

*BGWeWant

SUMMARY OF PHASE 3 OF THE BLAENAU GWENT WE WANT

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME 2017

The **Blaenau Gwent We Want** is about local people, businesses and organisations having a say and working with key local services to help create a better Blaenau Gwent for our future generations.



Lowri wants a Blaenau Gwent where she is happy, healthy and has the support she needs to get to University



Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg
This document is available in Welsh



BWRDD GWASANAETHAU CYHOEDDUS
Blaenau Gwent
PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD

SUMMARY & CONTENTS

The Blaenau Gwent We Want is about local people, businesses and organisations having their say and working with key local services to help create a better Blaenau Gwent for our future generations.

The programme began in August 2016. Since then we've talked with over 2,000 people across the whole of Blaenau Gwent, from all types of backgrounds; young and old; to find out the things that are important to people to live well and enjoy their lives, and what they think are the key issues for our area.

This magazine summarises our third phase of the Blaenau Gwent We Want conducted between July and September 2017. It explains what we learnt from this phase and how we'll use the feedback to help create the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan which is a document that sets out the future direction of work for all public services in the area.

For more information, or to view the draft Well-being Plan, please visit our website or contact us using the details below:

Website: www.blaenaugwentpsb.org.uk

Email: pps@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Tel: 01495 355092

Illustrations within this document are examples of feedback received from all 3 phases of The Blaenau Gwent We Want conducted at the time of publication.

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ABOUT THE BLAENAU GWENT WE WANT

Local public services have been working together to create a better Blaenau Gwent for future generations. But we can't do this alone. We need to work with our local communities, businesses and organisations to make sure the Blaenau Gwent We Want is one that everyone wants! The 'Blaenau Gwent We Want' programme is about local services going out and speaking with our communities to find out what they would like Blaenau Gwent to be like and how they think we can achieve it. The aim of the programme is to help us to create a Well-being Plan for Blaenau Gwent that will set the future direction of work for all public services in the area. This document summarises phase 3 of the programme, here is a summary of the previous phases:

PHASE 1:

August to September 2016

We spoke with over 1,000 people from throughout the area and asked them:

- Q1** What is special about Blaenau Gwent?
- Q2** What things are important to you to live well and enjoy your life?
- Q3** What would make Blaenau Gwent a better place?
- Q4** What can you do to make Blaenau Gwent a better place?

PHASE 2:

February to March 2017

We showed people what everyone had said during phase 1 and asked them if this was the Blaenau Gwent that they knew, or if there was anything missing.

We used the feedback from both phases to help produce a Well-being Assessment of the area which is a document that creates a picture of what Blaenau Gwent is like; what's good about it which we need to maintain, and where improvements need to be made.

You can view the well-being assessment by visiting:

www.blaenauwentpsb.org.uk



SUMMARY OF PHASE 3: July to September 2017

Our Well-being Assessment gave us a clear picture of what Blaenau Gwent was like and what the key issues were in the area. We used this information to come up with 5 key objectives for the area, or things we want to achieve, in order to make Blaenau Gwent a better place for future generations...

Blaenau Gwent wants...

- ...everyone to have the best start in life
- ...to encourage people to make healthy lifestyle choices
- ...to have safe and friendly communities
- ...to forge new pathways to prosperity
- ...to look after and protect its environment

In order to achieve each of our objectives, we came up with some draft priorities that we wanted to work on. Our third phase of the Blaenau Gwent We Want was about showing people our draft priorities and asking them:

- Q1** Why do you think this should be a priority for Blaenau Gwent
- Q2** What do you think needs to be done to help achieve this priority?
- Q3** Do you know of any work already being done to help achieve this priority?

So that we could speak with as many people as possible and give everyone the chance to have their say we organised and took part in lots of local events, groups and drop-in sessions right across the borough. Including...



People could also take part on the web via our online questionnaire.

YOUR FEEDBACK IN YOUR WAY

We understand that different people like to take part in different ways, which is why we offered many different opportunities for people to share their views; from questionnaires to postcards, drawings to poems, group sessions to social media posts; people could, and did, take part however they liked!

