



BWRDD GWASANAETHAU CYHOEDDUS  
**Blaenau Gwent**  
PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD

# The Blaenau Gwent We Want

Two Years Of Progress

2019/20





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Two Years Of Progress  
(2019/20)

**Disclaimer:** This Annual Report has been produced and published under the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This published document is part of an on-going approach to improve well-being in Blaenau Gwent.

The most up to date version of this document is available on the PSB website:

<http://www.blaenauwentpsb.org.uk/>

**Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg**







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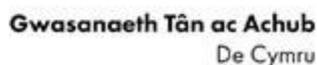
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# Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board Partners





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# Foreword

The Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) was formed in 2016 under the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.

The PSB brings together public services operating locally and regionally and focuses on improving the well-being of current and future generations in the Blaenau Gwent area. It oversees the delivery of our Well-being Plan 'The Blaenau Gwent We Want' 2018 to 2023. Our work programme for 2019/20 was part of the forward work programme of the Councils Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee.

One of the statutory requirements on us as a PSB is to produce an annual report setting out the progress we have made towards achieving the Well Being Plan objectives.

This year has given us some unique challenges as we responded to, and continue to live with the COVID-19 pandemic. We have continued to work together as a PSB during 2020 including reflecting on the impact of the pandemic on our communities and the focus of our work programme moving forward.

I am pleased to share our annual report for 2020/21 highlighting the work that we have been doing across our communities.

Councillor Nigel Daniels  
**Chair of the Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board**  
**Leader of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**



# Introduction

Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) was established in April 2016 as part of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 (“the Act”). It is a partnership of key public bodies that by working together have a huge responsibility to create a place we want to live in now and in the future.

The Act is a ground-breaking piece of legislation which aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The vision of this legislation is expressed in the [Seven Well-being Goals](#).

The Act places a duty on public bodies to apply the sustainable development principle which states they ‘must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. The sustainable development principle is made up of the following [five ways of working](#), pictured below:



Our Annual Report contains video content to show some of the great work that has been taken forward in the first year of our plan. If you see the ‘video’ icon (left) in this document you can click on it to watch the clips, all of which are hosted on external websites.

## Meeting our requirement under the Act

As a Public Services Board (PSB) we agreed our five-year Well-being Plan in April 2018 and it was published on Friday 4 May 2018, in-line with statutory guidance.

Our plan was the result of a comprehensive programme of involvement and collaborative work to develop a coherent plan for delivering well-being. It prioritises five key well-being objectives set out below to take forward in order to bring about positive changes for local people and communities:

## Our Well-being Objectives

<b>1</b>	<b>Blaenau Gwent wants everyone to have the best start in life...</b>	Ensuring early years of future generations are healthy, happy, free from harm and ready to succeed.
<b>2</b>	<b>Blaenau Gwent wants safe and friendly communities...</b>	Creating safer communities, where people feel safe and have good social connections, are socially responsible and have a good cultural life.
<b>3</b>	<b>Blaenau Gwent wants to look after and protect its natural environments...</b>	Creating a vibrant area that lives in harmony with its natural environments, using resources in a fair and sustainable way.
<b>4</b>	<b>Blaenau Gwent wants to forge new pathways to prosperity...</b>	A place where people thrive and achieve their full learning and lifelong potential.
<b>5</b>	<b>Blaenau Gwent wants to encourage and enable people to make healthy lifestyle choices in the places that they live, learn, work and play.</b>	A place where people live longer with better health, a place where healthy behaviours is the 'norm'.

Further information on how we developed our plan, along with supporting documents is available within our local well-being plan [‘The Blaenau Gwent We Want, 2018-23’](#).



# Celebrating Our Progress – Annual Conference 2019

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In July 2019 Blaenau Gwent PSB held its first annual stakeholder event at the General Offices in Ebbw Vale. The event was well attended by over 100 representatives from a variety of partner organisations.

The event, hosted by the PSB Chair, was split into 2 distinct parts. The first part, which launched our first annual report, considered the progress made towards our five key well-being objectives in our first year. It included a number of case studies of partnership working delivered on key work such as the Blaenau Gwent on the Move programme, the newly established Community Safety Hub, the First 1,000 day programme and a regional project on the Future of Gwent.

In the second part of the day, the launch event featured speakers from a range of local and national partners focusing on maximising opportunities for prosperity. More information about the themes these speakers focussed on can be found throughout the Forging New Pathways to Prosperity chapter.





**INVOLVEMENT:** Attendees of our Annual Progress Report 2018/19 launch event were able to hear about the progress made towards the well-being objectives during our first year, as well as find out about how they could get involved in developing well-being programmes going forward.

During the last year the Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board focussed making progress towards achieving the following well-being objectives:

- Ensuring the **Best Start in Life for Everyone;**
- Fostering **Safe and Friendly Communities** across Blaenau Gwent;
- To **Look After and Protect our Environment;**
- To **Forge New Pathways to Prosperity** for everyone; and
- To Encourage and Enable People to make **Healthy Lifestyle Choices**

Updates on progress against these as well as details of emerging new programmes of work to achieve these objectives can be found in the chapters below.

# The Best Start in Life for Everyone

Early childhood is a critical stage in life that can determine much of a person's future well-being.

Over the course of the **First 1,000 Days** (from conception to the second birthday), a child develops behaviours and the ability to think and reason as part of their cognitive development. This sets the stage for lifelong health, learning and achievement, developing relationships, and what is eventually passed on to future generations.

Details of how we made progress towards ensuring **the best start in life for everyone** across Blaenau Gwent are outlined below.



**PREVENTION:** ensuring that current and future generations have 'the best start in life' in order to reduce the chances of Adverse Childhood Experiences and improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

## **FIRST 1,000 DAYS**

One of the key steps the PSB said they wished to take forward in order to meet this objective to ensure **the best start in life for everyone** was: “To understand more about Early Years Services including their quality and where the gaps are”.

The First 1,000 (F1000) Days Programme was identified by the PSB as a well-being project for 2018/19 that would fall under this PSB objective. The PSB agreed to undertake the Public Health Wales mapping model with the aim of uncovering detailed information regarding the identification of the services that are available in Blaenau Gwent, and the gaps in those services, as a first step to meeting the overarching objective.

### **Key achievements to-date on F1000 Days**

The new Early Years system has emerged, which is the Early Years Integrated Transformation Project (EYITP), which BG has signed up to be a Pathfinder with Caerphilly and Newport. Each Authority will test a new way of working, which challenges traditional organisational and professional boundaries to ensure effective collaboration for ‘hard to reach families’. That puts families first based on what matters to them, drawing on the principles that were developed during the Vanguard research which conducted in October 2019.

### **The Pilot**

The pilot will explore the scale of need for enhanced services for families outside of Flying Start areas in Blaenau Gwent. The areas which have been approved by PSB as Phase 1 (Cwm) and Phase 2 (Brynmawr and Nantyglo) have undergone intensive community asset mapping. This has involved working closely with the Family Information Services (FIS) to review all services for families with children aged 0-7 years in each of these areas.

Phase 1 of the pilot was ready to go live in March 2020, but Welsh Government put a pause on the programme whilst they prioritised their response to COVID 19. However in May 2020, Welsh Government confirmed that the pause button would be released as some Authorities were too far into recruitment

for the pilot not to continue. Funding until April 2021 was confirmed but it is half of the original funding.

The pilot aims to go live in late 2020, in the previously approved by PSB area of Cwm. It will bring services together in an integrated way, so services operate more like a programme or system rather than separate services.

### **Establish a F1000 Days Community of Practice in for Blaenau Gwent**

Building a joint understanding and local coalition of multi-agency partners who represent the F1000 days' system in Blaenau Gwent, is influencing the re-design of the current Early Years Development Childcare and Play Partnership (EYDCPP), which was created in to cover activities supporting children and families. When the Children and Families (Wales) 2010 Measure took effect, the partnership was expanded to also look at issues relevant to the sufficiency and provision of Play.

The EYDCPP has been successful in bringing together key partners, mainly from umbrella bodies for childcare and play organisations, there has been a lack of representation from Health colleagues, and it is heavily weighted by Local Authority staff.

A proposal is being drafted which will restructure the current format in-line with ensuring that this group has multi-agency partners who represent the F1000 days' systems in Blaenau Gwent. It is suggested that the EYDCPP should remain as a strategic decision-making group, with a number of sub-groups sitting underneath that will act as communities of practice.

Professionals from a wide range of organisations and groups will be invited to be part of these communities/groups to share ideas for developing services, reviewing new practice/best practice and producing reports and materials to support early years' developments ensuring integration and multi-agency working and enable performance data currently collected to be used for continuous improvement purposes.

