

SOUTH EAST WALES REGIONAL COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Friday 20 October 2000

Time: 9.30am to 12.55pm

Venue: Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale

Attendance:

Members:

Jenny Randerson (Chair)	Cardiff Central
Lorraine Barrett	Cardiff South and Penarth
Rosemary Butler	Newport West
Christine Chapman	Cynon Valley
Jane Davidson	Pontypridd
Geraint Davies	Rhondda
Janet Davies	South Wales West
Jocelyn Davies	South Wales East
Janice Gregory	Ogmore
John Griffiths	Newport East
Brian Hancock	Islwyn
Jane Hutt	Vale of Glamorgan
Pauline Jarman	South Wales Central

Peter Law	Blaenau Gwent
Huw Lewis	Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney
David Melding	South Wales Central
Lynne Neagle	Torfaen
Owen John Thomas	South Wales Central
Phil Williams	South Wales East

In attendance:

John Bader	Housing and Community Renewal Division
Peter Farley	Health Promotion Division
Don Bearcroft	Abertillery and District Museum Group
Rhian Robson	Colcot Community Project
Alan Williams	Ebbw Fach Development Trust
Margaret Hannigan-Popp	Groundwork Merthyr and Rhondda Cynon Taff
Stella Harry	Llanharan Community Project
Louise Gray	South Riverside Community Development Centre
Richard Morgan	Valleys Kids
Peter Slater	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Secretariat:

Martin Stevenson	Committee Clerk
Phil Mulraney	Deputy Committee Clerk

Opening remarks

1. The Chair welcomed Members to Ebbw Vale and thanked Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council for the use of their facilities.

2. The question was raised of whether Jenny Randerson should continue as Chair of the Committee following her recent appointment to the Cabinet. Jenny Randerson said that it was her intention to stand down as Chair and the Committee agreed to elect a new Chair at the end of the meeting under 'Any other business'.

Item 1: Apologies for absence

3. Apologies for absence were received from Peter Black, Alun Cairns, David Davies, Ron Davies, Sue Essex, Michael German, William Graham, Carwyn Jones, Dai Lloyd, Jonathan Morgan and Rhodri Morgan.

Item 2: Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July: SEWR-04-00 (min)

4. The minutes of the meeting held on 7 July were approved.

5. There was a request for information on the latest position on the proposal to reopen to passenger traffic the railway line from Ebbw Vale to Newport.

6. It was agreed that in future a list of action points should be attached to the minutes

[Clerk's note: This is attached as Annex 1].

Item 3: Communities First - The way forward: SEWR-05-00 (p.1)

7. John Bader introduced the paper, which provided a summary of the issues which had been raised by those responding to the first phase of the consultation on Communities First. He explained that Communities First would seek to tackle the problems of the most deprived communities in a comprehensive way. In particular, the new approach would overcome the lack of cohesion inherent in past programmes, which had made it very difficult for communities to co-ordinate action at the local level. The aim was to create self-sustaining communities, and although it was recognised that economic regeneration was the key, it was necessary to tackle the underlying causes of deprivation such as poor education and health inequalities.

8. A more detailed consultation paper, which would set out the policy framework for Communities First, was being prepared. This would include proposals on: how communities would be selected for inclusion in the programme; funding issues, including the need to target mainstream funding effectively; capacity building, so that communities were able to maximise the benefits of the programme; and the creation of community partnerships to develop a

community's vision and plan its delivery. It was proposed that progress would be measured by means of a system of benchmarking which would be subject to external validation. Following this further consultation, the plan was to implement the programme in 2001-02.

9. Peter Farley then emphasised the links between health improvement and community development. 'Better Health Better Wales' sought to tackle the underlying causes of ill health, in recognition of the fact that persuading people to adopt healthier lifestyles would work only in the context of improving economic and social circumstances. Local Health Alliances, which were already in place in most local authority areas, would have a significant role in taking forward the Communities First agenda.

10. The main items raised in discussion were as follows:

- On the criteria for selecting communities for inclusion in the Communities First programme, Members generally supported the proposal to supplement the Index of Multiple Deprivation by local knowledge. The Index was based on data at the Electoral Division level, and the use of local knowledge would make it possible to define more easily cohesive communities, including isolated pockets of deprivation.
- There was however serious concern about the proposal to allow all local authorities to identify up to five communities for inclusion in the programme, given the marked variations in the overall level of deprivation experienced in different local authority areas. John Bader explained that all the communities selected for the programme would have to meet a set of deprivation criteria to be set out in the consultation paper. Nevertheless, the general feeling amongst Members was that the available resources should be targeted at the areas of greatest need, with the selection criteria based on the ranking of communities against the Index of Multiple Deprivation for Wales as a whole.
- On funding, Members were keen that it should be possible to direct the funding for mainstream programmes towards the communities in the Communities First programme. In addition, it was important for the Objective 1 funding for community regeneration to be maximised.
- Members welcomed the long-term commitment to funding which would be a feature of the Communities First programme. It was felt that one of the major differences between Communities First and previous programmes was the difference in the timescale of the commitment.
- There was concern that Wales appeared to be behind other parts of the United Kingdom in terms of the development of community regeneration policies and practices, particularly the Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal in England and the social inclusion partnerships in Scotland. Furthermore, Wales was in danger of falling further behind unless adequate resources were devoted to the Communities First programme. It was noted that on a proportionate basis the number of officials in Wales engaged on tackling social exclusion was significantly less than in the rest of the United Kingdom.
- Members were keen for good practice to be identified from other countries and incorporated into the Communities First programme. It was suggested that there might

be lessons to be learned from the consensual approach to community regeneration adopted in the Scandinavian countries. John Bader said that work was in hand on a database of good practice in community regeneration, and examples from Scandinavia would be investigated with a view to possible inclusion.

