

# Blaenau Gwent Future Travel

February 2026





As part of Innovate UK's Net Zero Living programme, the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council worked with Involve, Forum for the Future, Ipsos, and Quantum to run a **citizen's forum on the future of travel in Blaenau Gwent**.

With thanks to the 19 forum members who contributed their time, energy and ideas to the citizens' forum. Blaenau Gwent Local Well-being Partnership organised a steering group to support and inform the travel forum and continue to support the delivery of Blaenau Gwent Future Travel.

### Contact

If you have any queries or questions in relation to this report, please contact the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Policy and Partnerships Team at the email address: [pps@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:pps@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)



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

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# BLAENAU GWENT FUTURE TRAVEL

## What is Blaenau Gwent Future Travel?

Blaenau Gwent Future Travel is Blaenau Gwent Council's response to the Future of Travel in Blaenau Gwent Citizens' Forum. This is part of an ongoing commitment made by the Council, and this should be taken as a live document that will be updated on a six-monthly basis, both to report our progress on delivering the Citizens' Forum recommendations and to add additional detail as we develop more actions over time.

It is our intention to align the actions we take in response to the recommendations and approach to travel as a Council with other newly forming key documents including our Blueprint for Growth plan, replacement Local Development Plan and the Cardiff Capital Region Regional Transport Plan.

This document focuses on the primarily on actions that Blaenau Gwent Council are taking, but also includes information from our partners. Blaenau Gwent Future Travel is not a transport strategy, but it will cover other elements of travel beyond the forum recommendations, recognising the need to consider the transport system as a whole.

## About the Citizen's Forum

The Citizens' Forum took place in January and February 2025, bringing together 19 Blaenau Gwent residents who were selected to be representative of the borough as a whole, over three days to answer the question **"How can Blaenau Gwent come together to make local travel fairer, greener and better for everyone?"** In response to this question the forum produced ten recommendations for actions that could be taken at the local level to make a significant difference to travel in Blaenau Gwent in the next five years.

The forum also produced thirteen fairness principles suggesting how their recommendations can be delivered in a way that is fair for everyone (see below). The Citizens' Forum was funded by Innovate UK, the UK Government's innovation agency. Full details of the Citizens' Forum process can be found on the Blaenau Gwent Council website: <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/climate-change/the-future-of-travel-in-blaenau-gwent/>

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

WE CAN...



## Fair travel in Blaenau Gwent means ...

These ideas were drafted by the participants and are in their own words. The numbers are not in order of importance or priority.

1. Everybody **being able to access** transport in general and public transport in particular.
2. Not cutting climate change emissions from transport as quickly as possible, if it means some people are missing out on being able to **access transport**.
3. Meeting peoples **different needs**.
4. Being **non-discriminatory**.
5. Avoiding **foreseeable unintended consequences** and excluding people by mistake, and minimising them when they do happen
6. Investment in **public transport and active travel** should be the priority so it's easier for everyone to use (even if they have a car).
7. Encouraging **local businesses** and making sure transport links to them.
8. **Targeting support** (not services) at where there is the greatest need and/or the greatest ripple effect of impact.
9. **Being transparent** about how and why support is targeted at different groups.
10. Not just looking at transport, but also looking at **technologies, people, and processes as enablers of transport**.
11. **Only asking people to do what they're able to**, as long as it is safe.
12. It is not fair to ask everyone to make changes all the time, but you could ask **most people to make one small change**.
13. **People who can comfortably afford to should be encouraged to contribute more**. However it is not fair to assume that working age people can afford to.
14. **Companies doing their bit**.

The council would like to thank the Citizens' Forum members for their hard work and welcomes their recommendations and fairness principles. We are committed to working with our partners and residents to improve travel options, and doings so in ways that are fair for everyone. We are also committed to developing the detailed actions needed to deliver these improvements. As part of this process, we will be continuing to engage with Citizens' Forum members (and other residents) on a regular basis to help ensure that Blaenau Gwent Future Travel is in line with the aims of the recommendations.

## **Focus on Local Actions**

Blaenau Gwent Future Travel does not attempt to cover all aspects of travel in Blaenau Gwent. It reflects the focus of the Citizens' Forum recommendations on things that we and our partners can do locally to make improvements in the next five years. There are significant elements of the travel system in Blaenau Gwent that are controlled at the regional and national level as well as potential long-term changes that are outside of this scope. However, it is still worth briefly touching on the broader picture of travel in Blaenau Gwent to provide important context and to note that we are committed to Blaenau Gwent having a strong voice in these wider developments.

## **Overview of Travel in Blaenau Gwent**

One of the key drivers behind Blaenau Gwent Future Travel is that it is not a question of whether travel in Blaenau Gwent will change, but how it should change. Travel and transport have consistently emerged as one of the biggest issues for Blaenau Gwent residents over a number of years. Some of these issues around travel in Blaenau Gwent reflect national trends and some are more specific to Blaenau Gwent.

We decided on the name Future Travel rather than Future Transport, to reflect that we wanted our actions to be guided by who needs to travel, where and why, not by looking at each type of transport in isolation. That is why we are setting up a travel group that brings together people working on highways, active travel, public transport, school transport etc. This travel group will be chaired by a senior officer, and will help make sure we take forward our actions in a way that is focused on residents' needs and the travel system as a whole.

