

CONTACT

The Community Magazine for the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil

FFos Y Fran
Community fund 05

Merthyr
Summer Festival 12



16
**Vibrant
and Viable
Places
Update**



MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL

Leader's introduction

Welcome to issue 38 of Contact...



Welcome to issue 38 of Contact community magazine. This issue covers a range of topics, ranging from changes in housing legislation, regeneration within the County Borough, events and updates on our consultation activity relating to the Efficiency Programme.

It was great to hear the announcement by Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, Lesley Griffiths, that an extra £1.5 million has been awarded for Project Riverside, the new regeneration scheme in Merthyr Tydfil, bringing total Welsh Government investment in the project to £5.7 million.

Based on the site of the old Merthyr Vale Colliery, Project Riverside will see the creation of 230 new homes, with the potential for other developments such as small shops, a nursing home, offices and a restaurant.

This new investment will facilitate delivery of our exciting plans for the area delivering on the Council's long established strategic ambitions. When completed, Project Riverside will have created modern homes with a distinct identity that will fundamentally change the appearance of the valley floor, re-establishing the link between the communities of Merthyr Vale and Aberfan. This is a wonderful opportunity!

Another fantastic regeneration programme, the £12.87 million Vibrant and Viable Places Programme, which is funded through Welsh Government, is underway, with several of the projects progressing well. The aim of this programme is to help create jobs, increase housing supply and upgrade buildings in primarily the Pontmorlais area, however this will also include housing development sites in the northern area of the County Borough.

Now that the Town Centre Regeneration Programme is coming to an end, with only the Railway Station Access Improvements to be completed, the Regeneration Information Shop which is located in the Town Centre, will no longer be manned by members of the Regeneration Team. Should you have any questions on regeneration in Merthyr Tydfil, please e-mail regeneration@merthyr.gov.uk or telephone 01685 727491.

We have been looking at ways at making it easier and more cost-effective for residents and visitors to park in the Town Centre and have already seen an increase in footfall in the town centre on Saturdays, since the introduction at the beginning of this year of £1 all day Saturday parking, and we are hoping that this trend will be replicated through the week with the new tariffs of 70p per hour, as well as generous savings which can be made with the purchase of season tickets.

We are committed to listening to local people and Scrutiny is a process to check that residents receive the best possible services from the Council and its partners. It also allows local people to have a say on matters that affect them. If you have any suggestions on a specific issue you would like the Scrutiny Committees to investigate or review (scrutinise), we would like to hear from you.

You can get involved by e-mailing your suggestions on topics for review or sending them via post or you could attend a meeting of a scrutiny committee. For further information, please visit the Council's website, e-mail scrutiny@merthyr.gov.uk or telephone 01685 725464.

As you will be aware, the Council, along with all other Councils in Wales is working extremely hard to bridge the budget gap we have which has meant we have had to look at reconfiguring and even cutting some services. You can find out more about the latest phase of our Efficiencies Programme on page.

Leader of Merthyr Tydfil CBC, Councillor Brendan Toomey



We are here to help!

Our customer service advisors are available to assist you with your queries at our Contact Centre/One Stop Shop Located at the Civic Centre and can show you how to make the most of council services and information online in the self-service area as well as how to make payments at the dedicated payment machine, where you can pay by cash or card.

You can either visit us:

- Monday to Thursday 8.30am - 5.00pm
- Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm.
- (Closed on weekends)

Or call: 01685 725000

For information about any of these services:

- Recycling and refuse collections
- Furniture & Bulky Items Collections
- Fly-tipping
- Dog Warden / Pest Control
- Environmental Health
- Noise nuisance complaints
- Anti-social behavior
- Benefits & Council Tax
- Parks
- Bereavement Services & Cemeteries
- Education
- Job applications

Other useful numbers:

Adult Education Centres	01685 724910
Family Information Service	01685 727374
Housing & Council Tax Benefits	01685 725371 / 725116
Fraud Hotline	01685 725111
Consumer Advice Line.....	08454 04 05 06
Planning.....	01685 726280
Licensing.....	01685 725107 / 726240
Electoral Registration	01685 725284
Registrars.....	01685 727333
Street Lighting	01685 724939
Potholes	01685 724939

Sports, Community Centres, Libraries & Attractions

Aberfan & Merthyr Vale Community Centre	01685 727373
Dowlais Community Centre	01685 377688
Gurnos Community Centre	01685 385284
Treharris Community Centre	01685 725226
Trelewis Community Centre	01443 412869
Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre	01685 727476
Central Library.....	01685 353480
Dowlais Library	01685 725 217
Treharris Library.....	01685 353483
Cyfarthfa Castle Museum & Park.....	01685 727371

Out of Hours & Emergency

Adult & Children Services	01443 425012
Emergency Out of Hours.....	01685 385231

Or access council services online... www.merthyr.gov.uk

Apply For It:

- Adopt a path scheme registration
- Application of Interest to become Foster Carers.
- Disabled person's bus pass
- Older person's bus pass
- Building regulations approval
- Help with school clothing costs
- Blue Badge
- Choice Based Lettings
- Customer Consultation Panel Membership
- Hire of Parks Facilities
- Library Membership
- Job Applications (General and Teaching Jobs)
- Postal Vote
- Register to Vote
- School Governor Training Form

Report It:

If there's a problem we need to fix or an issue we need to know about, then please report it to us as soon as possible.

- Abandoned vehicles
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Housing Benefit Fraud
- Dangerous Structures
- Dog fouling
- Drainage Problems
- Fly tipping
- Missed bin collection
- Potholes
- Road Maintenance
- Street lighting

Request It:

- Benefits change in circumstances
- Bulky item collection
- Childcare Enquiry
- Date Protection
- Subject Access
- Dropped Kerb
- Environmental Information
- Filming Permission
- Freedom of Information
- Leisure Centre Membership enquiry form
- Leisure Enquiry Card
- Library item renewal
- Recycling
- Road Safety And Traffic Management
- School Counsellor Appointment
- Winter Maintenance (Gritting)

Pay For It:

- BIDS Levy
- Business Rates
- Council Invoices
- Council Tax
- Housing Benefit Overpayment
- Parking Permit Renewals
- On-Street Parking Season Tickets
- Car Parks
- Parking fines

Don't forget...