11. The Chair thanked John Bader and Peter Farley for their presentations and for answering Members' questions. She invited them to make the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities aware of the Committee's views. She also invited John Bader to provide a written response to the numerous detailed points on Communities First which had been raised by Members [*Clerk's note: This is attached as Annex 2*].

Item 4: Open mike session

12. The Chair invited questions from members of the public. She said that she would arrange for each question to receive an answer in writing from the relevant Minister.

13. There was only one question relating to the Standard Spending Assessment formula for education services.

Item 5: Presentations by organisations concerned with community regeneration

14. A number of presentations were made to the Committee by organisations concerned with community regeneration. The presenters and organisations were:

- Don Bearcroft: Abertillery and District Museum Group
- Rhian Robson: Colcot Community Project
- Alan Williams: Ebbw Fach Development Trust
- Margaret Hannigan-Popp: Groundwork Merthyr and Rhondda Cynon Taff
- Stella Harry: Llanharan Community Project
- Louise Gray: South Riverside Community Development Centre
- Richard Morgan: Valleys Kids
- Peter Slater: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

15. Copies of the available presentations are attached as Annexes 3 to 9.

16. The following points were raised in discussion:

- Members noted the concerns expressed by the voluntary sector organisations about the complexity of accessing the available funding streams. The grant schemes were often difficult to understand and involved a wasteful duplication of effort on the part of the voluntary sector. There was particular concern about the use of challenge funding. John Bader said that there were over 40 separate programmes which related to social

exclusion. It was planned to develop a more flexible funding regime for Communities First, which would not be tied to specific time periods.

- There was also concern that grant funding became available to voluntary organisations only after the completion of projects, when the organisations often needed support early in the life of projects. In this context, it was noted that up to 7 per cent of the funding available under the European Structural Funds could be made available as advance payments.
- It was noted that Communities First could make a contribution to health improvement by challenging existing value systems. Unhealthy lifestyles, for example in relation to sexual health and smoking, were often linked to poverty and lack of social aspiration. It was suggested that these factors should be addressed in education programmes.
- The role of community organisations in promoting a positive Welsh identity was recognised, as was their contribution to supporting lifelong learning and tourism.

17. The Chair thanked the presenters for sharing with the Committee their expertise and first-hand experience of meeting the challenges posed by working in areas of deprivation.

Item 6: Date of next meeting

18. The Chair confirmed that the next meeting would be held on Friday 1 December at Chepstow Leisure Centre in Monmouthshire. The meeting would focus on the Health Improvement Strategies being prepared by the health authorities in the region. The Committee Clerk would arrange for a progress report on the new funding formula for health authorities.

19. It was suggested that a future meeting should look at transport issues in the region.

Item 7: Any other business

20. Jenny Randerson invited nominations to take over as Chair. Peter Black was the only nomination and was duly elected as Chair with immediate effect.

Committee Secretariat October 2000

Annex 1

ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM THE 20 OCTOBER MEETING

1. There was a request for information on the latest position on the proposal to reopen to passenger traffic the railway line from Ebbw Vale to Newport (paragraph 5).

2. It was agreed that in future a list of action points should be attached to the minutes (paragraph 6).
3. The Chair invited John Bader to provide a written response to the numerous detailed points on Communities First which had been raised by Members (paragraph 11).
4. The Chair would arrange for each question to receive an answer in writing from the relevant Minister (paragraph 12).
5. The Committee Clerk to arrange for a progress report on the new funding formula for health authorities (paragraph 18).

Annex 2

RESPONSES TO SPECIFIC ISSUES RAISED BY ASSEMBLY MEMBERS

Because of time constraints it was agreed that the issues raised by Assembly Members which were not answered would be the subject of a written response. These are set out below:

Christine Chapman

- Drew attention to examples of good practice in Scandinavia and asked whether these had been examined in the context of Wales.

Answer: Housing and Community Renewal Division is producing a good practice database (this will be available on the website within the next 4 - 6 weeks). It contains examples of community projects from the UK, Europe and the USA. It is intended to be dynamic and other examples will be added whenever these are brought to the attention of the Division. Currently there are no examples from Scandinavia, this will be investigated and, if appropriate, examples will be added to the database.

- Expressed the view that ineffective inter-agency working had been a barrier to community development.

Answer: One of the fundamental principles embodied in Communities First is to ensure more effective inter-agency collaboration.

- The problems of dealing with communities which suffer from marginal deprivation.

Answer: The commitment of the Assembly is to tackle the most deprived areas of Wales. There will always be a difficult decision as to where the line is drawn at any point in time. As the programme develops, success will mean that the initially chosen communities will become less deprived than those which were not in the original selection. However, Communities First should not be seen as a one-off programme and is likely to have subsequent phases which will include communities which are falling into decline. In addition, the Assembly will want to consider other proposals to prevent decline.