Learning from the F1,000 days has enabled a new Early Years Integrated Transformation Programme to be developed which will address inequalities between Flying Start families and non-Flying Start families, will change the

current systems and approaches to support families. Each family will have keyworker who supports the whole family in addressing 'What Matters' to them. Pulling other agencies in when and if needed rather than referring on or offering families a menu of services which does not always resolve what matters to them. The asset mapping that was carried out during the F1000 days has been updated, and is now being reviewed in light of COVID-19, with the aim of building on community strengths, skills and interests to reduce the reliance on commissioned services.

### **Other Developments**

As part of the preparation, a number of consultation events have taken place - these have included a workshop held with regional partners to ensure the Directors from Education and Social Services buy-in, support and shape the approach at a Blaenau Gwent level.

Additional preparation and consultation work has taken place during January and February 2020, in the form of a management briefing which included sharing the findings of Vanguard and the new principles for the EYITP and receiving feedback which was fed into the regional steering group. Managers representing Flying Start, Families First, Head Teachers, Early Years providers and leads within health, including; Health Visiting, school nurse and midwifery, attended.

At the heart of this project is the aim of creating an integrated and responsive early years system that is accessible for all families to address 'What Matters' to them, this has driven meetings with third sector organisations to explore how all these services can come together to form this new Early Years System.

### **Learning and Next Steps**

Originally the Pilot was going to take a two phase approach starting in Cwm and then using the learning from Phase 1 to expand the pilot into Phase 2 which is Brynmawr 2 (Bryn Farm) and LSOA Nantyglo 1 (Winchestown) areas.

However due to the pandemic, which resulted in pause in the project, changes in Welsh Government funding and the Early Years core offer having to be reconfigured in-line with Government guidelines around social distancing. The project will be delivered differently from the Pathfinders first aspirations,

starting in Cwm where the new way of working will be tested in-line with the principles and methods developed through the Vanguard process. The main difference is rather than home visiting, the model will rely on virtual delivery which may also provide opportunities around financial sustainability for rolling the EYITP more widely.

Currently Phase 2 which is Brynmawr 2 (Bryn Farm) and LSOA Nantyglo 1 (Winchestown) will remain on pause, but if funding allows and initial findings from Phase 1 are positive, our aspirations are that the project will be expanded beyond 2021 and this would allow the model to be rolled out to Brynmawr 2 (Bryn Farm) and LSOA Nantyglo 1 (Winchestown) areas.

The pilot will test the new way of working with families until April 2021, focusing on:

- No discrimination on who is eligible for support – Flying Start or generic
- The ‘What Matters’ question
- Ensuring consistency in the form of a one keyworker approach
- Enhanced midwife support from 12 weeks’ gestation
- Establishing early intervention to ensure support for early language development is in place from the antenatal period

Work will continue to work with the community to build resilience in the form of parenting support groups led by parents for parents pulling in specialist support if needed, reducing the need for commissioned services.

### **ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES**

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are experiences that occur before the age of 18 and are remembered throughout adulthood. Evidence shows children who experience stressful and poor-quality childhoods are more likely to develop health-harming and anti-social behaviours, more likely to perform poorly in school, more likely to be involved in crime and ultimately less likely to be a productive member of society.

Committed to ensuring ‘everyone has the best start in life’ and ‘creating safe and friendly communities’ we identified tackling ACEs as one of our key priority areas. We recognised that central to the delivery of this well-being objective is improving how public service organisations respond effectively to prevent and mitigate the harms of ACEs, whilst better supporting local people and communities to be able to cope with ACEs that cannot be prevented.

As a board, we took immediate action in ensuring our public sector workforce were ACEs aware and provided Level 1 ACEs and trauma informed practice training for our employees.

The training was made available via the Home Office funded Police and Public Health Wales Early Action Together Programme as well as Welsh Government’s ACEs Support Hub.



**LONG-TERM:** this was a key step towards strengthening our existing early intervention and preventative practices to protect and increase the resilience of the most vulnerable people in our communities over the medium to long-term.

To the end of March 2020, the Early Action Together Programme has provided ACE aware training to nearly 1300 Gwent Police Officers and staff and over 400 staff from partner agencies across Gwent. In Blaenau Gwent this was 102 Police staff and 57 staff from partner agencies.

Blaenau Gwent is also an ACE enquiry pilot site for Health Visitors and Staff have received training.

The ACEs Support Hub has provided the following training in Blaenau Gwent;

- ACE awareness to all schools except 3
- Phase 1 and Phase 2 Train the Trainer to 9 schools
- ACE Friendly Schools Train the Trainer to 9 schools

The Hub has also developed a Skills and Knowledge Framework which describes the knowledge and skills that the Public Service workforce needs to be ACE-Informed, ACE-Skilled and ACE-Influencers.

ACE training is being delivered across different sectors in Blaenau Gwent improving the knowledge, awareness and responses of public services to Adverse Childhood Experiences however, the work to date has highlighted an opportunity to improve the planning, coordination and monitoring of this training to ensure that we continue to develop and sustain our ACE informed public service workforce.

### **Early Intervention Project**

Building on the work to develop an ACE aware workforce, the Early Action Together Programme has also worked with partners in Blaenau Gwent including Gwent Police, Children's Services, Families First and Education to provide an integrated 'one front door' for referrals to Children's Services and a pathway for early intervention and support.

Since May 2019, the Early Intervention Project, funded by Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner, has supported 161 children and their families to access support. The project supports families who would otherwise have been closed with no further action by Children's Services.

The learning from the Early Intervention Project is informing the development of safeguarding, early intervention and prevention models across Gwent.

Further achievements include the implementation of Operation Encompass across the five Local Authorities in Gwent. Operation Encompass is a Police and Education early intervention safeguarding partnership which supports children and young people experiencing domestic abuse. Police report to schools prior to the school day when a child or young person has been involved or exposed to a domestic abuse incident in the previous 24 hours.

The ACEs programme is also working with Ebbw Fawr Learning Community to develop #NXTGEN, a programme which offers young people an opportunity to gain vocational qualifications and think differently about their potential and future aspirations. Our aim is to test this approach with a view that resources

can be shared to enable other schools and education settings to offer this programme to young people.

# Safe and Friendly Communities

Our Well-being Assessment demonstrated that Blaenau Gwent has strong community assets and our residents are proud of the area's cultural heritage and our sense of community.

Blaenau Gwent PSB wants to build on this strong sense of community by developing safe and friendly communities, using a **place-based approach to support our communities and citizens of all ages.**

During our first two years, this objective has focussed on tackling key community safety issues and ensuring that Blaenau Gwent can be recognised as an area of age-friendly communities. Details of how we've done this are provided in the chapter below.



## **COMMUNITY SAFETY HUB**

The Blaenau Gwent Community Safety Hub was established April 2019. The multi-agency partners who regularly attend the Hub have contributed to the delivery of commitments set out in the 'Blaenau Gwent We Want' Well-being Plan 2018-2023 and the Police and Crime Commissioner's Policing Plan for Gwent.



Through the Hub, partners have effectively discharged a broad range of community safety statutory functions:

- Prevent crime and reduce offending & reoffending amongst children and adults;
- Tackle anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment; and respond to Community Trigger requests;
- Combat the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances;
- Support victims of crime (including domestic abuse, hate crime and exploitation);
- Supporting children and adults at risk of radicalisation.

An Information Sharing Protocol was implemented to ensure the appropriate, safe and legal sharing of personal information between the multi-agency partners.

### **Outcomes**

Partners have worked together through the Hub to review Planning/Building Control arrangements at particular premises, met with the local Business Community to discuss concerns, maintained positive contact with elected members and key residents, in addition to considering all vulnerabilities and risks of harm to certain victim cohorts.

Members of the Hub have worked with victims from local businesses, the local community, neighbours, visitors to the area, victims known to the offenders etc. to address and prevent organised crime, illicit drug use and drug dealing, robbery, burglary, violence and intimidation, domestic violence, and anti-social behaviour. The Hub has helped to reduce offending amongst twenty identified targeted individuals, known prolific offenders, known petty offenders, offenders in tenuous accommodation arrangements, substance misusers, and rough sleepers.

Joint Police-led, high visibility operation to serve an extensive warrant at a key property. Drugs and stolen property recovered. One individual arrested, charged. Drug paraphernalia and extensive rubbish cleared from building and gardens. Practice review underway relating to houses of multiple occupancy.

Local Business Community and residents pleased with the response / reduction in victimisation, crimes and anti-social behaviour / accommodation manager working more effectively to manage their tenants.

### **Learning and next steps**

The Hub has been operating since April 2019. We are collaborating with our partners across Gwent and undertaking a comparative evaluation of the five Gwent Hubs with the intention of sharing 'what works', 'best practice' and identifying areas for the next development phase.