You can also find out more information about our services, visit and follow us online: www.merthyr.gov.uk



Follow us on Twitter
@merthrycbc



Find us on Facebook.com/
merthrydfilcbc

VIEW LOCAL DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

A selection of Council meetings which take place in the Council chamber are now recorded and published the following day on the Council's website.

These webcasts, which are funded by Welsh Government, will be available to access for 12 months after the meeting enabling residents to watch and listen to discussions and decisions that are made.

People are not always able to watch council proceedings from the public gallery at the Civic Centre and this development means that people can view online, from the comfort of their own homes, at a time and place to suit them.

Log onto the Council's website www.merthyr.gov.uk to see the meetings that have been broadcast so far and to view the dates for future Council meetings.



Record your language choice

To improve our service to the customer, we would like to record your preferred language for receiving general information from the Council in the future.

To do this please log onto www.merthyr.gov.uk/options and follow the instructions on the screen

The Orbit Business Lounge

... provides a relaxing and professional business lounge style environment for business people to use on an ad-hoc basis and offers support and resources that many coffee shops, hotels and restaurants don't provide.

Business lounge facilities

- An oasis of peace and comfort and professional image
- The perfect environment for business networking
- Free Wifi
- Free refreshments
- Access to print / scan / photocopy/ fax facilities
- News 24 entertainment
- On site business support and advice
- Dedicated support teams offering administrative assistance
- A rated energy efficient building
- Free car parking
- Laptop and mobile phone charging facilities
- Prime location with superb transport links for all modes of transport
- State of the art building technologies.

What's included

- Free 2 hours a week access to hot desk facilities
 - Superfast broadband
 - Access to telephone
 - Business centre facility discounts to include executive boardroom, training rooms, ICT suite and conference rooms
 - Any Orbit centre promotions and special offers
 - Main reception services
 - Freshen up with The Orbit centre shower facilities
 - Mail collection services
 - Disability Discrimination Act compliant building
 - Access to The Orbit Business Centre networking events.
- Contact us on:
01685 352700 or info@orbitbusinesscentre.co.uk

Access is available 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday and is unlimited during these times

The business lounge membership is available on monthly subscription for £25



Ffos Y Fran Community fund

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council administers a Community Fund in respect of royalty payments received by the Council from Miller Argent Limited based on the tonnage of coal extracted from the Ffos Y Fran Land Reclamation Scheme.

It has been agreed by Miller Argent in partnership with the Council that applications for support from the Ffos Y Fran Community Fund will be welcomed from interested parties. The Community Fund is split into 3 categories and all applications must support local community projects with an educational, environmental or leisure emphasis.

Community Groups can apply for the free use of one of two mini-buses (one of which is equipped to take wheelchair passengers). Please contact Mrs Lisa Llewellyn-Williams on 0870 111 5600 for further details.

For details of the successful applications from the Small and Intermediate Grant Scheme please visit the Council's website – www.merthyr.gov.uk

The Ffos Y Fran Large and Intermediate Panels meet every six months to review applications. Should you have any questions regarding the Ffos Y Fran Community Fund, please contact 01685 725125.

To date, successful applicants of the Large fund have been:

- MTHA (Arts Centre)
- 3G's Development Trust
- Sovereign Grace
- Fir Tree House
- The Willows
- ICI Rifle Field
- Cefn Coed RFC
- Merthyr Tydfil Football Club
- St Matthias Church
- Treharris Phoenix RFC

i **The Small Grant Scheme** - for applications of £1,000 or under.

The Intermediate Grant Scheme - for applications between £0 and £5,000.

The Large Grant Scheme - for applications of £5,000 or over.

For further information on the schemes above and to view the evaluation criteria, please visit the Council's website – www.merthyr.gov.uk

Community Groups can apply for the free use of one of two mini-buses



Waste Services Changes

There are numerous waste related targets that must be achieved by all Local Authorities. The Welsh Government has set very challenging statutory Local Authority Recovery Targets - by 2015/16 MTCBC must achieve a minimum of 58% of municipal waste which must be recycled, prepared for re-used and composted otherwise the Council will be liable for a financial penalty of £200 per tonne for the shortfall.

In addition to the Local Authority Recovery Targets MTCBC also has an obligation to landfill no more than its landfill allowance in accordance with The Landfill Allowances Scheme (Wales) Regulations 2004. Again the Council will be liable for a financial penalty of £200 per tonne for every tonne of biodegradable waste sent to landfill over and above the allowance.

These fines can result in significant financial penalties being placed on the Local Authority and therefore it is extremely important that everyone participates in the Council's recycling services.

MTCBC is working closely with Welsh Government that has recently awarded £2m to the Council as part of the Collaborative Change Programme to ensure that we meet the higher targets we have been set. The approach is not only about achieving higher targets but also about collecting higher quality recycling along with promoting good practices that can

improve efficiency in terms of cost reduction and performance.

Further to the recent changes to wheelee bins throughout the County Borough the Council is changing the way it collects your recycling from June 2015.

All households will receive a new reusable sack for cans and plastics. The new sack should be used for food and drink cans, aerosols, plastic bottles and food containers. In addition, you should continue to use your existing recycling boxes for paper, cardboard and glass bottles/jars. Paper will need to be kept separate from glass bottles/jars and cardboard.

There will be no change to the way in which you store your food waste for collection. However, food waste bags will be provided free of charge for 2015/16 and a roll will be delivered with an information pack and reusable sack mentioned above. Your food will be collected at the same time as your recycling.

Please note that we will be unable to continue to collect your recycling mixed in plastic bags from June 2015. However, the reusable sack should be sufficient to store plastic bottles/containers and cans and there should be no need to use your plastic bags. Householders who require additional containers for recycling can request them via the methods below.

The change of recycling collections to kerbside sort or 'multi-stream' approach ensures high quality separation of materials as well as the opportunity to feedback to residents on any contaminated materials that have been presented for recycling. Evidence gathered by the Welsh Government demonstrates that kerbside sort is the most cost effective method of collecting recyclate and also has the best sustainable development outcomes.