Janice Gregory:

- Expressed concern about selecting areas for inclusion in the programme which were outside the worst 100 (or whatever figure was finally agreed). She was also concerned about the implication of all authorities being able to identify up to five communities for inclusion in the programme.

Answer: John Bader explained that the proposals which were to be included in the second consultation paper were:

- a. For those Electoral Divisions which have been identified in the worst 100 by the Index of Multiple Deprivation, it would be necessary to firm up the boundaries to represent cohesive communities. Natural communities will rarely coincide with administrative boundaries, some would straddle Electoral Divisions, others would be much smaller than Electoral Divisions. Local authorities in consultation with their partners would be asked to determine the boundaries of communities within the Electoral Divisions.
- b. It is also recognised that because the Index provided information at Electoral Division level, pockets of serious deprivation, as bad if not worse than those identified, could be omitted from the programme. Therefore, local authorities, again with their partners, should have the opportunity of identifying such communities for inclusion in the programme. This would be determined against deprivation criteria which would be set out in the consultation paper.

There is no intention to allow all authorities automatically to identify up to five communities. A maximum number was proposed to recognise the problem of capacity to implement in some local authority areas.

In view of the fact that this issue was raised by a number of members, it was agreed that the suggested maximum of five would be taken back for further consideration prior to issue of the consultation paper.

Phil Williams:

- Raised the importance of Objective 1 (Priority 3) funding in the context of Communities First.
- He also raised the concern about the maximum number of communities and expressed reservations about the limitations on the Index of Multiple Deprivation and the importance of incorporating local knowledge into the selection process

Answer: Insofar as the Objective 1 is concerned, the intention is that the budget for community purposes will be available for potential match funding to access the community regeneration element (Priority 3).

Jane Davidson:

- Commented that the heart of Communities First with tackling poverty and doing things at a local level with the community rather than as had been the case in the past at the community. Two issues were raised:

- How would People in Communities fit with Communities First and what were the proposals for monitoring and evaluating this programme.

- How would the specific responses from the consultation exercise be fed back to Cabinet Members so that the various agendas could be tied together.

Answer: The People in Communities programme (which had now identified 16 communities for funding) would be incorporated in the Communities First programme. A strategy for evaluating and monitoring had been devised and a project had recently been commissioned to pilot this on the first 8 People in Communities projects. This would provide a valuable test bed for monitoring arrangements for Communities First:

Feedback from the original consultation papers will be provided to all policy Divisions, so that they can provide the necessary advice to individual Cabinet Ministers. A paper on the responses to the first consultation exercise is to be published alongside the next consultation paper.

Janet Davies:

- Referred to the communities which were still in decline and the difficulties in engaging with the community.

Answer: It was acknowledged that different communities are in different stages of readiness for engagement and an important part of the development of Communities First would be the capacity building exercise, both for the communities themselves and also those organisations who would be working with the communities.

Brian Hancock:

Raised the following issues:

- The importance of a social bus service.
- The links between Communities First and Sustainable Development.
- His concern that the Scottish programme appeared to have a much longer financial commitment than that proposed by the Assembly.
- The milestones identified in respect of the English Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal did not fit with Communities First proposals.

Answer:

- The principle of integrating transport policies into tackling the problems of deprived communities is fully acknowledged, and will be incorporated into the programme.
- Sustainability (in all aspects) was at the heart of the objectives of Communities First.
- The commitment given for the funding for Communities First was just as long term as that identified in the Scottish programme. One of the major differences between Communities First and previous initiatives is the difference in the timescale of the commitment.
- The information provided in respect of the other United Kingdom countries was to show similarities and differences. The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal has significant differences in approach from Communities First and the information or milestones relates only to the timing of the development of the English strategy.

David Melding:

- Raised his concern about limiting the number of communities to five in any local authority area.
- Concerned that the programme would impose solutions, seen as needed by organisations. Raised the importance of the voluntary sector role in the implementation of the programme.

Answer: The point on limitation on the number of communities has previously been dealt with. Communities First is very much non-prescriptive in its approach to implementation and the voluntary sector and community groups will play a major role in the implementation process.

Huw Lewis:

- Expressed the view that Wales was behind other parts of the United Kingdom in its development of community regeneration policies and practices. He referred to the Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal being developed in England and the social inclusion partnerships which had been in place in Scotland for several years. He expressed concern that Wales was in danger of falling further behind unless adequate resources were devoted to developing the programme and observed that the number of Assembly officials engaged on social inclusion was proportionately significantly less than in other United Kingdom countries.
- Also concurred with the view that a maximum of five communities in any one authority was unacceptable and that it was important to mirror the Scottish approach, which was to identify the most deprived irrespective of where those communities were located.

Rosemary Butler:

- Wanted an understanding that Communities First needed to be seen as different and more radical and not as another initiative. She believed that though funding was available it was now a matter of ensuring that this was used effectively in concentrating on the most deprived areas of Wales.

Pauline Jarman:

- Expressed deep concern about the level of child and pensioner poverty in Wales.

- Warned against the excessive use of league tables which could be perverse in the way in which they were viewed and often gave an inaccurate perception of the true position.
- Any new arrangements, particularly for funding, should be as non bureaucratic as possible.
- Endorsed the comments made by other members on the importance of focusing on the greatest need.
- Questioned how Assembly Members from regional lists could be included in the proposal that Assembly Members should be involved in the partnerships.