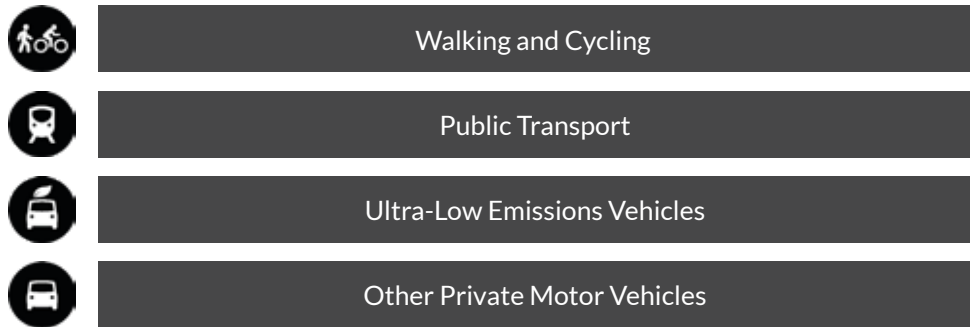
Over many years our towns and communities have become increasingly designed around cars. Blaenau Gwent Future Travel is not about trying to stop people from using their cars, we agree with the Citizens' Forum that improving travel in Blaenau Gwent is about providing residents with more convenient and affordable travel options.

In Blaenau Gwent we have the twin issues of relatively low car ownership (below Welsh average) but high car dependency (the highest proportion of people traveling to work by car in Wales). Blaenau Gwent Future Travel is about developing local solutions to these challenges.

There has been a very significant decline in bus services outside of London since privatisation in the 1980s, with Blaenau Gwent being particularly badly affected with the largest decline in number of services in Wales and the fourth largest in the UK. More positively train travel has been increasing nationally and in Blaenau Gwent passenger numbers from the reopening of the Ebbw Vale line significantly exceeded expectations. A £70 million investment in infrastructure on the line was recently completed by Network Rail to allow an increase in services on the line to two per hour. With the first direct services between Ebbw Vale and Newport began in January almost doubling the number of daily services from 33 to 63. Leading to more than 60,000 extra journeys on the Ebbw Vale line in the first eight months of the launch of new services to Newport. 317,267 journeys on the line, compared with 253,283 over the same period the previous year. We continue to engage with national decision makers on reopening the Abertillery line.

Making travel greener in the future is also important. A major transition to electric vehicles is now underway and it is important that Blaenau Gwent residents are not left behind. New charging infrastructure is needed for residents to be able to benefit from the lower running costs of electric vehicles. The switch to electric vehicles is part of shifting journeys up the travel hierarchy (below) towards greener forms of travel. In line with the Citizens' Forum fairness principles this is not about trying to change everything all at once. Instead, it is about helping everyone doing their bit by making it easier to choose the greener travel option when it is possible for them. This is a change that is already taking place, the distance the average person travels by car per year has been decreasing for over ten years. We also need to make sure our travel infrastructure is ready to cope with the impacts of climate change that are already starting to happen.

**Figure:** The Sustainable Travel Hierarchy



Blaenau Gwent Future Travel must respond to the specific needs, challenges and opportunities of Blaenau Gwent. Travel in Blaenau Gwent is shaped by our size, topography and weather, we need solutions that fit with our valley communities. We agree with the Citizens' Forum that we can and should learn from what works in other communities with similar characteristics and not just attempt to apply one size fits all models.

Travel is an important part of Blaenau Gwent's approach to place making, our Place Making Plans set out specific proposals to improve travel in and around our town centres. Our relatively small size and low population density will always affect the economics of providing shared transport services and mean that people will need to travel outside of the borough. In this context, it is important that Blaenau Gwent has a strong voice in the development of regional transport networks.

It is also important that Blaenau Gwent maximises economic opportunities from improved transport infrastructure, such as the Ebbw Vale line and Heads of the Valleys dualling to bring jobs and services into the borough.

## **Travel and The Deal**

Travel fits with Blaenau Gwent's Marmot approach, which is about improving health and well-being by tackling the root causes of poor health and the inequalities this causes. Travel is a key element of well-being; it is not just about people getting from A to B. The evidence is clear that in too many cases people cannot access jobs and services because transport is too expensive and/or not available. Improved travel options can also improve people's physical and mental health, by reducing isolation and providing opportunities for exercise and reducing air pollution.

Blaenau Gwent Future Travel also aligns with the forming Blaenau Gwent Deal approach. The Deal is about developing a new social contract by having honest conversations between council and residents about what our priorities are given the resources available, what it is realistic for council and residents to do achieve these in that context and then reporting on progress. This is what we looked to do through the Citizens' Forum and Blaenau Gwent Future Travel will continue this approach. This document is not our final word on the Citizens' Forum; we will continue to add more detail and actions over time.

We feel that the Marmot Principles and The Deal are both good fits with Citizens' Forum fairness principles. Marmot is about targeting support based on evidence of people's needs and maximising the impact on residents' well-being. The Deal is about being honest and transparent about how and why we are doing that.

## Current Investment in Travel

Our existing investment includes more than £4 million to be invested in improving highways in Blaenau Gwent over the next two years, thanks to support from the Welsh Government and local funding. As part of this significant investment, all 14 wards in the borough will see some roads fully resurfaced, and ward members will work with council officers to identify those areas most in need of improvement.

