at Brynmawr and thence to Abertillery in the east and Ebbw Vale and Merthyr Tydfil to the west .



Tourism and potential contribution to the Valleys Regional Park



The area has the potential to make a major contribution to the Valleys Regional Park. The rugged mountain landscape is a potential haven for outdoor activities and there is further potential to develop this opportunity for tourism.

Landscape: The hillsides are dramatic and magnificent views are obtained from minor roads and long distance footpaths along the ridgeways. Cwmillery, set in a quiet valley, is home to picturesque lakes and rambling farmland and is a popular area for walking.

Biodiversity: The Ebbw Fach river runs from Brynmawr in the north through Abertillery and Six Bells before joining the Ebbw Fawr at Aberbeeg. The river provides an essential wildlife corridor and important amenity resource.

Parks: Abertillery Park is an attractive 20-acre park on the outskirts of the town. The park provides the opportunity for local residents and visitors to appreciate the scenery and local sporting activities.

Cycle paths: there is a planned cycle route for the Ebbw Fach Valley.

Heritage: In the 1920s Abertillery was the second largest town in Monmouthshire, second only to Newport. At this time its population was an incredible 40,000 due to the expansion of the coal mining industry. There are many architecturally attractive 19th century buildings rising to three and four storeys set against a backdrop of steeply sloping and wooded hillsides. Abertillery has an important Victoria arcade.

The ancient church of St. Illtyd sits high on the hillside above Abertillery. This beautifully restored 12th century building retains many original features and was the winner of the Prince of Wales Award and the Civic Trust Award. It is used regularly for live

performances and is open to visitors on summer Sunday afternoons.

Abertillery and District Museum contains a collection of artefacts, documents and photographs dating from the Stone Age through to the Industrial Revolution and more recent history. The museum is housed in the former historic Victorian Metropole Theatre.

Footpaths: There are two heritage trails available. One trail begins at Foundry Bridge, and the other commences at Cwmtillery.

Events: Abertillery Community Theatre has become renowned for the quality of its blues music, attracting performers from all over the world. An annual Blues Festival is held in Abertillery Park which attracts UK and international artists.

The recently refurbished Metropole – The MET – provides a high quality cultural and conference centre in the heart of the town.

Accommodation: The only accommodation available in this area is a Guest House located in Cwmtillery.

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

- Cwm Merddog Woodlands

A number of candidate Local Nature Reserves have been proposed for the County Borough area. In the Lower Ebbw Fach Valley area, these are: Roseheyworth Community Woodlands (Abertillery), Cwmtillery Lakes (Abertillery) and Six Bells Colliery Site (Six Bells)

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 St Illtyd Castle Mound 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 Lower 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 72,300 in 1991.

In 2006, 24% of the HARP population was over pensionable age (60+) the same as the county borough. Conversely the young

people's population (ages 0 –19) was 26% in the Lower 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 (see Appendix 1):

All of the four wards in this area are Communities First areas as a result of their high levels of deprivation. Eight out of the eleven 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 Llanhilleth are in the top 25% of deprived LSOAs and further analysis shows that there are real issues of income, employment, health and education and skills deprivation.

Cwmtillery 1 and Llanhilleth 1 rank in the top 100 for Employment deprivation and Cwmtillery 2 is 84th for Health deprivation. Cwmtillery 1 is the most deprived LSOA in this HARP area.

Cwmtillery 3, Six Bells 1 and Abertillery 2 has a high level of poor housing relative to the other LSOAs in this HARP area.

Children:

There has been a consistent increase in the percentage of babies born with low birth weight (LBW) 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 include mothers smoking during pregnancy, poor diet and excessive alcohol and drug consumption during pregnancy. Sub unitary research shows that LBW rates were slightly worse in Cwmtillery and Abertillery wards.

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. 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 the ward of Abertillery has high levels of violent crime and criminal damage and crime and disorder on a Sunday which relates to drinking habits.

Abertillery also has a high number of calls for noise nuisance (engines revving, car stereos, scramblers and off road bikes).

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 areas 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 Lower Ebbw Fach Valley has many issues to address. That said, there are a number of key opportunities for the area given its location and varied natural landscape.

