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1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

1.1.1. Our interaction with the 'Living Environment' impacts on all aspects of life. It provides us with our basic needs (air, water and food), resources for economic growth and infrastructure, and opportunities for improving our health and well being. This is a strategy for safeguarding and, where necessary, enhancing the Living Environment in Caerphilly county borough, for its own sake and to secure quality of life for local people and visitors, now and in the future.

1.2. Background

1.2.1. The Living Environment is one of the four themes of the Caerphilly County Borough Community Strategy, the document that sets out a long term and holistic vision for the area. The Community Strategy is a partnership document, developed and adopted by organisations and communities. It sets the general strategic direction for all other local plans and strategies.

1.2.2. The other three themes in the Community Strategy are Regeneration, Education for Life, and Health Social Care and Well Being, and each of these themes has its own specific partnership strategy in place. This document 'fills the gap' by setting out the strategic framework for delivering the Living Environment priorities of the Community Strategy. It also provides a framework for all partners' relevant local plans and strategies that contribute to the theme.

1.2.3. The Community Strategy was adopted in 2004. It contains twenty eight objectives, eight of which address the Living Environment theme. This Living Environment Strategy has used the Community Strategy objectives as a starting point, adapting and redefining the original list of eight into seven key objectives (see 2.2.1). This strategy has also taken the vision for the Living Environment directly from the Community Strategy (see 2.1.1).

1.2.4. The Community Strategy is underpinned by the principles of sustainable development and equalities. In addition it also covers a range of cross cutting issues including children and young people, older people and community safety. These

principles and issues have been incorporated throughout the Living Environment Strategy to ensure they are mainstreamed into the delivery of the theme.

1.2.5. The Living Environment Partnership has also adopted three strategic projects from the Community Strategy known as 'Beacons' and these are referred to in relevant sections of the strategy. The three existing Living Environment Beacons are as follows:

- Tackling Binge Drinking Amongst Young People (see chapter 5)
- Neighbourhood Wardens and Rangers (see chapter 6)
- Town and Village Centre Improvements (see chapter 8. This beacon will be transferred to the Regeneration Partnership in autumn 2006 in order to feed directly into the Regeneration Action Plan)

1.2.6. There is scope to establish a small number of new beacons as a result of this Strategy (through the annual action plans).

1.3. The Living Environment Partnership

1.3.1. In line with the other three themes of the Community Strategy, the Living Environment has a Strategic Partnership in place. The Partnership comprises



a wide range of representatives from relevant disciplines, including public, voluntary and private organisations and these are listed in Appendix A. It is managed by the Living Environment Coordinator post which is based at Caerphilly County Borough Council. The Partnership's role is to deliver the Living Environment vision and priorities of the Community Strategy. This document will be central to the Partnership's work in the future.

1.4. National policy context

1.4.1. The publishing of this strategy in 2006 coincides with the launch of the Wales Environment Strategy. Both documents recognise the interdependency between the quality of the environment and quality of life. The Wales Environment Strategy sets out the delivery mechanism for the environmental aspects of the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) high level strategies. These include: Wales -A Better Country; the Sustainable Development Action Plan – Starting to Live Differently; and the Wales Spatial Plan; as well as its responsibilities under UK and international legislation.

1.4.2. The Wales Environment Strategy looks at environmental issues under five main headings. The Living Environment Strategy does not follow the same headings as the Wales Environment Strategy although it addresses similar issues and seeks to complement the national agenda at the local level. This is demonstrated through the following table:

Wales Environment Strategy headings

Addressing climate change
Sustainable use of resources
Distinctive biodiversity, landscapes & seascapes
Our local environment
Environmental hazards

Most relevant Living Environment Objectives (see page 10)

A, E, G
A, E, G
D, E
A, B, C, D, E, F, G
E, G

1.4.3. The Wales Environment Strategy also contains a chapter on Enabling Change, which focuses on the processes and mechanisms through which the aims and outcomes will be achieved.

1.4.4. Similarly, the Living Environment Strategy also identifies areas of work that may benefit from a sub-regional approach, or partnership beyond the boundaries of the county borough. This approach is being encouraged by the Welsh Assembly Government through the Making the Connections agenda and the South East Wales Spatial Plan – People, Places, Futures.

1.4.5. In addition to the Wales Environment Strategy, a number of other national and local documents have influenced this strategy. A comprehensive list is provided in the references (Section 11).

1.5. Evidence Base

1.5.1. In developing this strategy the Living Environment Partnership has conducted both primary and secondary research and consultation to provide a robust evidence base. The evidence base has been produced as a separate document due to the volume of data it contains (also available on the website). Each chapter in this strategy cites the



relevant key issues that emerged from the analysis of the evidence base.

1.6. Purpose of the Strategy

1.6.1. The Living Environment Strategy aims to:

- Safeguard and, where necessary, enhance the Living Environment in Caerphilly county borough, for its own sake and to secure quality of life for local people and visitors, now and in the future
- Establish how organisations and communities can work collaboratively to deliver the identified priorities, underpinned by the key principles of sustainable development and equality of opportunity
- Bring about measurable improvements in the Living Environment in the county borough against a baseline of information
- Ensure a consistent approach with the other three themes of the Community Strategy (all of which have strategies in place)
- Connect with regional and national plans – particularly the Welsh Assembly Government's national Environment Strategy – and provide a mechanism for local delivery
- Identify potential links with neighbouring county boroughs
- Provide a strategic framework for all environmental plans and activities in the county borough

1.6.2. This document acknowledges that there is already a lot of activity underway. The primary focus for the strategic priorities is on 'added value' – in other words the difference that can be made to the Living Environment through a strategic and coordinated rather than piecemeal approach.

1.7. Timescale for Strategy and supplementary Action Plans

1.7.1. This is a five year strategy for 2007-2012, which aligns as far as possible with the timescales for the other themes in the Community Strategy. It will be supplemented by an annual action plan and reviewed as part of the Community Strategy cycle. The action plans will state exactly what the Living Environment Partnership will deliver towards achieving the Strategy and will link to the wider regional and national priorities. The annual action plans will also be published on the community planning website.

1.8. Statutory Assessment of the Strategy

1.8.1. This strategy has been subject to a number of robust checks, to ensure it positively addresses sustainable development, equalities, health and risk assessment issues. The outcome of these checks can be seen in Appendices B to E, including:

- Caerphilly County Borough Council Equality Impact Assessment - Appendix B
- Sustainable Development appraisal, using the Welsh Assembly Government's Policy Integration Tool as a framework, carried out by Forum for the Future, the UK's leading sustainable development charity (of which the Council is a partner) – Appendix C
- Rapid Health Impact Assessment – Appendix D
- Risk Assessment – Appendix E

1.8.2. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was considered but deemed inappropriate as it is designed / required for plans with specific land use implications i.e. plans for a range of identified sites.

1.8.3. In addition to the assessment tools, the Living Environment Partnership has received informal training in sustainable development, equalities and the cross



cutting themes to ensure the Strategy is underpinned by these important principles.

1.9. Monitoring and Review

1.9.1. Progress on the Living Environment Strategy will be monitored through a range of mechanisms as follows:

- High level indicators that are already being used to monitor the overall implementation of the Community Strategy (Standing Conference Executive)
- Annual review of the Community Strategy Action Plan (Standing Conference Executive)
- Specific outputs set out in the annual action plans (Living Environment Partnership)
- Delivery of actions by sub groups including Beacon groups and task and finish groups (Living Environment Partnership)
- Overall strategy review to coincide with the four yearly review of the Community Strategy
- Consultation with key partners and communities on perceived improvements in the local Living Environment

1.10. Structure of the Strategy

1.10.1. Chapter 2 sets out the vision and objectives for the Strategy. Chapters 3 – 9 give a detailed account of each objective, including a reminder of key issues from the evidence base, aspirations, the strategic framework, current best practice and a way forward on recommended strategic priorities.

1.10.2. It is useful to note that a 'jargon buster' can be found in section 12 (page 64), explaining the acronyms and technical terms used throughout the Strategy.



2. The Living Environment Vision

2.1. Extract from the Community Strategy

2.1.1. The Community Strategy sets out the vision for the Living Environment in the county borough for 2020 as follows:

“There is a wide choice of well-designed, high quality, affordable and efficient housing to purchase or to rent to suit all lifestyles and aspirations. People are able to choose where they want to live in the county borough, regardless of their needs or choice of tenure.

Housing and economic development has been carefully managed to minimise their impact on the environment and have been combined with road transport planning to ensure ease of access to employment and services within the county borough and Cardiff and Newport.

People living in towns and villages value the large areas of countryside, the large variety of wildlife in the county borough and high quality of the air and rivers. People and businesses take responsibility for enhancing their local environment (both urban and rural), preventing pollution and flytipping and minimising waste / litter and use of water and energy.

Local people and visitors alike have easy, low cost access to the rural areas of the county borough and local attractions via a good rights of way network and a choice of low impact transport.

People of all ages take an interest in community life and helping others to find activities to engage in, particularly areas where anti-social behaviour and fear of crime were once a problem.

People feel safe in their own homes, neighbourhoods and town centres. A well-known network of local wardens exists to provide advice and help on environmental, community safety and housing issues.”

2.1.2. Since the Community Strategy was launched, the transport issues in this vision have been subsumed within the Regeneration theme strategy. All other aspects of the vision remain in the Living Environment arena. This strategy provides the tools with which the vision will be achieved.

2.2. Objectives

2.2.1. The Community Strategy has a total of twenty eight objectives covering the four themes, including eight objectives that directly address the Living Environment. These have been amended and refocused to provide the basis for this strategy, giving a total of seven key objectives for the Living Environment Strategy as follows:

- A. Encourage the development and maintenance of high quality, well designed and efficient, sustainable homes and residential environments that can meet all needs
- B. Promote a culture of community self help, cohesion and citizenship and involvement in decision making
- C. Improve community safety and quality of life by reducing crime, nuisance behaviour and the fear of crime



- D. Increase awareness and opportunities for safe access to the countryside and open spaces
- E. Ensure the protection and, where appropriate, enhancement of the natural environment, including the quality of air, rivers and watercourses, flood prevention, landscape and biodiversity, and our historic environment
- F. Encourage the improvement of town and village centres as a focus for community pride, with accessible services and activities for all
- G. Improve energy, waste and water efficiency and promote environmentally acceptable renewable energy to maintain a cleaner environment and help reduce our impact on climate change



3. Objective A:

Encourage the development and maintenance of high quality, well designed and efficient, sustainable homes and residential environments that can meet all needs

3.1. Aspirations, key opportunities and challenges

Aspirations

New buildings and environments

- Incorporate good design into homes and buildings, taking local distinctiveness, landscape, biodiversity enhancement and crime reduction into consideration
- Foster a 'whole life cycle' approach by considering the community and biodiversity needs and incorporating adaptability into homes and residential environments
- Encourage the use of high quality, low maintenance and sustainable materials in construction (locally sourced materials where possible)
- Build in renewable energy mechanisms and energy saving measures from the outset
- Set Ecohomes and Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) requirements as standard
- Ensure appropriate levels of attractive and ecologically valuable green space around homes and other buildings, to benefit quality of life and prevent biodiversity loss
- Ensure adequate community infrastructures (transport, services, facilities) are in place prior to completion of residential developments
- Utilise the Local Development Plan process to provide a mix of homes and buildings to meet community needs, now and in the future

Key Opportunities and Challenges Identified In The Evidence Base

New buildings and environments

- There was approximately a 31% increase in uptake of the Housing Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) amongst householders between 2003/04 and 2004/05
- The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating measures energy efficiency across all tenures, but there is little data available for the private sector at present.
- The National Playing Fields Association recommends that there should be a minimum of 1.6ha per 1000 people for outdoor sport and 0.8ha of outdoor space for children's play per 1000 people. This guidance will be used to inform the Local Development Plan process. Countryside Council for Wales has also produced a toolkit for green space in new developments.
- There are shortages in one bedroom and four plus bedroom homes in the county borough.
- There is an opportunity to use the Local Development Plan process to strengthen policies on provision of affordable housing and use of brownfield sites for development throughout the county borough.
- There is a mismatch between housing need and accommodation types available in the county borough





Existing buildings and environments

- Enable and encourage the maintenance and improvement of homes and buildings to meet national targets (particularly Welsh Housing Quality Scheme for homes and BREAAAM for industry)
- Encourage local residents to incorporate efficiency measures into their homes and lifestyles, no matter how large or small (from energy saving lightbulbs and water saving techniques through to photovoltaic cells) to reduce fuel poverty and CO2 emissions
- Enable the adaptation of homes and buildings to meet access and other needs
- Encourage the protection, maintenance and improvement of existing green space for community benefit, wildlife and quality of life

Meeting additional needs

- Deliver locally appropriate mechanisms for tackling homelessness in line with national targets
- Provide appropriate advice and support mechanisms for people with special housing needs

- The Development Design Guide for Wales has been adopted as supplementary planning guidance.
- The design and location of housing should take into account the need for mitigation and adaptation to climate change, particularly in relation to flooding and development of green space.

Existing buildings and environments

- Some of the most vulnerable residents in the county borough (e.g. older people) live in poor quality and unfit housing
- The private rented sector accounts for only 4.3% of the household tenure in the county borough, yet it accounts for approximately 10% of the unfit dwellings.
- Enormous investment is required in Council and housing association housing stock to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) by 2012.
- According to the Household Survey 2005 the majority of residents are satisfied with their local neighbourhood. However just over a fifth are dissatisfied.

Meeting additional needs

- As part of the 'increasing independence' agenda, older people are campaigning and demanding to be supported in maintaining accommodation that retains their privacy, dignity and autonomy.





- Organisations are responding positively to this through adaptations, home improvements and the provision of specialist services
- Anecdotal evidence through the Young People's Partnership would suggest that a number of young people are not presenting themselves as homeless but are 'sofa surfing'. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that some young parents are not homeless yet they are living in crowded and unsuitable conditions.
 - The Housing Needs Survey 2003 picked up a mismatch between housing need and accommodation types available in the county borough (although this is not necessarily the case now as the situation is constantly changing).
 - There are disparities in affordability of housing in different parts of the county borough (most notably between the north and the south). In the five years between 1999 and 2004 property prices increased by 54% but wages only increased by 8.3%.
 - Respondents to the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) housing survey were largely unaware of local authority services and registered housing landlords, and some respondents reported feelings of isolation
 - 44% of homelessness applications were from eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need in 2004/05. There is a shortage of emergency accommodation to deal with these needs.