Through the Highways Local Government Borrowing Initiative, the Welsh Government has confirmed additional revenue funding to support approximately £2.2 million in capital investment in the local highways network over the next two years. This includes £1.3 million in 2025/2026 and a further £0.9 million in 2026/2027. In a further show of commitment to long-term infrastructure improvement, the Council is allocating £0.5million per year from its own budget starting in 2026/2027, ensuring continued investment in the borough's roads and transport links.

This funding is in addition to the Council's existing annual revenue budget of £1.36 million, which is already dedicated to fund ongoing reactive repairs and maintenance across the highways network. Welsh Government Funding for Transport secured over last 2 years:

2024/25	2025/26
<p><b>Active travel fund</b> Core allocation of £500,000, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; £350,000 for Intermediate Road and The Dingle</li> <li>&gt; £47,500 for Glyncoed phase 3</li> </ul> <p><b>Road safety</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; £100,000 for implementation of 20mph speed limit</li> <li>&gt; £89,250 for A467 collision remedial measures</li> <li>&gt; £26,784 for children's pedestrian safety training</li> <li>&gt; £13,216 for National Standards Cycle Training</li> </ul> <p><b>Resilient roads fund</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; £500,000 for Aberbeeg Road A4046</li> <li>&gt; Ultra-low emission vehicles transformation fund</li> <li>&gt; £250,767 for enhancing electric vehicle provision</li> </ul>	<p><b>Active travel fund</b> Core allocation of £500,000, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; £500,000 for Glyncoed (phase 3)</li> </ul> <p><b>Resilient roads fund</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; £190,000 for Aberbeeg Road A4046</li> </ul> <p><b>Road safety</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; £26,784 for Child Pedestrian Training</li> <li>&gt; £13,216 for National Standards Cycle Training</li> </ul> <p><b>Safe routes in communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; £235,000 for Sofrydd Village</li> </ul> <p><b>Ultra-low emission vehicles transformation fund</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; £562,873 to enhance EV provision</li> </ul> <p><b>Unadopted roads</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; £97,000 for access off Blaenavon Road and Valley View, Brynmawr</li> </ul>

The rest of this document sets out more detail for each recommendation and some of the actions we are already taking in these areas.

## Taking forward the recommendations

The Citizens' Forum recommendations set clear priorities for what improvements are wanted and why, based on in-depth discussions and we are committed to working with partners and residents to deliver these. We also recognise that it was not possible during the Citizens' Forum to work out all details of how the recommendations can be delivered. Our approach will be to develop actions that meet the needs identified, not narrowly focused on the specific examples in the original text of the recommendations. For example, one of the examples given for reduce car use for commutes was cycle to work schemes, cycle storage facilities at work were not mentioned but would also be relevant to this recommendation.

Therefore, it is important that we continue to engage with forum members and other residents to make sure our actions fit with the spirit/aims of the recommendations. For each recommendation we will give an indication of what we think is realistic with the resources available, and what we are already doing to deliver. The new travel group will assign a lead with responsibility for each recommendation.

### Recommendation 1: Promote & Expand Community Transport Schemes



We support this recommendation. This is not a recommendation where we will lead delivery. However, it is potentially a good fit with the Blaenau Gwent Deal approach, providing a community led service. We will work with partners to support promotion of community transport services and volunteering.

We will also explore if there are ways that council resources/infrastructure can support service provision, for example, shared use of charging points for Electric Vehicles. We also recognise the importance of funding for core capacity to organise community transport schemes to recruit and train drivers.

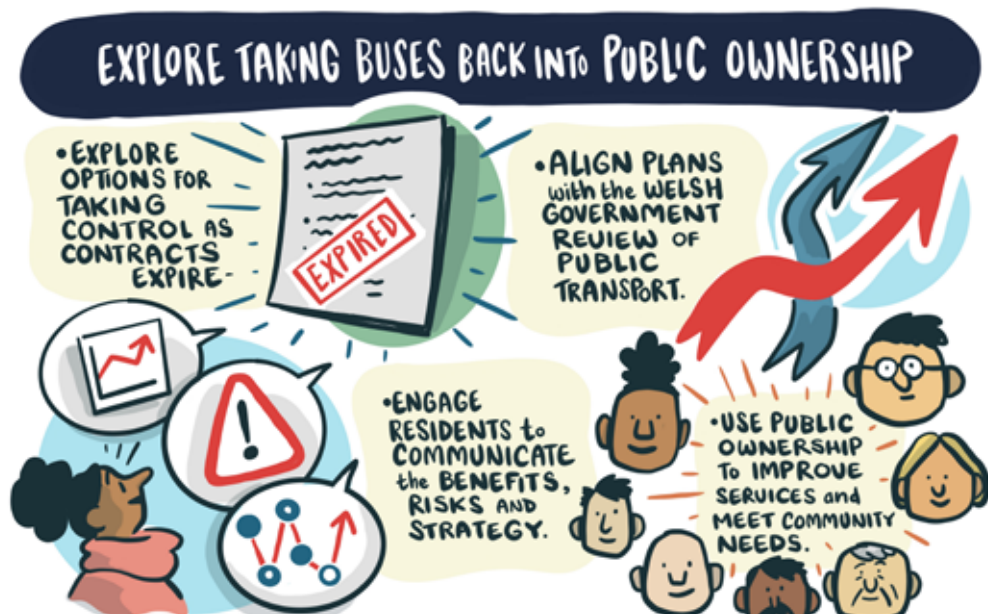
## Recommendation 2: Always Have Wheelchair Ramps Available on Trains



While we are not involved in delivery of this recommendation specifically, we support this recommendation, and the importance of accessibility is relevant to travel more widely. We are committed to improving accessibility as it applies to all recommendations and travel in Blaenau Gwent as a whole.