Answer: John Bader indicated that the intention was that the Assembly would be non prescriptive but provide guidance on the way in which partnerships would be constructed and developed. Insofar as the funding arrangements were concerned, the intention was for this to be as flexible as possible and to move away from the bid based system of previous initiatives. All of this would need to be contained within the requirements for accountability for public funding. As far as the involvement of Assembly Members was concerned, this was a matter for the Assembly and individual members. In a report the term constituency was intended to be used in its widest context.

Lorraine Barrett:

- Expressed concern about the potential for duplication of initiatives.
- Asked how much the communities programme depended on matching European funding.

Answer: John Bader acknowledged the importance of ensuring that there was not a duplication but believed that the partnerships which would be formed to implement Communities First programme would be operating at community level and were about delivering action. By producing an action plan with regular monitoring, the partnership should prevent duplication. It had been recognised that it was important that the funding in Objective 1 for community regeneration should be maximised and, therefore, the community purposes fund could be used as appropriate for match funded purposes.

John Griffiths:

- Believed that it was crucial to place resources where the need was greatest.
- Endorsed the view that apathy within communities was a major issue that needed to be tackled and that many communities had inadequate capacity at this point in time.
- Stressed the importance of finding ways to bend mainstream funding towards the most deprived communities.

- Stressed the crucial role that the Assembly Members could play in the implementation process.

Geraint Davies:

- Stressed the need for a shift in the way in which resources are used and endorsed the need for a long term commitment to funding the communities if success was to be achieved.
- Indicated that care was required in the constitution of the partnerships so that they were truly representative of the communities.
- Sought recognition of the specific problem of road links in the Valleys.

Lynne Neagle:

- Supported the principle that funding should go where it was needed.
- In selecting the areas, local knowledge should be linked to an objective set of criteria so that the final decisions could be seen to be consistent.

Answer: John Bader responded that it was acknowledged that selecting the communities would need to be undertaken against objective criteria and these would be set out in the consultation paper.

Annex 3

PRESENTATION BY ABERTILLERY AND DISTRICT MUSEUM SOCIETY

The Abertillery and District Museum Society has been in existence since 1964 and collects, catalogues and interprets archaeological and social history material relating to the communities of the Ebbw Fach valley, namely - Abertillery, Cwmtillery, Blaenau Gwent, Six Bells, Aberbeeg, Llanhilleth and Brynithel.

The society also organises a programme of monthly lectures for its members and the general public, runs educational workshops for schools and organises historical fieldtrips for its members.

Over the past four years, the Society has published two books - *Abertillery, Aberbeeg and*

Llanhilleth in Sutton Books' *Old Photographs* series; and *Voices of Abertillery, Aberbeeg and Llanhilleth* in Sutton Books' *Oral History Series* - this volume is made up of edited transcripts of the society's collections of taped interviews with local people. With the help of Lottery funding, the society will shortly publish a history of the area *Abertillery and District 2000 - from Prehistory to Present Times*.

In the wake of local government reorganisation in 1996, the society was forced to move its small museum from Abertillery Library.

However, over the past four years, the society has formed an excellent working partnership with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and has recently negotiated a 25 year lease from the council on the ground floor of the Victorian *Metropole Theatre* in Abertillery.

With financial input from the Council, these premises are currently being renovated and will open to the public early in 2001 as a fully integrated Community Museum. This will provide display space, stores for archive material and museum objects, a lecture theatre, an educational facility and a kitchen and catering facilities. Money raised by local fund-raising by the Society over the past four years will be used for equipping and setting up the Museum displays and it is hoped to attract matching grant-aid from the Council of Museums in Wales and the Heritage Lottery Fund for this work.

This will enable the Museum society to further develop its existing programme of local history-related activities. These include:

- collection of local archive material including oral history, photographs, written material and objects,
- permanent and temporary displays,
- school visits and workshops,
- public talks, lectures and other events,
- access for people with disabilities,
- dealing with public enquiries and requests for information,
- on-going training and personal development of voluntary staff.

The Society's collection ranges from prehistoric and Roman material to artefacts made and collected during the miners' strike of 1984/5 and includes objects, photographs, drawings, models, paintings, geological specimens and items of costume.

More recent material covers the impact of the World Wars on civilian life and the role played by local people in the services and war-time industries, the Six Bells mining disaster of 1960, the miners' strike of 1984 and the final demise of the coal industry. Banners, photographs and

printed ephemera cover the growth of trade unionism and radical politics in the area.

This marvellous collection represents a valuable local resource. One of the most important roles of an effective museum is interpreting and presenting the history of its own community to the people of that community. This can have great value as a purely traditional, schools-based educational role. However, by widening the scope of its educational activities and embracing life-long learning, Abertillery Museum has a central part to play in engendering a wider knowledge of the history of this area and its people.

This, in turn, will serve to give local people an enhanced sense of dignity and self respect and to strengthen the ties which bind the community together. In the case of an economically and socially deprived area such as the Ebbw Fach valley, this is of particular importance.

