

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol Blaenau Gwent



Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan

Draft first revision
December 2010

**BLAENAU GWENT
REGENERATION STRATEGY
AND ACTION PLAN**

DRAFT FIRST REVISION

DECEMBER 2010

Blaenau Gwent Draft First Revision of the Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan

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Foreword

A Regeneration Strategy was prepared for Blaenau Gwent. The Council approved the Strategy in September 2009. It also had the approval of the Regeneration Partnership Board.

Copies of this Draft First Revision of the Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan will be made available in all Blaenau Gwent libraries and in Community First Offices.

Copies of the Draft Strategy can be emailed to interested parties and it will also be accessible on the Council's website . Officers will be happy to discuss it with interested parties. Please contact Sharon Hill (357782) or Ged McHugh (355720). Let the Council know what you think about the Draft Strategy, what you like, what you don't like, any other suggestions you may have. Comments by 21st April 2011 will help to finalise the First Revision.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Blaenau Gwent Regeneration Strategy has been developed during 2007 and early 2008 to provide a platform for the continuing transformation of the County Borough over the next 10 years.

Blaenau Gwent is at a crossroads. The closure of the steelworks in 2002 brought a massive challenge to the Borough and its communities, but lots of work has already been carried out to meet these challenges. However there remains much to do, particularly in the light of the current recession.

Blaenau Gwent struggles with a legacy of deprivation in terms of income, health, education and opportunity. Also business performance is lagging behind other parts of Wales. Despite improvements in the physical environment and in employment over the last few years this legacy needs to be tackled by the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The County Borough Council, the Welsh Assembly Government and a wide range of partners from the public, private and voluntary and community sector have worked closely over the last year to draw up this Regeneration Strategy which sets the plans for making Blaenau Gwent a great place to live, work, learn and relax.

The strategy sets out six principles for regeneration and then identifies a number of transformational actions that must be implemented if the Borough is to come out of the recession and meet its vision for 2018.

Some of the actions will involve big, new physical developments in the shape of buildings, new facilities, reclaimed former industrial sites and new places of employment. These include:

- **Community Hubs** in each of the main urban areas incorporating new schools, community centres, learning and IT facilities and business centres.
- The complete transformation of the old steelworks site to create **The Works** - a 3,000 job complex including a hospital, proposed unique lifelong learning campus, theatre, leisure centre, 500 houses and business premises.
- New **high-quality business sites** for inward investment companies and small business incubation units.
- The completion of the dual carriageway **Heads of the Valleys road** between Tredegar and Abergavenny, **links to The Works site** and the further development of the **Ebbw Vale rail line**.
- Improved **local areas and town centres** where people go about their daily business.

These infrastructure projects will require massive investment from WAG, the Council, the NHS and the European Union. They will provide employment during the construction phase and afterwards, and the partners are determined that local people will benefit from job opportunities in these new developments which will help offset the effects of the recession.

Other projects will involve working closely with communities, with business, with learners and with disadvantaged people from throughout the Borough in a broad array of activities such as:

- Improving the impact of the **business support network** and the capacity of local people to **start their own businesses** and grow them.
- Creating a model network of **integrated public transport**, using commercial buses, community buses and other local services to make sure the new developments, community hubs and The Works are all accessible from every part of the Borough.
- Drawing up a **skills plan** to provide the best ever opportunities for Blaenau Gwent learners, workers and those currently outside the labour market – to get into work, to progress in work and to learn useful skills to make the most of the new developments.
- Helping **local businesses bid for and win work** at The Works and the other big new building projects and overcome the barriers for local people to get a job in these developments once they are built and operating.
- Finally – really **promoting and marketing Blaenau Gwent and The Works**. For too long the area has been shy about blowing its own trumpet but now the opportunities are just too good to ignore. Blaenau Gwent needs to improve its image with **investors** who can bring jobs and prosperity; with the **decision makers** in Cardiff and elsewhere who can help make things happen; and with **local people** – in many ways the harshest critics of all!

Many of these activities above will require the close involvement of Blaenau Gwent's voluntary and community organisations, both in ensuring community engagement and in the delivery of front-line services in some of the communities which are hardest to reach for the big public agencies.

The Regeneration Strategy finishes with an Action Plan, highlighting the specific things that the big public partners have committed to doing over the next few years and how they can be supported by the private sector and the community sector to make it all happen.

It is clear that there are some actions which can be tackled most effectively at a Blaenau Gwent level, but others will benefit substantially from a sub-regional partnership approach with partners in the Heads of the Valleys, in the 5 Counties and across the entire south east of Wales.



1. INTRODUCTION

The Vision for Blaenau Gwent in 2018

- 1.1. Blaenau Gwent is at a crossroads. The closure of steel manufacturing in 2002 brought a massive challenge to the Borough and its communities and a tremendous amount of work has been carried out by the Council, the Welsh Assembly Government and their partners to meet these challenges head on.
- 1.2. The key strands of the ambitious 2002 Regeneration Strategy have been implemented and the 2006 Turning Heads strategy for the Heads of the Valleys is continuing to bring real benefits to Blaenau Gwent. However it is vital that the strategic partners continue to forge ahead with an exciting and challenging vision for the future of the Borough; and an updated strategy which will deliver this vision throughout Blaenau Gwent.
- 1.3. The new Regeneration Strategy has been prepared and has taken account of a wide range of initiatives and policies being developed at the national, Valleys and local level. The One Wales agenda for the government of Wales has identified a vision of a fair, prosperous, confident and outgoing Wales, which creates prosperity and jobs in living communities. The emerging Wales Spatial Plan has identified a network of "Hub settlements" throughout South East Wales – employment and service centres with a critical role to play in delivering that vision. Ebbw Vale is identified as one of these Hub settlements.

- 1.4. In the Heads of the Valleys area the partners are building on this idea and are developing a vision for a sub-regional network of some eleven urban clusters, each with a Hub settlement at its heart. The Hub model is fully aligned with the innovative HARPS approach (Holistic Area Regeneration Plans) being introduced to inform HoV programme investment. Blaenau Gwent is well placed in this network with four Hub settlements identified. The strategic partners fully support this vision for Blaenau Gwent and have placed the idea of accessible, sustainable and inclusive Community Hubs at the centre of the this Blaenau Gwent Regeneration Strategy for 2018. These Hubs – in the areas of Ebbw Vale, Tredegar, Upper Ebbw Fach and Lower Ebbw Fach – are proposed as the focus of the key investment programmes and will create real opportunities throughout their local areas, offering a wide range of facilities and services.
- 1.5. It should be made clear at this stage that inclusion of initiatives and projects in this Strategy and Action Plan document does not necessarily reflect any actual commitments by public sector partners. Such commitments will be considered and appraised in due course.

Under the WAG Plan Rationalisation Process, there are four key Strategies which need to be prepared for Local Authorities:-

The Community Plan
The Local Development Plan
The Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategy
The Children and Young People's Plan

The Regeneration Strategy is a more focussed document, concerned about with Regeneration issues (economic development, skills and training, physical regeneration). It will take account of these four key Strategies.

The Content of the Regeneration Strategy

- 1.6. This document begins by describing the economic, social and business position of Blaenau Gwent. This acts as a baseline for developing the Strategy. A series of more detailed research documents which have informed this Strategy are available from the Borough Council. In addition the Strategy briefly sets out the wider policy context at national, regional and local level which covers the regeneration agenda in Blaenau Gwent.
- 1.7. This research was undertaken in summer 2007 but has been updated in some areas, particularly with reference to the onset of recession. The partners believe that the recession, while impacting severely on the economic opportunities in the Borough, does not change the longer term vision for Blaenau Gwent.
- 1.8. The Strategy then outlines the new vision for the Borough which places the four Community Hubs at its heart.

- 1.9. Having drawn up the vision, the Strategy sets out the six Principles which underpin the programmes and actions that partners will bring forward. These Principles help focus action on maximising the contribution to the new vision.
- 1.10. The key programmes and schemes under each Principle are then described – and in particular those actions which are considered to be ‘transformational’ in nature and likely to contribute most effectively to the vision.
- 1.11. The Strategy document is completed by a chapter on delivery and action planning, which sets out the process through which the Strategy will be delivered and the role that key strategic partners will play in this delivery process.
- 1.12. It is inevitable that a 10-year strategy will be seen in the context of the economic conditions which are prevalent at the beginning of the planning period. The recession will create particular challenges for the Borough which will require a range of immediate interventions by the key partners, but it has been stressed that the focus of the Regeneration Strategy should remain on the medium-term vision and outcomes to ensure that Blaenau Gwent is well placed to emerge from the recession.



2. BLAENAU GWENT 2010

Introduction

- 2.1. The closure of the Corus works at Ebbw Vale brought fundamental changes to the structure of the Blaenau Gwent economy. It took away a source of well-paid, secure employment and created massive challenges for the public authorities throughout South East Wales. However it also provided a major catalyst in forging exciting new public and private partnerships, devising ambitious and transformational regeneration strategies and accessing substantial WAG and EU funding to make the delivery of these strategies a reality.
- 2.2. However, despite considerable activity and undoubted successes since 2002, Blaenau Gwent still suffers across a wide range of socio-economic factors. This is not unusual since successful community regeneration requires a long-term and integrated approach which addresses factors such as skills and learning, health and well-being and community capacity building as well as physical and infrastructure regeneration.
- 2.3. This section of the Strategy provides an overview of the economic and social state of the Borough today.

Transformational Regeneration since 2002

- 2.4. The regeneration partners and stakeholders identified a remarkable range of successful projects, investments and other achievements which have been delivered in recent years. These include:

Transformational Changes:

- Land clearance and remediation on the Ebbw Vale steelworks site
- Road investment on the A465 and the Cwm by-pass
- The opening of the railway to Ebbw Vale
- The improvement of town centres, including the Metropole in Abertillery and the clock and canopy in Ebbw Vale
- An increase in private house building, for example in Brynmawr and Ebbw Vale
- Continued “greening” and environmental improvements
- Refurbishment of primary schools, stimulating improvements in attainment in communities such as Llanhilleth
- The opening of RISE learning centres and nursery schools across the Borough
- Improved school attainment rates and a higher rate of higher education enrolments
- Major developments at a number of sites including the former Dunlop-Semtex factory
- Construction of high-quality business premises such as Tredegar Business Park, the “BREEAM excellent” unit at Rising Sun and 25,000 ft² of office space in Abertillery
- An increase in the rate of business creation
- 100% broadband availability across Blaenau Gwent

The Continuing Challenges

- 2.6. Despite the real progress being made in delivering the key priorities of the 2002 Strategy, it is clear that much remains to be done to transform the performance of the Borough across a wide range of socio-economic indicators.

POPULATION

- 2.7. The population has fallen by almost 1100 since 2001 (to 68600). Blaenau Gwent’s people are less diverse than the Welsh average – 90% were born in Wales and only 0.8% are from ethnic groups.

DEPRIVATION

- 2.8. Blaenau Gwent still suffers from acute and widespread levels of deprivation. According to the new Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, 21% of the Borough’s small areas (LSOAs) are in the most deprived 10% in Wales. This is the 2nd highest proportion in Wales, but has improved since 2005. Statistically the most deprived small areas are in Tredegar Central & West, Sirhowy and Ebbw Vale North, although deprivation is evident in many parts of the Borough.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

- 2.9. 6.5% of the working age population claim Job Seekers Allowance in July 2010 (a total of 2,849 people). 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 Welsh average.
- 2.10. Long-term unemployment is a persistent problem. In July 2010, 35% of claimants had been unemployed for a year. The proportion of claimants under 25 is 33%.
- 2.11. The proportion of the working age population who are economically active (2009) is 68.9% - again much lower than that of Wales.
- 2.12. These indicators will inevitably deteriorate through 2009, making the case for increased regeneration activity even clearer.

EMPLOYMENT RATE

- 2.13. In 2009 employment levels in Blaenau Gwent were lower than those of Wales as a whole – 58.1% of Blaenau Gwent's working age population compared with 66.6% in Wales.

OUT COMMUTING

- 2.14. In 2006 there were 26,500 working residents in the Borough but 1,100 more people commute out of the Borough than commute in. However the in-commuting level has improved, suggesting Blaenau Gwent is offering more attractive job opportunities.

EARNINGS

- 2.15. Earnings figures for 2009 showed Blaenau Gwent's median gross weekly pay to be £365.2 for people working in the area, compared to £440.8 for Wales as a whole.

ENTERPRISE

- 2.16. Only 4.0% of workers are self-employed, compared with 8.3% in Wales.
- 2.17. There are 1,020 VAT-registered businesses – (2009). However the three-year survival rate for new businesses is just 66%. The vast majority of businesses (88%) employ less than 10 people.

WORKFORCE QUALIFICATION AND SKILLS

- 2.18. Despite improvements since 2002, Blaenau Gwent still suffers from low levels of skills:
- 21.5% of adults have no qualifications (just 14.8% in Wales)
 - 54.0% are qualified to Level 2 and above (64.7% in Wales)
 - 17.3% are qualified to Level 4 and above (27.3% in Wales).
- 2.19. Surveys show most adults would like to be involved in learning, but experience some barriers that stop them. The majority of employers who recruit young people report a significant skills gap.

EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE

- 2.20. Blaenau Gwent's educational performance remains below the Welsh average, with under-performance evident from an early age. Recent A level performance has improved but this needs to become sustainable.
- 2.21. The number of local students enrolled in higher education has increased by more than 10% to 1,695. The proportion of Year 11 pupils continuing in education has risen faster than for Gwent as a whole. Also the proportion of school leavers not in education, employment or training (NEETs) is a major and increasing problem.

INDUSTRIAL AND OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURES

- 2.22. The Blaenau Gwent economy has experienced major structural change, moving from dependence on heavy industry towards manufacturing and services. Figures suggest an fall of 600 jobs between 2005 and 2008 (Annual Business Inquiry).
- 2.23. In 2001 manufacturing accounted for 41% of jobs and now it is only 28% (2009). At the same time there has been an increase of 900 service jobs – but the sector is still smaller than in Wales. The largest number of these jobs is in public administration, education, health, distribution, hotels and restaurants.