As a council, we are taking further actions to improve our services and functions in-line with the Welsh Government's forming Disability Action Plan, targeting key actions such as disability employer confidence schemes, training for alignment with the social model for disability, and strengthening our Integrated Impact Assessment processes.

### Recommendation 3: Our Response; Public Control of Buses in Blaenau Gwent not Public Ownership



Due to the population and geography of Blaenau Gwent it is very unlikely that a municipal bus company based solely or primarily in Blaenau Gwent would be financially viable. However, in the Welsh Government's new franchising model the control of services will rest with Transport for Wales as the public transport authority not, as in the current contracting model, with individual bus providers. As a result, directly operating a municipal bus company will be much less important to public control of bus service planning and provision than under the current privatised model. Therefore, we think that direct public ownership of buses in Blaenau Gwent is not the most cost-effective way of achieving the benefits of greater public control of bus services that we and the Citizens' Forum want to see.

From April 2026, Welsh Government are consolidating transport grants into a Regional Transport Fund. Similarly, Regional Transport Plans (RTP) replace individual local authority transport plans to create a regional approach. This ensures better integration across council boundaries and aligns transport planning with regional economic and land-use strategies. Cardiff Capital Region will manage this funding for our region based on their RTP delivery plans, giving regions more control over investment decisions and hence the importance of local plans being fed into the regional arena. More specifically and in relation to bus services, under current legislation, the Cardiff Capital Region have limited powers of intervention in bus service themselves.

Acts of 1985 and 2000 prioritised the commercial provision of bus services, with the public sector's power of intervention limited to the provision of socially necessary services and infrastructure (roadside facilities such as stops and shelters, and highway provision, including bus priority measures) to support bus operation. However, the Welsh Government is reforming this through the Bus Services (Wales) Bill (2025), which proposes to re-regulate the bus market via franchising but until this Bill becomes law and is implemented, local authorities remain restricted from setting up their own bus companies.

We are committed to giving Blaenau Gwent a strong voice in the upcoming changes to bus services and being proactive about taking advantage of future opportunities that arise to improve travel in Blaenau Gwent through greater public control of bus services that results from this new operating model. As was discussed during the Citizens' Forum, this recommendation did not fit with the brief given to the forum that recommendations should focus on actions that could be taken at the local Blaenau Gwent level within the next five years, as long term changes to bus operating models will be led at the regional and national level. However, due to the importance the forum placed on improved bus services to future travel this

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## How this approach addresses the four main points raised by the Citizen’s Forum

- (i) Explore Options for Taking Control as Contracts Expire and  
(ii) Align Plans with the Welsh Government Review of Public Transport.**

Under the current deregulated model, the number of services and passengers have suffered a significant long-term decline across the country. The number of service per hour (2008-2023) across the UK (excluding London) has fallen 48% and this has been particularly marked in Blaenau Gwent at 79%. We are keen to play an active role in Welsh Government’s new franchising model, where services will be planned with reference to the whole transport network. Replacing existing contracts where decisions about whether a service is run (or not) are taken in isolation and on a commercial basis only. Subject to approval by the Senedd, a phased rollout of franchising will begin in South West Wales in 2027. With franchising due to take place in our region in 2029. We are also engaging with the current development of the Cardiff Capital Regional Transport Plan which will align with bus franchising in South East Wales.

- (iii) Engage Residents and Communicate the Benefits and Risks of Strategy.**

We will support Transport for Wales’s consultation on franchising in South East Wales to help ensure the voice of Blaenau Gwent residents is heard in the design of the bus network. For more information about the franchising process see <https://tfw.wales/ways-to-travel/bus/franchising>

- (iv) Use Public Ownership to improve services and meet community needs.**

Franchising is about greater public control of the bus network. It has the potential to address many of the needs identified by the citizens’ forum: meeting public need, reliability and coverage, affordability, sustainability and accountability. The proposed franchising system would have a single co-ordinated timetable and a single ticket that works across all bus and train services.

In terms of ownership services would be contracted to a mix of municipal, multinational and local SME providers. Regardless of which type of provider wins a specific contract, all routes and timetables would be controlled by Transport for Wales as the public transport authority and all buses would have the same single network branding. This will allow the public transport authority to potentially use profitable routes to cross-subsidise non-profitable routes and align routes with local services and housing development. Therefore, we do not feel that direct local public ownership of buses is the best way to deliver the benefits of increased public control of buses in Blaenau Gwent.

We also need to be realistic that franchising does not on its own solve all the financial challenges of bus provision we currently face.

## Summary

We are committed to providing a strong voice for Blaenau Gwent in the franchising process at the regional and national level and to taking a proactive approach to maximising the potential benefits for residents of greater public control over bus services through franchising. Direct local ownership of bus services is very unlikely to be financially viable in Blaenau Gwent and the franchising model does not require local ownership to deliver greater local control. We will also continue to lobby for improvements to existing services before franchising is introduced, such as the recent introduction of the X3 service trial (see below).

As details of the franchising process become clearer, our representatives on these decision-making groups will provide updates in future versions of this document.