From June 2015 your garden waste will be collected fortnightly on a seasonal basis e.g. April – November

each year. You will be provided with your collection dates and further information on this when you receive your new recycling sack and information pack explaining how the new service will work.

Your refuse will continue to be collected on a fortnightly basis but the lid of your bin must be closed and there must be no side waste placed for collection. The Council will continue to enforce this policy.

Waste and Recycling Wardens are on hand to help. If you would like us to visit you to look at how you can recycle more of your waste or you need advice on how to use the service please contact us and we will arrange to visit.

If you need further advice or information please contact us via wasteservices@merthyr.gov.uk or on **01685 725138**. For further information please visit www.recycleformerthyr.co.uk or www.merthyr.gov.uk



Waste and Recycling Wardens are on hand to help.

£50K AWARD HELPS DRIVE FOR BOWLS CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

An award of almost £50,000 is helping a drive to create an indoor bowls centre of excellence in Merthyr Tydfil.

Merthyr Tydfil (Rhydycar) Bowls Centre will be able to better cater for existing and new members - as well as hosting international competitions - after receiving £48,500 from the EU-funded South East Wales Community Economic Development (SEWCED) programme to upgrade its bowling green and lighting.

The Merthyr Leisure Village-based centre has been the home of Merthyr Tydfil Indoor Bowls Club since it was formed in 1975. The club currently has almost 300 members aged from nine to 90.

Along with a six-rink indoor bowling green, the facilities include an events room able to accommodate 130 people, while the lounge area caters for 80 people and a smaller conference room for 20 people.

"Our main aim is to provide an indoor bowling green centre of excellence" - Stadium Co-ordinator Barrie Broad.



THANK YOU...

... to all those who took the time to complete and return the Perception Survey which was included in the last issue of Contact Community Magazine.

The survey was intended to find out how satisfied you are with the services the Council delivers. The findings will be available in the next issue of Contact and on the website – www.merthyr.gov.uk



REGISTER TO VOTE

There is a UK Parliamentary General Election being held on **Thursday 7th May 2015** where you will be able to vote for your local MP.

The Political Party with the most MPs across the UK will form the Government and choose the Prime Minister. Make sure you have your say in what Party this is.

If you are aged 18 or over you have until Monday 20th April 2015 to get your name on the Electoral Register to be able to vote. Visit www.gov.uk/register tovote and make sure you have your National Insurance Number to hand.

Although you can't vote until you are 18 you can register any time after your 16th birthday. If you are not on the electoral register you will not be able to get credit for a loan or a mobile phone contract because the credit reference agencies use the register to check your address.

If you have any queries on registering to vote or are likely to be away on the day of the election and would like a postal vote, ring us on **01685 725284** or email electoral@merthyr.gov.uk

GOT A BIG IDEA? NEW TO BUSINESS? LOOKING TO GROW?

Merthyr Tydfil Effect is here to provide free and confidential business support to new and existing businesses.

Do you have a big idea? Energy? Passion? Maybe it's about taking that first step and talking to someone. Merthyr Tydfil Effect can help.

Jared Green is your Enterprise Facilitator
 Telephone: **07730 283812** or **01685 724919**
 E-mail: mteffect@merthyr.gov.uk



Regeneration scheme set to revitalise Aberfan and Merthyr Vale

Work is progressing well on the regeneration scheme on the site of the former Merthyr Vale Colliery. Project Riverside aims to create modern homes with a distinct identity that will fundamentally change the appearance of the valley floor, re-establishing the link between the communities of Merthyr Vale and Aberfan.

The current construction works includes working on the main infrastructure to make the site suitable and ready for housing development. The works will provide flood remediation protection, a new access road and new road and foot bridges that will link the communities of Merthyr Vale and Aberfan.

will be developed as a Home Zone in the longer term. Landscaping and community art works will add social value improving the local environment, creating opportunities for the local population and supporting engagement with private sector developers to further regenerate the area.

The Aberfan Civic Amenity Site (Recycling Centre) is also being relocated and enhanced on adjacent land and the existing weak bridge at Bridge Street will be demolished. New links will be created to ensure entry and exit at both ends of Nixonville which

The scheme is being jointly funded by Welsh Government and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. The Council's construction partner is Alun Griffiths (Contractors) Limited. The new road and bridges are due to be opened in October 2015.



Open Mic Nights

Open Mic Nights at The Imperial Hotel, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8UH. Monthly poetry and other performances: Helen Burke returns on 16th April and Frances Presley will be reading on 21st May. The Dic Penderyn Society will also present a special Merthyr Rising themed night on Wednesday 3rd June, featuring poet Phil Knight.

Visit the What's On guide at www.merthyr.gov.uk for all upcoming Open Mic Nights, as well as other events!



New early years centre for Merthyr Tydfil

Work is progressing well on the development of a new early years centre in the Gurnos. The Centre is being made possible thanks to £400,000 of funding from Welsh Government and £50,000 from Merthyr Valleys Homes which will go towards the costs of refurbishing Gurnos Community Centre to deliver Flying Start early years services for eligible children aged 0-4 years and their families.

The services which will be based at the Centre will include:

- Quality Flying Start pre-school provision for children aged 2- 3 years
- Crèche provision
- Parenting room to deliver parenting programmes
- Early language development programmes and other types of adult learning activities
- A multi-use room for professionals and parents

The Centre is due for completion in July/August 2015 in readiness for a September opening.

The existing 3G astro turf pitch will be re-fenced at the same time.



Could you be a member of the Council's Standards Committee?

Merthyr Tydfil is currently looking to recruit a Chair of the Standards Committee, 3 Independent Members and 1 Community Council representative.



The fees for attendance at meetings are as follows:

Chair of Standards
£256.00 (4 hours and over)
£128.00 (up to 4 hours)

Independent Members
£198.00 (4 hours and over) £99.00 (up to 4 hours)

The person appointed will also be entitled to claim travel expenses as a result of attendance at meetings.