Table 1: Employee jobs by Sector 2009

Percentages	Blaenau Gwent	Wales	Great Britain
Manufacturing	28.2	13.7	10.2
Construction	4.3	5.2	4.8
Services	67.4	79.1	83.5
• <i>Distribution, hotels and restaurants</i>	22.2	23.0	23.4
• <i>Transport and communications</i>	3.7	4.3	5.8
• <i>Finance, IT, other business activities</i>	6.8	14.1	22.0
• <i>Public admin, education and health</i>	31.1	32.9	27.0
• <i>Other services</i>	3.6	4.8	5.3
<i>Tourism-related</i>	6.0	8.3	8.2

2.24. The table below shows that Blaenau Gwent has a higher proportion of lower band occupations than Wales, particularly personal service occupations, plant & machine operatives and elementary occupations. Moreover, there are fewer people employed in professional and managerial occupations.

Table 2: Employment by occupation 2009

Percentages	Blaenau Gwent	Wales	Great Britain
Managers, senior officials, professional/technical	30.2	39.0	44.1
Administrative, secretarial & skilled trades	23.0	23.6	21.7
Personal service, sales & customer service	17.9	17.4	16.1
Operatives, elementary occupations	28.9	20.1	18.1

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

2.25. Blaenau Gwent has the lowest life expectancy in Wales – 74.2 years for males and 78.4 for females.

2.26. Adults in Blaenau Gwent report the highest rates of limiting long-term illness and the least healthy lifestyles, high rates of obesity, alcohol consumption and smoking, but low rates of fruit and vegetable intake. A high proportion of adults have fewer than 21 of their own teeth.

2.27. There are fewer GPs per head of the population compared with Wales. A higher proportion of people are waiting for their first outpatient appointment, inpatient admission and day case treatment. Of those people on hospital waiting lists, more are waiting longer.

2.28. There is a high percentage of looked-after children in Blaenau Gwent. More people receive community-based services and nursing home care than in Wales, but a smaller proportion of those over 65 receive residential care.

HOUSING

- 2.29. By the end of 2007 the average house price in Blaenau Gwent had passed the £100,000 mark – an increase of 160% since 2002 which is the second highest increase in the UK. This has changed during 2008 reflecting the national downturn in property prices.
- 2.30. Only 62% of homes are owner occupied compared with 71% in Wales. People are more likely to rent from the Council than in other parts of Wales. Since 2001 Blaenau Gwent has seen a growth of just 0.6% in total household numbers, much lower than Wales. It has also seen the lowest rates of new dwelling completions, across all tenures, in Wales.
- 2.31. Almost all households have central heating and sole use of a bath/shower and toilet. However, to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, investment in the Council house stock will need to be around £100m over the next 5 years.

INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL PROPERTY

- 2.32. Blaenau Gwent Council's business property portfolio currently provides 315,000 sq ft of floor space – this includes 13 estates with a total of 189 units. The units range in size from around 100 sq ft to 16,600 sq ft and sustain over 100 businesses in a mixture of offices, small industrial and higher specification units on various estates and business parks.

TRANSPORT

- 2.33. Low car ownership and poor public transport in Blaenau Gwent restricts access to jobs. In 2001 over a third of households had no access to a car or van. Until 2008 there were no passenger rail services in the Borough; however a rail link opened early in 2008, extending to Ebbw Vale Parkway and providing an hourly service to Cardiff. It is planned to extend the service into Ebbw Vale Town and it is expected there will also be a service to Newport in due course and that opportunities for extending the line to Abertillery will be explored. This is making it possible for more local residents to access jobs and education opportunities.
- 2.34. There are also plans to improve bus corridor routes such as Ebbw Vale/Brynmawr to Newport and Tredegar to Blackwood.
- 2.35. The A465 (Heads of the Valleys Road) is Blaenau Gwent's most important link to the national road network. Upgrading it has been a top priority in strengthening Blaenau Gwent's competitive advantage. The route is now being enhanced and this will have a fundamental impact on the upper Valleys.

ENVIRONMENT/LEISURE AND TOURISM

- 2.36. Despite being a traditional mining and iron making area, Blaenau Gwent benefits from a high quality natural environment. Over three quarters is open space and the distinctive roller coaster landscape boasts a variety of habitats and biodiversity. Silent Valley is designated as a Local Nature Reserve with 9

others in the pipeline. There are 2 SSSI and many other sites that contribute to the quality of the natural environment. The landscape is also rich in archaeology with 52 listed buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments ranging from reminders of the industrial past to those dating back to the Celts.

This landscape, with a wealth of interest, generates significant opportunities for activity tourism for a variety of abilities, easy walking routes to challenging upland walks. The landscape, both above and underground, offers a huge range of other pursuits such as cycling, climbing and caving.

Festival Park and Parc Bryn Bach are the two largest tourist attractions in the area. The soon to be opened attractions at The General Offices in Ebbw Vale and the redeveloped Bedwellty House and Park will add significantly to the tourism offer in Blaenau Gwent.

- 2.37. Recent years have seen a growth in the value and volume of tourism to the economy. STEAM statistics show that tourism brings in 563,000 visitors who spend 740,000 tourist days in Blaenau Gwent. This generates £29.7m and is responsible for the full time equivalent of 535 jobs. The tourism and leisure sector is predicted to be one of Europe's major growth industries over the next decade and the Head of the Valleys Strategy recognises that Blaenau Gwent has an opportunity to seize its share of this growth potential. The creation of a "perception changing" landscape is considered vital for such growth.

BROADBAND COVERAGE AND TAKE UP

- 2.38. Broadband coverage is 100% but take-up levels in Blaenau Gwent are the lowest anywhere in Wales. Only 34% of households have broadband, compared to 43% across Wales.

Summary SWOT Analysis

- 2.39. The current position of Blaenau Gwent is summarised in the table over the page, drawing out the key issues and presenting them as a series of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The main messages are that much has been achieved over the past six years but the official data shows that Blaenau Gwent still lags behind most of the rest of Wales across a wide range of indicators to do with economic and social well-being.
- 2.40. These issues will help inform the main priorities of the Regeneration Strategy and the interventions that underpin it.

Table 3: SWOT Summary

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attractive natural environment, rich in biodiversity, with close proximity to Brecon Beacons National Park• Proximity to main urban centres (South of the Valleys)• Good access to M4 and A465• Retention of a significant capability in manufacturing
<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lasting effects of major industrial change, worsened by the recession• High levels of deprivation and worklessness• Low levels of self-employment and enterprise• Low – but improving - levels of educational attainment and skills• High proportion of low level occupations• Low average earnings• Poor levels of health and an ageing population• Low levels of car ownership and public transport accessibility
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The steelworks site is a transformational opportunity for all of the Borough – in learning and skills, health, housing, jobs and the environment• Investment in business and enterprise, with Local Investment Fund and the Kick Start Fund• Improvements in transport links, including the A465 upgrade and Ebbw Vale Railway Scheme, linking to more job opportunities in Cardiff• Housing potential created by improved transport links, with opportunities to increase choice and quality across tenures over the next 10 years• Natural assets that can be used to build the tourism and leisure sector, including Festival Park, Local Nature Reserves and Brecon Beacons National Park• The infrastructure of Development Trusts, Communities First and other third sector organisations• Leisure and tourism will be at the forefront of regeneration in Wales over the next 10 years
<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Population continuing to decline• Recession reduces jobs, enterprise, training opportunities and private sector participation in regeneration projects for an extended period• More young people leaving the area• Failure to improve educational and skills attainment• High share of manufacturing firms vulnerable to recession and global competitiveness• The manufacturing skills of the population will not be utilised



3. BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS AUDIT AND SURVEY

- 3.1. Two pieces of research were carried out to help inform the priorities of the Regeneration Strategy:

Blaenau Gwent - Insight into Competitiveness - an analysis of business databases and other socio-economic information.

The Blaenau Gwent Business Survey - a phone survey with 30 local businesses of all sizes and types.

- 3.2. These two studies are available as supplementary reports and are summarised in this chapter of the Regeneration Strategy. They were both carried out before the impacts of the recession were fully evident amongst the business community.

“Blaenau Gwent - Insight into Competitiveness”

- 3.3. This study was carried out by Gavurin Ltd to provide robust evidence of the structure and competitiveness of the Blaenau Gwent business base as it stands today. Using a wide range of publicly available data and Gavurin’s databases derived from Companies House information, the analysis provides a number of very clear conclusions about the performance of the local economy which help inform the nature of interventions which should be taken forward in the strategy.

COMPETITIVENESS AND PRODUCTIVITY

- 3.4. Regional (or place-based) competitiveness is driven by the productivity of the region's economy in terms of the value of goods and services produced per unit of human or capital resources. High productivity allows an economy to support high wages, achieve attractive returns on capital and create a high standard of living.
- 3.5. HM Treasury has developed a model of regional productivity which links five key drivers and high performing places score well against each of these drivers: Skills, Enterprise, Competition, Investment and Innovation.
- 3.6. Innovation and educated labour force are particularly important drivers as is innovation in its widest sense – including products, processes, marketing, enterprise culture, connectivity to knowledge and research networks and telecommunications.

THE NUMBER OF BUSINESSES

- 3.7. There are just 2,662 businesses in Blaenau Gwent (389 per 10,000 persons). If there were the same number as the British average there would be about 2,000 more than actually exist. Over the next 10 years, Blaenau Gwent will need to double its business population to get near the national average.
- 3.8. The number of women running businesses in Blaenau Gwent is almost the lowest in Wales. Research shows that where women have influence in business, the impact on performance is considerable.

ECONOMIC SPECIALISM AND COMPARISON

- 3.9. Blaenau Gwent is very manufacturing oriented (26% of jobs compared with just 11% in Great Britain). The corollary is that it is very under-represented in business activities (5% compared with 17%) and in areas such as hotels and restaurants and financial services.
- 3.10. A detailed analysis of the economy shows that Blaenau Gwent has two clear industrial specialisms and four potential specialisms:

Existing Specialisms	Potential Specialisms
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Metal manufacturing• Automotive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lighting and electrical equipment• Analytical instruments• Communications equipment• Motor driven products

- 3.11. How well is Blaenau Gwent doing compared with other UK places with a similar industrial structure and some of the same specialisms? The best comparator was found to be Sedgefield in County Durham. Sedgefield is not an especially strong economy, but compared to Blaenau Gwent:
 - There are more businesses per person
 - Average profitability of businesses is four times higher
 - There are more businesses per person
 - GVA per head is appreciably higher

3.12. If Blaenau Gwent's businesses were as productive as Sedgefield's then GVA per head would be £12,400 higher.

STRENGTHENING SPECIALISMS

3.13. Places with strong specialisms have a broad spectrum of companies and a significant number of people working within them. Therefore strengthening a specialism either involves:

- Adding the companies and activities that are "missing" and strengthening the relevant existing ones
- Adding jobs in the existing companies and the "missing" ones
- An understanding of what makes a strong specialism means you can identify which industries, companies and people must be added.

ATTRACTING NEW FIRMS AND PEOPLE TO A PLACE

3.14. The key factors in strengthening a specialism include:

- Developing a ready supply of appropriately skilled labour by identifying future occupational and skills needs and putting plans in place to deliver these skills.
- Strengthening the supply chain by enhancing and embedding links between suppliers, customers and services.
- Attracting people and firms through a wide range of place amenities such as retail, sports, cultural, green space and schools. Blaenau Gwent has fewer cultural amenities than the UK average but proposals for the theatre and leisure centre at The Works will help.

PEOPLE AND SKILLS ISSUES

3.15. The number of workless in Blaenau Gwent is considerable and the resident population is poorly qualified. 10% of unemployed claimants are skilled trades people and 25% are plant operatives. This illustrates that there is already some existing capacity for these occupations.

3.16. Sedgefield outperforms Blaenau Gwent in terms of high skills while Blaenau Gwent has more people with NVQ1 or no qualifications at all. Schools need to improve Key Stage 3 performance.

JOBS, OCCUPATIONS AND THE SPECIALISMS

3.17. Comparison with Sedgefield suggests that Blaenau Gwent was short of significant numbers of skilled trades people and plant operatives. If Blaenau Gwent could strengthen its own specialisms to compare with Sedgefield's, this would create 60 new firms and 1,150 jobs. These jobs would have a strong focus on managers, professionals, administrative workers and skilled trades people.

BUSINESS SERVICES

- 3.18. In a modern economy a firm must buy in specialist expertise – including software, legal and accounting services, R&D, and advertising and marketing. Blaenau Gwent has 200 firms in business services; if it met the UK average it would have another 220 businesses and 2,350 more people working in the sector.

CONCLUSIONS OF COMPETITIVENESS STUDY

- 3.19. Blaenau Gwent has a poorly performing business base with far too few companies, especially in areas such as business services. It also suffers in terms of factors which might attract modern businesses and skilled staff, such as digital connectivity, skills and learning and in cultural amenities.
- Inward investment should target specialisms and business services
 - Learning and skills activity should be focused on the occupational needs of specialisms, to attracting new firms, encourage take-up by employers and attract learners
 - Digital connectivity should be enhanced, through community and retail provision of WiFi
 - A local Business Birth Rate Strategy should be established, encouraging and supporting people from all backgrounds to think about starting a business, particularly women

Blaenau Gwent Business Survey

- 3.20. Shared Intelligence carried out a phone survey of 30 local businesses, employing a total of almost 2,200 people, across all sectors and all types of business.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMPANIES

- 3.21. Over half of the businesses were in manufacturing, ranging from automotive components, to pharmaceuticals and health products, ceramics and tiles and temperature and humidity chambers. A smaller number were in the service sector, including wholesale traders, insurance brokers and financial services firms.
- 3.22. Two-thirds were independent and one-third were subsidiaries of a larger group. The subsidiary companies were all manufacturers and their local operations tended to be larger than the independent companies. The majority of the subsidiaries had foreign parents, with Germany the single most common country of ownership.
- 3.23. The companies ranged in size from just 1 employee right up to 500. Almost one-third of respondents employed less than 5 people while 2 had more than 250 employees. The mean size of company was 72 employees.
- 3.24. Company turnover also varied – from less than £100,000 up to £200m per annum. Three companies had a turnover above £50m and all were in

manufacturing or construction supplies. The smaller companies tended to be in their infancy.

