

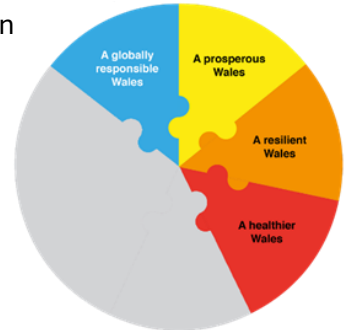
Well-being Objective 2

Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities

Why This Is Important as an Area of Focus:

Blaenau Gwent has a rich heritage, and its buildings and countryside are what make it an attractive place to live, work and visit. The local environment should be used to help improve the health and well-being of families and communities and be enhanced for future generations to continue to enjoy. There is a real desire to see the communities where people live kept clean, tidy and useable, creating areas that people can be proud of.

What We Aim to Achieve – For Blaenau Gwent Council to greatly reduce its carbon emissions, and provides an environment which supports growth and well-being and connects communities.

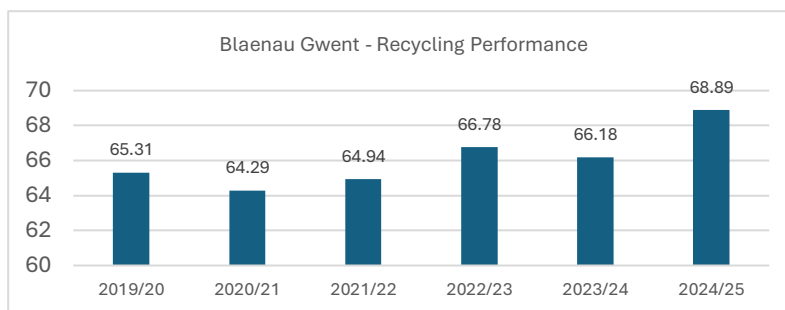


How well are we doing?

The following narrative provides an evaluative reflection of the activity, undertaken throughout 2024/25, across service areas that directly support this Well-being Objective. The narrative reflects what has gone well but also, and more importantly, where we are experiencing challenges. These challenges have then been collated together at the end of each section. These areas will be identified as areas of focus moving forward and will be reported as part of our next Self-Assessment, as well as performance monitoring throughout the year.

Reducing waste and increasing recycling

Between 2019/20 to 2023/24, Blaenau Gwent exceeded the Welsh Government statutory recycling target of 64%, achieving:



For 2024/25, recycling performance increased to 68.89%. Although performance has increased, Blaenau Gwent has fallen short of the Welsh Government target of 70% for 2024/ 25. Work is continuing to reduce the amount of residual (black bag) waste being collected and increasing recycling participation across the Borough.

For Blaenau Gwent to achieve the 70% recycling target, the council would have needed to reduce residual waste and increase recycling by 376 tonnes. For every 1% increase there would be a need to divert 339.11 tonnes from the residual tonnages to reuse/recycling and composting tonnages. This is made more difficult by things like smaller gardens in the area overall, so green waste figures are generally lower than other areas. It is imperative that the Council maintains and improves its recycling targets as there is a potential financial penalty imposed by Welsh Government if these are not met.

If a fine is imposed on the Council, this would equate to £200 for every tonne below the target. Therefore, if the current recycling rate of 68.89% with a shortfall of 376 tonnes would equate to a fine of £75,200

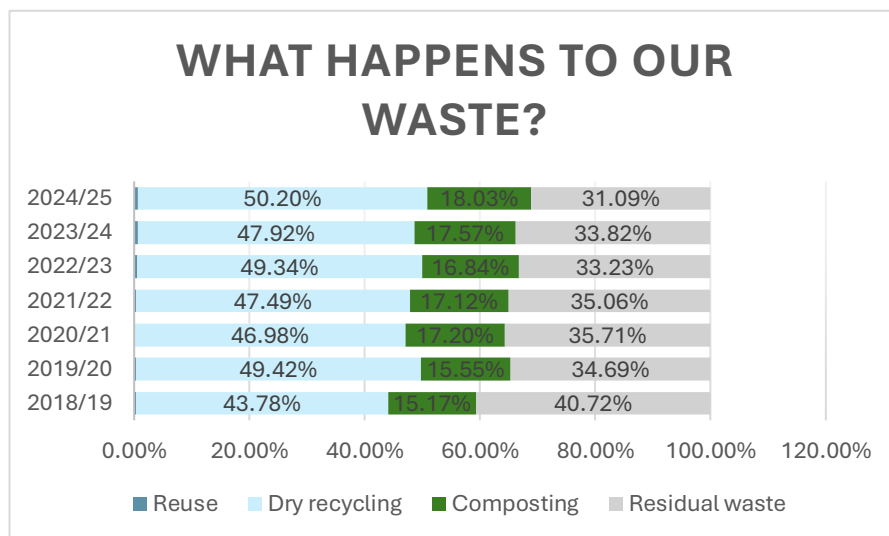


We are currently working with Welsh Government, through Local Partnerships and Wrap, to develop a new Waste Strategy which will set out the challenges we face and the strategic actions we will need to take to increase our recycling rate to 70% and beyond and reduce our overall waste.