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

- Rich industrial heritage
- Varied landscape

Issues and Opportunities in the Lower Ebbw Fach Valley

Issues

- Anti social behaviour in Abertillery town centre
- Limited variety of housing type
- Cwmtillery and Llanhilleth have high levels of deprivation
- Limited retail properties
- Poor public realm in Abertillery

Opportunities

- Redevelopment of the Six Bells Colliery site for housing and amenity space
- Ebbw Fach River & Ebbw Fach Trail
- Cwmtillery Lakes area
- Rich and varied landscape
- Redeveloped Llanhilleth Institute bringing disparate communities together
- Historic Arcade in Abertillery
- Cultural activities – Abertillery Blues Festival
- Four active Communities First Partnerships, championing excellent grass roots projects

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. LDPs 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 offer 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 (South East Wales Transport Alliance) 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.

Abertillery Regeneration Strategy: Powell Dobson Urbanists were appointed in September 2005 to prepare a strategy for Abertillery town. This has guided development to date and future plans for the town.

Former Six Bells Colliery Site Development Brief: A development brief for the redevelopment of the former Six Bells colliery site is being developed. The site is to include housing, a new primary school and substantial areas of open space.

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, including HoV are investing in the town of Abertillery to strengthen its position as a thriving town serving the communities of the Lower Ebbw Fach valley. Through recent public sector investment, the private sector is starting to invest in town centre property development for retail purposes.

The challenge for all partners in this HARP area is to ensure that the area capitalises on natural setting and builds upon the cultural and heritage activities that are already being developed. The outlying areas of Cwmtillery, Six Bells, Aberbeeg, Brynithel, Llanhilleth and Swffrydd need to benefit from the investment in Abertillery and in their own right contribute to the regeneration of the Lower Ebbw Fach valley.

The area could offer residents and visitors alike a wide range of services and activities. Abertillery provides the economic heart and the outlying settlements provide a focus for leisure activities through cycling, mountain biking, walking, fishing to name but a few. Many of these activities and their supporting facilities such as accommodation need to be developed and to be marketed locally and regionally.

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

Abertillery has changed from a thriving town centre with lots of shops and a large area of activity to a declining town centre with a diminishing number of shops still covering the same area. Powell Dobson Urbanists were appointed in September 2005 in order to develop a strategy that would address the issue of Abertillery's spiral of economic decline. Extensive audits of the issues, previous studies and meaningful engagement with the communities of

Abertillery through detailed consultation were pursued as a means of developing a regeneration strategy for the town that is both realistic and deliverable.

The aims and objectives of the strategy are to improve business viability by encouraging inward and indigenous investment, encourage property owners to improve vacant or poor quality premises and to help sustain and improve the commercial area of Abertillery. This will eventually lead to an increase in economic growth of the town centre making it a more attractive place for both shoppers and office workers.

The resultant strategy addresses the issues and opportunities to make a lasting and sustainable contribution to the town. The key areas for action are:

- Revision of the towns traffic management (including bridge renewal)
- Streetscape enhancements for Church Street and Somerset Street.
- Grants and guidance for shop front improvements
- Provision of a Town Centre Manager.
- Development of tourism through catering for mountain bike activities
- Creation of a youth enterprise zone (to develop young entrepreneurs).
- Introduction of a new car park at the northern gateway to the town with provision for 127 car parking spaces.
- Property acquisition on Tillery Street and Mitre Street.

Work has already started on the regeneration of Abertillery. HoV & WAG funding is supporting

- the construction of a new bridge, known as Foundry Bridge which supports one of the main routes into the town

- a Town Centre manager who has already made an impact in the town with regular events such as a continental market and improving the cleanliness and appearance of the town centre

Other recent projects in **Abertillery** include the refurbishment of the Metropole which now provides a modern vibrant facility for conferences and cultural activities. The completion of a nearby car park will only improve this facility. The Metropole is a key venue in the annual Abertillery Blues festival which features artists from around the world and brings in approximately 1,000 people into the area. Providing suitable accommodation for visitors will be crucial in capitalising on the benefits in terms of income spent in the area and job and training opportunities for residents.

