

ES12.3



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Local Development Plan

Hearing Session 12: Community and Social Life

Wednesday 4th July 2012

Examination 2012

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Submission

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SESSION 12 COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL LIFE (open space, play, community cohesion)

Introduction

This Statement has been prepared by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in order to help facilitate appropriate discussion at the Community and Social Life Hearing Session. The Paper provides a response to the questions set by the Planning Inspector (Mr Vincent Maher).

Where the Council does not intend to provide any additional written evidence the Inspector's attention is directed to the relevant part of the Evidence Base, which in the view of the Council addresses the matters raised. The paper will not repeat evidence previously submitted for consideration.

The Council's detailed response to the representations received to Community and Social Life are contained in the Report of Representations (**SD07b**).

Council Response to Inspector's Questions (questions in bold)

<p>1. Does the Plan provide an appropriate policy framework for considering the provision for and planning of social and community infrastructure to address the changing needs of the population?</p>

Yes. It is considered that the plan provides an appropriate policy framework for considering the provision for and planning of social and community infrastructure to address the changing needs of the population. The Inspector's attention is directed to **SD49**: Community Facilities Background Paper.

The Community Facilities Background Paper identifies the current provision of community facilities within Blaenau Gwent, the future requirements of facilities within the plan period and the proposed locations and allocations that will be included within the Plan (**SD01**).

Chapter 9.0 Delivery and Implementation of the Plan (**SD01**, pages 111 – 138) identifies the infrastructure needs of the allocations including leisure, educational and community facilities. These needs have been identified through education and leisure considering the amount of development in a particular ward and the timeframe for the completion of the development. Where appropriate, the necessary infrastructure has been identified.

<p>2. Does the Plan make adequate provision for sheltered housing and care centres for the elderly?</p>
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The Council's evidence on the provision for sheltered housing and care centres for the elderly is set out in:

- **SD49:** Community Facilities Background Paper (pages 21-24)
- **SD43:** Updated Affordable Housing Background Paper (pages 31 – 33)

To summarise, Blaenau Gwent has developed a 'Living Independently in the 21st Century' Blaenau Gwent Older Peoples Strategy (**SD70**) to ensure a more co-ordinated approach to service provision for older people in the 21st century. The strategy proposes a move away from traditional forms of care such as residential / nursing care and home care.

Blaenau Gwent has the largest number of care homes in Wales (in terms of its size) with a total of 741 beds. These are divided into:

- General Nursing 198
- EMI 124
- Residential 306 (independent 142, LA 164)

The strategy proposes a move away from standard residential care and proposes the closure of 4 of the 5 local authority homes, with the reinvestment in specialist long term residential provision.

Two extra care sheltered housing schemes have been constructed at:

- Land at College Road, Ebbw Vale (HC1.6) – 41 units
- Hafod Dawel Site, Nantyglo (H1.10) – 44 units

The Council are also proposing that a third extra care sheltered housing scheme to accommodate 40-50 units be located at the former Greenacres residential care home (housing allocation H1.3).

Rebuttal – Nantyburch Senior Citizens Association (Representor No: 61)

Nantyburch Senior Citizens Association object to the closure and subsequent demolition of Cartref Aneurin Bevan given that the Local Development Plan has not been adopted. The decision to close the residential care home was taken by Social Services in light of the 'Living Independently in the 21st Century' Blaenau Gwent Older Peoples Strategy (**SD70**) which proposes a move away from standard residential care. Therefore the decision was not taken by the Regeneration division, the Local Development Plan future land use of sites.

The Council are proposing an extra care sheltered housing scheme at the former Greenacres residential care home (housing allocation H1.3) which is located a short distance from the former Cartref Aneurin Bevan residential care home and therefore would accommodate the need for this facility in the area.

Nantyburch Senior Citizens Association suggests an alternative use for the site - a small park. It is acknowledged that there is no playground or informal play space and sports pitch within 400m. This does not, however, rule out a small area of open space for community use. A detailed scheme has yet to be prepared for the site. However, it has been agreed that the sale of the all of

the sheltered schemes will be recycled back in to the delivery of more fit for purpose older persons accommodation.

3. Does Policy DM12 provide a satisfactory definition of community facilities? How would criterion (a) of this policy be assessed?

Does Policy DM12 provide a satisfactory definition of community facilities?

It is accepted that the reasoned justification attached to policy DM12 could be improved to ensure there is a satisfactory definition of the term “community facilities”.

The Community Facilities Background Paper clearly defines what is meant by this term (**SD49**, page 1, paragraph 1.4). It is suggested to the Inspector that the reasoned justification should make reference to the definition set out in **SD49**.

How would criterion (a) of this policy be assessed?

A comparable replacement facility is considered self explanatory in that the replacement facility should be a facility that provides for the same use. It is accepted that clarity should be provided on the location of the facility in that the facility should be located to serve the same community / area.

4. What is the logic for requiring developers to provide 2.4 hectares of recreational space per 1000 projected population in developments of 10 or more homes to comply with Policy DM13? Which parts of the county borough have a quantitative deficiency in open space? How should the term “qualitative deficiency” be interpreted?

What is the logic for requiring developers to provide 2.4 hectares of recreational space per 1000 projected population in developments of 10 or more homes to comply with Policy DM13?

The Council has adopted the Fields in Trust Standard which endorses the standard of 2.4 ha per 1000 population. An in house open space assessment indicates that the current level of provision within the Borough is 1.25 ha per 1000 population which falls well below the required standard of 2.4ha. The Council intends working towards the nationally set standards and as a result it is considered necessary to require developments of 10 or more homes to provide recreational open space.

Which parts of the county borough have a quantitative deficiency in open space?

The Inspector's attention is drawn to Appendix 2 of the Leisure Background Paper (**SD55**), which identifies which wards have a quantitative deficiency in open space.

How should the term qualitative deficiency be determined?

A qualitative deficiency is defined as those areas where the existing provision has been identified by Leisure Services as requiring improvements.

Where it is determined that the development creates or exacerbates an existing deficiency in provision a planning obligation will be required

The Council's Play Strategy (2004) attached at appendix 1 identifies existing static play facilities within the County Borough (known as Local Play Areas, Visitor Play Areas, Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGA) and Wheeled Sports Areas). This Strategy sets out an implementation program identifying those Wards where there is a need for improvements to existing facilities. The Strategy provided the basis for identifying whether or not a development generated the need for a new facility or an improvement to an existing facility.