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Gaps in data

- The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating measures energy efficiency across all tenures, but there is little data available for the private sector at present
- Anecdotal evidence through the Young People's Partnership would suggest that a number of young people are not presenting themselves as homeless but are 'sofa surfing'. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that some young parents are not homeless yet they are

3.2. The Strategic Framework

3.2.1. There is a wide range of initiatives at the national level that address this broad ranging objective. These include:

- UK Buildings Regulations
- WAG Better Homes for People in Wales Strategy and the Welsh Housing Quality Standard
- Energy Savings Wales – including the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) and the Energy Efficiency Challenge
- WAG Affordable Warmth Strategy
- WAG Technical Advice Notes
- Model Design Guides for planners (produced by the Planning Officers Society for Wales)
- The Clean Neighbourhoods and



Environment Act (further detail in objective C, paragraph 5.2.4)

- Carbon Trust Wales
- WAG Homelessness Strategy
- Creating Sustainable Places (produced by the former Welsh Development Agency)

3.2.2. A number of the above documents are referenced in the Wales Environment Strategy, which includes a commitment that “every community in Wales should have a high quality, vibrant, well planned and well maintained built environment. The built environment should secure efficient use of land including appropriate density of development, respect local distinctiveness and historic character and provide for access to green space, areas for recreation and support biodiversity”.

3.2.3. The greatest challenge currently facing the social housing sector in Wales is the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS). It requires social landlords (the Council and housing associations) to improve their housing stock to the minimum WHQS standard by 2012 and this will require an enormous investment. The WHQS stipulates that dwellings must be:

- In a good state of repair
- Safe and secure
- Adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated (based on the Standard Assessment Procedure rating)
- Contain up-to-date bathrooms and kitchens
- Well managed (for rented housing)
- Located in safe and attractive environments
- As far as possible suit the specific requirements of the household (e.g. specific disabilities)

3.2.4. The Welsh Assembly Government's Technical Advice Note 12: Design (TAN 12) provides more specific guidance on housing design and layout. The aim of TAN 12 is to:

- Create places with the needs of people in mind, which are distinctive and respect local character
- Promote layouts and design features which encourage community safety and accessibility

- Focus on the quality of the places and living environments for pedestrians rather than the movement and parking of vehicles
- Avoid inflexible planning standards and encourage layouts with reduced road widths
- Promote energy efficiency in new housing
- Secure the most efficient use of land including appropriate densities
- Consider and balance potential conflicts between these criteria

3.2.5. In support of TAN 12, the local authority has adopted the Planning Officers Society for Wales Model Design Guides as supplementary planning guidance. The first guide (Building Better Places to Live) provides a comprehensive structure for local authorities to manage the design and development process. The second guide (Householder Development) includes a step-by-step guide for local people and developers, to help them to achieve good practice from the outset.

3.2.6. In terms of open space provision, the WAG All Wales Play Strategy and the National Playing Fields Association recommends there should be a minimum of 1.6ha per 1000 people for outdoor sport and recrea-





tion and 0.8ha for outdoor children's play. Furthermore, the Countryside Council for Wales toolkit for Accessible Natural Green Space recommends that there should be at least 2 hectares of accessible natural green space per 1000 head of population and a tiered system as follows:

- At least one accessible 20 hectare site within 2km of home
- One accessible 100 hectare site within 5km
- One accessible 500 hectare site within 10km

3.3. Current best practice in the county borough

3.3.1. There has been some excellent practice in the county borough in recent years in the delivery of good quality, efficient housing for the private and social markets. The local Housing Associations in particular have been at the forefront of this activity. For example, in April 2006 the United Welsh Housing Association unveiled seven sustainable homes in Silver Street, Cross Keys. The units (4 flats and 3 houses) are constructed from sustainable materials incorporating solar power, waste reduction systems and high insulation that will reduce running costs by up to 80%, thus having environmental benefits and reducing fuel poverty. In addition, Caerphilly County Borough Council has used reduced prices in the sale of its land to negotiate renewable energy and efficiency measures in developments, such as the Bryn Road site in Blackwood. The Property Officers at the Council have also received training to become Ecohomes assessors.

3.3.2. Efforts are also being made to improve efficiency in existing dwellings in the county borough, particularly through the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) which is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and operated locally by the council. In 2004/05 some 1276 homes had work undertaken under this programme costing a total of almost £1.08m. Coupled with this is the Energy Efficiency Commitment Scheme in conjunction with the energy companies, which involves initiatives such as giving free energy saving lightbulbs to householders benefiting from the HEES.

3.3.3. There are also excellent examples of developing new homes to meet specific needs. In February 2006, the Cefn Glas Extra Care Scheme was launched as a result of partnership between the Seren Group and Caerphilly

County Borough Council. Cefn Glas offers its residents self-contained flats but with the same level of support as a traditional residential home, with social care domiciliary support available round the clock. Residents have their own cooking facilities but can eat meals in the communal dining area if they choose, or have meals delivered to their flats. There are also communal library and bowling facilities.

3.3.4. In terms of wider residential environments, Groundwork Caerphilly is a vital partner in providing expertise in environmental audits and improvements in housing estates through the Sustainable Communities programme (partly funded by EU Objective One). Groundwork also ensures that local residents are given opportunities to get involved in implementing the improvements, thus helping to improve the environment as well as ensuring community ownership.

3.3.5. There are also examples of best practice in addressing this objective amongst the other themes and cross cutting issues of the Community Strategy as the table below demonstrates.



Theme	Issue	Example
Health Social Care and Well Being	Older People, Equalities, Children & Young People	Provide additional advice and support for care-leavers, older people, people with disabilities, people with mental health problems, and people from a black and minority ethnic (BME) background
Regeneration	Sustainable Development	Encourage the use of locally sourced materials for construction in new developments (Local Procurement Beacon)
Education for Life	Children & Young People, Equalities	The Family Support Local Priority Themed Group of the Children and Young People's Partnership looks at all aspects of support for families, including homelessness issues.

3.4. Strategic priorities

The Strategic Priorities set out below have been identified for Partnership action as a result of the evidence base and strategy process and will form the basis of the Action Plan for Objective A.

- 3.4.1. Provide a range of services and accommodation that contribute to tackling homelessness throughout the county borough
- 3.4.2. Meet the housing requirements of disadvantaged groups through the provision of high quality, specialist housing and services
- 3.4.3. Harness the contribution partners can make to physical, landscape, open space, access and wildlife improvements in and around our communities
- 3.4.4. Utilise planning regulation and planning gain to facilitate the development of good quality, well designed, affordable homes in sustainable communities (through sustainable design, construction and resource use)

- 3.4.5. Provide the opportunity for people to live in good quality housing through the improvement in condition of all existing housing throughout the county borough

Objective A contributes to a number of Wales Environment Strategy outcomes as follows. For the full list of outcomes please see Appendix F: 5, 6, 7, 14, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27.



4. Objective B:

Promote a culture of community self help, cohesion and citizenship and involvement in decision making

4.1. Aspirations, key opportunities and challenges

Aspirations

Self help

- Work with whole communities and target groups to develop their capacity for generating ideas, projects and funding to address issues that are important to them
- Identify community leaders and support them in encouraging others to take appropriate and sustainable action
- Identify appropriate organisations at the local, regional and wider level that can deliver an enabling role to help communities meet their own objectives
- Promote social and community enterprise development

Key Opportunities And Challenges Identified In The Evidence Base

Self help

- The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that deprivation is concentrated mainly in the north but with pockets in the south. Further analysis is required to ensure that community development work is targeted in the most needy areas.
- Community development staff are often employed on temporary contracts due to the nature of funding available for their posts.
- There is a wealth of good practice in partnership working between agencies and communities but no long term partnership strategy specifically for community development.
- EU Objective One is coming to an end and there are uncertainties about the amount and targeting of the new Convergence Funding.
- Continuation of a range of small grant schemes is crucial to local community development





Cohesion and citizenship

- Support community leaders, organisations and partnerships in identifying and engaging excluded groups (especially children, young people, older people, people with disabilities, people with mental illness, people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and other vulnerable groups)
- Positively promote the role, needs and opportunities for specific groups in communities (as above) and support initiatives that proactively break down barriers
- Provide opportunities for people (especially target groups) to become involved in their communities as volunteers, particularly in terms of the local environment and improving community activities
- Utilise existing mechanisms, such as the Youth Forum, 50+ Forum, education for sustainable development and global citizenship, community partnerships and youth councils to foster citizenship and environmental stewardship.

Cohesion and citizenship

- 45% of children consulted by the Children's Partnership said that things don't change if they are given a chance to have a say. 92% said that they should be consulted on things that affect them.
- The Youth Forum has a strong membership in existence (77 young people) but would like to increase its representation and diversity
- The Communities First Young Active Citizens Project works with young people to enable their participation in community partnerships and local decision making
- The response to the most recent Household Survey in the county borough (2005) was 21% - a high response rate for its type
- 74 of the 93 schools in the county borough are registered for Eco Schools and are actively working towards an award (at various levels). To date 24 schools have achieved an award (34%) and these can be broken down into 6 Green Flag awards, 5 Silver awards and 13 bronze awards.
- Community schools provide a new opportunity for promoting cohesion
- The top priorities of the Youth Forum Living Environment Sub Group for 2006 are CCTV, street-lights and safety, and education about the environment and renewable energy. The group would also like to see greater liaison and respect between young and older people.



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Decision making

- Support and empower communities to make realistic and sustainable decisions on issues over which they have control, and ensure appropriate mechanisms for this to take place
- Support and empower communities to articulate views and genuinely influence decisions made by organisations beyond their control
- Support locally elected representatives in providing leadership and accountability in decision making
- Promote and facilitate a high standard of information, consultation, and involvement across all organisations and reduce the opportunity for duplication of effort
- Encourage voting at local, national, UK and European elections

- There are various databases and events for environmental volunteers but these are not shared effectively between local organisations
- There is an opportunity for the Living Environment to develop more proactive links with cross cutting issues (e.g. children and young people, older people) and representatives of these groups, to support the development of new and innovative projects, and promote understanding of the Living Environment.

Decision making

- In light of the increasing emphasis on consultation for new strategies and plans, there is a danger of duplication by agencies and 'consultation fatigue' amongst local residents, communities and organisations. This will hopefully be resolved by the new multi-agency database (2006).
- Ensure that consultation information is shared across agencies, referred to in project work and fed back to participants to demonstrate their value and contribution
- Voter turnout for Caerphilly county borough at the most recent elections in 2004 was 39.9% of the electorate. This compares to an overall figure for Wales of 42%.





4.2. The Strategic Framework

4.2.1. Since the inception of the Welsh Assembly Government in 1999, the process of devolution in Wales has moved on apace. Wales has gained a range of policy and decision making powers and the Assembly is currently debating increased responsibilities including law making powers. The notion of devolved decision making in Wales has filtered out beyond the Assembly, with regional and local organisations along with communities taking an increasing role in influencing decisions. Some examples of this are given below:

- The Making the Connections agenda is encouraging organisations to work more closely at a regional and local level to deliver services more efficiently (e.g. South East Wales Transport Association). This agenda will have an increasing role in the future. In particular, the five Valleys authorities will be encouraged to work more closely through the Heads of the Valleys Programme.
- Improving quality of life has become a statutory duty under the Local Government Act 2000, mandating local authorities to lead on the production of Community Strategies (the umbrella document for all strategies in the county borough, including the Living Environment Strategy).
- The Welsh Assembly Government's Communities First programme has led to the establishment of Community Partnerships in the top one hundred most deprived wards in Wales (including 6 wards and 13 sub ward areas in Caerphilly county borough). The Community Partnerships are based on the principle of equal representation by community, voluntary and public sectors.
- There is a statutory requirement for public consultation on an increasing number of strategies and plans. For example the new Local Development Plan must include a comprehensive community involvement scheme for consultation throughout the process.

4.2.2. In addition there has been increasing importance placed on the engagement and rights of minority and excluded groups in recent years through the creation of new national legislation (e.g. an all embracing Equalities Act) and the introduction of new statutory mechanisms at the local level. The national Rights to Action and Extending Entitlement guidance documents have led to the formation of Children and

Young People Framework Partnerships and Strategies at the local level. The Partnerships provide a strategic driver for the development and commissioning of all aspects of services for children and young people, as well as ensuring that they are involved in decision making across the board. Similarly the Strategy for Older People in Wales has led to the creation of partnerships and strategies for older people, branded in Caerphilly county borough as 50+ Positive Action.

4.2.3. In terms of environmental citizenship, the Wales Environment Strategy (Enabling Change chapter) encourages leadership in the public, voluntary and private sector through the integration of environmental issues into all policy decisions. It also commits to "supporting communities to take ownership of their local environment and making improvements to it".

4.3. Current best practice in the county borough

4.3.1. The Communities First programme (mentioned above) covers 13 wards and 6 sub-ward areas in the county borough. Community Partnerships have been established in these wards as well as a number of areas outside the targeted areas. As a result there





are now some 30 Community Partnerships with 70 supporting staff (in various organisations) and the process in Caerphilly county borough is viewed as an example of best practice in Wales.

- 4.3.2. The Council's Community Regeneration Unit, Policy Unit and Groundwork Caerphilly are currently working together to undertake and engage in meaningful public consultation with local community partnerships on their local action plans. All community partnerships will produce a community audit, to document the physical, social and economic needs and issues within their own community. The audits will inform the local action plans and enable the partnerships to carry out evidence-based planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- 4.3.3. The involvement of excluded groups is a high priority in the county borough. As part of the Community Strategy process, Caerphilly county borough was one of few authority areas to carry out a specific consultation event with Welsh speakers. Consultation with children is also highly valued, and as part of its extensive role, the Children and Young People's Framework is in the process of developing a toolkit for engaging children and young people in decision making. The Communities First Young Active Citizens Project works with young people to enable their participation in local Community Partnerships and local decision making.
- 4.3.4. In addition, the Youth Forum and Caerphilly County Borough Council run events to celebrate Local Democracy Week each year. In 2005 this included a contest called 'I'm a councillor get me out of here!' in which young people were able to question politicians about pertinent issues. In addition, in March 2006 a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Young Achievers Awards Ceremony was organised by the Valleys Race Equality Council (VALREC) in association with Caerphilly County Borough Council. Over 250 people attended.
- 4.3.5. The voluntary sector is fundamental to the delivery of services and engagement of local people in the county borough. The umbrella body for this work is Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO). Each year GAVO runs a 'One Beat' event including an awards ceremony for the local voluntary sector. GAVO also publishes an Annual Community Directory of Voluntary Organisations, which listed 549

organisations in its most recent edition (2006). Another key activity is securing external funding for local projects and initiatives, through partnership working between GAVO and the Council.

- 4.3.6. In terms of environmental citizenship, the Eco Schools award scheme encourages schools and their pupils to take action on environmental issues. The scheme includes different levels of award and it links to the Healthy Schools initiative, Forest Schools Scheme, School Travel Plans and the Green Dragon Environmental Management scheme. As a result the work undertaken for one scheme counts towards some of the other schemes, thus encouraging schools to participate in several schemes without increasing workload. Many of the topics covered in the scheme(s) directly link to the other Living Environment objectives. The schemes are proactively promoted to schools by the Education for Sustainable Development & Global Citizenship Practitioners Group, which helps to advise, share best practice and encourage networking. There are currently 93 schools in the county borough with 74 registered for the Eco Schools programme to date.
- 4.3.7. In connection with Eco Schools,





the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales (CPRW) recently ran a poster competition in collaboration with CCBC. Prizes were awarded to school councils as contribution to environmental projects.