Cwmtillery: The boundaries between the settlement of Cwmtillery and Abertillery are not well defined with the two settlements merging. Cwmtillery is further up the valley and as a consequence is a more isolated and remote. The major opportunity for Cwmtillery is its beautiful natural setting. The lakes are owned by Dwr Cymru and through the Communities First Partnership an active group Cwmtillery Lakes Environmental Action Network (CLEAN) has been established.

Six Bells: In 2003 the former colliery site in Six Bells was reclaimed, the last colliery site to be reclaimed in the county borough. The site has the potential to provide a site for high quality housing, a new primary school and open space with biodiversity and heritage interest. It is a well used resource by the community, particularly dog walkers and a recent project to construct walking routes and provision of seating and BBQ areas will increase its use by residents of Six Bells and Aberbeeg. Further interpretation and celebration of its former use is being pioneered by the community based Six Bells Regeneration Team through the commissioning of a Miners Memorial and a wider heritage project.

Part of Six Bells has been declared a Housing Neighbourhood Renewal Area. Substantial improvements have been, and continue to be made, to properties in the Renewal Area and through a programme of acquisition and demolition new public spaces for seating and car parking have been created. Further plans for a village square which will provide a much needed focal point in this linear village are currently being hampered by a number of property owners who are unwilling to sell key buildings and funding for CPO cannot currently be identified.

As part of the renewal area, a derelict public house has been purchased by BGCBC and a community business Six Bells Regeneration Ltd (supported by Six Bells Community First Partnership) is currently seeking funding to convert this building into a training restaurant and office accommodation. This combination of uses was the result of a feasibility study carried out by Community Design Gwent.

Llanhilleth is the most southerly of settlements in the County Borough. The village has seen much investment in the last few years with the construction of a new school and refurbishment of the Llanhilleth Institute providing accommodation for the local GPs, library, café, weddings and conferences. Funding for these works has been via WAG and EU. Plans are underway for a village square.

WHAT'S PLANNED

The challenges for this area are great and varied. The Council and its partners acknowledges 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 Lower Ebbw Fach Valley Area a number of strategic outcomes were arrived at (see Section 3 for more information). 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 stage.

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 requiring 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 location of some of the priority projects are shown on Plan 1.

Below are summaries of all the projects submitted, more information on each is available from BGCBC.

Priority Projects

An attractive and well used natural, historic and built environment

Abertillery Town Centre Regeneration: This package seeks to revitalise the fabric of the town providing a more attractive and vibrant town centre experience. The projects proposed will make a lasting and sustainable contribution to the town.

a. Foundry Square:

Environmental streetscape enhancement is required to the northern gateway to the town centre to consolidate the environmental quality as there is currently no sense of arrival in Church Street.

b. Church Street/Somerset Street Enhancements:

Significant streetscape works are required to these streets to enhance the environmental quality of the public realm. Design options are currently being explored following workshops with key stakeholders.

c. Metropole Square:

A new civic space is proposed between Somerset Street and Market Street which will require the demolition of properties to create an exciting new public space. The space will create a focus for the town, redistribution of retail floorspace in the town, tackle poor quality buildings along Market Street, make the town more inviting and attractive and highlight and celebrate Abertillery's grandest civic and commercial buildings.

d. Property Acquisition Market St/Somerset St:

The following properties need to be acquired to complete the Metropole Square and to provide a pedestrian link between Market Street and Somerset Street. – 14-17 Market Street and 13-19 Somerset Street

e. Traffic Management Proposals:

Improved pedestrian linkages from out of town supermarket need to be improved to ensure the long term viability of the town. Proposals include pedestrian management and safe crossings, improved surfaces, landscaping, CCTV and improved lighting.

f. Prominent Building Property Renovation:

There are a number of key buildings in a state of disrepair and require grant-aid for external refurbishment – Former Trinity Church, Former Carmel Chapel, Somerset St Redevelopment, Former Liberal Club, 51 Church St and 18-19 Market Street

g. Town Centre Multi-Storey Car Park:

A replacement for the existing multi storey car park is required to comply with modern standards and DDA requirements. The existing building is detrimental to the public realm and is an intimidating environment for users particularly in the evening and is a hot spot for anti-social behaviour due to its poorly illuminated enclosed areas.

h. Artwork, Foundry Bridge:

The proposed artwork will be a gateway feature to enhance the northern gateway to the town centre, depicting Abertillery's industrial past and will be constructed from locally sourced materials.