MARKETS AND COMPETITORS

- 3.25. The great majority sell to other business rather than directly to end-user customers. The direct customer companies tended to be smaller, locally-owned and involved in services.
- 3.26. Exporting is considerable. About half of the businesses sell over 75% of their output outside Wales and the adjacent regions of England; and over half are involved in exports beyond the UK. The companies that focus on the South East Wales market tend to be smaller service sector firms. Companies feel they are in very competitive markets – even before the recession kicked in. Manufacturers face competition from Eastern Europe and the Far East and a number of firms referred to competition from the Midlands.
- 3.27. Price was the most quoted reason for losing business. Only four companies felt they won work because they were “innovative” – largely in health/pharmaceuticals and subsidiaries of larger multi-national groups. Eight said they had to diversify through new products and services to win work.
- 3.28. New, smaller businesses felt they lost work due to a lack of credibility and reputation and some felt they did not have the resources to fund major new market opportunities. A small number of smaller businesses felt their location in Blaenau Gwent had contributed to lost sales.

SUPPLY CHAIN

- 3.29. Most companies buy in substantial volumes of supplies and services. However only a handful use local suppliers for major supplies, although most buy locally for office supplies and catering. Just under half predominantly buy supplies from overseas – Europe and the Far East. One-third believed that reliance on distant suppliers had caused problems in delivery costs, unreliability and environmental impacts.

KEY ISSUES

- 3.30. The companies were asked to identify the key issues they were facing in the years ahead.

Table 4: The key issues facing businesses

Key issue facing the business	No. of businesses
Foreign Competition	13
Lack of Skilled Labour/ Poor Work Ethic	12
Lack of Funding	4

- 3.31. Foreign competition was the most cited threat, with some companies saying that their competitors were moving to Eastern Europe or the Far East and this was making it more difficult to compete on cost. The recession would obviously feature as a key issue if the survey was repeated today.
- 3.32. Manufacturing firms voiced concerns about the lack of skilled labour and an apparent lack of training opportunities locally. Linked to this was the perception of a poor work ethic, particularly regarding young people, which evidenced itself in very low staff retention rates.
- 3.33. Funding was a problem for a number of new, small companies. One manufacturing company referred specifically to a need for new premises to allow consolidation on one site in Blaenau Gwent.

SKILLS AND LABOUR

- 3.34. Less than half of the firms had any graduates but almost all companies employed "highly skilled non-graduates". Half said they face difficulties in recruiting staff, linked to lack of qualified and experienced staff and a perceived poor work ethic. Some firms are expanding their search area, with one recruiting qualified people from overseas.
- 3.35. The key skills required in future include IT and computer skills as well as softer skills such as attitudes to work and employability. There was a concern that Blaenau Gwent would not be able to attract well qualified young people.

INNOVATION

- 3.36. Two-thirds of companies described themselves as "innovative", referring to new product development and process improvements. Some of the most innovative activities included eye scanners and products to tackle MRSA in hospital bedding.
- 3.37. Almost half said they had collaborated with other companies or universities in developing products and services. These companies were almost all in manufacturing but included both independent and subsidiary companies. Only 20% said they had received support with their innovation projects from public sector agencies – receiving WAG or Council grants. The grant process was considered by some to be complex and long-winded although the support was regarded as knowledgeable and helpful.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT

- 3.38. Over half have used private sector support and advice. It was mostly smaller, independent companies and they cited financial, tax, IT, marketing and training as the subject of the support. The great majority (25 out of 30) had

recent contact with public sector agencies. The most frequently cited reasons were grant assistance, training initiatives and general advice and support. WAG (including WDA) and Blaenau Gwent Council were the most frequently mentioned agencies.

- 3.39. The general view of public sector support was positive, with most companies regarding it as good to excellent. However many felt that the role of the public sector could be improved, in areas such as:
- Funding advice and grants
 - Provision of new premises
 - SME support and advice
 - Ongoing relationships with companies
 - Public sector activity in place-making and the wider community
- 3.40. Information on funding and support with applications was highly sought after. Small companies particularly regarded this as a key area for public bodies and suggested innovative ways of providing developmental funding through loans and royalties or equity agreements.
- 3.41. A small number of companies felt that support for helping companies into new premises should be a higher priority. Companies saw a role for the Council in basic skills and wider community regeneration. Activities such as vocational training for school students and subsidised leisure and sports facilities. Some companies volunteered an interest in collaborating with public agencies around the employment, skills and community well-being agendas.
- 3.42. Had this survey been undertaken today it would inevitably have been influenced by the anticipated impact of the recession, resulting in weakened demand (although partly offset by the reduced value of sterling which increases the attractiveness of UK exports). However the strategic issues of skills, premises and business support remain extremely valid.



4. NATIONAL, REGIONAL & LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

- 4.1. Blaenau Gwent has been the focus of a number of studies and considerable regeneration activity over the past years. The Blaenau Gwent Regeneration Programme was prepared in 2002 following the announcement by Corus of the closure of the Ebbw Vale steelworks.
- 4.2. Since 2002 the policy landscape has changed significantly with a number of policy developments and initiatives. These range in scale from pan-Wales, to regional – with a focus on south east Wales or the Valleys, to local – focusing on the opportunities and priorities in Blaenau Gwent itself. They include:
 - Economic Renewal: A New Direction
 - One Wales
 - EU Convergence Funding
 - Wales Spatial Plan and South East Wales Spatial Plan
 - Turning Heads: A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys
 - Blaenau Gwent Community Plan 2005-09 + 2010-2030
 - Skills That Work for Wales (Draft Skills & Employment Strategy)
 - Ebbw Vale Masterplan
- 4.3. These policy initiatives are closely aligned and, together, aim to develop Wales into a knowledge based, high value-added economy. Several themes feature prominently, including building a skilled and entrepreneurial workforce, creating a learning culture, supporting business innovation, investing in transport and community infrastructure and promoting a high quality and sustainable environment.

National Policy Context

The Deputy First Minister has published a new Economic Renewal Programme in a document entitled Economic 'Renewal: a New Direction'.

To quote, the new approach includes:

- Reducing the level of direct business support, with resources and funding moved to wider infrastructure development – this will mean half the resources of the Single Investment Fund now going to infrastructure projects. Most of the finance that the Economy & Transport Department provides directly will be gradually moved to a repayable model.
- Developing the role of an enabler of growth rather than a direct deliverer of services to individual companies, so we will reduce the level of direct business support beyond the start-up phase to create space for private-sector business support.
- Developing high quality and sustainable infrastructure to underpin economic growth. Investors and indigenous businesses must be able to count on communications, transport, energy and other infrastructure necessary for 21st Century enterprise. This includes a commitment for every business in Wales to have access to Next Generation broadband by the middle of 2016, with all households enabled by 2020 – and a major improvement in mobile phone coverage.
- Supporting industry-led investment in six key sectors, where Wales has clear advantages for growth, instead of the current 14. The new target sectors, supported by resources released following closure of the Single Investment Fund are:-
 - Creative industries
 - ICT
 - Energy and Environment
 - Advanced material \ and manufacturing
 - Life Sciences
 - Financial and Professional services.
- A reduction of bureaucracy in public sector procurement, including a single National Procurement Website. We want businesses of all sizes to be able to bid for public sector contracts and easily navigate the system.
- Working with business to broaden and deepen the base of skills in Wales, including science, technology, engineering and maths, extension of the Apprenticeships programme and a new Basic Skills Employer Pledge. We will ensure that our young people are motivated and ready for the world of work, with the right attitudes and skills for the workplace. Employers will get help to tackle the costs arising from low levels of literacy and numeracy.
- Improvement supply of premises for business in areas where there is a shortage through a combination of direct provision and gap funding.

4.4. As part of the West Wales and the Valleys region, between 2007 and 2013, Blaenau Gwent is receiving the highest level of European structural funding, Convergence Funding. The funding programme identifies the need for the

region to increase skills and knowledge, levels of R&D, ICT utilisation and entrepreneurship to build a knowledge economy, as well as current inadequacies in infrastructure to support this, including transport and business sites.

- 4.5. *Better Homes for People in Wales: The National Housing Strategy* was published in 2001, emphasising the importance of good quality, affordable and mixed-tenure housing. It forecasts the number of households needing accommodation in Wales to increase by 140,000 (12 per cent) between 1996 and 2016. At the same time, it pledges that all social housing will be brought up to national quality standards by 2011.
- 4.6. *The Transport Strategy for Wales* will largely be delivered on a regional basis. Blaenau Gwent's submission stressed the need to concentrate on the A4046 route from the A465 south through the Borough.
- 4.7. In response to the Leitch and Webb reviews the Assembly Government published the strategy *Skills That Work for Wales*. This states that Wales must improve its workforce, leadership and management skills or else Welsh business will find it more difficult to compete. The low skilled will be progressively marginalised in the labour market and communities will become increasingly unequal. The recent document *Transforming Education and Training in Wales* takes these issues forward to ensure that all learning provision from the age of 16 is fundamentally reshaped, reconfigured and transformed so that all delivery is harmonised. A much greater degree of collaboration and networking between providers is essential, overseen by geographical or sectoral Learning Partnerships.
- 4.8. The Assembly Government's report *The Third Dimension* acknowledges the benefits of third sector organisations becoming involved in service design and delivery and – in so doing – aligning themselves more closely with the Assembly's priorities.

Regional Policy Context

- 4.9. The Capital Network, set out in the 2004 Wales Spatial Plan, is the vision for south east Wales, including Blaenau Gwent. The plan stresses the interdependence of Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys as a networked city-region. Reducing economic inactivity, building the role of universities in developing the economy, developing integrated transport, reducing economic inactivity and identifying environmental opportunities are the key elements of its vision. It also identifies 14 'hub settlements' which have been identified as having a critical role in the city region's success, although only one of these is in Blaenau Gwent – Ebbw Vale. These key settlements will be the prime focus for new development in south east Wales.
- 4.10. *Turning Heads: A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys* is the WAG-funded regeneration strategy, published in 2006, which covers Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil and parts of Rhondda Cynon Taf, Caerphilly and Torfaen.

It seeks to develop 'balanced communities' to provide a mix of housing, retail, tourism and leisure facilities as well as high quality public services and opportunities for people to work within the area and outside it. WAG has committed an additional £140m of special funding over 15 years and

anticipates leveraging in another £360m of private investment. The action plan for the first three years – to 2008/09 – identifies environmental projects, renewal of town centres and development of the tourism and leisure offer as the immediate focus for special funding.

- 4.11. The strategy has identified what success will look like, including regenerated and well connected town centres, better road and rail links and public transport, more and diverse business opportunities, more social enterprise, greater levels of innovation and entrepreneurship and more local and sustainable employment opportunities.

Local Policy Context

- 4.12. Regeneration is one of the seven key action areas in the Blaenau Gwent Community Plan 2005-9. Its objectives which relate to regeneration align closely with priorities at a national and regional level. These include measures to increase the stock of local businesses and the number of jobs in the Borough through business support and increasing commercial awareness of environmental opportunities, along with attracting new businesses to Blaenau Gwent. It also seeks to encourage self employment and social enterprises.

Making a Difference – A Community Strategy for Blaenau Gwent 2010-2030 Consultation Draft

The draft Community Strategy builds on the work undertaken by the Community Plan and takes forward the vision of making: Blaenau Gwent a better place to live, work and visit. The draft Community Strategy has 7 key themes and each theme has its own vision.

Lively & Accessible Communities – Creating communities that people enjoy and want to live in

Thriving Communities – Offering the opportunities, support and resources in our communities for people to thrive

Fair & Safe Communities – Making people feel safer in our communities

Learning Communities – Giving people the skills to succeed

Healthy Communities – Helping people to be healthy and get the right care and support when they need it

Green & Sustainable Communities – Improving our environment today for tomorrow

Community Leaders – Working with and for our communities

Under each of these themes the Strategy sets out:

- What we need to do?
- How we will do it?
- What will the key projects will be?
- What difference will it make?

The LDP, Regeneration Strategy and Regeneration Partnership will be directly responsible for delivering on: Lively & Accessible Communities, Thriving Communities and Green & Sustainable Communities.

The Council's Corporate Improvement Plan, developed under 'The Wales Programme for Improvement', cites regeneration as an underpinning theme.

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

- 4.13. Regeneration is a key focus of Blaenau Gwent's Unitary Development Plan (UDP). It emphasises the importance of maintaining a substantial valley community and using housing development as a means of securing urban regeneration. It forecasts demand for 726 additional dwellings in the Borough by 2011, beyond those already completed or committed to.
- 4.14. The UDP also has transport objectives of improving the main routes within Blaenau Gwent's three valleys and the strategic Heads of the Valleys route (A465), and encouraging alternative means of travel and transport which have less environmental impact. It states that strategic employment needs will be met by providing 180 hectares of land to accommodate existing businesses and a range of sites for new businesses. Existing retail centres should be consolidated and enhanced.
- 4.15. A masterplan has been developed for the 200 acre Ebbw Vale steelworks site. It features a Learning Campus, a local general hospital, high quality office space, 500 new homes, a theatre, a new railway station, a leisure centre and sports facilities and 70 acres of parkland. Developments on the site are being driven forward by the site project team and Blaenau Gwent Council in partnership with WAG. The Heads of the Valleys strategy identifies The Works as a strategically important project that will have a profound impact on the environment and economy of Ebbw Vale and the wider region.
- 4.16. The Heads of the Valleys Board has approved an approach to regeneration based on the wider needs of 11 sub-areas or urban clusters. The Board is developing the idea of Holistic Area Regeneration Plans for each of these clusters as a means of allocating strategic funding. There are 4 sub-areas in Blaenau Gwent.
- 4.17. Communities First Action Plans are addressing regeneration issues and in some cases are supporting skills and social enterprise initiatives.

4.18. The School Transformation Strategy was needed in Blaenau Gwent to achieve significant improvement in pupil attainment and for the community to reap the benefits of having a more highly skilled population. The School Transformation Strategy will be a 3-year plan that will measure progress on pupil attainment and achievement levels. There are six elements to the Strategy and these include:-

Raising attainment

Improving aspirational levels of pupils

Support for pupils with additional learning needs

The effective use of data and performance management

Consultation with schools and headteachers

Buildings and organisational needs

A School Transformation Project Board has been established which will take forward the priorities identified in the document.



5. THE VISION & KEY REGENERATION PRINCIPLES

- 5.1. In this section we set out the six Key Principles which drive the implementation of the Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan.