**COLLABORATION** – The Community Safety Hub is a collaborative multi-agency arrangement aimed at improving community safety across Blaenau Gwent as a collective partnership.

## AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

The concept of Age-Friendly Communities (AFCs) was developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as part of a global initiative to identify the changes needed for cities and communities to adapt to and benefit from ageing populations.

AFCs make life better for all people who live in a community, particularly as they age. They recognise lonely people in the community and encourage activities that people of all ages can participate in. Decisions on what it means to be age-friendly sit closer to local communities; ensuring local people have a voice based on their own lived experiences. Being age-friendly means designing our communities and services *with* older people, not just *for* them.

The eight domains of an AFC identified by the WHO are:-



The purpose of the Age-Friendly Blaenau Gwent programme is to ensure that future generations of older people are well equipped for later life by highlighting the challenges faced by today's older generations and secure a commitment from public service providers and local partners to continue to develop age-friendly communities across the borough.

The previous Blaenau Gwent Local Service Board Strategy for Older People was published before the inception of the PSB and before the development of the Blaenau Gwent We Want Well-being Plan 2018-2023. This document replaces the previous Strategy for Older People to align the Age-Friendly Blaenau Gwent programme with the objective in the local Well-being Plan to create safe and friendly communities across Blaenau Gwent.

It is hoped that the vision for age-friendly communities highlighted throughout the AFC assessment and ongoing programme will enable public service partners to integrate and embed age-friendly practices into strategies and ways of working across all sectors.

**The Blaenau Gwent 50+ Network** brings together local partners from organisations who represent or work with older people. For example, the Network comprises representatives from all PSB partners plus stakeholders like Age Cymru, Alzheimer's Society, Adult Learning Wales, Victim Support, and citizen representatives from the **Blaenau Gwent 50+ Forum**.



The Network has integrated the objectives of the Well-being Plan into its work programme and supporting the development of the Blaenau Gwent Age-Friendly Communities programme. Their age-friendly programme assessment will demonstrate the excellent work that local and regional organisations are already carrying out to encourage safe and friendly communities and promote healthy and active lifestyles amongst people of all ages.



The 50+ Network and 50+ Forum are currently chaired by Blaenau Gwent Council's Older People's Champion. The Network meets regularly to discuss local issues as well as share learning and best practice amongst its members.

The **Blaenau Gwent 50+ Forum** (pictured above) is free and open to anyone in Blaenau Gwent aged 50 and over. It meets several times a year in different venues across the borough to promote the interests of people aged 50+ and provides an opportunity for people to get together, socialise, and discuss the issues that matter most to them.

*"Great mix of talks and demonstrations, very useful to find out what's available in the local area."*

*"Very informative and fun!"*

*"Excellent day. I was unaware that so much is available for the aged. I will certainly attend again!"* – **Blaenau Gwent 50+ Forum members**

### **CASE STUDY – 50+ Forum International Day of Older Persons 2019**

The Blaenau Gwent 50+ Forum and 50+ Network hosted an **International Day of Older Persons event** each year. In October 2019, the Older People's Commissioner for Wales' Office attended the Blaina Community Centre to talk about the journey to age equality, ending ageism and age discrimination.

Representatives from Groundwork Wales, the Stroke Association, the National Exercise Referral Scheme and the Ebbw Fawr Trail group spoke about health and well-being initiatives available locally that help keep older people fit and active. Attendees were also treated to some sit-down yoga from a local yoga

instructor. *Click on the video link at the top left of the image below to see more!*



### **COMMUNITY CASE STUDY – Community Connections Befriending Service**

**Community Connections** is a free telephone befriending service that supports older people who have become lonely or isolated in their community. Older people are carefully ‘matched’ with a local volunteer befriender who has a telephone call with them at least once a week to provide company, friendship, and emotional support.



In Blaenau Gwent, the **befriending service** is available in Brynmawr from December 2019. One of the aims of the service is to tackle loneliness and isolation in a preventative way, enabling people to stay in their own homes and live as independently for as long as possible.

### **COMMUNITY CASE STUDY – COMMUNITY CAFÉS**

Before the start of the Covid19 pandemic in March 2020, a range of **community cafés** and **luncheon clubs** were held regularly across Blaenau

Gwent, open to anyone interested in meeting other people for food and drink and a friendly chat. This included older people, carers, people living with dementia, or anyone looking to get out and about to meet new people.

These are important activities for anyone suffering from loneliness or isolation, enabling them to discover new ways to improve their well-being and share conversations with new people. Examples included:-

- **Gwenu** is a local community group that aims to help support anyone whose life has been impacted by dementia. Gwenu community cafés were held four times a month – once in Tredegar, once in Abertillery, once in Ebbw Vale, and once in Nantyglo – and anyone of any age is welcome to attend.
- **The Happy Café** at Aberbeeg Community Centre met every Tuesday from 10am – 12pm. It was part of the Action for Happiness programme and offers a warm welcome for anyone interested in happiness and well-being, encouraging people of all ages to meet for a drink and a chat.
- A **Carer Café** was held on Tuesdays at 10am – 12pm at Ysbytty Aneurin Bevan in Ebbw Vale. The cafés provided advice, information, support, activities and workshops for carers to help equip them for their caring role, consider their own well-being, be aware of their rights, and share stories with other likeminded carers.



# Looking After and Protecting our Environment

We must address the challenges caused by climate change and loss of natural habitats in order to look after and protect our environment. To do this we need to improve our urban green spaces, walk, cycle, use public transport and recycle more, and look after our land and Blaenau Gwent's fabulous countryside in a more sustainable way.

Read on for more information about how the Blaenau Gwent on the Move project and the PSB's Climate Change programmes are aiming to address these challenges.



## **BLAENAU GWENT ON THE MOVE**

The BG on the Move project was successfully funded in 2018 by Natural Resources Wales Competitive Grants Scheme. The project resulted in the development of the Ebbw Fawr Trail which cuts through three nature reserves and features signage, street art, interactive interpretation boards and street furniture and supports the development of the areas Active Travel Programme.



**LLWYBR EBWY FAWR  
EBBW FAWR TRAIL**

The project was recognised as being an exemplar pilot project for its innovation and creative approach to partnership working which embodied the five ways of working (involvement, collaboration, prevention, integration and long-term) whilst delivering the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources principles.

Central to the project's success was its continued involvement of local people and communities, which built on the feedback received from Blaenau Gwent We Want Engagement programme. Using citizen insight and evidence the project aimed to help people to live healthier and more fulfilled lives by improving access to the natural environment and the outdoors, through increase use of the areas natural assets via walking and cycling whilst unlocking a range of multiple social, health and environmental well-being outcomes.

Some of the highlights of the trail includes a welcoming well-being space at Ebbw Vale Fire Station, art installations (murals and sculptures), the planting of native trees and wild flower meadows for pollinators and community litter

picks and river cleans. The event culminated with an exciting event launch held at Aneurin Sports Centre and a family orientated 5km fun walk 'Treasure Hunt'.



**INTEGRATION** – the Blaenau Gwent on the Move project brought together partners from the local community to help shape the Ebbw Fawr Trail and its impact on social and physical well-being.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

Action against climate change was identified as a priority by the PSB under the 'look after and protect the environment' objective. The Well-being Assessment identified a number of impacts from climate change that could have significant effects on local services and infrastructure, including more frequent and intense rainfall events, wetter warmer winters and hotter drier summers. Our climate actions can also address other well-being issues that are important to residents (such as local natural spaces, health and cost of living).

There are two main forms of climate action. Mitigation actions that prevent the release of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases that cause climate change (e.g. reducing energy use) and adaptation actions that respond to the changes which are predicted, or are already taking place, due to climate change (e.g. improving flood defences). The PSB will be addressing both types of action through two distinct projects:

### **Climate Mitigation**

There are significant opportunities to enhance prosperity through mitigation actions to decarbonise Blaenau Gwent. For example, the potential for job opportunities associated with retrofitting housing, or to improve access to jobs and education at the same time as decarbonising transport. The climate steering group will facilitate collaboration and identify distinct pathways to decarbonisation in different areas such as housing and transport. The steering group will include: relevant strategic decision makers, climate expertise and community representatives (including young people).

## Climate Adaptation

Blaenau Gwent PSB has worked with other Gwent PSBs through the 'Climate Ready Gwent: Capturing the Lived Experience' project, which developed a community engagement model for climate adaptation. Nature based adaptation actions that would reduce flood risk and enhance biodiversity had broad public support in the Blaenau Gwent We Want consultation.

Few areas have experienced the scope of landscape change that Blaenau Gwent has, as recent deindustrialisation has followed industrialisation. Community engagement with climate adaptation can enable people to take ownership of continuing landscape change in Blaenau Gwent.

