

Well- being Objective 2

Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities

How well are we doing?

Good progress has been made against Well-being Objective 2, particularly through biodiversity activity in schools and communities, reduced non-spend carbon emissions, solar installation, the Decarbonisation Dashboard and strengthened flood response following Storm Bert. However, challenges remain around recycling performance, increased residual waste and the complexity of delivering net zero, particularly due to cost pressures, data gaps and procurement emissions.

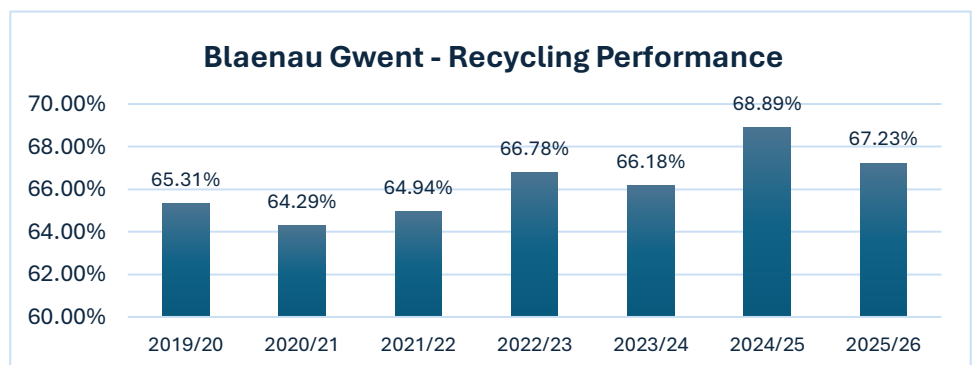
What we said we would do in our 2024/25 Self-Assessment	What we achieved
Explore complementary delivery routes to improve take-up of energy improvement measures and increase ECO4Flex uptake across the borough	ECO4Flex has stopped and no replacement programme has been confirmed.
Build community resilience into climate events by working with partners and implementing the flood management action plan	Flood preparedness has improved through regional climate risk work, the Cwm Flood Task Force and progress on 19 flood actions. Further focus is needed on communication, infrastructure and community resilience.
Continue working towards the Welsh Government recycling target of 70% and consult the public during 2025/26 on the new Waste and Recycling Strategy	The new Waste Strategy has been consulted on, but recycling fell to 67.23%, below the 70% target, so improvement remains a priority.
Implementation of the new Local Nature Recovery Action Plan and Pollinator Policy to respond to the nature emergency	Progress is being made, with biodiversity work moving into practical delivery, though capacity remains a challenge.

How do we know?

Recycling

Blaenau Gwent exceeded the Welsh Government recycling target between 2019/20 and 2023/24, but performance has since fallen below the updated 70% target. In 2025/26, recycling performance reduced further, meaning the Council would need to divert

additional waste from residual disposal into reuse, recycling and composting to meet the target.



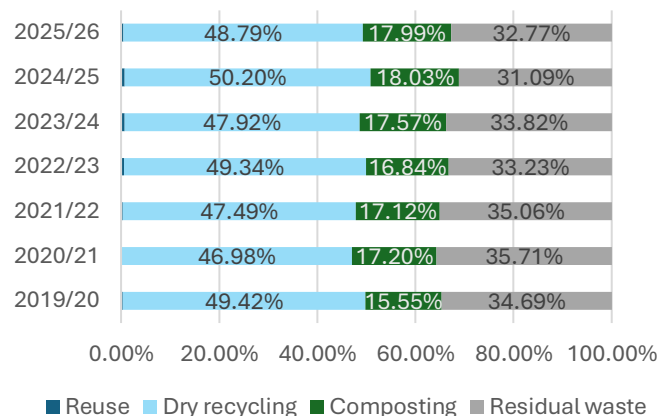
Breakdown of 2025/26 performance:

Period	2024/25	2025/26	Diff.
Quarter 1 (April – June)	69.83%	69.21%	-0.62%
Quarter 2 (July – Sept)	69.27%	67.24%	-2.03%
Quarter 3 (Oct – Dec)	68.40%	67.68%	-0.72%
Quarter 4 (Jan – March)	68.03%	64.84%	-3.19%
Annual (not yet verified by NRW)	68.89%	67.23%	-1.66%

The 2025/26 tonnage data shows increases in residual waste, food waste and garden waste compared with 2024/25, alongside reductions in kerbside dry recycling, HWRC recycling and commercial recycling.

The data shows a challenging position, with residual waste increasing while key recycling streams, including kerbside dry recycling, HWRC recycling and commercial recycling, have reduced. If performance remains below the statutory target, the Council could face a financial penalty, although 2025/26 data is still subject to NRW verification and may change.