Review of the Vision

- 5.2. The 2002 Regeneration Strategy drew up a future Vision for Blaenau Gwent which encompassed the following characteristics

- People are growing in confidence
- The economy is founded on knowledge and diversity
- The population is growing
- The private residential market is very healthy
- Excellent connections with Cardiff and Newport
- Modern manufacturing is thriving in high quality premises
- The key town centres are revitalised and transformed
- The Learning Campus is a symbol of improved learning & skills
- Health standards and lifestyles are vastly improved
- Tourism is a booming part of the local economy

- 5.3. This remains an ambitious but very appropriate Vision for the future of Blaenau Gwent.

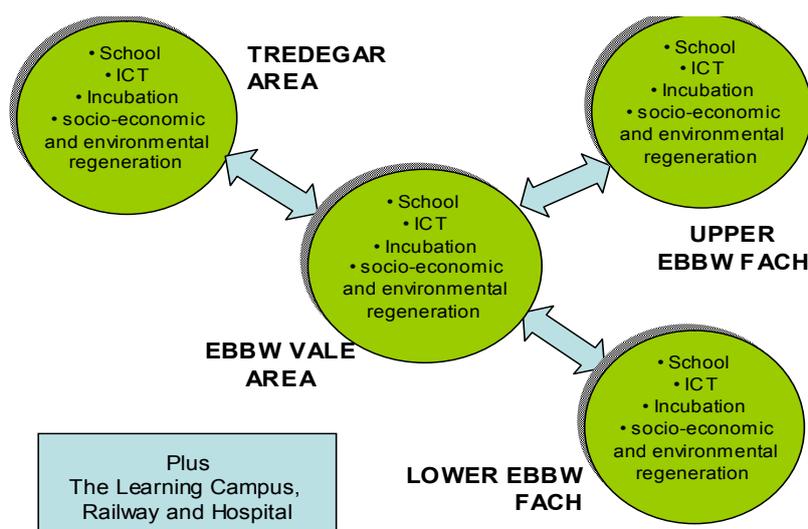
Vision for Community Hubs

- 5.4. The emerging momentum of One Wales, the Wales Spatial Plan and the new approach of Heads of the Valleys was seen as offering a focus for investment in key communities and Hubs. The identification of four Hubs within Blaenau

Gwent accorded very closely with the priorities being identified by WAG and the Council. It also provided an answer to the challenge of creating sustainable, modern towns providing real opportunities for their local people.

- 5.5. The vision of an integrated network of modern and revitalised Community Hubs throughout the Borough is seen as an exciting and transformational prospect, one which will bring together the investment schemes of all public sector partners and which will set the right conditions for substantial private sector investment in quality housing, retail and leisure services and in employment sites.
- 5.6. The Community Hub model is in its early stages of development and the precise schemes and developments will need to be negotiated and planned over the coming years, but the vision suggests that the four areas of Tredegar, Ebbw Vale, Upper Ebbw Fach and Lower Ebbw Fach will benefit from new or fully refurbished schools, further training and IT facilities, business incubation centres and, where appropriate, police stations, health centres and other community and voluntary sector facilities. The Ebbw Vale Hub should be seen alongside the proposed hospital, learning campus and railway station.
- 5.7. An outline of the vision is illustrated below.

Figure 1: Proposed Blaenau Gwent Community Hub Model



The Key Regeneration Principles

- 5.8. There are 6 Principles for the Regeneration Strategy. These are based on a thorough analysis of the baseline socioeconomic context, an assessment of the policy landscape at national, regional and local levels, and a comprehensive consultation exercise amongst all key stakeholders.
- 5.9. The six Principles are outlined below and the proposals to translate them into action are set out in the following sections.

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	DELIVER THE WORKS AS A NATIONAL FLAGSHIP Drive the transformational project forward and promote the changes and opportunities widely to maximise the benefits for the entire Borough.
PRINCIPLE 6	DEVELOP THE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE Invest in key projects to enhance external connections and to support accessibility throughout the Borough.

5.10. In addition to the six principles, there is an overarching aim of the Regeneration Strategy. This should be seen as a thread which runs throughout the document and which binds together all other priorities and interventions.

OVERARCHING AIM	SHARE THE BENEFITS OF REGENERATION WIDELY Ensure that the benefits of regeneration are shared by all those in Blaenau Gwent.
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5.11. These Principles and the overarching aim have been selected to form an integrated and comprehensive strategic focus for regeneration in the Borough. They seek to balance the visible investment in Community Hubs, physical regeneration and economic facilities on the one hand, with the equally important investment in communities, in confidence and capacity building and in ensuring that the whole of Blaenau Gwent can share in the proposed improvements on the other hand. The Principles also encapsulate a strong commitment to developing improved transport and connectivity between the Hubs and throughout the entire Borough.

5.12. This will require strong partnership between the public, private and community and voluntary sectors; and partnership working at local, sub-regional and national levels.



6. THE REGENERATION STRATEGY

- 6.1. In this section we expand on the six Key Principles which were outlined above. We set out the priority issues that need to be addressed and the main areas for action over the next five to ten years. This section explores the rationale for public sector intervention in these areas and the broad priorities.
- 6.2. It also focuses on the most transformational actions and schemes under each Principle; those schemes that are likely to contribute most fully to the vision for Blaenau Gwent.

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.

The Priority Issues

LOCAL SECTORAL AND DIVERSIFICATION PRIORITIES

- 6.3. The contextual research carried out for this Regeneration Strategy provides a rationale for the diversification of the Blaenau Gwent economy and the sustainable development of the local manufacturing base.
 - The summary SWOT in Section 2 identifies manufacturing capability (still providing 28% of jobs) as both a key strength and a potential threat. The strengths of the manufacturing sector are in the more innovative and

knowledge-intensive sectors, but even there some vulnerabilities are clear – around skills, foreign ownership and control and weak supply chains.

- The “Insight into Competitiveness” report outlined in Section 3 identifies certain specialisms where there are particular clustering strengths in Blaenau Gwent and where there might be opportunities for further development. Furthermore, the report highlights that even these sectors must develop their competitiveness, productivity and innovation if they are to contribute more effectively to local GVA, jobs and sustainability.
- Opportunities in other sectors have been highlighted by existing strategies, such as the Heads of the Valleys Strategy “Turning Heads”. These include: Construction, Business Services, Health & Pharmaceutical Products, Tourism & Leisure, Environmental Industries, and Health & Social Care.

- 6.4. The service sector is key. The corollary of retaining a high proportion of jobs in manufacturing is that services are correspondingly under-represented. A modern, sustainable economy must have a highly developed and responsive service sector – providing services for the increasingly prosperous local population as well as meeting the supply chain needs of large and small local businesses. Blaenau Gwent is poorly served in almost all service and business service areas. The number and quality of training places in these sectors will be vital.
- 6.5. The barriers to effective diversification and strengthening of the manufacturing base are wide-ranging and cover the quality of the local skills base; real and perceived accessibility; the availability of attractive sites and premises; the diversity of the natural, built, social and cultural environment; the effectiveness of inward investment campaigns; and the perceived lack of a network of ambitious, leading edge innovators in the local area. Capital Wales stated that the main limitations in the Blaenau Gwent area are the availability and quality of business accommodation and the quality of the public realm.
- 6.6. These barriers inhibit both businesses and high-skill individuals from locating or working in the area.

Programmes and Projects

- 6.7. The main focus for diversifying the Blaenau Gwent economy and for supporting sustainable growth opportunities in modern manufacturing begins with meeting the needs of existing key companies in terms of their immediate recession challenges and then to the barriers to their effective growth. It should also focus on challenging local businesses to reach higher and develop their hunger for innovation and higher value activities. In parallel the public authorities need to raise their game in terms of selling the benefits of Blaenau Gwent to inward investors – and in meeting their needs in terms of sites, premises, skills and supply chain support.
- 6.8. Bringing sustainable changes to industrial structure and the overall performance of key sectors will require effective and coherent service delivery from a wide range of providers working at national, regional and local levels. It will be essential to engage partners such as Finance Wales, WAG, Capital Wales, the relevant sector skills councils and the universities. These

organisations must be made more aware of opportunities in Blaenau Gwent – and the local businesses must also be engaged fully.

- 6.9. The following two activities are regarded as transformational in their potential to bring about the vision for Blaenau Gwent.

1A: KEY BUSINESS INVESTMENT SITES

The Businesses Competitiveness study and other consultation points to a requirement for a focused portfolio of business premises and sites in key locations and providing a range of accommodation pitched towards the middle and higher end of the quality spectrum. Capital Wales and WAG have confirmed the potential for a major strategic site at Rhyd-y-blew.

Blaenau Gwent should be in a position over the next five years to bring forward such a portfolio. For the purposes of this Strategy it is recommended that a review of the sites within the Borough is taken forward with some urgency, so that those strategic sites and sectoral opportunities can be developed and marketed appropriately. It is expected that the review would cover the following sites as a minimum: Rhyd-y-blew, Ebbw Vale Works, Tredegar Business Park, Marine Colliery Site.

These sites would then be promoted vigorously by Capital Wales and the Council with sales packs for those sites providing comprehensive details of the site opportunities for inward investors and existing companies as appropriate.

1B: PROMOTE BLAENAU GWENT INTENSIVELY

Building on the Capital Wales product - and on an improved sites and premises offer which will include the transformational opportunities offered by the Ebbw Vale site – a new and vigorous campaign is required to promote the Borough to inward investors. It might use “Blaenau Gwent Works” or “The Works” to draw attention to the transformation. The target market should include overseas, UK and Welsh companies and WAG office relocations to ensure that awareness of the Blaenau Gwent opportunities is maximised. A strong web presence for the Borough should also be established, that provides detailed information on the sites and premises offer.

The campaign should also focus on opinion formers in Cardiff and – importantly – on local people who can often be the hardest to convince.

1C: DEDICATED SUPPORT FOR MANUFACTURING

- 6.10. Coordinating and joining up the range of services for modern manufacturing businesses is vital if the Blaenau Gwent manufacturing capacity is to be sustained and developed to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. Bringing together the various public and private sector tools in the areas of finance, technology, lean manufacturing processes, product development, skills and efficient premises and facilities is fundamental in bringing about sustainable change in performance. Take up of these high level services is low in Blaenau Gwent.
- 6.11. This will require coordination between the agencies of the Assembly Government, regional bodies working at the South East Wales and Valleys level and Blaenau Gwent Council. It should involve coherent policies for inward investment, innovation, supply chain and skills.

1D: EFFECTIVE EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

- 6.12. The development of successful regional economies is enhanced by effective networking between key employers and the public sector. New energy and resources have been invested in establishing a strategic body for engaging employers in a public/private network with high levels of employer participation i.e. Blaenau Gwent Connect 2 Business.
- 6.13. The focus should be on addressing many of the issues identified in the business audit and survey, where a significant number of companies committed to collaborative cross-sector engagement. An effective and focused body will also provide a communication channel for public bodies to raise awareness of their services and their “offer” in terms of skills and workforce development, employability and recruitment, sites and premises, and access to finance and innovation support. There is evidence that the take-up of many business development and innovation services is considerably lower in Blaenau Gwent than in other parts of Wales.

1E: PRIORITY SECTOR APPROACH

- 6.14. Strategies such as Turning Heads and the competitiveness survey point to several key sectors outside manufacturing where Blaenau Gwent should focus for maximum impact.
- 6.15. **Business Services** – this sector is seriously under-represented and local companies look beyond the borough for their business services. The sector can also provide excellent opportunities for new business start-up companies. Blaenau Gwent should compete more successfully for mobile back office and contact centre facilities which provide modern employment opportunities for high skilled professionals as well as for people currently outside the labour force. This will require the provision of appropriate sites and premises; effective employability training for local people, through bodies such as Jobmatch; and guidance and support for young people through Careers Wales Gwent and others.
- 6.16. **Tourism & Leisure** - The business competitiveness study identified a serious shortfall in local cultural facilities in the Borough, but projects such as Parc Bryn Bach and Abertillery’s Metropole Cultural and Conference Centre are making a difference. The dualling of the A465 and the Ebbw Vale railway, the enhanced natural and built environment and the plans for the theatre and leisure centre at The Works will provide an excellent platform. The sector can contribute effectively to addressing the issues of employability by offering opportunities for less experienced people as well as providing high quality cultural and leisure jobs. The public agencies, including Careers Wales Gwent and Jobmatch, should be focusing on this sector.
- 6.17. **Health & Social Care** – The social care sector has been growing throughout the UK and provides a substantial opportunity for employment at all levels. In addition the development of the proposed 107-bed Local General Hospital in Ebbw Vale will provide employment across the entire range of clinical, caring and support services.
- 6.18. **Construction** - The regeneration of Blaenau Gwent is already providing job opportunities in construction and in hard and soft landscaping. This is an unprecedented programme incorporating The Works in Ebbw Vale, the learning

campus, the hospital, the leisure centre, town centre developments in Ebbw Vale, Brynmawr and Tredegar, schools refurbishment, WHQS and public and private housing programmes throughout the Borough. Jobmatch have established an on-site office at the Works and it is essential that resources are available to support local employment contracts with developers and sub-contractors.

Key Indicators

6.19. The following indicators will be used to assess progress in the area of economic diversification and manufacturing:

- Jobs created and safeguarded
- Creation of industrial or office floorspace
- Successful inward investment cases

PRINCIPLE 2

BOOST BUSINESS SUPPORT AND ENTERPRISE

Scale up targeted business support and promote enterprise and self-employment to grow economic output and raise activity rates.

The Priority Issues

BUSINESS SUPPORT AND ENTERPRISE PRIORITIES

The Deputy First Minister has published a new Economic Renewal Programme in a document entitled Economic 'Renewal: a New Direction'.

To quote, the new approach includes:

- Developing the role of an enabler of growth rather than a direct deliverer of services to individual companies, so we will reduce the level of direct business support beyond the start-up phase to create space for private-sector business support.
- As direct business support is reduced, we will still have a role in providing information on opportunities and guidance to business online.

LOCAL BUSINESS SUPPORT PRIORITIES

6.20. This document demonstrates the need to improve local productivity, competitiveness and innovation as local businesses are underperforming their counterparts elsewhere. Even where the local economy has the potential for specialisms these are not performing as well as they should be. It also shows the serious local shortfall in entrepreneurship and business creation and survival. When considered in conjunction with low levels of skills and attainment and evidence of poor attitudes to work amongst some groups, the need to focus on boosting enterprise and competitiveness is clear.

