

**Recycle this
Christmas!**

See **Page 3**
for information

Major funding boost for Regeneration projects



merthyrtydfilCBC



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Financial Position

Over the last decade, many local authorities across the country have seen continued budget cuts from Central Government.

This has added significant pressure on the day to day running of Councils and how they deliver services. This is proving exceptionally difficult and local authorities must now make drastic changes to be able to survive.

Over the last 10 years through our efficiencies programme, this Council has already had to find £32 million of savings, with a further challenge to find an additional £15million over the next 3 years.

The strain of austerity has impacted on this organisation and the ability to deliver services to the citizens of our County Borough.

We are not alone - every Council is feeling the strain.

Later this month, Welsh Government will announce our budget settlement for the forthcoming financial year. This will give us a clearer picture of the Council's financial position and how we will need to prioritise our services moving forward.

The past few months have been especially tough with the challenge to make savings. Officers and Elected Members have faced this challenge head-on and are making significant progress to ensure this Council will be sustainable moving forward.

To put the organisation in a strong position for the future, the Council needs to go through a comprehensive transformation in the way it delivers

services.

As part of this process, we have approached Welsh Government (WG) for assistance and they have provided the Council with a number of external advisors to help us drive forward the required change and improvement for the Council.

This support from WG will be in the form of a Board that will work closer with the Council to ensure that, with such limited budgets, the Council continues to deliver efficient and effective services moving forward.

It is important to keep you, our residents, regularly informed and engaged throughout. For further updates, please visit the Council's website www.merthyr.gov.uk or social media sites Facebook and Twitter.

Youth Mayor 2019-2020

In October, Merthyr Tydfil elected its new Deputy Youth Mayor 2020/2021. All the schools in the borough including pupils who attend Ysgol Rhydywaun voted for their next Deputy Youth Mayor. Over 3000 young people voted; this is the highest voting turnout since the whole Youth Mayor initiative was launched. Samee Furreed was duly elected as the next Deputy Youth Mayor and plans to continue working with the Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum on mental health and help to promote positive mental health to young people in Merthyr Tydfil. Samee also plans to work around hate crime/ bullying and help address the issue of climate change. Samee is 14 years old and attends Cyfarthfa high school, he is currently studying for his GCSE's.

This year marks/ celebrates 10 years of the Youth Mayor with Krystian Maciejczyk being the 10th Youth Mayor of the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil. Krystian was inaugurated as the Youth Mayor last May and will be in post until April 2020. His pledges are to try and change the perception on immigration, raise awareness of human trafficking and to address the ongoing issue of homelessness in Merthyr Tydfil. Alongside these 3 pledges the Youth Mayor has nominated the Donation Station as the charity that he will raise money for during his term of office.

The Deputy Youth Mayor for the year 2019/2020 is Andrew Millar, he is 13 years old and attends Cyfarthfa High School. Andrew is passionate about introducing life skills into schools and is looking forward to his year as Youth Mayor which will begin in May 2020.

Throughout Krystian's year as youth mayor he has participated in

many local events; attending the Remembrance Sunday services in Merthyr Tydfil alongside His Worship The Mayor. In addition, he has also co-presented Merthyr's Academy of Success which celebrates all the amazing achievements of young people in Merthyr Tydfil.

During the summer, Krystian visited several of the local youth provisions across Merthyr to see some of the amazing work being undertaken in the community for young people. In September 2019 Krystian also attended a number of Merthyr Tydfil's Schools in the borough, with the help of the Deputy Youth Mayor and the Chair of the Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum to promote the work being done by the Youth Forum and in the process try to recruit more young people to join.

Krystian has also led on a project about mental health for primary school children, he has been supported by the members of the Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum. The aim of the 'Feeling Good' project was about early intervention and helping young people to understand the importance of being happy and if they are not then what can be done about it. The Youth Forum worked with Cyfarthfa Park Primary and Ysgol Santes Tudful primary schools to create an activity pack and song. The resources have been distributed to all the schools in Merthyr Tydfil to be utilised to support positive mental well-being.