Six Bells Environmental Enhancement

To improve a number of key areas within Six Bells with hard and soft landscaping schemes. Consultation with the community has resulted in a number of designs for ironwork. Community pride in the area has been raised as a result of the ongoing work carried out under the Housing Renewal Area and these schemes build upon the good work carried out to date.

Doorsteps – Community Open Space Improvements, Cwmtillery:

This project seeks to regenerate derelict and unused neighbourhood areas involving local people through the Tillery timebank project and 'Tools 4 ur Future' project and BTCV projects. Implementation of this project will promote social cohesion and health and wellbeing as well as enhancing the local environment. Six areas have been identified.

The project will seek to progress individuals to a BTCV project whereby individual can gain formal and informal qualifications.

Heritage Project, Former Colliery Site, Six Bells

To depict areas of heritage and environmental interest, including a memorial to the mining disaster in 1950 which claimed the lives of 45 men and boys. The project will link Six Bells to Aberbeeg through walkways and signage through to the new railway station at Llanhilleth. This project complements the Ebbw Fach Trail and the Council's overall development of the former colliery site as a high quality site for housing, education and recreation.

Six Bells Community Hall

This project aims to develop and improve the existing facilities at the community centre through the creation of a wildlife garden and seating area at the rear of the centre. The community centre is being utilised by a wide variety of agencies and provides a centre for local community groups.

A vibrant economic landscape offering new opportunities

Coach & Horses Community Business, Six Bells

Re-development of a derelict public houses into a social enterprise providing training opportunities through a training restaurant, employment opportunities through the restaurant and employment of a manager and administrative staff, office accommodation for local public sector agencies and others. This project has resulted from a feasibility study and with the support of the Wales Co-op

local people have formed a company limited by guarantee to progress this business venture. Both capital and revenue contributions are sort for the refurbishment and conversion of the building for its new use and for the employment of a manager and part time support in the first three years.

A well educated, skilled and healthier population

Abertillery Youth Centre:

The centre has previously benefited from HoV funding to refurbish one end of the building. However the main hall and annex are still in need of improvement. This centre will feature as one of the fixed sites which will provide a base for the new youth provision being planned for Blaenau Gwent and provide a dance/fitness studio and storage area.

An appealing and coherent tourism and leisure experience

CALON – Cwmtillery Lakes

The CALON (Cwmtillery Active Lifestyles Outdoors Nexus) project seeks to create jobs and training opportunities through a community –led social enterprise focused on the environmentally friendly development of the Cwmtillery Lakes area and upper Cwm Tyleri area. The project will provide an eco centre on the site of the current Jim Owen pavilion, a family friendly mountain biking trail around the lakes and reservoir area and the creation of a cycle trail link from Abertillery to Cwmtillery to connect the Lakes area to Abertillery town centre and into the proposed Ebbw Fach trail. In addition appointment of a part-time reserve warden is sought.

Tyleri Valley Heritage Trails:

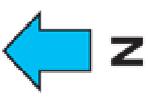
The Cwmtillery and Abertillery Community First Partnerships are supporting the activities of Cybertyleri and other local projects to

develop the area’s tourism potential. The major objective of these trails is to offer a coherent, attractive, community-led heritage tourism experience for visitors to the area through the provision of walking trails that interpret the areas cultural and natural environment in a way that not only attracts visitors to the area but equally importantly generates local pride and interest. The project will produce 5 new heritage trails, dedicated website, walk leaflets and a schools information pack. This project has originated from the CF Action Plan. Assisted by Sports Council for Wales funding some development of walks and walk training has taken place. A cross party working group has been set up to develop the trails and associated activities.