Breakdown of 2024/25 Performance		
	2023/24	2024/25
Quarter 1 (April – June)	70.11%	69.83%
Quarter 2 (July – Sept)	66.99%	69.27%
Quarter 3 (Oct – Dec)	61.91%	68.40%
Quarter 4 (Jan – March)	65.42%	68.03%
Annual (not yet verified by Natural Resources Wales)	66.18%	68.89%

When looking at the breakdown of tonnage figures for 2024/25, compared to 2023/24, it shows residual waste, food waste, kerbside dry recycling, garden waste, HWRC waste and commercial waste have all increased.

- Residual waste has increased by 315.591 tonnes (2.51%)
- Food waste has increased by 98.67 tonnes (2.67%)
- Kerbside dry recycling has increased by 86.334 tonnes (1.52%)
- Garden waste has increased by 37.981 tonnes (2.49%)
- HWRC waste has increased by 279.052 tonnes (4.67%)
- Commercial waste has increased by 1221.496 tonnes (40.71%)



**Quarter 4 indicators not yet signed off by NRW, but figures unlikely to change.*

The statutory recycling rate in Wales was increased to 70% in 2024/25, whilst the Council has made great improvements in our recycling rate, early indications of performance are that the Council will not achieve this target. Officers have engaged with Welsh Government, through Local Partnerships and Wrap, to develop a new Waste and Recycling Strategy which details the future vision for the service and actions required to achieve and go beyond 70%. The next stage is for public consultation in 2025.

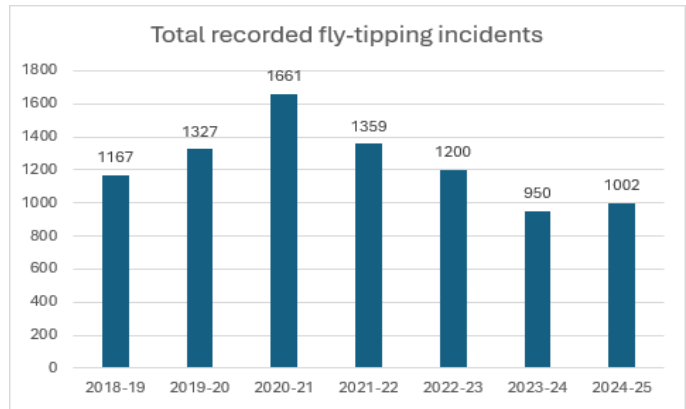
Fly Tipping and Street Cleansing

Deployment of CCTV units across Blaenau Gwent continues to target highway lay-bys and rural locations subject to prolific fly tipping. Blaenau Gwent issued 110 £400 fly tipping fixed penalty notices (FPN) for 23/24 and there has been a slight reduction this year with 109 £400 fly tipping FPN's issued between April 2024 to March 2025.

2024/2025	Number recorded
Number of Fly tipping incidents	1002
No of Litter Fixed penalty notices issued	412
No of Dog Control fixed penalty notices issued	20
Commercial Duty of care	22
Household Duty of Care	8



During the year 2024/25, a total of 22 £300 Commercial duty of care FPNs were issued to businesses who did not have appropriate waste disposal arrangements in place while 8 householders received £300 fixed penalty notices for failing to check their waste was transferred to an authorised waste carrier. 4 individuals were prosecuted for various waste offences which resulted in £5,913 being issued in fines and costs by the Courts



Housing and Energy

The delivery of ECO4Flex (a scheme to identify domestic properties in need of energy improvement measures) in Blaenau Gwent, through the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) partnership, has brought both benefits and limitations. While the CCR model provides a structured regional approach and access to delivery partners such as EDF and Citi Energy, local uptake has remained low. Households benefiting from energy measures fell from 32 in 2023/24 to just 5 in 2024/25, despite the framework being in place. In response to this decline, a targeted campaign was launched in March 2025, with Citi Energy reaching out to approximately 6,600 properties rated EPC E, F, or G via direct mail, supported by social media promotion. However, the campaign generated only four leads, highlighting the difficulty in converting awareness into action. This outcome suggests that the CCR model, while consistent, may lack the flexibility to fully address local delivery challenges. To improve responsiveness and engagement, the Council is now exploring complementary delivery routes to increase ECO4Flex uptake across the borough.

Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP)- whole energy system, looking at energy from the Domestic, Industrial, Commercial, Public, Agriculture and Transport Sector

During 2024/25 a Local Area Energy Plan ([LAEP](#)) was produced with funding from Welsh Government. The LAEP outlines what a Net Zero carbon energy system could look like in 2050 for Blaenau Gwent. The LAEP sets out the scale of the transformation required to switch to an energy system based largely on renewable electricity. The LAEP identifies actions for a range of organisations and the council committed to taking forward some of the actions identified and supporting, in principle, those that will require additional funding.