### Project Aims for 2020/21

#### Mitigation:-

- Steering group to be set up and decision-making process established, with a clear focus on developing a climate plan for Blaenau Gwent territorial emissions, based on a science based carbon budget.
- Brief given to experts to calculate carbon budget for Blaenau Gwent and suggest possible timescales for achieving carbon neutrality within this carbon budget.
- Identify the most important areas for mitigation action in Blaenau Gwent and carry out public engagement on these issues to inform the borough wide plan.
- Develop in more detail a range of approaches to decarbonisation that tie into wider well-being objectives for public engagement exercise.

#### Adaptation:-

Deliver a Climate Ready Gwent style engagement project across Blaenau Gwent to inform future PSB work with other partners and develop an adaptation plan for the community.



**PREVENTION** – Local Climate Change adaptation and mitigation programmes will help reduce flood risk to protect our residents and preserve biodiversity in the long-term for future generations to enjoy.

## **CASE STUDY – Blaenau Gwent Children’s Grand Council**

In 2019 the Blaenau Gwent Children’s Grand Council, which brings together representatives from all primary schools from across the area, aged 10 to 11, took part in the ‘Climate Ready Gwent –Capturing the Lived Experience’ project. The adaptation project being developed by the PSB will be based on this work, so we went back to the Children’s Grand Council at the Llanhilleth Institute in February 2020 to get their view about local climate adaptation projects.



# Forging New Pathways to Prosperity



In 2017, 24% of households in Blaenau Gwent were workless households. This was the second highest percentage of any local authority area in Wales. In 2019, Blaenau Gwent had the highest percentage of areas in the top 50% in Wales, at 80.9%, and also the highest proportion of areas in the most deprived 10% in Wales for the employment domain (23.4%).

The consequences of this can still be seen in our communities and town centres, but we are working hard to help create jobs and mitigate against the effect of de-industrialisation in order to bring about the scale of change required to meet the area's economic development needs.

Over the past year, the following PSB programmes have made progress towards tackling the effects unemployment and maximising economic opportunities for prosperity.

## **UNIVERSAL CREDIT**

In March 2018 The PSB identified mitigating the impact of Universal Credit as being a high priority for the area and that success could only be achieved through public organisations working effectively together in collaboration. It was agreed that this would form part of the PSB Well-being Plan Delivery Programme for 2018-19, with Tai Calon being appointed as the PSB programme sponsor.

### **Summary of Progress during life of programme**

As a starting point a Universal Credit Stakeholder Event' was held in April 2018 at The Beaufort Theatre in Ebbw Vale. The primary aim of the event was to gather intelligence about existing support provision being delivered by partner organisations and identify what the key headline challenges are for the area.

Information from the event was analysed and a number of challenges were identified for local people and communities including:

- Risks that might emerge from the practice of making payments direct to the customer
- Timescales of between 1-2 months for application to receipt of payment by customers created a risk that customers' day to day living could be impacted upon (for example, purchasing food);
- The fact that the service is digital by default, relying on customers to play an active role on maintaining their claim and that this would have an impact on customers with low levels of literacy skills and digital skills.

This it was felt presented a number of key challenges for public services organisations operating in Blaenau Gwent including:

- Increased demand from customers requiring assisted digital support and personal budgeting and support.
- The need to meet complex and multiple needs and circumstances of customers

The PSB's response to these challenges included:

- Tai Calon’s introduction of a triage service to identify digital and other support needs
- A collaborative approach between Tai Calon and the Job Centres on the verification process for Universal Credit
- The introduction of drop in surgeries at Tai Calon and elsewhere, including community locations, to assist customers with digital and budgeting support.

### **Outputs & Outcomes during 2019/20**

As at 31 May 2020 there were 1,235 Tai Calon residents claiming UC out of c.3,450 UC claimants across Blaenau Gwent in total. During 2019/20, the council’s Assisted Digital and Personal Budgeting services supported over 350 UC and legacy benefit claimants with online administration and applications.

The collaborative approach between local social landlords, the Council, DWP, support providers and the third sector has mitigated the significant risk to income and the risk of growth of debt. Incomes have reduced and debt increased but not at the scale forecasted.

The take up of local support via surgeries and Tai Calon staff working from Job Centres was very low. Feedback was clear from local people that support should either be via telephone or face to face. Tai Calon adjusted services to maximise this service offer.

During the Covid19 pandemic, the Tai Calon income support team have adapted their working procedures in order to maintain a high quality service, continue to provide financial support, and support tenants’ well-being. The team are focussing on an additional 220+ tenants who have claimed UC since March 2020, providing tailored advice and preventing arrears by agreeing flexible, affordable payment plans.



**INVOLVEMENT** – The new telephone triage service from Tai Calon was set up following feedback from local people who were unable to attend face-to-face financial support surgeries.

The development of a Blaenau Gwent Employment and Skills Plan was identified as mechanism through which to deliver specific interventions to support the Maximising Opportunities to Prosperity work stream.

The development of the Blaenau Gwent Employment and Skills Plan seeks to enhance the skills and work readiness of individuals in Blaenau Gwent, which is critical to ensuring residents can capitalise on the available employment (including opportunities stemming from current demands, emerging investment and growth occurring locally, regionally and beyond, including initiatives such as the CCRC, Tech Valleys and the Valleys Task Force).

**In the last 12 months the following progress has been made:-**

The PSB Maximising Opportunities for Prosperity event held in July 2019 was used to set the scene relating to projects and initiatives currently operating within this space; and to announce the intention to host an Employment and Skills stakeholder event.

**Employment and Skills Stakeholder Event**

The Employment and Skills Stakeholder event was held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at the General Offices. The event was attended by over 70 individuals with partner representation from businesses, schools, Further and Higher Education and employability partners.

The participatory event introduced the outline priority areas for the Employment and Skills Plan to partners, providing opportunity to test the vision and plan priorities. As a result of the event “Blaenau Gwent Prospers” was agreed as the new vision to underpin the plan.



## **Consultation of the final draft Employment and Skills Plan**

The main plan and supporting action plan was developed, reflective of the comments and observations made at the stakeholder event. Further consultation and endorsement of the plan was sought at the start of 2020 with final observations informing the final plan.

## **Project Development**

Exploration of funding opportunities to progress a number of projects identified within the plan have been pursued within the last 12 months including; STEM Facilitation (Tech Valleys), Future Skills Analysis (Tech Valleys) and Aspire Shared Apprenticeship (Welsh Government and CCR City Deal).

## **Achievements**

Additional to funding being pursued there have been collaborative achievements within this area including the annual inspiration event.

## **Next Steps**

The Employment and Skills Plan will be considered and endorsed by the Tech Valleys Advisory Group (April 2020).

The PSB will consider and approve the plan, providing a strategic and collaborative vision for delivering employability and skills initiatives within Blaenau Gwent.

The plan outlines proposed governance arrangements that will require implementation. This includes the establishment of a Blaenau Gwent Employment and Skills Board comprising of key partners including Tech Valleys Advisory Group, Blaenau Gwent Enterprise Board and colleges, amongst others. Sub/working groups will also be established, if a mechanism is not already in place for each of the priorities set out within the plan.

## **CASE STUDY – STEM Events with Schools**

Throughout 2019, the council in partnership with Aspire Blaenau Gwent, STEM Cymru, Aspire2Be, the Royal Academy of Engineering along with other regional and national partners held a number of STEM events with schoolchildren to

inspire young people and highlight the breadth of employment opportunities and associated pathways both in Blaenau Gwent and nationally.

This engagement with primary school aged children is particularly beneficial as the recent Gwent Futures report identified that two thirds of children starting primary school in 2019 will end up working in jobs that don't even exist yet.

The events highlighted that young people's career aspirations can be influenced by parents, teachers, peers and other students, as well as what they're taught in schools. Enhancing STEM links with local industries as part of school curriculums and promoting alternative routes to employment like apprenticeships can help develop enterprising, creative young people who become ready to play a full part in life and work as they get older.



## **FOUNDATIONAL ECONOMY**

The foundational economy can be described as economic sectors that provide everyday essential goods and services including; infrastructure, utility, retail, food, housing, construction, health, care and education. The associated services and activities are provided by a range of public sector, SME and larger companies.

The foundational economy operates in those areas where there is a continuous, every day demand for services, facilitating the needs of a given community and also serves as an important source of local employment.

Within Wales the foundational economy accounts for around four out of ten jobs. Wholesale, retail and transport industries, for example, make a slightly larger contribution to Wales' GVA than manufacturing. In addition to providing employment and key services, this sector of the economy provides a range of benefits which are not always so easily attributed to other sectors e.g. relatively stable economy and evenly spread.