- 4.3.8. Closely linked to the Eco Schools agenda is the Eco Challenge project, which has been sponsored by the Living Environment Partnership as a pilot for 2006. The Eco Challenge is a three day event to promote Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship through a series of workshops for 9-10 year old pupils in the county borough. The Partnership provided both financial resources and expertise 'in kind' to enable this innovative project to go ahead.
- 4.3.9. The value of educating young people about the environment in their schools cannot be underestimated. In addition to changing young people's perceptions, it often has a knock-on effect in the home, as parents are pressured by their children to take greater responsibility for recycling, saving energy and water, and so on.
- 4.3.10. There are also examples of best practice in addressing this objective amongst the other themes and cross-cutting issues in the county borough as the table below demonstrates.

Theme	Issue	Example
Health Social Care and Well Being	Older People, Equalities, Children & Young People	The Health Social Care and Well Being Partnership is in the process of driving through long term major changes to the delivery of health and social care services in the county borough. This has required extensive public consultation. Two of the most notable projects include the plans for a new hospital for the county borough, and the reorganisation of community services in the north
Regeneration	Equalities, Sustainable Development	Delivery of the Communities First programme and support for community partnerships across the county borough through a dedicated multi-agency team of officers
Education for Life	Children & Young People, Older People, Equalities	Launch of the RISE Network with a wide range of informal and formal learning opportunities across the county borough

4.4. Strategic priorities

The Strategic Priorities set out below have been identified for Partnership action as a result of the evidence base and strategy process and will form the basis of the Action Plan for Objective B.

- 4.4.1. Scope the development of a long term strategy for community development in the county borough, and the means to secure permanent staff to deliver it
- 4.4.2. Engage in the development and delivery of Community Partnership Local Action Plans, especially where major benefits can be gained for the Living Environment and local people's understanding and appreciation of it



- 4.4.3. Maintain and enhance the joint consultation database and calendar between (as a minimum) the agencies represented on the Standing Conference Executive
- 4.4.4. Find effective methods for engaging and supporting hard to reach groups in developing initiatives with a positive environmental contribution to help raise awareness and create positive attitudes to the environment.
- 4.4.5. Support the Youth Forum Living Environment Sub Group members in taking their project ideas forward.
- 4.4.6. Explore the potential benefits of a more coordinated approach to environmental / conservation volunteering e.g. a joint calendar of volunteering days, sharing volunteers and sharing expertise.
- 4.4.7. Support the delivery of the Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Beacon, including the promotion of Eco Schools and the Eco Challenge initiative.

Objective B contributes to a number of Wales Environment Strategy outcomes as follows. For the full list of outcomes please see Appendix F: 2, 5, 6.



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5.Objective C:

Improve community safety and quality of life by reducing crime, nuisance behaviour and the fear of crime

5.1. Aspirations, key opportunities and challenges

Aspirations

Reduce Crime and Nuisance Behaviour

- Support the delivery of the Safer Caerphilly County Borough Partnership strategic priorities (as set out in its three yearly strategies)
- Work proactively to plan and create safer environments for the most vulnerable in society, especially children and young people, older people, and Black and Minority Ethnic communities
- Address specific anti-social behaviour issues through partnership initiatives, such as the binge drinking beacon, wardens and rangers beacon and the Community And Neighbourhood Directed Operations (CAN DO) project.
- Tackle environmental crimes (including illegal off-road motor vehicles, large scale unauthorised waste activities, fly-tipping, illegal discharges to watercourses, littering, dog fouling, graffiti, noise and abandoned vehicles) through awareness raising, enforcement and appropriate provision of facilities
- Raise professional and public awareness of less visible wildlife crimes

Key Opportunities and Challenges Identified In The Evidence Base

Reduce Crime and Nuisance Behaviour

- Violent crime and car crime increased between 2001 and 2004 and the figures were above the Welsh average. Other types of crime were below the Welsh average.
- Alcohol consumption is high in the county borough amongst young people and the adult population, with higher than average 'binge drinking' on a regular basis
- Complaints in relation to neighbourhood disputes, noise and harassment increased significantly during 2002-2004
- Take-away litter and dog fouling are perceived by residents as the two biggest problems affecting street cleanliness in the county borough
- The county borough is performing well in terms of cleanliness (based on the LEAMS system)
- Off road motorcycling and fly tipping are major environmental crime problems in the county borough, with differing impacts in rural and urban areas
- Less visible environmental crimes are often not taken seriously in agency plans (e.g. wildlife crime)
- Fear of crime is a major issue in the county borough and is significantly higher than the national average and completely out of proportion in relation to the actual experience of crime





Reduce the fear of crime

- Empower communities and build citizenship and understanding through the aspirations for Objective B
- Promote good news stories and factual information about the reality of incidence of crime and support the 'safer stronger communities' ethos of the Safer Caerphilly County Borough Partnership

Partnership working

- Raise awareness and ensure compliance with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 across all Living Environment partners (to consider community safety issues in policy and decision making)
- Promote community safety as a cross-cutting issue that is central to all themes of the Community Strategy
- Seek an appropriate location for a substance misuse resource centre with treatment facilities to meet local needs

Reduce the fear of crime

- Anti social behaviour is perceived as a major problem by local residents and encompasses many different types of behaviour. The four strikes system is working very effectively to tackle this.
- Young people have a number of community safety / anti social behaviour concerns and suggest a range of options for dealing with these (e.g. CCTV, street lighting, inter-generational work, graffiti and litter projects)
- Communities often perceive anti social behaviour as a young people issue but statistics for ASBO's demonstrate otherwise.

Partnership working

- Safer Caerphilly C.B. Partnership is currently working towards the co-location of Community Safety staff from a variety of organisations. This is an exciting initiative and will help to facilitate more effective joint working. However there is limited knowledge of this initiative beyond the members of the Partnership, so awareness raising is a necessity
- Information sharing is often cited as a difficulty in partnership working, especially when dealing with sensitive data (e.g. crime related). Further protocols need to be developed to assist with this.





- There are several organisations providing Tier 1 and 2 services for substance misusers in the county borough but no Tier 3 or 4 services, despite an identified need for Tier 3 (detoxification and treatment). Misusers are therefore accessing these services in other authority areas.

5.2. The Strategic Framework

5.2.1. The National Community Safety Plan was launched by the Home Office in November 2005. It sets out the government's key priorities under the following five themes:

- making communities stronger and more effective
- further reducing crime and anti-social behaviour
- creating safer environments
- protecting the public and building confidence
- improving people's lives so they are less likely to commit offences or re-offend

5.2.2. At the local level this is echoed by the Safer Caerphilly C.B. Partnership Community Safety Strategy. There are five strategic priorities in the 2005-2008 Strategy:

- Crime reduction
- Anti-social behaviour
- Safer stronger communities





- Substance misuse
- Partnership development

5.2.3. In light of the county borough's high level of alcohol consumption, it is worth highlighting that there have been recent changes to licensing laws in England and Wales, including the abolishment of traditional fixed closing times for licensed premises. The full impact of the changes are yet to be seen within Caerphilly County Borough, as it is difficult to predict whether the changes will have a detrimental or beneficial effect on consumption and crime and disorder in the long term. The government is introducing a series of preventative measures (e.g. Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England). At the Welsh level, WAG's Health Challenge Wales initiative has 'alcohol and other substance misuse' as one of its key priorities.

5.2.4. The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 has become law after receiving Royal Assent. The Act contains a range of measures to improve the quality of the local environment by giving Local Authorities and the Environment Agency additional powers to deal with:

- fly-tipped waste
- litter
- nuisance alleys
- fly-posting and graffiti
- abandoned and nuisance vehicles
- dogs
- noise
- nuisance from artificial lighting, and other issues affecting the local environment. It also puts the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) on a statutory basis.

5.2.5. There is an additional commitment to the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act in the Wales Environment Strategy in which WAG states as one of its outcomes: "Environmental nuisances such as litter, flytipping, graffiti, dog fouling, flyposting, noise pollution and light pollution are minimised".

5.2.6. In relation to off road motorcycling, the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 and Police Reform Act 2003 have particular relevance. The former clearly made it an offence to ride / drive off road without lawful authority. The latter gave police powers to confiscate vehicles which are being used in a manner which is likely to cause alarm, distress or annoyance to members of the public.

5.2.7. Anti social behaviour and its impact on fear of crime can affect an individual's willingness and confidence to take part in outdoor activities and recreation. The Bevan Foundation report, Active Lives - Physical Activity in Disadvantaged Communities stated that "The assumption that certain crimes and anti-social behaviour (e.g. joy riding and large street gatherings) negatively impact on some modes of community physical activity (e.g. walking the neighbourhood and cycling) is probably a correct one. Greater efforts need to be made to eradicate or minimise this kind of behaviour if people are to be successfully encouraged to walk in the countryside...parks and open space" (Bevan Foundation, 2006).

5.3. Current best practice in the county borough

5.3.1. The Living Environment Partnership



is responsible for delivering the Binge Drinking Beacon. The beacon project aims to address the problem of binge drinking amongst young people (up to 25) through education, prevention and treatment. It recognises that this can only be achieved by the key players working collaboratively with young people and developing new initiatives that work. The Beacon Group involves a wide range of expert partners including the Gwent Alcohol Project (chair), Young People's Partnership, Licensing Forum, Caerphilly County Borough Council (Trading Standards, Policy and Research), Gwent Police, Drugaid, Local Health Board, National Public Health Service, and National Children's Home (NCH).

5.3.2. Key successes of the Binge Drinking Beacon include:

- Desk based research on best practice in tackling binge drinking
- Primary research with 13-17 year olds (carried out by the Young People's Partnership Officer)
- Commissioned the Trust for the Study of Adolescents (TSA) to carry out pioneering research with 18-25 year old 'binge drinkers' in the county borough, utilising £21,052 of funding (provided by the Local Substance Misuse Action Team). The report has formed the basis of the intervention plan being delivered by the beacon group. A conference to launch the research was attended by 135 people.
- The group secured funding from Gwent Police (£1000) to become a partner in phase three of the Digital Storytelling project. This will commence in January 2007.
- Group members have been allocated funding by Gwent Police to attend a conference on Alcohol and Young People in Bristol (November 2006).
- The research sub group has met with Cardiff University to discuss potential collaboration in future research projects.
- Recent test purchasing carried out by 14-15 year olds (organised by Trading Standards) resulted in 64% underage sales at on-licenses, compared to 20% in off-licenses. This demonstrated a need for further awareness raising and use of fixed penalty notices.
- The Trading Standards WASTED! project for schools has been so successful locally that it is being launched throughout Wales at the end of May. Every secondary school in Wales will receive a WASTED! CD Rom and pack.
- A number of projects led by individual organisations within the group, such as a binge drinking leaflet produced by young people for young people in the Rhymney

Valley (National Children's Home), Healthy Colleges Pack (National Public Health Service), Validate Proof of Age Scheme (Trading Standards) and the Drinkwise Scheme (Licensing Forum).

- 5.3.3. In response to the challenging issue of illegal off road motorcycling, the Living Environment Partnership established an Off Road Motorcycling Group in April 2006. The group aims to coordinate efforts to prevent, educate, enforce and seek solutions to this increasing problem, including exploring the feasibility of provision of dedicated facilities. The group has a high political profile and comprises public, private and voluntary sector experts in countryside and landscape, land management, urban parks, leisure, crime and disorder, community involvement, youth inclusion and trade. The group includes two members of the national working group that was set up to look at the issue on an all-Wales basis.

- 5.3.4. The Off Road Motorcycling Group takes a 'task and finish' approach and has established sub groups to take key areas of work forward including:

- Research into the nature of the problem in the county borough, including a survey of users, bike



clubs and politicians

- Research into a range of potential solutions including the type of provision needed through interviews with users
- Research into best practice elsewhere, especially potential links with nearby authority areas
- Media strategy
- Coordinate data and recording of incidents
- Ongoing enforcement operations
- Lobbying WAG and central government for resources to deal with the issue and for changes in legislation (on registering of vehicles)
- Examine the feasibility of providing legal sites

5.3.5. The Community Safety Partnership has developed an initiative called 'CAN DO' which stands for Community And Neighbourhood Directed Operations. The process involves targeting areas with reported high incidences of crime and anti-social behaviour, to tackle the problems on a short term basis through a high profile agency presence, and to stimulate a longer term community response to the problems. CAN DO was piloted in the wards of Twyn Camo and Pengam in the spring of 2006 and is now being rolled out to other areas following evaluation of the pilot programme. The results of the evaluation showed that CAN DO helps to raise community awareness of local community safety issues, and that agency staff (such as Police and Council wardens) develop closer working links, thus enabling them to address highly visible issues more effectively through joint working.

5.3.6. In terms of safer environments for older people, the Council's Trading Standards Department works with a wide range of organisations including Gwent Police and the Local Health Board to raise awareness of the dangers of 'doorstep callers' who prey on the elderly. The partner organisations produce and distribute 'Think Twice' leaflets as well as running Older Adult Awareness Days in local communities.

5.3.7. In addition to solving existing community safety problems it is important to prevent problems for the future. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act stipulates that public authorities should take consideration of community safety in all that they do, including planning recommendations and decisions taken by the Council. As a

result Caerphilly County Borough Council and Gwent Police have agreed a Protocol to ensure that crime and disorder is considered as part of the standard checklist for planning applications. The Council also distributes its weekly list of planning applications to the Police Architectural Liaison Officers.

5.3.8. There are also examples of best practice in addressing this objective amongst the other themes and cross-cutting issues in the county borough as the table below demonstrates.

Theme	Issue	Example
Health Social Care and Well Being	Older People, Equalities, Community Safety, Sustainable Development	The Care and Repair Scheme supported through Health Social Care and Well Being assists vulnerable people to remain in their homes and helps them to feel safe and secure, thus reducing their fear of crime and improving quality of life.
Regeneration	Community Safety	Community Partnerships set up through the Regeneration agenda are helping local residents to express their community safety concerns in a formal setting, with police and other relevant officers present. Some Community Partnerships have established Community Safety Sub Groups.
Education for Life	Children & Young People, Community Safety	Activities for young people through the network of youth clubs and mobile provision



5.4. Strategic priorities

The Strategic Priorities set out below have been identified for Partnership action as a result of the evidence base and strategy process and will form the basis of the Action Plan for Objective C.