Since the 1984 miners' strike and the destruction of the south Wales coal industry, the Ebbw Fach valley has been transformed beyond recognition. A new generation is growing up with no conception of the society their parents knew and lived in. The society's work offers a real opportunity for life-long learning and bringing together community groups of all ages. This will help the younger generation to become aware of their heritage and to appreciate and understand the experiences of their elders.

A well-run museum in Abertillery will perform a vital educational role for the community as a whole and will have an important part to play in the social regeneration of the area.

Annex 4

PRESENTATION BY EBBW FACH DEVELOPMENT TRUST

A Development Trust is

- Community Owned and Managed
- Engaged in the economic, social and environmental regeneration - holistic approach
- Aiming towards self-sufficiency
- Committed to working in partnership

Development Trusts in Wales

- 26 Trusts directly employ 300+
- Have annual incomes ranging from approximately £20,000 to over £750,000
- Own community buildings and other assets
- Engage trainees and volunteers in many thousands of hours of work every week

Development Trusts in Blaenau Gwent

- Tredegar Development Trust
- Ebbw Fach Development Trust
- Ebbw Vale Development Trust

Degeneration/ Regeneration

- Degeneration process in the valleys, urban and rural areas in Wales has been taking place for over 30 years
- Regeneration is, similarly, a long term process

Past funding failures

- Failure of formulae for the allocation of mainstream funding to adequately reflect local needs
- Proliferation of a wide variety of short term funding programmes
- Focus on capital spending programmes to regenerate areas
- Concentration on a 'top down' approach with limited community involvement
- All exacerbated by delays in launching programmes and ludicrously short bidding deadlines, followed by delays in announcing successful bids. Recent examples are Objective 1, People in Communities and Local Regeneration Fund.

Communities First (a solution to our problems?)

- If it is to succeed we need to learn from the past
- Consultation processes have to date has been a major step in the right direction
- Needs to put the community at the heart of the regeneration process
- Needs genuine partnership at all levels from the Assembly to people on the street
- Needs to adopt a long-term holistic approach to regeneration
- Needs to be honest , open and transparent in its management, targets and expectations

Targetting – Welsh Index of Deprivation

- Major step forward in the information available to assist government and other organisations to target the most needy communities
- Be wary of concentration on the headline grabbing hotspots
- Look at areas of concentrated deprivation – all 7 Electoral Divisions in the Ebbw Fach Valley are in the 20% most deprived in Wales
- Beware the flaws in the statistics -unreliable data in some areas, particularly in the housing and access domains

5 Ebbw Fach divisions in the best 30% housing

4 Ebbw Fach divisions in the best 30% access

- Is it really appropriate to assess access 'as the crow flies' in the Valleys, and take no account of the fact that Blaenau Gwent has no railway, no rural carriageway, limited public transport, and the lowest level of car ownership in Wales?

Conclusion

- We do not expect a blank cheque
- We do expect to be involved in the whole process, planning, implementation and evaluation
- None of us can make a difference working on our own
- Only by working together can we be sure that we make the maximum sustainable positive impact.

Annex 5

PRESENTATION BY GROUNDWORK MERTHYR AND RHONDDA CYNON TAFF

Groundwork Trusts are a federation of independent locally based Trusts dedicated to building Sustainable Communities through Environmental Action.

In our experience the problems Community Groups face on the ground cover:

Firstly, making the connections with the relevant agencies or Local Authority Departments whose support and initiative the Group needs can often be an arduous task, particularly where the Group wants to pin down responsibility and find out who's who and who can sort out a problem. It could be fly tipping, land ownership, use of a building, getting some local delivery of health services - despite the availability of telephone numbers and helplines it always seems to require intense perseverance from the Groups.

Secondly, having made connections and having drawn together representatives from the relevant Statutory and Voluntary Organisations the next problem can be expectations being raised as new Strategies or Funding Programmes are unveiled which may not always be relevant to the **immediate** priority or more often cannot be delivered without the necessary phase of Capacity Building. It is in the nature of Strategic Programmes or Funding Programmes that the promotion and hype precedes the actual delivery. This has happened with the Lottery

Programmes and it is happening with the European Programmes. This leads to the third problem where such a length of time occurs for something to happen that local circumstance may change completely between the initial proposal and the final delivery - very often the momentum of community action is lost. Finally, the Community Groups are facing an increased demand to be consulted as more and more agencies seek to prove their commitment to Community Consultation by drawing Community Groups in to validate their plans. A real fatigue and cynicism is setting in as Groups feel their Agendas are being hijacked to serve the interests of Bodies external to their community.

We must act to connect the problems of deprivation with the Agendas and priorities of Development Agencies to allow Community Regeneration Partnerships both the flexibility to tailor Programmes of Action appropriate to local need and circumstances and free up the bureaucracy and departmentalised isolation which can often paralyse local action and local momentum.

The problems of deprivation which our Trust have encountered in Merthyr and Rhondda Cynon Taff encompass Built Environment, especially housing conditions and lack of community facilities, needs of young people for affirmation action, social and physical isolation and fears for community safety of the elderly and a need for recreation which provides safe play for children, leisure and life enhancing skills for young people and healthier lifestyles for the whole community.