## Recommendation 4: Better Options for School Journeys



We support this recommendation, we are actively engaging with schools to improve options for walking, wheeling and cycling, including active travel schemes, walking buses and improved infrastructure. Blaenau Gwent is currently the only Welsh Local Authority that exceeds the minimum Welsh Government guidelines for school bus provision.

### Active Travel to Schools

We have been promoting active travel to school, at borough wide events including: Coleg Gwent's Health & Wellbeing Day in March 2025, a session for the Children's Grand Council (which includes pupils from all Blaenau Gwent primary schools) in April 2025, the Headteachers' quarterly Meeting in May 2025, Go Wild event and National Play Day.

We are also engaging with individual schools through a number of initiatives. Active Travel Workshops for years 5 & 6 in all 19 Blaenau Gwent Primary Schools started in September 2025. These workshops introduce active travel and its benefits and are also used to understand what barriers pupils may have to using active travel for school journeys. So far seven schools have completed workshops and a further eight are booked in.

BGCBC also works with Living Streets who deliver the WOW project to 10 primary schools in Blaenau Gwent. The Living Streets WOW project is a year-round walk to school challenge that encourages primary school children to walk, cycle, or scoot to school at least once a week. Two secondary schools have now signed up to the Next Steps Challenge which is the equivalent scheme for secondary schools.

Bollo (arts company) has started delivering its Active Travel, Road Safety and Healthy Eating focused theatrical educational resource to Primary Schools in Blaenau Gwent. Each school receives a 30-minute theatrical show followed by an individual classroom-based workshop. Eleven schools have had workshops so far and another three are signed up.

We are working with schools across Blaenau Gwent to help them develop Active Travel School Plans (ATSPs). These plans will look at pupils' (and staff) baseline Active Travel habits and list objectives to help increase Active Travel rates for school journeys. We have installed bike shelters and scooter racks at some schools and will continue to use the Active Travel Fund to install more. Only schools with ATSPs in place are eligible for funding via the Active Travel Fund for improvements/supporting infrastructure such as bike shelters and scooter racks. Currently eight schools have ATSPs in place (including four who are updating theirs).

We are working on Georgetown School Development Plan to improve active travel links, working with the Walk, Wheel, Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans). Automatic vehicle counts at Vale Terrace and a topography survey to inform that plan are now completed. In person consultation with pupils and residents will take place in the New Year.

We have brought two new schools on for the Walking Bus scheme and have another five schools interested in adopting the scheme, talks are ongoing with these schools. We started running a Walking Bus at one of the new schools St Marys RC School in Brynmawr the week after Half-Term.

We are already providing National Standard Cycling (NSC) Level 1 and Level 2 cycling to year 6 pupils. Level 1 is delivered in a traffic-free environment and focuses on basic cycle control skills. Level 2 is delivered on quiet local roads, this level introduces real-world cycling scenarios and equips riders to handle short journeys independently, such as cycling to school. We deliver to as many schools as our funding from Welsh Government will allow, should any more funding become available we would be able to offer national standard cycling to more children in primary schools.

On the issues of vehicle congestion, we are aware that irresponsible parking is increasing. Schools actively communicate to parents about considerate parking in and around school at the start and end of the school day.

## Home to School Transport

We have a duty to provide transport in accordance with Learner Travel (Wales) Measure, 2008 see: [a-parent's-guide-to-the-learner-travel-wales-measure-2008.pdf](#)

The distance by which entitlement to transport is calculated is defined as the walking distance of the shortest available route, that is deemed to be safe. Route designation is carried out in accordance with the risk assessment procedure as detailed in the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance (2014).

Blaenau Gwent Council will provide free transport for children attending their nearest suitable school, where the distance from home to school is over the specified walking distance detailed below:

- > more than 1.5 miles from home for children aged under 8 years (at the commencement of the academic year) but of statutory school age. Any transport awarded will remain in place for the whole of the academic year
- > more than 2 miles from home for children aged 8 years and over (at the commencement of the academic year).

Blaenau Gwent Council provides a high level of discretionary transport, well above statutory requirements, which are:

- > children at primary school get free home to school transport if they live 2 miles or more from the nearest suitable school and
- > children at secondary school get free transport if they live 3 miles or more from the nearest suitable school

This additional provision costs the Authority approximately an additional £576,000 annually. Welsh Government have raised queries as to whether the Council has considered reverting to statutory distances in order to support the active travel agenda. Whilst there is no political appetite to change the Home to School Transport policy and revert to statutory distances, due to the financial challenges anticipated over the medium term in delivering services to meet the needs of residents, there is a need consider this.

## Performance Information and Data

The Council home to school transport provision covers mainstream, Welsh-medium, faith education and specialist provision for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) pupils attending special schools and resource bases, via contracted providers. There are currently 26 providers contracted to deliver 90 contracts for home school transport to 1,698 pupils (including over 280 pupils with a Local Authority Individual Development Plan and over 1,300 mainstream pupils) across 96 established routes.

### WE TRANSPORT TO:

19 schools within Blaenau Gwent, Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone (Ebbw Vale Campus - Post 16) and 8 out of county schools.

We provide support for over 4,900 Post-16 students living in Blaenau Gwent, they are provided with a discounted bus ticket or travel grant.

The provision of home to school transport changes on a weekly basis in line with demand and new applicants, especially in respect of pupils with Additional Learning Needs.