- 6.21. FS4B services will focus on information provision in future. The Council offers business support to local businesses, including support with sites and premises and a number of local grant schemes. With the potential reduction in FS4B Services there is scope for a rethink on what should be provided by the Local Authority.
- 6.22. There is evidence of low levels of take-up in Blaenau Gwent despite the abundant supply of providers and schemes. Consultations suggest that enterprise and business support services can be complex and potentially confusing for potential users.
- 6.23. There is no purely local solution to the issues of enterprise and business support. Most of the challenges are regional across the whole Valleys area. It will be essential for the Council and local partners to identify where multi-area initiatives can be taken to provide economies of scale or other benefits of collaboration.

THE ENTERPRISE AND WORKLESSNESS CHALLENGE

- 6.24. Worklessness remains a major challenge for Blaenau Gwent's economy. The Two main approaches to achieving strong and sustainable economic growth are:- helping more people into work; and creating an environment where businesses can increase average value-added per job with the consequent benefits for earnings levels.
- 6.25. Those who are workless can benefit through access to new opportunities to help them reintegrate into the labour market. Worklessness can only be addressed through a strong local economy which offers a range of employment opportunities – both within the Borough and within commuter distance of it. A strong entrepreneurial culture is vital and the actions set out here seek to enable a stronger local economy by providing targeted business and enterprise support which builds upon what is already in place.
- 6.26. Some progress has been made in business formation in the Borough. However self-employment levels and business survival rates in remain much lower than those of Wales.

Programmes and Projects

- 6.27. The main focus for improving enterprise and business support should be on ensuring that Blaenau Gwent leverages the maximum support from existing programmes and providers, combined with selectively introducing new elements of provision designed to make a difference in the medium to long-term. Coordination and streamlining must be a key priority as well meeting the specific needs of the Blaenau Gwent economy as identified in the competitiveness and business survey.
- 6.28. This approach is consistent with WAG's commitment set out in *Making the Connections: Delivering Better Services for Wales*, which aims to bring about improved public services for everyone in Wales. This emphasises the need for services to be more responsive to the needs of their customers, and making services more coherent, working through simpler, more joined-up and transparent structures.

2A: SIMPLER AND ACCESSIBLE SUPPORT NETWORK

Business support services for Blaenau Gwent's firms are established, but consultations suggest that the take-up of these services by businesses is not as great as in some other neighbouring boroughs.

In light of the underperformance of Blaenau Gwent businesses and low levels of business start-up, this suggests a need for better targetting and co-ordination of services both through general profile raising – for example through a higher profile One Stop Shop and a regular events programme – and through better individual support to access such services. There is a clear requirement for a greater level of proactive penetration of the small business sector.

2B: INCUBATION AND SMALL UNITS

The provision of business and commercial space is also a critical factor in ensuring the growth prospects of new businesses.

A particular need highlighted in consultation was for more high-quality small units and incubation units. The Council should consider how to accommodate new entrepreneurs.

2C: TARGETED START-UP SUPPORT FOR DEPRIVED GROUPS

- 6.29. The NEAP, through the introduction of the Potentia Programme, acknowledged the importance of dedicated support for disadvantaged groups. The Local Enterprise Growth Initiative in England has strengthened the evidence for the economic and social benefits that such enterprise support can provide.
- 6.30. Initially, a small-scale but targeted start-up support offer for those in deprived groups should be scoped and piloted. Examples of how such offers can operate already exist, for example through the Sirolli model.

2D: ACCESSING PUBLIC SECTOR CONTRACTS

- 6.31. Procurement support is already available within the Borough - for example the existing remediation contract on the Ebbw Vale site and a range of social and community services.
- 6.32. The Council should allocate clear responsibility for driving this agenda and set out a series of actions that can make local access to contracts a reality. These should include identifying a clear lead individual to drive access to local procurement opportunities for local businesses; scoping the range of contracts that can be made accessible to local businesses; simplifying the procedures to remove barriers for small businesses; and running a series of workshops for businesses with an information pack. This should build on the work undertaken by the Project Team at The Works.

2E: COMPREHENSIVE ENTERPRISE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

- 6.33. If Blaenau Gwent is to deliver more and better businesses in order to ensure its future success, a major commitment to delivering more effective enterprise education in all of the Borough's schools and colleges will be critical.

Key Indicators

6.34. The following indicators will be used to assess progress in the area of enterprise and business support:

- Number of local businesses supported by public sector funded schemes
- New VAT registrations and stock of VAT-registered businesses per head of working age population
- Graduate business start-ups
- Numbers of people progressing from employability programmes to sustainable employment
- Provision and take-up of business and industrial space
- Increased success in public procurement by local firms

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.

The Priority Issues

NATIONAL SKILLS AND LEARNING PRIORITIES

- 6.35. The Skills for Wales Action Plan (SFWAP) aimed to target resources on people and communities facing disadvantage, prioritising improving basic skills; ensuring essential skills for employment; increasing demand from employers for high level skills; and addressing the skills gap in key sectors.
- 6.36. (SFWAP) also outlined four action plan priorities: improving mechanisms for workforce development; supplying new entrants with the skills needed for employment; working with employers and employees to improve skills; and helping people into sustainable employment
- 6.37. In September 2008 the WAG document "Transforming Education and Training Provision in Wales" set priorities – to widen options available to 14-19 year olds; reduce unnecessary duplication of provision; and move to excellence across networks of providers. A key priority of the strategy is to ensure that all learning delivery, from the age of 16, is fundamentally reshaped, reconfigured and transformed so that all delivery is harmonised.

REGIONAL AND LOCAL SKILLS AND LEARNING PRIORITIES

- 6.38. The Regional Statement of Needs 2007-08 for South East Wales identifies specific local challenges for Blaenau Gwent and the Heads of the Valleys: implement the sustainability strategy for the RISE Network; coordinated learning pathways to meet the needs of the local economy and inward investors; and higher level training in communication technology, media and creative skills.

- 6.39. Blaenau Gwent suffers from low skills levels and many local companies have identified a problem with attitudes to work and low aspirations. This is holding back productivity and competitiveness and dampening levels of income and prosperity in the area.
- 6.40. The Heads of the Valleys Strategy has set a target of achieving an increase in the employment rate across the Valleys to 70% by 2010. This is a challenging target for Blaenau Gwent. Low employment rates are linked to high levels of incapacity benefit, long term ill-health, lone parent families, low skills and other measures of deprivation. Blaenau Gwent also suffers from persistently high numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs). The Heads of the Valleys City Strategy is taking this priority forward with ambitious targets for helping economically inactive people into work, building on the work of Jobmatch in Blaenau Gwent. Careers Wales Gwent and others are addressing the NEET challenge.

Programmes and Projects

- 6.41. The learning and skills interventions planned include a major capital investment to create a unique Lifelong Learning Campus on The Works site supported by a programme of initiatives aimed at improving educational attainment and vocational skills at every level from basic skills right up to higher education.
- 6.42. There is a clear requirement to shape future vocational skills capacity and provision to meet the current and future needs of employers in Blaenau Gwent, in the key sectors identified by HoV, in the specialisms and other sectors identified in this document and in the key personal and communications skills identified by employers as the main driver of future demand. The uncertainty caused by the recession would suggest that capacity should be focused on the few certainties – that skills in IT, in customer service, in health and social care and in broad personal and communication skills will be vital in the immediate future. But as we emerge from the recession there will be an increase in demand for skills in the other key HoV sectors.

3A: THE BLAENAU GWENT LIFELONG LEARNING CAMPUS

The creation of a Learning Campus will be one of the flagship developments on The Works site and a truly transformational project. The current plans envisage bringing together the sixth-forms from throughout the Borough, HE institutions and Coleg Gwent in a state-of-the-art £30m Learning Zone that will attract 3,500 full-time students.

The advanced works contract is due for completion Sep 2010. A decision on ERDF funding is anticipated by December 2010. The main works project will start in October 2010 with completion in March 2012.

3B: VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR 14-19s

The Council and partners will work to "Make NEETs History. The interventions required to eliminate the problem of young people currently not in education, employment or training will begin with the new school integrated academic and vocational curriculum in September 2008.

The Council is proposing developing its vocational skills facilities to incorporate the Construction and Engineering School as part of the Learning Zone of the Lifelong Learning Campus, focusing on skills for the 14-19 group to meet business skills needs, reduce disengagement and assist progression post-16 and beyond NVQ level 2. Funding is being sought from EU Convergence.

The facility will require a commitment of longer-term revenue funding to ensure adequate levels of volume and provision if the ambitious target regarding NEETs is to be achieved.

Projects such as Tools 4 Yr Future are developing results in tackling NEETs and should be integrated into an expanded and integrated programme.

3C: EMPLOYABILITY AND WORKLESSNESS

- 6.43. In the Heads of the Valleys City Strategy area the target is to place 14,000 workless people in employment over 5 years. The success of Jobmatch in Blaenau Gwent is evidence that it is possible to address the deep cultural issues around worklessness and the early participation of Jobmatch in The Works site is an excellent development that must be resourced fully. This will require strong partnership working by all public agencies and the third sector in an effective programme of employer engagement with developers, contractors, the NHS, Coleg Gwent and other proposed tenants of the site. A manager is being recruited to the Works team to develop a network of employers with the remit to establish recruitment needs in the Blaenau Gwent area. Evidence from Merthyr shows that initiatives such as this can be successful, with more than 50 unemployed local people gaining work at the new local hospital. Community engagement, development and capacity building, provided by the community and voluntary sector, is vital.
- 6.44. The application by the Six Valleys Consortium to draw down EU Convergence funding for a complementary project to support specific economically inactive groups through mentoring and pre-employment training will provide vital revenue resources for helping prepare the client groups for the journey to sustainable employment.
- 6.45. The importance of volunteering, self employment and social enterprise are other key routes out of worklessness and should be incorporated in programmes.

3D: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- 6.46. The low skills base in the Borough is a serious drag on economic growth, prosperity and social inclusion. There is evidence of low take-up of workforce skills provision by employers and low aspirations from employees. Consultees see the lack of a generic training grant as a major barrier to upskilling the workforce and low awareness of the benefits of training and development among local employers.
- 6.47. The commitment in *Skills That Work for Wales* to improved workforce skills and greater employer participation in a skills and employment system that responds to their needs are noted. The re-launch of an employers' forum to replace the Voice of Industry will be vital in raising awareness of the benefits of training amongst the Borough's predominantly small employers, assessing the training needs and presenting the "offer" that the public sector can make

to employers. The identification of Skills Champions amongst local business leaders will be an effective mechanism for employer engagement.

3E: ADULT LEARNING AND THE RISE NETWORK

- 6.48. The collaboration of local authorities, which secured the Bridges into Work project has also now been successful in securing the Working Skills for Adults project. This has enabled the project team to address low and no skills/qualifications held by employed individuals within the workforce across six local authorities. Through a collaborative approach, Working Skills for Adults is engaging and supporting employed individuals to gain or improve their qualifications.
- 6.49. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, working with five other Local Authorities has successfully secured a 3 year project – 'Bridges Into Work'. This project will address economic inactivity through a collaborative approach, to engage, support and prepare the economically inactive to acquire the appropriate skills to become job ready and gain sustainable employment.

3F: DEVELOPING A STRONG HIGHER EDUCATION PRESENCE

- 6.50. The University of Wales Newport is an active partner of the Campus and plans are being firmed up for enhancing the participation of local HE institutions on the Campus. The opportunity for Ebbw Vale to attain the status of a university town will have transformational implications for the perception of Blaenau Gwent and for the enhancement of learning and skills in the borough. This is a fundamentally important project.
- 6.51. UWN are planning to serve some 430 FTE students (800-900 individuals) within 3 years of the Campus opening. This aspiration is being fleshed out but might include subjects such as Business Management, Post-16 Teacher Training and Health. Courses will be delivered through a range of models, from franchise to direct delivery. In addition UWN intend bringing the Community University of the Valleys into the Campus, housing 20 staff working across the Objective 1 area. The University of Glamorgan will also have a collaborative presence of the Campus.
- 6.52. This is a collaborative initiative involving DCELLS, Coleg Gwent, UWN and University of Glamorgan.

3G: EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP FOR SKILLS & EMPLOYMENT

- 6.53. There have been discussions within the Assembly Government about the development of partnerships to devise and implement a plan for learning and skills at local authority and sub-regional levels. In the light of the Assembly's wish to reduce and rationalise the partnerships involved in this function and the range of major reviews and policy initiatives taking place with implications for learning and skills (including Leitch, Webb, Making Connections, EU Convergence), it will be necessary to consider the future of the Blaenau Gwent CCET and its function and remit.
- 6.54. Given the close comparison between membership of the current CCET and the Regeneration Partnership Board – and the need for close working between the physical, economic and social aspects of regeneration - there is an argument

for combining the functions of the RPB and the existing CCET or at least linking them closely.

3H: SUB-REGIONAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT

- 6.55. The increased emphasis on private sector employer engagement and the benefits of working towards a demand-led skills market means there is a serious need for high quality and relevant labour market intelligence together with economic data and business survey information. This information should be able to link across regeneration, business support and learning and skills.
- 6.56. It is proposed that Blaenau Gwent should lead a sub-regional project to establish an Intelligence Unit (or Observatory) which can provide these outputs on a cost-effective basis across a number of authorities.

Key Indicators

- 6.57. The following indicators will be used to assess progress in the area of learning and skills:
- Development of a Skills Strategy for the borough
 - Numbers of people achieving vocationally relevant qualifications as well as specific NVQ qualifications in key subjects at all levels
 - Reduction in NEETs and people with basic skills problems
 - Numbers of people moving from benefits to sustainable employment
 - School and 6th form performance in light of new curriculum and Learning Campus
 - Companies engaging in workforce development – including strategic participation in programme development

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.

The Priority Issues

- 6.58. Significant progress has been made in the physical condition of Blaenau Gwent since 2002, however the continuing regeneration of Blaenau Gwent will require considerable further area based investment over the next 10 years in town centres, community facilities, private and social housing and in communications infrastructure.
- 6.59. Partners are agreed that this investment must be focused to maximise the economic and social impact and that the programme brought forward should be strategic in nature and developed within clear master plans or frameworks. This has led to the development of the concept of Community Hubs for Blaenau Gwent, a network of high-quality and modern facilities centred on the four key urban clusters in the Borough. Design and sustainability will be key

aspects of the Community Hub proposals and for area regeneration frameworks.

