

PIW 05

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Inquiry into: Poverty in Wales Strand 4

Response from: Keep Wales Tidy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Keep Wales Tidy's mission is to encourage local action to protect and enhance our environment, contributing towards a sustainable future. We are an independent national voluntary organisation with charity status and support communities, groups, schools and individuals throughout Wales. We deliver:

- **Programmes which improve the quality and sustainability of the environment;**
- **Advice and technical expertise to Government and partners;**
- **A means of translating strategic policy into effective local action;**
- **Campaigns on a range of environmental issues.**

1.2 We operate at international, national, regional and local levels. We aim to influence behaviour change through policy development and campaigns, environmental education and community engagement.

1.3 Keep Wales Tidy (KWT) reaches in to the heart of communities throughout Wales. We deliver programmes which are specifically tailored to support the people of Wales and improve the quality and sustainability of the environment in which we live and work. The local environment is central to our wellbeing and has implications for everything from our health, through to our economy and our cultural values.

1.4 KWT welcomes the opportunity to comment on this inquiry. Tackling poverty is key to our work, particularly through our education programmes (such as Eco-Schools and Young Reporters for the Environment) and community environmental improvement projects. We support disadvantaged groups across Wales and our work not only provides hard and soft skills to these groups, but also a sense of community pride.

2.0 Introduction to Supporting Information

2.1 Although KWT cannot provide information on all 3 categories listed under strand 4, we would like to offer our views on the second and to community-based approaches to tackling poverty more generally.

3.0 The Effectiveness of Area-based anti-poverty programmes such as Communities First

3.1 We were disappointed when the environment was given lower priority in the Communities First programme. It is no longer one of the strategic outcomes, which is unfortunate since:

- all work undertaken must reflect sustainable development (the Welsh Government's organising principle, and the Wellbeing and Future Generations Bill); and**
- the other two "pillars" of sustainable development (social and economic) are covered by the three new strategic objectives.**

This seems to create an imbalance to the emphasis of the new programme.

3.2 KWT work with communities all over Wales, including Communities First areas. However, with less focus now on the environment, there is and will continue to be a negative impact on the environment and therefore on the residents in these already disadvantaged areas.

3.3 It is important to recognise that improving the environment has both direct and indirect benefits, e.g. it creates better places which helps attract industry and local job opportunities. By involving local communities in the environmental improvements they receive training which furthers their education and skills, and there are also benefits in terms of health and wellbeing; all of which enables them to get close to the job market. KWT recently ran a year-long Environmental Led Regeneration Project (known as the Outcomes Project) in 7 Communities First areas across south Wales. These communities took responsibility and ownership of their local areas to get them engaged in their surroundings and build community capacity. For more information on the Outcomes Project, please see Annex 1.

3.4 Local Environmental Quality (LEQ) is important in identifying problem areas. Our street cleanliness surveys, for example, can identify areas where there are litter, graffiti and other environmental crimes and problems, which can be indicators of underlying social problems and environmental poverty (please see point 4 below).

3.5 KWT provides training to Local Authorities, contractors, housing associations, school pupils, students and volunteers which enables them to monitor these aspects for themselves. This could be used as part of the needs analysis and evidence gathering process, which could improve the effectiveness and success of the Communities First programme.

4.0 Information on Community-based Approaches to Tackling Poverty More Generally

Environmental Poverty:

4.1 If people live in an area affected by littering, graffiti, vandalism, dog fouling etc., their perception of community safety will be affected as will other aspects, such as pride in the area where they live. Poor LEQ will also have implications for health, e.g. fly-tipped green spaces aren't attractive for exercise and can affect mental health. These environmental problems can also impact on prosperity when trying to attract business and visitors into an area. These areas are therefore not just economically or socially disadvantaged, but are also environmentally disadvantaged.

Green Spaces:

4.2 The availability of accessible and well-managed green space has a positive impact on health and well-being, as these recreational areas provide physical and mental as well as community benefits.

4.3 KWT manages the [Green Flag](#) Award scheme in Wales, which encourages improved management of municipal and community parks. By improving standards we can encourage greater use of these important community spaces.

Links with Crime:

4.4 The 'Broken Windows Theory'¹ shows not only that there is a link between poor local environmental quality (issues such as litter and graffiti) and crime; but that disorder and crime are linked in a developmental sequence. This was tested in the Netherlands where experiments have shown that environmental problems can change the way people behave. Most significantly, graffiti doubled the number of people who were willing to steal.²