Despite the potential the Foundational Economy offers, historically there have been challenges, not least;

- Lack of recognition as a priority sector for growth, comparable to sectors such as manufacturing, ICT etc.
- Low skilled/low wage employment; with a tendency for part time opportunities fulfilled by females
- Displacement of local businesses by larger operators

In responding to the known challenges the PSB in January 2020 considered that there was an opportunity to work collaboratively to better understand the sector and consider growth opportunities including, the dynamics between firms of different sizes, behavior of organizations, supply chain and procurement opportunities, support innovation, improving management, fill skills gaps, develop progression routes and explore new business model.

A number of partner stakeholders including BGCBC have been successful in securing funding as part of the challenge fund, looking to support the Foundational Economy through specific interventions, namely;

Pilot Project (s) led by BGCBC and BG operating RSLs, complimentary applications were submitted and approved, to;

- Understand BGCBC and RSL procurement spend and associated voids within the local supply chain (Blaenau Gwent)
- Respond positively to the barriers faced by business in tendering for work (internal and external to the procuring organisations)
- Co-ordinate proactive support to business (range of partners and methods) to position business to tender for work and address voids.

As of March 2020 it was intended that the pilot projects would be operational in Q4 of 19/20 through to the end of March 2021. An early inception meeting was progressed prior to the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic but resources have had to be diverted to respond to more immediate issues. The PSB will be considering the way forward for this programme of work when it has had time to reflect on the impact COVID-19 has on its wider well-being plan.

# Encourage and Enable People to Make Healthy Lifestyle Choices

Blaenau Gwent has a population that is unhealthier than the rest of Wales on average. The PSB therefore wants to encourage and enable people to make healthy lifestyle choices in the places they live, learn, work and play in order to promote good health and reduce levels of disease and poor health.



## **EBBW FAWR TRAIL**

The Ebbw Fawr Trail set up by the Blaenau Gwent on the Move project offers superb opportunities to explore local areas of natural beauty and rich cultural past through walking, running or cycling. It is hoped that the introduction of

this new active travel route will help people live healthier and more fulfilled lives by improving access to the outdoors and our natural environment.



*Click on the video link in the bottom left of this photo to hear more about the health benefits of the Ebbw Fawr Trail!*

Blaenau Gwent is blessed with plenty of other existing accessible walking and active travel routes available to the local community. The Integrated Network of Maps currently being developed as part of the Welsh Government Active Travel programme will also make it easier for people of all ages to get active outdoors across Gwent.



**LONG-TERM** – the introduction of a new active travel route will help people live healthier lives by improving access to the outdoors and our natural environment in the long-term.

### **CASE STUDY –Ebbw Fawr Trail Launch Event, October 2019**

Helping Blaenau Gwent residents become more physically active by getting outdoors to enjoy the natural assets Blaenau Gwent has to offer was central to the delivery of the Blaenau Gwent on the Move Project and the development of the Ebbw Fawr Trail. The involvement of local people and communities, including working in partnership with Ebbw Fach Trail Community Group, was fundamental to the overall design of the trail, including its key features.

The project, funded by Natural Resources Wales, culminated with a ‘Pirate’ themed launch event to celebrate the official opening of the Ebbw Fawr Trail on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2019 held at Ebbw Vale Leisure Centre.

Over 150 attendees and many public and third sector organisations came together to celebrate the official opening of the trail which stretches from Sirhowy Hill Woodlands to the Marine Colliery in Cwm. The event was packed with family fun activities including a bouncy castle, goody bags, a treasure hunt, and characters from TV's PAW Patrol.



Councillor Mandy Moore who officially opened the event said “It was great to see so many families taking part in the fun run and enjoying their time spent together on the new trail and the feedback we’ve received has been fantastic. It’s so encouraging to see initiatives like this really helping to improve people’s well-being”.

### **SUSTAINABLE FOOD PARTNERSHIP**

Dignified access to nutritious and healthy food is a fundamental part of life – a human right. Yet, increasingly, for many people in Blaenau Gwent, providing food for themselves and their families is challenging due to inadequate incomes and the rising cost of living.

Food poverty and food insecurity are terms that are frequently used interchangeably. Food poverty is the inability to afford, or have access to foods which make up a socially and culturally acceptable healthy diet. The causes of food poverty are complex and include the following factors:

- financial – relating to income and to the price of locally available healthy food
- social – relating to cultural norms, skills, social networks, and the impact of marketing of unhealthy foods
- physical – relating to access to shops and cafes selling affordable healthy food, to cooking facilities, to transport.

Food insecurity means having access at all times to enough food that is both sufficiently varied and culturally appropriate to sustain an active and healthy life. Moderate insecurity can mean compromising on the quality and quantity of food, such as eating toast at most meals or choosing cheap, filling foods rather than vegetables. More severe insecurity can involve mothers eating children's leftovers, skipping meals altogether, and filling up on water.

### **The causes of food poverty**

Where budgets are limited, food may be given less priority compared to housing or utilities and people may go with cheaper, less healthy options.

While the affordability of food plays a part in food poverty, so too does the accessibility of food outlets that offer adequate choice of foods. Accessing food of any kind can be difficult in some areas that are devoid of any food outlets (areas known as food deserts). Accessing food in these areas can incur an even greater cost when accounting for the cost of transport, or the difficulty of carrying shopping home, and the choice available to individuals will be restricted to what's on offer at the outlets that are accessible to them.

Food poverty also depends upon whether individuals have the opportunity to develop their nutritional knowledge and cooking skills that help support a healthy diet. Choosing foods of nutritional value may be made more difficult still when individuals lack the education required to inform healthy choices and prepare healthy meals.

### **The consequences of food poverty**

Low-income families have to spend a larger proportion of their incomes on food than other households, and food is the largest item of household expenditure for low-income households after housing, fuel and power costs.

Food poverty has a detrimental impact on both the quality of life, and the length of life. The inability to access a nourishing diet is associated with worse diet and worse health. It can lead to increased dependence on healthcare (with GP visits and hospital admissions becoming more frequent), increased levels of stress and depression, and lower life expectancy.

Without a shift in focus we risk food banks becoming an institutionalised fixture of Blaenau Gwent communities. Food aid should not replace the dignity and choice afforded to those who can afford to buy food.

### **Progress**

On 28 February 2020 the PSB in partnership with **Oxfam and the South Wales Food Poverty Alliance** brought stakeholders together from the public sector, voluntary sector and community groups at this event to explore how partners could work together more effectively in addressing food inequality across Blaenau Gwent and wider South Wales.

**The Chief Executive of Tai Calon Community Housing** welcomed attendees to Tai Calon's offices in Blaina, Blaenau Gwent to highlight why the PSB has identified food insecurity as a key priority for 2020/21.

**Eryl Powell, Public Health Wales**, then provided some background about the work already being carried out locally to address food inequality across Blaenau Gwent, including the development of the Sustainable Food programme through the PSB. This programme was recently agreed as a priority aligned to the well-being objectives for Blaenau Gwent, so all public service partners sit on the PSB.



**COLLABORATION** – Representatives from a wide range of local, regional and national partners attended the event to have their say on how a sustainable food partnership could benefit local communities.

Representatives from **A Menu for Change: Cash, Rights, Food – an innovative partnership between Oxfam, The Poverty Alliance, the Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland, and Nourish Scotland** – outlined how the Menu for Change project was established in 2017 across three local authority areas to develop preventative models for addressing food insecurity, with a view to replicating these elsewhere if successful.



### **Next Steps**

During the workshop stakeholders considered a range of questions including what opportunities presented themselves in the coming 12-24 months to improve on the current position.

These included:

- Increased employment opportunities – high spec
- Keeping people (particularly young people) in the area through better employment opportunities
- Develop aspirations amongst young people through the education system
- Develop better partnership working amongst local businesses by encouraging them to create partnerships with other companies

- Businesses could use their entrepreneurial skills to help people facing food poverty through food waste projects and other charitable approaches
- Introducing a service that provides food, training, and employment skills etc. at the point of contact
- Workers in local communities feel more supported
- Greater joined up partnership working between businesses, local authority, Third Sector and community groups
- Reduce the stigma behind free school meals

The PSB is currently considering how to progress this work further throughout its 2020/21 work programme.

### **INTEGRATED WELL-BEING NETWORK**

Blaenau Gwent Integrated Well-being Network (IWN) is a partnership initiative ratified by the PSB in January 2020. Taking a place based approach, it brings together professionals and community members to improving health and well-being in a specific geographical area. The identified areas in Blaenau Gwent are Brynmawr and Tredegar.

There are **four main areas** of focus for each network:

#### **Place-based Collaboration**

Bringing together professionals and community members to build relationships and work together to make the best use of what we have in communities

#### **People who deliver services and support**

Supporting people to work co-productively, building on their strengths to find their own solutions and connecting primary care teams to well-being resources.