Unfortunately the following CANNOT in law be an independent member:

- A serving Councillor or Officer (or the spouse or civil partner of a Councillor or Officer) of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council,

any other County or County Borough Council, a Fire Authority, a National Park Authority, or a Community/Town Council

- Former Councillors or Officers of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council former Councillors or Officers of any other County or County Borough Council, Fire Authority or National Park Authority until at least one year

after ceasing to be a Councillor/ Officer of that Authority.

For more information or an informal chat, please contact Carys Kennedy, Monitoring Officer on **01685 725454**

An application form can be obtained from the Civic Centre, Castle Street, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8AN.



Entitled to claim travel expenses as a result of attendance at meetings

'Housing Choice' Goes Electronic

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's 'Housing Choice' (Housing register) is soon to go electronic which will eliminate the need for the use of hard, paper forms to be used by those applying for Social Housing.

All applicants will need to visit the Civic Centre in relation to applying for housing and this process will take up to one hour in the majority of cases. Those wishing to apply will be required to provide an amount of information which will be needed before an application is placed on the 'Housing Choice' system.

The information required will include:

- Identification and Proof of Residency
- Proof of Income
- Housing History
- Your GP/Medical Centre address
- Any relevant contact details of any support workers involved with your household
- Offending history e.g. previous criminal convictions, licences or areas of exclusion
- The new electronic system will be introduced in Early 2015.

For further information, please contact the Housing Solutions Team on **01685 725475**

HOUSING WALES ACT 2014

The new 'Housing (Wales) Bill' will come into force in Spring/Summer of this year and is aimed at helping those households who are currently experiencing issues with housing and threatened with homelessness or are homeless.

In preparation for the new legislation, the Council's Housing Solutions Team has undergone structural and operational changes in addition to staff receiving training, in order to deliver 'Housing Solutions' to people and households who approach the local authority for information, advice, assistance and support.

To find out more about the 'Housing (Wales) Bill' and its key points, please visit the Council's website – www.merthyr.gov.uk

Approach the local authority for information, advice, assistance and support

Have you got your We Love Merthyr Loyalty Card?

More than 1600 shoppers are already making use of their free We Love Merthyr Loyalty Card to gain access to a wide range of instantly redeemable offers and discounts at over 20 shops, cafes, restaurants and businesses across the town centre.

Funded by The Big Heart of Merthyr Tydfil Business Improvement District, the card rewards shoppers for supporting their town centre and encourages them to spend their money in Merthyr Tydfil rather than going elsewhere.

Antonia Pompa, Co-ordinator of The Big Heart of Merthyr Tydfil said, "It's great that so many people have signed up to the loyalty card and

are benefitting from the discounts available. There is a real mix of businesses participating including nationals such as Bonmarche, Trespass, The Fragrance Shop and Specsavers as well as some fabulous local independent stores selling everything from flowers to clothes, glasses to curtains and gifts to books. We also have local cafes, pubs and restaurants on board so there is

definitely something for everyone."

She added, "The We Love Merthyr Loyalty Card scheme is a winner all round. It's free, it saves you money and it supports local businesses."

The card is FREE to customers and is very easy to get hold of:

- In person from Merthyr Tydfil Civic Centre, Central Library or Leisure Centre
- In the post by emailing

antonia@thebigheart.net with details of your name, address and postcode

- By registering online by going to www.welovemerthyr.co.uk and clicking on 'Apply for Card'

For more information, please contact The Big Heart of Merthyr Tydfil at antonia@thebigheart.net

The card is FREE to customers and is very easy to get hold of





Merthyr set for fabulous line up of summer festivals

Merthyr Tydfil town centre will be buzzing this summer with a fabulous programme of events and festivals. Kicking off with Global Village, which is relocating from Cyfarthfa Park to the town centre, we then welcome back the very successful chilli and food festivals, before the programme culminates in the entirely new Merthyr by the Sea in August. Truly, there will be something for everyone!

Merthyr Tydfil Global Village Festival SATURDAY 16 MAY

Organised by Merthyr Tydfil Global Village Committee

A day of music, dance, art and creative activities celebrating the people, cultural diversity and heritage of Merthyr.

The Awesome Merthyr Chilli Fiesta SATURDAY 13 JUNE

Organised by Chilli Fest UK and The Big Heart of Merthyr Tydfil

Chilli mayhem with some 20 traders selling the very best chilli products as well as loads of food to eat, drink and taste.

Merthyr Food Festival SATURDAY 18 JULY

Organised by The Big Heart of Merthyr Tydfil

Food stalls, chef's demos, live entertainment, craft stalls and much more – if you love food, you'll love Merthyr Food Festival!

Merthyr by the Sea FRIDAY 21 & SATURDAY 22 AUGUST

Organised by The Big Heart of Merthyr Tydfil

All the fun of the seaside with our very own beach, deck chairs, beach huts, live entertainment and much more.



Parking Reduction

In addition to this, there will be a re-introduction of 1 hour parking for 70p and this will be available from April 2015. You may also want to take advantage of the monthly permit at £38 or the annual permit at £350. Other permit offers for weekly, quarterly an academic year (39 weeks) will be available soon. Please contact South Wales Parking Group on 725000 for further details.

Phone and Pay system

Don't forget that you can also pay for your parking using the Phone and Pay system, which eliminates the need for loose change and paper tickets.

Once a motorist parks, they ring 02476 011 282 and quote the site code (located on signage in the car park) or alternatively they can download the "Phone and Pay" smartphone app to book parking.

A text reminder can also be sent to remind you of when your parking is running out.

Register online now at www.phoneandpay.co.uk or by phoning 0208 090 3595

It's free and it will save you time when you next want to park!

£1 for all day Saturday parking

It now only costs £1 to park all day in Merthyr Tydfil's pay and display car parks on Saturdays.

The new £1 all day Saturday rate will operate on all the council's town centre pay and display car parks including the St Tydfil car park, opposite Merthyr Tydfil College, Gilar Street and the Castle Street multi-storey and ground level car parks.

1 hour parking for 70p



Global Village 2015

SATURDAY 16TH MAY

Penderyn Square, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8AF

Celebrate the diversity of Merthyr Tydfil with international music, dance, film, arts and crafts!

