

Final report March 2025

The Future of Travel in Blaenau Gwent – a Citizens' Forum



Executive Summary

Current travel options in Blaenau Gwent are not always fair, reliable, or accessible for everyone. And in the coming years, residents will need to change how they get around in response to climate change. To meet both these challenges, Blaenau Gwent Council are developing a **strategy for the future of travel** for the local area.

As part of Innovate UK's [Net Zero Living](#) programme, the council worked with Involve (who wrote this report), Forum for the Future, Ipsos, and Quantum to run a **citizen's forum on the future of travel in Blaenau Gwent**. The aim was to put citizen ambitions for the future of their area at the heart of the council's travel strategy.

The process brought together **19 residents**, broadly reflective of Blaenau Gwent across different demographics (see [Who took part?](#)).

Through **three in-person sessions**, the group learnt about travel from a range of speakers. Topics included climate change and options for better ways to travel. They heard about the challenges Blaenau Gwent council is facing, discussed potential solutions and thought about their own experiences of travelling locally.

The forum used their learning to write recommendations for Blaenau Gwent council, based on what would be achievable in the next **5 years**. They developed:

- a vision for fairer, greener and better travel
- recommendations for how to get there
- guidelines for how to achieve this in a fair way.

All of these are included in the **forum's own words** in this report. In response to the forum's recommendations, the council will:

- present the forum's report and recommendations to elected members for endorsement and adoption
- publish and share this report and the recommendations on the council website and wider community
- publish a formal response to all recommendations, including responses from other partners who will deliver some of this work
- where they are unable to take any recommendations forward, set out why and suggest alternatives.



Project origins

Why the future of travel?

Changing how we get around is a major part of tackling the climate emergency. At the same time, our network and options for travel need to improve to meet communities' needs - particularly in rural areas like in Blaenau Gwent.

In 2021, Blaenau Gwent ran a [local climate assembly](#). The citizens who took part recommended a more integrated transport system and improvements to walking and cycling options. Blaenau Gwent Council are now working towards overcoming barriers to a net zero transport system and would like to understand more about the climate assembly's previous recommendation.

This project came at a good time to influence the council's vision for the future local transport system, and to shape the council's contributions to a regional transport plan for Southeast Wales.

Why a citizen visioning forum?

Citizen visioning builds upon community knowledge and is rooted in the local context. It meets people where they are, identifying barriers and building on their community's unique strengths. At the same time, people are invited to step back, to look at the bigger picture and into the future.

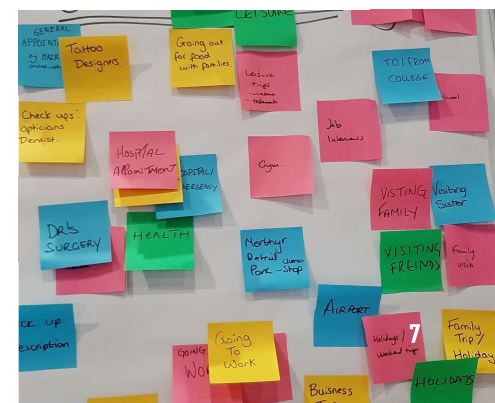
The forum in Blaenau Gwent used this approach to create a positive vision for travel and practical steps to make that vision a reality.

What question did this process set out to answer?

The forum were asked to respond to the question: *How can Blaenau Gwent come together to make local travel fairer, greener and better for everyone?*

The citizens' forum worked together, deliberated and agreed upon:

- a vision for fairer, greener and better travel
- a set of recommendations for how to get there
- guidelines for how to achieve this in a fair way.





Overview of Citizen Visioning

Learning

Participants learnt about the topic from a range of speakers, including those they requested themselves. Topics covered an introduction to climate change, local impacts and solutions.

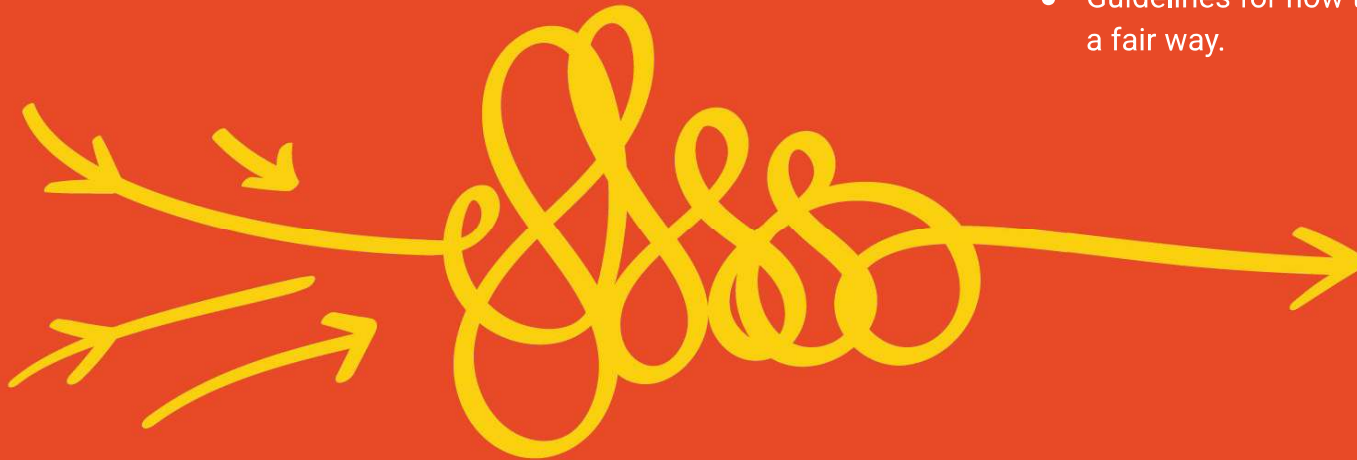
Deliberation

Participants discussed the information they had heard and developed a long list of ideas, weighing up potential ways forward. The council reviewed these and provided feedback.