Currently the Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum are working with the Safeguarding Board to create an animated film to raise awareness about children/ adolescent violence and abuse to parents and carers.

Memorial Garden scoops Wales in Bloom award

Volunteers at Merthyr Libraries' Holocaust Memorial Garden were delighted when their efforts were recognised in this year's Wales in Bloom competition.

The Memorial Garden achieved a Level 5 'Outstanding' award in the It's your Neighbourhood category of the regional element of the National Britain in Bloom Competition supported by the Royal Horticultural Society.

"The memorial garden was established in 2016 by Merthyr Tydfil Libraries staff and since 2018, has been looked after by our amazing group of volunteers, who have sourced funding for continuous improvements as well as the day to day care of the garden," said

Wellbeing@Merthyr Member Support Officer Rhianwen Long.

"Merthyr Tydfil Libraries and Wellbeing@Merthyr would like to thank the volunteers for their continued hard work in the garden,

with a special mention for Janet Morgan, who takes the lead in organising the group and sourcing resources to keep improving the garden year on year."

Janet Morgan and Anne Yates of Merthyr Central Library were presented with the award by representatives of the RHS.



Pupils join mission to save eels

A mission to reverse a Europe-wide decline in eels has seen pupils from Trelewis and Bedlinog Primary Schools 're-engage' with their local river, the Bargoed Taf.

As part of the Taff Bargoed Catchment Project, students from both schools looked after young eels or elvers for 12 weeks in readiness for release into the Bargoed Taf as part of a restocking scheme.

The past 20 years have seen a dramatic decline in the number of eels reaching European river systems - falling to as little as 1% of their previous levels, according to some estimates - but no one explanation can account for the phenomenon.

Eels hatch from eggs in the Sargasso, a deep part of the western Atlantic Ocean. Using the Gulf

Stream, they then migrate 3,000 miles across the Atlantic towards the western European coast. There they congregate in estuaries as glass eel, before metamorphosing into elvers and moving upstream.

The Trelewis and Bedlinog pupils looked after the elvers and learnt about this fascinating lifecycle through a series of educational workshops organised by Gareth Edge, Project Officer for the Taf Bargoed Catchment scheme.

"We hope the project will help local people realise the importance of local rivers and help raise awareness of this enigmatic species," he said.

The Taff Bargoed Catchment Project is funded by Rural Action Cwm Taf through the European Union's Rural Development Programme and

managed by the South East Wales Rivers Trust.

Rural Action Cwm Taf works in the rural wards of Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf: Bedlinog, Vaynor, Cyfarthfa, Plymouth, Treharris, Merthyr Vale, Maerdy, Rhigos and Ynysybwl. The programme's remit is to:

- Diversify the local economy
- Improve quality of life in rural communities
- Engage with grassroots communities, and
- Encourage new innovative ways to sustain rural development.

To find out more about how you or your community can benefit from the scheme, ring 01685 725467 or visit Ruralaction@merthyr.gov.uk.



This year's Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor



Our annual Budget Consultation is underway

Have your Say on how you think the Council should prioritise its services. The survey is available online here: smartsurvey.co.uk/s/BudgetConsultation20-21/ or paper copies are available at the Civic Centre.





RECYCLE THIS CHRISTMAS

Most of us have more waste than usual during the Christmas period, so do your bit for the environment and recycle this Christmas!

KERBSIDE RECYCLING SERVICE

Glass can be recycled over and over and can be recycled in the weekly recycling scheme.

Please do not place broken glass into the recycling box.

Metal food and drink cans should be rinsed and placed in the blue bag.

Plastic bottles, tubs, pots and trays should be rinsed and placed in the blue bag.

Clean aluminium foil which is free of food can be crunched into a ball and recycled in your blue bag.

Paper and magazines should be presented separately to other materials.

Shredded paper can be placed into a carrier bag to prevent spillages.

Cardboard should be flattened and free of polystyrene or packaging before being placed out for collection.

Top tip!

Avoid wrapping paper altogether and give presents in paper bags, which can be reused.

