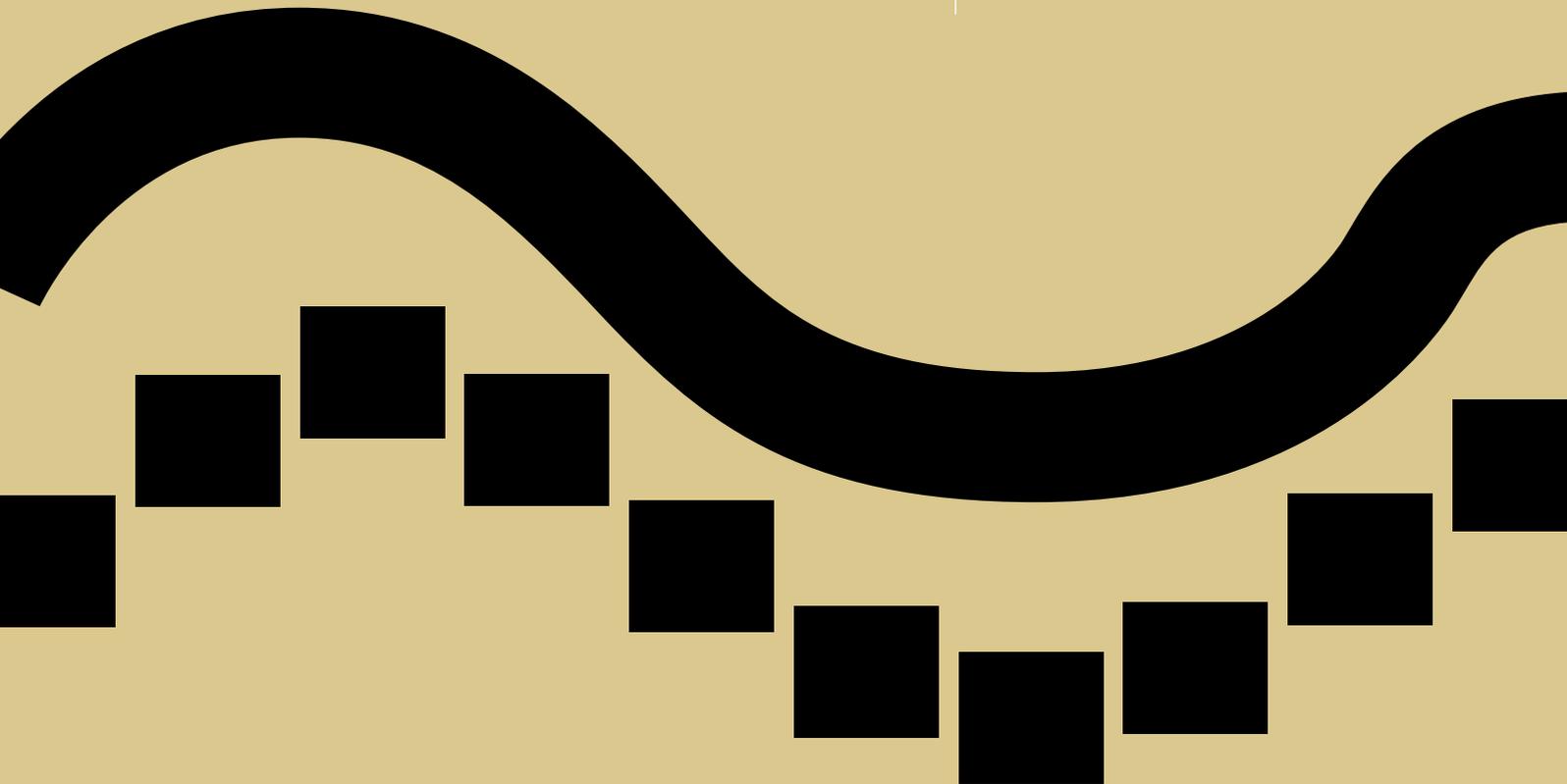


The Garw Valley

Regeneration Framework and
Action Plan



Final Report to Bridgend County Borough Council and the WDA
Prepared by Peter Williams Consultants LLP
October 2003

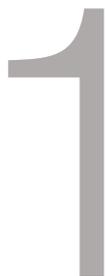


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Introduction



In December 2001, Peter Williams Consultants LLP was appointed by Bridgend County Borough and the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) to support the process of regeneration in the Garw Valley. Specifically, the commission addressed two issues:

- To bring together a Regeneration Strategy for the area building on work undertaken to date and discussions with key stakeholders;
- To evaluate existing projects, specifically those being developed for Objective 1 funding, against the strategy and other criteria.

The programme has involved a series of informal meetings and presentations to a number of groups including a client group made up of the County Borough, WDA and representatives from the Garw Valley Regeneration Forum.

The key output of our work is the development of a comprehensive and communicable regeneration strategy for the Garw Valley that takes into account the existing policy context at a national, sub regional and local level set out within a number of strategic documents mostly at a county level, and is also a reflection of local views from key stakeholders and residents about the place in which they deliver services, work and live.

The report's purpose is to set a strategic context and framework for future programmes and projects. It aims to provide a short and long-term vision about what is important to the community and a shared view of what might be achieved by working together and with others in partnership.

The document presents a profile of the area as it is today based on research and input from key stakeholders, although it has to be recognised that this is based on existing datasets, which at a micro ward level need to be viewed with caution. The document also includes a **Vision** and **Key Themes for Action**. We have used the framework and analysis to assess the existing range of projects already submitted. A detailed commentary on these projects is included within this report.

In addition, the report provides some recommendations on the future delivery of the strategy and programme.

As well as providing an important strategic context for future funding applications the Regeneration Framework provides a basis upon which the Council and other investors can better understand the needs of the community and help ensure that services meet those needs in the best way.



The Garw Valley Today

2

The Garw Valley has been transformed over the past years with much of the legacy of its heavy industrial past being remedied. The Garw Valley had six deep pits and numerous drift mines which operated between the 1870's and the final closure in 1985. Those who have lived and worked in the valley appreciate the changes but the impressions of the new visitor will still be formed by the number of empty premises, some in danger of dereliction, tired public realm, lack of facilities and other than the natural beauty, dearth of obvious attractions.



Fig 1. Relatively dense housing...



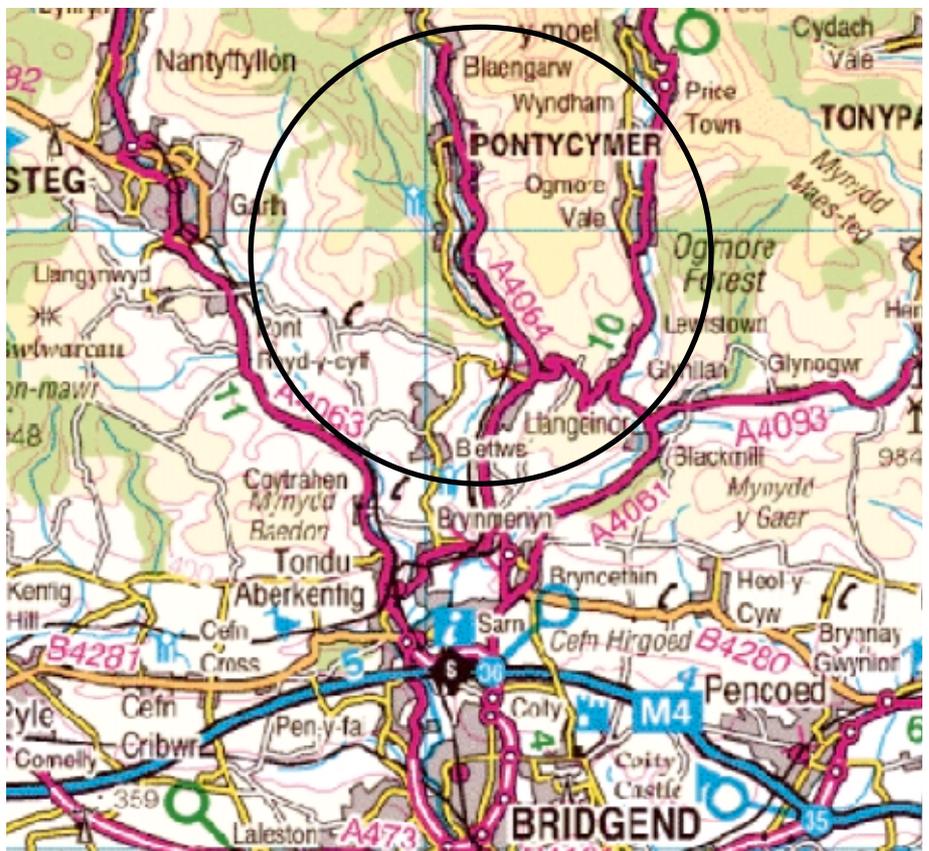
Fig 2. ...with a beautiful rural hinterland

The Valley Villages

The Garw Valley lies within the Mid Glamorgan hills between two other valleys, the Ogmore Valley and Llynfi Valley. The valley is about 6 miles long and is made up of a number of village settlements including Blaengarw, Pontycymer, Pantygog, Pontyrhyl and Lluest. These villages have virtually merged overtime, stretching along the A4064, which is the only road running up the valley. At the southern end of the valley are the villages of Betws, and Llangeinor, and road connections to the adjacent Ogmore and Llynfi Valleys.

The villages themselves nestle in open countryside and feel physically isolated.

Fig 3. The main road ends at Blaengarw



History

The area has a strong association with coal mining. The villages remained largely untouched by the industrial revolution until improvements were made to the transport system, specifically the railway line, which led to a huge investment in mining activity. This attracted people to work and live in the area and created comparative prosperity up to the mid 1920s. During this time, the area provided a range of amenities, including social facilities, schools, workman’s hall and shops.

However, following the Second World War and particularly during the 1950s local industry began to decline at an alarming rate, with the eventual closure of most large sources of local employment. The development of industrial estates in Bridgend has provided the mainstay of employment since the last pit closed in 1985.

Since 1988, a significant programme of land reclamation has been implemented throughout the Upper Garw Valley, which has transformed the area and addressed the environmental dereliction caused by the loss of the mining industry. The area has undergone some significant improvements since the closure of the pits. Large scale land reclamation and landscaping has occurred in the area, particularly around the railway embankment.