600+ Event Post-it Notes

200+ Postcards

30+ Pictures

20+ Stories/Poems

175+ Questionnaires

- Event post-it note:** Participants could write their answers on a post-it note and stick it to our board
- Picture:** Participants, especially children, drew what they would like Blaenau Gwent to be like or what they like about it. We made sure they told us what they had drawn to avoid confusion during analysis
- Stories/poems:** Participants could also write a story or poem about Blaenau Gwent
- Postcard:** We handed out postcards with our draft priorities listed on them and asked people to write on the back what they thought of those priorities before returning to us via the post.

OVERALL SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

Our team carefully looked at each piece of feedback and divided them into thousands of individual comments. For each comment we noted which draft priority it was related to and the issue or subject it was describing, such as 'public transport' or 'police presence'. We were then able to identify trends and patterns in the feedback. Here's what we found out...

Over 1,000 people provided a total of 2,369 comments

Most popular objectives overall

- 1 Blaenau Gwent wants to have safe and friendly communities (597 comments, 27%)
- 2 Blaenau Gwent wants to forge new pathways to prosperity (533 comments, 24%)
- 3 Blaenau Gwent wants everyone to have the best start in life (472 comments, 21%)
- 4 Blaenau Gwent wants to look after and protect its environment (419 comments, 19%)
- 5 Blaenau Gwent wants to encourage people to make healthy lifestyle choices (215 comments, 10%)

Top 5 draft priorities talked about overall

- 1 Create safe, secure and friendly communities (294 comments, 13%)
- 2 Protect, preserve and enhance our environment (260 comments, 11%)
- 3 Give children the best start in life (257 comments, 11%)
- 4 Give people the skills they need to get jobs (221 comments, 10%)
- 5 Protect children from negative experiences (215 comments, 9%)

Top 5 specific issues talked about overall

- 1 Activities for children and young people (184 comments, 8%)
- 2 Landscaping / tidying / litter picking / dog fouling (111 comments, 5%)
- 3 Police presence / parking wardens / monitoring (101 comments, 5%)
- 4 Community clubs / groups / events (78 comments, 4%)
- 5 Funding for services and groups (68 comments, 3%)

The rest of this document summarises what people told us about each objective and draft priority.



OBJECTIVE: Blaenau Gwent wants everyone to have the best start in life

This objective was the 3rd most popular with people overall, receiving 472 comments (21%). There were 2 draft priorities that we talked to people about for this objective. Responses to both priorities were very similar so we have merged them for our top 3 issues below.

DRAFT PRIORITY: Give Children the best start in life

This was the 3rd most popular draft priority overall with 257 comments (11%)

DRAFT PRIORITY: Protect children from negative experiences (e.g. substance misuse, domestic abuse and sexual violence)

This was the 5th most popular draft priority overall with 215 comments (9%)

Top 3 issues mentioned by people for both draft priorities:

- 1 Activities for children and young people (95 comments, 21%)
- 2 Educating / raising awareness (51 comments, 11%)
- 3 Support (41 comments, 11%)

What people told us:

People recognised that giving children the best start in life was a key challenge that needed specific support and funding, particularly given that Blaenau Gwent was a deprived area. Many felt that this was the most important thing to get right and that improvements here would have a positive impact on most of our other priorities.

It was recognised that education would play a major role here; educating parents and teachers on how to recognise and deal with issues early on, and educating children on subjects such as parenting skills so that our future generations are better prepared.



"Substance misuse epidemic across the area!"

Substance misuse was identified as an issue throughout the area, with visible drug taking being reported in many parks and town centres; where children and young people were being pressured into taking them. When asked how to combat this the most popular response was to give children and young people more things to do, such as youth/sports clubs and leisure activities, to keep them "off the streets and out of trouble", this was more common in the Sirhowy Valley area.

"Need more things for children to do to keep them from trouble"

A number of services working in this area were identified, most notably Flying Start, but there was a strong feeling that these services should be accessible to all and not just those living within specific postcode areas.

"Not every parent can help, some can't read or write themselves! Some children don't have stories read to them"

There were some comments about the overuse of modern technology, with children preferring to play computer games or use social media than communicate verbally or play outside, and restricting technology at home and in school would encourage more life experiences, better social skills and improved mental health.