What Happens to our Waste?



Waste Strategy 2026–2031

To address the shortfall, the Council has consulted on a new Resource and Waste Strategy 2026–2031, focused on reducing residual waste, increasing recycling participation and supporting reuse. This will be supported by operational improvements, including new recycling vehicles, plans for flexible plastics collections and stronger enforcement. Reuse initiatives, including Roseheyworth Reuse and Recycling Centre and The Den, are also helping to divert waste from disposal and support a more circular economy.



Reuse and repair

Reuse and repair activity continued to support waste prevention, recycling and the circular economy across Blaenau Gwent, helping residents access items and services more affordably and sustainably while reducing materials going to disposal. It also supported wider well-being by encouraging physical activity, creativity, community participation and more sustainable choices. Key initiatives included the:

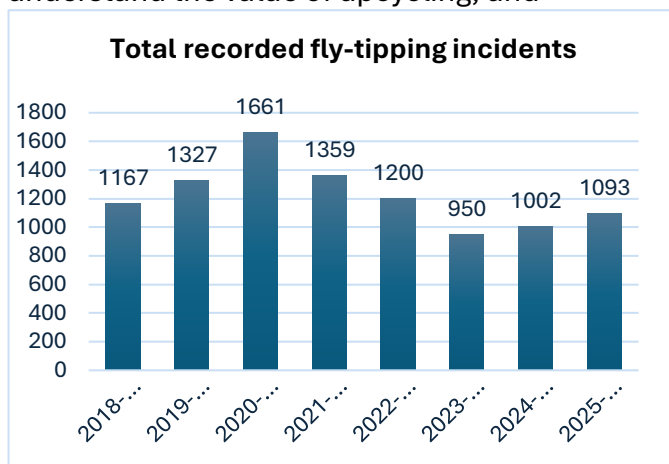
- **Community Kit Room in Ebbw Vale**, providing preloved sports and leisure equipment;
- **Library of Things at Llanhilleth Institute**, enabling residents and groups to borrow rather than buy;
- **bike repair pop-up events**, supporting repairs, maintenance and active travel;



- **reuse through art**, helping schools and young people understand the value of upcycling; and
- **The Den at Roseheyworth Reuse and Recycling Centre**, enabling residents to donate and buy good-quality reused items.

Fly-tipping and Street Cleansing

- Number of £400 fixed penalty notices issued for fly-tipping: 93;
- Number of £300 fixed penalty notices issued for commercial duty of care: 84; and
- Number of £300 fixed penalty notices issued for household duty of care: 4.



Lakeview Litter Heroes

To enhance the Deal and deliver aspects of Mission 2, the Lakeview Day Centre in Brynmawr has a group of dedicated volunteers who have registered with Keep Wales Tidy to establish a litter picking group. Supported by the Council's Community Outreach provision, every week volunteers carry out litter picking sessions that contribute to cleaner streets, safer public spaces and a more welcoming environment for all. <http://intranet/media/224870/CaseStudy-A4-2up-LakeView.jpg>

Biodiversity



The Council continued to support biodiversity through the Local Nature Recovery Action Plan and Linking Landscapes project, moving from planning into practical delivery during 2025/26. Work has focused on habitat improvement, species recovery, monitoring, community involvement and partnership working, including the Go Wild! event, the Barn Owl Project, biodiversity improvements across schools, housing estates, leisure sites and community spaces, and surveys of Council-owned land and local nature sites.

This activity is strengthening local evidence, improving habitats, supporting wildlife recovery and involving more residents and volunteers in nature recovery. The main challenge remains capacity within the Biodiversity Team, particularly following the Nature Recovery Officer vacancy.

Further work is needed to embed biodiversity consistently across the Council and strengthen reporting arrangements.



Community-led woodland stewardship

Through the Deal and Mission 5 activity, the Council and community woodland groups are working together to improve access, habitats, investment and participation at Sirhowy Hill.

This shared stewardship model combines volunteer knowledge with council support, keeping valued green spaces accessible and welcoming while supporting biodiversity, volunteering, learning and well-being. Sirhowy Hill has achieved its first Green Flag Community Award, with further work planned to strengthen access, habitat management and volunteer development across both sites. <https://vimeo.com/1209543662>



Net Zero 2030

The Council has continued to work towards its Net Zero 2030 ambition through the Decarbonisation Plan 2020–2030, supported during 2025/26 by a midpoint review and new Power BI Decarbonisation Dashboard. These are improving understanding of carbon performance, energy costs and the actions needed to support a more realistic pathway to organisational net zero. Further work is needed to strengthen carbon tracking, address data gaps and improve monitoring of solar generation. The latest available direct carbon emissions figures are shown below. These exclude spend-based procurement emissions, which are less suitable for tracking progress and rely more heavily on action by suppliers and wider markets.