Supplementary Planning Guidance Planning Obligation (**SD128** Paragraph 4.42, Page 44) sets out the Council's approach to assessing whether development requires the provision of recreation or open space. It further clarifies that where a commuted sum is paid to the Council in lieu of direct provision by the developer, this payment may be utilised:

- to increase open space and recreation capacity by the provision of additional space / facilities created by the extra demand or
- to upgrade existing facilities to increase their capacity.

Rebuttal – The Home Builders Federation (Representor No:24)

The Council has adopted the FiT standard in relation to the provision of open space in line with Tan 16 para 2.9 (**W65**) which states '*the FiT has prepared bench mark standards for outdoor sport and play*'.

In line with Planning Policy Wales (**WD41**) an in house open space assessment has been carried out the results of which are contained in the Leisure Background Paper (**SD55**, page 15, Table 6). This assessment clearly identifies where deficiencies exist at ward level within the borough and this information will inform any requirement for a planning obligation at the planning application stage.

<p>5. Why should the Council seek to protect all open space within the county? Does criterion (c) of Policy DM14 provide a clear indication of when it may be appropriate to allow the development on some open space?</p>

Why should the Council seek to protect all open space within the county?

It is noted that Policy DM14 goes further than national policy as contained in Tan 16 (**W65**) para 3.12 in seeking to protect all open space. Therefore it is suggested to the Inspector that an additional criterion is added to policy DM14 to further clarify when development proposals affecting open space will be permitted.

Does criterion (c) of Policy DM14 provide a clear indication of where it may be appropriate to allow the development of some open space?

Criterion C allows development, which would improve existing recreation facilities e.g. improved car parking, changing rooms. It is accepted that the reasoned justification requires amending to provide a clear indication of when it may be appropriate to allow development.

<p>6. What does Policy SP9 seek to achieve? Has the Council allocated sites in such a way as to increase the percentage of the population within 400m of green space?</p>
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What does Policy SP9 seek to achieve?

Policy SP9 seeks to provide the strategic policy framework to achieve Objective 11, which aims to provide an accessible network of green open spaces and high quality leisure infrastructure. Pre-deposit participation (**SD16 - SD23**) undertaken on the plan provided a clear indication of those land use issues that key stakeholders consider to be of primary importance in Blaenau Gwent. The Issues paper identified that a key issue for Blaenau Gwent was the need to foster sustainable tourism and leisure in order to boost the local economy.

In addition to this, the Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Exercise (**SD24**) identified that a key issue for Blaenau Gwent related to leisure was health.

As detailed in **SD55**, the Council has undertaken a number of studies and consultations to understand the approach needed to create active and healthy communities.

SP10 Criterion (a) recognises the important role of the Valleys Regional Park (VPR) in creating a high quality leisure infrastructure. The overall aim of the VPR is to create a high quality, sustainable network of green space. A number of sites are allocated for tourism and leisure in Policy TM1 in order to encourage activities such as walking, cycling and mountain biking to improve the tourist offer and provide benefits for residents of the borough.

Criterion (b) takes forward the intention in objective 11 to improve and protect existing open-space, sport and leisure facilities. This aim is delivered through the following policies and allocations:

- DM4 Infrastructure Provision
- DM12 Protection of Community and Leisure Facilities
- DM13 Provision for Open Space, Recreation and Leisure Facilities
- DM14 Protection of Open Space
- DM16 Protection and Enhancement of the Green Infrastructure
- MU2 The Works
- MU3 NMC factory and Bus Depot
- TM1 Tourism and Leisure
- L1 Formal Leisure Facilities

Criterion (c) sets out the Council's proposal to protect and enhance accessibility to natural green spaces for members of the community. This is ensured through policies DM13, DM14 & DM16. Policy DM13 seeks to secure provision of open space, recreation and leisure facilities in residential development of 10 or more units through the use of planning obligations and DM14 seeks to protect existing open space and provide open space, recreation and leisure facilities. Policy DM16 seeks to achieve this by protecting and enhancing the Green Infrastructure. Green Infrastructure is a network of connected, accessible multi functional sites, which can bring about multiple social, health economic and environmental benefits to the area. Although important on their own it is the linking of these green assets that brings about added value.

Has the Council allocated sites in such a way as to increase the percentage of the population within 400m of green space?

The Council has not allocated sites to increase the percentage of the population within 400m of green space. The key to achieving this aim is to remove barriers that prevent current access to natural green space. This will be delivered through the Blaenau Gwent's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2009-2014), which identifies the management, maintenance, and improvement of the local rights of way network.

As set out above Policies DM13, DM14 and DM16 will be applied to ensure that proposed sites provide green spaces and improve access to existing green spaces.

7. What measures are in place in the Plan to support the Welsh language?

In accordance with PPW (W41, page 61, paragraph 4.12.2), the Council has considered if they have communities where the use of the Welsh language is part of the social fabric. Attached at Appendix 2 is a table which shows the number and percentage of the population aged 3 and over that are able to speak Welsh by electoral ward. The table illustrates that for Blaenau Gwent

the percentage of welsh speakers is 9.49%, this is the second lowest in Wales. The Council therefore consider that this is not an issue for the Borough. Appendix 1 also shows that the Welsh language is not significant to the social fabric of any ward in Blaenau Gwent as the Beaufort ward has the highest number of people who are able to speak Welsh at a small percentage of 11.7%. The Blaenau Gwent Community Strategy - *Making a Difference – The Big 20 Year Plan for Blaenau Gwent 2010 to 2030* (**SD121**) does not specifically identify the Welsh language as an issue in Blaenau Gwent.

It is therefore considered that there is currently no need for a specific LDP policy for Welsh language. The aims of protecting and enhancing the culture and heritage of the area can be secured through DM2 Design and Placemaking and other policies in the Plan (**SD01**), such as Policy SP11 Protection and Enhancement of the Built Environment.

The Minor Change MC.4 identified in the Statement of Focussed Changes (**SD10a**, page 20) provides clarity on how the needs and interests of the welsh language have been taken into account.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

PLAY STRATEGY

2004 Onwards

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OUR VISION

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council recognises the significance and value of play in the development of its children and young people.

The Council's Mission Statement is;

"To provide economical, efficient and effective public services which seek to enhance the quality of life of the people of Blaenau Gwent."

Our Vision aims to raise the profile of Play by continuing to improve the quality and equity of provision throughout the County Borough for all our children and young people.

1 RESPONSIBILITY

The County Borough of Blaenau Gwent provides opportunities for Children's Play throughout the authority.

