

## WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 5:

*Address our climate and nature emergencies, recycle more and make improvements to the local environment*

### Increasing our Carbon reduction....

Our programme of work to reduce energy use, and carbon emissions associated with our buildings has continued during 2024/25.

To support the transition to low carbon heating, we have piloted heat pump technology at five of our sites, with most of the installation work having taken place, during 2024/25.

Grant funding from Welsh Government Energy Services' Local Authority Low Carbon Heat Grant has helped to enable gas boilers to be replaced with low carbon heat alternatives at our Greenmeadow Community Farm, Ty Blaen site and The Powerstation.

A further heat pump has been installed at our new Maendy Primary School, in Northville. This is the first fully net zero school in the borough and alongside the air source heat pump, the building, which has been positioned to optimise energy efficiency, is super-insulated and has 700m<sup>2</sup> of solar PV panels. The new extension at Crownbridge School also utilises heat-pump technology.

To support wider carbon reduction in the borough, during 2024/25 our Energy Team delivered an ambitious decarbonisation project to support our community centres, sport centres, charities and businesses, across the borough to reduce the carbon footprint of their buildings.

Funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, grants totalling £360,000 have been issued to help organisations invest in energy efficiency measures, and renewable energy generation. 38 schemes have been supported through the project, with total projected annual cost savings of over £200,000. In total, these projects have an estimated annual carbon saving of 346 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.



SOLAR PANELS AT LLANTARNAM GRANGE- ARTS CENTRE, CWMBRAN



LED LIGHTING UPGRADE AT THE CO-STAR PARTNERSHIP, COMMUNITY CENTRE, CWMBRAN

### Protecting and enhancing our local parks....

Protecting and enhancing our local parks is crucial because they provide vital green spaces that support physical and mental wellbeing, encourage social interaction, and promote environmental sustainability. Parks offer safe places for play, exercise, and relaxation, helping to improve community health and cohesion. They also support biodiversity, improve air quality, and help mitigate the effects of climate change. Investing in parks makes communities more attractive, inclusive, and resilient, ensuring that everyone—regardless of age or background—can enjoy the benefits of nature close to home.

In September 2024, residents were invited to respond to a consultation to help shape our new management plans to protect and enhance our local parks.

The plans focus on encouraging more people to use parks, protecting and enhancing biodiversity and identifying opportunities for future investment and development.

As a result, each of our parks will have its own management plan, focusing on the maintenance of existing facilities and identifying opportunities for further facilities, whilst addressing any issues raised through public consultation.

The parks are as follows:

- Blaenavon Park
- Cwmbran recreation areas (Boating Lake, Northfields and Southfields)

- Cwmbran Park
- Fishpond Park, Griffithstown
- Glansychan Park, Abersychan
- Pontnewydd Park
- Pontypool Park

We appreciate that we need to make sure that we manage all aspects of our parks in the most sustainable way, but without knowing how our residents use our parks and what they find most important, we are unable to plan for their future.

The responses from this survey will therefore help us create a series of management plans to support external grant applications to fund their delivery, ensuring our parks continue to be fit for purpose.

(Preparation of our management plans has been made possible through £49,120 of grant funding from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund).

### **Keeping our local environment clean and tidy....**

Keeping our local environment clean and tidy promotes public health, enhances community pride, and creates safer, more attractive spaces for everyone to enjoy. Clean environments reduce pollution, discourage antisocial behaviour, and support biodiversity. They also contribute to mental wellbeing and encourage outdoor activity, which benefits physical health.

Throughout 2024/25, we have continued to hold our annual spring clean events around the borough.

Torfaen Spring Clean takes place every year and is an opportunity for residents, businesses, schools and other agencies to carry out litter picks to help clean up our borough and create litter free zones.

Our litter picks took place at: Pontypool Park, Garn Lakes, Blaenavon town centre, Garndiffaith Millennium Hall Car Park, Pontypool town centre, Springvale Woods, Northfields, Llantarnam Ponds, Cwmbran Boating Lake and Woodland Road fields. Five of the locations were chosen because they were suitable for volunteers with mobility problems.