"Children not brought up right - wrong mentality"

Pregnant women and young mothers were more likely to mention the difficulty of accessing certain services.



TO BE
I want to be a vet
because i love any animal
I want to be an exotic vet
So that i can travel
around and save animals.
I want good education
and I will need to
work very hard. I
really hope I can
get this ~~same~~ chance
in my life

OBJECTIVE: Blaenau Gwent wants to encourage people to make healthy lifestyle choices

This objective was the least popular objective overall, receiving just 215 comments (10%). There were 2 draft priorities that we talked to people about for this objective:

DRAFT PRIORITY: Create a smoke free Blaenau Gwent

This was the 12th most popular draft priority overall with just 75 comments (3%). There were too few comments to create a top 3 list of issues.

What people told us:

This draft priority received the 2nd lowest amount of comments overall. Of the comments we did receive, the most common suggestions were about creating designated smoking areas away from entrances to premises, introducing smoke-free zones throughout the towns, and educating or raising awareness in schools of the health issues associated with smoking.

Young People, particularly teenagers, were more likely to say that smoking was an issue and said that smoking e-cigs was seen as a 'cool' thing to do. Some suggested that work needed to be done, such as launching campaigns, to create a negative stigma around smoking.

"Smoking is seen as cool; particularly e-cigs and weed"

Some people said that this should not be a priority at all as they felt it was impossible to achieve.

"Can't stop people so shouldn't be a priority!"

Pregnant women and young mothers were more likely to say that there needed to be more designated smoking areas introduced.



DRAFT PRIORITY: Achieve a healthy weight for children and families

This was the 8th most popular draft priority overall with 140 comments (6%)

Top 3 issues mentioned by people for this draft priority:

- 1 Activities for children and young people (42 comments, 32%)
- 2 Educating / raising awareness (19 comments, 14%)
- 3 Support (9 comments, 7%)

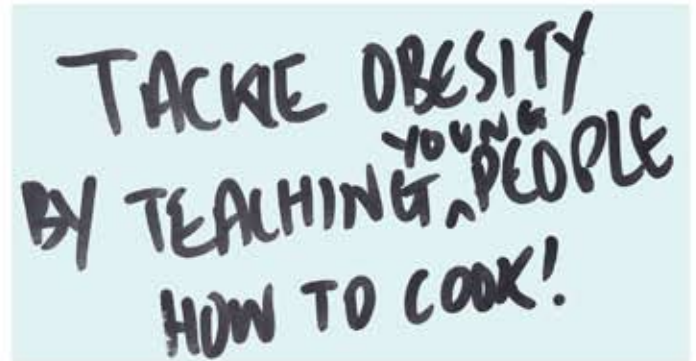
About a third of comments for this draft priority were about the need for more free or low-cost physical activities to be available for children and young people inside and outside of school to keep them fit and healthy.

"Need free gym memberships and activities for parents and children"

A number of people said that healthy cooking and nutrition classes should be introduced within schools.

