

South Wales West Regional Committee

Minutes (SWaWR (2)-01-05)

Meeting date: Friday 20 May 2005

Meeting time: 10.00am to 12.40pm

Meeting venue: The Dylan Thomas Centre, Somerset Place, Swansea

Assembly Members in Attendance

Assembly Member	Constituency
Peter Black	South Wales West
Alun Cairns	South Wales West
Andrew Davies	Swansea West
Janet Davies (Chair)	South Wales West
Janice Gregory	Ogmore
Edwina Hart	Gower
Dai Lloyd	South Wales West
Val Lloyd	Swansea East

In Attendance

Name	Representing (if applicable)
Cllr Derek Vaughan	Leader, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPT CBC)
Ken Sawyers	Chief Executive, (NPT CBC)
Dick Crawshaw	South West Wales Economic Forum
Betsan Caldwell	Welsh Development Agency (WDA)
Martin Hall	Welsh Development Agency (WDA)
Professor Colin Trotman	Community University of the Valleys Partnership
Melvin Gray	Cwmni Clydach Development Trust
Jo-anne Thomas	Upper Afan Forum
Dawn Davies	Creation Community Development Trust

Committee Service in Attendance

Name	Job title
Jane Westlake	Committee Clerk
Victoria Paris	Acting Deputy Committee Clerk
Martin Puddifer	Acting Deputy Committee Clerk

Apologies were received from:

Assembly Member	Constituency
Brian Gibbons	Aberavon
Carwyn Jones	Bridgend
Gwenda Thomas	Neath

Item 1: Welcome, Introduction and Election of Chair

1.1 This was the first meeting of the Committee following the re-alignment of regional committee boundaries.

1.2 The Committee Clerk invited nominations for the election of the Chair. Val Lloyd nominated Janet Davies. There were no other nominations and Janet Davies was elected.

Item 2: Economic Regeneration of the Valleys in the Region (Part 1)

2.1 Councillor Derek Vaughan made a presentation on behalf of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPT CBC). A copy of his presentation is attached at Annex 1 and an additional paper attached at Annex 2.

2.2 Martin Hall gave a presentation on behalf of the Welsh Development Agency (WDA). A copy is attached at Annex 3.

2.3 In response to questions from Members, presenters made the following points:

Neath Port Talbot CBC

- ◆ NPT CBC sees Partnership as the key in nearly every thing they do. They try to include all interested parties, especially the voluntary sector.
- ◆ After a slow start the Communities First initiative is making good progress and using the funding wisely.
- ◆ NPT CBC is encouraging Partnerships to complete their action plans. Four have already been completed and once they are published the Partnerships can bid for larger sums of funding.
- ◆ The New Learning Network, which was largely funded by Objective 1, has been a great success.
- ◆ There is a plan in place for the restoration of the canals. NPT CBC is keen to develop the canals for an improvement in tourism and the economy in Neath Port Talbot. In 2007-13, if successful with Objective 1 money, the Council wants to restore the link from Neath to the Swansea

Basin. This is estimated to cost £57 million. Joint working between Partnerships is imperative.

- ◆ A key document is [Making the Connections: Delivering better Public Services for Wales](#).
- ◆ Social Enterprise is of primary importance in regenerating the Valleys. Community transport and community shops will stimulate the local economy.
- ◆ NPT CBC is keen to be involved in shared learning and the cross co-ordination with other authorities. Meetings have been arranged with this in mind. Although the Welsh Tourist Board will be amalgamated into the National Assembly for Wales in April 2006, the regional Partnerships will still continue and the [Wales Spatial Plan](#) is a key document. Tourism is examined within this document, which identifies whether issues are for individual local authorities or are across local authority boundaries.
- ◆ Transport has been improved with Objective 1 money and this has helped get people back into work.
- ◆ Development in one area benefits other areas. It is just as important to remember that the SW Wales Valleys connect to the Brecon Beacons and the Black Mountains as well as to the southern area.

Martin Hall

- ◆ The WDA recognises the importance of Communities First and is in discussions with the Assistant Director of Communities about supporting Partnerships with their action plans and more effectively to bring projects forward.
- ◆ The WDA looks at a number of different facets when accessing a project. It tries to be complementary to other developments, existing businesses and encouraging to new companies entering the area.
- ◆ It is important that the WDA works jointly with other Partnerships successfully to influence the economic regeneration of Bridgend town centre. The regeneration of town centres needs to be considered holistically; including the town's attractions, accessibility, amenities and the way in which it is managed.
- ◆ Although the WDA has succeeded in many projects it still need for further development and improvement projects.

2.4. Andrew Davies AM, Minister for Economic Development and Transport, announced that Objective 1 funding would be available to NPT CBC for town centre regeneration.

At this point the Committee moved to Item 3, reported below.

Item 2: Economic regeneration of the valleys in the region (Part 2)

2.5 Professor Colin Trotman, Head of the Department of Continuing Education at Swansea University, gave a presentation on the work of the Community University of the Valleys Partnership (CUIVP).

- ◆ He emphasised the role of community based education in regeneration projects and efforts to bring education closer to the most 'educationally isolated'.
- ◆ The CUVP works because its innovative curriculum flexible approach to learning meets people's educational needs.
- ◆ CUVP is an example of good practice and deserves the same recognition in Wales as it has in Europe.
- ◆ It is working with ten other European cities to develop a common approach to community learning through the Cities of Learning Project.
- ◆ Sustainability of funding is an issue. Projects are underpinned by the Connecting Cymru ICT project. Community based learning projects benefit from Objective One funding, but there is no guarantee that this will continue under the convergence plans for 2007-13. The National Assembly should look at the cost of community learning in relation to the benefits
- ◆ Currently, there are some 529 courses taking place in Swansea, 130 in Neath Port Talbot and over 100 in Carmarthenshire.
- ◆ There is a 'digital divide' whereby those in lower social classes need more access to ICT. CUVP provides this access.
- ◆ Forty per cent of students in Wales are part time. The report by Professor Rees on higher Education, due to be published shortly, could have a significant impact on adult education and the CUVP.

2.6 Melvin Gray, Manager of the Cwmni Clydach Development Trust, gave a presentation on the Trust's progress over the past four years. A copy is at Annex 4. Jo-anne Thomas, Communities First Co-ordinator with the Upper Afan Forum, and Dawn Davies, Chief Executive of Creation Community Development Trust also gave presentations on the work of their organisations. Annexes 5 and 6 refer.

2.7 In response to questions from Members, Professor Colin Trotman made the following points:

- ◆ Women currently have a higher participation rate in higher education. Differential rates of subject take-up are not a problem. The long term development approach has allowed the CUVP to get to know the community and the people it serves better.
- ◆ Universities are often seen as distant ivory towers, and CUVP provides a better understanding of higher education.
- ◆ One of the most important issues is that of financial support for part-time students. Given the high number of part-time students in Wales, there is an opportunity to do things differently.
- ◆ The best form of marketing courses has proved to be 'word of mouth'
- ◆ Schools should be targeted with funding so that greater opportunities are available to help pupils from lower social classes into further and higher education and to break down the barriers that still exist in access to professions such as law and medicine.

2.8 In response to questions from Members, Dawn Davies made the following points;

- ◆ Development Trusts can bridge the gap in securing private finance.
- ◆ Community development trusts are now able to offer more help and support to private businesses as they come to have a better understanding of the area they serve.
- ◆ There is still a high level of premature deaths in the valley.

2.9 Jo-anne Thomas added that in the Upper Afan Valley health problems had been exacerbated by the closure of a surgery in Croes Erw. The Forum was in touch with the health authorities who were aware of the problem.

Action

The Chair would send a copy of the minutes to the Minister for Economic Development and Transport.

Item 3 – Open Mike

3.1 **Cllr David Anderson**, Deputy Leader of Bridgend County Borough Council, assured the Members that the Council fully understands and appreciates the difficulties involved with cross-representation of all interested business groups in planning town centre regeneration . They have held forum meetings with traders that have proved very beneficial in Phase II of improving Bridgend town centre. In Maesteg they have put an engineer in charge on the project for Phase II following delays in Phase I because of problems with pipelines and cabling .

3.2 **John Morris**, Farmers Union of Wales West Glamorgan, stated that Ystradgynlais is a shining example of how a village should be run. As Ystradgynlais factories are full, he asked whether they receive more grant money because they are in Powys rather than Neath and Port Talbot where factories are empty. Although there are three entrances to the Brecon to Swansea Cycle Track in the Ystalyfera region they are not signposted. Work on the canal in that area is reliant upon volunteers as there is no money available for paid workers. If they spent money in the top of the Swansea valley the Ystalyfera area could be on par with that of the Neath Gnock area.

3.3 Andrew Davies AM explained that as Ystradgynlais is in Powys it is not part of an assisted area and therefore is unable to obtain a higher level of grants. However, Ystalyfera is in an assisted area and is therefore able to claim for a higher level of grants through Regional Selective Assistance and the Assembly Investment Grant.

3.4 **Sandra Davies**, Councillor for Cwmtwrch in Powys, stated that there is not a proper integrated public transport system linking with the Powys area.

She said she works for MENCAP and knows that it is difficult for people wanting to travel via public transport to the main hospitals, especially for an early appointment.

3.5 Andrew Davies AM commented that on 19 May 05 the Transport Wales Bill was introduced at the House of Commons. He highlighted the Assembly government's investment in free bus travel to the over-65s and to the disabled. They are working with the local authorities and bus companies to address concerns and use the flexibility within the system to enhance community transport.

3.6 **Jenny Simmons** said that the issue of people going from unemployment to employment needs to be addressed. She stated that although unemployment has decreased client debt has increased. Many people who have been unemployed for a long time are used to living on a low income. When they become employed they find that they need to buy things that before were not needed before, for example, a car or new clothes. She suggested that the National Assembly for Wales should consider funding the Citizens Advice Bureau to advise people on how to prevent accumulating debt.

3.7 Edwina Hart AM, Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration, mentioned that they will be discussing the problem of debt across Wales at the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee and the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council meeting.

3.8 **Margaret Hammond** asked whether in view of the Prime Minister's reluctance to acknowledge that there is anything wrong with the electoral system for the general election, would elections to the National Assembly will still have an element of proportional representation.