Fig 4. The evidence of its mining history have largely disappeared.



Neighbourhood Statistics

We have undertaken an assessment of the current profile of Garw Valley in terms of economic, social and environmental considerations. It draws on a detailed review and analysis of socio-economic data about the wards. A detailed socio-economic analysis of the area is included as Appendix 1.

Despite the positive economic performance of the County Borough in recent years – overall the County has a higher GDP per head than the Welsh average – the Garw Valley has not shared in this economic up-turn. There is a marked contrast between the relative prosperity of the south of the Borough and the Garw Valley.

The Garw Valley suffers from a range of economic, environmental and social problems specifically low incomes, high unemployment, poor educational attainment, housing stress, poor health and a range of attendant social problems. All four wards are in the bottom 12% of the most deprived wards in Wales – indeed Betws is ranked in the bottom 2%. In terms of the education, skills and training domain, the four wards are ranked in the bottom 10%, with Betws the 6th most deprived ward using this domain indicator.

In recognition of these problems, two wards – Betws and Llangeinor – have been designated as priority Community First wards.



Business Survey

As part of the research 25 businesses were interviewed throughout the Garw Valley. Advantages of operating in the area were reported as a loyal customer base and lack of local competition. Disadvantages include lack of parking, low spend, no passing trade and the effect of out of town shopping centres.

The interviews suggest that trade in the valley has now settled at a new level and that the outlook of the area is still positive with a commitment from businesses to staying in the area (59% committed to the area for the next 5 or more years). In the main they are long standing businesses with 65% being in the area for more than 10 years. This is further reinforced by the pattern of ownership with 82% of traders owning their premises and 18% renting.

However this may mask the fact that those who remain “can’t get out”. Certainly businesses report a decline in trade during the last year.

Local employees

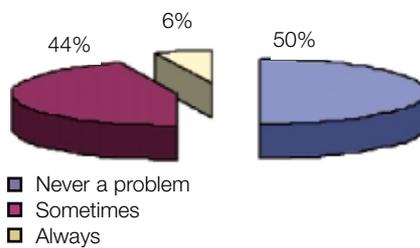


Fig 5. The majority of businesses interviewed had experienced a dip in sales

Turnover

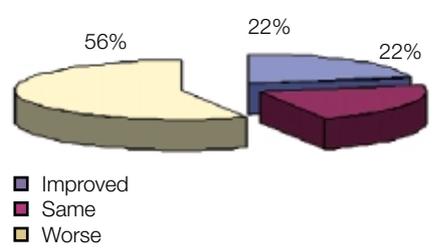


Fig 6. Half of employers found there to be no problem recruiting staff locally.

Retaining these businesses and establishing others is very significant to the valley. 91% of employees are from the local area with females accounting for 75% of this. In the 25 businesses interviewed there were 77 employees, 50 were part time and 27 were full time.



The Policy Context: Developing the Strategy

3

The local regeneration strategy and action programme needs to be set within the context of a wide range of national, regional and local strategies that influence the current and future development of the Valley.

The local framework builds upon recent policy documents in Wales at a national, county and local level specifically:

- National Economic Development Strategy, which sets specific targets for West Wales and the Valleys to increase per capital GDP, create 120,000 new jobs and reduce economic inactivity by 81,000;
- West Wales and the Valleys Objective 1 SPD 2000 – 2006, which is structured around six strategic priorities:
 1. Developing the SME Base
 2. Modernising the Economic Base
 3. Community Regeneration
 4. Promoting Employability and Development of a Learning Society
 5. Rural Development and the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources
 6. Strategic Infrastructure Investment
- A Sustainable Wales – Learning to Live Differently, which sets the scope of sustainable development
- Entrepreneurship Action Plan
- ELWa Corporate Plan
- A Sustainable Economic Regeneration Strategy for Bridgend County Borough
- Communities First programme

The Deposit UDP outlines a number of strategic objectives to secure the future physical regeneration of the Garw Valley, focusing specifically on:

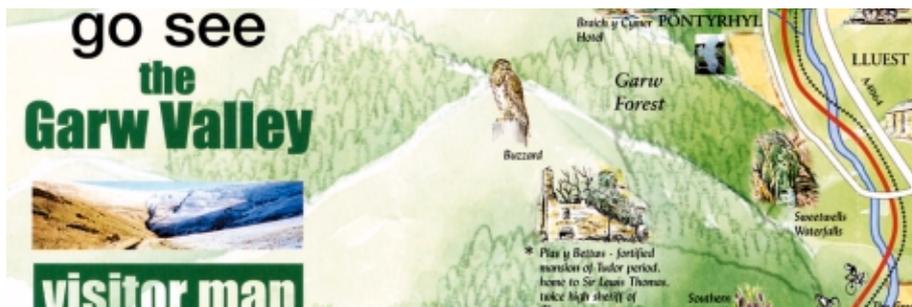
- Completion of the Garw Valley reclamation scheme;
- Implementation of the Garw Valley Green Strategy;
- Implementation of the Betws Green Strategy¹;
- Promotion of leisure and tourism schemes based on the heritage and environmental opportunities;
- Extension of commercial improvement grants.

The Bridgend County Tourism Strategy sets down an important strategic context to develop the tourism sector as an economic generator, which maximises benefits to the local community, whilst minimising adverse effects on the community and the environment. The Garw Valley is identified as providing a “cluster of potential attractions” for future development.

¹ Described in the UDP as an “environmental improvements initiative specifically directed at Betws Village”.



Fig 7. "Go see the Garw Valley!" poster



Local Context

For a relatively small area, a number of programmes and projects are being implemented – many involving local people - in order to improve the quality of life for local residents and secure the future regeneration of the area.

The valley community is diverse, proud and resourceful. The area is also a community of opportunity, which has significant potential particularly in developing its human and environmental assets. Opportunities exist for connecting the Garw Valley community to the regeneration of their own locality and the wider regeneration of Bridgend.

However, the community is also characterised by high levels of social exclusion and social and economic deprivation. The cycle of deprivation is a real experience for people, with people living in poor housing, with few local job opportunities, poor health and a generally poor built environment. There is an actual and perceived sense of isolation amongst the community – tucked away on the edge of Bridgend. Of more concern are the poor educational attainment and a perceived lack of self-esteem and ambition specifically among younger people.

Things are happening in the area, which is generating confidence and renewed optimism for the future. For example the housing stock transfer will realise substantial investment bringing significant benefits to Llangeinor in particular. A core of enthusiastic people is at the forefront of developing and implementing change for the good of the area. A key issue for the community is to engage and empower more local people – particularly young people and families – to become more involved in securing the long-term future of the area. The Communities First programme seeks to build on the opportunities.

Vision and Objectives

4

In response to the problems, challenges and opportunities facing the area, a vision for the area could be built around the following condensed story line:

“The process of reclamation and repair in the Garw Valley is well advanced. The next stage of regeneration will build on that, using the areas natural attributes and appeal to attract new visitors and to reverse the population decline and hence underpin services. The ability of residents to access job opportunities must be advanced. Additional criteria for project selection will be the extent to which they provide employment and training opportunities for local people.”

Like many similar valleys its original raison d’etre has been removed and it is searching for a new role. To determine what this might be it is worth considering the Garw as a place to live, work and visit. A balanced regeneration strategy would have elements targeted at each, with priorities being agreed based on the assessed potential of each.

Under the broad “live, work and visit” umbrella there are a series of objectives. Translating the vision into action will be achieved through securing:

- A community with the capacity to prosper and value the quality of life in the Garw Valley;
- A healthy, confident socially inclusive community who feel safe about themselves and their children
- A range of housing including good quality, affordable homes and a local environment where people can enjoy their leisure time through a range of accessible and safe facilities;
- Innovative programmes developed by young people to raise confidence and self-esteem;
- Improved educational standards and promoting a culture of lifelong learning for all people, young and old;
- People earning decent incomes, supported by affordable, good quality childcare to support parents returning to work;
- Supporting and connecting with local business and creating an environment where community enterprises can flourish.
- Providing the infrastructure in terms of buildings and support, which will facilitate the growth of indigenous small businesses
- Environmental stewardship that will build on the progress that has already been made in amenity and ecological terms
- Incrementally improving the valley’s attractions, accommodation and services to maximise visitor draw

Underpinning the mission and key objectives is a stronger community with the capacity and relevant skills, more involved in the education of their children and learning opportunities for the whole community, and having a greater say in the management and delivery of local services. Crucial to the success of the area will be the degree to which the community transforms from dependency culture into one of self-confidence and enterprise.



Programmes and Actions

5

Programmes and plans will need to be developed and implemented to tackle the barriers and inequalities faced by the most disadvantaged sections of the Garw Valley community. Any programme needs to be adaptable, responding to changing needs, opportunities and threats.

The programme objectives and priorities are set out on the following pages.



PROGRAMME A

A Place to Work: Developing People

Developing People has been identified as one of three core themes to secure the sustainable economic regeneration of Bridgend, and includes priority actions associated with:

- Improving employability and developing pathways to employment;
- Developing a lifelong learning culture, and
- Skills for business.

Fig 8. Local delivery of IT skills



The Regional Statement of Needs and Priorities (South-East Wales) for Bridgend has set down a number of core priorities for intervention and actions, which are translated within the South East Wales Regional Plan. Goals and Priorities include:

- **Essential Skills:** everyone must be able to develop and apply essential skills such as communication, team building, problem solving and the ability to learn. Locally this means working to improve and raise the quality of essential skills delivery and developing the capacity of learning providers to access and deliver essential skills provision.
- **Creating Lifelong Learners:** encouraging more people to embrace lifelong learning. Locally, this is being translated in a number of ways including increasing the number of learners in the poorest wards participating in work-based learning or FEIs, supporting the development of partnerships and networks to instil a culture of lifelong learning for 14-19s etc.
- **Developing the ability to apply knowledge:** to be more effective at exploiting knowledge which exists within businesses, academic institutions and other organisations.
- **Skills for business:** to encourage a culture of investing in workforce development.
- **Learning Communities:** people within communities need the ability to acquire new skills and to become active citizens. Locally this involves working with Community First co-ordinators and others to broaden the learning opportunities available using themes such as sport, music, art and environmental projects to capture the imagination of individuals and develop new learning methods.