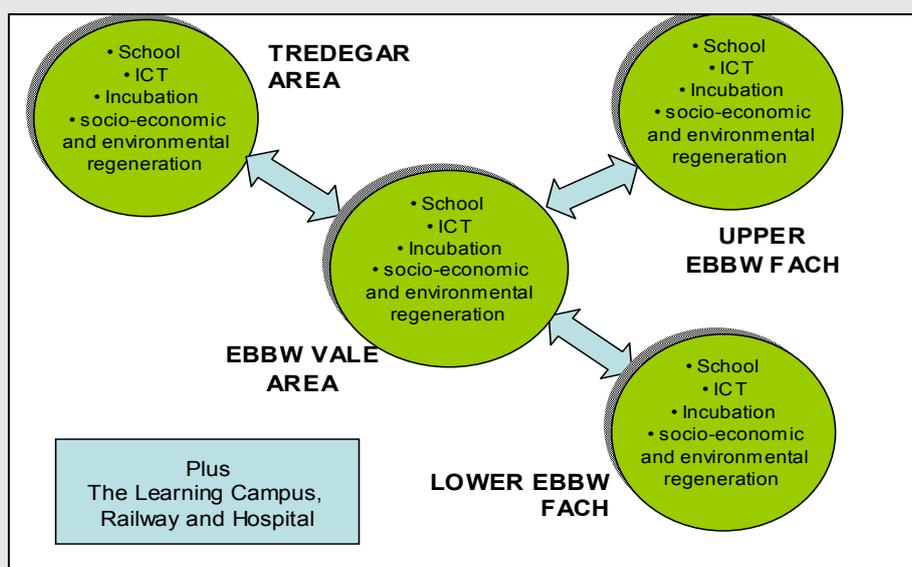
- 6.60. Community consultation will be a key component of the development of Community Hubs and area regeneration frameworks.

Programmes and Projects

- 6.61. The community investment programme will be driven by the Council's new 10-year strategy to create an integrated network of community facilities, arranged as a Hub and Spoke network in the four key urban areas in Blaenau Gwent. This radical approach – creating Hubs in Ebbw Vale, Tredegar, Upper Ebbw Fach and Lower Ebbw Fach and aligned to the HARPs concept. The Hub approach will bring the full weight of public, private and third sector resources (human and financial) to bear on tackling the sustainable regeneration agenda throughout the Borough.

4A: THE COMMUNITY HUB AND SPOKE NETWORK

In line with the HARPs concept being developed by HoV, the Council is developing transformational plans for four integrated Community Hubs; each anchored by a new or fully refurbished secondary school and linked learning and enterprise facilities. The Ebbw Vale Hub will also be supported by the new hospital, Learning Campus and railway.



In addition to the school, community learning, ICT and enterprise incubation facilities the Community Hubs will also include – where appropriate – library, health, police and voluntary and community sector facilities. The Hubs will not all be self-contained physical developments, but will contain a core of provision with effective connectivity to existing community facilities where they already exist – for instance to the RISE LACs.

4B: HOUSING CHOICE AND QUALITY IN KEY COMMUNITIES

The Borough saw a complete turnaround in its housing market in recent years. Private sector interest was booming and there were issues emerging regarding affordability. The new railway line, environmental improvements, the anticipation of the reclamation of the steelworks site and the new facilities which will emerge in its place were all factors which were transforming the marketability of the

Borough.

The current downturn has taken the heat out of that market for the moment but it is expected that in the medium-term the housing market will regain a degree of vibrancy.

The Redrow development of 100 units adjacent to the Works site was an early contributor to the market and over 500 homes are planned at the Works of which about one-fifth will be "affordable". Over the next five years the borough will require an increase in housing completions compared with recent performance and land will need to be made available once completion targets are set.

Equally important is the contribution of the public and social rented sector. The Council has secured Assembly Government funding to provide 143 homes in Rassau, Briery Hill, Tredegar and Cwmtillery as well as a new homeless unit.

To meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012, investment in the Council house stock will need to be £100m over the next 4 years.

4C: AREA REGENERATION FRAMEWORKS

- 6.62. **Ebbw Vale** – The largest settlement in the Borough, it is the key area because of its location adjacent to The Works. The Council believe that progress has been made in Ebbw Vale but that the poor standard of the town centre will undermine the success of the massive investment in The Works. Much of the town centre remains sub-standard and lacking in quality and choice in retailing and services. The connections between the town centre and the Works will need to be designed effectively to deal with the height differences and the importance of ensuring accessibility of the new facilities.
- 6.63. The Council and WAG are taking forward a comprehensive Development Framework for the Ebbw Vale area for implementation over a 10-year period as a high priority for regeneration.

Key Indicators

- 6.64. The following indicators will be used to assess progress in the area of investment in key communities:
- Commercial take-up and rental values in town centres
 - Land remediated and townscape improvements
 - Leverage of private sector investment
 - New homes provided – private and social/affordable
 - Social housing refurbished

Drive the transformational project forward and promote the changes and opportunities widely to maximise the benefits for the entire Borough.

The Priority Issues

- 6.65. Work is well underway on one of the most complex reclamation and regeneration schemes ever undertaken in the UK. The project has the potential to benefit not only Ebbw Vale, but the whole of Blaenau Gwent and the Heads of the Valleys region. The main programme will transform the 200 acre site into a thriving community, complete with 3,000 new jobs, a Learning Campus for 3,500 students, a new local general hospital, a primary school, a theatre, a leisure centre, a new railway line and station and over 700 homes.
- 6.66. The transformation of the massive site will change the perception of Blaenau Gwent in terms of its industrial and environmental past and present the Borough to visitors and potential investors in a modern and positive sense. And to achieve the full benefits of the regeneration investment, it will be essential to carry out a parallel transformation of the adjacent Ebbw Vale town centre and the Assembly Government is committed to working with the Council to develop a regeneration framework for the town centre.
- 6.67. However partners are determined that the opportunities that will be created are designed and delivered to be accessible to **all** the residents and communities of Blaenau Gwent. Yes, the direct physical impact will be realised on the site and in the vicinity of Ebbw Vale town centre, but the implications in terms of jobs, learning, healthcare, leisure, culture, housing and transport must be accessible to everyone, irrespective of where they live in the Borough.
- 6.68. As well as improving transport and access to The Works from throughout the Borough, the more complex barriers to accessibility and participation in the fields of education, skills, employment, healthy lifestyles and wider well-being need to be addressed. It will be essential to provide effective support services for disadvantaged and under-represented communities and individuals to allow them to grow their self-confidence to allow them to access the much improved range of services and facilities that will be on offer. There is a clear role for voluntary and community organisations in providing such support and in engaging local communities in the regeneration process.

Programmes and Projects

5A: DELIVERING THE EBBW VALE WORKS PROJECT

The Council purchased the site in November 2005 and started reclamation work immediately. Outline planning permission was approved in July 2007. The £20m reclamation programme began at the hospital site and is now complete.

The current infrastructure phasing report identifies Phase 1 as including Festival Park and the new hospital and Phase 2 the Learning Campus and the business office space. The individual components of the project include £25-30m for the Learning Campus, £5-8m for the arts and cultural centres, £16m for the sports centre and another £53m which is already in place for Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan.

The infrastructure programme is planned over an 8-10 year period. Investment of £50m for the Works has been earmarked by the Assembly Government in total – and a broad programme of £5-8m a year is anticipated over the next 5 years. Property advisers have estimated an eventual land value of some £350m.

5B: ACCESSING EMPLOYMENT AT THE WORKS

- 6.69. The job opportunities arising from the regeneration of the steelworks site will be considerable, with estimates of 3,000 jobs being accommodated in the office and business space as well as a wide range of employment at all levels in the Learning Campus, hospital, leisure centre and theatre. The infrastructure and subsequent construction phases will last over a period of 8-10 years. There will be opportunities for employment in every aspect of the development and operation of these facilities.
- 6.70. The project is determined to ensure that local businesses and local people have real opportunities to benefit from the massive spend and the employment that the work will generate. The team is working with Careers Wales Gwent, Job Centre Plus and Jobmatch to promote the available opportunities, initially in construction. Advice is being taken on framing contracts to promote local suppliers, sub-contractors and local employees (social clauses). This service must be adequately funded and integrated with the support services of the key public sector agencies involved in employer engagement, business support, basic skills, vocational training and recruitment throughout the borough.

5C: MARKETING THE WORKS

- 6.71. The commercial opportunities offered by the regenerated site must be maximised by raising awareness of the potential for investment. A high quality marketing campaign should be drawn up – in conjunction with The HOV Programme and Capital Wales - with the aim of securing inward investments of appropriate quality and scale for the site. The Welsh Assembly Government must ensure that its massive investment in the reclamation and infrastructure programme is supported by such a campaign in key investment markets.
- 6.72. It is also vital that the profile of the Borough is raised throughout Wales and the rest of the UK, with reference to the transformation of the site. Old stereotypes of the physical and socioeconomic perceptions of the Borough need to be replaced with more positive and modern images of the area and its new learning, business, environmental and housing opportunities. The opportunities being created should also be promoted to the people of Blaenau Gwent. This is a major focus for increasing ambition and aspiration amongst local people.

Key Indicators

- 6.73. The following indicators will be used to assess progress in the delivery of The Works and bringing forward the economic and community benefits:
- Delivery of the Works programme and physical infrastructure
 - Land remediated and brought into productive end-use
 - Inward investment attracted
 - Jobs created on-site by type
 - New homes provided

PRINCIPLE 6

DEVELOP THE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Invest in key sustainable transport projects to improve regional and national connectivity and enhance local access within the Borough.

The Priority Issues

- 6.74. Some great improvements have been achieved in recent years in the transport infrastructure in Blaenau Gwent, aimed at overcoming the previously unacceptable level of accessibility. The local towns and valleys were effectively isolated at the heads of the valleys with poor links to the east and west and down to Cardiff and Newport. The partial development of the Heads of the Valleys road as far as Tredegar has brought real benefits, as has the Cwm by-pass and the new railway to Ebbw Vale Parkway.
- 6.75. However much remains to be done, especially in the context of the transformational steelworks project where accessibility will be vital. Transport connectivity must be improved – to enhance the attractiveness of the Works for potential investors, employees and users of the range of facilities. The opportunities of accessing the Learning Campus, the hospital and the theatre by convenient sustainable means must be maximised.

Programmes and Projects

6A: COMPLETING THE HEADS OF THE VALLEYS ROAD

Considerable progress has been made in dualling the A465. Work has been completed on the Abergavenny to Govilon section and Tredegar to Brynmawr is scheduled ready to be implemented 2012-2016. The Council demands a strong commitment to this project in order to improve regional and national connectivity, as well as providing significant improvements to road safety.

6B: COMPLETING THE RAILWAY NETWORK

Since the re-introduction of passenger services in 2008, the Ebbw Valley Valley has proved phenomenally successful in providing sustainable access for all to employment opportunities, services, healthcare, education, tourism and leisure facilities. It is therefore essential that the line is extended north to Ebbw Vale Town and that an hourly service is provided to Newport. The Council would also wish to see rail services extended to Abertillery.

6C: CONNECTING THE WORKS

The success of the transformational development of The Works will depend on creating modern transport connections, particularly providing enhanced access to the dualled A465 by means of an improved A4046. This will be considered within a masterplan for the north of Ebbw Vale. It is also essential that sustainable access to the site is considered as a fundamental service provision of the development.

6D: OTHER ACCESS IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

- 6.76. In addition to completing the dualling of the A465 and connecting The Works there is a strong regeneration case for the following schemes to improve connectivity within Blaenau Gwent and beyond: the A4046 between Cwm and Aberbeeg; improvements between Abertillery and Aberbeeg; and Tredegar to Blackwood.

6E: INTEGRATED PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- 6.77. The Council wishes to offer sustainable travel opportunities to The Works from the outset and will therefore encourage the use of public transport as the main mode of access. Working collaboratively with operators, it is proposed to identify funding to provide a sustainable level of bus service connecting The Works and Ebbw Vale to the other settlements within the Borough. In addition it is intended to maximise the use of walking and cycling to the site, particularly from the town centre and adjacent areas of Ebbw Vale. The Works development is governed by a comprehensive Travel Plan, as well as a requirement for all individual developments within the site to produce their own plans. It is therefore the Council's intention to ensure that travel planning best practice is adhered to over the implementation period and beyond.

Key Indicators

- 6.78. The following indicators will be used to assess progress in the development of transport infrastructure and public transport provision:
- Transport journeys to The Works by mode
 - Passenger statistics for the rail link
 - Inward investment enquiries and business surveys

OVERARCHING AIM**SHARE THE BENEFITS OF REGENERATION WIDELY**

Ensure that the benefits of regeneration are shared by all those in Blaenau Gwent.

- 6.79. Achievement of the economic benefits of regeneration through improving the competitiveness of the local economy, raising skills levels and eliminating NEETs, maximising the business impact of the Works site will contribute to an increase in the prosperity of Blaenau Gwent and to a greater sense of community sustainability. The recognition in this Strategy that the maximum impact of investment in the borough will undoubtedly be achieved through a clear focus on opportunities and on key business sites, town centres and other sources of economic growth will also bring about greater overall prosperity.
- 6.80. However, it is equally important that the activity and public investment that is carried out in pursuit of the Regeneration Strategy has at its core a strong commitment to ensure equity and accessibility – so that **all** residents of Blaenau Gwent can enjoy the benefits of an improving economy and greater prosperity.
- 6.81. This is a particular issue in the Valleys because of the unique geography which limits movement; the low levels of car ownership and the challenges of arranging attractive public transport in such terrain; and the current low levels of skills, educational attainment, self-confidence, economic participation and health. There are inevitably communities, specific groups and individuals who are less well placed to take advantage of these real opportunities. The Regeneration Strategy places a clear emphasis on allowing everyone to prosper, wherever they live and whatever their life circumstances.
- 6.82. This Strategy has already outlined a wide range of programmes and initiatives which will have benefits throughout the Borough and for disadvantaged groups and individuals. These include:
- More vocational training and guidance and support in schools and better chances of progressing to further education for young people who currently disengage.
 - Initiatives to help local unemployed people to access the new jobs in business, construction, council house refurbishment and at The Works.
 - Supporting people on benefits to be able to get on the job ladder through tailored training and personal support.
 - A coordinated programme of learning opportunities for everyone - from RISE satellites in communities, to the four Learning Action Centres and on to the new Learning Campus.
 - Strategic area regeneration programmes and local environmental schemes for communities.
 - Innovative plans for better public transport using trains, traditional buses and community vehicles – and encouraging people to walk and cycle for many shorter trips.