3.9 Janet Davies stated that elections to the National Assembly might be covered in a White Paper from the UK Government. As yet it had not been published and so the Committee was not able to discuss it.

Any Other Business

The Chair said that the majority of Members who had responded to a recent questionnaire favoured one meeting a term. The provisional date for the meeting is 14 October, but this was subject to confirmation.

**Committee Service
May 2005**

Presentation by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Western Valleys – Making a Difference

The western valleys form a significant part of the Neath Port Talbot county borough area and extend into Carmarthenshire and the area of the city and county of Swansea.

Whilst there are many similarities in the problems facing the valleys and their communities, for example, poor health and transport provision, there are also very significant differences between different valleys.

Since local government reorganisation in 1996, Neath Port Talbot county borough council has considered that it would be difficult to obtain significant and sustainable industrial inward investment to replace traditional heavy industries particularly coal mining. Instead our strategy has focused on attracting new industries to the coastal m4 corridor; we have seen significant successes with the Baglan energy park, which is progressing, and Coed D'arcy urban village, which will begin this year.

We do not accept, however, that this means that the western valleys do not require and deserve strategies tailored to raise their economic and quality of life attributes of valley communities. Indeed, we believe our valleys have many attractions including providing a good quality of life, a skilled workforce and improving communications through increased broadband coverage.

Therefore, within the developing spatial plan action plan for Swansea Bay waterfront and western valleys. It is not good enough to rely on secondary benefits from waterfront and central Swansea developments to raise the quality of life in the western valleys. We were particularly concerned when initial thoughts on the spatial plan for Swansea Bay and western valleys focused on Swansea city centre and SA1.

Therefore, we have now started to put forward the view to Assembly officials that the spatial plan action plan must include initiatives that directly help regenerate our valley communities.

For example, we see tourism as a key sector in achieving our vision. Tourism already brings in over £50m in income to Neath Port Talbot and employs + 1000 people.

An example of the tourism opportunities is provided by the hugely successful world renowned mountain bike centre in the Afan Forest Park, rated best 10 in world; restoration of Neath canal is also taking place (largely thanks to objective 1 money). Other high profile opportunities such as Pontardawe arena are waiting in the wings for funding.

Neath Port Talbot council itself recognises it can play a huge part in valley community regeneration. The amalgamation of two small primary schools in the Afan

valley with the development of a 21st century facility, not only for education provision but for community provision generally, is an example of how we are attempting to make a difference. This is also demonstrated by the funding provided to trusts and training centres.

We are also continuing the regeneration of valley towns and significant public funding will be needed to support our ambitious plans. For example, in Neath we are pleased that we have just received news that an objective 1 bid for Neath town centre is going to full appraisal. This will help continue the development of the town centre.

Returning to the issue of valleys regeneration, to be sustainable we believe valley communities must offer not only high quality education but also high quality educational and community facilities centred on new and innovative public buildings which support the partnership approach to the delivery of a whole range of public services. Our flagship NLN initiative is an example of what can be done. Again this initiative is largely funded by objective 1 money.

Objective 1 has been a huge success in Neath Port Talbot – brought in over £30m of European funding so far. The total investment is now £70m

We also need innovative public transport solutions and not just from valley areas to the city centre and coastal belt, as the spatial plan suggests, but also between valleys and between valleys and town centre. For Neath Port Talbot's part our transport for communities strategy involving the development of community enterprises delivering local transport is being trialed in the Dulais valley later this year. Social enterprise should also be seen as a way of regenerating our communities.

The next step we believe in developing our own valleys strategy and to set it in the context of the Wales spatial plan for Swansea Bay waterfront and western valleys area. We are, therefore, very keen to help shape the vision and the action plan for the whole of that area.

The Neath Port Talbot valleys strategy was requested by myself soon after becoming leader and will be launched in the next few months. It will look at what is currently being done in valley areas, what is planned to be done and what we would like to be done in the future. We will, of course, be consulting widely with communities themselves on its content.

So my main message for the committee this morning is that we put great importance on regenerating our valley communities, hence our valleys strategy. We hope the assembly does likewise and it can be reflected in the spatial plan action plan for Swansea Bay and the western valleys. This is so important as future funding allocations could be directed at priorities in the action plan.

I am grateful for the opportunity this morning to speak to the committee and will be pleased later to answer any questions from members or the public on the issues I have discussed today.

Thank you.

Presentation by Coun. Derek Vaughan, Leader Neath Port Talbot CBC to Welsh Assembly Regional Committee for South West Wales

20 May 2005

REGENERATING THE WESTERN VALLEYS

1. Introduction

The valley areas of NPT i.e., the Upper Swansea and Amman, Dulais, Neath and Afan Valleys, form part of the South Wales Coalfield which, for many years, has been recognised as a distinct area of social and economic disadvantage resulting from the contraction and subsequent virtual disappearance, of the mining industry.

These areas typically display problems associated with peripherality, long-term unemployment, high levels of economic inactivity, low educational achievement and skills levels, low levels of personal mobility and poor health.

Whilst the valley areas within the County Borough share these problems with the eastern valleys areas, they differ in many of their characteristics. This is most notable in their demography – they are less heavily populated and lack significant urban areas. In addition, they feed into a coastal belt that has also experienced industrial decline in key sectors and which is also in the process of restructuring its economy.

Even within Neath Port Talbot itself, although the basic problems are generally shared, each valley exhibits physical and socio-economic characteristics distinctive from those of its neighbour and therefore presents different, and sometimes unique, development opportunities.

A regeneration strategy for these areas, and indeed that for the wider sub-region, must take account of these differences. It must acknowledge that the spread of prosperity from the coastal areas into the hinterland is likely to work differently from the way this

happens further east and will in many respects require a more specific approach to public sector intervention.

The following sections indicate some of the opportunities that we would wish to see included in a fully funded strategic action plan for the valleys of Neath Port Talbot. Projects include those for which NPTCBC and its partners are currently seeking funding.

2. Cross Valley Initiatives

Some problems are common to all our valleys areas to varying degrees, and to this extent some basic themes can be developed through cross-valley initiatives. The following are considered of particular importance to the valleys of Neath Port Talbot.

a) Community Regeneration

Involving the community in shaping its future is a theme that is universally applicable as a principle of good government, but has particular relevance in more remote areas of the region, where access to services and facilities is often poor and less readily facilitated than in the more densely populated coastal belt. The Authority is already actively engaged with a wide range of community organisations in developing and supporting local economic, social and cultural initiatives. The WDA are also working closely with this sector providing funding through their Community Regeneration Toolkit.

More recently this approach has been boosted by the Assembly's Communities First initiative. Maintaining capital and revenue support for these initiatives from a wide range of grant sources, most of which are short-term, is a problem that has consistently been identified by the sector as their biggest barrier to effective delivery. Additional resources targeted at achieving long-term sustainability for successful projects is a priority in this area.

Communities First in the Neath Port Talbot Valleys

Of the 10 Communities First partnerships in the county borough, five are located in the valleys. A further partnership dealing with domestic violence operates on a county borough-wide basis.

The five in the valleys area are:

Upper Afan Valley – Wards of Cymmer, Glyncorwg and Gwynfi;

Upper Amman Valley – Wards of Lower Brynamman and Gwaun-cae-Gurwen (this is a cross-border partnership with the adjoining Quarterbach Ward in Carmarthenshire);

Upper Dulais Valley – Wards of Seven Sisters and Onllwyn;

Ystalyfera – Wards of Ystalyfera and Godre'rgraig (Pantyffynnon sub-ward);

Bryn Bryddan and Bryn & Cwmafan (Penllyn sub-ward);

Pelenna.

Many of the partnerships have or are about to publish the first drafts of their Community Action Plans that will form the basis for the development of projects to tackle issues identified as priorities by the local community, within the following themes:

- Jobs & Business
- Education/Training
- Environment
- Active Community
- Community Safety
- Health & Well Being

These are co-terminus with Neath Port Talbot Community Plan themes.

Themed Initiatives

- Sustaining and extending local schools as a base for community activity.
- Continuing support to maintain and extend successful pilot projects.
- Support to develop social enterprise, including the provision of specialist business support and advice services.
- Support for initiatives that improve the local environment.

b) Education, Skills Development and Lifelong Learning

Themed Initiatives

- Sustaining and expanding the New Learning Network
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c) Public and Community Transport

All valley areas in Neath Port Talbot have a Monday to Saturday daytime bus service, commonly hourly or better on main routes. Evening and Sunday/Bank holiday services are, however, often less frequent or, in some cases, non-existent. Some journeys can also only be made by making a change of bus, which is not necessarily conveniently timed. Consequently for those without their own means of transport access to employment and other facilities can be difficult.

Volunteer-based community transport schemes are in operation in some of the valley communities but are limited in what they can achieve by both low numbers of volunteers and legal constraints on the services which they can provide.

Themed Initiatives

- Improving bus services to facilitate access to employment opportunities.
- Promoting the development of Community Enterprises to provide transport services which are more responsive to the needs of local communities.

d) Services and Utilities

A major drawback to encouraging sustainable investment in new businesses, housing and other amenities in some valleys is either a complete lack of infrastructure or insufficient capacity to provide basic services and utilities. A programme of investment is needed to overcome these constraints on investment.

Themed Initiatives

- Fuel Poverty Schemes.
- Highway infrastructure improvements.
- Supporting the extension of the gas supply network to non-gas areas.
- Supporting for the improvement of the telecommunications infrastructure e.g. cable/satellite

e) Tourism and Environment

We have identified tourism in general as a potential growth area throughout the valleys of Neath Port Talbot but with specific target groups for different valley areas. Realising this potential will require significant new investment in improving the quality and extending the range of both attractions and accommodation in the valleys area. The availability of support for the tourism industry specifically tailored to local opportunities and demand is particularly important and this needs to be underpinned by improvements in the natural environment and removal of blight.

Themed Initiatives

- Tourist accommodation improvement grant aimed at encouraging new business development and raising standards in accordance with the WTB's guidelines.
- An environmental improvement programme targeted at removing dereliction and raising environmental standards.
- A long-term programme to eradicate Japanese Knotweed from the valley areas initially concentrating on main through routes and tourist related locations.