Priority areas also include driving up the quality of learning and driving up the demand for learning.



Discussions with ELWA and the Bridgend CCET confirm that little or no local research is available for the Garw Valley area to provide accurate information as to the needs and aspirations of local people with respect to educational attainment, training and skills. This may be one factor that has led to a limited number of local training / skill development projects coming forward.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that a critical issue within the Garw Valley is the young people who refuse training opportunities and the need to address and support individuals in overcoming barriers, which prevent them from engaging in formal and informal learning opportunities. The issue of basic / essential skills development has not been addressed with any real success within the Valley community.

The CCET had identified 11 core recommendations for action between 2002 – 2005 which in discussion with ELWA it combined into 4 main programme areas. The core recommendations which are of particular relevance to the Garw Valley area include:

- **Development of construction skills.** There is evidence that a range of construction skills (including carpentry, plumbing, bricklaying and electrician skills) in the Bridgend area are in short supply. The opportunity for future investment in housing maintenance and repairs (and new build) together with other capital projects in the Valley provides construction opportunities for local people if they can acquire the right sort of skills and training. ELWA is keen to use the development of construction training as a positive “hook” to kick-start basic skills provision in the area. They are keen to work with partners on the ground – CF, CCET and Community Education – to work towards addressing the needs and priorities of the valley communities.
- **Changing the learning mind-set of learners and providers.** Social exclusion and economic inactivity are particularly apparent within the Garw Valley wards giving rise to a negative mind-set to training and employment amongst young people, which needs to be addressed through greater out-reach provision and an increase in the range of learning routes for young people.
- **Developing the capacity of the voluntary sector.** WCVA estimate the level of income of the voluntary sector in Wales to be between £512 and £870 million, which represents an increase on the 1999 estimate, but a 15% decrease in real terms since 1995.

In Wales, an estimated 1.12 million people volunteer, which equating to 48% of the adult population volunteering on average 8 hours of time a month, with WCVA estimating this to value £1.1 billion, the equivalent to 3.6% of the GDP in Wales.

The voluntary sector is also a major employer, with an estimated 22,900 in paid employment within voluntary organisations in Wales, accounting for 1.8% of the paid workforce in Wales.

The sector is regarded as a significant portal to informal learning and providing onward employment opportunities. There is a need to build the capacity of the sector in the Garw Valley to enable the sector to fully participate in the design and delivery of economic and social regeneration.



Fig 9. Blaengarw Institute



A Place to Work: Local Entrepreneurship

The National Assembly for Wales has identified the strengthening of the entrepreneurial culture in Wales as a key strategic objective. In March 2000, it adopted a strategy document “Entrepreneurship Action Plan for Wales: The Sky is the Limit”, which set out 3 core objectives:

- Recognising the Opportunity;
- Creating Enterprises, and
- Going for Growth.

A number of programmes are being implemented through the Implementation Plan for Entrepreneurship: Making it Happen” to develop an entrepreneurial culture and environment, including:

- Promoting a positive image of entrepreneurship;
- Promoting the development of entrepreneurial skills in young people;
- Maximise the contribution of the education system and business participation (particularly by SMEs) in creating a more enterprising culture;
- Reduce the stigma attached to failure;
- Research the barriers that under-represented groups face in starting and growing a business;
- Work in partnership to ensure that all entrepreneurs are able to achieve their potential.

It is recognised that local frameworks and delivery mechanisms needs to be put in place which meets the needs, aspirations and opportunities within areas in Wales.

The LEAP (Local Economy Action Plan) Programme in Bridgend was created in response to the understanding that there are problems of deprivation in the northern Valleys’ areas, and that traditional economic development measures will not be sufficient to address the problems. The team is involved in proactively looking at ways to promote economic development through supporting community enterprises and helping under-represented groups start in businesses.

The LEAP team continues to be involved in providing advice, guidance and support to a number of groups and individuals within the Garw Valley who are at the first stage of start up activity. The team are planning to increase its

penetration in the Garw through outreach work, including regular weekly sessions within the area.

While there have been some good individual examples of actions to address entrepreneurship, they have had limited overall impact because they have been disjointed. An effective Action Plan must weave together unconnected elements, ensuring that actions are on a scale and well coordinated enough to make a difference. This means pulling together into one implementation plan what is done in:

- Education (Primary, Secondary, Further and Higher)
- Community
- Confidence development prior to engaging in entrepreneurship
- Business start up
- Existing businesses.

In partnership with other stakeholders, including Community First and Business in Focus, a co-ordinated programme could be developed in the Garw Valley to synergise current and future programmes to increase the overall understanding of business issues within education, raise entrepreneurship awareness and assistance, provide product development facilities, and support to start-up enterprises – all within a positive environment to facilitate economic and social related improvements.

Capacity is clearly an issue; however, future activities could include:

- Mount a local awareness campaign promoting an entrepreneurial culture, which links with the national campaign.
- Embed entrepreneurship education through the whole educational process i.e. primary and secondary education, further and higher education, and career development.
- Provide tasters, which widen people's horizons as to entrepreneurship opportunities, specifically with regards to tourism and construction.
- Stimulate entrepreneurial behaviour within local groups.
- Develop a programme of start-up support based on best practice, which reflects the actual types of support required, by different types of businesses.
- Develop funding and advice initiatives tailored explicitly to the needs of growth-orientated businesses.



Fig 10. A major new employment opportunity is secured



Fig 11. BCBC have developed workshop units at Pyle and elsewhere

Possible Barriers

Under the **A Place to Work** theme a coordinated programme needs to be put in place to tackle the fundamental barriers for work and recognise the opportunities, which exist. Those barriers include:

- Lack of skills and poor educational attainment levels;
- Only one major employer;
- Lack of interest in training, low self-esteem and despondency, particularly among young people;
- Child care responsibilities;
- Lack of entrepreneurship;
- Fragmented provision of advice and support services;
- Lack of start up accommodation.

Programme Objectives

The programme objectives include:

- Enabling those presently in insecure, unsustainable and low earning occupations to move up the job ladder through vocational training delivered locally, and instilling the confidence and ambition in local people to apply for higher level jobs.
- Nurturing and supporting the establishment of community enterprise and self-employment. This approach will build on essential economic and social services and activities as a means of generating job stability and new employment e.g. community transport initiative, child care and crèche provision etc.
- Comprehensive and targeted plan to get people back into work through for example the provision of affordable childcare, pre-employment advice and support, local employment agency linking local employers to local people.
- Establish learning as a priority in the area, specifically among post 16, linking vocational and non-vocational education.
- Providing low cost commercial units through wherever possible converting/refurbishing current empty space.

PROGRAMME B A Place to Live

Following the rapid growth in population in the 1960s Bridgend's rate of growth has declined but the population is still increasing. It is projected to grow by 7,300 (5.6%) to 137,541 by 2016. (UDP). This and the effect of smaller household formation translate into a demand for 8,050 dwellings by 2016.

The UDP identifies within the Garw Valley capacity for 110 units in addition to small infill sites. This represents less than 2% of the total growth projection and a third of its "fair share". Added to this is the loss of existing units due to dilapidation and disrepair.

There are a number of factors influencing housing decisions.

Location

The Garw Valley is between 1 and 7 miles from Junction 36 of the M4. Journey time to Cardiff is 30 mins and Swansea 40 mins. Road travel is the only option from the valley. Distances to the M4 aren't great and the road network based around the A4064 is "of a limited standard and specification" with the need for improvements along certain sections. However the UDP accepts that there is "limited potential for increasing its capacity". Recently the section south of Llangeinor has been improved and the Engineers have no plans for further schemes over the next five years as their resources are focussed on alleviating congestion around Bridgend and the M4 junctions. Most of the housing, even that in the centre of settlements allows for easy access into the countryside, and there are spectacular vistas.

Fig 12. The valley is close to centres of population



Housing Choice

As elsewhere where housing was developed to satisfy the workforce demands of a particular industry, much of the stock in the Garw was built around the same time and is in need of maintenance and refurbishment.



Fig 13. An attractive cottage



Fig 14. Council housing

Perhaps the greatest threat to an area like the Garw is that property values fall below the point where it is economically viable to maintain them. This is already the case in communities in the north east of England and parts of the English coal field. There is evidence that the process is underway in the Garw with commercial premises boarded up and increasingly residential property being abandoned.



Fig 15. Empty properties in the heart of the community



Fig 16: Limited activity by volume house builders

Development activity by major house builders in the valley has been limited. Lovell's regeneration arm was the contractor for a partnership scheme in Betws involving the council and Wales & West Housing Association. There has also been a separate, successful speculative development there. The contrast in land values and hence house prices between the Garw Valley and Bridgend and even more so with Cardiff does provide an opportunity.

House Prices: The Garw Valley

Fig 17. House Prices: The Garw Valley

	Llangeinor	Blaengarw	Betws	Pontycymmer	Bridgend
Detached					106,132
Semi-detached			37,214	28,000	61,582
Terraced	30,070	25,855		24,182	42,203
Flat					45,455
All property	58,229	29,118	45,210	24,506	68,244

Source: The Land Registry: 2001 Census, ONS



Shopping

There is significant retail competition in the county with the centres of Bridgend, Maesteg and Porthcawl being supplemented by major edge and out of town developments in particular the extensive retail park at Junction 36. The UDP also states that there is still a significant loss of expenditure on comparison goods to Swansea and Cardiff.

Pontycymmer and Blaengarw are District Centres in the retail hierarchy. There are number of voids in the two settlements. The voids and lack of investment in operational businesses contributes to the poor environmental appearance of the main shopping streets.

Fig 8. Co-op at Blaengarw



Possible measures to redress this are covered in the section dealing with employment.

Leisure Facilities

The valley has a number of soccer and rugby clubs. There is a leisure centre at Pontycymmer but this is in need of refurbishment, and regrettably the swimming pool at Llangeinor is to be lost. Alternative uses for the site are under consideration. There are good examples of community based arts initiatives such as the hall at Blaengarw and Valley and Vale in Betws. Two community centres are locally managed and funded, and as elsewhere this proves to be a constant struggle but also provides a major opportunity.

Fig 19. The pool at Llangeinor



There are also abundant opportunities for informal recreation and adventure hobbies afforded by the surrounding countryside. These are looked at in more detail in the A Place to Visit section below.