- 5.4.1. Support CAN DO initiatives and assist with identifying and tackling specific environmental problems and wildlife crimes within CAN DO areas
- 5.4.2. Continue to tackle illegal off road motorcycling through partnership working, making links beyond the county borough boundary
- 5.4.3. Utilise the Binge Drinking Beacon research effectively to develop appropriate interventions to address binge drinking amongst young people, and consider the potential for extending the project to over 25s
- 5.4.4. Seek an appropriate location for Tier 3 substance misuse services (treatment and detoxification resource centre) that meet the needs of services users and other local residents
- 5.4.5. Raise awareness of environmental and wildlife crimes and publicise convictions to demonstrate agency commitment

6. Objective D:

Increase awareness and opportunities for safe access to the countryside and open spaces

6.1. Aspirations, key opportunities and challenges

Aspirations

Increase awareness

- Promote the value and diversity of the county borough's countryside, landscape and wildlife to local people and visitors alike
- Publicise the variety of informal and formal recreation activities available in rural areas of the county borough
- Promote the importance of urban green space for local people and wildlife
- Raise awareness of the benefits of visiting countryside and open space, including health and well being, in connection with the local Physical Activity Strategy and Action Plan and WAG's Climbing Higher Strategy
- Promote the new open access areas and rights of way
- Equip wardens, rangers and community based staff to share relevant and accurate information about the countryside and open spaces with the communities they work in
- Maximise the use of resources through joint and well coordinated publicity, information, education and interpretation
- Promote the Countryside Code
- Create links between the countryside and cultural history in the county borough and wider valleys region
- Capitalise on the tourism industries in nearby Cardiff and the Brecon Beacons

Key Opportunities & Challenges Identified In The Evidence Base

Increasing awareness

- There are high rates of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, mental ill health and other related health issues in the county borough. Obesity is often linked with physical inactivity.
- There is a wealth of information on countryside walks and tourism opportunities but a lack of consistent branding and targeting
- The majority of the 330,000 people who visit country parks each year are from the local community
- There are major opportunities for attracting tourists as well as local communities, for example the world class mountain biking facilities at Cwm-carn
- There is a low level of useful quantitative data on users of the countryside and rights of way. The Bevan Foundation study provides new insights into current activity and potential for the future.
- There are wardens and rangers working with local communities with different skills and knowledge relating to the countryside and open space. The Neighbourhood Wardens and Rangers Beacon project is helping to coordinate their work.



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Increase opportunities for safe access

- Create new and varied activities at existing facilities and attractions to encourage people to visit the countryside
- Create appropriate new opportunities for users with specific access needs, such as physical and learning disabilities, mental health problems and sensory impairments
- Seek to address issues of conflict between different users of the countryside and land-owners e.g. off road motorcycling
- Build the capacity of wardens and rangers to work together in a coordinated fashion to prevent and take action on damaging activities in the countryside and open space
- Encourage those engaged in improving community safety to tackle wildlife crimes
- Ensure adequate provision of good quality green space in new urban developments and adopt CCW's toolkit for accessible natural green space.
- Support the Regeneration Partnership in developing the rural economy and services for rural tourists
- Support the Regeneration Partnership in promoting sustainable transport mechanisms for accessing rural areas and visitor facilities through an integrated walking, cycling and public transport network
- Work with neighbouring authorities to develop regional footpaths, cycle paths and bridleways

Increase opportunities for safe access

- There are opportunities to develop trails and open spaces in partnership with other county boroughs in the region
- Walkers, cyclists and horse-riders can come into conflict on shared routes in the countryside
- Whilst the majority of rights of way users are legitimate, there are a number of illegitimate users who are causing problems across the county borough. Illegal off road motorcycling is currently the key concern and is spiralling out of control.
- WAG's 'Climbing Higher: Sport and Recreation in Wales' gives a commitment that no one should live more than six minute walk / 300m from their nearest green space. The Countryside Council for Wales's newly developed toolkit to assist local authorities in achieving this





Enhancing the countryside landscape and open spaces

- Work with landowners / managers to encourage good environmental stewardship in rural areas and urban green spaces
- Encourage users of the countryside to act as custodians in protecting landscape and habitats
- Involve communities in improving their local environment by creating opportunities for volunteering
- Maintain and improve the county borough's network of footpaths, cyclepaths, bridleways and other rights of way
- Protect sensitive environments, wildlife and landscapes from inappropriate development through appropriate policies and planning

Enhancing the countryside landscape and open spaces

- The landscape of the county borough is varied and of a high quality. Approximately 75% of it is managed forest or agricultural land.
- People are increasingly satisfied with council managed parks, play areas and sports and recreation grounds

Gaps in data

- There is no data for visitor numbers to individual country parks or the open access land
- No data on people's perceptions / experiences of nature and wildlife in open spaces

6.2. The Strategic Framework

6.2.1. Health Challenge Wales is a major WAG initiative that was launched in 2005. Two of its key priorities are relevant to this objective:

- Food and Fitness
- Mental Health and Well Being

6.2.2. In addressing this agenda, the Assembly recognises that outdoor physical activity can address a plethora of physical and mental health issues, and this is highlighted in the Wales Environment Strategy. The Strategy also sets out a



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commitment that by 2023 no one should live more than six minute walk (300m) from their nearest natural green space. This was first identified in WAG's 'Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity: Climbing Higher' and the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) has subsequently developed a toolkit to assist local authorities in achieving this. To complement this, the county borough has its own Physical Activity Strategy and Action Plan, overseen by the Health Social Care and Well Being Partnership.

6.2.3. WAG has supported the launch of the Mentro Allan initiative through the Big Lottery Fund. Through Mentro Allan, over £1m has been earmarked for Caerphilly County Borough (and neighbouring Torfaen) to develop projects to encourage people from hard-to-reach groups to access open space.

6.2.4. The WAG Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-13 is in production.

6.2.5. The main body for promoting countryside access in Wales is the Countryside Council for Wales, which is an active partner in the Living Environment Partnership. CCW has recently re-launched the Countryside Code and a campaign called 'Natural Buzz' to promote safe and responsible access to the countryside. This was timed to coincide with the introduction of the Countryside Rights of Way (CRoW) Act in 2005. At the county borough level, the Local Access Forum is a multi agency partnership. Its role is to advise the Council, the Welsh Assembly Government, Countryside Council for Wales and other bodies exercising functions under Part 1 of the Countryside Rights of Way Act (CroW Act) as to the improvement of public access to land for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment of the area. The local authority is also responsible for delivering a Rights of Way Improvement Plan and has powers to implement the open access provisions of the CroW Act.

6.3. Current best practice in the county borough

6.3.1. The Living Environment Partnership is responsible for delivering the Neighbourhood Wardens and Rangers Beacon. The Beacon is based on the principle that wardens and rangers working for different organisations are faced with similar issues in their day-to-day work (e.g. environmental crime, questions from the community). In order to deal with these issues most effectively it is important that they work together in

a coordinated fashion and share their knowledge, skills and powers. The group overseeing the beacon comprises managers of wardens, rangers and related posts (e.g. countryside, community safety, housing, public services and environment) drawn from Caerphilly County Borough Council, Gwent Police, Groundwork Caerphilly, Forestry Commission and Keep Wales Tidy. Key successes of the group to date include:

- An audit of warden and ranger services and as a result the development of an electronic Directory of Wardens and Rangers that is regularly updated.
- Joint networking and training events for wardens and rangers
- Establishment of a working group to carry out an analysis of common skills / training for wardens and rangers across the board with a view to developing joint training packages and exploring the possibility of a common quality standard (to complement the roll out of the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme).
- Creation of additional task and finish style sub groups for specific issues e.g. abandoned vehicles on housing land (to improve information sharing and coordinated action), and developing a common approach on using discretion when issuing fixed penalty notices





- Support for the CAN DO initiatives, led by the Safer Caerphilly Partnership.
- Support for the Heads of the Valleys Clean Week (April 2006)

6.3.2. In support of the Neighbourhood Wardens and Rangers Beacon the Living Environment Partnership has provided funding for the Living Environment Ambassadors project. The project involves training wardens, rangers, police community support officers, grassroots workers and local tourism operators in environmental awareness, wildlife, access and a range of countryside issues. It will take place in autumn 2006 and will include sessions for 15 people at a time in venues around the county borough. The project has also received funding from the University of Wales Institute Cardiff (UWIC).

6.3.3. In 2005 Caerphilly County Borough Council's Countryside and Landscape Section commissioned a photographer to build up a portfolio of local pictures. As a result a series of free postcards were produced to raise awareness of the physical beauty of the county borough – for local residents and tourists alike.

6.3.4. At the more localised level, a strategy has been developed for major investments to the facilities at Cwmcarn, including improved camping facilities, new attractions along the Forest Drive, community linkages, interpretation, mountain biking and renovation of the visitor centre. A project manager has been jointly appointed by the Forestry Commission and Caerphilly County Borough Council to oversee the project.

6.3.5. A number of initiatives have been launched in recent years to encourage people to use the countryside and open space where they live. The 'Stroll On' walks leaflets published by Caerphilly County Borough Council are focused on the Upper Rhymney Valley – an area of high deprivation and physical inactivity - and are designed to encourage people to walk around their community. The initiative is linked to the Healthy Living Centres initiative, and local doctors are able to refer people for 'walking prescriptions' to improve their health and well being. The project also recruits walk leaders from the locality and has been so successful that the Council and the Local Health Board have extended the project to the entire county borough.

6.3.6. In addition a number of funding streams (e.g. Objective One and Communities First) have created new opportunities for involving communities in improving access to their local environment. The 'Loops and Links' project aims to develop new and improved footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths around and between settlements. Involving communities in planning and implementing the work increases the likelihood of them using and maintaining the links in the long term. It also has the spin-off benefit of encouraging different Community Partnerships to work together and learn from each other. In addition to the loops and links at the local level, the Rights of Way Committee at Caerphilly County Borough Council is in the process of developing a long distance bridleway around the county borough.

6.3.7. There are also examples of best practice in addressing this objective amongst the other themes and cross-cutting issues in the county borough as the table below demonstrates.





Theme	Issue	Example
Health Social Care and Well Being	Older People, Children and Young People, Equalities, Sustainable Development	Through the Healthy Living Centres initiative (overseen by the Health Social Care and Well Being Partnership), a Healthy Walks officer has been employed and GP's are 'prescribing' walking as a way of improving patient health and well being. Increased physical activity improves health and potentially reduces the need for long term medical and social care support.
Regeneration	Sustainable Development	The Local Tourism Beacon project is looking at the strategic aspects of developing tourism and heritage in the county borough
Education for Life	Children and Young People	The Play, Leisure and Recreation sub group of the Children and Young People's Framework is developing a creative play strategy to include supervised formal and informal activities in the countryside and open space of the county borough.

6.4. Strategic priorities

The Strategic Priorities set out below have been identified for Partnership action as a result of the evidence base and strategy process and will form the basis of the Action Plan for Objective D.

6.4.1. Maximise funding through Mentro Allan, Heads of the Valleys and other sources to provide sustainable outdoor opportunities for specific hard-to-reach and excluded groups who do not currently utilise the countryside

6.4.2. Improve and develop opportunities and facilities for outdoor activities and recreation, to attract visitors to the area, as well as improving local health and well being and reducing obesity rates.

6.4.3. Link up with the Local Tourism Beacon group to create coordinated, consistent and accessible publicity and information on countryside and outdoor opportunities.

6.4.4. Promote high standards and consistency of service across wardens and rangers in partner organisations.

6.4.5. Work at the regional level to help progress the HERIAN and Valleys Regional Park agendas

6.4.6. Adopt CCW's toolkit and baseline for natural green space within the Local Development Plan

6.4.7. Ensure quality standards for urban green space

6.4.8. Support the Regeneration Partnership in promoting sustainable modes of transport to enable greater access to the countryside

Objective D contributes to a number of Wales Environment Strategy outcomes as follows (for the full list of outcomes please see Appendix F): 19, 20, 23, 27, 29



7.Objective E:

Ensure the protection and, where appropriate, enhancement of the natural environment, including the quality of air, rivers and watercourses, flood prevention, landscape and biodiversity, and our historic environment

7.1. Aspirations, key opportunities and challenges

Aspirations

Air quality

- Continue monitoring air quality in the county borough to ensure that air quality objectives are being met
- Undertake detailed monitoring of sites where the air quality objectives may be exceeded, with a view to declaring an Air Quality Management Area if it failed the objectives
- Reduce road congestion by promoting the development and implementation of travel plans across all partner organisations
- Ensure all industrial processes in the county borough are regulated to maintain emissions within the prescribed levels

Quality of rivers / watercourses

- Continue to improve water quality in line with progress in recent years through effective enforcement and cleaning up of reported pollution incidents
- Continue to regulate industry and raise awareness in terms of pollution prevention and waste management
- Continue to address sewage problems through effective partnership with water companies

Key Opportunities & Challenges – Identified In The Evidence Base

Air quality

- Air quality objectives are currently being met in the county borough. It is important that this continues in order to meet national targets, but also because the population in the county borough has a relatively high incidence of respiratory related disease (in part, a legacy of the former mining industry), which is exacerbated by air pollution

Quality of rivers / watercourses

- River water quality has improved in the last decade. The challenge is to maintain and further improve quality through ongoing partnership with water companies, integrated river basin management, tackling diffuse pollution from land and in water, and tackling water pollution and unsustainable abstraction through a more risk based approach to regulation (Environment Agency Wales priorities)





Flood prevention

- Promote the integration of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) in new developments
- Minimise development in the flood plains of the county borough and encourage agricultural and woodland land uses in these areas, to enhance the environment and help reduce flooding
- Raise awareness of flood issues and impacts

Landscape and biodiversity

- Protect and, where necessary, enhance areas of special geological, natural and historic landscape value
- Protect and encourage positive management of important / designated areas for special habitats and species (including SSSIs, SACs, SINCs)
- Raise awareness of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and importance of habitats and species in the county borough, and encourage local people and organisations to care for them
- Create a network of robust wildlife corridors between important sites within the county borough and linked to neighbouring areas
- Complete study of potentially contaminated sites in the county borough and take action on any sites that are found to fall under the legal definition of contaminated land.

Flood prevention

- SUDS should be considered as a favourable option where possible in planning new developments – need to ensure relevant policies in the Local Development Plan
- Flood risk management is an issue of increasing importance. The Local Development Plan policies and subsequent Development Control decisions should reflect this.

Landscape and biodiversity

- CCBC is in the process of studying potentially contaminated land in the county borough.
- Caerphilly county borough has 18 of the UK priority habitats and at least 25 priority species. There is an international commitment to halt decline of habitats and biodiversity by 2010 and see recovery by 2025. However climate change will have a huge impact on the biodiversity and species in the county borough and it is important that wildlife corridors are maintained to allow for the movement of species.
- Currently 5443.31ha or 19.6% of the area of the county borough is designated for nature / biodiversity conservation.
- There are 5 biological and 5 geological SSSIs in the county borough
- There is a range of agri-environmental schemes available to farmers but slow take-up in the county borough.