3. Afan Valley

The Afan Valley is the narrowest and arguably the most remote of the valleys and contains the highest concentration of social, economic and health disadvantage in the county borough. The area has been the subject of a number of regeneration initiatives, but has nevertheless failed to achieve significant sustained improvements.

Outside of the built-up areas the quality of the environment is generally extremely good and most of the valley is now designated as a Tourism Growth Area (Afan Forest Park TGA) based principally on its development as a centre of excellence for mountain biking. However, the quality of the built environment is generally poor and significant areas of dereliction exist.

The steep valley sides and virtual absence of flat developable land have combined to frustrate solutions based on traditional business and commercial investment opportunities. Previous strategies to introduce factory-based employment have failed and it is clear that a new approach is required.

This approach may well require greater emphasis on developing the skills and confidence of individuals to enable them to engage in economic activity and less on a capital investment-led strategy.

Projects for the Afan Valley

Tourism

- Afan Forest Park TGA: development of a range of infrastructure projects that will encourage increasing visitor numbers and consequent spend e.g. provision of a shower block at the Visitor Centre.
- Pelenna Mountain Centre: improvements to access and utilities at this strategically significant facility.
- Afan Valley Miners' Museum: provision of new building.

Community Regeneration

- Croeserw Youth Project: a community-led project to build and run a new youth centre based in the Croeserw Estate.
- Abergwynfi Community School:

3. Neath Valley

The Neath Valley is more agricultural in character than the other valleys, with a much broader valley floor containing most of the settlements, and a greater availability of land suitable for development. This, together with its high standard road linking the M4 corridor and the Midlands (A465), places it in a much better situation to benefit from initiatives involving the development of business infrastructure. Yet there has been little public sector investment in the valley to encourage business growth in the last ten years, despite the availability of serviced development sites.

Its high quality environment, linked to its proximity to the Brecon Beacons National Park and the renowned waterfalls walks area at Ystradfellte, places tourism as an important factor in the local

economy. There is considerable potential for tourism related development, based on the twin themes of industrial heritage and 'water' – rivers, canals and waterfalls - for a range of outdoor leisure pursuits.

A major catalyst, such as restoration of the Neath canal, is needed to significantly increase the number of visitors in order to further capitalise on the wider attractions the area has to offer.

Projects for the Neath Valley

Business Infrastructure Development

- Glynneath Business Park
- Resolven Supplier Park

Tourism

- Swansea and Neath and Tennant Canals Integrated Waterway Network: This is a project that was identified in "Waterways for Wales" (produced by British Waterways at the suggestion of the Minister for Environment) as one of three key Strategic national projects. The project involves the restoration and re-establishment of waterways that would link the three canals via Swansea Docks, creating a 35 mile length of navigable waterway with access to the Bristol Channel. Indicative costs are of the order of £55 million.

4. Dulais Valley

The visual impact of mining in the Dulais Valley is still very much in evidence, from the distinctive headgear and mine buildings at Cefn Coed as you approach Crynant, to the Onllwyn washery at the top of the valley. However, its economic impact is very much less evident and the valley now principally provides a home for people who work elsewhere.

As with the Afan and Amman Valleys, the fact that it is not on a main through route places the area at a huge disadvantage when

trying to compete for new industrial and commercial investment. Experience shows that there is little value in making inward investment a central driver for regeneration in these areas.

Community-led action has been central to the approach to regeneration in the valley since the establishment of DOVE Workshop during the mid 1980's and, more recently, the Dulais Valley Partnership (DVP) nearly ten years ago. With funding and other support from NPTCBC, WAG, WDA and many others, DOVE and the DVP have established a wide range of innovative community projects that address local environmental, youth, training and transportation issues (DVP is now one of the leading providers of community transport in Wales).

Projects for the Dulais Valley

Tourism

- Cefn Coed museum site requires major investment to preserve the valley's coal mining heritage and to exploit its potential for appropriate development.

Community Regeneration

- Dove Workshop Horticulture training project.
- DVP Care and Repair project.
- DVP Community Transport scheme.

5. Upper Swansea and Amman Valleys

This area shows a marked divide between the reasonably prosperous southern communities of Rhos, Pontardawe, Alltwn and Trebanos and the more remote communities at Ystalyfera and along the Twrch and Amman Valleys.

Pontardawe itself is a town of some size that has benefited from its attractive surroundings, and its proximity to Neath and Swansea. It has developed as something of a dormitory town, with good provision of leisure, cultural, retail and commercial facilities, but also having an established industrial employment base.

However, employment opportunities in the remainder of the area are few and as one moves inland from Pontardawe, problems of accessibility and remoteness become more of an issue and levels of deprivation rise.

Over the last few years a very strong interest in equestrian activities has emerged throughout these valleys and this has brought together a local partnership of community organisations. They have been developing plans for a new arena to be built on the outskirts of Pontardawe. Although the arena is intended to be multi-purpose, its principal use will be for equestrian activity, providing a national centre of excellence as well a facility for local use and as a focus for local interest.

This is complemented by another equestrian-based, community-led proposal for the upgrading of a trotting racetrack at Tairgwaith. If these developments attract the necessary funding, the profile of the area in the equestrian world would be greatly increased, with huge potential benefits to the local economy in terms of equestrian-based tourism.

Projects for the Swansea and Amman Valleys

Tourism

- Pontardawe Arena
- Amman Valley Trotting Track improvement

Education, Skills and Training

- Integrated children's centre at Ystalyfera.

Community Regeneration

- Old Primary School , Gwaun Cae Gurwen: There is considerable community interest in conversion of these buildings to provide a new community facility that would help to promote community enterprise in the valley.
- Steer Studio

APPENDIX

Valley Strategy

The Valley Strategy Group is involved in the production of a regeneration strategy for the valley areas of Neath Port Talbot. These areas consist of the Upper Swansea and Amman, Dulais, Neath and Afan Valleys, and span across 20 wards in total. The map below illustrates the extent of these areas.



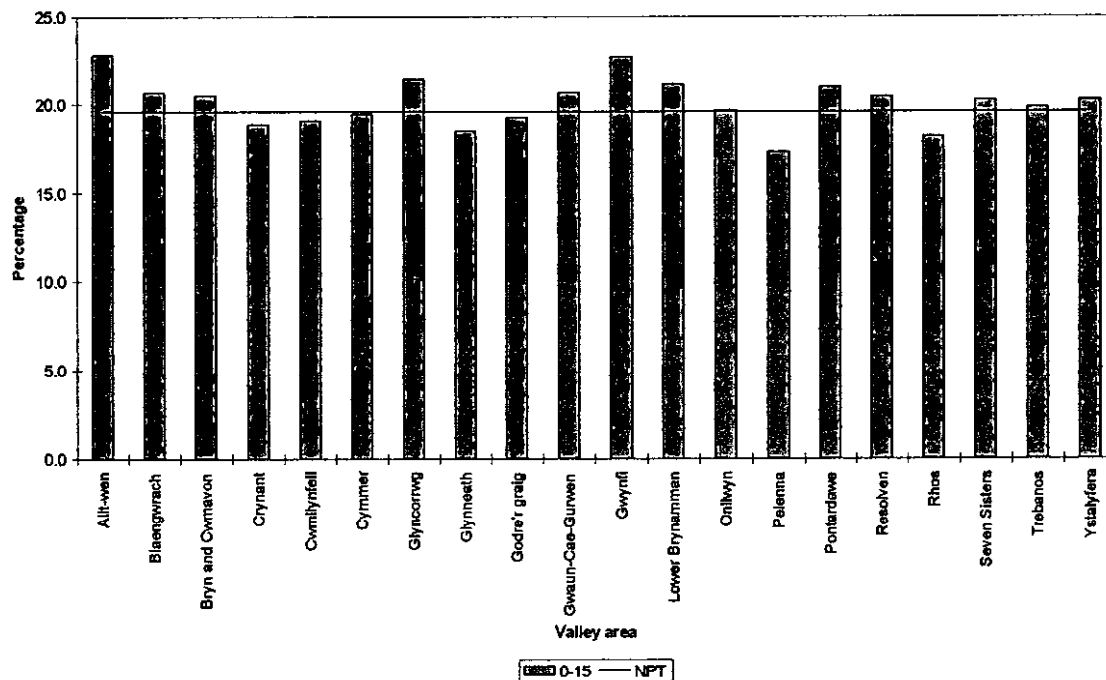
This paper presents an analysis of the characteristics of each of the 20 valley areas. Since the Valley Strategy Group is developing a regeneration strategy, then particular emphasis is placed on identifying sources of information that reflect measures of deprivation. In particular, the document focuses on using the following data sources:

- Age structure
- Economic activity and unemployment
- Health
- Lone-parent households
- Occupancy rating
- Car or van availability
- Working Families Tax Credit
- Income Support Claimants

and where possible, the most up-to-date information is used. Each section listed above is examined below across all of the 20 valley areas.