Stabilising the population and benefiting from any growth should be a key aspiration of the regeneration strategy. Shops and services will not develop without customers and clients. The physical location of the valley compounds the feeling that the community is alienated from the organisations that control services delivered in the area.

In partnership with public agencies, the programme will need to establish co-ordinated and efficient local services, which meet the needs of, are accountable to, and where practical the community is given an opportunity to manage and operate the services.

Programme Objectives

The programme objectives include:

- Protecting, enhancing and improving access to the green open spaces in the area;
- Providing good quality, well maintained and accessible recreation space;
- Safe routes around the area, with priority given to pedestrian and cycle links;
- Decent affordable housing;
- Broadening the range of housing on offer.

A key element of the strategy will be aimed at preventing young people from entering crime and being involved in “nuisance” activities through providing outreach work, active support to parents and family support programmes.



PROGRAMME C **A Place to Visit**

Tourism directly contributes (overnight and day visitors) more than £2.0 billion to the Welsh economy or approximately 7% of GDP, which is more of a contribution to the Welsh economy than agriculture and forestry, which contributes 2.4% and the construction industry, which contributes 5.3%. There are 100,000 people employed in tourism jobs in Wales.

The pattern of both domestic and overseas holiday visits to the UK has changed considerably over the last ten to twenty years. There is a clear trend for British residents to take their annual holiday abroad. Long holidays of 4 nights or more in the UK by the British have declined. The UK's market share of international tourism arrivals and receipts have lagged behind the European average in the face of competition from newly emerging tourism destinations. However, the British are taking more holidays of a shorter duration with shorter lead times throughout the year within the UK. In 1991, short breaks represented 22.5% of the total UK holidays taken by the British and in 1998 this had grown to 32%.

In Wales, there is a similar pattern to the UK with short breaks accounting for 28% of all domestic holiday spend in 1998 compared to 18% in 1990. There are now more holiday visitors overall, but they stay for less time.

The domestic (UK) market provides the main base for tourism in Wales, attracting an 8% share of all UK tourism spend and just a 1.4% share of total overseas spend. The overseas market in terms of numbers is low, but it is a relatively high spending sector of the market (£269 million in 1999, representing over 19% of total overnight tourism receipts).

Tourism is a volatile sector. Since 2001, a number of significant events have occurred that will affect tourism revenue and visitor figures in the near future. The outbreak of foot and mouth disease, September 11th and the Iraq conflict will have a significant effect on the overseas market.

During 1999, activity based tourism accounted for 17% of all UK holiday trips and figures, 15% in Wales. In respect of short breaks and long holidays the percentage of tourists in Wales who took part in activities whilst on holiday was in fact above the overall UK average. In 1999, 33% of visitors to Wales took part in activities involving walking and cycling. Activity-based holidays are now recognised as an important growth sector by the WTB. The salient points that emerge from analysis of local tourism product opportunity within the Garw Valley is the cluster of potential attractions, which provide a basis for a range of activity holidays, notably those associated with walking, cycling and horse riding. For example, cycle tourism is currently estimated to be worth as much as £18 million to Wales and it could expand and be worth over £41 million by 2007 (WTB).

Fig 20. Canoers in the Neath Valley



Specialist facilities have been developed throughout Wales, including Coed y Brenin, where there has been an increase in visitor numbers of 14,000 in 1994 to 170,000 in the last year.

An important element of the WTB strategy is the development of “mountain bike resorts”, similar to Alpine ski resorts. There is a need to ensure that such development link into local services – retail, entertainment and hospitality – to ensure maximum community benefit. The lack of hostels or bunkhouse type bed space is a major drawback if the Garw Valley is to exploit the potential increasing demand arising from activity tourism products.

The Garw Valley is well placed to exploit the activity tourism market segments, being located in beautiful countryside with good walking amenities and being the close to the M4 junction. The development of tourism facilities, in the main through the actions of locally-based entrepreneurs, is an appropriate sector to fulfil the aims and objectives of the Regeneration Strategy for the Garw Valley. However, the impact of tourism will be marginal due to the lack of appropriate facilities (such as quality accommodation and catering, retail product and evening entertainment), which is a major problem. The Valley lacks the range of amenities necessary to become a tourist resort and also lacks any major draw for visitors in terms of shopping, entertainment or attractions.



Fig 21. Wonderful cycling and walking country

Tourism is already an important part of the local economy. In 2002, it was estimated that: £172 million was spent by tourists in the area, 3,329 people were employed in tourism-related activities and 3,138,000 visitors came to Bridgend County Borough.

There are clear opportunities for tourism growth both within the County generally and the Garw Valley specifically. The Garw’s proximity to the M4 and the “cluster” of potential attractions in the Garw Valley has implications for expanding the tourism product.

The attractiveness of the natural setting of the valley is undisputable, and the potential certainly exists to increase the number of visitors. However the degree to which tourism will provide a cornerstone of regeneration activity will depend on a number of factors.

The projects put forward are complimentary, seeking to combine the experience of staying in the valley with easy access to a range of activities. There has been a growth in interest in activity type holidays which are typically short break and would allow participants to try a range of “new” sports such as mountain biking, kiting, grass skiing, as well as canoeing, walking, and riding. The Garw is well





Fig 22. Attention to details raises the image



Fig 23. Good value pub food

placed to provide all of these. There are existing long and short routes for walkers and riders (though the bridleway network is limited). These have marketing identities which can be built upon e.g. From Sky to Sea. They make even more sense when seen as part of a network which covers the valleys and beyond. Similarly with cycle routes, where access to different types of terrain is readily available. The potential for canoeing is limited by the depth of the water features that have been installed to date.

The kiting outlet which has built a niche reputation is a good example of what is possible. The notion that the railway could be used to go between points, or e.g. take cyclists up the valley for them to enjoy the descent has its attractions. There is a view that the whole of the upper valley could be seen as a Park where the work of reclamation having been completed with the removal of the previous industrial blots, the emphasis is now on promoting biodiversity and the sustainable management of the environment. Rangers could be employed to tackle the remaining issues and new ones as they arise. In due course they would help interpret the valley for visitors. This would be a supportive context for the development of outdoor activity based tourism.

There is a need though to undertake rigorous research and planning in order to develop the correct competitive mix. The Garw would be competing for visitors with a number of already developed areas and attractions. For example the UK mountain-biking centre is based in Dolgellau and Afan Argoed in neighbouring Neath and Port Talbot has a well established course and developments there have made it one of the WTB's most successful Tourism Growth Areas. There would be no support for developments which compete head on with others and undermine the viability of all.

Programme Objectives

The programme objectives under this strategic priority include:

- Build on and exploit the natural assets of the Valley to attract and retain visitors to the area;
- Develop new market opportunities specifically the support and development of activity-based attractions, services and facilities, to complement developments in adjacent areas;
- Prepare a co-ordinated programme of Valley-events for the benefit of local residents and visitors;
- Develop the tourism product to provide services and facilities to attract and retain visitors / visitor spend in the local area
- Improve the accommodation base in the area.

Assessment of Projects

6

The vision, objectives programme provide the context which informs the regeneration framework for the Garw Valley. This has been applied to the assess projects, which are being developed for Objective 1 funding in the area.

All projects which were included in the list supplied by the client have been reviewed and in addition there is a short commentary on Garw Valley Community Enterprise Centre. The projects have been organised under the three strategic themes identified. Additionally gaps in project areas have been flagged up.



Assessment of Projects

**PROGRAMME A
A Place to Work**

The current project list is deficient in employment initiatives. Naturally the tourism projects have employment outputs but the importance of employment issues to the valley demands that there are specific measures targeted at increasing the number and quality of jobs and range of training opportunities that local people can access.

Local Renewable Energy Initiative has recently been subject of a feasibility exercise undertaken by a specialist consultancy, Dulas Ltd., Machynlleth. The study concluded that the catchment area was not large enough to warrant the required capital expenditure.

➤ Project development issues - None

The Spring Water Bottling Initiative is simply an idea at this stage to capitalise of a gushing spring, known locally as Sweet Wells. It is on Forestry Commission owned land and the promoter hopes it might form part of their strategy of diversification.

➤ Project Development Issues – The Forestry Commission have no plans to pursue this currently. There are other possible sources which would need to be compared. A prerequisite would be to identify a promoter and what interest exists to take project forward.

The Conversion of Trem-Y-Mor (former residential home) involves finding a new use for this building which was vacated in 1999.

Fig 24. The Conversion of Trem-Y-Mor (former residential home)



The premises require refurbishment of the envelope, improvements to access arrangements and car parking and reorganisation of internal space. BCBC architects department are progressing feasibility, but this is not been given priority as no budget for the project exists. The proposed new uses include:

- Providing office accommodation to bring together teams of staff from the caring professions, and voluntary and statutory sectors, with a focus on the valley. These would be based on the first floor where c. 60 could be accommodated.
- Developing a community facility and training resource on the ground floor. There would be a centre of excellence for the training of home care staff (of which there are 500 in the county borough) and other carers, and the space would also be suitable and available for community conferences etc.

➤ Project Development Issues - the project’s objectives are consistent with the strategy being advocated on a number of counts:

- Bringing redundant accommodation back into use.
- Bringing service delivery closer to the service users.
- Creating and basing employment in the valley, with possible spin offs for local services
- Developing community facilities.

Before being supported though the project would need to be subject to an appraisal which considered the following option analysis:

- Can the site with its attractive vistas and location on the edge of the settlement be used for housing and the receipt used to develop elsewhere the facility desired?
- Are there elements of the project, mainly training, which could be accommodated within the nearby Betws Centre, aiding that building’s viability, without compromising its community use?
- Funding – The building is corporately owned and Social Services have no budget. How easy will it be to attract funding for a development with this proportion of council accommodation?

Garw Community Enterprise Centre – this project being promoted by the Garw Valley Community Co-operative Limited addresses a number of issues which are key to the future of the valley. It seeks to promote community enterprise, provides workshop accommodation and provides a solution for an unused building which would otherwise run further into disrepair. The premises are located at the centre of the settlement and are accessible by public transport. Its aims are worthy of support and it appeared to have secured funding through the Objective 1 process.

Fig 25. Conversion opportunity for workshops



➤ Project Development Issues – this project was not included on the list because the funding application was far advanced.