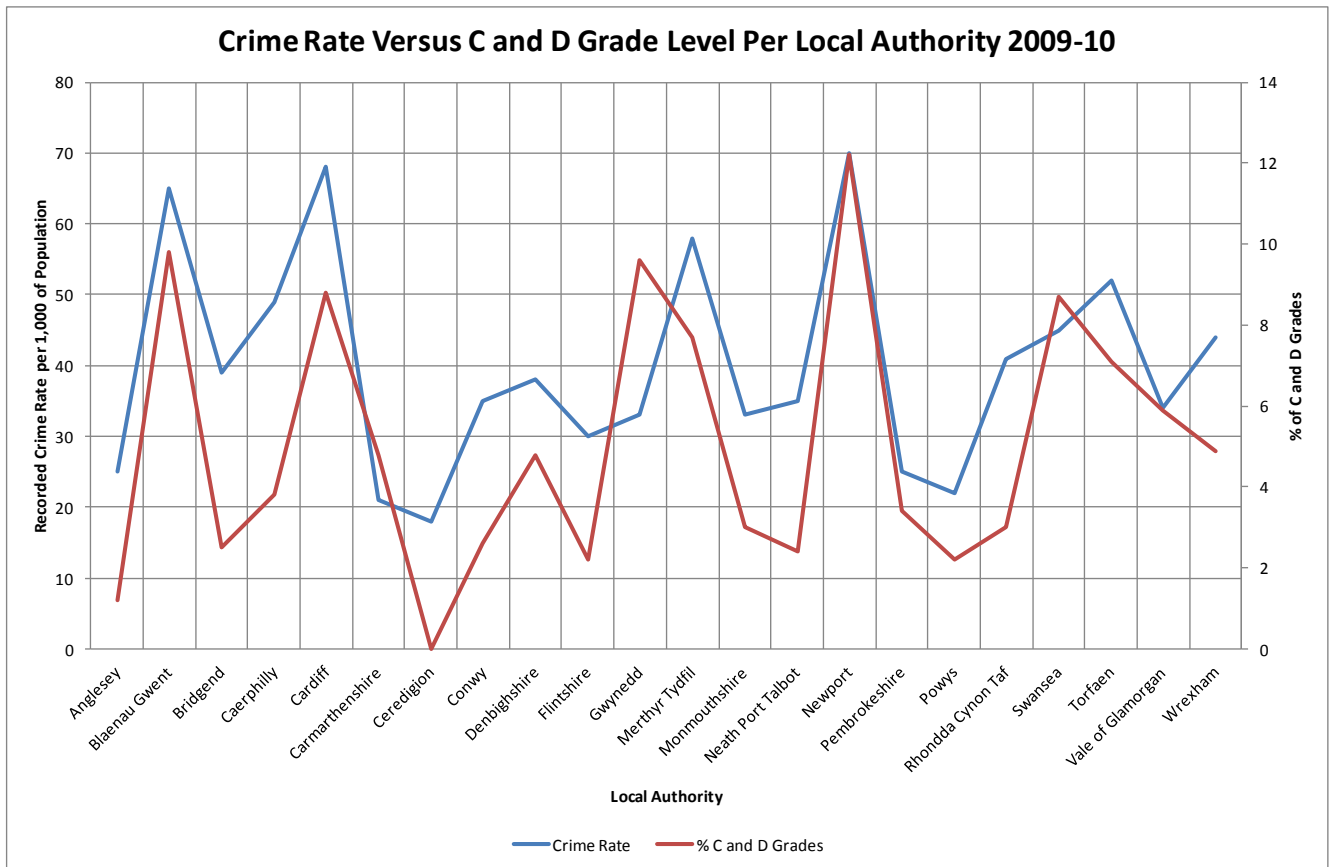
4.5 KWT research, using data from our street cleanliness surveys³ shows that this correlation between litter and crime exists at both local authority level

¹ Kelling, G. and Wilson, J. (1982) 'Broken Windows', *The Atlantic*

² Website: <http://www.economist.com/node/12630201> (Visited 06-01-15).

³ Website: <http://www.keepwalestidy.org/policy-research/environmental-quality-surveys/leams> (Visited 06-01-15).

(please see graph below) and street level in Wales⁴.



4.6 The same link has also been established at a street level in England.⁵ Crime, as an indirect effect of litter costs Scotland up to £22.5 million per year.⁶

4.7 Not only this, but litter attracts litter⁷ and poor areas suffer more environmental problems than richer ones⁸. This is also supported by our ongoing research⁹, which shows that:

- the most deprived streets have more litter
- litterless streets have low levels of deprivation

4.8 On the other hand, as areas improve, crime is reduced and cleaner areas are cared for to a greater extent.¹⁰ Indeed, research from trials undertaken in the USA state that ‘...*policing disorder can generate crime-prevention gains.*’¹¹

4.9 This can be seen as a cheaper way of tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. Adopting preventative measures such as encouraging local pride to

⁴ Keep Wales Tidy Research Paper: Are There Links Between Poor Local Environmental Quality and Crime? (2013).

⁵ Keep Britain Tidy Report: How Clean is England? (2014).

⁶ Website:

<http://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/sites/files/zws/Indirect%20Costs%20of%20Litter%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf> (Visited: 07-01-15).

⁷ Beaufort Research (2010) Litter in Wales: Understanding Littering and Litterers p 22).

⁸ White, D. (2012) Pride in Places: Tackling Environmental Incivilities (p viii).

⁹ In partnership with Dr Wouter Poortinga, Cardiff University.

¹⁰ Keep Wales Tidy Research Paper: Are There Links Between Poor Local Environmental Quality and Crime? (2013).