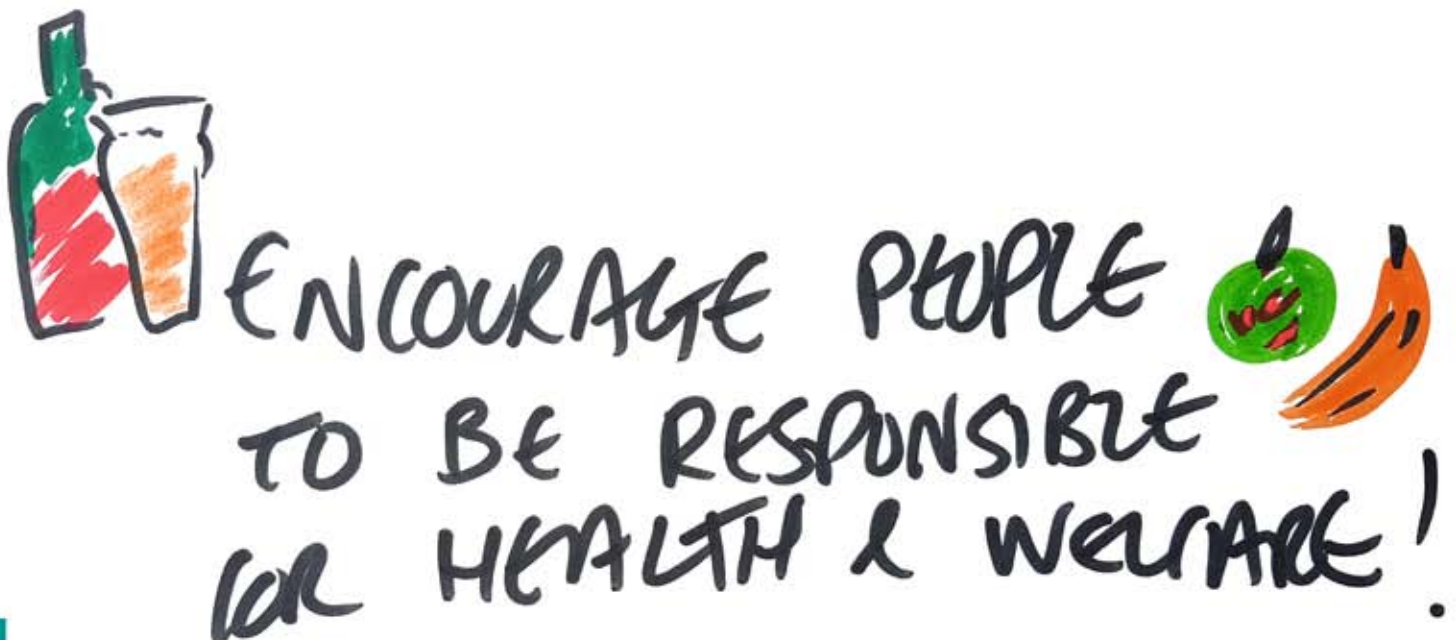
"Need healthy cooking classes in schools"

Children and young people were more likely to talk to us about this draft priority



There were also comments that there should be a limit on the number of non-healthy food options and a greater number of low-cost healthy options available in town centres and within schools, colleges and workplaces.

"Too many fast food restaurants and not enough healthy food options"



OBJECTIVE: Blaenau Gwent wants to have safe and friendly communities

This objective was the most popular with people overall, receiving 597 comments (27%). There were 3 draft priorities that we talked to people about for this objective:

DRAFT PRIORITY: Create strong, connected and engaged communities

This was the 7th most popular draft priority overall with 185 comments (8%)

Top 3 issues mentioned by people for this draft priority:

- 1 Community spirit/pride (28 comments, 17%)
- 2 Community clubs/groups (26 comments, 15%)
- 3 Promotion of events/activities (13 comments, 8%)

What people told us:

We received many comments that people in Blaenau Gwent had little or no community spirit or pride in their area, with a feeling that this was not an issue in the past. To combat the issue people said that there should be more clubs, groups and community events introduced where community members can get to know one another, and the necessary funding should be made available. People in the Sirhowy Valley were less likely to say that community spirit was an issue.

"Community spirit will die with the older generation"

Some respondents said that activities and events, which were already taking place, needed to be better advertised; possibly by creating a community web portal or social media site and introducing more notice boards.

"No social activities or recreation"

It was clear that a lot of work was already going on to combat this issue with many people telling us about great local groups, projects and initiatives that were already taking place in the area. They told us how important it was to maintain funding for these groups, but some said that they could work together more effectively.

"Continue to fund local community projects"

The Buddhist community were far more likely to talk about community spirit and pride than any other communities in the area.



DRAFT PRIORITY: Create safe, secure and friendly communities

This was the most popular draft priority overall with 294 comments (13%)

Top 3 issues mentioned by people for this draft priority:

- 1 Police Presence (83 comments, 29%)
- 2 ASB/Vandalism (40 comments, 14%)
- 3 Activities for Children & Young People (22 comments, 8%)

What people told us:

‘More police on the streets’ was the 4th most common issue across the whole engagement exercise with a feeling that this would lower Anti-Social Behaviour and vandalism and allow residents to feel safer in their communities.