- The continued development of Communities First initiatives and the work of the Development Trusts and the voluntary sector to reach communities and individuals that would otherwise miss out on opportunities.
- The development of the proposed hospital and the improvements in the range of health services which will be available within the borough – linked to other improvements in local primary care through new GP facilities and increased staffing.
- The massive WQHS council house improvement scheme that will extend throughout the Borough, with consequent benefits in health and community perception and self-confidence.



7. ACTION PLAN

- 7.1. In this section we set out some of the key actions which the Council, the Assembly Government and their strategic partners must take to ensure the effective delivery of this Regeneration Strategy. The following actions are set out in a common format which focuses on the most important features of each intervention, including lead partners and funding required.
- 7.2. In addition, partners believe that the key regeneration proposals will need to be developed by means of a phased programme of priority setting, framework development and consultation.
- 7.3. The high-level actions required by the Council and partners to steer and oversee the delivery of the Regeneration Strategy should include the establishment of appropriate partnership structures to drive the delivery of the Regeneration Strategy, taking a wide, cross-functional definition of regeneration.
 - The process should be overseen by the **Blaenau Gwent Regeneration Partnership Board** which now includes the successor to the CCET.
 - The Board should consider the most appropriate methods for driving the delivery of the Strategy in a manner which identifies clear responsibilities, ensures access to resources and provides a participative model for partners.
- 7.4. The Action Plan includes the most pressing actions from each of the regeneration Principles. The nature of the actions and interventions differs quite considerably, from simple investment decisions or administrative actions on the one hand – through to major and complex capital programmes on the other.

The Action Plan

The Strategy document is completed by this chapter on delivery and action planning. However, in order to implement the Strategy it is considered necessary to develop a more detailed Action Plan which spells out; the funding, outputs and timetable for projects. Progress on its implementation will be the subject of regular reporting. So that the Action Plan provides details for the 29 programmes identified under the 6 Principle headings. It also includes policy targets.

The Strategy is intended to cover the period to 2018. The Action Plan will focus on 3 years i.e. 2010/11 and 2011/12 and 2012/13.

Policy Targets

A Limited number of key policy targets have been identified which reflect the main aims of the Regeneration Strategy and where time series data is available

- The economic activity target reflects the key aim of tackling economic inactivity, often related to health
- The employment target reflects the fact that this takes account of both unemployment and economic activity and the ultimate aim of getting people into work
- The earnings target reflects the key aim of securing higher quality jobs
- The NVQ target reflects the key aims of raising the skill levels of the workforce
- The self-employment target reflects the key aim of developing an entrepreneurial culture

Even within the timeframe of the Regeneration Strategy it is not realistic to bring these indicators up to current Welsh figures, when account is taken of the demographics of Blaenau Gwent.

Taking into account the current Blaenau Gwent and Wales figures, the following targets are proposed for the key economic indicators :-

	2009	2012	2015	2018
Activity Rate	70.1%	71.1%	72.1%	73.1%
Unemployment Rate	8.3%	7%	5.7%	4.4%
Employment Rate	65.8%	67%	69%	71%
Self Employment Rate	4.8%	5.2%	5.7%	6.2%
Average Earnings (% of Wales)	85.2%	86.8%	88.4%	90%
NVQ3 or Equivalent	33.3%	36.5%	40%	43.8%

Activity Rates have been included in the targets as the need to increase them is recognised as a key policy objective. However, by itself, such an increase would only add to the unemployment rate, hence the importance of the employment rate as an indicator of economic progress.

The targets for 2012/2015/2018 are based on an assessment of how easy it would be to hit current Welsh rates by 2018. In the case of some this is considered reasonable (unemployment, employment). In the other cases, it is considered reasonable to close the gap, but not completely.

BLAENAU GWENT REGENERATION STRATEGY – ACTION PLAN

1. TO DIVERSIFY THE ECONOMY AND DEVELOP MANUFACTURING

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
1A – KEY BUSINESS INVESTMENT SITES	Undertake a review of key sites with some urgency to identify opportunities for high-quality business space – with a view to bringing forward a funded infrastructure programme.	WAG and BGCBC, with promotion by Capital Wales	Funding for review in 2009 from WAG. Possible consequent investment in infrastructure.	Initial outputs will be an options review, but ultimate outcomes will be inward investment of major UK or global businesses, particularly in business services or the knowledge economy.	Complete review and bring forward proposals.

CURRENT POSITION

The 3 Key sites for high quality business have been identified:- The Works (Ebbw Vale), Tredegar Business Park and Rhyd y Blew.

1/A/1 – The Works, Ebbw Vale Description <u>Lead Fund</u> BGCBC £4M EC £4MF = £8M Ph1 infrastructure and 25K sq. ft. (6x1.5, 6x1, £800K sq.ft.) 4x2.5 Hectares <u>Status</u> Full Scheme At Business Case stage for EC funds Ph1 Start 2011/12 Completion 2012/13	1/A/2 Tredegar Business Park Description <u>Lead Fund</u> BGCBC £2M EC £2M mf = £4M <u>Outputs Status</u> sq ft Awaiting WEFO decision to proceed to Business Case Start 2012/2013 Completion 2013/2014	1/A/3 Rhyd y blew, Ebbw Vale Description <u>Lead Fund</u> WAG DE&T £2M EC £3M mf = £5M <u>Outputs Status</u> Ph1 infrastructure and 50K sq. ft 12 Hectares Ph1 Start 2010 Completion 2011/12
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PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
1B - PROMOTE BLAENAU GWENT INTENSIVELY	A multi-purpose promotion campaign focusing on inward investment from UK and overseas; on opinion formers in Cardiff; and on the people of Blaenau Gwent themselves. Building on physical transformation and accessibility for all.	Capital Wales, WAG and BGCBC	£300,000 over 3 years from WAG.	Multi-media campaign leading to increased inward investment leads, awareness and local self-confidence.	Develop the campaign and deliver.

CURRENT POSITION

No new funding has yet been identified to undertake such a campaign, but there is current rethinking and adjustment on the existing marketing of Blaenau Gwent.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
1C - DEDICATED SUPPORT FOR MANUFACTURING	Coordinating, joining up and promoting the range of services for modern manufacturing businesses – finance, technology, lean manufacturing, product development, skills and premises.	BGCBC, WAG, HOV, business support providers, employers.	Accessing existing WAG-funded schemes and recession funding.	Much higher take-up of support services by local firms, jobs safeguarded and created, increased competitiveness.	Streamlined and promoted support services.

CURRENT POSITION

The Welsh Assembly Government's support for business has been completely reorganised, following publication of the Economic Renewal Programme.

1/C/1 Local Investment fund
 RCT Council, as part of Valleys Councils bid
 Fund Grant £860K (EC) MF 1290K+ (Private)
 Output 98 SMEs assisted
 39 individual assisted to start up
 147 jobs created
 Status Start Dec 2008 finish Dec 2013

1/C/2 Kickstart Grant
 Lead BGCBC
 Fund £10K (UK Steel) £10K (BGCBC) £20K (private) each year
 Status Ongoing Scheme

1/C/3 Social Economy Grant
 Description:- Capital and Revenue Grant Scheme for Social Enterprises, at average rate of 66%.
 Lead Merthyr Council leading as part of Valleys councils bid
 Fund Grant element cap £460K (EC) £230KMF (SE)
 Rev £230K (EC) £115K MF (SE)

Output 32 jobs
 10 orgs financially supported
 3 SEs created
 Approved
 Status Start Sept 2010 Completion Aug 2015

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
1D – EFFECTIVE EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT	Linked to the Skills Implementation Plan and building on the potential of the Voice of Industry, develop an effective vehicle for improved dialogue with local employers and securing their active collaboration in skills employment activities.	BGCBC, WAG, JobMatch, JCP, employers, Wales Careers Gwent..	Existing aligned funding more effectively.	An agreed public sector “offer”; the commitment of employers to deliver their involvement.	An Employer Engagement plan.

CURRENT POSITION

Voice of Industry has been superseded by a revitalised Business Forum geared to meeting the expressed needs of businesses, Blaenau Gwent Connect 2 Business.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
<p>1E – PRIORITY SECTOR BUSINESS SUPPORT</p>	<p>Taking account of “Turning Heads” and the research carried out for this Strategy, develop clear actions for supporting those sectors of the economy that can bring about maximum impact. The sectors will include Manufacturing, Business services, Tourism & leisure, Health & social care, Construction. The interventions will vary but might include skills, recruitment support, premises, business skills and public procurement advice.</p>	<p>BGBCB, WAG, business support providers, JobMatch, training providers, employers, Capital Region Tourism.</p>	<p>Existing funding supplemented by WAG, where relevant.</p>	<p>Increased employment and GVA in key sectors; addressing worklessness and skill shortages.</p>	<p>Identify a range of sector strategies.</p>

CURRENT POSITION

One sector which is being developed at the Alchemy is the creative industry sector; progress is also being made elsewhere with various project in the medical equipment field.

2. BOOST BUSINESS SUPPORT AND ENTERPRISE

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
2A - SIMPLER & ACCESSIBLE BUSINESS SUPPORT NETWORK	Devise a client-centred support network, better signposted, higher profile and focused on their needs – productivity, skills and premises. Link to enterprise in Community Hubs. Potential pilot for the region.	WAG BGCBC Existing providers, Capital Region Tourism.	Existing budgets used effectively	Higher penetration of the local business sector	To be reviewed.

CURRENT POSITION

Services to the business community are continually being improved, helped by surveys of business needs.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
2B - INCUBATION AND SMALL UNITS	Develop a network of high-quality small units and incubation units in the Community Hubs, with on-site business support and mentoring for growth potential companies.	BGCBC WAG PRIVATE SECTOR	£2m for 4 small facilities in the Hubs	Over 1,000 sq.m. of space accommodating 75-100 growth jobs	Feasibility study within Community Hubs

CURRENT POSITION

The Strategy for Pre-Incubation and Incubation involves a phased development of facilities. The starting point has been the Pre Incubation facility at Lakeside Business Centre, Nantyglo, The Alchemy Suite, which is up and running. The second project involves an Incubation facility at The Works, Ebbw Vale, in the REGAIN building.

2/B/1

Descrip
Lead
Fund
Output
Status

The Alchemy Suite, Lakeside, Nantyglo

Existing facility for pre incubation
BGCBC
clients
Start 2008/9

2/B/2

Descrip
Lead
Fund
Outputs
Status

The REGAIN Building, The Works, Ebbw Vale

Small high quality building proposed, to house both pre incubation and incubation facilities.
BGCBC
£700K EC £700 mf (WAG HOV)
2 100 sq ft (7x300 units)
Start 2010 Completion 2011

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
2C - TARGETED START-UP SUPPORT FOR DEPRIVED GROUPS	Develop a small but intensive pilot in one of Blaenau Gwent's hub communities aimed at generating a transformational change in the level of enterprise and new business starts – aimed at overcoming massive shortfall in businesses in the Borough.	BGBCB VOLUNTARY AND PRIVATE SECTORS	Additional funding required to supplement existing start-up work, from WAG and EU	Increased levels of enterprise, new starts, social enterprise, jobs	Scope a project draw up a baseline and deliver over 3 years.

CURRENT POSITION

2/C/1 Enterprise Facilitators

Descrip. This project involves employing two people to work as mentors with potential business start-ups and existing businesses.

Lead

EVAD

Fund

3 year project of £400K (BGCB £46k/ Communities First Outcomes Fund £93k/ WAG HOV Programme £115k/ Waterloo Foundation £36k)

Outputs

Business start-ups

Status

Start Oct 2010 Completion Oct 2013

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
2D – ACCESSING PUBLIC SECTOR CONTRACTS	A programme of workshops, information packs and simplified procedures to remove barriers to small firms in tendering for and winning contracts at The Works, in housing improvement programmes and in other public sector procurement.	Works Team, BGCB, business support providers	Aligning business support, supplemented by WAG	New business starts and growing local businesses, jobs	Devise the programme.

CURRENT POSITION

The Council has developed a Sustainable Procurement Strategy for major capital projects. In addition, Construct Wales is currently running a Programme in Blaenau Gwent to improve businesses so that they are better able to compete for construction contracts.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
2E - COMPREHENSIVE ENTERPRISE EDUCATION PROGRAMME		BGCBC, WAG, schools, private sector, Coleg Gwent, Careers Wales Gwent.	Existing funding , supplemented by WAG and Council	Increased awareness among young people; increase in new starts	Develop a Borough proposal.

CURRENT POSITION

The Learning Zone will significantly enhance enterprise education provision in Blaenau Gwent.

3. PROMOTE LEARNING AND MODERN SKILLS

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
3A - THE BLAENAU GWENT LIFELONG LEARNING CAMPUS	The creation of a flagship campus as a truly transformational project, bringing together sixth forms, FE and HE in a state of the art facility for 3,500 full-time students. Particular emphasis on delivering a strong Heads of Valleys higher education presence on the Campus.	WAG, BGCBC, Coleg Gwent, HE institutions	Capital cost of £30m from WAG and Council for Learning Zone and Construction & Engineering School.	High-quality carbon neutral demonstration building; delivering improved learning and skills outcomes – including at HE level.	Main works start October 2010 and opening April 2012.

CURRENT POSITION

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
3B – VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR 14-19 YEAR OLDS	The Vocational Training Centre at Tafarnaubach will be incorporated into the Learning Campus as part of a hub and spoke model. Focusing on skills to meet business needs, reduce disengagement and assist progression post-16. Contributing to target “Make NEETs History”.	BGCBC, WAG, HOV	Being finalised.	Improved skills, reduced NEETs and school exclusions and reduced skill shortages.	Delivered through Skills Implementation Plan.

CURRENT POSITION

3/B/1 Schools Vocational Training Project

Vocational training in Automotive & Construction Sectors for the 6 Comprehensive Schools/Communities First – Tools 4UR Future

Lead Fund Learning Area Network funded = £25,750
 Communities First = £45,750
 Outputs 60 – Year 10 & 11 Pupils
 Status Bid agreed

3/B/2 Prevent 14 – 19

Description Intense Support including on basic skills to be provided to address NEET potential, develop self confidence and raise aspirations.
 Lead Bridgend as part of Valley Authority project
 Fund £963KEC; MF £642K (schools)
 Outputs Not yet determined

3/B/3 16+ Vocational Training

Description Provision of construction, Engineering, Manufacturing and Business Studies Training. Scope to be extended from 2011 onwards.