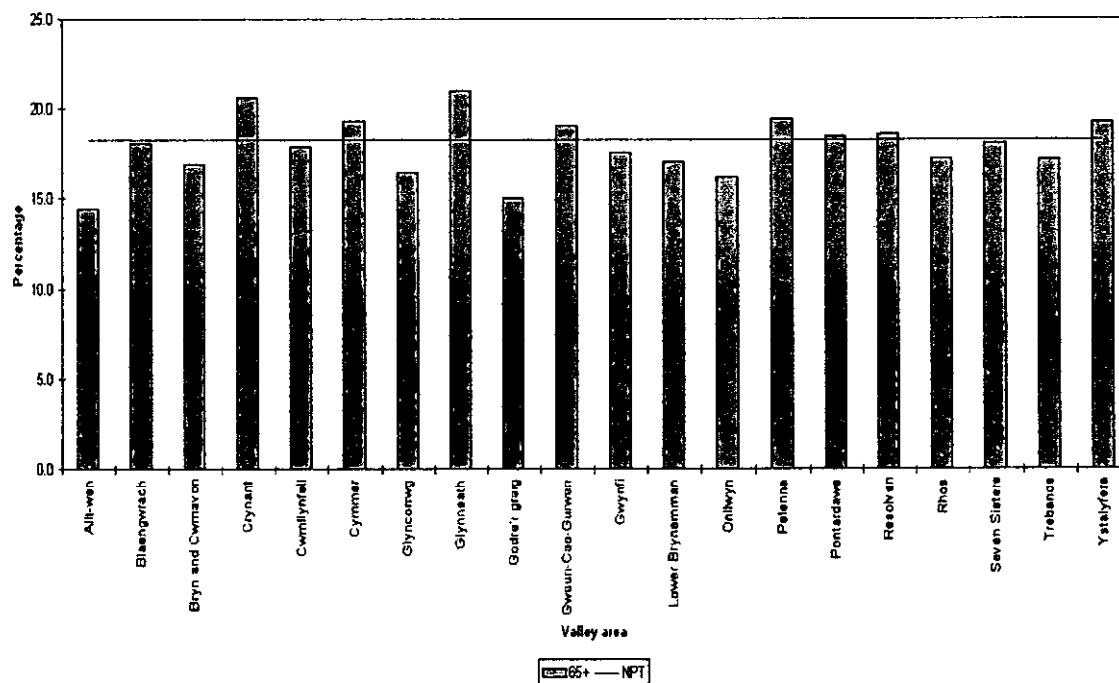
Age structure

The age structure, particularly of children and older adults in each of the 20 valley areas is examined below. The analysis focuses on highlighting areas where the percentage of 0-15 year olds, or adults aged 65 or more is particularly high. These groups generally contain a smaller proportion of the economically active population and so could be a good indicator of deprivation for an area. The first chart below shows the percentage of 0-15 year olds in each of the 20 valley areas. The straight line is the NPT figure for the whole of the borough, and lies just below 20%. Allt-wen and Gwynfi have the largest percentage of children aged between 0-15 years. Pelenna and Rhos lie well below the NPT and overall Wales figure of 20.2%.



Source : 2001 Census, ONS

The second chart summarises the proportion of people aged over 65 for each of the valley areas.



Source : 2001 Census, ONS

Valley areas such as Glynneath, Cymmer, Crynant, Gwaen-Cae-Gurwen, Pelenna and Ystalyfera all contain high proportions of people of retirement age.

Economic activity and unemployment

This section considers how the economically inactive population varies across the valley areas. This is slightly different from examining unemployment rates, since it includes people who have retired, students who do not work, adults looking after the home or family, the permanently sick or disabled and other unemployed people who have no desire to work. The table below shows the ranked percentage of economically inactive people aged 16-74 in each of the wards. Only Allt-wen falls below the over Welsh figure of 39.0%. Over half of the population aged between 16 and 74 from Onllwyn, Cymmer and Glyncoirwg are classed as economically inactive.

Valley area	% economically inactive	Valley area	% economically inactive
Allt-wen	35.5	Cwmillynfell	44.3
Rhos	37.3	Ystalyfera	45.5
Crynant	40.3	Glynneath	45.5
Pontardawe	41.3	Lower Brynamman	45.6
Trebanos	41.7	GCG	46.0
Resolven	43.0	Seven Sisters	47.4
Bryn & Cwmavon	43.3	Onllwyn	50.0
Blaengwrach	43.6	Cymmer	52.2
Godre'r Graig	43.6	Glyncoirwg	55.0
Pelenna	43.7	Gwynfi	55.4

Source : 2001 Census, ONS

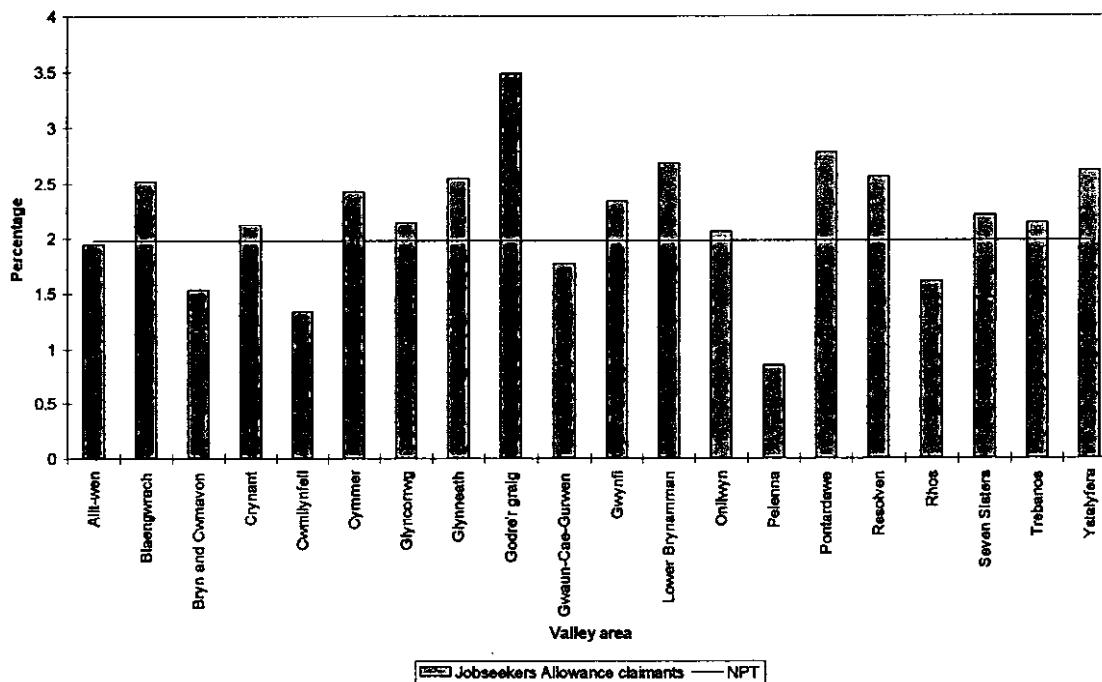
This section also considers unemployment figures. The Local Labour Force Survey conducted by the ONS collects unemployment figures for individual wards of the borough on a regular basis. The table below ranks the percentage of unemployed people during October 2004.

Valley area	% unemployed	Valley area	% unemployed
Pelenna	1.3	Lower Brynamman	2.7
Trebanos	1.5	Cymmer	2.8
Bryn & Cwmavon	1.7	Glynneath	2.8
Rhos	1.7	GCG	2.9
Allt-wen	1.8	Seven Sisters	2.9
Glyncoirwg	2.3	Ystalyfera	2.9
Resolven	2.3	Pontardawe	3.0
Cwmillynfell	2.4	Blaengwrach	3.2
Gwynfi	2.5	Crynant	3.3
Godre'r Graig	2.6	Onllwyn	3.4

Source : Local Labour Force Survey, ONS, October 2004

The unemployment rate for NPT is 2.4% so the majority of valley areas lie above this figure. Wards within the Dulais Valley, such as Seven Sisters, Crynant and Onllwyn appear to have the highest rates of unemployment.

Another indicator related to unemployment is the number of people claiming Jobseekers Allowance. The chart below summarises the number of people claiming this allowance as a percentage of the total population.



Source : Department for Work and Pensions, 2001

The percentage of claimants for most of the valley areas fluctuates around the NPT figure of just fewer than 2%. Godre'r Graig, Lower Brynamman, Pontardawe and Ystalyfera have very high percentages associated with the number of Jobseekers Allowance claimants, whilst Pelenna and Cwmllynfell have very low numbers of claimants.

Health

This section presents an analysis on peoples health in the valley areas of NPT. In particular it examines how the number of people claiming Disability Living Allowance and Incapacity Benefits vary across the wards. An examination of the number of people with a limiting long-term illness and those who provide unpaid care is also considered.

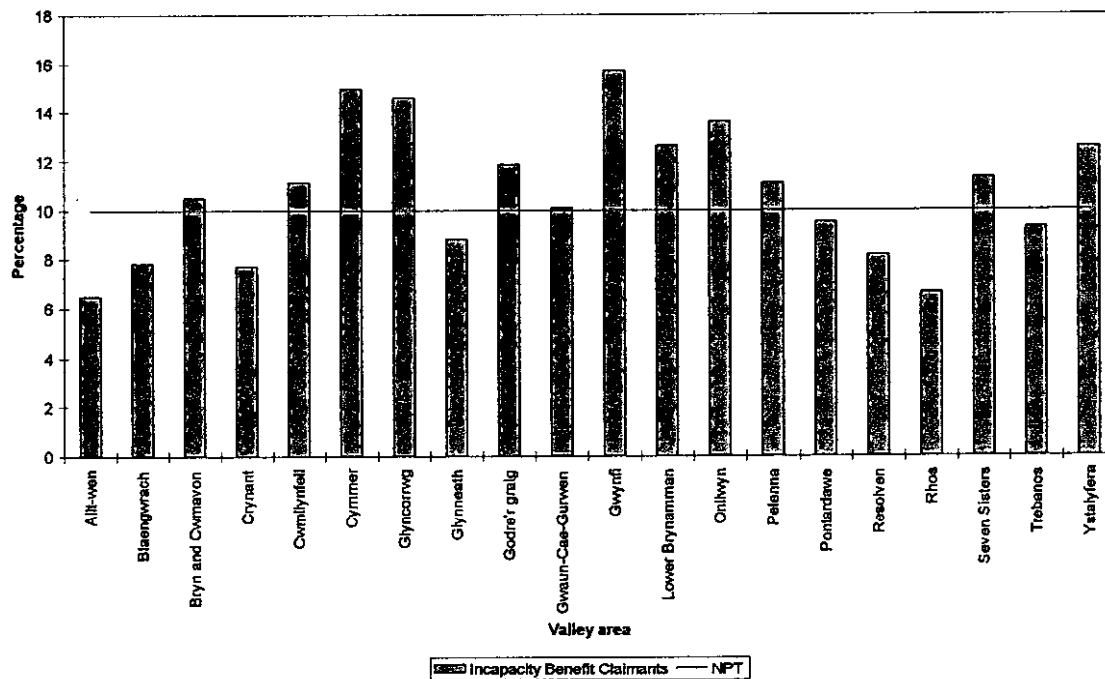
The table below ranks the percentage of people in each valley area that claim Disability Living Allowance for a severe physical or mental disability.