There is recognition that opportunities to participate in good quality play activities are essential to the healthy, mental, physical and emotional well-being of the developing child. Through play children learn how to get on with each other, how to run, jump, catch and climb, how to act, how to draw and paint and use materials around them to create imaginary worlds. As the RT Hon Richard Caborn MP describes;

"Play is central to children's lives and an essential ingredient of a happy childhood. When so much of all our lives is spent working we need space and time to have fun, children most of all"

Play professionals suggest that the essential components of play include it being;

- Freely chosen (children choose **what** they do themselves)
- Personally directed (children choose **how** they do something)
- Intrinsically motivated (children choose **why** they do something)

The scope of this strategy focuses on the three dimensions of play provision provided by the Leisure Services Division:

- Static play provision (e.g. play areas, multi games areas, wheeled sports areas)
- Staffed play provision (e.g. play schemes and outreach activities)
- 'Play for purpose' (through planned activities in sport and recreation, culture and countryside)

Integral to these provisions is the concept of open access play. For the purpose of this strategy open access play draws from the Play Wales (2003) definition;

Open access play is a term used to describe provision for children, which may be a permanent or short-term scheme. Children are not restricted in their movements, other than where related to safety matters, and are not prevented from coming and going as and when they wish. Children have the freedom of choice as to what range of play activity they wish to undertake and with whom they play.

2 THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council was established following Local Government reorganisation in Wales in 1996. The Community Plan identifies the Authority's vision as;

'providing services which enhance the quality of life to the people of Blaenau Gwent'.

The Leisure Services Division understands that quality play opportunities for the young, and not so young, are important to the quality of life agenda. From the development of physical confidence and mastery at a young age, to the empowerment of disadvantaged groups, play contributes to the priorities of the Authority recognised in the Community Plan. Indeed, this Play Strategy is one of very few strategic policy documents that offers something for all residents of the County Borough.

The Play Strategy is influenced by, contributes to and complements the following at a local level;

- The Community Plan
- Health, Social Care and Well-Being Strategy
- The Sport and Recreation Strategy
- The Children's First Plan

At a national level, all of the above are underpinned by the Welsh Assembly Government's 'Climbing Higher' Strategy, which promotes active participation and recreation. Unstructured play is one of the first stages of involvement in active participation in natural community settings. Healthy (and unhealthy) lifestyles have a significant impact on modern society. There is much evidence available suggesting that increased participation in play and recreation especially during formative years will lead to a healthier population, increase economic activity and reduce the burden on the health service.

Leisure also recognises how play links to the key strategic themes of the Cymorth programme, concentrating on the following themes associated to entitlement;

- **Promotion of good health** (e.g. providing healthy eating options at play schemes and promoting opportunities for physical activities)
- **Play, Leisure and Enrichment: recognising the importance of play and providing a wide range of accessible cultural and leisure activities** (e.g. offering a wide range of inclusive, equitable provision for all children and young people)
- **Empowerment, Participation and Active Citizenship: through consultation and engagement with children and young people** (e.g. to consult with children and young people on the development of provisions and activities)
- **Community Development: ensuring the engagement of children/young people in community development and the creation of safe communities** (e.g. to promote the principles and values of the community development process, including developing links with the Community Safety Partnership)
- **Education, Training, Mentoring and Information: promoting learning by ensuring access to learning opportunities and information services.** (eg ensuring play schemes provide fun learning opportunities for children and young people. Maximising the children's information service.)

3 CURRENT SITUATION

i) Static Play Provision

The authority has a population of 70,064 (2001 Census), which is built up of the following age groups: -

- 0 – 4 year olds	5.6%
- 5 – 14 year olds	14.3%
- 15 – 24 year olds	11.4%
- 25 – 29 year olds	5.9%
- 30 – 44 year olds	21.3%
- 45 – 59 year olds	19.3%
- 60 –64 year olds	5.3%
- 65 – 74 year olds	8.8%
- 75 plus	8.1%

The above figures show that 20% of the population are within the 0–14 years age group, with 31% of the population within the 0– 25 age group as identified as young people by the Welsh Assembly Government.

The authority has 53 static play areas, 3 visitor play areas, 8 multi-use games areas (MUGA's), 10 wheeled sports areas and operates 5 children's playschemes at the authority's sports centres during school Summer holidays and half-term periods. All these facilities are available to the community on an open access basis.

The static play areas (including visitor areas), multi-use games areas and wheeled sports areas are inspected on a regular basis by the authority's Grounds Maintenance section, together with, annual inspections being undertaken by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), and the authority's insurers Zurich Municipal. Also, RoSPA undertake post installation inspections on any new equipment installed. An activities report is

prepared on a monthly basis, indicating the number of inspections undertaken and the number of repairs carried out in that period.

Table 1 and 2 below shows an analysis of play provision per Ward, together with the number of children aged 0-14 years currently residing in those Wards (2001 census).

The criteria used in the original strategy to determine how many static play areas per Ward, was 1 play area per 250 children under the age of 14 (1991 Census). The use of this formula ensured that static play provision was provided across the County Borough equitably, and counter-acted the previously disproportionate levels of play areas in certain Wards. Where an over-provision of static play still exists, this is down to long-term plans for site removal.

(N.B. Where site locations need to be identified, this will be undertaken by consultation).

Local Play Areas

Table 1

Ward Number		Current Situation	
		No. of Children	No. of Play Areas
		1991 Census	
1	Beaufort	840	3
2	Cwm	700	3
3	Badminton	493	1
4	Rassau	831	2
5	Ebbw Vale North	964	3
6	Ebbw Vale South	934	4
	Total	4762	17
7	Brynmawr	945	3
	Total	945	3
8	Abertillery	822	2
9	Six Bells	504	3
10	Llanhilleth	1025	6
11	Cwmtillery	995	5
	Total	3346	16
12	Nantyglo	1111	7
13	Blaina	901	5

1991
census
data
Shows be
updates.
New census
all figures
for no. of
play areas.

	Total	2012	12
14	Central & West	1104	1
15	Sirhowy	1175	3
16	Georgetown	601	2
	Total	2880	6
	Sub-Total	13945	53

Visitor Play Areas

Table 2

Ward	Current Situation	
	No. of Children 0-14 years	No. of Play Areas
Abertillery	3361	1
Tredegar	2918	1
Nantyglo & Blaina	1894	0
Brynmawr	1045	1
Ebbw Vale	4838	0
Total	14056	3
Grand Total		
Play Areas	14056	57

Multi-Use Games Area and Wheeled Sports

Table 3 below identifies the present position with Multi Use Games and Wheeled Sports Areas. For both M.U.G.A's and Wheeled Sports areas, Council policy is to allow one of each per Ward in the first instance. However, this policy does require some flexibility in isolated communities such as Cwmtillery, Llanhilleth and Sirhowy.

(N.B. Where site locations need to be identified this will be undertaken through consultation).