This year Global Village has moved to Penderyn Square in the town centre, with activities also taking place in Redhouse - The Old Town Hall, Canolfan Soar and other sites. For full details visit www.merthirtydfilglobalvillage.org.uk



FREE entry



Consultation Feedback

During November and December we came out to ask you what you thought of a range of service cuts for 2015-16 as part of our Phase 3 Efficiency Programme.

Below is a summary of what you told us and how many of you said what:

There were a total of 408 responses across all formats of engagement including:



Dolygaer outdoor education centre

What will we do?

- The property was sold by way of auction on 23rd February 2015. There was a lot of interest from various parts of the UK which resulted in a high offer for the site. The sale completion is planned for 14th April 2015 and the buyer hopes to be in a position to re-open the site for summer 2015. They will be advertising for staff in the local press in the very near future, starting with a centre manager.
- The buyer is a leisure type operator that already runs a number of facilities in Wales, who also provide community and educational facilities as part of their group. They are a long established organisation.

Nursery Education

- At the same time as the Phase 3 consultation, we also took the opportunity to ask people what they thought of our proposal to make changes to Nursery Education. This proposal was to ensure access is available fairly and to all children in the term after their 3rd birthday on a part-time basis.

What you told us?

- 57% of you were in favour of changing nursery education so that all places offered across Merthyr Tydfil are part-time only (194 of 338 responses were in favour).

What will we do?

- From September 2015, all children across Merthyr Tydfil will have access to a part-time place in nursery education once they are 3 years old.

Continuing Social Care

What you told us?

- 59% of you were in favour of changing the way that social care is delivered in peoples' homes (196 of 331 responses were in favour).

What will we do?

- The last 20% or continuing social care still delivered by the council will be supplied by companies that already provide social care in Merthyr Tydfil. The staff will be given the opportunity to move to work for the new company.
- This change will take place by **April 2015**.

Day Services Transport

What you told us?

- 75% of you were in favour of changing the way we assess people for free day services transport (221 of 294 responses were in favour).

What will we do?

- As of the start of **April 2015** we will look to develop a new assessment criterion that ensures that people who need transport can get it.
- This will then be introduced once ready.

Village's public space to be transformed

A £300,000 regeneration project which aims to transform a public space in a village started in February. Work will be carried out on Bedlinog Square in Bedlinog to enhance the area and create a "focal point" for the village.

This will include enhancing the war memorial, upgrading street lighting, improving pavements, replacing street furniture, and improving public signs.

The project, which has been part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund through the Welsh Government, is expected to start by the end of this month.

Bedlinog Square is at the heart of the Cwm Felin designated conservation area in the centre of Bedlinog village and the area has a strong cultural heritage. It is planned to build on this Welsh heritage, celebrate the village's distinctiveness and establish a real sense of place.

The proposals for the square will capture key elements of this heritage and create a focal point for the village. Public realm and street furniture enhancements will improve the appearance of the square and create a more pedestrian friendly and welcoming environment.

It follows the recent presentation of a Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) commendation award to the Physical Regeneration Team for Treharris Square at the Wales Planning Awards 2014.

The project has transformed Treharris, creating a generous open space in the centre of the village that can now accommodate special events.

The range of regeneration works being carried out:

- Upgrade street lights with energy efficient system to a historic style in keeping with the areas status as a conservation area
- Floorscape and pavement improvements in appropriate materials which will enhance the conservation area
- Enhance Bedlinog Square, the war memorial and village marker which was one of the last items to be cast at the Dowlais Iron works in the late 1980s
- Enable pedestrian movements in the square and roads running through the Cmw Felin Conservation area
- Replace and improve street furniture to keep with the look of the square and the conservation area
- Improve signage which is cluttered and confusing and ensure it directs people to local points of interest
- Improvements to the boundaries around the Square, specifically to the High Street retaining walls and area in front of Acorn Coaches, Bedlinog Rugby Club, Salem Baptist Church and Bedlinog Inn. The latter two are key historic buildings in the square.

Improvements to the boundaries around the Square



Vibrant and Viable Places Programme Update

Merthyr Town
Football Club
have secured
£1.8 million from
the Programme



On Monday 17th November the Ministerial Advisory Group, along with colleagues from Welsh Government, visited Merthyr Tydfil to discuss the Merthyr Tydfil Regional Centre Housing and Regeneration Programme funded through the Vibrant and Viable Places Programme and visit some of the key projects included within the Programme.

The Group's role is to advise the Minister for Communities, Lesley Griffiths, on the implementation and development of the Programme. The Group were met by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Brendan Toomey, along with representatives of the Council and members of the team responsible for the delivery of the Programme.

Key projects visited included the Merthyr Tydfil Enterprise Centre, St. David's Hall, Miner's Hall, YMCA, Labour Exchange and Penyarden Park.

Penyarden Park

Merthyr Town Football Club have secured £1.8 million from the Programme to support the creation of the new Community facility, adjacent to the current clubhouse (CANDAC Suite) which will provide a flexible educational, training and recreational facility. It will also enable the club to provide a modern banqueting and hospitality facility, which should considerably increase the usage of Penyarden Park and support the economic sustainability of the Society's activities. A planning application for the Football Club development was approved in December and a "Meet the buyer event" also took place in December where around 50 companies attended and it is anticipated that work on site will commence in March. The old strikers building was demolished in January which has aided the completion of a new Car Park.

Retail Grants

This grant is available to support independent businesses located within the Town Centre of Merthyr Tydfil and will provide financial support to help eligible start-up and existing retail companies, by supporting investments in capital projects.

Capital costs could include the purchase of ICT equipment, software, hardware; laptop, printer, scanner, CCTV, tills, commercial kitchen equipment, or the development of a new website etc. and funding of up to 70% of eligible total project costs are available, from a minimum of £500 to a maximum of £5,000 (excluding VAT costs).

Case Study

Buy 4 Save is a new convenience store to the High Street in the Town Centre, and they are a new business start-up and inward investment company to the area.

Buy 4 Save were one of the first businesses to be supported under this

new grant scheme. 70% of funding was accessed to support the purchase of 2 commercial fridges for the new shop premises.