Nearly 100 volunteers tackled 10 litter hotspots, and collected a total of 57 bags of rubbish, and 25 bags of recyclable items.

We are grateful to all of our volunteers who get involved in our Spring Clean events and we recognise that by working together, we really can make a difference to the cleanliness of Torfaen.

In December 2024, eight of our primary school eco committees also signed up to a Keep Wales Tidy campaign, to help keep communities free from litter.

Cwmffrwdor, George Street, Penygarn and Griffithstown primary schools, in Pontypool, have become Litter Free Zones, together with Woodlands, Llantarnam and the Federation of Blenheim Road and Coed Eva primary schools in Cwmbran.



They will now carry out regular litter picks around their school grounds. We have donated litter picking packs to each school, as part of a joint initiative between our Active Travel and litter and Fly-tipping Teams.

This is an exciting project that not only focuses on improving the appearance of local communities but encourages more people to consider walking or cycling for short journeys.

(The active travel Litter Free Zones project is funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund).

## Encouraging biodiversity....

Encouraging biodiversity is vital because it helps maintain healthy, resilient ecosystems that provide essential services like clean air, water, and fertile soil. It supports food security, contributes to medical discoveries, and strengthens economies through agriculture and tourism. Biodiverse environments also enhance mental well-being and preserve cultural heritage. Protecting biodiversity ensures nature can continue to support life and adapt to challenges like climate change and disease.

In May 2024, we encouraged our residents to support our 'No Mow May' campaign to leave their lawns uncut throughout May, to help biodiversity and tackle climate change.

It's 10 years since the council first introduced its sustainable grassland management programme, which identifies areas of land where grass cutting is reduced, between April and October, to allow grass and wildflowers to pollinate during the summer.

The Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen Local Nature Partnership group is now planning to carry out a study to see what impact the programme has had on local butterfly numbers.

We now have 200 areas across Torfaen that are being managed sustainably, and we know they are having a positive impact on local insect populations. Last year, we discovered wasp spiders in a verge in Pontnewynydd and at Henllys Local Nature Reserve, which is the furthest north they've ever been recorded. We've also seen a wider variety of butterflies including Orange-tips, Small Skippers, Marbled Whites and Peacock butterflies.

There are hopes a local nature reserve in Cwmbran could be expanded following a successful bid for National Lottery Heritage funding. The funding has been used to purchase a three-acre meadow and woodland area near Henllys Local Nature Reserve.

On 25 February 2025, Blaenserchan valley was officially declared as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). This site is a former colliery site in Abersychan, which previously consisted of remnants of coal spoil heaps.

The site has since been reclaimed by nature and is home to many species of wildlife, including scarce flora, which will be protected for future generations. Biological surveying activities (Bioblitz) are planned to take place on 5 July, during Wales Nature Week.

Work also begun in March 2025, to improve biodiversity at Coed Meyric Moel, including planting new hedging and developing natural wildlife corridors, with further plans to create paths leading to Henllys Local Nature Reserve and a nature trail with help from Able, in Cwmbran, an organisation which supports people living with disabilities.

The project is being supported by Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen's Local Nature Partnership, which this year celebrates its 25th anniversary.

(There are currently now eight Local Nature Reserves in Torfaen: at Garn Lakes, which is currently the largest at nearly 53 hectares; Cwmavon Corridor (the cycleway linking Garndiffaith and Blaenavon), Tirpentwys, Cwmyrnyscoy Quarry, Springvale Ponds, Henllys, Llwynceilyn and Blaensychan.

## Reducing our waste....

Reducing our waste helps protect the environment, conserve natural resources, and reduce pollution. When we produce less waste, we use fewer raw materials and less energy, which lowers greenhouse gas emissions and slows climate change. It also reduces the strain on landfills and incinerators, which can harm ecosystems and human health. By managing waste responsibly—through recycling, reusing, and reducing—we create cleaner, more sustainable communities and support a circular economy that benefits both people and the planet.