Blaenau Gwent
Cynghor Meirionnydd Iard
County Borough Council

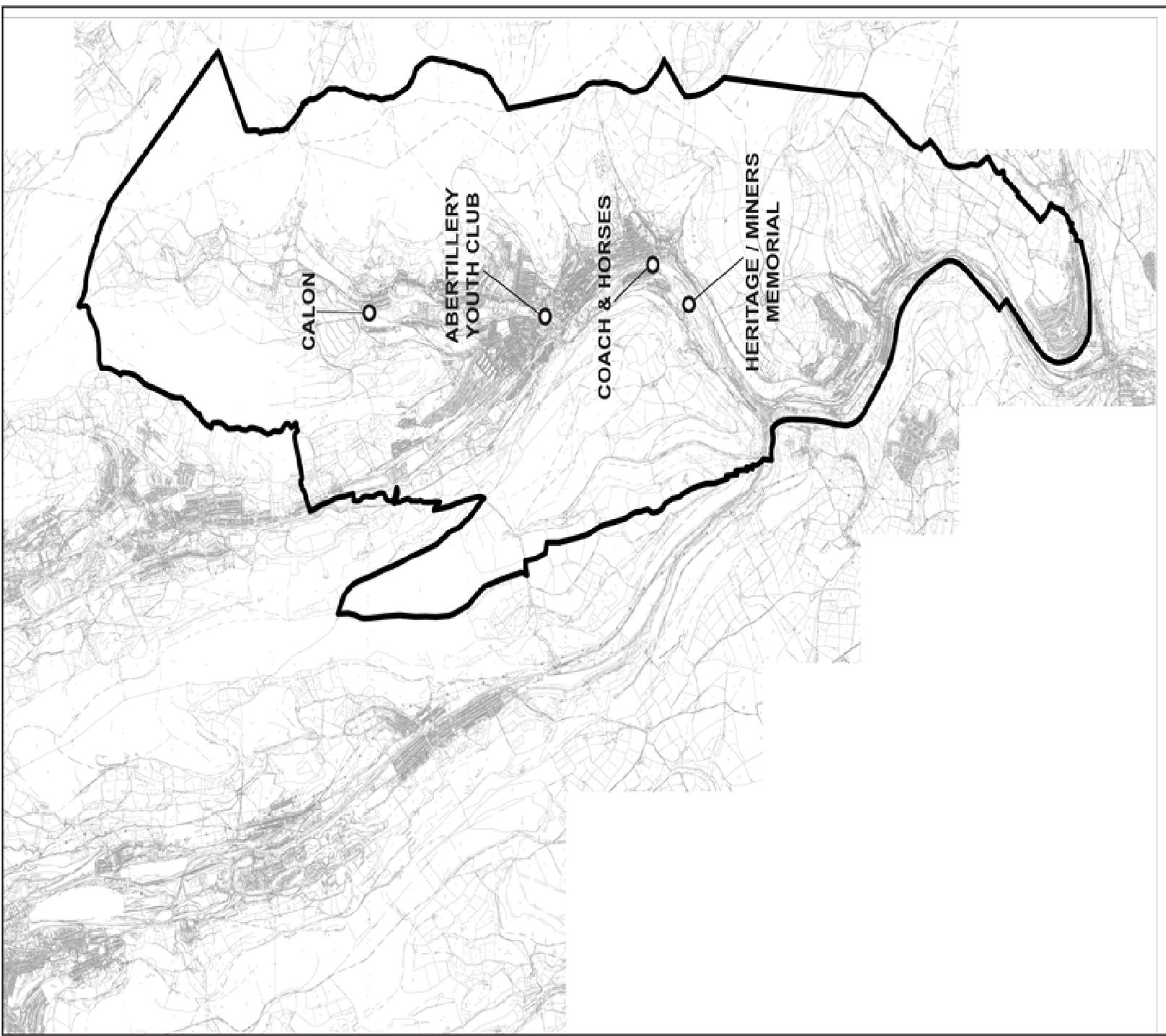
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Regeneration Division - Business Resource Centre
Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate
Tredegar, Blaenau Gwent. NP22 3AA



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Title : Location of Priority Projects

Scale 1 : 15000



Reserve Projects

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

Turkey Trot, Six Bells

Upgrading a well used pedestrian link between Six Bells and Abertillery, known locally as the Turkey Trot. Improvements will include seating, landscaping and appropriate lighting.

A vibrant economic landscape offering new opportunities

No projects identified

A well educated, skilled and healthier population

Community Computer Centres – Swffrydd & Brynithel

This project would provide bespoke, secure and high quality IT facilities in community buildings in Swffrydd and Brynithel. The centres would be linked to BGCBC's network and become part of the adult education system, opening up opportunities for accessing a wide range of learning resources via Moodle and digital brain. Tutor support would be arranged through the Blaenau Gwent Community Learning Partnership. Funding is sought for refurbishment, IT equipment and a small amount of revenue.