Tonnes CO2e/year	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Change from Base Year	Change from Last Year
Non-spend-based carbon emissions	14,783	11,818	13,100	12,353	11,951	11,368	10,677	-28%	-6%

Buildings remain the largest source of direct emissions. Solar installations have continued across the school estate, with further schemes planned, and Aneurin Leisure Trust has progressed installations at Ebbw Vale Sports Centre and Parc Bryn Bach. Funding has also been secured to improve the Works District Heating Network, supporting greater efficiency, reduced energy use and lower running costs. Procurement-related emissions are also being considered through supplier specifications, delivery methods and carbon reduction plans, with work underway to improve supplier emissions data and target future action more effectively.

Net Zero 2050

Work towards Net Zero 2050 has focused on fairer, greener and more accessible travel. Progress has included the Council's response to the Citizens' Forum travel recommendations ([published](#)), the establishment of a corporate travel group, work on electric vehicle charging for residents without off-street parking, and participation in Solar Together. Low local uptake of Solar Together shows the need to make low-carbon choices more accessible and practical for residents.



Climate Adaptation

The Council has worked with Public Services Board partners to develop the Gwent Climate Change Risk Assessment, with input from officers across the organisation to identify climate risks affecting Council assets and services. This work, alongside the developing federated approach with Torfaen, will help strengthen climate adaptation planning and delivery, building on recent flood response activity through the Cwm Flood Task Force and wider adaptation work in Cwm and Llanhilleth. During 2025, the Council also took part in Solar Together South-East Wales through the Cardiff Capital Region, helping residents access solar panels and battery storage through a collective buying scheme. In Blaenau Gwent, 12 households took part: 10 had solar panels installed and 2 added battery storage to existing systems. Take-up was slightly above the level predicted by the market profile for Blaenau Gwent, and the Council will participate in the rebranded Switch Together scheme again in 2026.

Storm Bert

Following Storm Bert in November 2024, which caused significant disruption in areas including Cwm, Cwmtillery and Llanhilleth, the Council reviewed its flood preparedness and emergency response arrangements. The review identified the need for improvements in operational readiness, communication, infrastructure planning and community resilience. In response, the Cwm Flood Task Force was established, demonstrating a practical community-led approach to emergency planning, flood protection and preparedness, linked to the Blaenau Gwent Deal. Progress against the 19 improvement actions identified to address flooding was reported to Scrutiny in February, full report and progress can be found [here](#)

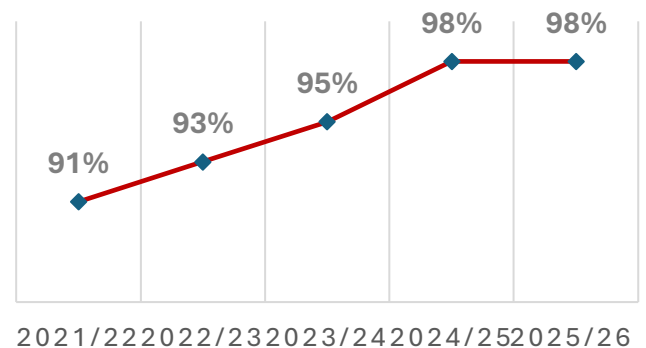


Planning

In 2025/26 most planning applications were determined on time, improved enforcement performance, and no Planning Committee decisions made contrary to officer recommendation. However, older and more complex applications continue to affect average determination times, partly due to staffing, system and capacity pressures. Recruitment, training and process improvements are underway to strengthen resilience and support further improvement in 2026/27.

Planning performance is reported frequently to the Council's Planning Committee. Previous quarterly reports can be found [here](#).

% OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS DETERMINED ON TIME



Key Challenges and Actions for 2026/27

- **Improve recycling performance** by increasing recycling rates back towards the 70% target, reducing residual waste, and strengthening performance across key recycling streams.
- **Increase waste prevention and public participation** by encouraging residents to reduce waste, recycle more consistently, and supporting delivery of the new Waste Strategy through measurable actions.
- **Strengthen net zero delivery** by addressing data gaps, improving monitoring of procurement and building emissions, and tracking the impact of solar generation more effectively.
- **Improve climate resilience and emergency preparedness** by strengthening communication, infrastructure planning, operational readiness and community flood resilience, learning from the impact of Storm Bert.
- **Maintain capacity and service resilience** by managing staffing, system and workload pressures to sustain progress in biodiversity, planning and wider service delivery.