Decision making

Participants worked together to review feedback from the council and agree on:

- A final vision
- A set of priority recommendations
- Guidelines for how to achieve this in a fair way.



Who took part?

In total, 19 people were recruited to broadly reflect the population of Blaenau Gwent.

We sent letters inviting people to take part to 6,500 randomly selected residential addresses across the whole of Blaenau Gwent. We selected citizens' forum members from those who had received a letter and then signed up.

We gave members of the group a gift of thanks for taking part in all sessions, to make participation accessible to all and in recognition of their time. We also covered travel and any additional costs such as childcare.

How were participants selected?

Our partners the Sortition Foundation selected forum members were selected using a type of civic lottery called [sortition](#).

Residents completed a form to express their interest in taking part. From there, we removed personal details and selected a group using a computer program to be broadly reflective of the area in terms of their:

- Age
- Gender
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Views on Climate Change
- Car ownership
- Average travel time to services





The citizens' forum created...

A vision

The vision sets out an idea of what local travel in Blaenau Gwent should look like in the future.

Forum members developed it during the first session by thinking about what they like and dislike about travelling around Blaenau Gwent currently, and what they would like travel options to be like in the future.

13 fairness guidelines

The guidelines are a series of statements on what it means for travel in Blaenau Gwent to be fair.

The forum explained why each guideline was important to them. You can find the full guidelines in [Appendix 5](#).

10 recommendations

The recommendations are a call to action of what the council and its partners should do to improve travel in Blaenau Gwent.

They include:

- a headline recommendation
- why it is important
- practical next steps.

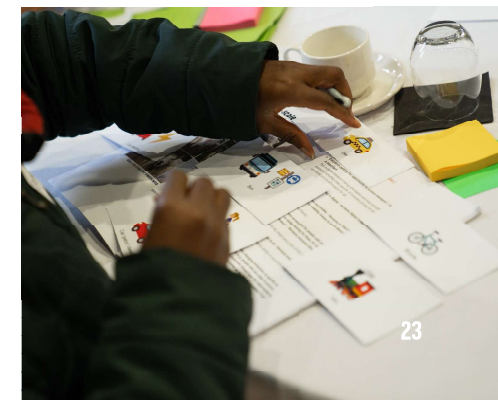
The forum came up with initial ideas at the second meeting. These were then reviewed by the council, advisory group, and other local groups. The forum took on board this feedback and drafted their final recommendations at their last meeting.



Fair travel in Blaenau Gwent means...

These ideas were drafted by the participants and are in their own words. The numbers do not in order of priority or importance. You can read the full guidelines with an explanation of why they are important in [Appendix 5](#).

1. ... **everybody being able to access** transport in general, and public transport in particular
2. ...not cutting climate changing emissions from transport as quickly as possible, if it means some people are missing out on being able to **access transport**
3. ...meeting people's **different needs**
4. ... being **non-discriminatory**
5. ...**avoiding foreseeable unintended consequences** and excluding people by mistake, and minimising them when they do happen
6. ...investment in **public transport and active travel** should be the priority so that it's easier for everyone to use (even if they have a car)
7. ...**encouraging local businesses** and making sure transport links to them



Fair travel in Blaenau Gwent means...

These ideas were drafted by the participants and are in their own words. You can read the full guidelines with an explanation of why they are important in [Appendix 5](#).

8. ...**targeting support** (not services*) at where there is greatest need and/or the greatest ripple effect of impact

9. ...**being transparent** about how and why support is targeted at different groups

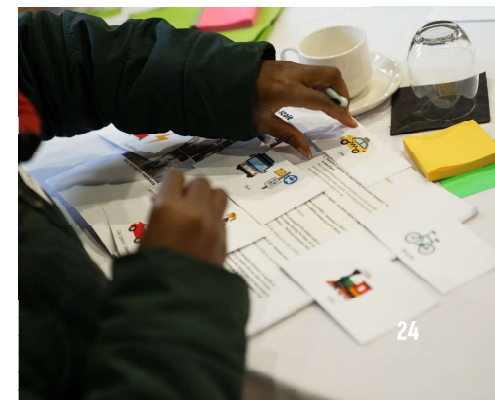
10. ... not just looking at transport, but also looking at **technologies, people, and processes as enablers of transport** .

11. ... **only asking people to do what they are able to**, as long as it is safe

12. ...it is not fair to ask everyone to make changes all the time, but you could ask **most people to make one small change**

13. ... **people who can comfortably afford to should be encouraged to contribute more** . However, it is not fair to assume that working age people can afford to contribute more

14. ... **companies doing their bit.**



THE FUTURE OF TRAVEL IN BLAENAU GWENT CITIZEN'S FORUM

HOW CAN BLAENAU GWENT COME TOGETHER TO MAKE LOCAL TRAVEL FAIRER, GREENER AND BETTER FOR EVERYONE? WE CAN...

REDUCE CAR USE FOR COMMUTES



ALWAYS HAVE WHEELCHAIR RAMP AVAILABLE ON TRAINS



IMPROVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN TRANSPORT PLANNING



EXPLORE TAKING BUSES BACK INTO PUBLIC OWNERSHIP



INCREASE TRANSPORT OPTIONS IN THE EVENING



IMPROVE TAXI SERVICES



INCREASE Fflecsci BUS PUBLICITY, CAPACITY AND FUNDING



PROMOTE AND EXPAND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SCHEMES



ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO WALK, CYCLE OR WHEEL



PROVIDE BETTER OPTIONS FOR SCHOOL JOURNEYS