Further information on this funding programme and any business support query you may have for your business, can be obtained from Frances Jones, Economic Development Officer, on **01685 725429**.

The YMCA

The Stage 1 Stabilisation phase of the YMCA building, funded by the Pontmorlais THI Scheme, was completed at the beginning of January. The building is now fully secure and covered with a temporary roof. All scaffolding has been removed and windows on the front elevation covered with artwork. The openings on the ground floor are covered with black boarding - the intention being to engage the local community in preparing appropriate artwork to attach to these boards.

Work will soon be starting on ground pinning to the rear of the 1st

March 2015. The application process for further funding to cover the complete restoration of the building has already commenced, with a plan to start the restoration proper in the second quarter 2016.

Bus Station

The demolition of the former Police Station on Swan Street is starting ready for the redevelopment of the site as the new Central Bus Station. The Council purchased the building in December through funding from Welsh Government's Metro fund; contractors are currently on site carrying out the internal strip of the building with full demolition starting in the coming weeks. It is anticipated that this will be completed in the Spring.

The decision to move the Bus Station to Swan Street was made following a range of studies on the best location and a month of consultation with the public. 54% of people consulted wished to see the bus station relocated opposed to 42% who wished for it to remain in its current location.

Designs for the new bus station on Swan Street are currently being drawn up and will be available for public viewing and comment in Spring 2015. In line with the feedback from last year's consultation, the plans will include a heated waiting area, seating, public toilets and retail units. The redevelopment is being made possible through funding from both the Welsh Government's Metro Programme and their Vibrant and Viable Places Programme.

Trails, Links and Open Spaces

The project is split into two separate phases. Phase 1 comprises of the development of a shared usage footpath/cycle way starting from college plaza area to the Cyfarthfa Retail Park with a link to the Keir Hardy Health Park. The planning application has been submitted and it is anticipated that work will commence in mid-March.

The second phase comprises of the following stages:

- A shared usage DDA compliant footpath/cycleway linking the Cyfarthfa Heritage Path to the Taff Trail.
- A shared usage DDA compliant footpath/cycleway linking the Taff Trail to the grade II listed Pont Y Cefnau Bridge
- Advisory cycle lanes for Penyarden roundabout to Pontmorlais roundabout
- Designated walkways through the Castle Street Car Park.
- A shared usage footpath/cycleway from the Glebeland Junction to Avenue De Clichy
- Work commenced on the 9th February 2015 and will continue for approximately 8 – 10 weeks.

Labour Exchange

Planning has been approved for the Labour Exchange and Pontmorlais Promenade project. A consultation event was held in November between Wales and West and Merthyr Tydfil

CBC for the oubli to obtain further information on the scheme and this was well attended. The application included plans to provide 12 x 1 bedroom apartments and 12 x 2 bedroom houses for rent. Work on the site will commence over the coming months.

Miners Hall and Theatre Royal

Developments have started on the Miners Hall and the Theatre Royal, two key listed buildings in the Town Centre. Structural surveys have been commissioned on both buildings which will allow the council to develop their plans for both sites in more detail. It is anticipated that the Miner's Hall will be mothballed and made structurally safe and there are potential plans to acquire both sites.

For further information on the Programme please contact the team on **01685 725474** or at **VVP@merthyr.gov.uk**

Cyfarthfa Park Retail Park Expansion

As you will have already seen, the new B&Q Eco-Learning Store is now open for trade and is performing well, with works progressing for the new terrace (on the old B&Q site), which

includes a 50,000 sqft Marks & Spencer's, a new 45,000 sqft Next Lifestyle store.

Practical Completion of building works will be July, with M&S and Next due to open in

the Autumn 2015, once they have fitted out their new stores. Negotiations are taking place with 3 other national retailers for the remaining 3 units at Cyfarthfa Retail Park.

To keep up-to date on developments, please visit www.cyfarthfashopping.com



Store is now open for trade and is performing well

THE CYFARTHFA TALES

Year 6 pupils from Cyfarthfa Park Junior School have worked with Welsh author Phil Carradice to bring historical characters from Cyfarthfa Park to life!

The stories, based on a similar format to the Canterbury Tales entitled 'The Cyfarthfa Tales' include magical snapshots of life as the gardener, the cook and the puddler, working in the park under the 'reign' of the Crawshays.

The children spent the day in Cyfarthfa Castle Museum & Art Gallery researching the characters and the lifestyles of the people who once lived and worked there, then took part in literacy workshops to each produce a story based on their character.

The stories will be published in a book, which will also be illustrated by pupils from the school and will be available to buy soon from Cyfarthfa Castle gift shop, as well as Merthyr Tydfil Central Library. The children will also work on an illustration and animation project to bring the tales to life in a short film.



Merthyr urgently need people to come forward and make a long lasting positive difference to the life of a child

Merthyr Tydfil Fostering

Service Prepares For Fostering Fortnight 1-14 June 2015

Fostering network predicts AT LEAST 550 new foster families are needed across Wales during 2015 to provide stable, secure and loving homes for record numbers of fostered children, according to figures released last week.

Merthyr Tydfil Children's Services is always looking to increase the number of suitable foster carers for our looked after children. It is so important to match children with foster carers who will meet all of their needs, stick with them and provide a safe, secure and happy home until they are ready to leave care and to support them beyond. This Year Merthyr Tydfil is hoping that they will be able to target foster families for teenagers, children with disabilities and sibling groups.

We will be holding a variety of events throughout the year in our local Asda, Global Village event, and monthly farmers markets.

Without enough foster families willing and able to offer homes to

these groups, some children will find themselves living a long way from family, friends and their school. It could also lead to them being split up from brothers and sisters. These pressures can lead to relationships breaking down, and children having to make regular moves between homes. Some young people will find themselves living in residential care when fostering has been identified as the best plan for them.

Fostering as we know, is also a challenging job, and when the match between foster family and child is not right, it becomes even more difficult. A wider pool of foster carers enables fostering services to be able to match the needs of each child more closely with the skills that each foster carer

brings, and to find the right home for each child, first time.