## Recommendation 5: Increase Fflecsi Bus Publicity, Capacity & Funding



We support this recommendation and were pleased to hear the positive experience of several members of the Citizens' Forum in using the fflecsi service and are working to build on the success of this scheme so far.

The fflecsi bus service is a demand-responsive transport (DRT) initiative run by Transport for Wales (TfW) in partnership with local councils and bus operators. It offers a flexible alternative to traditional bus services, especially in areas where fixed routes may not be viable. Fflecsi is designed to complement scheduled bus routes but instead of fixed timetables and stops, fflecsi buses pick up and drop off passengers within a designated service area, based on bookings made via the app or on the phone. The service uses technology to dynamically route buses according to passenger demand.

Fflecsi was introduced to Blaenau Gwent in 2021 and we have seen year-on-year growth in the patronage of the service especially since the introduction of the Hybrid service model in 2023, which was introduced as a direct result of passenger feedback. The fflecsi service is split into two zones. Zone 1 operates in and around Ebbw Vale in the early mornings (5:30pm - 9:24pm) and evenings (5:45pm - 11pm), with a fixed line service running between 9:24am and 17:45pm timetabled as E1 and E2 services. Zone 2 operates in Brynmawr down towards Abertillery and Llanhilleth on a demand responsive basis from 5:30pm - 11pm.



Transport for Wales recognises that Blaenau Gwent has been one of the most successful of the eleven pilot fflecsi schemes across Wales. Funding for Fflecsi has been awarded for 2025-26 and a further request will be made to continue the service in future years.

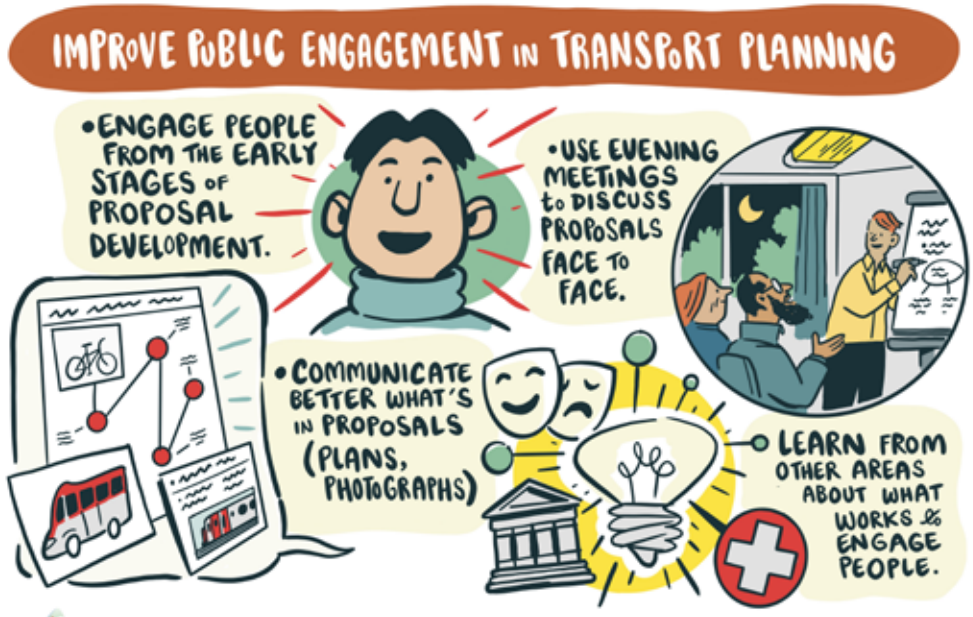
## Work With Employers to Understand Demand

With a stop off at Rassau Industrial Estate which is used by shift workers and feedback has been provided from businesses on the Rassau Industrial Estate that the service has been very valuable in facilitating transport for shift workers.

## Make it Possible to Book Nearer the Time

Journeys can be booked up to 30 days in advance and correspondingly can be booked nearer the time of travel. We are working to improve the app and other booking options to maximise uptake and address the limitations of current system. However, as a Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) booking system, the bookable service and its availability is dependent on the demand at the time, and it must be recognised that Fflecsi is a bus service not a taxi service.

## Recommendation 6: Improve Public Engagement in Transport Planning



We agree with this recommendation and are committed to ensuring that residents have an effective voice from the earliest stages of planning and this is what informed our commissioning of the Citizens' Forum. There are examples in the response to some of the other recommendations of recent activity in this area, including consultation on the Blaenau Gwent Active Travel Network Map and development of the hybrid model for fflexi. Taking this recommendation forward is something that will be integrated into delivering the other recommendations.

Another element of our approach is working with residents to find effective travel solutions. One example of this is working with residents through an On Street Charging Trial. In Blaenau Gwent 29% of households (approximately 10,800 homes) do not have access to off-street parking which means if they were to transition to Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) alternatives, they would most likely have to rely on the public charging network. The current cost per kWh to charge on the public charging network in Blaenau Gwent ranges between 44p per kWh and 87p per kWh compared to tariffs as low as 7.5p per kWh to charge overnight on a home charger. This means there is currently a disparity between homeowners who have off street parking and those who do not. Alongside this, resident feedback has identified the inability to charge at home and the high cost of public charging as the two major barriers to purchasing an EV. We are currently trialling two cross pavement gully channel solutions, Kerbo Charge and Gul-e by ODS to enable safe home charging for residents without off-street parking. We had space for sixteen properties to participate in the trial and received expressions of interest from 70 residents. The first installation took place in July 2024, and the final installations will take place over the next few months.