Our initial concerns were around the capacity of the organisation to, not only deliver the project but to manage it thereafter. There are already a number of community based organisations active within the community. The developing format of strategic and funding partnerships are making further demands on the



time of community/voluntary sector representatives and it is important to ensure that organisations with a long term management obligation, unlike those with short term project or funding lifetimes, have in place plans for sustaining their structure. (Further consideration is given to organizational capacity in the Section above.)

During the course of the study two other concerns emerged:

- The condition of the building which has deteriorated further since the bid was submitted.
- The availability of alternative locations and the notion that in such a linear community there would be merit in a programme of conversion of a series of buildings to workshop use along the valley. This would make the employment opportunities more accessible and tie in with other proposed strategic objectives around reducing the amount of empty space, and would be an interesting approach with relevance beyond the valley.



Fig 26. There are no shortage of candidates for commercial conversion

To take such an approach forward would require an audit to identify a long list of candidates, a fuller appraisal of short listed candidates and the preparation of a business plan covering funding, development, management and ownership considerations.

The Create Project was the only one to address directly the human issues around employee and business development. Whilst the efforts of existing agencies have been strengthened by initiatives such as LEAP, there is a need to focus more around nurturing an enterprise culture and increasing the rate of business start up in the valley.

Fig 27. The Institute acts as a hub of community activity



This project is concerned with the how individual and community ideas / activities can be grown into social or private enterprises. Creation would provide training in building business plans, marketing, product expansion, and would work as a signposting agency.

An Objective 1 application has been worked up and funding could be available if sponsorship arrangement can be put in place, as Creation may not be able to fulfil this role.

- Project Development Issues – formalise how this project relates to others with shared objectives, and resolve project sponsorship issues.



Assessment of Projects

PROGRAMME B A Place to Live

Empty Property Initiative – The only project to deal directly with the issues around the deterioration in part of the housing stock is that promoted by the GVRF. The project entitled Garw Valley Fresh Start Pilot Project seeks to attend to the problems of empty and derelict buildings of all types - shops, chapels and churches, pubs and clubs, public buildings and residential properties. They propose the employment of a Co-ordinator who will:

- Identify and contact building owners
- Take action to bring properties back into use
- Temporarily improve empty properties through murals etc.

These proposals certainly represent a step in the right direction but fall short of offering a solution. There are also issues around how this could best be resourced, with no certainty of sufficient funding in the short term to make an appointment, and even less clarity around sustainability. A theme returned to in the delivery section is how best the programme can be integrated at a strategic and operational level. It is apparent that this project's objectives dovetail closely with other parts of the programme.

Fig 28. The amount of empty property needs to be quantified



- Project Development Issues - This work needs to be undertaken. However it is unclear whether a full time employee is fundable or indeed desirable. Though a significant part of the work is an audit, it does not necessarily lend itself to a consultancy exercise as the intractable issues involved call for tenacity and perseverance over a longer time frame. This project could be one delivered alongside others if "Team Garw Valley" was established.

Betws/Garw Valley Healthy Living Initiative - There are concerns in Betws with youth issues and with vandalism. Apart from the Betws Community Centre managed by Groundwork there is no other centre based youth provision in the area. (Though BCBC have detached youth workers in the area, the Boys and Girls Clubs arrange football activity and arts projects are run by Valley and Vale.) The girls and boys school building has been condemned and the Centre in its current form cannot provide the facilities that the condemned hall provided. A proposal exists that when the condemned hall is sold the land value will be used in creating an extension of the Betws Centre. Although other options including an adjunct to the football pavilion exist, believed to be the favoured option.

Groundwork now manages the Betws Centre and has been successful in a National Lottery bid for a Healthy Living Initiative targeted at the whole Garw Valley. Staff were appointed in the Spring of 2003. Twelve core projects are

being developed. Other projects that Groundwork would want to undertake are not fundable through NOF.

The building consists of a café which is intending to target a wider range of customers – this is being linked with the healthy living project which is currently being run from the centre. In addition the local library, now designated as a Life Centre, is situated in the centre with the council paying rent. The credit union are renting an office space, and it houses a computer suite which runs BCBC courses, computer clubs (three nights a week), and is used by Bridgend College. Local children are also encouraged to get involved in community issues. Surgeries are held in the centre with the Police and M.P



Fig 29. Library and other community uses under one roof



Fig 30. Good facilities for seminars and workshops

A conference room has also been developed on the first floor which has proven to be successful although it is recognised that the local community need to be made aware of the facility. A bid for European funding for access adaptations to the building has been approved by WEFO.

Plans to use the hall for bingo are being developed with the area behind the stage (changing rooms) possibly being developed into offices. A separate crèche building is situated next to centre. This is on a retainer by the local authority. There are no registered child minders in Betws and it is unlikely that the crèche will run full time.

- Project Development Issues – There are areas of project activity which could be undertaken if revenue funding match could be identified. The challenge here, as elsewhere within this strategy, is to determine the optimum delivery arrangements for these projects and how this project interrelates and dovetails into the Communities First process.

Getting Engaged – The aims of this project are around generating involvement in the community, realising energy and innovation, reducing isolation and promoting well being. As traditional activities and ties break down new opportunities which promote social intercourse and cohesion need to be developed. These should be locally delivered and easily accessible.

- Project Development Issues - The capacity to deliver the project exists through Creation, but the issue of whether that Trust is in a position to sponsor European projects at this stage in its development is in doubt and some other agency may need to undertake this role.

Youth Drop-in Resource Centre – As in every community there is an issue around groups of young people congregating on street corners. In reality the actual level of crime in the valley is low by comparable standards, a fact possibly



attributable to their being only one road in and out of the valley. The incidence of all crime is lower, including drug related offences.



Fig 31. The successful community resource centre at Ferndale



Fig 32. Involving young people in project design

The council has secured £2.9 million from Objective 1 for 25 projects under the Youth Focus banner, managed by Dr Gareth Price. This will allow an increase in youth provision in the valley which is currently limited to one youth club and a detached youth worker. The aspiration is to set up a Youth Information Shop combined with diversionary activities that could include media facilities and a recording studio. The project seeks to lease a town centre building and has not been able to identify anything suitable to date. This provides an excellent opportunity both for an innovative youth facility to be established and for a community organisation to acquire and develop an empty property and lease it to this council sponsored project.

➤ Project Development Issues - With the ongoing revenue funding in place the task is to identify suitable premises and assemble a development model and funding package that will house the project in the short to mid term, and also be capable of delivering longer term benefits.

Parking proposals – Oxford St Pontycymmer – Carriageways which were built to accommodate two way traffic are not now wide enough to cope with the additional extensive on-street car parking. Hence at pinch points such as Oxford St, traffic flow is restricted.

This project has been specified for some time and involves the introduction of a limited regulated parking regime at a cost of c.£6000. Even at this budget the council are not convinced that the benefits warrant the expenditure and the same applies to the potential of off-road parking schemes at the old cinema site and Ffalda Square. One way schemes have been given limited consideration. The Council’s view is that the bus corridor improvements are now complete, other than a few minor schemes.

Fig 33. Demand for off-street parking is significant



➤ Project Development Issues – We propose that feasibility work be commissioned to resolve the following:

- Can parking restrictions be policed,
- Will they win the support of local traders?
- Is there potential for creating further off–street car parking through selective demolition of targeted properties which are empty and dilapidated. Such a scheme, with careful landscaping treatment could enhance the high streets.
- How can the existing off–street provision be improved through landscaping, perimeter treatment, signage and resurfacing?

Conversion of neglected allotments to communal organic plots –

This project arises out concern that the cultivation and care of allotments has declined often to the point of disuse. There is not significant support of the project and the existing Allotment Society is not well organised. It is possible to see this project as part of a programme linked to promoting a healthy life style. As it stands with no obvious champion or source of funding it is unlikely to develop.

The idea that locally produced food could be supplied to the adventure centre is a good tie in, but seasonality would dictate that the kitchens there would have to secure contracts with commercial sources.

➤ Project Development Issues – If this project is to proceed it will require a champion, and clear ideas of how it may evolve.



Assessment of Projects

**PROGRAMME C
A Place to Visit**

Fig 34. The established Brecon Mountain Railway

Bridgend Valleys Railway (Restoring the Daffodil Line) - The society promoting this project was formed in 1988 and now has over 100 members. In addition to the society, which is a registered charity, there is a company which actually owns the rights and lease over the track. The track was in use as a mineral line until 1997 and carried 13 million tons of coal to Margam.



In order to get the rights the Society promoted a Transport and Works Act order at the cost of £70,000, grant aided from the Millennium Lottery Fund. They have a lease rather than a freehold interest to avoid taking on the liability of the bridges which remains with the freeholder. The lease is for 125 years and was acquired with support of Groundwork and a £125,000 Millennium Lottery Fund grant. Groundwork used part of the grant to develop the cycle path. Since then the Society has invested a further £45,000 in an engine shed and leased a diesel multiple unit which requires stripping down before being serviceable. Hence the achievements to date are admirable. A small band of core volunteers undertake all the promotion, administrative and fund raising activity as well as physical works on site such as cleaning drainage ditches and cutting undergrowth.



Fig 35. Lines need regular ongoing maintenance



Fig 36. The engine shed is almost complete

There are still significant challenges ahead of them which they have phased into three development stages.

- Stage 1 would see a train running between Llangeinor and Pontycymmer a distance of 2.5 miles.
- Stage 2 extends the journey to Blaengarw Countryside Park, a further 2 miles
- Stage 3 is for a southern terminus in Brynmenyn and a platform in Tondy. The group accepts that there is no prospect in the medium term of reopening the route to Bridgend. The viability of this project depends on a number of

things. It is essential that a steam locomotive is used as this is what attracts interest. The society is aware of this and has plans in place.

There are already 137 heritage railways in the UK, 20 in Wales, 7 in South Wales. There are a further 40 Museums of railway interest.

➤ Project Development Issues – Sustainability of human and financial resources. The amount of effort to develop the project and secure the ongoing maintenance of the line is significant.

Funding – Two previous applications for regeneration funding have been turned down and with granting criteria based on output generation which the project cannot currently evidence it is difficult to be optimistic.