Table 3

Ward Number		Current Situation	
		No. of MUGA's	Wheeled Sports Areas
1	Beaufort	1	0
2	Cwm	1	1
3	Badminton	1	0
4	Rassau	0	1
5	Ebbw Vale North	0	2
6	Ebbw Vale South	0	0
7	Brynmawr	0	1
8	Abertillery	1	0
9	Six Bells	0	1
10	Llanhilleth	1	0
11	Cwmtilery	1	1
12	Nantyglo	1	0
13	Blaina	1	1
14	Tredegar Central & West	0	2
15	Georgetown	0	0
16	Sirhowy	0	0
Totals		8	10

ii) **Staffed Play Provision (holiday schemes)**

- The play Schemes offer children aged 8 – 12 years within the County Borough the opportunity to engage in an open access play experience at the four sports centres, running during holiday periods. The scheme focuses on providing a wide range of activities that both engage creativity and physical activity. The play scheme operates on an inclusive basis, with children with disabilities on Social Services Summer scheme integrating into all activities taking place, which includes the following themes:

- Sport and physical activity
- Arts/Culture
- Libraries
- Outreach Work in the local community

- The Leisure Services Division also delivers an outreach programme to specific Wards within the authority, as an extension of the Summer play scheme, taking advantage of new facilities, which have already been provided. The outreach programme adopts an open access philosophy and targets Wards (including Community First areas) that may include children and young people, aged from eight to sixteen years of age, who are in danger of being excluded. In addition the profile of the wards targeted suggests that the outreach programme may benefit those participants who are vulnerable to anti social behaviour. The potential for the programme to impact on the incidences of anti social behaviour may also influence quality of life within the community.

Table 4 below shows an analysis of our holiday programme participation for the last two years.

Site	2002/03	2003/04
Ebbw Vale Sports Centre	4,243	3,392
Abertillery Sports Centre	3,791	3,209
Tredegar Sports Centre	3,146	2,553
Nantyglo Sports Centre	3,504	2,368
Total	14,684	11,522

iii) **‘Play For Purpose’**

The opportunity for positive and satisfying play experiences contribute to the healthy development of the children’s physical and emotional well-being. The Leisure Services Division recognises the contribution of its provision in a broad spectrum of activity, ranging in approach from open access to planned sessions. By developing the programme, the Division meets a direct need in terms of providing quality experiences on an equitable basis for young people in their communities. The Authority’s ‘Play for Purpose’ agenda can be broken down into 3 categories, namely;

– **Play through sport and recreation activities**

Various play opportunities are offered by the Leisure Services Division through the medium of sport and recreation. These range from structured sports development programmes through to unstructured ‘drop in’ sessions, such as the football street league. These activities are offered across the borough to children and young people of various ages.

– **Play through cultural activities**

A broad range of activities are offered via the Cultural Services team, in a wide variety of settings. These range from ‘taster’ sessions to organised programmes of activities culminating in performances. Examples include ‘kids clubs’ programmes and dance sessions. The use of arts and cultural activities as a vehicle to promote social capital is gaining recognition in many quarters. (Culture at the heart of regeneration, Department of Culture, Media and Sport)

– **Play through countryside activities**

Physical activity in the natural setting is recognised as a significant concept, with recent research (‘making children’s lives more active’) acknowledging that although children use the most energy in sports and PE lessons, they in fact get the most prolonged and valuable physical exercise when playing outdoors. Opportunities for both open access and organised outdoor activities at venues such as Parc Bryn Bach promote the potential synergy between play and the natural environment. Examples include Forest schools and adventure activities.

4. THE WAY FORWARD

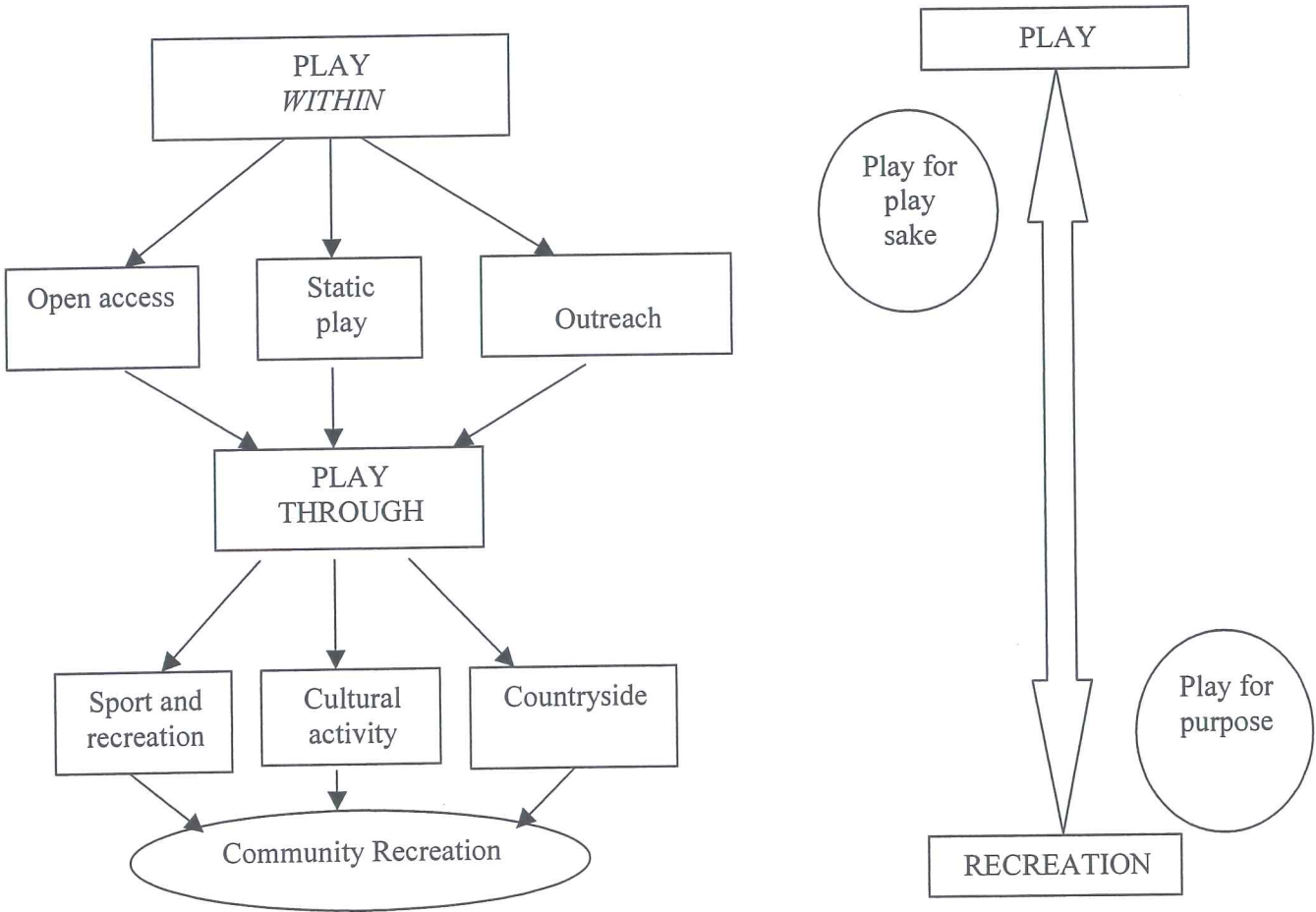
4.1 Priorities For Development And Improvement