Historic environment

- Identify buildings and structures of special historic and architectural importance in the county borough
- Seek to protect and where possible enhance important buildings and structures, through appropriate conservation designations, enforcement and utilising the powers of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- Where appropriate, encourage sustainable community based management and uses of important buildings and structures
- Protect and where necessary enhance important urban landscapes
- Build understanding of the historic environment including historic landscapes and gardens, archaeology and built heritage

- Inappropriate use of the land is having detrimental impacts on landscape, watercourses and biodiversity e.g. illegal off road motorbiking, flytipping, greenfield development and modernising of domestic gardens
- The Local Development Plan needs to take account of this objective and all issues raised in the evidence base in its landuse policies and allocations

Historic environment

- The General Condition Assessment Survey of 234 listed buildings (2006) will help to inform a register of listed buildings and hopefully stimulate community interest in protecting local built heritage and help to target funds.
- There are 14 conservation areas designated in the county borough and these are subject to tighter planning regulations. We are duty bound to carry out character appraisals and design enhancement plans for these areas and seek to designate new areas where appropriate.

Gaps

- The Living Environment Partnership has little representation from the historic / heritage sector





7.2. The Strategic Framework

7.2.1. The Wales air quality strategy, 'Working Together for Clean Air' forms part of the UK Air Quality Strategy. It includes the assessment of local air quality by local authorities and the designation of Air Quality Management Areas where air quality is failing to meet the standards, with corresponding Air Quality Management Plans to address these problem areas. Caerphilly county borough has no Air Quality Management Areas as air quality objectives are being met currently. In addition the Environment Agency is responsible for regulating the Large Combustion Plant Directive in industry.

7.2.2. In terms of water quality, the EU Water Framework Directive 2000 covers all water bodies including rivers, estuaries, coasts, lakes, groundwater and man-made / modified water bodies. The Environment Agency in Wales is responsible for helping to meet the demands of the Directive. The Environment Agency is also working with the Coal Authority on the Metal Mine Strategy for Wales (to clean up rivers impacted by abandoned coal mines). This has particular relevance in the Valleys area.

7.2.3. The Environment Agency Wales priorities include:

- Take forward plans for integrated river basin management
- Tackle diffuse pollution from land and in water
- Tackle water pollution and unsustainable abstraction through a more risk based approach to regulation
- Work with water companies to improve the water environment in affordable ways

7.2.4. There has been a shift in emphasis in the last decade from flood defence to flood risk management. WAG guidance on flood risk is contained within Technical Advice Note 15 (TAN 15). It stipulates that development on flood plains should be avoided and that a decision to develop on the flood plain must be justified in socio-economic terms. In the Wales Environment Strategy, WAG commits to implementing flood risk management measures in all catchments and coastlines by 2025, and to develop a plan for public awareness of flood risk by 2008. In addition the Environment Agency Wales aims to improve current flood defences such that 95% achieve 'good' status by 2011.

7.2.5. Former historical land use, including industry and mining, has left a legacy of contamination and environmental problems in Wales, some of which can be clearly seen in Caerphilly county borough. Many of the sites where contamination was present have been remediated and redeveloped through the planning process to bring the sites back into beneficial use. Caerphilly County Borough Council is in the process of risk assessing its identified potentially contaminated sites via desktop studies. Once the exercise is complete, the information will be used to prioritise the sites for intrusive investigation to determine if any of the sites fall under the legal definition of contaminated land and therefore require further action. These processes are being undertaken in line with CCBC's Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy 2004.

7.2.6. There is a huge legislative framework surrounding biodiversity which has spanned over thirty years at the international level. Within the last fifteen years key legislation has included:

- Global level – UN Convention on Biological Biodiversity
- European level – Habitats and Birds Directives, the Water Framework Directive, Common Agricultural Policy reform
- UK level – various Habitats Regulations, the National Parks and Ac-





cess to the Countryside Act, the Wildlife and Countryside Act, the Badger Act and most recently the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CroW Act) and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill (NERC Bill)

- Wales level – Wales Environment Strategy, Woodlands for Wales Strategy, Farming for the Future Strategy

7.2.7. The county borough contains 18 of the UK priority habitats and at least 25 priority species, which need to be protected and enhanced. Some of the species, such as otter, dormouse and great crested newt are European Protected Species. In the Wales Environment Strategy, WAG reiterates its commitment to the above legislation by stating that the loss of biodiversity should be halted by 2010 and recovery to be underway by 2025 (WAG outcome 19).

7.2.8. In terms of historic heritage, Planning Policy Wales (2002) states that “it is important that the historic environment encompassing archaeology and ancient monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas and historic parks, gardens and landscapes, is protected. The WAG objectives in this area are to:

- Preserve and enhance the historic environment, recognising its contribution to economic vitality and culture, civic pride and the quality of life, and its importance as a resource for future generations
- Protect archaeological remains, which are a finite and non-renewable resource, part of the historical and cultural identity of Wales and valuable both for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and the economy, particularly tourism
- Ensure that the character of historic buildings is safeguarded from alterations, extensions or demolition that would compromise a building's special architectural and historic interest
- Ensure that conservation areas are protected and enhanced, whilst at the same time remaining alive and prosperous, avoiding unnecessarily detailed control over businesses and householders

7.2.9. In addition CADW and WAG have been jointly working towards a Strategy for the Historic Environment. At the sub regional level, the HERIAN initiative is increasing awareness and accessibility to the industrial heritage of the South Wales Valleys.

7.2.10. The Wales Environment Strategy covers all of the above issues and the following statements are of particular relevance:

“We want to minimise the risks posed by pollution and other environmental hazards. This is important for our health and the health of our environment”

“We are aiming to halt the loss of biodiversity and see a definite recovery from the losses that have already occurred” (biodiversity is about the variety of wildlife species and habitats)

“Every community in Wales should have a high quality, vibrant, well planned and well maintained built environment”

7.3. Current best practice in the county borough

7.3.1. One of the key messages throughout this Strategy is the importance of involving communities in looking after their own local environment. An excellent example of this is Keep Wales Tidy's clean rivers initiative, which involves local volunteers in cleaning sections of rivers. In 2005, the Lower Machen and Draethen Rivercare Group received two Keep Wales Tidy awards at the national level for their efforts, as well as a Rural





Wales Award from the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales (CPRW).

- 7.3.2. The Go Wild! Event is run annually by the Countryside and Landscape Team at Caerphilly County Borough Council, supported by a range of other organisations such as Countryside Council for Wales, Environment Agency Wales and local conservation groups. It provides an opportunity for the whole family to learn about biodiversity in a fun and informal way and is supported by a range of local voluntary wildlife organisations. The ecologists within the team also provide species identification, habitat requirement and monitoring training to the community (free of charge) which underpins county wildlife baseline information.
- 7.3.3. The Commoners Association for Merthyr and Gelligaer Commons secured funding in 2005 to appoint a countryside ranger to help protect the special landscape and wildlife across the commons.
- 7.3.4. Built heritage has been given a high profile in the county borough in recent years. In 2005 the Newbridge Memorial Hall was the runner up in the national BBC Restoration programme. The management committee for the 'Memo' has gone from strength to strength and continues to raise funds to restore the building to its former glory.
- 7.3.5. In addition, the Living Environment Partnership has funded a General Condition Assessment Survey (being carried out in 2006). The survey involves commissioning a basic condition survey of 234 listed buildings across the county borough. Apart from giving an accurate picture of the state of built heritage, it is also hoped that the survey will help to generate community interest in protecting and enhancing locally important buildings.
- 7.3.6. There are also examples of best practice in addressing this objective amongst the other themes and cross-cutting issues in the county borough as the table below demonstrates.

Theme	Issue	Example
	Older People, Equalities, Children & Young People	Intergenerational digital storytelling projects enable children to learn about the history and heritage of their communities, while breaking down barriers between the old and the young.
Regeneration	Sustainable Development	The Rhymney Town Heritage Initiative (THI) has brought about visible improvements to the built environment and helped to regenerate the high street, bringing economic benefits. It has been supported by access to Commercial Improvement Grants and Town Improvement Grants (Council).
Education for Life	Children & Young People, Sustainable Development	Over 1000 pupils have been involved in planting trees in the Aberbargoed Grasslands scheme

7.4. Strategic Priorities

The Strategic Priorities set out below have been identified for Partnership action as a result of the evidence base and strategy process and will form the basis of the Action Plan for Objective E.

- 7.4.1. Continue monitoring air, river and water quality in the county borough to ensure that targets are being met
- 7.4.2. Ensure the incorporation of this objective in all aspects of the Local Development Plan (and thus resultant future developments)



- 7.4.3. Work with farming communities to promote their role as custodians of the land, and encourage membership of agri-environmental schemes to help achieve Local Biodiversity Action Plan targets
- 7.4.4. Work in partnership to effectively manage and alleviate flood risk in the county borough and encourage use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)
- 7.4.5. Utilise the General Condition Assessment Survey of listed buildings to stimulate community interest in preserving or enhancing built heritage
- 7.4.6. Continue to educate, prevent and enforce on behaviours that are detrimental to the environment (linked to objective C)
- 7.4.7. Create a network of robust wildlife corridors linking important areas within and beyond the county borough, and use as a focus for community involvement and education
- 7.4.8. Build the Living Environment Partnership's understanding and capacity in terms of the historic elements of the environment (buildings, landscapes, gardens, archaeology and culture) to develop this area of work

Objective E contributes to a number of Wales Environment Strategy outcomes as follows (for the full list of outcomes please see Appendix F): 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 13, 16, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37.



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8. Objective F:

Encourage the improvement of town and village centres as a focus for community pride, with accessible services and activities for all

8.1. Aspirations, key opportunities and challenges

Aspirations

General

- Work closely with the Regeneration Partnership in delivering sustainable town and village centre improvements across the county borough
- Utilise the aspirations and strategic priorities for this objective to focus the work of the Town and Village Centres Beacon Group
- Roll out the Appraisal Tool for Sustainable Masterplans within and beyond the county borough boundary

Key Opportunities & Challenges – Identified In The Evidence Base

General

- Town and village centres are identified as a strategic priority in the Community Strategy and have specific links to the Regeneration and Living Environment agendas
- The Appraisal Tool for Sustainable Masterplans needs to be used as a matter of course in developing actions for town centres, to ensure best practice in sustainable development and accessibility
- Opportunities to incorporate street audits into community audits should be explored.
- Net loss and gain of jobs varies across town centres in the county borough, with Blackwood performing best in the latter part of 2005. Caerphilly has a shortage of available retail / employment space.
- Managing the changing night time economy effectively could reap rewards for town centres.





Provide a focus for community pride

- Provide high quality, clean and well maintained public spaces in town and village centres
- Incorporate artwork and objects of local interest into the public realm
- Include attractive green spaces for people to meet and relax, and where wildlife habitats can develop and be enhanced and promoted
- Raise awareness of the Green Flag Parks Awards
- Encourage the enhancement of buildings of local architectural, cultural or historic interest (linked to objective 5) and promote local distinctiveness
- Encourage communities to hold events in town and village centres, such as festivals, carnivals and special interest events
- Monitor perceptions of town and village centres and listen to people's ideas for improving them
- Create a sense of community and business responsibility for looking after local town and village centres
- Promote town and village centres to local residents and tourists alike

Provide a focus for community pride

- Satisfaction with town centre based entertainment is low compared to satisfaction with shopping
- Use of the main cultural facilities by local residents appears to be low
- Cleanliness has an impact on people's perceptions of town centres. There is greater satisfaction about town centre cleanliness in the mid valleys and south of the county borough than the north.
- The Caerphilly in Bloom initiative has been a great success in town centres but there is no equivalent competition for village centres.
- Town Centre Management Groups are making good progress and engaging businesses, but require further resources to make a difference.
- Keeping town and village centres clean is costly. New approaches could include business support, voluntary and community service.





Accessible services

- Ensure links with the Regeneration Partnership in delivering the Beacons for Physical Transport, Community Transport and Local Tourism, to maintain and improve transport and access routes through town and village centres
- Prioritise the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and non-motorists within town and village centres, to encourage walking and cycling and prevent road / parking congestion (well designed car parking should be encouraged at key 'gateways' to centres)
- Encourage organisations to maintain and establish service bases in strategic town and village centre locations, focusing on areas of identified need
- Promote co-location of organisations / services in town and village centres to generate joint working, and provide a range of services and facilities in one place
- Encourage town centre diversity through a mixed retail and property offer (support delivery of Regeneration priorities)
- Raise awareness of the Disability Discrimination Act and encourage the removal of physical barriers in town and village centres
- Create services that are accessible to people regardless of their disability, language, colour, ethnicity, nationality, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status or religion.
- Continuously monitor and evaluate services to check they are meeting people's needs, through consultation and involvement of users.

Activities for all

- Encourage community run activities to utilise buildings in town and village centres during the daytime and evening
- Promote educational, social, recreational and cultural activities that meet the needs of a wide range of users, particularly hard to reach groups
- Encourage the provision of Welsh medium activities

Accessible services

- A number of specific accessibility improvements have been made in recent years in town and village centres (e.g. dropped curbs, seating) but there is no data on general accessibility in town and village centres.

Gaps in data

- There is no direct information on quality of access in town and village centres
- There is no information on use of / satisfaction with non-Council facilities





8.2. The Strategic Framework

- 8.2.1. The economic improvement of town and village centres has been a priority of the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) for decades. However in April 2006 the WDA was subsumed into the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) as the Department for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks and it is too early to predict whether this will make any real difference to the priorities and funding availability.
- 8.2.2. The main Welsh Assembly Government policy for improving the vitality of town centres is the Planning Technical Advice Note (TAN 4) on Retailing and Town Centres (1996). Annex B of TAN 4 suggests that employing a town centre manager will help to develop effective promotion and management of town centres and thus enhance their vitality, attractiveness and viability. It also suggests that detailed non-statutory development plans and management frameworks for town centres will help to create a balance of economic, social and environmental improvements (i.e. similar to masterplans). This is echoed in the Wales Environment Strategy, which commits to “supporting town centre regeneration, physical regeneration of communities, industrial areas and the improvement of prominent sites or buildings in dereliction or disuse, including through historic building conservation and reuse”.
- 8.2.3. This is echoed in The Smart Alternative – the Regeneration Strategy for the county borough. The fifth principle of the strategy is to ‘re-establish town centres as foci of economic activity’ and it suggests 4 key activities for achieving this:
- Public realm improvements
 - Improving retailing and the tourism and hospitality offer
 - Widening the range of office activities
 - Increasing town centre living
- 8.2.4. There is no specific TAN for village centres.
- 8.2.5. The Heads of the Valleys Programme is a fifteen year Welsh Assembly Government initiative which covers the northern part of the county borough. In ‘The Way Ahead...Towards a Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys’ (2006), one of the visions is for ‘strong, vibrant and well maintained town centres, linked by good quality public

transport’. This document has now been superseded by a more detailed strategy “Turning Heads”.