AVIATOR:

Arael View and Rose Heyworth estates were built in 1970s and 1950s respectively and largely make up LSOA Cwmtillery 1 which was 142 in the WIMD 2008, making it the most deprived LSOA in the Ebbw Fach Valley. Communities First are working with residents to support them in tackling issues that affect their lives and prospects, particularly around health, education and job and

training prospects. A meeting venue is required for parents and children and young people and to provide a venue for outreach support. A modular building is proposed on land leased by BGCBC.

An appealing and coherent tourism and leisure experience

Brynithel Sport and Community Centre:

Following a fire 2003 the previous community building had to be demolished. The rebuilding of the community facility will rehouse local sports groups and provide space for wider community uses. The centre is located in Brynithel but also serving the communities of Llanhilleth and Abertillery. Facilities will include changing facilities, toilets, kitchen, community hall, car parking, outdoor spectator facilities. Some funding is available from BGCBC, this would not be sufficient to provide a good quality multi use facility, additional funding is therefore sought.

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.

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.

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.

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 shows a significant demand. EU funding excludes 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 More 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 the 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 for 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 HARP. 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.

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. For more information on Strategic Outcomes see section 2.

An invite list was collated by the Council from contact details 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 local groups such as 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. Contact details of those persons who wish to be kept informed of progress of the HARPS was also captured.

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. BGCB 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
Abertillery Town Centre Regeneration	6	9	1,000,000		1,025,000		650,000		2,675,000
CALON	10	13	892,000	17,000		17,000		17,000	943,000
Coach & Horses, Six Bells	10	13	200,000	15,000		15,000		15,000	245,000
Tyleri Valleys Trails	6	9	25,600		35,750		40,523		101,873
Doorsteps	6	12	7,500		7,725				15,225
Six Bells Environmental Enhancement	6	12	70,000		20,000				90,000
Six Bells Heritage/Miners Memorial	5	13	150,000		100,000				250,000
Six Bells Community Hall	6	13	20,000						20,000
TOTAL			2,365,100	32,000	1,188,475	32,000	690,523	32,000	4,340,098

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
AVIATOR	4		100,000						100,000
Brynithel Sports Centre	3		378,900		220,000				598,900
Community Computer Centres	3		11,000	1,000	11,300	2,000		2,700	28,000
Turkey Trot	4		152,000						152,000
TOTAL			641,900	1,000	231,300	2,000		2,700	878,900

PROJECTS REQUIRING FURTHER 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
Development of a Bowling Green	Needs further investigation							
Development of a Community Centre	Possible incorporation into CALON project							
Car Park provision at rear of Gwern Berthi Road	Needs further investigation							
Road safety improvements, Aberbeeg, Brynithel, Llanhilleth	Needs further investigation							
Environmental Enhancement, Llanhilleth railway station	Needs further investigation							
Environmental Improvements, Aberbeeg	Needs further investigation							

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 form part of evaluation of the 2008 process and will inform the process for 2009.

APPENDIX 1

WELSH INDEX OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION 2008: LOWER 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						
Cwmtillery 1	142	107	90	370	248	1286
Cwmtillery 2	387	567	529	84	472	630
Cwmtillery 3	498	477	443	369	551	271
Abertillery 1	459	630	428	160	631	809
Abertillery 2	342	392	243	657	357	355
Abertillery 3	1122	1034	600	1272	954	1003
Six Bells 1	253	344	136	280	351	467
Six Bells 2	933	935	586	647	916	1106
Llanhilleth 1	172	229	89	164	220	1437
Llanhilleth 2	231	304	154	489	176	1270
Llanhilleth 3	402	467	212	943	253	994

The WIMD 2008 ranks the LSOA Cwmtillery 1 and Llanhilleth 1 as areas with a high level of employment deprivation. Cwmtillery 2 has an unusually high rank for health deprivation. Overall this HARP area has a high level of poor housing in Cwmtillery 3, Six Bells 1 and Abertillery 2. These are areas of private sector housing and the residential area covered by Six Bells 1 is currently the subject of a Housing Neighbourhood Renewal Area.

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