The primary objectives of the Strategy is to increase opportunity, participation and involvement in play and through to recreation. The way forward and future direction of play in Blaenau Gwent requires a strategic framework of priorities that can shape the community's play development for the next decade. These priorities for development and improvement are identified below:

- a) Priority 1 - Static Play Facilities
- b) Priority 2 - Staffed Play Provision (Holiday Schemes)
- c) Priority 3 - Open Access Play Opportunities
- d) Priority 4 - Play Development Through Planned Activity
- e) Priority 5 - Social Inclusion

By working with the community, it's organisation and relevant partners, the Authority can deliver a step change in the quality and equity of play provision offered to its residents. Play is also progressive, ranging from "play for play sake" to "play for purpose". As a result a pathway (or continuum) of play towards recreation exists, and this Strategy will challenge the Authority to links its play priorities into wider community recreation. For example, a child may be introduced to the activity of swimming via the 'Free Swim' initiative, and go on to decide to join a lifesaving or swimming club to further their interest at an appropriate level in line with their skills and ability. The pathway is shown overleaf in the form of a continuum.

THE PLAY CONTINUUM



a) Priority One -Static Play Provision

Strategic objective: to continue, improve and maximise the potential of static play facilities across the Borough, responding to opportunities for static play development in the future.

In considering the future level of provision for local static play areas, it is proposed that the existing ratio of 1 play area per every 250 children aged 0-14, be continued as the demographic figures for this age group have not changed to dramatically since the 1991 census with, in the first instance, 1 multi-use games area (MUGA) and 1 Wheeled Sports area per County Borough Ward. Visitor play areas will be established as identified in this strategy and located at the most appropriate venues. This would give the most equitable provision across the County Borough.

The proposal for play and activity future provision in respect of the Children's Play Strategy 2004/2009 is, therefore, as follows;

- Local play areas 56
- Visitor play areas 5
- Multi-use games areas (MUGA's) 16
- Wheeled sports areas 16

(See Appendix B)

i) **Local Play Areas**

The following table depicts the current and proposed provision of 'local' play areas throughout the County Borough.

Ward Number		Current Situation			Proposed	Comments
		No. Of Children 0-14 years		No. Of Play Areas	Provision 1 per 250 children	
		1991 Census	2001 Census			
1	Beaufort	840	851	3	3	
2	Cwm	700	908	3	3	
3	Badminton	493	586	1	2	Site to be identified
4	Rassau	831	620	2	2	
5	Ebbw Vale North	964	989	3	4	
6	Ebbw Vale South	934	884	4	4	
	Total	4762	4838	17	18	
7	Brynmawr	945	1045	3	4	New Play area to be created Site to be identified
	Total	945	1045	3	4	
8	Abertillery	822	894	2	4	2 New Play Areas to be created Sites to be identified
9	Six Bells	504	547	3	2	Lancaster Street to be removed
10	Llanhilleth	1025	953	6	4	Woodland Terrace and Troy Road to be removed
11	Cwmtillery	995	967	5	4	Gwern Berthi Road to be removed
	Total	3346	3361	16	14	
12	Nantyglo	1111	913	7	4	Pant View, Dale View, and Garn Cross to be removed
13	Blaina	9011	981	5	4	Brynheulog long term removal
	Total	2012	1894	12	8	
14	Central & West	1104	1168	1	5	Establish site to replace Laburnum Avenue, Cefn Golau. 2 Further sites to be identified
15	Sirhowy	1175	1065	3	4	Station Road needs to be replaced following the duelling of Heads of Valley.
16	Georgetown	601	685	2	3	Site to be identified.
	Total	2880	2918	6	12	
	Sub-Total	13945	14056	53	56	

ii) Visitor Play Areas

“Visitor” play areas will be larger areas to cater for all age groups and as a visit indicates, will attract families from outside the immediate community to the play area for all age groups. The current situation remains and the table below depicts the proposed provision in relation to the proposed situation.

Ward	Current Situation		Proposed	Comments
	No. of Children 0-14 years	No. of Play Areas	Provision 1 per 250 children	
Abertillery	3361	1	1	Abertillery Park
Tredegar	2918	1	1	Bedwellty Park
Nantyglo & Blaina	1894	0	1	Central Park
Brynmawr	1045	1	1	Brynmawr welfare
Ebbw Vale	4838	0	1	Site to be identified
Total	14056	3	5	
Grand Total				
Play Areas	14056	57	61	

iii) Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA)

Multi-use games areas (MUGA’s) will be provided in the first instance – one per ward – to enable a range of sporting activities to take place, and would cater for all age groups and outreach programmes undertaken by the Division. The current and proposed situation is shown below.

Ward Number		Current Situation		Proposed		Comments
		No. of MUGA’s	Wheeled Sports Areas	No. of MUGA’s	Wheeled Sports Areas	
1	Beaufort	1	0	1	1	Site to be identified
2	Cwm	1	1	1	1	
3	Badminton	1	0	1	1	Site to be identified
4	Rassau	0	1	1	1	Site to be identified
5	Ebbw Vale North	0	2	1	1	Wheeled Sports Area to be removed from EVLC Site for MUGA to be identified
6	Ebbw Vale South	0	0	1	1	Sites to be identified
7	Brynmawr	0	1	1	1	New ramps required on wheeled sports area
8	Abertillery	1	0	1	1	
9	Six Bells	0	1	1	1	Site to be identified
10	Llanhilleth	1	0	1	1	Site to be identified
11	Cwmtillery	1	1	1	1	
12	Nantyglo	1	0	1	1	Site to be identified
13	Blaina	1	1	1	1	

Ward Number		Current Situation		Proposed		Comments
		No. of MUGA's	Wheeled Sports Areas	No. of MUGA's	Wheeled Sports Areas	
14	Tredegar Central & West	0	2	1	1	Wheeled sports area to be removed from Bedwellty Park site for MUGA to be identified
15	Georgetown	0	0	1	1	Sites to be identified
16	Sirhowy	0	0	1	1	Sites to be identified
Totals		8	10	16	16	

iv) **Wheeled Sports Areas**

Wheeled Sports areas will be provided in the first instance, one per ward, to enable a range of activities to take place including BMX bikes, skateboards, rollerblading, etc., for all age groups and outreach programmes undertaken by the authority's sports development team and play scheme leaders.

b. **Priority Two-Staffed Play Provision (holiday schemes)**

Strategic objective: to encourage, support and deliver opportunities for participation in a varied, quality programme of staffed play provision.