- 8.2.6. The Assembly’s Communities First programme has instigated the establishment of community partnerships in both targeted areas and subsequently non-targeted areas of the county borough (described in more detail in the evidence base under objective B). The community partnerships are providing an opportunity for communities to influence improvements in their town and village centres.
- 8.2.7. In terms of accessibility, there are four key national legislative documents:
- Welsh Language Act 1993
 - Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Amended 2005)
 - Race Equalities Act 1976 (Amended 2000)
 - Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (Amended 1986)
- 8.2.8. The Government is currently preparing a single Equalities Act which will create the new Commission for Equalities and Human Rights to replace the existing equalities Commissions. This will bring about a coherent approach to all equalities issues and will include strands such as sexual orientation, age, religious belief and so on. The





Welsh Assembly Government has also produced a range of good practice guidance on equalities and diversity.

8.3. Current examples of best practice in the county borough

8.3.1. Since 2004 the Living Environment Partnership has been responsible for developing and delivering the Town and Village Centre Improvements Beacon. This beacon is being handed over to the Regeneration theme in autumn 2006, to feed directly into the Regeneration Action Plan. The Living Environment Partnership will continue to have a key role in delivering the key outcomes.

8.3.2. The aims of the beacon are as follows:

- Identify and coordinate programmes of work
- Provide a framework for 'masterplans' for the county borough's major town centres taking social, economic and environmental issues into consideration
- Identify villages that could benefit from spin-off effects of town centre improvements
- Encourage the involvement of local communities and businesses
- Target initiatives in priority areas

8.3.3. The Beacon Group has to date achieved milestones against all of these aims, including:

- Creation of an Appraisal Tool for Sustainable Masterplans (which is being adopted across the entire Heads of the Valleys area)
- Links to business through the Town Centre Management Groups
- Links with the Council based Town Centre Improvement Group
- Testing of 'street audit' tools, for assessing the walkability and appearance of town and village centre streets
- Engaging internationally acclaimed consultants to create reports for attracting high street retailers and marketing of town centres
- Developing the Clean, Green and Tidy Initiative to encourage businesses to keep their premises and surroundings clean
- Supporting the In Bloom initiative

- Engaging in the Arriva Wales 'Adopt a Platform' scheme

8.3.4.

8.3.5. In order to improve the perception of local town centres and to boost the economy, the Economic Development and Communications sections of Caerphilly County Borough Council are in the process of launching 'brands' for the main town centres. The first was Caerphilly's 'Relaxing Retail Therapy' brand, followed by Blackwood 'Defining the Future'. The next step is Bargoed 'The Big Idea'.

8.3.6. Local organisations are beginning to see the benefits of opening services in town centres, for example Caerphilly County Borough Council, which opened its first 'Customer First' centre in Blackwood in 2005. The 'one stop shop' principle means that customers can benefit from a range of Council services in one place, and the Council can interact in a positive way with local residents.

8.3.7. The Crosskeys and Pontywaun Environmental Regeneration Programme is a good example of partnership working between Caerphilly County Borough Council, Groundwork Caerphilly and the local Community



Partnership, to improve the village centre. Following the development and design stages, the partners were successful in gaining almost £1million in funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Welsh Assembly Government's Local Regeneration Fund (LRF) to implement the Programme.

- 8.3.8. Provision of services in village centres can be more costly than towns, however it can be made more viable through the sharing of premises. A good example of this is Cefn Hengoed Youth Centre, where the community led Fruit and Veg Co-op operates weekly alongside demonstrations from the Centre for Help and Advice for the Disabled (CHAD) and a Citizens' Advice Bureau Surgery. All of the services benefit from the presence of each other in terms of user numbers, and the individuals who use the services benefit from the convenience of their co-location.
- 8.3.9. A good example of a coherent, coordinated list of community activities in the county borough is the map of Welsh language activities, which is produced every two years by the Menter Iaith and Caerphilly County Borough Council. The map and accompanying leaflet lists all activities and services in the medium of Welsh, including childcare clubs, nurseries, youth groups, Welsh medium schools, magazines, Welsh classes and several more. In the most recent map (2004) over 90 activities and facilities were listed, plus a number of additional organisations and contacts.

8.4. Strategic priorities

The Strategic Priorities set out below have been identified for Partnership action as a result of the evidence base and strategy process and will form the basis of the Action Plan for Objective F.

- 8.4.1. Use the Appraisal Tool for Sustainable Masterplans in all future town centre master-planning work, to ensure integration of social, economic, environmental and accessibility considerations.
- 8.4.2. Seek wider involvement in keeping town and village centres clean to foster local pride through business partnerships, local volunteering and community service teams
- 8.4.3. Support community partnerships in incorporating a Street Audit tool to assess their

local town / village centres, as part of the Community Audit process

- 8.4.4. Investigate the potential for villages to participate in regional / national competitions such as Caerphilly in Bloom, Green Flag Parks Awards, Best Kept Village, Wildlife Gardening and Welsh Village of the Year, to foster community pride.

Objective F contributes to a number of Wales Environment Strategy outcomes as follows (for the full list of outcomes please see Appendix F): 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.



9. Objective G:

Improve energy, water and waste efficiency and promote environmentally acceptable renewable energy to maintain a cleaner environment and help reduce our impact on climate change

9.1. Aspirations, key opportunities and challenges

Aspirations

Improve energy, waste and water efficiency

- Educate and encourage organisations and businesses to implement energy, water and waste saving measures into buildings and processes, by highlighting the environmental and economic advantages and utilising initiatives such as Green Dragon
- Enable organisations and businesses to reduce waste through minimisation, reuse, repair and recycling
- Encourage people to take personal responsibility for resource use at work and at home (linked to objective A), highlighting the short and long term benefits
- Provide efficient, effective and economically viable infrastructure for managing and processing waste that helps to realise statutory targets as well as meeting the needs of residents and businesses

Key Opportunities & Challenges Identified In The Evidence Base

Improve energy, waste and water efficiency

- Energy related CO₂ accounts for more than 75% of all greenhouse gas emissions (the remainder are mostly from methane and nitrous oxide)
- In terms of waste disposal locally, 77,682 tonnes or 67% of all waste arisings were landfilled by the authority in 2005/06. By comparison 36,427 tonnes or 28.1% of waste arisings were recycled, reused or composted in 2005/06. Targets are currently being met but the future is bleak in terms of predicted increases in waste.
- Based on the predicted increase in waste, the region will need to increase its combined recycling and composting from the 2004/05 figure of 175,000 tonnes to 410,000 tonnes by 2009/10.
- Industrial waste has reduced by 55% in the region in the last six years. Construction and demolition waste has increased by 80% in the last five years.



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Promote environmentally acceptable renewable energy

- Encourage micro energy generation in organisations and homes (linked to objective A), including photovoltaic, geothermal and wind.
- Seek opportunities for large scale renewable energy generation without jeopardising the landscape value of the county borough.
- Increase the uptake of green energy available on the national grid

Reduce our impact on climate change (in addition to the above points)

- Reduce reliance on the private car for personal and work related journeys (in conjunction with the Regeneration Partnership's work)
- Maintain the county borough's position amongst the lowest Ecological Footprints in the UK
- Reduce the county borough's Ecological Footprint in the long term whilst encouraging sustainable economic growth
- Address key areas of concern in the Ecological Footprint through specific initiatives (e.g. promoting locally produced, unprocessed food)

Promote environmentally acceptable renewable energy

- There is an opportunity to expand and develop new partnership working on renewable energy and resource efficiency
- Education about the environment and renewable energy is very important – it is the future. Publicity is the key for young people.
- There may be potential to expand Green Dragon to organisations and individuals

Reduce our impact on climate change (in addition to the above points)

- In Caerphilly county borough the Ecological Footprint in January 2006 was 4.92 gha/cap which is lower than the Welsh average, but still above the global capacity. The largest impact on the Ecological Footprint in Caerphilly C.B. is from the food sector
- Climate change needs to be addressed at the local level through reduced CO2 emissions, mitigation and adaptation. This requires a strategic approach at the local level.

Gaps in data

- Both the Carbon Trust and the local Green Dragon partners acknowledge that it is not possible to give a realistic figure on energy data for business locally



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- It is not possible to give an estimate of resource use and efficiency within the public and voluntary sectors at present
- There is no data on water consumption in the county borough
- There appears to be no data available on renewable energy produced and used within the county borough. It is equally difficult to find statistics for the regional and national level.

9.2. The Strategic Framework

9.2.1. The UK Climate Change Strategy sets out the Government's programme of integrated policies and measures to:

- improve business' use of energy, stimulate investment and cut costs;
- stimulate new, more efficient sources of power generation;
- cut emissions from the transport sector;
- promote better energy efficiency in the domestic sector;
- improve energy efficiency requirements of the Building Regulations;
- continue the fall in emissions from agriculture and forestry;
- ensure the public sector takes a leading role.

9.2.2. The government's Energy White Paper committed to cutting carbon dioxide emissions by 20% of 1990 levels by 2010 and by 60% by 2050. It is more



likely that the reduction will be 14% by 2010 (DTI and DEFRA 2005). In addition, the Renewable Obligations Order came into effect in April 2005, including an obligation for 15.4% of UK energy to be sourced from renewable sources by 2015/16.

- 9.2.3. The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to reducing Wales' greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020 based on the 2000 baseline of 46.114 mega tonnes of carbon dioxide. The Assembly will deliver this by focusing on areas where it can exert influence e.g. reducing transport demand, developing alternative fuels, public and social sector procurement, construction and estate management, energy efficiency, renewable and low carbon energy, and land management practices (Wales Environment Strategy 2006). All local authorities in Wales have also signed up to a Welsh Climate Change Commitment through the Welsh Local Government Association.
- 9.2.4. Technical Advice Note 8 (TAN 8) sets out WAG's target to produce 4Twh of renewable energy by 2010 and 7TWh by 2020. In order to reach this the Welsh Assembly Government concludes that 800MW of installed capacity is needed from on-shore wind sources and a further 200MW from off-shore wind and other renewable sources.
- 9.2.5. In addition to renewable energy, there is also a current focus on strengthening the clean coal sector in Wales, through the development of carbon capture projects (WAG 2005).
- 9.2.6. Furthermore the Heads of the Valleys Programme (covering the northern part of Caerphilly county borough) includes a proposal for a Sustainable Energy Zone in partnership with National Energy Action Wales. Representatives from the county borough's organisations attended a conference to discuss this in March 2006.
- 9.2.7. The Wales Waste Strategy, Wise about Waste 2002 sets out the Assembly's commitments to deliver its obligations under the European Landfill Directive 1999.

9.3. Current best practice in the county borough

- 9.3.1. Environmental Business Support is available at the local level, predominantly through the Green Dragon Programme, which is operated by Caerphilly County Borough Council and Groundwork Caerphilly in association with ARENA Network. Green Dragon is 5-step environmental management system that helps businesses to manage their environmental impacts more effectively and formally recognises their achievements. Interest in the programme is increasing due to changes in environmental legislation, supplier pressures and increases in energy prices. However its future is uncertain beyond the end of the Objective One funding period (2007).
- 9.3.2. In recent years a number of new industrial and business estates have been developed in strategic locations around the county borough. These have been implemented through the Sustainable Business Parks Strategy and a commitment to Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) standards. Woodfieldside, Tredomen and Oakdale Parks have all achieved BREEAM Excellent Rating as a result.



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9.3.3. In terms of improving efficiency in other non-domestic properties, the Carbon Trust has formed a partnership with Caerphilly County Borough Council to form a special fund that is loaned to schools, leisure facilities and other properties to implement energy efficiency measures. The funding is then returned via the savings made through less consumption and the resultant lower utility bills. The Council received a national award from the Carbon Trust in 2005 in recognition of this initiative and its other energy and water good practice methods.

9.3.4. Caerphilly county borough is part of the South East Wales Regional Waste Group that is responsible for planning the management of waste at the regional level in the short, medium and long term. As part of this responsibility, Caerphilly is in the process of procuring a Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) facility. MBT is a process that takes more materials and energy out of the waste that is left over after regular recycling and composting. It involves two processes – machinery to separate materials that can be recycled, and a biological treatment that reduces the amount of biodegradable waste. The remaining waste is then either sent for thermal treatment or landfill. Importantly, if the remaining waste is buried in a landfill site it will take less space than raw waste and produce only 10% of the liquid and methane pollution produced by raw waste.

9.3.5. There are also examples of best practice in addressing this objective amongst the other themes and cross-cutting issues in the county borough as the table below demonstrates.

Theme	Issue	Example
Regeneration	Sustainable Development	Development of the new Council Offices at Tredomen will include the latest eco-friendly techniques and feature a range of green technologies. It is anticipated that these efficiency measures will save the authority in excess of a quarter of a million pounds per annum.
Education for Life	Children & Young People	Yellow Pages recycling competition – pupils bring in old Yellow Pages and these are recycled by Excel Industries in Rhymney. The schools collecting the most receive prizes and a tour of the recycling facility (just over 1000 Yellow Pages creates enough insulation for a 3 bedroom house)

9.4. Strategic priorities

The Strategic Priorities set out below have been identified for Partnership action as a result of the evidence base and strategy process and will form the basis of the Action Plan for Objective G.

- 9.4.1. Produce a Climate Change Strategy (mitigation and adaptation) for the county borough and develop new and innovative joint approaches at a sub-regional level.
- 9.4.2. Set up a multi-agency task force on energy efficiency (household and non-household) and renewable / cleaner energy, linking with the Heads of the Valleys 'Sustainable Energy Zone' initiative.
- 9.4.3. Explore the possibility of Green Dragon for all (communities, industry, public and voluntary sector) and spread wider sustainable development messages.
- 9.4.4. Promote locally produced and non-processed foods and support the establishment of new food co-ops.
- 9.4.5. Ensure the emerging Local Development Plan has tough policies to promote

renewable energy and efficiency measures in new developments and regeneration programmes. Ensure this is followed through in development control decisions.

- 9.4.6. Support the Regeneration Partnership in promoting sustainable and accessible public and community transport, and encourage partner organisations to adopt green travel plans.
- 9.4.7. Reduce waste by i) lobbying for tighter regulations on packaging to reduce waste at source ii) working with householders and industry to increase awareness and opportunities for composting, re-using and recycling iii) taking advantage of new technologies for reducing and processing waste with minimal environmental impacts.
- 9.4.8. Pursue a publicity campaign on environmental issues (generally) and explore the potential for a Caerphilly county borough to celebrate the environment, for example through national and international initiatives (such as World Environment Day and Biodiversity Week).

Objective G contributes to a number of Wales Environment Strategy outcomes as follows (for the full list of outcomes please see Appendix F): 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 31, 32, 33.