“More Police on the beat”

ASB and Vandalism were common issues in the town centre areas, particularly in the Ebbw Fawr Valley, which left some residents feeling intimidated.

“Intimidating environment in town centres for young people”

Substance misuse was also seen as a particular problem for Blaenau Gwent with drug taking apparent in town centres and local parks. People in the Sirhowy Valley were more likely to mention this.

“Drugs are rife in the area”

Along with a greater Police presence, ‘more things for children and young people to do’ was seen as a key way of combating the ASB and substance misuse.

“Skate parks are for skating not drug taking!”

Older people were more likely to talk about community safety than other groups.

**MORE POLICE PRESENCE
ON OUR STREETS**



DRAFT PRIORITY: Tackle loneliness and isolation

This was the 10th most popular draft priority overall with 118 comments (5%).

Top 3 issues mentioned by people for this draft priority:

- 1 Community clubs/groups/events (28 comments, 26%)
- 2 Looking after neighbours (16 comments, 15%)
- 3 Availability of services (11 comments, 10%)

What people told us:

The introduction and continued funding of clubs and community drop in sessions was seen as key to tackling loneliness and isolation, particularly for elderly people.

"No funding for knitting group to continue!"

This was not seen as an issue for elderly people alone, with a number job-seekers and single parents also revealing that they felt lonely and isolated.

"People out of work are also lonely and isolated"

There were some suggestions that the public transport system in the area was not adequate enough for people who are isolated and some felt trapped within their small communities.

It was recognised that isolation leads to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety and needed to be combatted in order to improve overall mental health.

"Some people are very isolated which leads to depression"

Those in the gypsy traveller community were more likely to say that looking after their neighbours was very important to them.



OBJECTIVE: Blaenau Gwent wants to forge new pathways to prosperity

This objective was the 2nd most popular overall, receiving 533 comments (24%). There were 3 draft priorities that we talked to people about for this objective:

DRAFT PRIORITY: Help young people through the key stages of education

This was the 11th most popular draft priority overall with 107 comments (5%)

Top 3 issues mentioned by people for this draft priority:

- 1 Education (51 comments, 50%)
- 2 Support (13 comments, 13%)
- 3 Activities for Children & Young People (9 comments, 9%)

What people told us:

Improving education was the most popular issue for this draft priority, with some people commenting that low quality teaching and a poor education system could leave children underqualified for college or university.

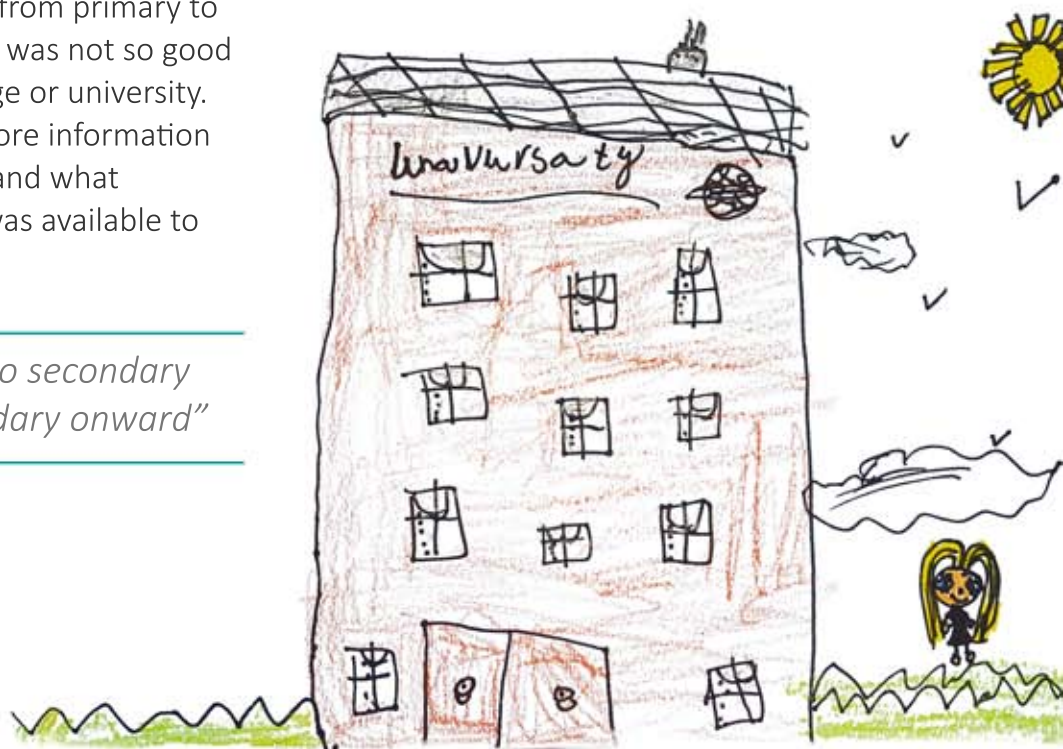
"Invest more in Education"