The Council continues to investigate opportunities for low and zero carbon procurement within the corporate landlord portfolio, including:

- New PV installations at Willowtown Primary, Rhos Y fedwen Primary School, Abertillery Leisure Centre and Ebbw Vale Sports Centre;
- Installing low carbon technologies, including LED replacements, at Coed y Garn Primary School, St Mary's Church in Wales Primary School and Georgetown Primary School; and
- Installing new low/zero carbon technologies in new builds and large refurbishment works at the new Glyncoed Primary School, Trinity Chapel, the Old Abertillery Library, and the new Welsh Medium Primary School.

Work around developing Energy Projects continues with progress being made on the Silent Valley Wind Turbine. This now has planning permission and will be progressed to procurement when the case for investment is re-determined. Work is continuing on the development and installation of infrastructure for Blaenau Gwent fleet, schools and Council buildings.

Biodiversity

All Councils in Wales are under a legal duty via the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems.

In September 2024, the Council formally declared a nature emergency in recognition of the significant threat posed by declining biodiversity within the borough. To address this issue and safeguard local biodiversity for



the future, the Council adopted a Local Nature Recovery Action [Plan](#) which aims to reduce or prevent further loss of natural habitats.

The plan has 6 key objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels;
- **Objective 2:** Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management;
- **Objective 3:** Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation;
- **Objective 4:** Tackle key pressures on species and habitats;
- **Objective 5:** Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring; and
- **Objective 6:** Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery.

The Council has been working in partnership to implement the actions set out in the plan and has made some progress including designating over 140 sites of significant value for nature conservation to ensure they are and will be protected through local and national policies.

A Pollinator [Policy](#) has also been produced and endorsed by the Council in 2024 to promote the creation of pollinator friendly habitats on land owned by the Council, the policy outlines several actions which includes; reducing the number of cuts to grassed areas to allow a longer growing period, introducing perennial native wildflower mix to formal beds and where appropriate to other urban area green spaces continue to develop more habitats for solitary bees e.g. bee bank, grasses, tree holes and bug hotels.

Storm Bert

In November 2024 Storm Bert brought devastation across South Wales, and many communities in Blaenau Gwent were deeply affected. The extreme weather experienced exceeded all predictions, with record-breaking rainfall in some areas of our borough. This was an extraordinary challenge for the Council, emergency services, and communities.

The Council's immediate priority was to safeguard the lives of residents, protect properties where possible, and preserve critical infrastructure. Despite planning and preparations, based on the forecasts available, the intensity and impact of the storm went beyond anything anticipated. Homes, businesses, schools, roads, and childcare facilities were all affected. The volume of emergency calls received were unprecedented.

The Storm also triggered a landslide in Cwmtillery causing significant disruption and distress. As we look to the future, we know that events like these are becoming more frequent due to climate change. Building resilience within our communities will be critical, and we will work closely with partners to ensure we are better prepared for the challenges ahead. A full debrief and review of the Council's response was conducted, and an independent review was also undertaken. From this, a members working group has been established in order to address lessons learnt and prepare for any future extreme weather.

Public Transport

Works are now complete on the frequency enhancement project on the Ebbw Vale line delivered in partnership with the Welsh Government, Transport for Wales and Network Rail. There are now direct services between Ebbw Vale and Newport and Cardiff, with 2 trains per hour from Ebbw Vale. The project has also seen a fully accessible Access for All footbridge, a new platform and car park at Llanhilleth. To allow the new services to run, a new 7-mile passing loop has been built between Crosskeys and Aberbeeg alongside new earthworks and drainage, constructed to accommodate the new track improving connectivity and access for residents and businesses with the wider region and beyond.



Highways

The completion and formal adoption of the Highway Asset Management [Plan](#) (HAMP) was approved by Council in September 2023. The HAMP will support and drive the Authority's approach to highways maintenance over the next 5 years.

A new banding method for sealing patches / potholes across the highway network has been used with the aim of making the finish look more aesthetically pleasing, but more importantly, prolong the life of the repaired highway and prevent multiple visits. Additionally, the council is in the process of trialling a new method for patching and pothole works using a JCB Bobcat which is proving to be very positive.

Going forward the council has secured funding from Welsh Government through their Local Government Borrowing Initiative (LGBI) for 2025/26 and 2026/27 where it is envisaged this will make a major impact on the maintenance of the highway infrastructure.

Key Challenges Identified for Action in 2025/26

- In order to improve the take up of energy improvement measures across homes, the Council is exploring complementary delivery routes to increase ECO4Flex uptake across the borough.
- Building resilience within our communities with regards to climate events will be critical, and we will work closely with partners to ensure we are better prepared for the challenges ahead by implementing our flood management action plan.
- Continue to work to achieve the Welsh Government recycling target of 70% which is included as part of our performance indicators. Officers have engaged with Welsh Government, through Local Partnerships and WRAP, to develop a new Waste and Recycling Strategy which details the future vision for the service and further actions required
 - *Next steps – consult public during 25/ 26 on the Council's new Waste and Recycling Strategy*
- Implementation of the new Local Nature Recovery Action Plan and Pollinator Policy to respond to the nature emergency.