¹¹ Braga, A. A., & Bond, B. J. (2008). Policing crime and disorder hot spots: A randomized, controlled trial. *Criminology*, 46, p 598.

tackle crime in our communities will therefore reduce the burden on the Police and Local Authorities.

4.10 Our work with disadvantaged communities across Wales benefits not only the environment and the individuals and communities involved but can also reduce crime.

Annex 1: Conclusions of the Environment Led Regeneration Project Evaluation Report (The Outcomes Project)¹²

Conclusions and Key Learning Points

The following sets out the conclusions and key learning points, which in our opinion are relevant for this project.

<p>Land Ownership/ Current Policies and Priorities</p>	<p>The selection of sites for a project like this can make or break it. Issues such as land ownership, current local authority or housing association policies and procedures will have a real impact on success. There may be reluctance on the part of an authority to relinquish control of a piece of land to a voluntary group and this is where community councils could have a very empowering role to play. External or partner policies and priorities may provide additional hurdles, which in shorter project timescales, become magnified.</p>
<p>Community preparedness</p>	<p>The level of readiness of a community to be able to become involved in a project of this nature should be considered if timescales are short. This project did not have the luxury of the time needed for a lot of basic community development prior to project commencement. Where this was the case it proved to be a significant impediment.</p>
<p>Community control</p>	<p>It is important for communities to be able to take control of their own areas as soon as is practical and the small grants programme helped deliver this aspect.</p>
<p>Community Confidence</p>	<p>An increase in community confidence as a project outcome has clearly been the case for several groups who are now flourishing. The community confidence-building element of this project has been critical to its successes. The empowering role of the KWT officers in helping groups to develop is critical to building trust and project success.</p>
<p>Local Community Relationships</p>	<p>The KWT project officers were essential to the building of relationships and needed to be very visible within each community. Where officers were already part of a local community this happened more readily.</p>
<p>Local Autonomy</p>	<p>The ability of project officers to control and decide small-scale local expenditure not only cut through red tape but also enhanced their ability to be able to respond quickly. It placed</p>

¹² Third Sector Development & Training and Au Partnerships (2012) Environment Led Regeneration Project Evaluation Report (The Outcomes Project) p 34-37.

	<p>in them a measure of organisational trust which has proved very empowering and good for staff morale. It also served to increase their standing within the local communities as people who could 'get things done'</p>
<p>Skills Development</p>	<p>The project evaluation tools have clearly shown that it is possible to capture not only the hard skills acquired as a result of specific training but also the soft skills gained due to participation within the project activities.</p>
<p>Project Officer Time</p>	<p>Formal KWT officer time on the ground was too limited to achieve all the project outcomes within the timeframe especially where communities required more basic work to ready them.</p>
<p>Partner Relationships</p>	<p>Relationships between key people are essential for achieve success in a project such as this. Strong links between KWT officers, Communities First and LA departments proved vital in getting around some of the bureaucracy. More interaction at Partnership / KWT HQ level might have served to make local relationships stronger in some areas. They might also have served to more clearly outline project expectations and project delivery methods.</p>
<p>Communications</p>	<p>Communications at all levels are critical to project success. The blog proved useful in letting groups know what was going on but more could have been made of this aspect of the project in developing relationships with partner organisations. A project communications strategy might be a useful tool for any future project of this nature.</p>
<p>Managing Project Expectations</p>	<p>Within each area there was evidence of previous interventions by other organisations that had clearly not been maintained, as there appeared to have been little or no community buy in for the long term. KWT was in some cases expected to help restore these. In addition, some of the expectations set out in the opening event were not able to be met due to circumstances beyond the control of either KWT or the project officers within the timeframe.</p>
<p>Engagement Techniques</p>	<p>The range of engagement techniques used in the project (skips / litter picks / bulb and tree planting) are all tried and tested. One which particularly seemed to catch the imagination was the construction of greenhouses out of recycled bottles which involved a wider range of people that perhaps some of the other techniques.</p> <p>However, there is a need to complete the greenhouse quickly so the community has a useable structure on the ground within a short period of time.</p>
<p>Evaluation Tools</p>	<p>The effectiveness of the evaluation tools used had mixed results partly due to pressures on officer time. However they did show how projects such as this can build in those techniques to better demonstrate the outputs and outcomes. In particular, measuring the attitudinal changes via the Outcomes Star process, albeit limited in this case, clearly has the potential to be used in the future.</p>

The training element of the programme has clearly helped a number of local residents improve their skills and employability. In one notable case, one community member now feels confident enough to put themselves forward as a candidate in the next community council elections while within another group, relationships between them and both the local authority and the community council have dramatically improved to the benefit of all concerned.

The building of confidence and trust between local communities and their authorities and between partner groups is evident in five of the seven areas.

In conclusion it is fair to say that while the project has only been partially successful and not delivered to the expected levels in all the Communities First areas chosen, namely Penlan, Blaenymaes and Pill, activities in Pill are now developing well and should continue to deliver benefits. Within the other four Communities First areas of Brackla and Bettws in Bridgend and Neath North and Fairyland and Neath East there is clear evidence that the use of environment as a regeneration tool has worked well with community groups now gaining in confidence and taking more responsibility for their own areas.