Some people, particularly our younger respondents, said that support from primary to secondary school was good but was not so good from secondary school to college or university. They suggested the need for more information on their options, how to apply and what financial support or transport was available to them.

"Support from primary to secondary good but not from secondary onward"

"New teaching methods and more one to one training"

There were also some comments about the need for adequate funding for schools and that higher education should be more affordable.



DRAFT PRIORITY: Give people the skills they need to get jobs

This was the 4th most popular draft priority overall with 221 comments (10%).

Top 3 issues mentioned by people for this draft priority:

1 Availability of jobs (43 comments, 21%)

2 Education (34 comments, 17%)

3 Support (27 comments, 13%)

What people told us:

"Need more jobs not just skills!"

There was a notable feeling that the key issue around employment was not so much a shortage of available skills but the lack of local jobs and very poor public transport links.

"Those out of work are being asked to apply for jobs with no hope of actually getting there due to the lack of public transport"

A number of people felt that schools needed to better prepare children for jobs by introducing a more robust curriculum for life which would give children the skills they needed to get jobs.

People said that there needed to be more apprenticeship schemes and volunteering opportunities to give people 'on the job experience' which was being sought by employers.

"More volunteering opportunities for young people to gain skills to get a job"

We received a number of comments praising some local projects, such as job clubs and one-to-one support, available to help people into work and more should be introduced along with the necessary funding.

I want to
be a forensic
Scientist



ACCESS TO
GOOD JOBS



DRAFT PRIORITY: Improve infrastructure and maximise opportunities for growth

This was the 6th most popular draft priority overall with 205 comments (9%)

Top 3 issues mentioned by people for this draft priority:

- 1 Public Transport (52 comments, 27%)
- 2 Fairer distribution of investment (24 comments, 13%)
- 3 Empty / poor quality shops (18 comments, 9%)

What people told us:

Public transport was a key issue for people during our engagement exercise with many critical of the bus services, which they said were often late, not available early in the morning, too expensive, and did not provide the adequate connections to jobs. Those in the Ebbw Fawr and South Ebbw Fach Valleys were more likely to say that public transport was an issue.

"The only place you can get to from Cwmtillery at 8 o'clock in the morning is Brynmawr, and to get to Ebbw Vale takes you an hour and a half!"

Another popular issue was the quality of shops in our town centres, with many saying that there needed to be more and better quality shops and not so many takeaways and beauty parlours. People in the South Ebbw Fach Valley were more likely to say this.

"Need better quality shops like clothes shops and general shops"

"Why doesn't the Council allow the street traders to operate off their premises? I pitch in Powys because it's free"

A number of people felt that some towns had more funding than others and that investment needed to be more equal and fair across the area. Again, those in the South Ebbw Fach Valley were more likely to feel this way.

There were also reports of poor quality roads with many pot-holes throughout the area.