To select the properties to take part residents were invited to submit an expression of interest to take part in the trial. This trial will allow for a full monitoring period of 12 months for all of the gully channel installations. It will enable us to gather resident feedback and identify the process and fees for a potential wider rollout across Blaenau Gwent based on residents' experience and feedback about different solutions.

## Recommendation 7: Improve Taxi Services



We support this recommendation and will use our licensing powers where applicable, particularly around passenger safety. Wider service provision is dependent on commercial viability, but we are committed to continuing to engage with the local taxi industry on how to meet travel needs of Blaenau Gwent residents.

The Council is the Licensing Authority for the purposes of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, 1982 and Town Police Clauses Act 1847, 1889 which regulates licensing of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles.

### Safety

As the licensing authority safety and safeguarding are our main responsibilities and the policy relating to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licences gives guidance on vehicle standards and driver codes of conduct. Each driver carries a licence badge which is displayed in the vehicle and each vehicle is fitted with a taxi licence plate on the rear. The vehicles also display an internal plate, which states the vehicle details and also the expiry date. Reports about bad performance/service can be made to the Licensing Team and allegations/intelligence are investigated as appropriate, via the Council's website [here](#).

## Cost

In respect of fares; the Council's Policy requires that the current table of fares must be displayed in each vehicle. The fares are reviewed periodically, and this policy will be updated accordingly. It is an offence to charge more than the metered fare for journeys that start and end in the local authority area. A lesser fee than the metered fare may be charged, but never more than.

The entry of alternative commercial providers such as Uber or Lyft into Blaenau Gwent is outside of our control, and there is no guarantee that they would have an overall positive impact on the level of provision.

## Types and Numbers of Vehicles

Blaenau Gwent consists of a predominantly hackney carriage (taxi) trade with only 3 private hire vehicles in use. These are differentiated with door stickers on PHV's and a taxi light fitted to HCV's. Hackney carriages can be hailed in the street or can work from any of the four taxi ranks in the borough. They can be identified by a roof light on the top of the vehicle which is linked to a meter inside the vehicle. The light will be lit when the taxi is available for hire and the light should be extinguished when the meter is brought into operation when the driver is carrying a fare.

They can also be recognised by their yellow licence plate displayed on the rear of the vehicle.

### NUMBER OF TAXIS IN BLAENAU GWENT:

In 2024/25, 107 Vehicle applications were received and processed, 16 of which were in respect of new vehicles.

2023/24 - 113 vehicle applications were received 18 of which were in respect of new vehicles..

Private Hire Vehicle licence applications have remained consistent over the past three years – remaining at 3.

Current numbers of Licenced Hackney carriage vehicles by Town:  
Abertillery 11 | Blaina 13 | Brynmawr 5 | Ebbw Vale 34 | Tredegar 35  
Out of county: 5

The council is planning to carry out a review of our licensing policy in 2026 (the current policy is available here) and will report on this in future updates. However, it is important to note that service standards such as hours of operation fall outside of this policy. These issues would have to be addressed through engagement with taxi providers rather than through licensing.

## Recommendation 8: Encourage People to Walk, Cycle or Wheel



We support this recommendation and are committed to continuing to improve routes and promote walking, cycling and wheeling. We have delivered many Active Travel schemes over the last few years using Active Travel Funding. These include signalised crossings, uncontrolled crossing, upgrading of routes and construction of new routes. For financial year 2025-2026 Blaenau Gwent has been awarded £1,000,000 from the Active Travel Fund. We have a main scheme that will be constructed this year in Glyncoed. This will be an extension of a current shared use route for people to walk, wheel and cycle. We've been collecting data at this site since the North-South Link was constructed and opened in 2023. Between 1st January 2023 and 31st August 2023, footfall was recorded as 38,487 trips across part of all of the link. In 2025, for the same period, a total footfall of 85,478 was recorded for all or part of the link, which is a 122 per cent increase in use in two years. (For examples of some of the improvements to this route see <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/highways/active-travel-blaenau-gwent/>).

Blaenau Gwent is required to update its Active Travel Network Map (ATNM) by December 2026. Public consultation has started which includes a public survey and town centre workshops to gather feedback on existing and future routes. We have an Active Travel webpage on BGCBC's website to promote the benefits and provide examples of existing schemes. There is also an animation that people can watch which gives an overview of active travel. Also promoting the network map consultation and active travel at in-person events. Planning future public engagement for schemes including the Georgetown School Network Development.

Maintaining Walking & Cycling Routes and Keeping them Well Lit. Routes have been surveyed against Active Travel Guidance criteria to ensure they are of a good standard. Routes that fail audits are listed and can be improved using core funding from the Active Travel Fund. Highways Maintenance and Ranger Team work to ensure routes are well maintained, vegetation is cut back and signed to ensure they are to Active Travel Guidance standards. A signage update scheme for cycle paths is planned for 2025/26. We work with internal departments to determine the best lighting schemes for new routes, particularly when considering wildlife habitats (bats etc).