Valley area	% claiming Disability Living Allowance	Valley area	% claiming Disability Living Allowance
Allt-wen	6.9	GCG	10.6
Crynant	6.9	Pelenna	11.1
Glynneath	6.9	Ystalyfera	11.1
Rhos	7.4	Trebanos	11.1
Resolven	7.5	Godre'r Graig	11.5
Blaengwrach	7.6	Onllwyn	11.9
Pontardawe	9.4	Lower Brynamman	12.6
Cwmllynfell	9.8	Glyncorwg	15.9
Seven Sisters	9.8	Cymmer	17.2
Bryn & Cwmavon	9.9	Gwynfi	17.7

Source : Department for Work and Pensions, 2001

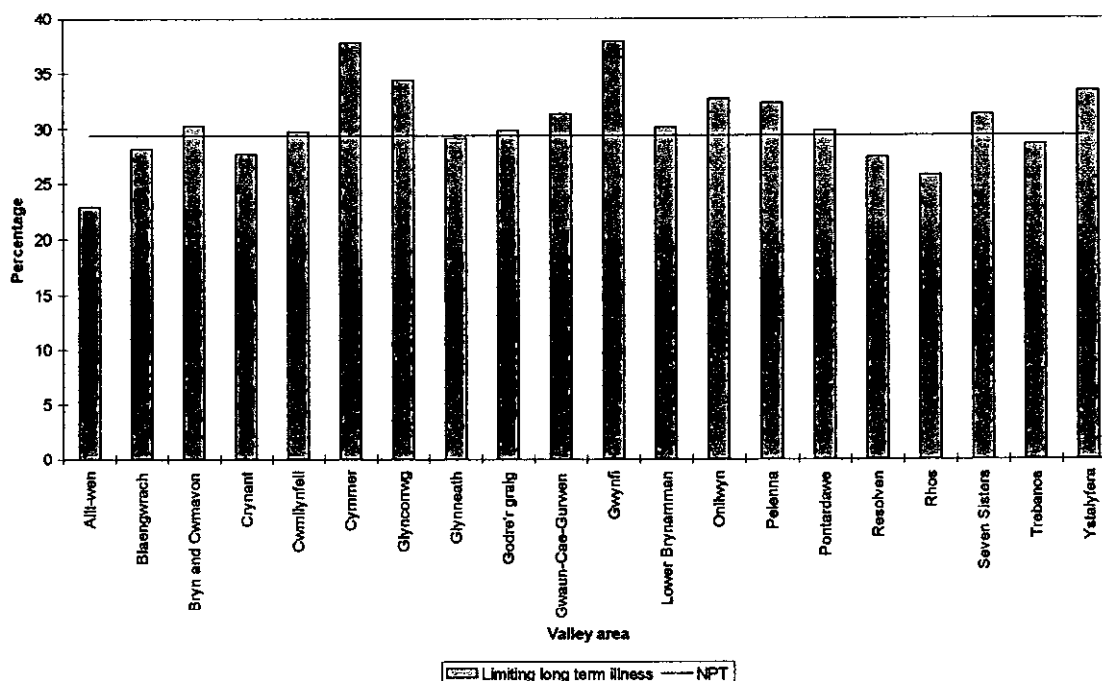
The number of people who claim Disability Living Allowance across all valley areas is more than the overall Welsh figure of 6.5%. Most wards also fall above the NPT total of 9.6%. The extent of the number of people claiming Disability Living Allowance in Glyncorwg, Cymmer and Gwynfi is evident and the percentage for all three wards is double that of Wales.

A similar examination is conducted for people claiming Incapacity Benefits. These represent people who have worked in the past, and so paid National Insurance contributions, but who have been absent from work due to illness or some form of disability. The chart below summarises the patterns of people claiming Incapacity Benefits for each of the valley areas. Only Allt-wen falls below the overall Wales percentage of 6.8%. Again Gwynfi, Glyncorwg and Cymmer contain significantly more people claiming Incapacity Benefits than any other wards.



Source : Department for Work and Pensions, 2001

The final analysis on health considers results taken from the 2001 Census. The first chart below looks at the percentage of people with a limiting long-term illness across all the valley areas.

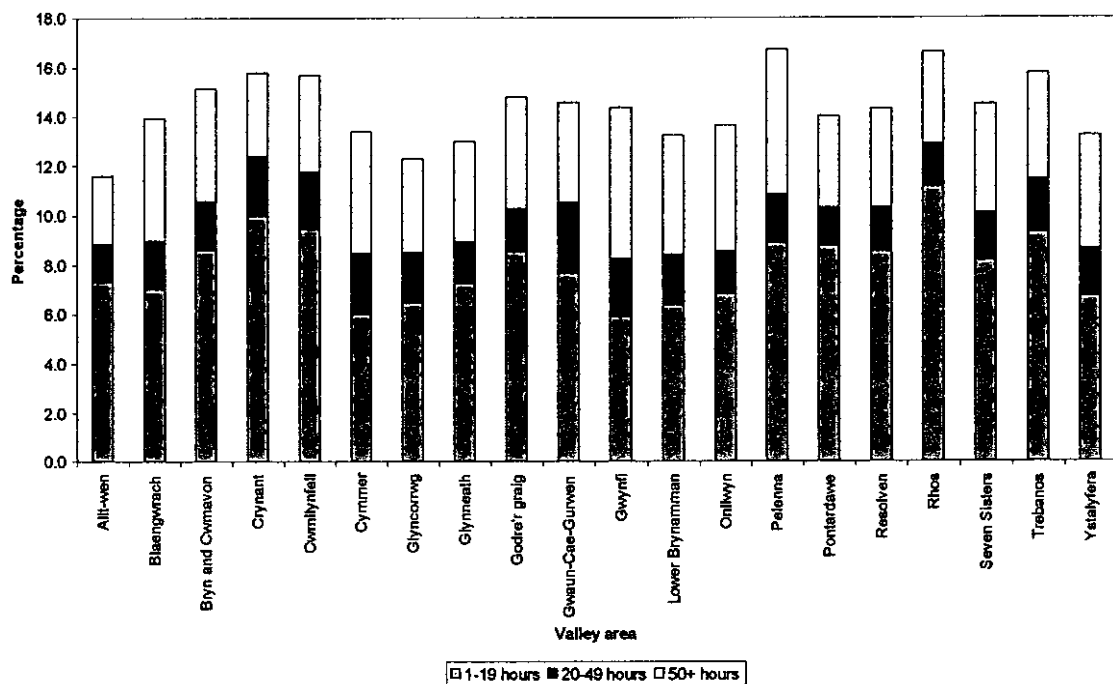


Source : 2001 Census, ONS

Unsurprisingly results mirror those above on people claiming benefits. Allt-wen is the only valley area that falls below the overall Welsh figure of 22.3%, and only seven wards are less than the borough figure of 29.4% (which can

be seen by the straight line on the chart). Glyncorrwg, Cymmer and Gwynfi are again the top three wards containing the highest number of people with a limiting long-term illness, and almost two fifths of the population in each case suffer with this problem.

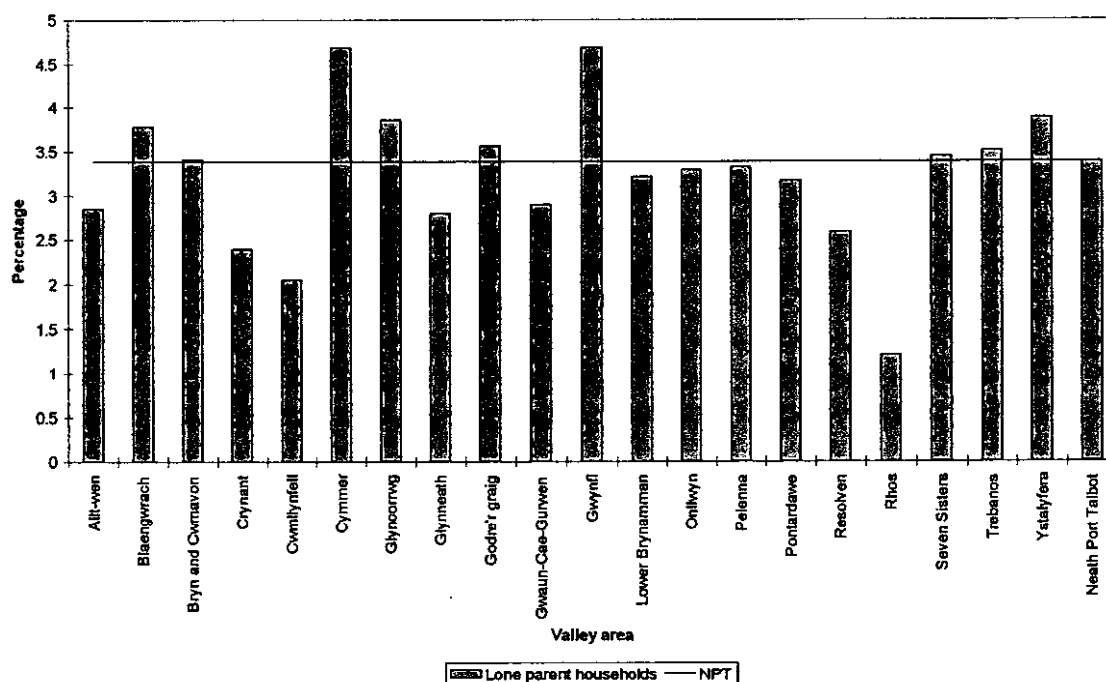
The final analysis taken from the 2001 Census considers how the level of unpaid care provided to relatives or neighbours vary across the valley areas. The chart below summarises the percentage of people providing unpaid care; this has been split into 1-19 hours, 20-49 hours and 50+ hours. The highest percentage of people providing 1-19 hours of care are based in Rhos. There are also high percentages associated with Crynant and Cwmlllynfell. People from Pelenna are more likely to provide over 50 hours of unpaid care to neighbours or relatives.



Source : 2001 Census, ONS

Lone-parent households

The number of lone-parent households with dependent children is summarised below for all valley areas. The chart shows that areas which have more problems with their health and which have higher proportions of people who claim benefits also have high percentages associated with lone-parent families. Thus, Gwynfi, Cymmer and Glyncorrwg all have high percentages of lone-parent families and fall well above the Neath Port Talbot figure of 3.4%.



Source : 2001 Census, ONS

Occupancy rating

The occupancy rating is an indication of how over-crowded or under-crowded a household is. It was evaluated during the 2001 Census and took account of the number of people living in a household, and the total number of rooms. So, for example, an occupancy rating of -1 indicates that there is 1 room too few in the household. The table below presents the ranked percentage of households in each of the valley areas that have an occupancy rating of -1 or less.