Improved
Public
Transport



OBJECTIVE: Blaenau Gwent wants to look after and protect its environment

This objective was the 4th most popular overall, receiving 419 comments (19%). There were 3 draft priorities that we talked to people about for this objective:

DRAFT PRIORITY: Protect, preserve and enhance our environment

This was the 2nd most popular draft priority overall with 260 comments (11%)

Top 3 issues mentioned by people for this draft priority:

- 1 Clean, tidy area (97 comments, 39%)
- 2 Waste and recycling (34 comments, 14%)
- 3 Preservation (25 comments, 10%)

What people told us:

A clean, tidy area free from litter, weeds and dog fouling was one of the biggest issues for people. A number said that the streets were not cleaned regularly enough, there were not enough bins and weeds were left overgrown. There was also a feeling that the attitude of residents needed to change and they should take more responsibility for cleaning their own areas. However, some people who had previously undertaken litter picking exercises told us that they had stopped due to abuse from other residents.

"Lack of respect for the environment"

Some respondents said that cheaper collection of bulky items and more refuse centres would lead to a reduction in litter and fly-tipping. The need to recycle more was a common issue and people said that more could be done to encourage an increase in recycling rates, such as promotional campaigns.

"Pick your own litter up!"

*"Litter pickers are harassed
and accused of taking local
peoples jobs"*

There was recognition that Blaenau Gwent has some beautiful landscapes and parks and these needed to be preserved and protected for future generations. Our Buddhist community were particularly likely to mention this.

"Keep this lovely land tidy. Stop tipping"



DRAFT PRIORITY: Make the most of renewable energy opportunities

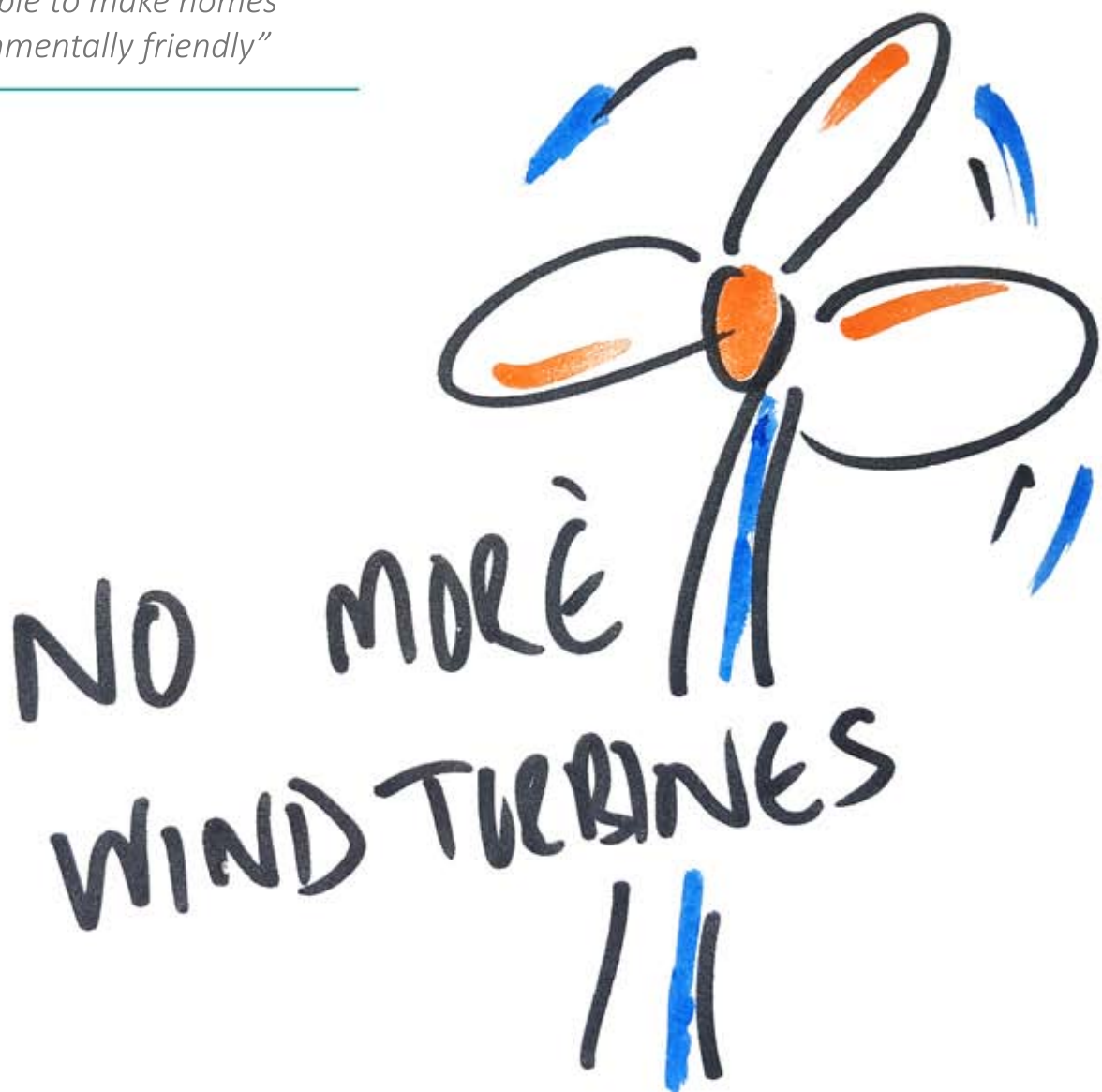
This was the least popular draft priority overall with 37 comments (2%). There were not enough comments to create a top 3 list of issues for this priority.