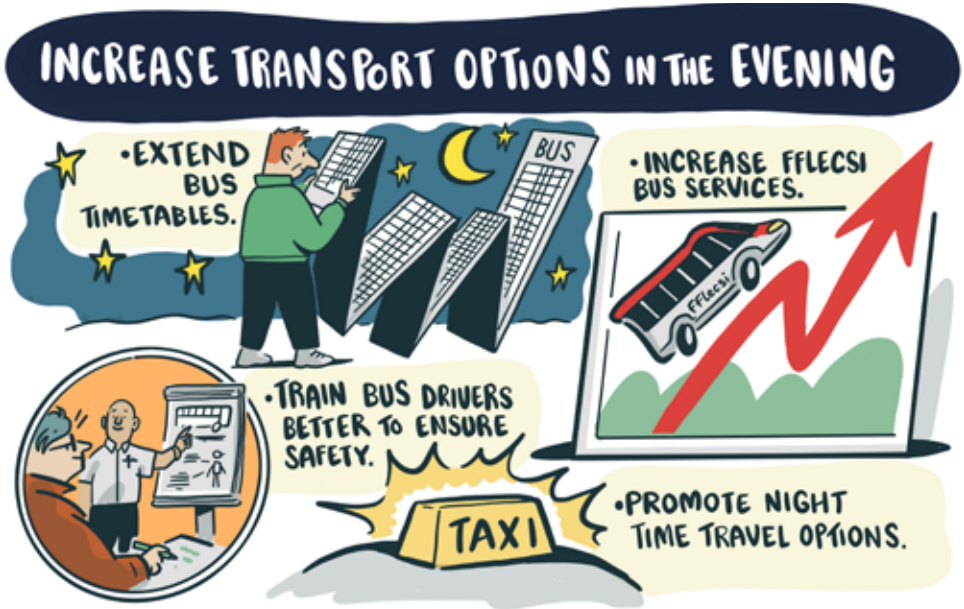
### **Improve Access to Routes**

BGCBC has installed a series of uncontrolled crossings along junctions throughout the borough to improve access to routes for all users. Some schemes include the addition of ramps along routes to ensure routes are accessible to wheelchair users, pram users and cyclists. A review of a barrier audit was undertaken in 2023, which looked at what barriers need to be removed or adjusted to ensure least restrictive access. This needs to be balanced against the issue of off-road vehicles illegally using cycle paths and footpaths.

We will carry out minor works improvements throughout the borough, including installation of dropped kerbs and tactile paving, installation of refuge island for walkers and cyclists and improve signage to the National Cycle Network. We will continue to review the Active Travel Network Map and design Active Travel schemes to benefit local communities (subject to continued funding).

BGCBC works closely with Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans) these are a UK based charity that promotes walking, wheeling, and cycling. Their mission is to help communities adopt active travel habits for the benefit of their health, well-being, and the environment.

## Recommendation 9: Increase Transport Options in the Evening



We support this recommendation, while recognising that it is one of the more challenging to implement. For all forms of shared transport, evening provision has been the most impacted by challenges to financial viability of services. Evening services will be important considerations for actions on the recommendations around buses and taxis.

## Recommendation 10: Reduce Car Use for Commutes



We support this recommendation and in line with the Citizens' Forum fairness guidelines our approach to taking this forward will be based primarily on supporting more convenient and affordable options for residents commuting journeys, rather than restricting the use of cars. This reflects the reality of the current transport system and patterns in Blaenau Gwent. Similarly, it is also important that our approach considers residents whose employment options are limited by restricted access to cars. Many of the actions under the other recommendations also support this recommendation.

### Bus Links for Commutes

In addition to the Fflecsi links to Ebbw Vale bus station and Rassau Industrial Estate (see a recommendation 5 above) a new X3 timetabled service is being introduced providing an hourly service (07.00-18.53) Brynmawr, Nantyglo, Blaina, Abertillery, Aberbeeg, Cwm and Ebbw Vale providing accessing Ebbw Vale train station ([Timetable-X3-SEPT-25-V2.pdf](#)). The X3 service will operate from September 2025 to April 2026 with the option of extending to April 2029 should funding be available. Also the 4a/4c service links Tredegar to Rhymney train station.

## **Workplace Schemes**

We offer Tusker Car Lease and Vivup Bikes to Work Schemes. At present we have 18 staff with a Tusker Car Lease and 9 staff with a Bikes to Work. Both schemes encourage greener travel as the Tusker Car Lease Scheme provides substantial savings on Electric Vehicles due to the lower Benefit In Kind (BIK) tax on electric cars. Currently the distribution of vehicles in the scheme is 9 electric vehicles, 5 hybrid and 4 petrol vehicles.

We have also reduced commuting through homeworking, utilising digital technology. In 2024-25, 142 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff were home based and a further 737 FTE were agile workers (coming into the office on an average for 50% of workdays). We estimate our staff have as a result avoided over 2,100,000 miles of commuting over the last year.

## **Concluding Remarks**

This is not our final word on the Citizens Forum recommendations; we will be providing six-monthly updates that will add additional actions and provide greater detail. This first version of Blaenau Gwent Future Travel is focused on the actions that we as the council can take, we will be looking to add more detail for partner actions in future updates.

We also want to be realistic about the extent to which the actions in this document can address the travel challenges faced by Blaenau Gwent. There are significant elements of travel that are largely outside of local control and therefore also the scope of this document. However, this was also the reason for the brief given to the Citizens' Forum, and continued in this document, to focus on actions that can be taken locally in the next five years to make a tangible difference for residents. Blaenau Gwent Future Travel is a good fit with the ambition of the new Blaenau Gwent Deal, to establish new ways of working with residents that make a real difference to their lives.



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**This document is also available in welsh.**