Lead BGCBC/Training Centre

Fund WAG-DCELLS 2010/11 contract £800k

Outputs Annual outputs approx

- Skillbuild youth employment 482
- Adult unemployed 58
- Foundation modern apprentice 2 745
- Modern apprentice 3 415
- Advanced modern apprentice 4 77
- 1777

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
3C EMPLOYABILITY AND WORKLESSNESS	- Drive the City Strategy programme forward in Blaenau Gwent, with a particular focus on The Works and the development opportunities arising there, in housing improvements and in the Community Hubs throughout the Borough. Client engagement, pre-employment training, recruitment and employment support.	City Strategy, WAG, BGCBC, Job Center Plus, Jobmatch, Works Team, NHS, community organisations, Careers Wales Gwent.	EU Convergence (City Strategy, Bridges into Work), DWP, WAG	Contributing to HoV target of 14,000 workless people into jobs	Included in Skills Implementation Plan

CURRENT POSITION

3/C/1 FUTURE JOBS FUND

Descrip This is a 6 Authority bid

Fund £3.51M

Outputs 540 participants in 3 phases starting in October 2009 – last intake March 2011, end Oct 2011.

Status Bid approved

3/C/2**JobMatch**

Description: It is an Initiative offering support to help people to overcome barriers to employment. It can help people with training and gaining new qualifications, as well as linking people with suitable job opportunities, and encouraging self employment. JobMatch can also provide advice on financial support, care of dependents and transport issues.

Fund £11.427M

£6.17M EC; MF DWP/HOV

Outputs Participants 3990

Gain qualification 1596

Further learning 2531

Employment 2850

Status Start 2004 Completion 2011

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
3D – WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	Launch a new Employers' Forum to engage local companies in the employment and skill agenda, and identify Skills Champions amongst local business leaders. Ensure employer input to new skills curricula. Support companies with upskilling through recession. Focus on skills at all levels, including higher level.	BGCBC, employers, HE and FE, Capital Region Tourism, Careers Wales Gwent.	Mainstream plus ProAct EU funding during recession	Improved skills, company performance in due course, increased capacity and quality of provision.	Included in Skills Implementation Plan.

CURRENT POSITION

The revitalised business forum, Blaenau Gwent Connect 2 Business, has and will continue to engage in the skills agenda, including on the curriculum of the Learning Campus.

3/D/1 Tourism Training

Description Develop and deliver training (tailored tourism) to local businesses
 Lead Capital Region Wales
 Fund
 Outputs Croeso Cynnes Cymrieg training for 100
 Status Ongoing programme

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
3E – ADULT LEARNING AND RISE THE NETWORK	Build on achievements of Learning Action Centres, BIG Learning Community and partnership work across 5 Counties by developing a programme of provision, focused on learning for employment, progression to further learning and engagement in economic and community life.	BGCBC, partner local authorities, FE, WEA and other providers, Careers Wales Gwent.	Using existing budgets with more focus and accessing EU and other funds	Progression, skills qualifications, employability basic	Included in Skills Implementation Plan.

CURRENT POSITION

3/E/1 BRIDGES TO WORK

The project is intended to address economic activity in six Local Authorities. The project aims, through a partnership approach, to engage, support and prepare the economically inactive, including those on incapacity in the most deprived areas, to become job ready and move closer to the employment market
 Lead BGCBC/Leisure/Adult Education
 Fund EC £1.167M MF £972K

Output Engage 1987 participants
 Support 9894 to gain a qualification
 Progress 635 into further learning
 Progress 238 into sustainable employment
 Start JAN 09

Status

3/E/2 WORKING SKILLS FOR ADULTS

The project aims to identify skills gaps and needs across the Region and increase the ownership of generic, transferable skills at all levels across the full spectrum of the employed workforce. The project will raise aspirations and earning potential for workers and also improve motivation, productivity and stability within the workforce.

Lead BGCBC/Leisure/Adult Education

Fund EC £1.18M MF £988K

Output Engage 2745 participants

Support 1235 to gain a qualification

Progress 686 into further learning

Status Business Case submitted to WEFO

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
3F – DEVELOPING A STRONG HIGHER EDUCATION PRESENCE	Linked closely with 3A, delivering transformational HE provision to Blaenau Gwent as part of a Heads of Valleys University, with a relevant and innovative curriculum supporting individual and business needs.	DCELLS, BGCBC, UWN, UoG, Coleg Gwent, employers	DCELLS and existing funding	High level skills, degrees and business and leadership skills,	Deliver Learning Campus through strategic partnership.

CURRENT POSITION

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
3G - EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP FOR SKILLS & EMPLOYMENT	Under the auspices of the Regeneration Partnership Board, establish an effective sub-group charged with leading on the vocational skills and employment agenda – covering 14-19 vocational, employability, workforce development and ACL/basic skills.	BGCBC, WAG, Coleg Gwent, HE, RISE, HoV, Careers Wales, voluntary sector	Aligning existing funding	Improved learning and skills attainment; more people employment into improved business performance.	Establish arrangements

CURRENT POSITION

An Employment Consortium has been established by Heads of the Valleys Programme. Review of activity ongoing in Blaenau Gwent.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
3H - SUB-REGIONAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT	Blaenau Gwent to lead a sub-regional project to investigate the establishment of an Intelligence Unit or Observatory to provide labour market intelligence, economic data and business survey information.	BGCBC, neighbour Councils, HOV, WAG and private sector	Better aligned existing funding supplemented by WAG and EU	Improved intelligence and evidence base for intervention.	Feasibility study completed.

CURRENT POSITION

The SE Wales Economic Forum is examining a project, to serve the whole region

4. FOCUS INVESTMENT IN KEY COMMUNITIES

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
4A - THE COMMUNITY HUB AND SPOKE NETWORK	Create a transformational network of four integrated Community Hubs in Ebbw Vale, Tredegar, Upper Ebbw Fach and Lower Ebbw Fach; each anchored by a new secondary school and linked learning, community and enterprise facilities	BGCBCI, WAG, voluntary sector, NHS, police, business support	Substantial funding from Council, WAG and agencies	Modern, purpose-built facilities leading to physical regeneration and to eventual improved aspirations and attainment.	Major feasibility study to assess the potential in each community and to bring forward a master plan for each.

CURRENT POSITION

HARPs (Holistic Area Regeneration Plans) have been prepared for the four sub divisions of Blaenau Gwent to guide Heads of the Valleys and other funding streams.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
4B - HOUSING CHOICE AND QUALITY	Bring forward proposals for further private housing provision and ensure adequate land is made available. Make the appropriate arrangements for achieving the WHQS by 2012.	BGCBC, WAG, private developers, potential RSL	£100m required over 5 years for WHQS	Transformation of the housing market with implications for inward investment, in-migration and community sustainability.	Consultation process leading to a possible stock transfer ballot

CURRENT POSITION

Tenants have voted in favour of stock transfer. A new Housing Stock Transfer Organisation, Tai Calon, has been established and the transfer has been completed.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
4C - AREA REGENERATION FRAMEWORKS	A series of area-based studies to establish appropriate and sustainable physical regeneration priorities and delivery plans for the four key areas and communities, linked closely to priorities for skills, learning, enterprise and community development.	WAG and BGCBC	WAG resources for the development of the Frameworks, with possible use of public/private collaboration (the JESSICA model as an option)	Clear 3-10 year priorities for regeneration of key areas	The Frameworks completed in a phased programme, with commitments to implement.

CURRENT POSITION

HARPS (Holistic Area Regeneration Plans) have been prepared for the four areas and these are subject to an annual review process.

5. DELIVER THE WORKS AS A NATIONAL FLAGSHIP

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
5A - DELIVER "THE WORKS" AS A NATIONAL FLAGSHIP	Driving the transformational project forward, building on progress e and coordinating the major components. Maintaining momentum and addressing barriers and constraints through strong partnership.	Works Team, WAG, BGCBC, NHS and developers.	£5-8m pa for infrastructure from WAG, with funding for each component as required.	Transformational community and commercial facilities. Eventually accommodating 3,000 jobs.	Deliver in line with infrastructure phasing plans.

CURRENT POSITION

Land reclamation complete; hospital completion – Summer 2010. Environmental Resource Centre open Spring 2010; General Offices project to started Spring 2010. Future Works Housing scheme being implemented.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
5B - ACCESSING EMPLOYMENT AT THE WORKS	Linked with 2D and 3C above, work to maximise job opportunities for local people at The Works.	Works Team, Jobmatch, WAG, BGCBC, Careers Wales	Accessing EU Convergence funds to supplement WAG and local funds.	Increasing employment getting unemployed people into sustainable local jobs.	Develop the integrated employability model and ensure The Works provides a wide range of job opportunities.

CURRENT POSITION

The Works has been the subject of a focus on maximising job opportunities. This is now reflected in The Sustainable Procurement Strategy

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
5C - MARKETING "THE WORKS"	Supporting the infrastructure project with the most intensive marketing campaign ever in the Valleys, focusing on the specific opportunities for development and investment.	Works Team, WAG, BGCBC, Capital Wales	WAG funding over 5 years.	Effective campaign leading to increased developer interest and investments.	Develop the campaign.

CURRENT POSITION

Marketing Strategy agreed, funding not yet secured for implementation.

6. DEVELOP THE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
6A - COMPLETE THE DUALLING OF THE A465 HEADS OF THE VALLEYS ROAD	Complete the dualling of the A465 from Tredegar to Abergavenny.	WAG	From WAG	A modern connection to the Midlands and North, leading to increased competitiveness of local business and new market opportunities.	Commitment to programming the outstanding sections and completing the project.

CURRENT POSITION

Start likely on Brynmawr to Tredegar section in 2012, for completion in 2015

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
6B - COMPLETE THE RAILWAY NETWORK	Complete the railway line to Ebbw Vale Town and hourly service to Newport, and investigate additional infrastructure on the EVR including a spur to Abertillery.	WAG, BGCBC, SEWTA	From WAG	A modern connection to Cardiff and Newport, leading to increased competitiveness of local business, new market opportunities and new employment opportunities.	Commitment to programming the extension to Ebbw Vale Town, to coincide with an hourly service to Newport.

CURRENT POSITION

6/B/1 Ebbw Vale Rail extension to Town Centre

Describe Implement the extension of the Ebbw Valley railway from Parkway station to a new station at Ebbw vale, located within “The Works”.

Lead WAG, Council, SEWTA
 Funding From WAG
 Outputs From WAG

A further extension of the Ebbw Valley Railway linking to directly “The Works” and Ebbw Vale, leading to increased competitiveness of local business, new market opportunities and new employment opportunities.

Status On EVR and review of SEWTA Rail Strategy

Deputy First Minister for the Economy and Transport has commissioned further advice on planning issues; and commissioned Network Rail to further progress feasibility and design work for a combined scheme to GRIP4 stage, under Network Rail’s Guide to Railway Investment Procedures.

6/B/2 Extend Rail Service to Newport

Describe Provision of an hourly passenger rail service between Ebbw Vale and Newport.

Lead WAG, Council, SEWTA
 Funding From WAG
 Outputs From WAG

A modern connection to Newport, leading to increased competitiveness of local business, new market opportunities and new employment opportunities.

Status as 6/B/1 above

6/B/3 Extend Rail Service to Abertillery

Describe Provision of spur to Abertillery for the Ebbw Valley Railway

Lead WAG, Council, SEWTA
 Fund From WAG
 Outputs From WAG

A modern connection to Cardiff and Newport, leading to increased competitiveness of local business, new market opportunities and new employment opportunities

Status Subject to current SEWTA study on additional infrastructure.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
6C - CONNECT THE WORKS	Create first class road connections to The Works by upgrading the A4046 link between the development site and the A465.	WAG, BGCBC, SEWTA	From WAG	Improved connectivity, competitiveness and access to employment opportunities.	Commitment to programming.

CURRENT POSITION

Current second stage of access study further developing the preferred option..

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
6D – OTHER ROAD SCHEMES	Improve connectivity within Blaenau Gwent by improving the A4046 between Cwm and Aberbeeg; and by improving connections between Abertillery and Aberbeeg and between Tredegar and Blackwood.	WAG, BGCBC and SEWTA	From WAG	Improved connectivity, competitiveness and access to employment opportunities.	Investigate appropriate funding opportunities.

CURRENT POSITION

6/D/1	Cwm to Aberbeeg Road Improvement Improve connectivity within Blaenau Gwent by improving the A4046 between Cwm and Aberbeeg WAG, Council, SEWTA From WAG Improved connectivity, competitiveness and access to employment opportunities. Not currently identified within WAG Road Forward Programme 2008 or Sewta Road Strategy.
6/D/2	Abertillery to Aberbeeg Road Improvement Improve connectivity within Blaenau Gwent by improving the A467 between Abertillery and Aberbeeg. WAG, Council, SEWTA From WAG Improved connectivity, competitiveness and access to employment opportunities. Not currently identified within WAG Road Forward Programme 2008 or Sewta Road Strategy.
6/D/3	Tredegar to Blackwood Road Improvement Improve connectivity within Blaenau Gwent by improving the A4048 between Tredegar and Blackwood. WAG, Council, SEWTA

Fund Outputs Status From WAG Improved connectivity, competitiveness and access to employment opportunities. Not currently identified within WAG Road Forward Programme 2008 or Sewta Road Strategy.

6/D/4
 Descrip Fund Outputs Status **A465 Link Road to The Works**
 Improvements needed to enable full development of The Works site, including the Cemetery Roundabout.
 BGCBC

Submitted for consideration as part of SEWTA Making Better Use/ Junction Programme.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	FUNDING	OUTPUTS/IMPACT	MILESTONES
6E - INTEGRATED PUBLIC TRANSPORT	Develop and pilot an innovative model for sustainable and high accessibility local transport to support the Community Hub network and allow Blaenau Gwent people and visitors to make the most of the transformational opportunities.	WAG, BGCBC, SEWTA, private and community operators	3-year pilot funding from WAG and Council	An integrated network linking commercial bus services with community-led funded provision, resulting in high accessibility and increased participation in employment, tourism and other activities.	Negotiations and planning for introduction of pilot.

CURRENT POSITION