What people told us:

This draft priority saw the fewest amounts of comments. Those that did provide a comment mentioned that they would be happy to see more wind turbines provided they did not spoil the look of the landscape. Some also said that we could make more use of solar power and should encourage an uptake in electric car ownership; both of which would benefit from incentives.

"Try not to spoil the landscape with wind turbines"

"Support people to make homes more environmentally friendly"



DRAFT PRIORITY: Encourage more tourism to the area

This was the 9th most popular draft priority overall with 122 comments (5%).

Top 3 issues mentioned by people for this draft priority:

1 Promotion (60 comments, 51%)

2 Culture history (7 comments, 6%)

3 Support (6 comments, 5%)

What people told us:

People felt that a lot more could be done to promote our area and that it would be better to hold all the information in one place to make it easier for both tourists and residents find out what's going on.

"We have a great history in BG. Attract and invest in tourism"

"Better accommodation options in the County from caravan parks to hotels to improving existing options"

"Establish walks to chartist caves, quarries, via guided talks"

Respondents recognised that we have a beautiful landscape along with a rich history and culture, although there was a feeling that we didn't celebrate these enough. People suggested the introduction of more tours, walks and local events, such as jazz or food festivals, to attract more people to the area.



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

We will use the information from phase 3 of the Blaenau Gwent We Want, combined with the feedback from phase 1 and 2, to help produce a draft of our new Well-being Plan for the area.

The Well-being Plan will detail the key priorities that we'll be working on to try to achieve the Blaenau Gwent We Want. All our key public services providers in the area will use this plan to set their direction of work for years to come, so it's a very important document which will have a big impact on our lives.

BLAENAU GWENT WE WANT: PHASE 4

Coming soon...

We will soon be back on the streets for phase 4 of The Blaenau Gwent We Want where we'll be asking your thoughts on our draft Well-being Plan, giving you the chance to influence it before it's finalised.

We hope you've enjoyed finding out what people in the community think of our area and we look forward to working with you in the future to help create the Blaenau Gwent that we all want.

We'll leave you with Danielle's story on the right, which was written by a pupil of St. Illtyd's Primary School...

Danielle sat down on the lushes,
green grass Mountain. She loved
to come here as it looked
over the whole of Blaenau Gwent
Danielle treasured her home
because of its culture, history
healthy lifestyles, happy ~~communities~~ ^{communities}
and friendly communities a sparkle
shined in her crystal blue eyes
as she watched the busy ~~borough~~ ^{borough} with pride, however she ^{beat}
knew it could be better
No matter how good it already
was, she pondered how ~~the~~ ^{x'}
could improve / Blaenau ^{x'} Gwent
and who would improve it
in that very precious moment
Danielle decided she was going
to improve Blaenau Gwent because
the change has to start with
someone. Change can also
begin with you. ^{you} So next time
you see litter, pick it up, don't
vandalize, be kind and help ^{help}
because change starts with
you be like
Charlotte, St. Illtyd's Danielle.