The Merthyr Tydfil Fostering Service is always looking to recruit remarkable people who open their homes to some of the most disadvantaged and challenging of children and young people in our local community. In response the fostering team will offer you training for the job, a skilled social worker to support you, organised contact with other foster carers, generous allowances and an opportunity to work from home.

Merthyr urgently need people to come forward and make a long lasting positive difference to the life of a child. In particular, foster carers are needed to provide homes

for teenagers and children with disabilities, and to help sibling groups stay together.

Details of fostering services and more information about fostering and becoming a foster carer for Merthyr are available from www.merthyr.gov.uk and you will be signposted to the Fostering website.

Alternatively you can visit us and have a cup of tea and an informal chat at our Fostering base in Unit 5, Triangle Business Park, Pentrebach, Merthyr Tydfil CF48 4TQ. Or pick up the phone and give us a ring on : **08006783798 / 01685 724589.**

Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust

It's exciting times for Merthyr Tydfil Leisure, as it's now officially a Leisure & Culture Trust!

The transfer from Council ownership to a Trust follows over a year of consultation with the public to find the best way of protecting the future of the important leisure and cultural services provided to the community.

With a vision of 'Enhancing lives through leisure & culture' the Trust will be responsible for the operation of leisure centres, community centres, libraries and various other sites through the county borough.

The Trust is led by Chief Executive, Richard Marsh, supported by a Board of 11 Trustees, which includes members of the public, staff and MTCBC Councillors. Kevin O'Neill, former Chief Superintendent

of Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf Police, has been appointed as Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Richard said: "Operating as a Trust will give us lots more opportunity to access funding and provide a more flexible way of working, which in turn will allow us to provide an even better service. We've got a dedicated and enthusiastic team who are looking forward to the challenge".

Kevin said: "I consider this a great opportunity to continue the excellent work of the Local Authority in preserving our strong cultural heritage and developing a dynamic sporting environment in the community".

i For further information visit www.merthyrleisuretrust.co.uk or find us on Facebook!

Facilities included within Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust:

- Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre
- Aberfan & Merthyr Vale Community Centre
- Gurnos and Treharris Community Centres
- Cae Mari Dwn, Pen-y-Dre and the
- Grove Field Astro Turf Pitches
- Gôl Football Centre
- Sk8topia skate park
- Cyfarthfa Castle Museum & Art Gallery Joseph Parry's Cottage
- Cyfarthfa Park, to include Splash Pad, Canolfan Cyfarthfa, Golf, Model Railway, Pavilion, the lake, Tennis Courts,
- Central, Dowlais, Aberfan and Treharris Libraries
- Ynysfach Engine House
- National Exercise Referral Scheme

OFFICIAL OPENING OF GÔL FOOTBALL CENTRE

This February saw the official opening of the new Gôl Football Centre by His Worship the Mayor, Councillor Bryan Mansbridge.

Also in attendance were special guests, local Merthyr Town FC players Kerry Morgan and Steve Williams, as well as members of the new Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust management team.

The opening coincided with the half term soccer extravaganza, which saw over 70 children enjoying the excellent facilities the centre has to offer.

Whether you're interested in joining a league, booking a one-off court or having a birthday party – the Gôl football centre is an excellent football playing experience!

For daytime bookings contact Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre **01685 727476**

For evening bookings contact Gôl **01685 788064**



PERSONAL TRAINING

Are you a Personal Trainer looking for a facility to run your sessions, but crippled with phenomenal fees? Then look no further!

Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust is currently putting together an attractive membership package for Personal Trainers to use our facilities at both Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre and Aberfan Community Centre!

Contact the Lifestyles Manager on **01685 727429** for further information.



With a vision of 'enhancing lives through leisure & culture'

GLYN'S STORY

Former GP Referral client, Glyn Culliford, is going from strength to strength following his graduation from the scheme in 2014 and is now a successful Merthyr Tydfil Leisure instructor!

Glyn was referred to us in 2013 to help him lose the weight he'd gained as a result of illness. Having been a dancer from the age of 3 and performing on Come Dancing as part of the British Latin Formation Team as an adult, Glyn started his road to recovery by taking part in MTLT's GPR Zumba classes.

The class instructor saw his potential and recommended Glyn to go on a Fitness Wales course in Exercise to Music, which was funded by the Skilled and Passionate Workforce grant through Sports Development. Glyn passed the course at the end of 2014 and immediately started instructing his own class 'Booty Shakers'. Glyn said "When my class started I had around 30 people a week – it was a shock to the system that so many people wanted to dance fit! Now we have two classes per week with people of all abilities joining in – it's only hard if you make it hard on yourself!"

Come and see Glyn in action at MTLT Tuesdays 6-7pm and Thursdays 8-9pm.

For information on Community Chest grants contact Dan Bufton **01685 726270**.





Merthyr kids get their kicks out of football

A group of Heolgerrig Junior School pupils headed to Cardiff to watch the mighty Bluebirds recently, thanks to their local neighbourhood policing team.

Fourteen year 6 pupils were taken in a mini bus to watch their beloved football team take on Brighton and Hove Albion on Tuesday, 10 February 2015.

They were taken in a mini bus to Ninian Park, and were given VIP treatment by the club which let them get pitch-side before the game. It is hoped the trip has helped to

build and reinforce... the excellent relationships it has with the local community.

Pc Ian Sullivan, from Merthyr Tydfil Neighbourhood Policing Team, said: "The children had a ball - the club really looked after us all. It was a shame we didn't see Cardiff win, but it really didn't matter as the atmosphere itself was a fantastic

experience. It was a first live football match for most of the children who went.

"I'd like to thank Cardiff City for the complimentary tickets, and also Miller Argent who gave us their community mini bus free of charge to take the children to and from the venue."



The trip helps to build and reinforce the excellent relationships it has with the local community

Know the score

Agencies in Merthyr Tydfil teamed up to support a campaign that urges people to enjoy a night out without drinking too much.

South Wales Police, South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, local authority CCTV staff and environment health officers, St John Ambulance and Cwm Taf Health Board scrummed down and agreed tactics to face the night time economy during the Six Nations Championships recently.