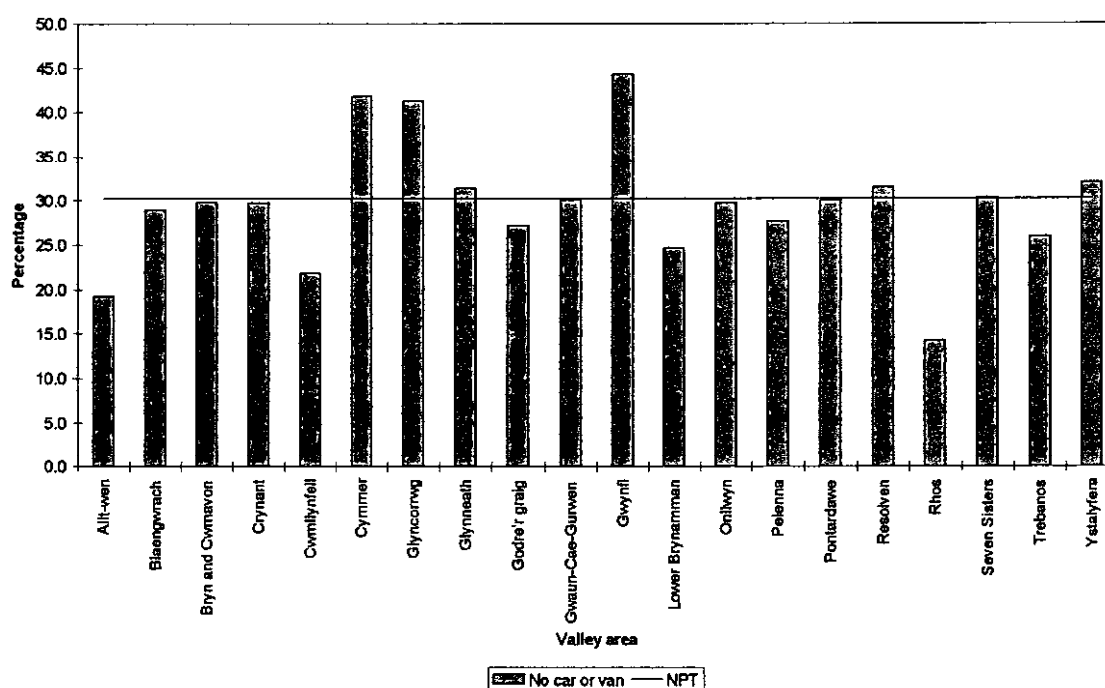
Valley area	% with occupancy rating -1 or less	Valley area	% with occupancy rating -1 or less
Rhos	1.5	Gwynfi	3.6
Cwmilynfell	1.7	Bryn & Cwmavon	3.6
Allt-wen	1.7	Ystalyfera	3.6
Godre'r Graig	2.4	Onllwyn	3.7
Trebanos	2.7	Resolven	3.9
Blaengwrach	2.8	Cymmer	4.1
GCG	3.0	Seven Sisters	4.1
Pontardawe	3.2	Glynneath	4.9
Pelenna	3.2	Crynant	5.1
Lower Brynamman	3.4	Glyncorwg	5.7

Source : 2001 Census, ONS

Generally numbers are small and virtually all wards fall below the overall Welsh figure of 4.4%. Almost half also fall below the NPT figure of 3.4%. Only Glynneath, Crynant and Glyncoed are above both the NPT and Wales figures.

Car or van availability

Below is an analysis on the numbers of households with no access to a car or van taken from the 2001 Census. The straight line is the percentage of households in NPT with no cars or vans. Like previous studies on indicators of deprivation, Gwynfi, Cymmer and Glyncoed rank as the highest wards with no cars or vans. The remainder fluctuate around the NPT figure of just over 30%, although Rhos, Allt-wen and Cwmlllynfell fall significantly below this.



Source : 2001 Census, ONS

Working Families Tax Credit

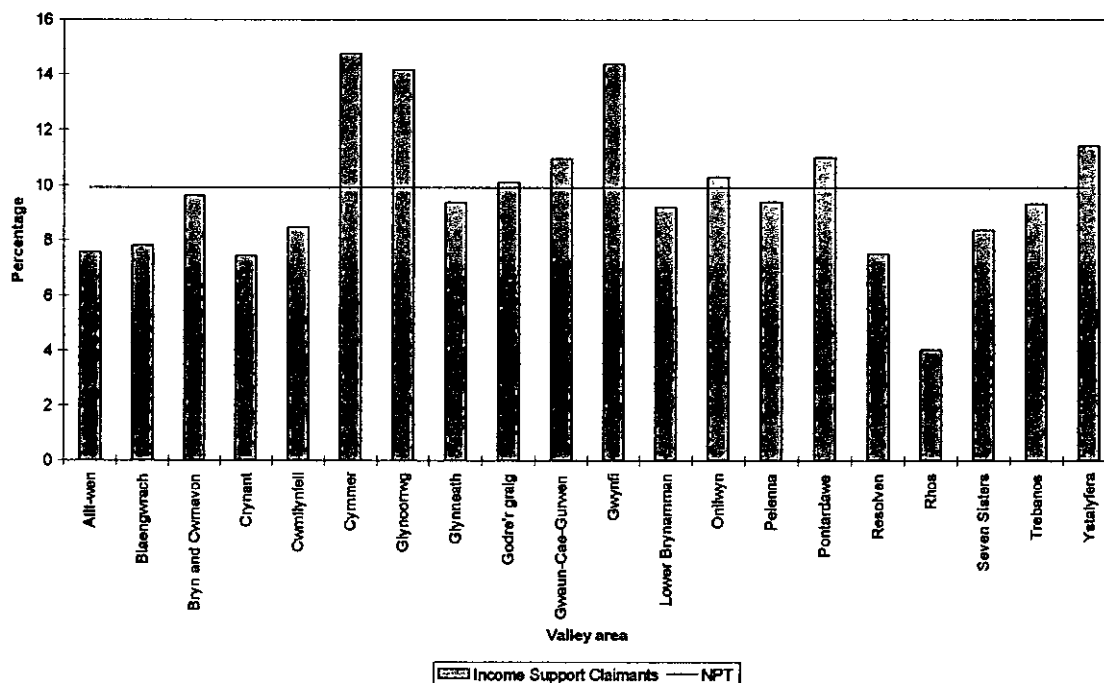
Working families tax credit is paid to families if they have one or more children under the age of 16 living with them, and have less than £8000 in savings. The table below ranks the percentage of all claimants, as a total of the overall population of each valley area. Just over half the wards lie above the borough figure of 2.4%, with Rhos and Resolven having particularly low numbers of claimants. As in previous studies on indicators of deprivation, wards in the Amman and Swansea valleys such as Godre'r Graig, Lower Brynamman and Ystalyfera appear more deprived, and have considerably higher numbers of people claiming Working Families Tax Credit

Valley area	% claiming working families tax credit	Valley area	% claiming working families tax credit
Rhos	1.8	Glyncorrwg	2.6
Resolven	1.9	Pontardawe	2.6
Glynneath	2.0	Cwmllynfell	2.7
Cymmer	2.1	Allt-wen	2.8
Crynant	2.1	GCG	2.8
Seven Sisters	2.2	Trebanos	2.9
Blaengwrach	2.3	Ystalyfera	3.1
Bryn & Cwmavon	2.3	Onllwyn	3.3
Gwynfi	2.3	Lower Brynamman	3.4
Pelenna	2.6	Godre'r Graig	3.8

Source : Department for Work and Pensions, 2001

Income Support Claimants

The chart below summarises the percentage of people claiming Income Support. This is awarded to people over the age of 16 who do not work more than 16 hours per week and who have less money coming in than the law says they need to live on. The straight line represents the NPT percentage.



Source : Department for Work and Pensions, 2001

Gwynfi, Cymmer and Glyncorrwg all have considerably higher figures than the NPT figure of 9.9% and the overall Welsh figure of 8.1%, whilst Rhos, Resolven and Crynant fall well below both percentages.

Summary

The analysis highlights some common areas that frequently appear. Wards in the Swansea valley such as Rhos and Allt-wen consistently have lower numbers associated with claiming benefits such as Disability Living Allowance, Incapacity Benefits and Income Support. They also have less lone-parent households and fewer people with no access to a car or van. Conversely, wards in the Afan valley such as Gwynfi, Cymmer and Glyncoerwg have higher proportions claiming benefits and more people who suffer with some form of health related problem. Areas in the Neath and Dulais valleys, such as Onllwyn, Crynant, Blaengwrach and Glynneath tend to suffer with higher rates of unemployment and larger proportions of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance, although wards such as Gwynfi, Cymmer and Glyncoerwg in the Afan valley have high numbers of economically inactive people.

Presentation by the Welsh Development Agency

My name is Martin Hall and I am an Area Development Manager with the WDA S E Region with a recent involvement in supporting regeneration in the valleys as part of the WDA's support of the wider Bridgend County Borough Economic Partnership.

The Bridgend Economic Partnership is led by Bridgend CBC and comprises representatives from the public, private/social partners and the voluntary sectors. It has identified 5 strategic objectives:

1. to increase the contribution of Bridgend County Borough to the wider South Wales economy
2. to foster the modernisation of the economy of the County Borough
3. to encourage positive attitudes to acquiring knowledge and skills
4. to strengthen the economies of the poorer communities within the County Borough
5. to increase penetration, take up and effective use of new information technologies

I will briefly give you a flavour of WDA support for 3 of the objectives.

One of the main focuses of WDA investment in recent years to support the objective of increasing Bridgend County's contribution to the wider South Wales economy has been to support Bridgend County Borough Council and its partners regenerate Bridgend and Maesteg town centres. Whilst Bridgend town centre is not located in the "valleys" *per se*, it is an important town which serves the valley communities.

In Bridgend town centre we have invested in schemes to improve the environment and also build a new 28k sq. ft office that has attracted Marketsafe.com with the prospect of over 100 jobs.

In Maesteg we have also invested in schemes to improve the environment and funded the reclamation of the former Maesteg Washery site creating space for a proposed new school.