Option Analysis – Current business planning assumptions are based on significant investment and meeting targets set for the short to mid term, some of which have already slipped. A different strategy has been considered. One which depends on much more limited annual funding and a much longer development period with significant milestones identified along the route. For this to be successful the Company will need a staff resource to co-ordinate the development, promotional and operational issues.

Mynydd Carn Adventure Centre – This project involves the creation of an adventure centre on a plateau at the head of the valley which enjoys wonderful views of the valley and easy access to the surrounding countryside. The project’s exciting vision has won the support of the community and important backers. The promoters are committed and energetic.



Fig 37. Mynydd Carn enjoys a wonderful setting



Fig 38. Camping and caravanning can be used to test a site’s appeal

A feasibility study has been undertaken by Community Enterprise Wales and design work progressed. The projected capital costs are in excess of £2.5 million, and revenue costs of c. £350,000 p.a. The project will create 16 jobs. The target audience will include school groups, corporate organisations and families.

➤ Project Development Issues – Marketing plan: target audience, numbers. Is the market growing? What are the demographics in terms of age groups targeted? Is Local Government expenditure on this increasing? If not what will be the projects strategy to build market share. Does the emphasis on disadvantage / school groups impact on the project’s ability to attract families and corporate business e.g. by the type of accommodation offered.

Regeneration outputs – the project creates employment. How can the



regeneration potential of the project be maximised – how can ancillary spend in valley facilities be secured.

Capacity to undertake project – Is there sufficient experience and expertise on the board to undertake the project. What thought has been given to the mid term implications of operating the centre?

Funding – The WTB have indicated that they do not consider the Business Plan sufficiently robust or detailed to consider supporting the project.

Option Analysis – Are there ways in which the project can be tested, incrementally developed through e.g. using camping or caravan accommodation in the first instance.

Bunk/Barn Accommodation – This project is allied to the one above and additionally questions whether property owners could be incentivised to refurbish and upgrade property for self catering and B&B type accommodation.

➤ Project Development Issues – To derive the maximum benefit from visitors, converting day visits to overnight stays is very desirable. Many factors will influence this from the quality of accommodation on offer to the availability of places to eat, evening activities and even sense of security. Currently there is nothing in place in terms of an assessment of how many bed-spaces might be made available and the project would be commencing from the most fundamental level.

Dr Richard Price Interpretation Centre – There are two potential projects linked to this centre. One grows from the concern that many of the old or traditional craft skills in fields such as spinning, weaving, baking etc are being lost to society. The concept is to establish a centre for traditional crafts, where people with the old skills could be encouraged to establish themselves, and hopefully to communicate those skills to other, younger people, so that they can be preserved.

There are a number of reasons for considering the location of such a centre at Dr Richard Price centre including its size. The Centre is comparatively easy to reach and has an adequate car park; and should be even easier to access if and when the railway development goes ahead. The Bridgend Wood Carving and Turning Group has already been persuaded to re-locate there.

Fig 39. Well located but unattractive



The other project proposes a visitor centre based on the local connections with Dr Richard Price.

➤ Project Development Issues - When this assessment was undertaken very little development work or planning had been undertaken in respect of either proposal. Nor had any discussions taken place with the Centre management committee who would need to be fully involved and whose vision for the future of the centre is currently very different.

Potential Visitor Attraction Ty'nton Farm – Ty'nton Farm is associated with Dr Richard Price and also appears to date back to 1650. It is architecturally interesting. The house is in private ownership and in need of restoration. In anticipation that a project might be feasible the National Trust, which is keen to increase its portfolio in Wales, has been approached as has the Heritage Lottery Fund. The former often now expect a dowry towards maintenance as well as the property gifted. HLF support is becoming less easy. However the key to this project is that the owner / occupant Mrs Carpenter, an elderly lady does not want any disruption and is unwilling to cooperate with proposals at this stage.

Project Development Issues – Given the current scenario it is proposed that the Council (and any partners) agrees its aspirations for the property and conveys these to the family, who would be given the encouragement to discuss the options at a time suitable to themselves.

Garw Valley Access to Woodlands and Garw Fechan Woodland Park/Darren Fawr are closely allied projects. The woodland particularly to the west of the valley has the potential for many activities. Encouraging increased access and interpretation could be achieved by employing Park Rangers or Community Wardens. This concept was considered some years ago when Gnoll Park and Deri/Bargoed were seen as examples of good practice. Thinking has now moved on and there is a considerable body of experience. Rangers/wardens can be catalysts who develop projects. As well as focussing on visitors they an important role in promoting bio-diversity and sustainability. Groundwork has funding for improving accessibility.

Significantly the role of the Forestry Commission has changed to place a much greater emphasis on community benefit. They have a long term planting plan for the valley which will see much more broad leafed trees replacing conifer plantations. The Commission have undergone a consultation exercise with the community and have recently appointed a dedicated member of staff to the valley. In the neighbouring Afan Valley they have made a joint appointment with the Council, WDA and WTB to take forward the Special Interest Tourism Growth Area, and this has developed into a very successful initiative.

➤ Project Development Issues – This project has the potential to combine a number of themes. The idea that this provides part of the next phase of reclamation, focussed on furthering the bio-diversity in the valley and ensuring that the valley does not suffer from degradation has relevance far beyond this valley and could be developed in consort with other regions and countries. The WDA has been keen to work with the council in developing these ideas through the Bridgend Biodiversity Partnership.

The woodland will create employment opportunities, and has potential for attracting visitors. Celtic Bird Tours is one example of a private initiative to realise the potential for wildlife tourism.





Fig 41. Opportunities emerge as landscape matures



Fig 42. A traditional link with horses exists

The woodland is also a community resource. Interestingly one primary school head stated that 90% of the curriculum could be delivered through the forest classroom initiative. Again optimising the potential here will depend on co-ordination at the strategic and operational levels.

Off-road commercial bike course – There is interest in the valley in this activity. The topography and vegetation lends itself to it, but the current locations in which it takes place are inappropriate and lead to conflict with residents. Those involved aren't formed into any cohesive group and it is difficult to see how the project could proceed without that.

➤ Project Development Issues – The Forestry Commission are exploring the potential for this form of use over the area of their land holding. There are numerous issues around conflict with other users, noise nuisance, liabilities etc. The project needs to be worked up in this regional rather than local context.

Equestrian Centre – The valley has a tradition of horse ownership, though as facilities are inadequate horses are often kept in poor conditions. Some stables are derelict and the ownership is unknown. There are specialist equestrian operations in the valley.

CCW funded a study several years ago. Further feasibility needs to be conducted and Groundwork has got £5,000 towards cost. To look at improving conditions and using bridal ways. Aspiration for national bridal way to mirror cycle path. There is a local horse group (BHS) although they are not well organised. A hunt occurs at Llangynor.

➤ Project Development Issues – Project needs to be part of the programme and plans to be revisited once the feasibility exercise is completed.

A Programme of Events – This proposal would be in keeping with the balanced incremental development approach being advocated. Events and festivals are a means by which interest and confidence can be nurtured and concepts tested without over committing capital. The council has bid for substantial funding from Objective 1 for a project entitled Rural Economy Action Launchpad. The funding includes the cost of a co-ordinator.

➤ Project Development Issues – Integrate the range of events into the regeneration strategy for the valley in order that it supports the other elements and is dovetailed with other activities.

Delivering the Strategy and Action Plan

7

The Garw Valley has a number of active regeneration organisations, more than might be expected given the size of the population. Group formation can arise for geographical reasons, and the valley's communities are spread out over six miles and there is a parochialism and rivalry between settlements. Or project themes can generate their own structures – Building Preservation Trusts being a good example. Division and dissatisfaction with the status quo can also see the emergence of new groups who may feel excluded from the process and to some extent this can lead to increased levels of activity and healthy competition.

However funding bodies will require reassurance that there is sufficient capacity to sustain the organisational framework, and that groups are representative. Crucially communities which do develop are those who can unite around a shared vision and avoid duplication of effort and actions which pull in different directions.

It is apparent from the work already underway that there is the potential for the community/voluntary sector to develop further and contribute significantly to the future revitalisation of the area. For this to be realised a framework needs to be developed which represents all villages in the Valley and increases the number of residents actively involved in community life, particularly those who are currently under-represented e.g. those on the new housing estates.

The strategy needs to focus on:

- The need for outreach work;
- Improving channels of communication and activities between different villages and sections of the community;
- Resources for those sections of the community who are most disadvantaged;
- Fully utilising resources such as the Objective 1 programme.

This Strategy and Action Plan emphasises the importance of an integrated approach to the challenges and opportunities facing the Garw Valley. The programmes and initiatives focus on physical projects to revitalise the valley as well as the software of economic and social regeneration.

In terms of delivery, the programmes and projects will be delivered by a variety of public, private and third sector agencies over a 3-8 year timeframe. An important issue will be to clarify roles and responsibilities in terms of delivery and implementation. In terms of taking the strategy forward, there will need to be a clear definition of enabling, sponsoring, development and funding roles. We see it as important for the Garw Valley Strategy to be owned and directed by a strong Partnership Board, clear about its role and responsibilities in driving forward this challenging programme.

There is already a plethora of regional, sub regional and local organisations involved in promoting and securing the economic and social development of the area. These include:



Area	Organisation / Partnership
Regional	WDA / ELWa
County	Bridgend County Borough
Town/Village Partnerships	Garw Valley Forum Llangeinor , Betws
Others	Groundwork

The Garw Valley Forum has been successful in drawing together organisations and individuals who have a vested interest in the valley. The next step will be to secure agreement and promote the new vision and strategy for the valley, which can then be translated into a shared agenda, sense of values and common consensus to deliver the action necessary to secure the future regeneration of the area.

A strong Partnership Board is needed, which will have a clear strategic role to perform to inform, promote and secure commitment to the new strategy and programme. Specifically, this could include:

- To **co-ordinate** key regeneration activities between the various agencies responsible for delivering services and facilities in the Garw Valley and offer support in achieving the most effective service delivery;
- To provide a wider **influencing role** both to ensure the delivery of excellence in service provision and to lobby on behalf of the valley and its citizens, particularly in terms of securing additional financial support for the area;
- To identify and exploit all **external funding** opportunities to support regeneration activities in the Garw Valley;
- To **facilitate action** to secure an integrated approach, linking economic development and social inclusion initiatives;

Critically, the programmes and proposals will need to be taken forward in an integrated manner, so as to promote a more cohesive area. In the long term, consideration will need to be given to co-ordinating decision-making processes, a streamlined delivery mechanism and the pooling of resources. Clearly, this long-term aspiration will demonstrate the serious commitment of the parties, particularly when seeking Central Government and EU support and resources.