For example on the Fernhill Estate in the Cynon Valley, the Community Centre and associated Flats and Shops are in the centre of an Estate of mixed terraced housing and low level docks of Flats. Issues include poor access to health and social facilities, a sterile environment unplanned for recreation with no individual sense of place and ownership, litter and fly tipping and recently the spreading of decay of voids in housing. A Partnership was established between the Community Groups, Groundwork Rhondda Cynon Taff and Save the Children. This led to setting up a Young Peoples Project with its own Co-ordinator and Training Placements for local young people as Millennium Award Holders, a Community Co-ordinator has been appointed to support and develop the Fernhill Groups and the Association of Residents has been reformed and re-energised. The Project has now secured the support of the Housing Department and since August the old Estates Office has been handed over to the Youth Group and a Cyber Café and Computer Suite for training is up and running a major litter clearance and sweep up of the Estate has been led by the Local Authority, and three Greencare Projects have been set up. Plans are being drawn up for a major refurbishment of the whole central block to bring a Village Centre nucleus and attract more participants in the Residents Association. Next steps are to secure a Healthy Lifestyles Project for the Estate, funding for the environment and Recreation Projects, halt the ebbing of the local population and the voids problems and draw in external providers of training and pre employment skills, to work on the Estate. It has taken over 3 years to get this far. A key issue is to maintain the momentum of making plans for the future when the future is so uncertain both to the vagaries of funding and the long term commitment which the Partnership of Groundwork, Save the

Children and Rhondda Cynon Taff need to have to achieve Sustainable Development for the people of Fernhill.

In our experience the regeneration approach needs to build in these processes, and the key issues at the start.

In summary, we believe that the key issues that need to be tackled for the National Assembly's approach to regenerating the most disadvantaged communities in Wales are:

- i. Ensuring that regeneration priorities are identified through community led processes and that actions and relevant agencies are accountable to the Community Organisations.
- ii. Balancing the social imperatives so that the Social Infrastructure is developed alongside Physical Regeneration.
- iii. Investing directly at the local level so that the maximum benefit of funding investment is retained locally and funds the local economy.
- iv. Ensuring an holistic approach so that for example health issues, community environments, socio economic needs and the provision of local facilities are developed in an integrated fashion.
- v. An understanding that Sustainable Development does not equate to zero costs at the end of the period but targeting costs and the resources most effectively for optimum added value.

Annex 6

PRESENTATION BY LLANHARAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT LTD.

- Our Project is on the edge of Rhondda Cynon Taff. Available statistics can give the impression that Llanharan is relatively affluent compared with the Valleys of RCT. Statistics do not tell the whole story and may not show that an area has the potential to deteriorate as well as to improve.
- For us this has put European funding beyond our reach because our 3 ex-mining villages were not the most recent to lose pits or there is just too much competition in RCT. Spatial targeting with Objective 1 funding has been a further blow after filling in yet more forms, although RCT officers were as helpful as they could be.
- We welcome the fact that the National Lottery Charities Board Wales has a category of grants for projects aiming to prevent or minimise future poverty and that they acknowledge the need for workers in charge of small projects to have salaries which reflect their level of responsibility with no parent organisation to provide support.
- We feel that many grant awarding bodies have unrealistic time-scales for attaining sustainability when money for development to promote income generation is scarce and

our clients are unwaged or young. Statutory regulations concerning child protection and the demands of work with young people mean that properly trained professional staff are a necessity, not merely a luxury until unpaid volunteers can be found.

- We are undertaking community development work in partnership with the Community Council; consulting local voluntary bodies to highlight any lack of facilities and we have kept the Community Council informed on Objective One issues. We hear rumours of increased roles for local councils in drawing up local plans, but they do not seem to be considered as having any relevance to community regeneration.
- Finally, as a small organisation with valued objectives and a big task to carry out, we find the demands of form-filling to meet short deadlines an unreasonable burden on resources. Surely some standardisation of forms or exchange of information between public bodies will become possible in the age of information technology.

Annex 7

PRESENTATION BY SOUTH RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTRE, CARDIFF

This report will contain:

1. A brief history of South Riverside Community Development Centre
2. A brief description of South Riverside
3. A response to the points made in 2.2 Summary of the first round of consultation

1. Brief history of South Riverside Community Development Centre

South Riverside Community Development Centre (SRCDC) is one of the longest running, independent small voluntary organisations in the city. It supports the local community through Riverside advice (Independent advice service with Community Languages) Young Children and Parents Project (Partner in Cardiff Sure Start), the Riverside Regeneration Project and community use of the building itself.

2. A brief description of South Riverside

South Riverside is a densely populated inner city area. It has a population of 6,201 occupying 2,340 dwellings. The area is a Welsh Office designated Renewal Area and has 2 years remaining of the 10-year scheme. The effect of the renewal area strategies has been a considerable improvement in the housing stock. There has also been a

programme of related environmental works.

South Riverside is possibly the most multi-cultural area in Wales. It has proportionally the second largest black and ethnic minority groups in the City and the largest Asian population. The black and ethnic minority communities are a mixture of long term residents, more recent arrivals and a growing number of overseas students on relatively short stays. All of these groups have different and complex needs in relation to access to rights, benefits and opportunities. There is a large young population (50% is under 30 years of age). Levels of unemployment have been high for many years and much of the working population is in low paid or part time employment. These statistics are higher for black and ethnic minority groups with the added concern of those of working age not appearing in the statistics. The recent past has seen a significant rise in the number of households in multiple occupations.