Our main contribution to the objective of modernising the economy has been in relation to the provision of

- a) sites and premises;
- b) industrial estate improvements; and
- c) account management to assist existing companies.

Again, whilst many of the key sites are in the M4 corridor they provide a significant cluster of opportunity that serves the “valleys” and the wider hinterland.

The WDA is bringing forward sites for larger and smaller manufacturing projects at Brocastle and Waterton respectively; and for high technology companies that require a prestige environment we are bring forward a new site in Pencoed, called Pencoed Technology Park.

We are also able to support the private sector in the development of business premises; a recent example being support to Macob for their B1 business units at Pencoed, but we have also, for example, supported factory building projects in Pyle and Brynmenyn.

We have also developed programmes to improve the environment of existing industrial estates, one example being The Forge industrial estate in Maesteg.

An important aspect of our work is to assist existing business through our account management function. Companies in Bridgend and the valleys including Logica, Georgia Pacific, Cooper Standard, COSi have been helped in this way.

In terms of strengthening the economies of the poorer communities, the wider Economic Partnership is progressing three strands: capacity building, grants for community organisations and support for community enterprises. The WDA 's assistance has focused on supporting the capacity building strand of Partnership activity in The Llynfi and the Garw Valley where historically there has been a lot of active community groups. I will give you 2 examples:

- In the Llynfi Valley we are committed to supporting Caerau Communities First with funding towards the cost of employing a physical regeneration officer, which was identified as a key gap in capacity for the CF Partnership.
- In the Garw Valley we provided funding support towards the cost of The Garw Valley Regeneration Framework and Action Plan. This provided a focus for bringing the Garw Valley Partnership together, which has subsequently been successful in obtaining EU funding for a regeneration officer and a £1.4m grant fund. The WDA is also participating in the partnership to explore future priorities for assistance. It is also worth remembering that this new work is set against the background of a dramatic transformation of the environment brought about by a now completed £8m land reclamation scheme, funded by the WDA.

I hope this has given you a flavour of how the WDA fits into the wider picture. However, the economic regeneration of the valleys in Bridgend is about Partnership working with many players involved and it is how we apply our efforts jointly that will influence future success.

Presentation by Cwmni Clydach Development Trust

Background

The Trust was formed in October 2000 following consultation with local people, partner organisations operating in the area and local politicians to address the needs of local people with the intention of making Clydach a place that residents would be proud of both visually and environmentally.

It would also work to increase the GDP of the area by providing training and facilities to help generate employment opportunities as well as encouraging the participation of the whole community. It was also intended to be the vehicle through which funding might be attracted to the area to assist in improving the area and address issues such as GDP.

The Trust has a focus on the Graigfelen area but covers the whole of Clydach. It has its main office in INCO but also has a Communities First office in Hebron Road opposite the site of the planned Community Resource Centre in Forge Fach.

The board comprises three sections being business, voluntary and elected members. Key partners include the Clydach Community Council, through whom the Trust was proposed.

The Trust is based at INCO Europe who provide in kind support including, for example, the office, computers, telephones and who have also made cash contributions, which have helped support the development of the Forge Fach site.

Projects/Initiatives

The Trust is involved with a number of initiatives and projects including, but not exclusively, the following.

High Street – 3 phases of physical improvements have been completed which have included repaving, redesign of road layouts, new street furniture.

Alongside this a number of businesses have taken advantage of grants available to carry out shop frontage improvements with a substantial investment in the businesses as a result. These schemes have been funded through the WDA and City & County of Swansea; the funding for these schemes exceeded £350K and was provided by the businesses themselves supported by grants from both the WDA & the City & County of Swansea.

Clydach Learning Shop

In July 2002 the Trust and its partners opened the “Clydach Learning Shop” in the High Street that has both IT and teaching space, in anticipation of the new Forge Fach site to where it will transfer upon completion.

Learning opportunities at the centre are being provided through a partnership between Clydach Trust, City & County of Swansea Education Dept, Swansea College, Gorseinon College, Dept of Adult Continuing Education University of Wales Swansea and the Community University of the Valleys partnership.

Communities First

The Trust appointed a preparatory/development worker for Graigfelen in 2003 with a consultation exercise now taking place with external consultants leading to a Communities First partnership for the area.

The consultation, which is currently being undertaken, will also extend to the remainder of Clydach alongside the Communities First area.

This is alongside the existing development work-taking place including assistance to local groups with funding applications. These have included a number of applications where we have acted as accountable body in partnership with local groups including one for a building funding for which totals £185K.

A number of community events have taken place including a litter pick, a fun day with a local group, Kit4Kenya with SCVS, play schemes and more are planned.

Other information/activities.

Newsletter – the Trust produces a regular newsletter, which is distributed to local people.

Membership – over 120 local people are now members of the scheme that also includes the nomination of member’s representatives onto the board.

Credit Union – weekly collection point as part of the wider LASA Credit Union for Swansea.

Development work – includes the remainder of Clydach alongside our work in Graigfelen particularly where other areas of Clydach have specific problems. This includes assistance to local groups with funding applications. It also works with a number of partner organisations that include Surestart.

Funders – a mix of organisations that include Communities First, WDA, INCO & the City & County of Swansea. INCO also provide an office for the Trust including the provision of telephones and computers.

Staff

The Trust appointed a Trust manager, Melvin Gray, in May 2001, an administrator, Louise Parry, started in April 2002 and a Communities First development worker Rebecca Harkness started in May 2003.

Paul Featherstone was appointed as our project Manager for Forge Fach in February 2005.

Forge Fach

On the site of the old swimming pool, which was demolished in 2002 from funding obtained for the WDA, the Trust is building a new multi purpose Resource Centre at a cost of approx. £1.5 million.

This will provide a range of facilities including IT centre, Training, Crèche, Healthy Living areas, Community Café with an external Multi Use Games area.

The existing Learning Shop, as above, for education will transfer from its current location in the High Street.

Funding has been agreed with Clydach Community Council, Local Regeneration Funds (through the City & County of Swansea), Objective 1 and the Trust for £86K, £400K, £925K and £55K respectively. Funding of £79K with the Sports Council has also been approved. The capital project is being handled in partnership with the City & County of Swansea until completion when the Trust will fully take over the centre.

Work on site started in February and the steel structure is now in place. The scheduled completion date is the 17th December 2005.

Summary

Whilst the Forge Fach centre is obviously very important to Clydach and the Trust it is seen as the next step in the Trust activities in the area.

The Trust is now looking at future initiatives including issues regarding sustainability particularly with the Trust's core activities.

Presentation by the Upper Afan Forum

Some of you will be aware of the CF Programme for those of you that aren't fully aware I will give you a simplified version, is a community regeneration programme designed to make sure that local people play a major part in developing the solutions to the problems they face. The Assembly Government, on the basis of evidence of deprivation, selected communities to receive help and support under the programme.

I would like to start off by giving you a brief description of my role as a Communities First Co-ordinator it entails working closely with members of the community and of other sectors such as the statutory sector, the business sector and of course the voluntary sector its about the linking of these sectors to gain best practice and services within the UAV. The programme is very much designed so that the ideas are from the grass roots so to speak, from the community members themselves, this is where the CF Partnership plays a main role in my work plan, they are there to direct my work and the work of my colleagues, I am very lucky to be part of a very positive and enthusiastic team, within this team there is an Admin Finance Manager, an Administrator, a Development Worker and three community Outreach Workers, we work closely together on a day to day basis. Out of seven members of staff four are communities members and three of us are outsiders so to speak!! I am unfortunately one of the outsiders, I say unfortunately because even though I have been working in the community for over two years and I have grown to love it, I still realise there are further lessons to be learnt and discoveries to be found, this is where the members of staff that are from the community help us outsiders develop our forever growing knowledge of the UAV.

I would like to at this point give you a description of the beautiful valley in which I work. The Upper Afan Valley is situated 6-12 miles north of Port Talbot. It is a narrow valley with beautiful natural scenery. There are three ward, consisting of eight villages. Glyncorwg is composed of a single village, Gwynfi however is made up of two villages, Abergwynfi and Blaengwynfi, Cymmer is the largest ward consisting of five villages, Croeserw, Dyffryn Ronda, Cynonville and Abercregan. Croeserw has the larger percentage of population in the ward of Cymmer. Each community has a strong community atmosphere and can be classed as very "tight knit". Each ward is spread over a very large geographical area which is a barrier to internal communication. This has a knock on effect with the transport issues that continuously occur in each area, making it very difficult for people to have any kind of external communication and therefore making it difficult for people to Venture into the world of employment.

Each ward has a few amenities in place although the valley itself has tremendous assets such as Afan Forest Park, The Miners Museum, Glyncorwg Ponds and the newly built bike centre. Afan Argoed Country Park and The Welsh Miners Museum lie in the heart of the Valley. Set in among 9,000 acres of unspoilt woodland, the park is seen as the gateway to the Afan Valley.

Each ward figures high on the rank of index of multiple deprivation, Cymmer – 8, Gwynfi – 13 and Glyncorrwg – 24. The resident population of the Upper Afan Valley from the 2001 census report is just over 5,500, I have plucked out a few other stats that I think are of interesting;

Under the Employment Domain, Cymmer – 1, Gwynfi -3, Glyncorrwg – 10

Under the Health domain, Cymmer – 3, Gwynfi – 1, Glyncorrwg – 6

From the 2001 Census:

64.3% of the adult population are permanently sick or disabled.

3.5% are Economically active full-time students.

Within Cymmer, 17 % of those unemployed were aged 50 and over, 11% had never worked and 38% were long term unemployed.

Within Gwynfi, 17% of those unemployed were aged 50 and over, 19% had never worked and 40% were long term unemployed.

Within Glyncorrwg, 8% of those unemployed were aged 50 and over, 25% had never worked and 42% were long term unemployed.

Although these figures are quite disheartening there is a light at the end of a long tunnel, We have a very active Local Action Centre based in Cymmer and the team there work very closely with the Action Team for jobs, the ponds training centre, Cymmer Comprehensive School and our CF Team, there are a number of projects up and running or in the process of development such as the “Cor remember the War Project” this project interlinks the older generation with the younger generation, the older generation will attend schools to tell the children stories of the war, these stories will then be published into a book that will be kept in the local libraries and the library of the BBC. There are courses being run on a weekly basis throughout the Upper Afan Valley in each of the community centres.