In terms of direct delivery, the proposed Partnership Board needs to consider whether it should, over time, move towards a more proactive delivery/implementation role, through for example the formation of a Development Trust. Issues for consideration and assessment will include:



- **Capacity** to deliver and manage complex regeneration developments;
- **Credibility** to manage and be accountable for public / external funds;
- **Competence** to have the necessary skills and experience to drive forward both developments and future management;
- **Accountable** to be accountable to the local community to ensure that the development meets broader economic and social inclusion objectives;
- **Deliverability** to have in place necessary structures and personnel to deliver the scheme on time and within budget

The Garw Valley Forum doesn't currently meet all the assessment criteria and a major policy shift, including an injection of revenue funding, would be required to move towards this future role

In the short to medium term, the delivery framework will need to work within the existing partnership structure. Delivery agents are likely to include the local authorities, partnerships, other joint venture initiatives, private investors and any number of other organisations that can carry out the sorts of activities that can help to deliver the strategy.

Critically, the partnership board will provide an operating framework to ensure the more effective co-ordination and communication between partners, the private sector and the third sector to realise the agreed vision and objectives. It may be that overtime, the partnership may evolve into a more formal group, who would make strategic policy and expenditure decisions, within the agreed budgets and parameters set down by partners.

The board's overall purpose is to provide coherence and be a unifying, "joining-up" influence to the wide range of agencies and partnerships actively seeking to secure the prosperity of the valley. The "terms of reference" could include the following:

- To develop and maintain an overarching strategy for the valley based upon sound and reasoned thinking, which ensures maximum programme effectiveness and efficiency;
- To maximise the level of funding secured for the future economic regeneration of the area;
- To coordinate, enable and lead some bids for regeneration funding for the area;
- To be consulted on other economic development programmes and bids and mainstream regeneration budgets in the sub region.

The public, private and third sector partners in the Garw Valley are demonstrating their willingness to work in much more effective ways across the urban areas and rural hinterland. Over the next 10 years, it will be vital for people, communities, voluntary organisations, the public and private sectors to continue to collaborate even more effectively to achieve the vision for the area.



The development of the Partnership Board should be facilitated and not left to chance. There are a number of well tried and tested methods through which the progress and performance of partnerships can be monitored, reviewed and improved. Aims and objectives need to be made explicit, open to public scrutiny and promoted to the community.

Below the strategic level urgent attention should be given to how the different officers, from the range of agencies and initiatives already operating in the valley interrelate (see Appendix 3). At its simplest there is merit in them meeting periodically to exchange information plans etc.

Setting Priorities and the Implementation Timetable

8



The brief for this commission called for the pulling together of existing analysis and the production of an “overarching strategy” against which to evaluate the range of projects considered in section 6 above. Producing an agreed strategy proved less straightforward than this, but following the consultation we have undertaken we have argued that a framework to guide the regeneration of the valley would have three major strands and that a balanced incremental strategy for the valley should be seen as the way forward, i.e. one which raises confidence incrementally by building progressively on what has and is being achieved.

A key task for this study was to assess the extent to which projects fit with the strategic approach. In addition to this other criteria were identified in the brief against which to assess the priority to be awarded to different projects.

Again following a review of the status of the projects this approach proved less likely to deliver the agreed vision and action plan which were the key outputs for the commission. Hence a more discursive and flexible approach was agreed for the evaluation exercise with each project being individually appraised and conclusions drawn.

This assessment included:

- The feasibility of the project and the level of risk involved
- The existence of limiting factors and the constraints in getting the project moving
- The track record of the promoting organisations and the implications this has for their ability to deliver
- The strength of the business planning undertaken
- The energy, drive, commitment exhibited by project champions
- The likelihood of funding being available
- The likely impact of the project in progressing the strategic objectives

Applying these considerations to the projects allowed the phasing of the programme to be structured. The need to kick start the regeneration process means that quick wins are needed and there are a number of projects which could be progressed in the short term if the requisite amount of programme and project management resource can be procured and applied. The responsibility for making progress on these projects cannot simply be appended to staff who



already have full workloads. Key projects have also been identified within each strand.

The phasing schedules laid out below should be read in conjunction with the Projects Budget at Appendix 2.

A Place to Live

The greatest threat posed to the valley’s sustainable future is that of depopulation. The exodus of the younger and abler residents in search of better opportunities and a broader range of housing elsewhere will undermine services and reinforce the decline in retailing.

A good range of projects were put forward in this strand, addressing the major concerns. The key schemes to implement will be securing improvement to the retail mix through introducing a new supermarket development. This should be accompanied by measures to assist existing retailers such as facelift schemes (and increasing the capacity of the Chamber of Trade, see A Place to Work below).

Also there needs to be a concerted effort to identify and bring forward sites for residential development, with the aim of working with developers who are interested in introducing housing products with a broader appeal than the current offer.

As both these key schemes require the support of the private sector they are thereby less predictable in terms of timing. Hence in addition to ensure progress, we recommend supporting schemes which are less complex to implement in the short term.

Project	Short term	Mid term	Long term
Fresh Start Project	Employ staff	Undertake project or introduce grant regime	
Healthy Living Initiative	Employ staff Undertake capital works		
Getting Engaged	Employ staff Resolve project issues		
Parking Proposals	Feasibility & design	Capital works	
Youth Drop In Centre	Feasibility re: project location	Refurbishment works	
Promote Retail Store		Feasibility	Implementation
Facilitate Residential Development		Feasibility	Implementation

A Place to Work

Given the economic and social profile outlined above, the provision of additional commercial workspace should be a central component of this balanced strategy. However there was a lack of sufficient, robust proposals. The benefits of such a project(s) would go beyond delivering job creation outputs. This new commercial space could be created through the conversion of existing redundant buildings, or where this is not feasible through the redevelopment of those sites, and this would bring the added advantage of removing some of the dereliction which blights too much of the urban areas of the valley.



In the absence of a clear winning scheme in this respect, the emphasis in prioritising accordingly shifts to training and development where there is plenty of scope to implement proven approaches. The prospect of a growth in construction jobs provides the rationale for introducing local labour clauses and techniques to challenge recruitment into the industry. The other key schemes allied to this are around skill development and encouraging enterprise.

Providing more support to the Chamber of Trade would bring benefits at low cost.

Project	Short term	Mid term	Long term
Trem-Y-Mor	Full option appraisal		
Community Workshops	Management development & support		
Create	Funding bid	implementation	
Construction training pilot	Skills review	Local labour in construction	Supporting under-represented groups
Chamber of Trade		Development work	
Capacity Building			
Training and development	Skills audit	Pilot project	
Essential skills development ILM	Undertake scoping exercise	Project implementation	
Enterprise development	Dedicated Leap officer time - targeting different age groups		

A Place to Visit

Many of the creative ideas which emerged through the study were in this area. Many projects brought together visionary ideas with committed promoters. We identified positive signs to reinforce the claims being made for these projects. However in some cases, due to the combination of the costs involved and an insufficiently compelling business case, we have taken the view that the current risks associated with those projects, require that a period of piloting should precede the application of appreciably higher levels of investment. This is consistent with the balanced incremental development approach being advocated. We would hope to see the Mynydd Carn and railway projects reach their potential.

Two further exciting and related projects began taking shape through the course of the study. They deal with different aspects of the same question. How can the Garw act as an exemplar for environmental stewardship, and attract the growing number of visitors who are interested in spending time and money in accessing the countryside. The opportunity exists for further significant progress on these fronts by the Council, Forestry Commission and Groundwork working co-operatively. However there was not as yet a clear sense of how this agenda would be driven forward, though evidently the ideas are there and individuals with the key skills and knowledge within the organisations.



Hence for the key project we propose ensuring that those with an existing stake in increasing the number of day and staying visitors are supported as fully as possible – through financial support, training and joint promotion etc.

For tourism to flourish achieving a critical mass of activity, packaging attractions, is often the key to making progress. Improving co-ordination between the promoters of the other projects and facilitating project development has a major role to play in realising the potential of these projects.

Project	Short term	Mid term	Long term
Daffodil Line	Develop to the point of pilot events		Appraisal & further development
Mynydd Carn Adventure Centre	Strengthen business planning	Pilot events & management development	Implementation
Access to Woodlands	Various works & promotion Community ranger		
Equestrian Centre	Consultancy exercise		
Events Programme	Programme aimed at exploiting opportunities for adventure tourism		
Ty'nton Farm	Agree long term policy Council/owners/National Trust		
Dr Richard Price Interpretation Centre		Crafts Centre Feasibility	
Tourism infrastructure	Scheme to upgrade existing catering and lodging accommodation		



Appendix 1 Socio-Economic Profile

Population

Bridgend has a population of 128,645 (2001 Census) with almost half residing in the conurbation of greater Bridgend, of which 49% were male and 51% were female.

Population growth between 1991 and 1999 was 1.7% in Bridgend, similar to the figure for Wales as a whole (1.6%) but below that of South East Wales (2.2%) and the United Kingdom (2.9%). Forecast population growth in Bridgend County Borough between 1997 and 2007 is 0.1% per annum, below the 0.2% forecast for Wales as a whole (Sustainable Economic Regeneration Strategy, ECOTEC).

Table 1: Population and Household Numbers (2001)

Ward	Population (2001)	Household (2001)
Betws	2034	801
Blaengarw	1895	782
Llangeinor	1161	486
Pontycymmer	2480	1,031
Total	7,570	3,100

The table below outlines the % of households without a car. The % of households in Betws and Blaengarw without a car or van is significantly more than the county average.

Table 2: % of Households with no car or van

Ward	% of households with no car or van (2001)
Betws	38.7%
Blaengarw	35%
Llangeinor	29.1%
Pontycymmer	30%
BRIDGEND	25.6%

The County Borough's population structure is similar to the UK's but with a slightly over representation of fewer than 14s and over 50s and under-representation in the 15-29 age group.

Table 3 indicates the % of families within the Garw Valley wards with children and the % of population aged 16-24.