South Riverside is the closest residential area to the city centre and has many of the characteristics and problems associated with an inner-city area. These include a significant transient population, groups and individuals involved with street drinking, illegal drugs, rough sleeping and prostitution. It also has to live with the forms of disruption that follow on from the attractions (many late night) offered in the city centre. Additionally the area is sandwiched between The Millennium Stadium and Ninian Park Football Ground with the main rail and bus stations also adjacent to the area.

SRCDC, through its ERDF funded South Riverside Community Regeneration Partnership, has led an area-based regeneration project, developing a variety of initiatives and responses with individuals and community groups, other agencies and the Renewal Area Team.

3. **Response to the points made in 2.2 Summary of the first round of consultation:**
 - **100 of the most deprived communities identified, using the Index of Multiple Deprivation and knowledge.**

The new Index of Multiple Deprivation bases many of its statistics on the 1991 census. For South Riverside this is particularly problematic.

The information was inaccurate – the Office for National Statistics has recognised the shortcomings of the last census, particularly for inner city areas and ethnic minority groups. Riverside is an inner city area with a high level of transient populations and a high proportion of ethnic minority residents.

We are working with the Office for National Statistics to address these issues in the next census. The proportion of ethnic minority residents in the area has increased due to:

- Levels of migration into the area,
- Some minority ethnic families being larger and children setting up home close to the parents home.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation does not take into account levels of insecurity/ transient populations etc that are particularly relevant to South Riverside.

'Local Knowledge' needs to be used to highlight particular aspects of areas that the broad brush of general statistics do not reveal. This is not anecdotal, but based on recognised statistical information. Cardiff Research Centre has been able to produce information on a sub-ward level – just South Riverside, removing the much more prosperous Pontcanna that skews the ward statistics.

- **Up to 5 deprived communities should be selected from every LA area**

We are concerned that this will be too prescriptive to respond to need.

The areas should be selected in a transparent manner, including consultation with the communities concerned. Who is selecting? Will the Local Authority be the gatekeeper?

The LA is clearly a major player in Community Regeneration. South Riverside's experience of LA involvement in Regeneration work has fluctuated depending on political circumstance.

8 years ago, before the unitary authorities were established, South Riverside became a Welsh Office/ National Assembly of Wales designated Renewal Area. The guidance for the scheme states "Declaration of a renewal area will provide a local authority with real scope...to develop a true partnership between the local authority, residents and private sector interests." Recent history of the relationship of the local authority to South Riverside has not maximised on these possibilities. The area is in the eighth year of the

ten-year Renewal Area programme. To date it represents an investment of £18,000,000 (75% of which represents Welsh Office/Assembly grant aid) none of which has been used to match with European funds.

We believe that a strong local partnership combined with local authority involvement and the means to access European funds will provide the best means of maximising on the improvements brought about through the Renewal Area status.

- **A long-term commitment to funding**

Yes, yes, yes.

So much is said about the need for the independent voluntary sector to address sustainability. My job is rightly about just this, but I am on a 3-month contract. This is a plea to really take this seriously with funding streams that are accessible to our sector.

We have recently been disappointed in what has happened to the Local Regeneration Fund. The 10% top sliced directly to the voluntary sector has been the pot chosen to finance the Gap funding, and is now to be distributed via the Local Partnerships – further dilution and delays.

- **Capacity building will be an integral part of the programme**

One of the key end products of capacity building is vibrant partnerships with community and small voluntary groups as equal partners around the table. This could allow the transfer of power and resources to enable the community to lead the process of community regeneration. We know what the problems are, and what we want to do; the partnership is the mechanism by which it becomes a reality.

Capacity building needs to be a two way process. This means that statutory sector and public bodies as well as community groups need to develop ways of working and communication methods that adapt to each other. Some community groups and voluntary groups have been around a long time, they know their communities well, and are what they want to be as organisations. It may be that core funding, not capacity building are key needs.

Annex 8

VALLEYS KIDS

The proposals set out in the consultation paper are innovative and exciting. But they also provide challenges for us all if we are to make them work.

There are challenges for the communities, challenges for the Statutory Authorities and challenges for the Assembly

The Community

The proposal for 'community partnerships' is crucial. The top down model of the last 20 years has failed many of our most deprived communities. We need a fresh approach. We need to tackle the problems together and we need to be serious about it.

The Community Partnerships must be inclusive. We have to find new ways of involving as wide a range of local people as possible in a meaningful way. An approach that is as inclusive as possible and plays to peoples strengths.

Statutory Authorities

The Local Authority is key. Their commitment to partnership is essential if a long-term meaningful change is to be achieved. If they are to be successful the Community Partnerships will not be marginal groups depending on the short-term 'grants' from the Assembly or the National Lottery. The Partnerships will be at the core of Local Authority provision in these areas. They should include the Health Authority, the Police, the local Colleges, in fact all organisations working in these communities.

We must change the way we work and commit to working together with local people, local tenants associations and community groups.

There will be difficulties, but the results will be better for communities and better for statutory authorities.

The National Assembly

The National Assembly must also change. There must be a total commitment to tackling poverty and exclusion. We must all agree that this is a priority for 21st Century Wales. We must put our most deprived communities first.