There are issues that are still occurring with regards to transport, transport to higher and further education facilities as well as other facilities throughout the Upper Afan Valley. There are a group of volunteers who work with the Upper Afan Community transport team and with the NPT Environment Directorate they meet bi-monthly to discuss the services currently operating and aim to resolve many issues.

We are very lucky to have five Communities First Police officers designated to our area, they work very closely with our team, the CF Partnership and members of the public.

The most up to date figures from our CF police officers

Are for the month of April 05 there were in all 44 crimes throughout the Upper Afan Valley which is a decrease to figures from April 04 where there was 55 crimes committed. The CF Police team report figures to the partnership on a regular basis so that these can then be assessed over the year.

We are also very lucky to have a large number of Voluntary Organisation active throughout the valley there are in all approximately 70 Vol Orgs.

Lets move onto a more positive note and look at projects that are currently running or are in the process of being developed throughout the Upper Afan Valley

When I first started working within the valley I came to realise that there was no central information stop for people to access all kinds of advice and support and general information with regards to what is happening within their area, or what services and even facilities are there around them so I went ahead and devised a business plan for a community building based in the centre of the Upper Afan Valley. The Building is now home to the CF team, we moved into our new address late last year and are in the process of setting up user groups, the building will in the future address a number of the Capacity Building needs within the community and one of the aims of the project is to promote the welfare of children and their families in the area.

Other projects that are set up;

Bryn Siriol

- This project is the renovation of an old building, which will hopefully be funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Riverside Project

- This will be a days event to celebrate and promote the use of the Afan River.

ASCOG – Glyncorrwg

- The Affiliated Sports Clubs of Glyncorrwg set up to improve on the sports facilities in the area.

Cymmer Sports Centre – Cymmer

- This is a new build that is being built at present.

Warm Wales – The whole of the UAV

- Their aim is to reduce the number of people in fuel poverty.

Digi Labs

- This will be based in Croeserw Community Centre and open to people from the age of 14 years and upwards.

Chill Out Area

- A unused changing room was converted into a chill out area for the youth of Croeserw.

Ground work and Artists in Residence

- This is a future project, they will work with the young people in designing a mural for the side of the Community Building in Glyncorrwg

Getting Women back into exercise.

Summer Play Schemes.

Sports Group for Gwynfi

As you can see throughout the Upper Afan Valley there is a prosperous future.

Presentation by Creation Community Development Trust

Hello, my name is Dawn Davies. I am Chief Executive of Creation, a development trust that has been operating in the Garw Valley near Bridgend since 2000.

The Garw Valley lies within the Bridgend hills between two other valleys, the Ogmore valley and the Llynfi valley. The Garw valley is about 6 miles long and is made up of four wards. It can be thought of as two areas – the Upper Garw Valley comprising the villages of Blaengarw and Pontycymer with its mainly private housing and the Lower Garw Valley comprising the villages of Llangeinor and Bettws – two estates with mainly social housing that are designated Communities First areas. Generally, throughout the valley the problems are the same as you find in many coalfields communities in Wales – low-income families, high levels of economic inactivity, low educational attainment and poor health. The villages themselves nestle in open countryside and feel physically isolated. They are also characterised by high levels of social exclusion typified by a sense of isolation, lack of self-esteem and low aspirations.

However, the valley has some strengths and opportunities; the communities are ‘naturally grown’ and in the main, have retained their community spirit; being a closed-end valley, crime figures are relatively low; and the land reclamation scheme that was completed several years ago has created a beautiful landscape and opportunities to match the aspirations of the community with social and economic development. The effects of the recent housing boom have even been felt in the Garw where house prices have roughly doubled in price, a three bedroom terraced house now typically selling for approximately sixty five thousand pounds. At the top end of the valley, this has led to property developers, some local people and some from outside the area, buying up derelict properties, many of which have been empty for several years and renovating them.

Although this solves a short-term problem, I believe that this will lead to problems for the long-term. For example, in Blaengarw, three buildings within the main commercial area are being converted into six houses. I believe that this will lead to a shortage of buildings for social purposes and for businesses that could be developed as the area begins to feel the full benefit of social and economic regeneration. Currently, I am aware of a requirement for four shops in Blaengarw with only two being available.

Blaengarw is the most rural village and it is where Creation is based. It is ranked 128th most deprived community on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation but in terms of the health domain, it is ranked 62nd. Over 28% of the community have a long-term limiting illness with over 46% of residents having no qualifications. Other issues include litter problems, illegal dumping of waste, debt, physical dereliction, home-grown drug dealers and an embryonic drug problem amongst single parents.

Pontycymer, the next village down, houses the main shopping centre for the people of the valley. Recent research amongst local businesses cites the advantages of operating in the area as a loyal customer base and lack of competition with disadvantages including lack of parking, low spend, no passing trade and the effect of out-of-town shopping centres. The research also suggests that trade in the valley has now settled at a new level and that the outlook of the area is still positive with a commitment from businesses to stay in the area. These businesses, in the main, are long standing businesses with 65% being in the area for more than 10 years and 82% of traders owning their premises. However, the research suggests that this may mask the fact that those who remain 'can't get out' as businesses have reported a decline in trade since 2002. In Pontycymer, 26% of residents report a long-term limiting illness with 44% having no qualifications.

Llangeinor is the smallest village and up until recently, its area of very poor social housing gave it its rank as 84th most deprived community in Wales. The first phase of replacing this housing has recently been completed with phase two to begin soon. Once complete, the village will be restored to its picturesque status. However, a lot of families still live on low incomes. 30% of residents report a limiting long-term illness with 47% having no qualifications. Llangeinor's facilities include a community run community centre and swimming pool that have both suffered from under-investment leaving them run down and unattractive. Most recently, Irvin GQ parachutes have relocated their parachute manufacturing facility in the village that promises to provide much needed local jobs for local people.

Bettws is a large estate with almost one third of the 2,034 residents suffering from poor health with 13% of residents providing unpaid care. 32% of residents report a limiting long-term illness with 58% having no qualifications and almost 13% being lone parent households with dependent children. There are an abundance of facilities in this village including a football club, a boys and girls club, a media centre, a social club, a pub, a very well-used healthy living centre with one of the best frequented libraries in Bridgend run by Groundwork and an NCH family centre. Bettws also boasts the best credit union collection point taking over £700 per week.

Despite the positive economic performance of Bridgend County Borough in recent years, the Garw Valley has not shared in this economic up-turn. All four wards are in the bottom 12% of the most deprived wards in Wales, Bettws being ranked in the bottom 2%. In terms of the education, skills and training domain, the four wards are ranked in the bottom 10%.

Nevertheless, the Garw valley communities are diverse, proud and resourceful. For a relatively small area, a number of programmes and projects are being implemented, many involving local people.

In October 2003, Bridgend County Borough Council and the WDA with the support of the Garw Valley Regeneration Partnership, which involves many representatives from the local community, published the Garw Valley

Regeneration Framework and Action Plan – the first valley wide regeneration plan published for the Bridgend valleys. This plan led to Town Improvement Grant status for the whole valley and enabled the partnership to successfully apply for Objective 1 funding to employ a Regeneration Officer to assist in the plans implementation. Recent audit commission reports have led to the creation of a new post within the local authority of Assistant Director of Community Regeneration and Strategic Development. With this new post, different structures are being introduced within the local authority. For all concerned, these new structures should “provide a structure and reporting mechanisms that clarify who is responsible for regeneration activities” and “provide greater clarity in relation to partnership working”. In light of these recent changes the Garw Valley Regeneration Framework and Action Plan will now be updated. Schemes devised by Bridgend County Borough’s Economic Development Unit have attracted Objective 1 money to be targeted at the Garw Valley for business development and physical regeneration bringing over £1.5 million to the valley. Projects put forward by the local community for development to date include a steam railway, outdoor activity centre and an equestrian centre.

For inventive projects like these and with many funders now looking to distribute funds more strategically, there is a danger that many funding streams currently available to community-led regeneration initiatives, in the future, will only be available via the local authority. Although I believe that local authority assistance is crucial to the success of many projects, particularly larger ones, those projects that provide more innovative and risky solutions may not necessarily be able to attract the support of the authority and original solutions to social and economic problems may be lost.

As always, there is still a lot of work to be done to address the inequalities prevalent in the Garw valley. With emphasis being put on one’s ability to be economically active, our senior citizens are now being viewed as of no use instead of being valued for their knowledge, wisdom and positive attitude. There is still a lack of opportunities for young people, particularly those who are not academic. With the fear of nuisance behaviour and noise, similarly, our young people are no longer seen as assets but liabilities. Colleges and universities for many are remote concepts with those that have obtained degrees or higher qualifications numbering between 4 and 10%, well below the England and Wales average of almost 20%. For parents who want to go back to work, Creation runs the only childcare facility in the valley and there are no childminders.

Nevertheless, I remain optimistic about the future. Creation has taken advantage of many of the Welsh Assembly Government initiatives to make a difference. When we took over the running of Blaengarw Workmen’s Hall in April 2000, we had increased the usage by 40% within two years. With recent support from the Community Facilities and Activities Programme, the Hall has undergone improvements, had new equipment and a Community Liaison Officer and Hall usage has increased by a further 60%. We have also formed a partnership with the Objective 1 funded Welsh Institute of Community Currencies and set up the unique Timecentre project that involves people

giving their time to help the Hall or their community and in return, receive time credits, a form of community currency. In turn, time credits can be spent at the Hall which is great for those that are time rich and cash poor. This project attracted 100 new members in six weeks and has to date created over 2,500 hours of active citizenship. The Timecentre is proving an effective way of valuing people for their abilities and skills, building confidence and community spirit. Other small capacity building projects have attracted funding from the WCVA's Social Risk Fund – another Objective 1 funded programme and most recently, we have attracted our first larger Objective 1 grant to employ a Food Development Manager who will oversee the opening of our healthy eating community café, the development of catering facilities at Blaengarw Workmen's Hall and a food co-op that improves access to fresh food for local people. As a development trust, we believe in asset-based development that provides sustainability and freedom from grant regimes in the long-term. What would be really helpful would be fast access to loans and grants to acquire property for community benefit and community enterprise development so that we have a better chance of competing in the property market for properties that would better serve the community under their ownership.

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