This strategy recognises that a fundamental review of the staffed play provision offered by the Authority needs to be undertaken in line with Cymorth evaluation procedures. This comprehensive review will inform future developments and programmes with a commitment to increase participation over the lifespan of the strategy.

The programme fosters positive experiences through arts, sport and recreation for children and young people within their own communities.

Both the outreach programme and the facility based schemes impact in a positive way in the life of the community, consequences of a reduction in the current level of provision would result in:

- A decrease in opportunity for creative and physical play

- Potential increase in anti social behaviour
- Impact on child care provision across the County Borough during holiday periods (as identified in the Children and Youth Partnership survey)
- A withdrawal of the scheme’s positive contribution to the health agenda (with specific reference to recognised increase in inactivity in children and young people)

Examples of the programmes that will be further enhanced include;

- Holiday Playcare programmes
- The Football Street League
- Community Arts Development activities
- Outdoor Pursuits (Parc Bryn Bach)

c. Priority Three-Open Access Play Opportunities

Strategic objective: To recognise, support and encourage the development of open access play through a broad spectrum of opportunities.

The impact of both quality staffed and static play provision on opportunities for open access play needs to be consolidated. Current provision offers the potential to build on the many opportunities that have had a positive impact on individuals and communities. Moreover, the significance of play in the natural setting needs to be reiterated and developed with support from relevant partners.

Examples include;

- Open access activities at Bryn Bach Park e.g. Cycling (mountain biking)
- Challenging equipment –rollerblading areas
- ‘Drop-in’ programmes in playschemes

These activities are based on the premis that the play occurs in a ‘freely-choosen’ environment, and without the constraints of discipline and structure. This is becoming increasingly acknowledged as successful in the 14+ age group, who are

traditionally a hard to reach target group in formal settings. Importantly, the perceived benefits of participating in open access play are intrinsic to the individual i.e. they desire to take part and are not pressurised into participation or involvement.

d) **Priority Four-Play Development Through Planned Activity**

Strategic objective: To recognise and expand opportunities for play development through a varied and quality programme of planned activity, across the Division.

This strategy recognises the importance of play in the lives of children and young people, and therefore the potential to promote the fundamental facets of play through planned activity should not be dismissed. This basic philosophy of ‘play for purpose’ acknowledges the continuum between recreation and play, and exists within the planned programme of activity encompassing arts and culture, sport and recreation and the countryside. Moreover, the significance of freely chosen leisure activities in relation to the nurturing of empowerment of individuals potentially impacts on the securing of social citizenship. The 11-25 year old age group is recognised as a priority group under the strategic objective of the Children and Young Peoples Framework Partnership “promoting essential skills and learning.” Leisure Services with relevant partners will actively seek to engage the 11-25 year old age group in meaningful play and recreation programmes. The Strategy commits Leisure to target this under-represented age group and redress the participation imbalance for this traditionally hard to reach target market. This commitment is signified by a dedicated action plan (see Appendix A) specifically dealing with this agenda. Priorities for action include universal confidence building, alternative curriculum, outreach and affordable activities. The Division clearly has a role to play in meeting these key priorities.

The inextricable link between play and recreation is clearly found here, when recreation is viewed from the perspective of using ‘free’ time for positive purposes. Whether it is to join a badminton club for social reasons, or volunteering to assist a practitioner in a dance programme, the planned activities give the individual some return.

Examples include;

- 'Kids' homework clubs in Libraries
- Team building activities (Bryn Bach Park)
- Sports Diversion and the work with the Youth Offending Team
- Volunteering Counts programme (O.C.N. accreditations)

Innovative planned play activities provide people of all ages with choices and experiences that may encourage their future participation and involvement more formally i.e. bridging the gap between play and community recreation. Consequently, the Play Strategy will create a seamless transition into the Authority's Sport and Recreation and Cultural Strategies, dependent upon individual's preferences.

e. **Priority Five-Social Inclusion**

Strategic objective: to take positive action to ensure equality of opportunity for all sections of the community to enjoy appropriate play opportunity, thereby contributing to the social and economic regeneration of Blaenau Gwent.

Social Inclusion is a key strategic objective recognised by the Community Plan. The significance of play in helping to secure social capital through its capacity to develop the well being of individuals is fundamental to the goals of social inclusion. This strategy reinforces the commitment to tackle issues of social exclusion through play development and recognises its significance in all aspects of provision and opportunity offered by the Division.

However, to fully comprehend social exclusion, this strategy needs to explore the reasons why people become excluded, and how this inhibits participation and enjoyment in play. There are three categories of barriers to play participation, namely;

- Intrapersonal constraints include;
 - Perceptions of oneself. (Shaping expressions of preference)
 - Perceived self skill

- Interpersonal constraints include;
 - Peer group pressures
 - Relationships with others
 - Ability to find a friend/partner to pursue the activity

- Structural constraints include;
 - Programming
 - Transport
 - Resources (financial) and reasons that intervene between play preferences.

One of the main challenges for the Play Strategy is to redress social exclusion and promote equality of opportunity. The action plans within this strategy will seek to reduce the influence of the above barriers to participation in play through positive discrimination.

Examples include;

- Inclusion of disadvantaged groups, regardless of ability
- Competitive pricing policy (regularly benchmarked)
- Outreach philosophy (isolated communities)
- Early years skill development programmes e.g. Dragon Sport
- Changing 'rules' e.g. 'T-shirts worn in Wet 'n' Wild swimming sessions

5. IMPLEMENTATION

This Strategy highlights the Authority's commitment to raise the profile of play by continuing to improve the quality and equity of provision in the three dimensions of play. It also demonstrates a process of continuous improvement over the strategies lifespan in play and recreation facilities/activities for young people.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will regularly monitor and review the progress made in the implementation of this strategy. To achieve this, a set of action plans relevant to each of the strategy's key priorities have been developed, and are show in Appendix (A).