Table 3: % of Families with Children and aged 16-24

Ward	% of families with children (2001)	% of population aged 16-24
Betws	36.8%	15%
Blaengarw	32.5%	16%
Llangeinor	30%	17%
Pontycymmer	34.5%	14%
BRIDGEND	31.7%	13%

The 2001 census indicates that the current population of the Garw Valley wards is younger than the county average, both in terms of % with families and aged 16-24. The % of pensionable age population in 3 of the wards is less than the country average (Table 4).



Table 4: % Pensionable Age Population

Ward	% of Pensionable Age Population (2001)
Betws	18%
Blaengarw	22%
Llangeinor	17.8%
Pontycymmer	19%
BRIDGEND	21.9%

The population of Bridgend County Borough population is ageing – between 1991 and 2007 the largest increases in population are expected to be in the number of pensioners and the number of people in the 45-retirement age bracket (ECOTEC study).

Deprivation

3 out of the 5 most deprived wards in Bridgend County Borough are in the Garw Valley – Betws (2nd), Llangeinor (4th) and Blaengarw (5th).

The Multiple Deprivation Score and Rankings are set out in the table below.

Table 5: Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000

Ward	Index of Multiple Deprivation Score	Rank of Index of Multiple Deprivation 865 least deprived
Betws	59.9	22
Blaengarw	34.9	128
Llangeinor	41.9	84
Pontycymmer	30.59	191

Employment and Income Support

Table 6: JSA / Income Support

Ward	Job Seeker Allowance Claimants	% of JSA with child dependents	Income Support Claimants
Betws	90	78%	310
Blaengarw	30	0%	140
Llangeinor	25	40%	115
Pontycymmer	50	40%	200

August 1998, ONS

Economic Activity and Unemployment Trends

In October 2002, the registered unemployment benefit claimant count in Bridgend County Borough was 3.1% (4.8 & for men and 1.3% for women). In the Bridgend TTWA, this was 3.0% compared to 3.4% for Wales and 2.8% for England.

Table 7: Wholly Unemployed Claimants by Ward, 2002

Ward	Wholly unemployed claimants
Betws	38
Blaengarw	20
Llangeinor	29
Pontycymmer	34



The table below shows the latest statistics on the distribution of unemployment by ward based on 1991 census. Clearly, this data needs to be reviewed as soon as equivalent 2001 Census results become available.

Table 8: Economically Active Unemployed (1991)

Ward	Economically Active Unemployed by Ward	Unemployed as % of economically active in ward
Betws	218	21.48%
Blaengarw	107	13.54%
Llangeinor	108	17.7%
Pontycymmer	119	10.72%

Economic Structure

Bridgend provides 52,000 jobs employing 66.9% of those of working age (LMS, May 2002). 65% of jobs are within the service sector, and manufacturing, distribution and public administration each accounts for over 20% of employment provision. Manufacturing will continue to be an important feature within the area

Although there has been a decrease in the number of jobs provided in recent years, forecasts by Business Strategies (1998) suggest that regional employment growth will continue with a 3.2% increase (18,200 jobs in South East Wales) by 2010. 34% of these jobs will be in managerial, professional or technical positions.

There are two major employers within the Garw Valley, Irvin GQ and ARM Plastics.



The table below provides an indicative number of employee jobs within the 4 wards (National Statistics).

Table 9: Employee Jobs

Ward	Employee Jobs (September 1998)
Betws	200
Blaengarw	100
Llangeinor	400
Pontycymmer	300



Tourism is a very important part of the County and local economy, worth over £119m in 2000, employing over 2300 people and attracting over 3.1m visitors to a broad range of offers: seaside, attractions, countryside and country parks, recreational activities etc. The McArthur Glen Designer Outlet at Sarn has become a major attraction in a very short period of time.

Qualifications and Skills

The population of Bridgend is not especially well qualified. In 2001, 36.4% of the working population had no qualifications, higher than the average for Wales 29.1%.

The Garw Valley has the one of the lowest level of educational achievement and skills in the County Borough.

Table 10: % with Higher Educational Qualifications (2001)

Ward	% with Higher Educational Qualifications (2001)
Betws	5.4%
Blaengarw	7.4%
Llangeinor	10.3%
Pontycymmer	8.8%
BRIDGEND	15.7%

Betws is ranked 6th as the most deprived ward in Wales in the Education Domain Score.

Earnings

Average gross weekly earnings are £360.90 in Bridgend. This is below the Welsh average of £368.10 and the English figure of £419.30 (New Earnings Survey 2000).

No earnings figures are available at a local level. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that earnings within the Garw Valley are below the County Borough average figure.

Housing

House prices within the Garw Valley are significantly lower than in Bridgend County Borough.

Table 11: House Prices: The Garw Valley

	Llangeinor	Blaengarw	Betws	Pontycymmer	Bridgend
Detached					106,132
Semi-detached			37,214	28,000	61,582
Terraced	30,070	25,855		24,182	42,203
Flat					45,455
All property	58,229	29,118	45,210	24,506	68,244

The Land Registry: 2001 Census, ONS



**Appendix 2
Programmes
Implementation
Timetables**

A Place to Live

Project	Short term	Mid term	Long term
Fresh Start Project	Employ staff	Undertake project or introduce grant regime	
Healthy Living Initiative	Employ staff Undertake capital works		
Getting Engaged	Employ staff Resolve project issues		
Parking Proposals	Feasibility & design	Capital works	
Youth Drop In Centre	Feasibility re: project location	Refurbishment works	
Promote Retail Store		Feasibility	Implementation
Facilitate Residential Development		Feasibility	Implementation

A Place to Work

Project	Short term	Mid term	Long term
Trem-Y-Mor	Full option appraisal		
Community Workshops	Management development & support		
Create	Funding bid	implementation	
Construction training pilot	Skills review	Local labour in construction	Supporting under-represented groups
Chamber of Trade		Development work	
Capacity Building			
Training and development	Skills audit	Pilot project	
Essential skills development ILM	Undertake scoping exercise	Project implementation	
Enterprise development	Dedicated Leap officer time - targeting different age groups		

A Place to Visit

Project	Short term	Mid term	Long term
Daffodil Line	Develop to the point of pilot events		Appraisal & further development
Mynydd Carn Adventure Centre	Strengthen business planning	Pilot events & management development	Implementation
Access to Woodlands	Various works & promotion Community ranger		
Equestrian Centre	Consultancy exercise		
Events Programme	Programme aimed at exploiting opportunities for adventure tourism		
Ty'nton Farm	Agree long term policy Council/owners/ National Trust		
Dr Richard Price Interpretation Centre		Crafts Centre Feasibility	
Tourism infrastructure	Scheme to upgrade existing catering and lodging accommodation		



**Appendix 3
Projects Budget**

■ Key schemes highlighted

Theme	Project	Elements	Lead Body	Indicative	Funding	Timetable		
						Short	Medium	Long
A Place to Live	Fresh Start	Resolve implementation mechanism Undertake audit	GVRF	£28,000	WDA CRT	√		
	Health living centre	Implement programme Supplement project budget	Groundwork Bridgend & Neath PT	£1m £5,000p.a.	£600,000 NOF Obj 1/C First	√ √	√	√
	Getting engaged	Employ staff Implement	Creation	£90,000	ESF	√		
	Parking proposals	Feasibility and design Capital works	GVRF	£10,000 £90,000	WDA WDA/BCBC	√		√
	Youth drop-in centre	Develop premises Youth service	TBC BCBC	£90,000 £80,000p.a. 3yr	WDA/BCBC/CRT Obj 1/Youth Focus	√ √	√	
	Promote retail store	Site feasibility Enabling works Facelift scheme	BCBC	£15,000 £8,000 £30,000p.a. 3yr £30,000p.a.	WDA WDA WDA Private	√ √ √ √		√ √
	Residential sites	Identify and market the sites	BCBC	£7,000	BCBC/WDA	√		
A Place to Work	Trem-Y-Mor	Option appraisal	BCBC	£7,000	BCBC/WDA	√		
	Community enterprise centre	Project review Works	BCBC TBC	£10,000 £1m	WDA/CRT Obj 1	√ √	√	
	Create	Funding bid Implementation	BCBC/Creation Creation	£201,000	£99,000 ERD	√ √		
	Construction Training pilot	Skills review (demand / supply) Local labour construction training initiative Supporting under-represented groups in construction	CCET / CITB	£50,000 pa	ESF	√		
	Business support	Capacity building	Chamber Of Trade	£800p.a. 3yr	BAVO/BCBC	√		
	Training and development	Skills audit and pilot project	Bridgend College	£40,000	ELWA/CCET/ESF		√	
	Essential Skills development	Creating pathways to employment (e.g. ILM etc.)	Bridgend College	£50,000	ESF/CCET/ Job centre plus		√	
	Enterprise awareness	Targeting different age groups	LEAP	£25,000	Obj 1	√	√	
A Place to Visit	Dafoddil line	Development officer/ core budget Maintenance development programme Pilot event programme	BVRC	£26,000p.a. 3yr £20,000p.a. 3yr £6,000p.a.	BCBC LRF BCBC LRF Income generation/ Obj 1 REAP	√		√ √
	Mynydd carn	Pilot events Business plan	Creation	£8,000p.a	Income generation/ Obj 1 REAP	√	√	
	Access to woodlands	Access works programme Community ranger	Groundwork Forestry Commission	£20,000 £30,000 p.a.	Groundwork Forestry Comm.	√	√	√
	Equestrian centre	Study	Groundwork	£5,000	In place	√		
	Events programme	Variety of events	BCBC	£125,000	£50,000 Obj 1 REAP		√	
	Tynton Farm	Position statement	BCBC	N/A	N/A	√		
	Dr. Richard Price	Forward plan	Management committee	£8,000	C. First	√		
Tourism infrastructure	Upgrading catering and lodging accommodation	BCBC	£20,000p.a. 3yr	Obj 1 REAP/WTB		√	√	



**Appendix 4
Human Resources**

- Regeneration officer
- LEAP – Local Enterprise Action Plan
- REAP Rural Economy Action Project
- Business in Focus
- Communities First development officers
- Healthy Living Initiative
- Fresh Start project officer
- BAVO
- Creation
- Park Rangers
- Forestry Commission Rangers





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