## Community-based Hubs

Connecting people with health and well-being resources, activities and other people. Linking community hubs to improve their well-being role and ensuring communities are able to access the right services and support locally.

## Easy Access to Well-being information

Ensuring people have easy access to well-being information through different channels including, family, friends, link workers, community hubs, community champions or through online tools such as [DEWIS Cymru](#).

The Blaenau Gwent IWN began in May 2019. Initial successes includes:

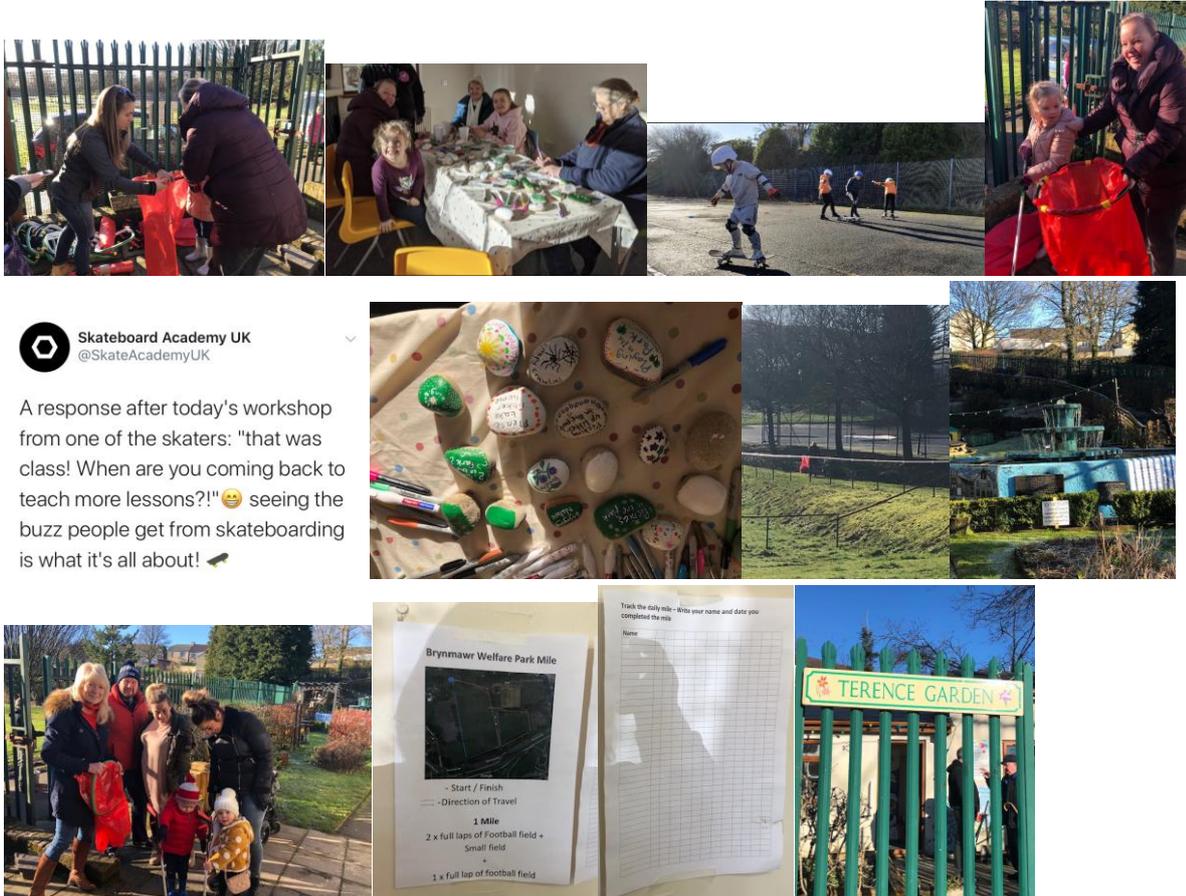
- Establishment of a steering group
- Establishment of networks in Tredegar and Brynmawr engaging approximately 40 partners and a small number of community members
- The mapping of community support across the towns of Tredegar and Brynmawr
- Community engagement activities
- Identification of community hubs
- DEWIS input sessions held in libraries across the borough to support community groups to advertise their community activities
- A community engagement session to begin looking at specific projects that can be taken forward in Brynmawr. (The Tredegar engagement session was cancelled due to the COVID pandemic)
- The recruitment of a number of well-being champions across the Borough



**INTEGRATION** – The Integrated Well-being Network encourages partners to work together better, in a more integrated way to find more effective ways to support community health and well-being.

## CASE STUDY – Brynmawr Welfare Park

Brynmawr Welfare Park is a large area of green space situated just outside Brynmawr town centre. Although the park is used regularly by local people, a consultation event was undertaken in January 2020 to try and understand the types of activities that the local community would like to see in the park.



## Partnership Working

A number of partners were involved in supporting the event including:

- ABUHB – Blaenau Gwent IWN
- Aneurin Leisure – Sports Development
- Head for Arts
- Keep Wales Tidy
- Skate Academy Wales
- Tai Calon
- Terence Tearooms and Gardens

## **The Approach**

An informal approach was taken, based on conversations. A number of activities and refreshments were made available to attendees. Activities included:

- A one mile walk around the park
- Pebble painting
- Litter picking
- Skateboarding tutorials
- Refreshments

The event was advertised using a number of methods including social media, Facebook and Twitter. The posts were shared many times by community groups and organisations. There was also a mail drop to local community. Attendees had heard about the event through all the different methods above.

## **Outcomes**

The event was attended by 23 people, their ages ranged between 1 and 68. There were many suggestions about activities that could happen in the park and tearooms. These included:

- Litter picking
- Afternoon tea in the tearooms for the older generation
- A family walk/jog at the weekend (linking with the mile and back to the tearoom for refreshments)
- Activities that are not physical activity focussed:
  - Picnics
  - Arts & crafts
  - A community festival in the summer
  - Treasure hunts
  - Skateboarding
  - Horse-riding

Three of the attendees expressed interest in becoming run leaders to lead a Sunday mile activity.

### **Next Steps**

A meeting will be arranged to discuss the outcomes of the consultation and consider the suggestions and put a plan together for implementation.



**INVOLVEMENT** – The Brynmawr Welfare Park consultation event was attended by adults and children aged between one and 68 years old.

# Regional Well-being Programmes

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Blaenau Gwent PSB works in partnership with other local authorities and PSBs across Gwent and wider South Wales to achieve our collective well-being goals, led by the G10, which is a Gwent regional strategic partnership group of Chief Executives and Leaders, supported by the delivery work the Gwent Strategic Well-being Action Group (GSWAG).

## **Gwent Strategic Well-being Action Group**

GSWAG, with Public Health Wales as the lead organisation, has been delivering a project on behalf of G10 to identify the priorities across Gwent which would be best tackled by working collectively at a regional level. This work is based on a piece of work carried out in 2017 by consultants commissioned via GSWAG. GSWAG presented a series of proposals for consideration at G10, against six regional priorities which are:

1. Gwent Green Grid
2. Climate Ready Gwent
3. Reducing the Region's Carbon emissions
4. Regional Transport
5. Cancer and Health inequalities
6. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

## **BUILDING A HEALTHIER GWENT**

Building a Healthier Gwent is a programme led by ABUHB that sets out the actions that, taken together, would achieve the ambition of people that live in Gwent living more of their lives in good health in all our communities.

The ambition is for the places where we live, work, learn and play in 2030 to make it easier for people in our communities to live health, fulfilled lives. There were a number of workshops held across Blaenau Gwent during summer 2019 where ABUHB were able to engage with local people and elected members on

how the Building a Healthier Gwent programme could promote healthier lifestyles.



**COLLABORATION & INVOLVEMENT** – Blaenau Gwent PSB partners worked together with the Health Board to facilitate various engagement events across Blaenau Gwent, workshops with elected members and specific community groups, and were represented at the Building a Healthier Gwent Conference in Newport in November 2019.

### **GWENT REGIONAL TRAVEL CHARTER**

The Gwent Sustainable Travel Group led by Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) is taking work forward to develop a Sustainable Travel Charter for Gwent to be considered by GSWAG. The group project plan sets out an ambition to launch the Gwent Travel Charter during 2020/21.

A Gwent sustainable travel charter will support an integrated approach to delivery against carbon reduction, healthy and active lifestyles and sustainable travel priorities for the five Public Services Boards. All PSB partners in Gwent along with a number of other public sector bodies are being given the opportunity to sign up to the Gwent Charter. In Blaenau Gwent, this piece of work sits under the PSB's Climate Change Mitigation programme.