Finally, this strategy reiterates the commitment of the authority to actively promote the importance of play to all relevant partners.

APPENDIX A –STRATEGIC ACTION PLANS

Strategic objective: to improve and maximise the potential of static play facilities across the Borough, responding to opportunities for static play development in the future

Current position	Action	Key partners	Target	Outcomes
Increasing demands on inspections and maintenance	Establish a maintenance team of 2 mechanical fitters with 2 assistants, to include weekly inspections and maintenance programme for equipment painting	BGCBC	Ongoing	More effective maintenance regimes implemented, in line with RoSPA guidelines
A variety of safety surfaces are used at present	Establish a rolling programme to replace Bark safety with a more appropriate product	BGCBC	Ongoing	The most appropriate safety surfaces used consistently across the Borough
Identified need for an equipment replacement programme	Establish a replacement programme for ageing and damaged play equipment	BGCBC	Ongoing	Continuation of the play facilities upgrading programme with provision meeting recognised play value and inclusion guidelines
Need to investigate additional revenue funding	Funding identified for equipment replacement	BGCBC WAG	Ongoing	Replacement programme secured

Strategic objective: to encourage, support and deliver opportunities for participation in a varied, quality staffed programme of play provision

Current position	Action	Key partners	Target	Outcomes
Holiday playschemes operate at the four sports centres and Parc Bryn Bach	To undertake a comprehensive review of the programme of activity offered in conjunction with consultation with young people	Arts development Sports development Parc Bryn Bach Social Services NCH	To undertake ongoing qualitative and quantitative data analysis on an annual basis, which will inform future programmes	Compliance with Cymorth evaluation guidelines
Outreach programme	To enhance the current programme, developing age appropriate activities and physical activities in the formal and informal setting	Arts development Sports development Sport centre staff Community groups (e.g. NCH, YOT)	To review the potential of running the outreach programme during other holiday periods Extend venues from 2005	Enhanced outreach programme, including focus on young people aged 14+
Sports centre staff deliver holiday programmes	To establish an appropriate training framework for relevant staff in relation to play	BGCBC Coleg Gwent	All permanent staff qualified over 3 years (2005/08)	Staff qualified in an appropriate level play certificate (e.g. Take 5 for play, CACHE level 2)

Strategic objective: to recognise, support and encourage the development of open access play through a broad spectrum of opportunities

Current position	Action	Key partners	Target	Outcomes
Static play provision	To fully utilise the potential play value of open access static provision	BGCBC	To implement the replacement programme on an ongoing basis (appendix B)	Appropriately challenging equipment introduced
Limited opportunities in Adventure/outdoor activities	Develop opportunities to promote the potential synergy between play, physical activity and the natural setting	BGCBC Community groups (e.g. scouts) NGB's of sport Arts Council of Wales	In line with developments within countryside parks and open spaces	A more coherent approach to open access play in the natural environment

Strategic objective: to recognise and expand opportunities for play development through a varied and quality programme of planned activity.

Current position	Action	Key partners	Target	Outcomes
Staff awareness of the value of play in recreation activities needs to be further promoted	To establish an appropriate training framework for relevant staff in relation to play	BGCBC Coleg Gwent	Comprehensive training programme to run from 2005	Staff qualified in an appropriate level of play certificate if required (e.g. Take 5 for play) Greater understanding of the fundamental components of play through recreation and cultural activities
An evaluation of the delivery of 'unstructured' activities in relation to play required	To ensure that the physical, social and mental well being of individuals is optimal	BGCBC Children and young peoples framework partnership	Review undertaken by 2005	Planned activities are acknowledged as incorporating play value Findings to inform future programmes
Need to extend Child Protection Policy across all Service areas	To roll out in line with the current policy adopted within Sports Development/facilities and Cultural Services	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Sports Council for Wales Arts Council of Wales	To establish a comprehensive training and development programme through 2005/2006 Compliance by March 2007	Child Protection Policy adopted across the Leisure Division

Strategic objective: to take positive action to ensure equality of opportunity for all sections of the community to enjoy appropriate play opportunity, thereby contributing to the social and economic regeneration of Blaenau Gwent.

Current position	Action	Key partners	Target	Outcomes
Integration of social services scheme into summer holiday scheme	To continue to work with social services in including disadvantaged young people into playscheme activities	Leisure services Social services NCH	Ongoing integrated programme of activity, including the 'teen scheme'	Quality programme of activity offered to disadvantaged young people
Inclusion of disabled people in planned activities	To continue to develop a varied programme of activity	Leisure services Social services NCH	Ongoing	Quality opportunities for disabled people
Pricing policy	To continue an annual benchmarking exercise to include arts venues	BGCBC	Ongoing	Pricing policy set to maximise usage
Outreach programme	To extend the programme through diversionary and outreach work	BGCBC NCH YOT	Development of the programme from 2005	Quality programme of activity adopting an outreach philosophy including diversionary work through recreation and culture
Actively target the 11-25 year old age category.	To develop activities to support the alternative curriculum eg accreditation through cultural interests.	Leisure Services Lifelong Learning Coleg Gwent	Programme developed by 2005	Empowerment and value to the targeted group.

Table 6

Appendix (B)

No	PLAY AREA / WARD	UPGRADED BY JULY 2003	LONG TERM REMOVAL	NEW AND UPGRADED PLAY PROVISION 2004 Onwards	COMMENTS
EBBW VALE					
1	Ebbw Vale "Visit" PA	No		Yes	Site to be identified
WARD - Beaufort					
2	Beaufort Hill PA	No		Yes	
3	Primitive Place PA	Yes			
4	Garnlydan PA	Yes			
5	Wheeled Sports Area	No		Yes	Site to be identified
6	MUGA	Yes			
WARD- Cwm					
7	Cwm Welfare PA	Yes			
8	William Street PA	Yes			
9	Hillside Terrace PA	Yes			
10	Wheeled sports Area	Yes			
11	MUGA	yes			
WARD- Badminton					
12	Glyncoed PA	Yes			
13	New Play Area	No		Yes	Site to be identified
14	Wheeled Sports Area	Yes			
15	MUGA	Yes			
WARD - Rassau					
16	New Rassau PA	Yes			
17	Old Rassau PA	Yes			
18	Wheeled Sports Area	Yes			
19	MUGA	No		Yes	Site to be identified
WARD - Ebbw Vale North					
20	Letchworth Rd PA	Yes			
21	Hilltop PA	Yes			
22	Hughes Avenue PA	No		Yes	No equipment on site
23	Hilltop Log Cabin	No		Yes	Play area removed New site to be identified
24	Newtown PA	Yes			
25	Wheeled Sports Area	Yes x 2			Area at rear of Sports Centre to be removed
26	MUGA	No		Yes	Site to be identified