10. Conclusion

- 10.1.1. The Living Environment Strategy has set out the strategic priorities for the Living Environment theme of the Community Strategy over the five year period 2007-12. It has provided the final piece of the jigsaw – by completing the gap in the four themed strategies. The benefit of being the final strategy to be completed is that it is integrated as far as possible with the priorities, objectives and timescales of the other three themes and cross cutting issues.
- 10.1.2. The Strategy will be delivered through an Action Plan that will be updated on an annual basis. The first year Action Plan (2007-08) is being launched simultaneously with the Strategy.
- 10.1.3. The Action Plan will enable the monitoring of progress against the strategic priorities and contribution to national / regional objectives, using the baseline data from the Living Environment Evidence Base where possible. An annual review will be completed at the end of each year.
- 10.1.4. All subsequent information and copies of the Action Plan and annual reviews will be posted on the Caerphilly County Borough Community Planning website.



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12. JARGON BUSTER

Term / Acronym

ABC
Affordable Housing

ASBI
ASBO
Baseline Study of Organisations 2005

Beacon

BME community

BMW

BREEAM

CABE

Cadw

CAN DO

CCBC

CCW

CHAD

Communities First

CPRW

CroW Act 2000

DDA

DEIN

Ecological Footprint

Definition

Acceptable Behaviour Contracts

Affordable Housing is defined by Caerphilly County Borough Council Housing Division as 'subsidised housing (irrespective of tenure, exclusive or shared ownership, or financial arrangements) that will be available to people who cannot afford to occupy houses generally available on the open market.'

Anti Social Behaviour Injunctions

Anti Social Behaviour Orders

A postal / email consultation carried out with Living Environment Partnership members to ascertain their organisational priorities in relation to partnership working

A Beacon Project addresses several Community Strategy objectives at once, and depends on partnership working for success

Black and Minority Ethnic community

Biodegradable Municipal Waste

Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment

The Welsh Assembly Government's official advisor on Welsh heritage matters

Community And Neighbourhood Directed Operations

Caerphilly County Borough Council

Countryside Council for Wales

Centre for Help and Advice for the Disabled

A Welsh Assembly Government regeneration initiative aimed at 100 of the most deprived wards in Wales

Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales

Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000

Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Amended 2005)

Department of Enterprise, Innovation and Networks (a department of the Welsh Assembly Government, formed in 2006 through a merger with Welsh Development Agency)

A method for measuring the environmental burden we place on the planet based on the area of land we would need to provide the raw materials and crops we consume and to absorb the pollution and waste we produce. The Footprint is measured in a standardised area unit equivalent to a world average productive hectare or 'global hectare' (gha) and is expressed as global hectares



ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESD & GC	Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship
EU Convergence Funding	European Structure Funds affecting the county borough (and Valleys / West Wales) 2007 onwards
EU Objective One	European Structural Funds affecting the county borough (and Valleys / West Wales) 1999-2006
FUW	Farmers Union of Wales
GAVO	Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations
GAVO LASTING Team	Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations - Local Action Support Team Involving Neighbourhood Groups
Gha / cap	Global hectares per person (see 'Ecological Footprint' for explanation)
Green Dragon	A 5-step environmental management system that formally recognises effective environmental management
Greenhouse gas	Used to describe gases such as CO ₂ , methane and nitrous oxide that contribute to global warming
HECA	Home Energy Efficiency Act
HEES	Home Energy Efficiency Scheme
HERIAN	Heritage in Action – a partnership between public, private and voluntary organisations working across the South Wales Valleys
HMO	Houses in Multiple Occupation
Household Survey	A biennial postal survey of 10,000 randomly selected households in the county borough (run by the Council)
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan
LDP	Local Development Plan – the new framework for the development planning process at the county borough level
LEAMS	Local Environmental Audit Management Services
LNR	Local Nature Reserves
Local Action Plans	Plans being developed by local Community Partnerships to determine the future of their area
LRF	Local Regeneration Fund (Welsh Assembly Government fund)
Masterplans (for town centres)	Comprehensive plans for town centre improvements including social, economic and environmental factors
MBT	Mechanical Biological Treatment
NCH	National Children's Home
NCRS	National Crime Recording Standard
NFU	National Farmers Union
ROW	Rights of Way



RSL	Registered Social Landlord (e.g. Housing Associations)
SAC	Special Areas of Conservation
Safer Caerphilly Partnership	Also known as the Community Safety Partnership
SAP	The 'Standard Assessment Procedure' rating is a method for measuring the energy efficiency of housing stock, and is based on annual consumption of energy for space and water heating (against floor space).
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
Section 59	Section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002 gives Police the power to seize vehicles that are being driven in a way that causes, or is likely to cause, alarm, distress or annoyance
SEWRWG	South East Wales Regional Waste Group
SINC	Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation
SSSI	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
SUDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems
SYDIC	Senghenydd Youth Drop In Centre
TAN	Technical Advice Note – guidance for planning authorities, produced by Welsh Assembly Government
TSA	Trust for the Study of Adolescents
UDP	Unitary Development Plan – the former framework for the development planning process at the county borough level
UKBAP	UK Biodiversity Action Plan
VALREC	Valleys Race Equality Council
Viewpoint Panel	A Council-run residents panel of approximately 1000 members of the public, who participate in regular surveys and meetings to discuss Council services and important issues affecting the county borough
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
WDA	Welsh Development Agency (see DEIN above)
WHCS	Welsh Housing Condition Survey
WHQS	Welsh Housing Quality Standard
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature



13. APPENDIX A: Living Environment Partnership Membership list

Business in the Community

Cadw

Caerphilly County Borough Community Network

Caerphilly County Borough Council

(including representatives from Planning, Environmental Health, Public Services, Economic Development, Community Regeneration, Policy, Property, Park Services)

Caerphilly County Borough Council Local Access Forum

Caerphilly Local Health Board

Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales

Charter Housing Association

Countryside Council for Wales

Environment Agency Wales

Farmers Union of Wales

Forestry Commission

GAVO

Glamorgan & Gwent Housing Association

Groundwork Caerphilly

Gwent Police

Gwent Wildlife Trust

HERIAN

Keep Wales Tidy

Local Biodiversity Partnership

National Farmers Union

National Public Health Service

Safer Caerphilly

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service

United Welsh Housing Association

Wales & West Housing Association

Welsh Assembly Government (Department of Enterprise, Innovation and Networks)

Those marked in **bold** are also members of the Steering Group, established to make decisions on behalf of the Partnership and direct the work of the Coordinator.



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14. APPENDIX B: Equality Impact Assessment

Introduction

The Equality Impact Assessment has been developed by Caerphilly County Borough Council as part of its statutory and moral commitments to ensure that no individuals or groups are discriminated against on the basis of colour, ethnicity, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, religion, language or nationality, whether they are service users, staff or other stakeholders. The council is working hard to demonstrate, categorically, that no institutional discrimination exists across the range of its functions and activities.

The Assessment is designed to gauge the impact of policies and procedures on staff and service users through a checklist of questions. Although it is not specifically designed for strategies, the Living Environment Partnership has chosen to use the Equality Impact Assessment to check that the Living Environment Strategy does not discriminate, but makes a positive contribution to the equalities agenda.

Name / Organisation: Siân Lewis, on behalf of the Living Environment Partnership
Document: Living Environment Strategy

Purpose

1. What is the policy intended to achieve?

(Please give a brief description of the purpose of this policy/procedure)

The Living Environment Strategy sets out to safeguard and, where necessary, enhance the Living Environment in Caerphilly county borough, for its own sake and to secure quality of life for local people and visitors, now and in the future

The document sets out the strategic framework for delivering the Living Environment priorities of the Community Strategy and all relevant local plans and strategies that contribute to the theme. The principles of sustainable development and equalities underpin the Living Environment theme and the Community Strategy as a whole.

The objectives of the Living Environment Strategy are as follows:

- A. Encourage the development and maintenance of high quality, well designed and efficient, sustainable homes and residential environments that can meet all needs
- B. Promote a culture of community self help, cohesion and citizenship and involvement in decision making
- C. Improve community safety and quality of life by reducing crime, nuisance behaviour and the fear of crime
- D. Increase awareness and opportunities for safe access to the countryside and open spaces
- E. Ensure the protection and, where necessary, enhancement of the natural environment, including the quality of air, rivers and watercourses, flood prevention, landscape and biodiversity, and our built heritage
- F. Encourage the improvement of town and village centres as a focus for community pride, with accessible services and activities for all
- G. Improve energy, waste and water efficiency and promote environmentally acceptable renewable energy to maintain a cleaner environment and help reduce our impact on climate change



2. Who is the policy for?

(Who will be directly affected by the delivery of this policy/procedure? e.g. staff, public generally, specific section of the public)

The Strategy impacts on organisations and the general public in the county borough (including local residents and visitors).

Impact On The Public And Staff

3. Does the policy ensure that women and men, different racial groups, Welsh speakers and disabled people have an equal access to all the services available?

(What has been done to examine whether or not one or more of these groups do not have direct access to the service or receive the service in a different way, if so which groups are affected?)

The objectives of the Strategy apply across the board. Beneath the objectives lies a series of strategic priorities (between 4 and 8 per objective). The strategic priorities make links to the cross cutting themes of the Community Strategy and highlight instances where additional measures need to be considered by service providers to ensure equal access. In particular links are made in strategic priorities 3.4.2, 4.4.4, 5.4.3, 5.4.4, 5.4.5, 6.4.1, 8.4.1, 9.4.6.

Actions required

4. What are the indirect consequences of the policy for particular groups?

(Has the service delivery been examined to assess if there is any indirect affect on any groups?)

Efforts have been made to identify where service providers need to adapt to specific needs (e.g. Housing, 3.4.2). However other strategic priorities will require more detailed consid-

eration during the action plan and delivery stages to ensure there are no negative impacts on specific groups. (see below)

Actions required

More detailed consideration of the impact / measures required when action planning the following strategic priorities:

- 4.4.3 Ensure accessible methods of consultation (language, formats, venues)
- 4.4.5 Consider the needs of individual volunteers and provide any additional support required
- 5.4.6 Ensure publicity and information is in accessible formats
- 6.4.2 Ensure accessible opportunities / facilities / publicity for outdoor recreation
- 6.4.3 Accessible information and publicity
- 6.4.7 Ensure accessible urban green space
- 7.4.5 Access considerations in any built heritage projects
- 7.4.7 Access to / interpretation of wildlife sites
- 8.4.3 Access considerations (including signage) in street audits
- 9.4.7 Accessible information and facilities for waste, reuse and recycling
- 9.4.8 Accessible information and publicity



Information Collection

5. Is full information and analysis of users of the service available?

(Is this service effectively targeting all its potential users or is there higher or lower participation or uptake by one or more groups? If this is so, What has been done to address any difference in take up of the service one or more groups?)

The Strategy and Evidence Base (developed in support of the Strategy) make links to relevant information and statistics on specific groups, but inevitably there are gaps. In particular, the document references the Bevan Foundation report on 'Active Lives - Physical Activity in Disadvantaged Communities' (2006), research on alcohol / drug use amongst young people, health and obesity statistics and studies on participation in activities by Welsh speakers.

Actions required

The summary version of the strategy needs to be accessible – bilingual and available in other formats / languages on request, plain language, 14 point font as standard.

Consultation

6. What consultation has taken place?

(What steps been taken to ensure that women and men, different racial groups, Welsh speakers and disabled people have been consulted during the development of this policy /procedure?)

The Strategy is based on priorities identified by local organisations and residents throughout the Community Strategy process. In addition comments were invited on the draft Strategy from:

All organisations involved in the Living Environment Partnership
CCBC Development Officer for Older People
CCBC Children and Young People's Framework Coordinator
CCBC Equalities Officer

CCBC Welsh Language Officer
CCBC Sustainable Development Coordinator
CCBC Community Regeneration Team
Safer Caerphilly County Borough Partnership
Youth Forum Living Environment Sub Group
Standing Conference Executive (includes a wide range of organisations)

*The Caerphilly County Borough Access Group
*Centre for Help and Advice for the Disabled (CHAD)
*Disability Wales
*Disability Rights Commission (Wales)
*Gwent Association for the Blind
*Chwarae Teg
*RNIB Cymru
*RNID Cymru

*Please note organisations marked with an asterisk received copies of the Draft Strategy from the CCBC Equalities Team

Actions required

Need to check that the Valleys Race Equality Council (VALREC) was also consulted



Monitoring And Review

7. How will the policy be monitored?

(What monitoring process has been set up to assess the extent that the service is being used by all sections of the community?)

The Strategy will be monitored by the Standing Conference Executive and Living Environment Partnership.

Actions required

Need to ensure that strategic priorities (as mentioned under questions 3 and 4) are monitored for impacts on specific community groups

8. How will the policy be evaluated?

(What methods will be used to ensure that the needs of all sections of the community are being met?)

The action plan will contain performance indicators that will be reviewed annually (or when the information becomes available). Each strategic priority will also have set outcomes to help evaluate the impact of processes and services. Any negative impacts will be avoided as far as possible, but addressed by the Partnership in consultation with relevant groups / officers if they arise.

Actions required

9. Could it be done better next time?

(What has been learned to help ensure that the needs of the community will be better catered for in the future?)

Much has been done to ensure equalities underpins the Strategy and the work of the Partnership (for example, the Partnership ran in a workshop session on the cross cutting themes in April 2006).

In terms of consultation with the community, some of the information has been taken from sources such as the Household Survey and consultation on the priorities for the Community Strategy. While this included some of the specific user groups, it would be better in future to do primary research for the purpose of the Strategy. Resources, as ever, are a limiting factor.

Actions required

Utilise contacts with cross-cutting issues / coordinators to carry out primary research in the development of the next strategy in 2013.



15. APPENDIX C: Sustainable Development Evaluation

Caerphilly County Borough's Living Environment Strategy

Forum for the Future: Sustainable Development Appraisal of draft Environment Strategy

General comments:

Para 1.1.1: This introductory paragraph is great – sets out your vision quite clearly (“safeguarding and enhancing the Living Environment in Caerphilly... to secure quality of life... now and in the future”). It's clear and simple for the reader to follow. It's a shame that this isn't repeated further on in para 1.6 where you list the aims. Surely the primary aim is this? With the bulleted list being additional aims?

Para 1.2.2: where you refer to “all relevant local plans and strategies that contribute to the theme” – you need to clarify that this doesn't only mean CCBC's plans and strategies but all the other partner organisations that work within the borough, and have an impact on the environment (i.e. most organisations). I realise that you mention in para 1.2.1 that the Community Strategy is a partnership document – but it may be worth reiterating this again in relation to the Living Environment Strategy.

Para 1.4.1: in relation to the reference to the Wales Environment Strategy (WES) headings – they actually address 5 key environmental themes (climate change to environmental hazards) whilst the first theme (enabling change) is a more process-driven theme. May be worth clarifying this difference here?