## Increasing our recycling

At the start of July 2024, plans to introduce a new recycling bag were approved, as part of the council's 'Raise the Recycling Rate' campaign. Unfortunately, due to supply chain issues the roll out of this scheme was delayed.



From the end of October and throughout November, every household received a new red recycling bag, a leaflet explaining what to put in the new bag, and a guide to the council's full kerbside recycling service.

Our new red bags are now used for plastic, cans, tins, and cartons and are collected weekly, alongside black boxes, cardboard bags and food waste bins. Glass, paper, batteries, and textiles continue to go into the black boxes.

(Collecting recycling separately, is in line with the Welsh Government's Blueprint for Recycling Collections).

The 90-litre bags hold more than the black boxes, so will reduce the need for residents to have multiple boxes and the time it takes for crews to sort recycling, at the kerbside. It is also felt that the new bags will be easier to store, and the resealable lids will reduce the amount of litter caused by items blown from boxes. They also offer much better value for money - costing less to buy and being more hardwearing.

In 2023, 87 per cent of people who took part in our 'Raise the Rate' survey said they would be prepared to separate their recycling. We already know a lot of residents already sort out their recycling into different black boxes, which makes a big difference to crews, but it is hoped further improvements to the service will also encourage people to recycle more.

Cardboard continues to be collected in the blue bags and food waste in the brown caddies weekly.

(The Welsh Government has set local authorities a target of 70% waste recycled by 2025).

## Waste Education & Enforcement Policy

At the beginning of December 2024, our Cabinet Members approved a Waste Education and Enforcement Policy, which will come into place in 2025.

This policy will help increase our recycling rates in the borough by reducing the amount of recycling put into purple-lidded bins. Around 62% of what residents place in their purple lidded bins is recyclable. It will focus therefore on householders who over-fill their purple-lidded bin or leave rubbish bags alongside their bin, as well as those who do not recycle.

In our 'Raise the Rate' survey in 2023, 56 per cent of our residents said they would support enforcement action being taken against those who do not recycle.

Going forward, our Education and Enforcement Officers will be contacting residents in person and in writing to offer further information and support, with enforcement action taken as the last resort.

Over the past few years, after a lot of hard work, we managed to hit the statutory 64 per cent recycling rate by March 2024. From 2024/25, the target we have to reach now however, is 70 per cent, or the local authority could be fined by Welsh Government.

We are confident that if we work together with our residents, we can increase our recycling rates, which will be better for our environment and future generations.

## Reducing our food waste....

In October 2024, several of our primary schools reduced their food waste by a third on average, as part of a competition run by our Catering Service.



Our 'Waste Warriors' competition was launched last year, as a way of making the school meal service more sustainable.

Fourteen of our schools took part in the Waste Warriors competition – cutting their food waste by an average of 33% - 13% per cent more than last year.

Pupils monitored and recorded the amount of food thrown away at lunchtimes and planned a campaign to get their fellow pupils to reduce what they threw away.

The winners were pupils from Ysgol Gymraeg Cwmbran, who reduced their food waste by a total of 36%. Cwmffrwdroer Primary School were runners up.



To help with our ambition to raise our recycling rate, we feel that by learning about reducing food waste, at such an early age is important. It can help our children understand where their food comes from, develop a greater appreciation for nature, and make healthier eating choices. It can also help reduce food waste in homes, which can help the planet and save money.

Both schools won an all-day healthy cooking session, thanks to funding from our [Food4Growth partnership](#). The group also paid for weighing scales for each school taking part in the competition.

## Our Key Challenges...

### Education:

- **Continue to reduce food waste within our school kitchens** - reducing food waste will require a change in our school kitchen practices, menu planning, and portion control, which can be complex to implement. It's important because improving access to meals helps ensure all children are well-fed and ready to learn, while cutting waste supports climate goals and makes better use of public resources

### Waste & Recycling:

- Our objective remains to achieve 70 percent recycling rate. If we fail to reach 70 percent by 2025, we face fines of £100,000 for every 1 percent we fall short and that could have a financial impact on all of our council services. If we cannot raise the rate by changing behaviours, we will be left with little choice but to reconsider systemic changes.