No	PLAY AREA / WARD	UPGRADED BY JULY 2003	LONG TERM REMOVAL	NEW AND UPGRADED PLAY PROVISION 2004 Onwards	COMMENTS
WARD - Ebbw Vale South					
27	Coronation Park PA	Yes			
28	Garden City PA	Yes			
29	Pennant Street PA	No		Yes	
30	Tyllwyn PA	Yes			
31	Wheeled Sports Area	No		Yes	Site to be identified
32	MUGA	No		Yes	Site to be identified
BRYNMAWR					
WARD - Brynmawr					
33	Brynawel PA	Yes			
34	Brynmawr Rec PA	Yes			
35	Brynmawr Welfare " Visit PA	Yes			
36	New Play Area	No		Yes	Site to be identified
37	Wheeled Sports Area	Yes		Yes	New ramps to be introduced to the site at Brynmawr Welfare ground
38					
ABERTILLERY					
WARD - Abertillery					
39	New Play Area	No		Yes	Site to be identified
40	New Play Area	No		Yes	Site to be identified
41	Gelli Crug PA	Yes			
42	Vivian Street PA	Yes			
43	Wheeled Sports Area	No		Yes	Site to be identified
44	MUGA	Yes			
WARD - Six Bells					
45	Six Bells Park PA	Yes			
46	Warm Turn PA	Yes			
47	Lancaster Street PA	Yes	Yes		To be removed
48	Wheeled Sports Area	Yes			
49	MUGA	No		Yes	
WARD - Llanhilleth					
50	Llanhilleth Park PA	Yes			
51	Sofrydd PA	Yes			

No	PLAY AREA / WARD	UPGRADED BY JULY 2003	LONG TERM REMOVAL	NEW AND UPGRADED PLAY PROVISION 2004 Onwards	COMMENTS
52	Oxford Place PA	Yes			
53	Aberbeeg Welfare PA	Yes			
54	Woodland Terrace PA	Yes	Yes		To be removed
55	Troy Road PA	Yes	Yes		To be removed
56	Wheeled Sports Area	No		Yes	Site to be identified
57	Brynithel BC	Yes			
WARD – Cwmtillery					
58	Woodland Field PA	Yes			
59	Roseheyworth PA	Yes			
60	Upper Arael View PA	No		Yes	
61	Gwern Berthi Rd PA	No	Yes		To be removed
62	Jim Owen Field	Yes			
63	Abertillery Park “Visit” PA	Yes			
64	Wheeled Sports Area	Yes			
65	MUGA	Yes			
NANTYGLO					
WARD – Nantyglo					
66	Banna Park PA	Yes			
67	Waun Ebbw PA	No		Yes	Need to identify new site
68	Vincent Avenue PA	Yes			
69	Pant View PA	Yes	Yes		To be removed
70	Coed Cae PA	Yes			
71	Central Park “Visit” PA	No		Yes	Visit Play Area
72	Dale View PA	Yes	Yes		To be removed
73	Garn Cross PA	Yes	Yes		To be removed
74	Wheeled Sports Area	No		Yes	Site to be identified
75	MUGA Nantyglo	Yes			
BLAINA					
WARD - Blaina					
76	Glanstruth PA	No		Yes	
77	Brynheulog PA	Yes	Yes		To be removed
78	Maeshafod PA	Yes			
79	Duffryn Park PA	Yes			
80	West Side PA	Yes			
81	Wheeled Sports Area Blaina	Yes			
82	MUGA Blaina	Yes			

No	PLAY AREA / WARD	UPGRADED BY JULY 2003	LONG TERM REMOVAL	NEW AND UPGRADED PLAY PROVISION 2004 Onwards	COMMENTS
TREDEGAR					
WARD - Central & West					
83	New Play Area	No		Yes	Site To be identified
84	New Play Area	No		Yes	Site to be identified
85	Bedwelty Pits PA	Yes			
86	Laburnum Avenue	No		Yes	No equipment on site and need to identify new site
87	Cefn Golau	No		Yes	No equipment on site
88	Bedwelty Park " Visit" PA	Yes			
89	Wheeled Sports Area	Yes x 2			Site at Bedwelty Park to be removed
90	MUGA	No		Yes	Site to be identified
WARD – Georgetown					
91	New Play Area	No		Yes	Site to be identified
92	Southend PA	Yes			
93	St James Way PA	Yes			
94	Wheeled Sports Area	No		Yes	Site to be identified
95	MUGA	No		Yes	Site to be identified
WARD – Sirhowy					
96	Chartist Way PA	Yes			
97	Station Terrace PA	No		Yes	Removed because of heads of the Valleys dueling
98	Ty Newydd PA	No		Yes	
99	Bryn Bach Park	No		Yes	
100	Wheeled Sports Area	No		Yes	Site to be identified
101	MUGA	No		Yes	Site to be identified
	Total	101	8	36	

- Total number of play facilities remaining after the life span of the strategy one hundred and one (101).
- There will be eight (8) play areas removed.
- Thirty six (36) projects will be undertaken.

Appendix 2 Welsh Language Statistics from the Census 2001

The table below shows the number and percentage of the population aged 3 and over that are able to speak Welsh by electoral ward.

Official Name of the Electoral Division	Age Group	NUMBER			%
		All People	Able to Speak Welsh	Not Able to Speak Welsh	Able to Speak Welsh
Abertillery	3 and over	4358	456	3902	10.5
Badminton	3 and over	3095	276	2819	8.9
Beaufort	3 and over	3751	440	3311	11.7
Blaina	3 and over	4679	483	4196	10.3
Brynmawr	3 and over	5420	511	4909	9.4
Cwm	3 and over	4188	407	3781	9.7
Cwmtillery	3 and over	4595	442	4153	9.6
Ebbw Vale North	3 and over	4588	376	4212	8.2
Ebbw Vale South	3 and over	4065	346	3719	8.5
Georgetown	3 and over	3377	329	3048	9.7
Llanhilleth	3 and over	4602	407	4195	8.8
Nantyglo	3 and over	4127	396	3731	9.6
Rassau	3 and over	3190	281	2909	8.8
Sirhowy	3 and over	5348	518	4830	9.7
Six Bells	3 and over	2562	239	2323	9.3
Tredegar Central and West	3 and over	5854	514	5340	8.8
Blaenau Gwent	3 and over	67799	6421	61378	9.49

Source: Office of National Statistics, Census 2001