The formidable pack – including the Chief Executive of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Brendan Toomey - also threw its full weight

behind the 'Know the score – drink less, enjoy more' campaign, which was launched in February by South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner Alun Michael and Chief Constable Peter Vaughan.

The campaign – which was backed by the Welsh Rugby Union – used radio, press and social media to highlight the consequences for individuals, of being turned away or banned from licensed premises.

Agencies pledged their full support to bar staff and licensed premises so they are confident enough to act professionally and refuse to break the law by serving people who are already drunk.

Bar staff across the valleys wore t-shirts emblazoned with the eye catching 'Too drink to drunk' message.

Know the score – 'drink less, enjoy more' campaign

Police and Crime Commissioner Alun Michael, said:

"The police service has become more sophisticated in the management of the many thousands of people who come to our town and city centres at night and the licensed premises they then visit. This is resource intensive and can divert officers from other important tasks which is why we all need to work together to manage night-time economy and alcohol related issues in the most effective way. There is a clear link between people getting drunk and then becoming a perpetrator or victim of crime, both of which can have serious consequences for the individual. We want people to go out, enjoy themselves but drink responsibly and play their part in reducing levels of alcohol-related crime and disorder."

Brendan Toomey Leader of Merthyr Tydfil CBC said:

"The authority is committed to promoting, enhancing and diversifying the night time economy in Merthyr Tydfil. We want the residents of Merthyr Tydfil and visitors to have a safe and enjoyable experience. That is why I personally supported this campaign. I am convinced initiatives like this will reduce the risk of harm to individuals, reduce the pressures on our public services and enhance the reputation of licensed premises which can only be good for business."

Policing the night time economy

In conjunction with the awareness campaign, a range of initiatives will take place across Rhondda Cynon Taff and Merthyr Tydfil.

In Merthyr Tydfil and in other towns, where thousands of people spill out from the Cardiff trains late at night, agencies teamed up to prevent and detect alcohol related crimes.

Activities from across the region include:

- Proactive licensing visits to ensure adequate security and safety of premises.
- Plastic drinks containers will be used by licenses premises
- Pre match-day visits by police officers to known offenders likely to offend

- Undercover licensing visits
- To secure convictions, officers will wear head cams to gather evidence real-time when responding to incidents
- Extra resources to serve problem areas such as domestic violence
- Officers will be based in A & E departments to ensure reports of crimes and oversee the safety of medical staff

- St John Ambulance volunteers to deal with minor street incidents to free-up police officers
- Local authority CCTV teams, including a mobile CCTV van, will focus on hotspot areas as a deterrent to offenders, and be used to identify suspects and record evidence
- Campaign posters and t-shirts worn by bar staff to remind drinkers of the campaign message.

Putting the brakes on dangerous school parking in Dowlais

An operation to tackle dangerous parking outside schools throughout Dowlais has been hailed a success.

A month-long initiative which began in January 2015, police officers, supported by PCSOs and local authority enforcement officers, honed in on three schools throughout Dowlais where dangerous parking was risking public and pupil safety.

In the first two weeks of the operation, police officers and PCSOs spoke to many of motorists about their driving and careless parking.

In the third week, officers took a zero tolerance approach and issued fixed penalty notices to those who continue to ignore their advice.

One parent – who parked on zebra crossing zig zags outside Dowlais Primary School before letting their child out of the vehicle – was issued a £100 fixed penalty notice by Neighbourhood Beat Manager, Pc Neil Jeffreys.

Another motorist was given a £30 fine for parking in a 'no wait' zone.

Police officers worked closely with local authority parking enforcement teams and Head teachers in Dowlais Primary School, Twynrodyn Community School, and Gwaunfarren Primary School.

Police officers sent out warning letters, and schools reinforced the message by highlighting the issue and the police plans in their newsletters and on their web sites.

Pc Neil Jeffreys, said: "Most drivers who we spoke to were glad to see us there, as they were concerned about the problem outside the schools.

"However, the minority were clearly intent on ignoring our advice so we didn't hesitate to take action.

"Hopefully our presence at the schools will make people think again about parking dangerously. We will continue to monitor the situation."

Have your say become involved in Scrutiny at the Council

We want you to get involved.

Your Council is committed to listening to local people and Scrutiny is a process to check that residents receive the best possible services from the Council and its partners. It also allows local people to have a say on matters that affect them.

At MTCBC, the Scrutiny process is carried out by four Scrutiny Committees. These committees are made up of Local Councillors and Co-opted members. They are responsible for looking at Council policies, procedures and services, and checking to see what is working well. They also consider what further improvements can be made and then make recommendations to the Councils Cabinet or Full Council on ways to improve services. Scrutiny committees are not restricted however to looking at council services; in fact they can look at any issue that has an impact on the quality of life of the residents of the County Borough.

How can I get Involved?

If you have any suggestions on a specific issue you would like the Scrutiny Committees to investigate or review (scrutinise), we would like to hear from you. This could be something which the Council is responsible for, or a general issue which is affecting your area. You can get involved by:

- **Suggesting a topic for review or investigation.**

The Council's Scrutiny Committees are seeking ideas from residents and other stakeholders on items for scrutiny to look at. Each Scrutiny Committee produces a work programme which reflects topics the committee will be reviewing at their meetings over the coming months.

If you have any ideas or topics you think should be scrutinised and included on the work programmes, please email or send them to the Scrutiny Section, or complete the online "suggested topics for scrutiny" form on the Councils website.

- **Attending a meeting of a Scrutiny Committee.**

Why not come along to a scrutiny committee meeting and listen to the debate. All meetings are open to the public, except when a confidential item is discussed (this is very rare). Meetings usually take place at the Civic Centre in Merthyr Tydfil. To find out when meetings take place see the Council website.

i Further information on Scrutiny at MTCBC including agendas and minutes of meetings is available on the Council's web pages. Alternatively for more information please contact:-

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough
Council
Scrutiny Section
Civic Centre, Castle Street
Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8AN
Email: scrutiny@merthyr.gov.uk
Telephone: **01685 725464**
Scrutiny Web page – go to
www.merthyr.gov.uk and enter
"scrutiny" in the search facility.

*Your Council
is committed
to listening to
local people*