Climate Ready Gwent (*more details below*) has been supporting the development of the charter. This work led by ABUHB aims to support and encourage staff and visitors to the sites of Gwent PSB partners to use healthy and sustainable modes of transport. 4,373 questionnaires were completed by staff from partner organisations across Gwent about how they travel to and from work and during the working day. This survey will be repeated on an annual basis to help measure progress.

### **CLIMATE READY GWENT**

As Climate Change is a concern across Gwent, the decision was made for all Gwent PSBs to work collaboratively through 'Climate Ready Gwent'.

## CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

### Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Point Infrastructure

The five local authorities in Gwent have been awarded £422,000 by the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) from the On-street Residential Charge-point Fund, to install a total of 65 fast charge points across 34 sites in the region. Match funding is being provided by the five local authority partners.

To support development of this project in 2019 an electric vehicle charging point infrastructure study was completed on behalf of five Gwent local authorities, Gwent Police, South Wales Fire and Rescue, ABUHB and Natural Resources Wales. The Welsh Government Smart Living programme and Natural Resources Wales both contributed funding to support this work.



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council are the grant recipient on behalf of the regional project and also procured the project supported by a cross-authority working group. The installation is being undertaken by a Welsh company called Silverstone Green Energy. Who will also operate, manage and maintain the charging units until 2025, with the option to extend this to 2028.

### Electric Vehicle (EV) Fleet

To assist with pulling together the implementation plan £16,000 funding was secured from Welsh Government to undertake Phase 2 of the Fleet Review work. This includes:

- Identifying progress made by partners following Phase 1 and identifying the support required to move all partners forward with Phase 2.
- More detailed analysis of each partners' fleet – in phase 1 not all mileage and fuel consumption data was readily available.

In February 2020 the officer working group attended a workshop facilitated by Welsh Government's Energy Service to support the development of this project.

### **Hydrogen Fuel Cell (FC) Fleet and Charging Infrastructure**

A regional study was completed exploring the potential for hydrogen powered vehicles and infrastructure across Gwent, building on a hydrogen vehicle trial by Monmouthshire County Council.

### **Carbon Positive –Sharing best practice in decarbonisation across the region.**

Funded by Welsh Government, NRW have developed Carbon Positive, a systemic approach to help organisations to address their carbon impact. The methodology looks at buildings, transport, land, operational assets, and goods and services procured. Using this approach NRW have been able to work out their net carbon status, accounting for both greenhouse gas emissions across operations and the carbon captured annually across the estate, as well as estimating existing stores of carbon on the estate.

To help share the NRW approach and their key lessons learnt, a workshop took place in December with a focus on supporting collaborative activity of public bodies across Gwent. During the workshop Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council shared their Carbon Positive journey providing a local authority perspective. Their low carbon project forms part of their organisational transformation programme.

The workshop also included a session from Welsh Government on the new Greenhouse Gas Reporting requirements and what this will mean for public bodies. NRW's Carbon Positive methodology is consistent in its scope with this approach and can help organisations in the region to start to prepare for these new requirements.

## **WIDER COLLABORATION**

### **Transport for Wales – Strategic EV Charging Infrastructure**

Arup have been appointed to work with Transport for Wales (TfW) on behalf of Welsh Government to develop EV charging infrastructure on the strategic road network and railway station car parks in Wales. Officers from across public

bodies in Gwent have been involved in stakeholder engagement workshops to ensure a joined-up approach is taken in the region.

### **Developing a Cardiff City Region Energy Plan**

Officers have played an active role in workshops funded by the Welsh Government Energy Service to input into the creation of an energy plan for the wider Cardiff City Deal Region.

### **Linking our Landscapes**

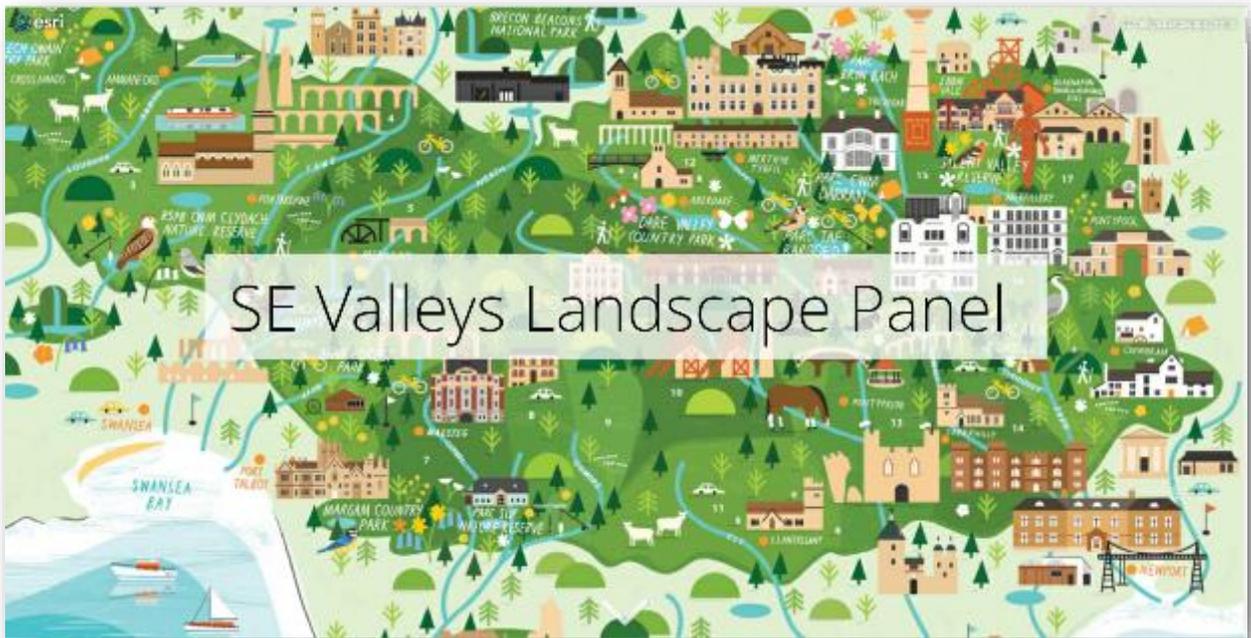
Linking Our Landscapes is about identifying local opportunities for our protected sites, natural and built environments to contribute towards the resilience of wider priority habitat networks in the region, with partners working together to tackle the “nature emergency” in Gwent.

Landscape profiles are a mechanism to ensure that national evidence and grassroots technical knowledge together inform our understanding of ecosystem resilience in South East Wales. They are also a mechanism to influence policy and inform place-based planning and delivery through the [Area Statement](#).

The landscape panel approach drew on the technical and spatial expertise of existing partnerships in South East, including: The Gwent Green Grid Partnership; the Resilient Greater Gwent Partnership (through the State of Nature and Nature Recovery Action Plan for Gwent); the Living Levels Partnership; the South East Wales Resilient Uplands Partnership; and Wye Valley AONB Partnership. Each of the panels worked together to produce a set of landscape profiles, which addressed the following questions:

- What is special or significant about this landscape?
- Where do we want to build resilience within the landscape and why?

Blaenau Gwent is part of **The Eastern Valleys** landscape. For more information, click on this story map below.



## **Resilient Greater Gwent Project**

The five local authorities in Gwent have been awarded £1.3 million ENRaW (Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being) grant funding from Welsh Government for a Resilient Greater Gwent regional project.

The project is being led by Blaenau Gwent Council, working in partnership with the other Gwent LAs, NRW, Gwent Wildlife Trust, Buglife, SEWBReC (South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre), Technical Ecology, and other Gwent partners.

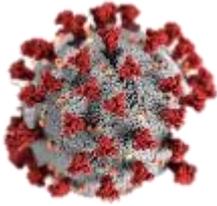
## **Gwent Green Grid Partnership**

The Gwent Green Grid Partnership (GGGP) is made up of officers working for the five Gwent Public Services Boards. The partnership is designed to facilitate regional collaboration which makes the most of Gwent's natural assets and the wide-ranging benefits they provide to communities.

In November 2019, project partners submitted a combined ENRaW bid to WG to fund a collaborative GGGP Project. The bid has a total value of £2.7M, seeking grant aid of £2.3m (with 20% in kind match funding) over 3 years. The bid includes the following individual project streams:

- Gwent Green Grid Partnership (GGGP)
- Gwent Strategic Access Plan

- Gwent i-Tree Eco Study
- Gwent Green Infrastructure Projects
- Pollinator Friendly Gwent



# Considering the Impact of COVID-19

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The physical, social and mental well-being of all Blaenau Gwent residents has been a key priority for all public services providers during the Covid19 pandemic. Services were adapted immediately and lessons were learned quickly to ensure any household needing help with advice, shopping collections, prescription deliveries, or simply someone to talk to were supported effectively.