Para 1.4.2: I feel that your comments on the links between CCB's LE Strategy and the WES should be further clarified – I understand why the headings are not the same because you already had your LE objectives before the WES was produced, however it may be useful for the reader to understand where it seeks to complement the national agenda – i.e. exactly how is this strategy contributing towards the national priorities of addressing climate change, conserving and enhancing biodiversity etc (see priorities listed on page 15 of the WES). It may even be worth listing these national priorities and illustrate where the local objectives and priorities link to them.

1.6 Purpose of strategy: as already noted the primary aim (as stated in 1.1.1) is to safeguard and enhance the natural environment. Your bulleted list is quite specific, so I think it would be worth repeating this here.

1.8.1: I suggest rewording this to:
- Sustainable Development appraisal, using the Welsh Assembly Government's Policy Integration Tool as a framework, carried out by Forum for the Future (the UK's leading SD charity, of which the council is a partner).

2.2.1 Objectives: again, as I've mentioned previously, as well as listing the key objectives for Caerphilly it would be useful to have a sense of how these fit in with WAG/WES priorities – e.g. climate change, resource use, biodiversity, local environment etc, because this is not immediately apparent from the list alone.

Areas highlighted by Welsh Assembly Government's Integration Tool:

- WAG's Integration Tool was used as the framework for an SD Appraisal, and highlighted the following areas for improvement:
- Better promotion of the links between using economic regeneration to support the environment – e.g. through creating new employment



opportunities in the environmental goods and services sectors; looking for commercial opportunities in the renewable energy sector; promoting integrated and electronic communication networks to help access to recreational opportunities etc.

- Ensuring that the strategy addresses and promotes Climate Change in the round – both mitigation and adaptation (as suggested in our SD Appraisal of Caerphilly's Community strategy).
- Promoting cultural life and diversity where appropriate and ensuring that it contributes positively to the historic landscape and heritage of Wales.
- Strengthen the links between the health promotion agenda and quality of life issues, including the role that the environment (in its widest sense) has to play on health inequalities (this is referred to in the text but not within the priorities).
- Reflecting local, national and international agendas where appropriate.

Specific comments on individual Objectives

Objective A

- 3.2.1 it isn't clear what these numbers (24 and 25, 27, 20 etc) refer to – if they are outcomes from WAG's WES then it would be worth explaining this here. May even be worth including this list of outcomes as an appendix, demonstrating how Caerphilly's ES also contribute to them.
- 3.3 highlighting areas of good practice is a really great idea as it gives a platform to build on (this comment is valid throughout).
- 3.4 under Strategic Priorities: I believe that these will be supported by a range of actions as specified within your Action Plan. These targets should be SMART and outcome-based (possibly linked to the WES outcomes). They should also specify which partners are responsible so that it is clear how much work is going to be delivered by CCBC and how much by the partner organisations (again, this comment applies throughout all objectives).
- 3.4.4 with regard to sustainable homes, SD principles should be applied throughout the process – ie not only resource use (through materials) but also through the design phase, construction and ongoing running of the homes. Need to ensure that the actions will reflect this (eg through committing to achieve BREAM very good or excellent standard).

Objective C

- 5.4 you should explore potential of making the links between environmental improvements and anti-social behaviour (through not only getting younger people involved in such projects to improve their areas, but also giving them a sense of pride in their communities).
- 5.4.6 There should also be greater reference to actions that will reduce environmental crime, e.g. flytipping and pollution, rather than just raise awareness, and again the opportunities to involve young people in particular in environmental projects (to link in with the crime reduction agenda).

Objective D

- 6.4 priorities should be expanded to include reference to encouraging access to the countryside, for all, including the promotion of sustainable modes of transport (I realise that your transport objective has been moved to a different partnership, but it is still worth mentioning here).

Objective E

- 7.4 priorities should be widened to include more reference to Climate Change (recognised as the biggest challenge facing the world right now). Not only should it be mentioned in relation to flood risk management (7.4.4) and other mitigations meas-



ures, but it should also be mentioned in relation to other priorities e.g. biodiversity, wildlife and air quality.

Objective F

- 8.4 despite the fact that the objective itself covers “accessibly services and activities for all” – I’m unable to find any reference to accessibility within the strategic priorities. There is an opportunity to promote sustainable and accessible modes of transport to be considered as part of town centre developments, acknowledging the link with the work of the regeneration partnership.

Objective G

As mentioned previously, this objective needs to be expanded to include reference to Climate Change (not just global warming which is one of the ‘symptoms’ experienced as part of the whole climate change phenomenon. This should be done within the text – e.g. reference Welsh Climate Change Commitment developed by WLGA, that all LAs have signed up to. Good to see it as a specific priority (9.4.1).

- 9.4.2 acknowledge energy hierarchy where measure to cut energy use (through promoting organisations and households to switch things off!) comes above energy efficiency and renewables.
- 9.4.5 assume ‘tough policies’ should be viewed in the positive sense ie means that they will be promoting the use of renewables etc – should clarify this!
- 9.4.8 publicity campaigns should link into national and international initiatives – e.g. World Environment Day, Biodiversity week etc etc.



16. APPENDIX D: Rapid Health Impact Assessment

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a tool that can help organisations to assess the possible consequences of their decisions on people's health and well-being, thereby helping to develop more integrated policies and programmes.

Many of the Living Environment Partnership's activities impact on the wider determinants of health, for example the design and condition of housing, crime and substance misuse reduction, and access to open space for recreation and exercise. As a result the Living Environment Partnership has chosen to carry out a 'rapid' HIA to ensure the Strategy contributes to health in a positive way.

Objective	Potential positive impacts	Potential negative impacts	Comments / Actions
A	<p>Improvement in condition of existing housing – potential impacts on warmth, safety and security, accessibility, hygiene, personal well being</p> <p>Reduction in fuel poverty</p> <p>New housing – built to high standards to ensure warmth, safety and security, accessibility, hygiene, well being</p> <p>Addressing homelessness – major positives for health and well being</p>	<p>Impact on individuals during refurbishment – disruption and stress</p> <p>Potential economic cost to individuals – impact on other areas of life / well being</p> <p>Noise during construction and refurbishment</p> <p>Location of housing – potential flood risk, poor access to services</p>	<p>Need to maximise benefits and minimise negative impacts through the local housing strategy and local development plan processes</p>

	Improvements in physical environment around communities – pleasant and safe environment for recreation (and exercise)		
B	<p>Community involvement – impacts on social contact, helps give people confidence, build networks / friendships, discover new activities, break down barriers (e.g. between young and old), develop new skills, influence decisions that impact on personal / community health and well being.</p> <p>Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship includes aspects of healthy living</p>		
C	Reduction in crime and fear of crime – helps vulnerable groups especially the elderly to feel safer in their own homes and in the community therefore more likely to go out and take exercise, interact socially, participate in activities	<p>Too much publicity about tackling crime can cause unnecessary fear / stress</p> <p>Inappropriate location of substance misuse treatment centre could cause stress and worry</p>	Safer Caerphilly CB Partnership to ensure consistent messages about crime

	<p>Find appropriate location for substance misuse treatment / detoxification – help individuals to rebuild their health and lives</p> <p>Binge drinking beacon raising awareness of risks associated with binge drinking – contribution to reduction in hospital admissions, accidents, illness, anxiety, regretted sexual experiences, unplanned pregnancies</p> <p>Tackling off road motorcycling – reduce fear of walking in open space / countryside, reduce accidents, prevent noise nuisance</p>		<p>Must ensure appropriate location of substance misuse services</p>
D	<p>Encourage disadvantaged groups to use the countryside for recreation therefore improving physical and mental health and reducing obesity</p> <p>Increase access to good quality countryside and open space within and near to settlements</p>	<p>Need to ensure safety of individuals and groups</p>	
E	<p>Maintain air, river and water quality – good for health e.g. prevent respiratory problems</p> <p>Manage flood risk and therefore impact on people's lives, homes, health, worry</p>		

	<p>Protect and enhance wildlife – access to nature / natural landscapes</p> <p>Remediation of contaminated land sites – safer for all</p>		
F	<p>Cleaner town and village centres – increased pride and confidence to go out and use services / activities</p> <p>Use of the town centres appraisal tool – ensure town centres meet people's access needs</p>	<p>Potential health risks for local community volunteers / businesses in clearing litter</p>	<p>Need to risk assess clean / green initiatives involving the public</p>
G	<p>Climate change strategy – mitigate / adapt to prevent long term negative health and well being implications</p> <p>Energy efficiency and affordable warmth will have positive impact on vulnerable individuals</p> <p>Waste reduction – cleaner environment, less litter, less landfill</p> <p>Promotion of food co-ops – encourages people to eat fresh fruit and vegetables and therefore reduce obesity and related illnesses</p>	<p>Climate change strategy – some changes are already irreversible and will impact on long term health in years to come</p>	<p>Need to ensure safety / health considerations as part of waste minimisation, reuse, recycling, treatment and composting initiatives</p>

17. APPENDIX E: Risk Assessment

Description of risk	Impact of risk	Probability of risk	Contingency
Competing agendas or lack of commitment to delivery of strategy by key partners	High	Medium	<p>Living Environment Steering Group and Standing Conference Executive to push for delivery</p> <p>Utilise WAG's Wales Environment Strategy to push for delivery of priorities</p> <p>Brief new members when staff changes impact on Partnership representation</p> <p>Consider 'duty of cooperation'</p>
Changing priorities at the national level	Medium	Medium	<p>Wales Environment Strategy was published in May 2006 and covers lifespan of Living Environment Strategy</p> <p>Making the Connections agenda and links at sub-regional level built into the strategy</p>
Inability to identify areas for action within strategic priorities	High	Low	<p>Annual action plans to highlight key areas for action</p> <p>Establish task and finish groups</p>

Funding of core Partnership activities	High	High	Re-establish core funding sources for 2007-08 onwards
Funding of new Partnership initiatives	High	High	Work with CCBC Policy Unit and funding bodies to identify and draw in funding
Competing timescales	Medium	Medium	<p>Alignment with other themed strategies within the Community Strategy</p> <p>Clear Annual Action Plan</p>
Delivery of Objective A	High	Medium	Ensure new Local Housing Strategy addresses the objective effectively
Delivery of Objective B	High	Low	WAG and local multi-agency priority
Delivery of Objective C	High	Medium	Support Safer Caerphilly County Borough Partnership in delivering the challenging strategic priorities
Delivery of Objective D	High	Low	<p>Support local initiatives such as Local Tourism Beacon and Local Access Forum</p> <p>Ensure links with the new EU Rural Development Programme</p>

Delivery of Objective E	High	Medium	All aspects of the environment at risk. Support delivery of Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Local Development Plan, Air Quality Management Plan, enforcement initiatives.
Delivery of Objective F	Medium	Low	Support Regeneration Partnership in achieving its action plan priorities
Delivery of Objective G	High	High	Publicity and information about how organisations and individuals can reduce their impact on the environment Develop a climate change strategy



18. APPENDIX F: Full list of the Wales Environment Strategy Outcomes

1. The Assembly Government provides clear leadership on environmental issues through its policies, programmes and the way that it conducts its business
2. Wales demonstrates the contribution that a small developed nation can make to global sustainable development and environmental improvement
3. Environmental considerations are integrated in all policies, programmes and service delivery and that high quality and consistent environmental evidence is available to inform the decision making processes
4. The roles and responsibilities of organisations are understood, leading to better integration for the delivery of environmental protection and enhancement
5. Appropriate education about our environmental impacts is in place and good quality information is available at the point where people made decisions
6. Individuals understand and are enabled to take responsibility for their environmental impact; changes in behaviour are apparent that help reduce negative environmental impacts
7. Greenhouse gas emissions are minimised, consistent with Wales contributing fully to meeting UK-wide targets and in line with more specific Wales targets that are under development
8. Wales has improved resilience to the impacts of climate change. A clear flexible programme of measures is in place to enable Wales to respond and adapt to climate change
9. The amount of waste that is generated in Wales is minimised
10. Reduce, reuse and recycle is universally accepted in government, business, industry and home life
11. Appropriate waste management facilities are in place to minimise the amount of waste going to landfill
12. Businesses produce well designed products that require less resources in their production, use and end of life, that create minimal waste and are easily reused or recycled
13. Water resources are managed sustainably meeting the needs of society without causing damage to the environment
14. Water is used more efficiently across all sectors
15. The high quality of our drinking water is maintained
16. Soil is managed to safeguard its ability to support plants and animals, store carbon and provide other important ecosystem services
17. The extraction of minerals and aggregates minimised the impact on the environment and local communities
18. The use of alternative materials, secondary and recycled aggregates is maximised where possible in the construction industry
19. The loss of biodiversity has been halted and we can see a definite recovery in the number, range and genetic diversity of species, including those species that need very specific conditions to survive
20. The wider environment is more favourable to biodiversity through appropriate management, reduced habitat fragmentation and increased extent and interconnectivity of habitats
21. Sites of international, Welsh and local importance are in favourable condition to support the species and habitats for which they have been identified
22. Our seas are clean and support healthy ecosystems that are biologically diverse, productive and managed sustainably
23. The quality and diversity of the natural and historic character of our landscape and seascape is maintained and enhanced
24. The built environment is high quality and vibrant, reflecting local distinctiveness and supporting strong communities, which are actively engaged in the management of their local environment



25. New buildings in Wales meet high environmental quality standards and the environmental quality of existing building stock is improving
26. The historic building stock and character is maintained to a high standard
27. There is easy, equitable access to ample high quality green space
28. Environmental nuisances such as litter, graffiti, dog, fouling, fly posting, noise pollution and light pollution are minimised
29. There is sustainable, widespread and equitable access to the countryside and coast, which recognises the need for a balance between tranquil areas and areas supporting larger numbers of people and a range of activities. Damaging access will be discouraged
30. The number of people choosing to walk or cycle as a means of transport is increasing
31. Appropriate measures are in place to manage the risk of flooding from rivers and the sea and help adapt to climate change impacts
32. Everyone who lives in a flood risk area understand the flood risk they are subject to, the consequences of that risk and how to live with that risk
33. A reduction in air pollution leads to increased life expectancy and ecological protection
34. The extent of contaminated land is better understood and actions are being taken to remediate contaminated land for beneficial use where appropriate
35. The quality of our groundwater, rivers, lakes and coastal waters is maintained and enhanced
36. Diffuse pollution is better understood and action is being taken to reduce and manage diffuse pollution
37. The risks posed by exposure to chemicals is minimised with emphasis on protecting vulnerable members of society
38. Those at risk from radon are aware of the risk that they face and what they can do to minimise that risk
39. Radioactive discharges in Wales and doses to the public will be minimised. Discharges to the marine environment will be minimised to the extent that additional concentrations in the marine environment above historic levels are close to zero