The multitude of individual programmes, each with different criteria and individual application forms must be streamlined and co-ordinated.

We must change the way we fund community initiatives. At the moment the Assembly is the only organisation that insists on funding community organisations in arrears. This puts an enormous strain on community groups and effectively excludes many new community organisations from following their dreams and carrying out their plans.

This is social exclusion by management system and the Assembly has the responsibility for changing it.

There must be a commitment to support community initiatives in full. It is ironic that areas suffering some of the worst conditions in Wales also are expected to contribute most to new developments.

A prime example is the FEFCW bulletin on financing community initiatives:

"all provision made with the involvement of non-profit making charitable bodies with the aim of widening participation and tackling social exclusion will be funded at 67% of the standard rate."

The colleges and the local authorities receive 100% funding. Community groups have the pressure of finding the 33% extra.

We must put the needs of the community first and not the needs of bureaucracy.

Communities First

The briefing paper makes the commitment to identify the 100 most deprived communities in Wales.

It then suggests selecting up to five communities in every local authority area.

This is disappointing. If it is accepted that we should target the most needy then we have to take a National view. We have to take responsibility for Wales as a whole not just our own constituency.

Targeting is essential and we must target those areas with the worst health, the worst employment record and the worst education in Wales. This will mean taking a view for Wales and not a view for our constituencies.

Lastly it will take time. This is not an approach that will be completed in three years, five years or even ten or twenty years.

While we need policemen we will need community co-ordinators. While we need social workers we will need community development workers.

It will involve a fundamental shift in the way we provide and co-ordinate all services in communities. We will have to change the way we spend our existing money to ensure support for communities through local community support services.

While targeting the most deprived communities this approach is also important for every community in Wales.

The Police often tell us that they can't crack crime without the community's support. It's true. But neither can the social services, the health services or the schools be completely successful without community participation.

We can't change people. We can't change communities.

They can only change themselves.

It is our duty and responsibility to do all we can to support that change.

Annex 9

PRESENTATION BY BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

1. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council welcomes the Assembly's 'Communities First' initiative given that it is based on the key principles underlying successful economic and social generation, namely: -

- **that the regeneration process requires long term funding solutions;**
- **that actions and resources need to be targeted on the most deprived communities;**
- **that implementation programmes should be non-prescriptive and designed to meet needs and priorities determined by local communities;**
- **that effective partnerships are required at the local level to deliver sustainable action.**

2. The scale and incidence of deprivation in Blaenau Gwent and the surrounding area is well documented and will be familiar to the Committee. Given that many of the problems associated with social disadvantage and poverty are interrelated, the Council recognises that effective solutions need to reflect these linkages and complexities re. they need to be based on cross sectoral multi agency partnerships working to locally determined, area based strategies. The Council has some experience of this approach. 'Communities First' provides a major opportunity to build on this experience, and that of the Council's wider role to promote the economic and social well being of the community, and with this in mind the Committee is asked to consider the following comments on how we might maximise the benefits of the initiative.

i) Allocation of Revenue and Capital Resources

- The allocation of resources for both mainstream and specific initiatives should be linked explicitly to the incidence of deprivation and need. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation identifies Blaenau Gwent as the second most deprived Borough in Wales, yet the proposed SSA formula places the Borough in 9th position. In essence, the most

disadvantaged communities should be tackled first and priorities should be based on needs rather than opportunities.

- There is a need to simplify the regeneration agenda which has become too complex due to the proliferation of initiatives. Paradoxically, the proliferation of funding sources is taking place at a time when the basic public services which help to sustain communities are themselves being eroded through inadequate core funding.
- The security of disadvantaged communities could be significantly improved with longer term commitments for mainstream funding, allowing for more effective planning and development of services and regeneration initiatives.
- Consideration should be given to setting targets for tackling disadvantage at the national, regional and local level, to ensure more effective use of resources.
- There may be a case for the National Assembly to directly fund community regeneration plans and partnerships.

ii) The Management and Delivery of Community Regeneration

- Given its wider role of promoting the economic and social well being of the community, the responsibility for the management and delivery of the regeneration agenda should be co-ordinated by the local authority in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sectors.
- Decisions on the organisation and priorities of partnerships should be delegated to the local level.
- The composition of local partnerships should be based firmly on the principles of public accountability and democracy.
- Insofar as the regeneration agenda is acknowledged to be long term, so too is the process of building partnerships; they require time to evolve and mature. Establishing sustainable partnerships would be assisted by greater certainty over funding levels and timescales and the setting of clear targets.

iii) Scope of Actions

- Current programmes and area-based initiatives are largely focused on economic development and physical infrastructure. There is a need to integrate wider economic, education/training, social regeneration, housing and environmental actions into the process.
- Co-ordination of multiple programmes could be improved by utilising common themes.
- All programmes and actions should be based on the principle of sustainability.
- There may be merit in merging area-based programmes to create more flexibility in respect of implementation and maximising funding opportunities.

3. Conclusions

The 'Communities First' initiative has the potential to make a real difference to disadvantaged communities. Its success or otherwise will depend ultimately however on the extent to which we can ensure that:

- **Communities are provided with long term commitments for realistic levels of resources;**
- **Priorities are based on needs rather than opportunities;**
- **Partnerships are firmly rooted in the principles of democratic and public accountability.**