Action to support our communities was a collaborative effort between local and regional partners, as well as being preventative in nature through signposting residents to the appropriate help or advice services at such a difficult time many people.

## **CASE STUDY – Locality Response Teams**

In March 2020, Blaenau Gwent Council set up Locality Response Teams to support those Shielding and other vulnerable residents across Blaenau Gwent.

The Teams were set up to respond to requests from vulnerable residents looking for help from within their community for things like shopping, picking up prescriptions, dog-walking, befriending calls, or anything else they were struggling with during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The Teams comprised of redeployed council staff from a variety of different service areas, as well as Aneurin Leisure Trust (ALT) staff who were also redeployed in collaboration with the council to assist our communities. Much of the work has been carried out remotely, with council and ALT staff able to safely work from home speaking to residents and community groups via telephone and managing cases online. Some council staff also safely delivered prescriptions and grocery shopping orders to many of our hardest to reach residents.



The Locality Response Teams & the volunteers and community groups they work with have been absolutely vital to the Covid-19 response in ensuring vulnerable people are well supported. So far they have supported over 550 households and the feedback from the residents has been extremely grateful and positive.

Here's what two of the team members had to say about their redeployment to the Locality Response Teams:

*“The work has been very rewarding and eye-opening. It’s been a great experience to become a friendly voice and a source of support for some of our most vulnerable residents, and I’ll miss some of my regular calls when I return to my usual role.”*

*“I have enjoyed working with the Locality Teams so much, it’s a totally different role to my usual day to day role. The assistance we have given to vulnerable, elderly and shielding people has been an invaluable service, which they have all been incredibly grateful for. This is something that Blaenau Gwent Council can be truly proud of.”*

## COMMUNITY CASE STUDY – Tredegar Community Taskforce

The volunteers of the Tredegar Community Task Force are everyday normal people who stood up in unusual circumstances, putting the well-being of the community before their own. Cymru Creations has led this tremendously outstanding community work in Tredegar (the birth place of Aneurin Bevan who started the NHS) whilst delivering positive outcomes for those most vulnerable across Blaenau Gwent.

Tredegar Community Task Force was established by Cymru Creations in the very early stages of the COVID19 outbreak. Cymru Creations are a small community interest business specialising in film making whilst supporting an extensive over 60s social club and a Youth Film Academy.

This team of film makers, ex-teachers, steel industry workers, local councillors, and those who are self-employed, have all risen to the challenge in a time of uncertainty and crisis, and furthermore, they are succeeding. Every day the staff and volunteers continue to make deliveries and provide support to whoever requires our help, and milestones continue to be surpassed.



On 10th March 2020 a unanimous decision was made by the Taskforce to stand up and support those who needed it the most.

It is remarkable the speed at which Cymru Creations stood up a brand new community service weeks ahead of many official organisations and governing bodies. The Taskforce

offered a range of vital support and quickly became a forerunner in responding to the COVID19 emergency within Blaenau Gwent.

The council's Locality Response Teams have worked closely with the Taskforce throughout the pandemic in order to source local support for shielding residents in need of prescription or shopping deliveries.

Cymru Creations' office based in The Little Theatre, Tredegar, proved invaluable as the Headquarters for the operation. Kevin Phillips from Cymru Creations led on the coordination of local groups in the area to support the community by any means necessary. The theatre was transformed into a fully functioning base of operations, complete with social distancing markers, notice boards, and personal protective equipment for all their volunteers.

It was clear immediately that the Taskforce was very much needed. The project quickly grew from just four volunteers to a group of thirty strong, with the small team taking over 200 calls a day due to the extensive promotional work with the community and referrals from the council's Locality Response Teams. Volunteers were carrying out 50-70 prescription collections per day; 30-60 shopping deliveries per day; and delivering 250 bags of free food parcels per week. The food parcels were sourced from working in partnership with Jesus Cares, Fair Share, McDonalds, Tesco, Braces.

Since March, the Taskforce has supported all members of the community, not just in Tredegar, but other towns in the Blaenau Gwent area as well. First 500 jobs were completed, then 1000, then 2000, 5000, and this now exceeds 7500 and counting. Cymru Creations also distributed educational packs and sanitary products for children and young people unable to attend school during the pandemic.

### **SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BLAENAU GWENT PSB, JULY 2020**

The PSB believes that Public Services Boards across Wales collectively play a vital role in achieving well-being outcomes for our local areas during and beyond the Covid19 pandemic. We have taken a proactive approach as a PSB in Blaenau Gwent moving from initial response and now looking ahead towards recovery, reconstruction and beyond.

The special PSB meeting held in July 2020 provided the opportunity for a discussion space focussed on the theme '*Covid-19 – Reflections, lessons learned, where next?*', facilitated by Academi Wales. Providing the Board with a pause and reflect space, the discussion centred around 3 questions;

- What has worked well
- Areas which have not worked so well; and
- What this means in terms of how we reflect and refocus the well-being objectives and priorities within our local Well-being Plan over the next 18 months.

The session identified the importance of partnership working and continuing to support community resilience as key themes, as well as the importance of the use of data and intelligence, digital transformation, community cohesion and the foundational and green economies.

It was acknowledged that many of the existing programmes initiated in the current strategic work programme and outlined throughout this document continued to be appropriate, if anything even more so, to mitigate the long-term effects of the crisis.



**INTEGRATION** – In recognition of the effects Covid-19 has had on communities in Wales and the greater impacts being felt by certain population groups, we are currently supporting the implementation of a Pilot Community Impact Assessment (CIA) approach which will take account of the social, economic, environmental and cultural impact of the pandemic across 3 population groups. Learning from the pilot will enable us to consider how we can scale up the CIA approach to support local and regional recovering planning.

# Next Steps for the PSB Well-being Programme

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## **COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

During July and August 2020 the council has undertaken a Community Impact Assessment to consider the impact of the Covid19 pandemic on three specific community and population groups:-

- Parents with Young Families (children 0-8 years);
- People with Learning Disabilities (all ages); and
- Young People/Young Adults (14-25 years)

The CIA aims to assess the impact of the Covid19 crisis and public services' recovery plans on the identified population groups, as well as identify any actions public services need to take in order to reduce vulnerabilities and increase the resilience of this groups going forward.

A CIA template has been developed which will be used to capture key areas for assessment including issues related to well-being objectives. Consideration of socio-economics will also be referenced where appropriate to support the organisation in meeting the new Socio-economic Duty which is planned to commence in the autumn 2020.

All learning captured during the CIA process will be fed into the PSB's 2020/21 work programme and will be vital in identifying future priorities for the well-being of Blaenau Gwent residents.

## **PSB ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21**

In this rapidly changing context the Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board shares the view of the vital role PSBs will need to collectively play in achieving well-being outcomes for our local area. The BG PSB is taking a proactive approach in looking ahead towards recovery, reconstruction and beyond.

The PSB has identified several key themes for recovery, such as the importance of partnership working and continuing to support community resilience. Key work streams and enablers aligned to our existing well-being plan work programme have also been identified, such as the importance of the use of data and intelligence, digital transformation, community cohesion and the foundational and green economies.

Many of the existing programmes initiated in the PSB’s current strategic work programme continue to be appropriate, if anything even more so, to mitigate the long-term effects of the pandemic. The PSB will continue to focus on the following 2020/21 well-being programmes:-

High Level Action	PSB Lead	Timeframe	Delivery Method
<b>Age-Friendly Communities</b>	Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations	2020/21	Embedding the eight age-friendly domains (p.21) into public service delivery and Covid19 recovery
<b>Foundation Economy</b>	Coleg Gwent	2020/21	Investigating the opportunities for prosperity through the Foundational Economy
<b>Climate Change Mitigation</b>	Blaenau Gwent Council	2020/21	Decarbonisation programme
<b>Climate Change Adaptation</b>	Natural Resources Wales	2020/21	Develop an Adaptation Plan for the community
<b>Sustainable Food Partnership</b>	Tai Calon Community Housing	2020/21	Working Together to tackle food poverty and food insecurity
<b>Early Years – First 1,000 Days</b>	Aneurin Bevan University Health Board	2020/21	Pathfinder virtual early years’ service pilot starting in Cwm

<b>Integrated Well-being Network</b>	Aneurin Bevan University Health Board	2020/21	Implementation of regional project locally in Blaenau Gwent, linking in with ABUHB's Building a Healthier Gwent programme
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The PSB has also agreed to continue the conversation regarding the review and refresh of this 2020/21 well-being programme throughout autumn – winter 2020, taking into account the impact of the Covid19 pandemic and how the well-being programmes can help our communities to respond and recover.



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