WRAPPING PAPER

Conventional wrapping paper isn't recyclable because it contains glitter and ribbons, so please try to use gift bags instead – they can be reused over and over! If you generate any non-recyclable wrapping paper, please take this to the household waste and recycling centre.

Additional bags of wrapping paper will not be collected from the kerbside this year and must be placed into the black bin or taken to the household waste and recycling centre.

REAL CHRISTMAS TREES / GARDEN WASTE

Real Christmas trees will be collected on request only.

A collection will be made from the upper Valley on **Wednesday 8th January 2020** and from the lower valley on **Thursday 9th January 2020**. Please call 01685 726264 to request a collection before these dates.

Real trees and garden waste can also be taken to the Household Waste and Recycling Centres.

FOOD WASTE

All types of cooked and uncooked food which is free of packaging should be placed into compostable bags and into your food waste bin.

Food waste is collected weekly.

ELECTRICAL ITEMS

Electrical items are harmful to the environment and should never be placed in the wheeled bin as they need to be broken down and disposed of correctly.

The Council collect small electrical items at the kerbside and larger items can be taken to the HWRC sites. You can book a chargeable bulky waste collection via the website.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

We're running a Christmas card recycling competition with local schools, so please check if your local school is participating and donate any cards to them to improve their chances of winning this year's competition! You could also send e-cards or donate money normally spent on cards to a charity instead.

Cards should not be placed in with your cardboard recycling as the glitter, ribbons and other materials contained on them are non-recyclable.

Top tip!

Always make a list before you shop and plan recipes to prevent food waste occurring and to save money too!



HOUSEHOLD WASTE AND RECYCLING CENTRES (HWRC'S)

You can take your waste and recycling to your nearest HWRC at either:

- Aberfan Household Waste and Recycling Centre, Aberfan Road, Aberfan
- Dowlais Household Waste and Recycling Centre, The Bont, Gellifaelog Old Road, Dowlais

Both sites are open 9.00am to 4.30pm over the Christmas period except Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

Please remember:

- All waste must be separated by type and placed in the correct container.
- Packaging must be removed from cardboard before placing it into the correct skip.
- Bags containing mixed waste will need to be sorted at home before being brought to the site. Sorting stations are available at the sites, which you will be directed to in order to sort any mixed materials.
- You should flatten cardboard before taking it to the sites.
- Always ask a member of staff if you're unsure which skip to deposit your materials into.

REFUSE / RECYCLING COLLECTION ARRANGEMENTS CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR HOLIDAY PERIOD

NORMAL COLLECTION DAY:

Monday 23rd December
Tuesday 24th December
Wednesday 25th December
Thursday 26th December
Friday 27th December
Monday 30th December
Tuesday 31st January
Wednesday 1st January
Thursday 2nd January
Friday 3rd January

WILL BE COLLECTED ON:

Normal Day
Normal Day
Friday 27th December
Saturday 28th December
Sunday 29th December
Normal Day
Normal Day
Thursday 2nd January
Friday 3rd January
Saturday 4th January

To ensure that there is a consistent traffic flow through the Dowlais site; all traffic must pull in to the right hand lane to deposit materials. Parking in the left hand lane reduces traffic flow and creates a health & safety issue for site users.



Are you keeping up with the Joneses?

Keeping up with the Joneses is a project that targets the small minority of people who recycle very little or not at all.

Households which don't start recycling could face a **£100 fine**.

The campaign started in September 2019 and will continue into 2020.

All local authorities in Wales must reduce the amount of waste which

is sent for disposal and recycle 64% of their waste in 2019/20.

Failure to meet this target will result in financial penalties

Your recycling is making a BIG difference in Merthyr Tydfil – thank you!



Merthyr Tydfil yn ailgylchu
Merthyr Tydfil recycles



Merthyr Tydfil ranked #1 in UK on the Eunomia Recycling Carbon Index

We're thrilled to have been ranked #1 in the UK on the Eunomia Recycling Carbon Index!

The Index shows which local authorities' recycling activities are delivering the greatest carbon benefits; ultimately reducing our carbon footprint.

We'd like to thank all residents who take part in our weekly

recycling collections, as well as our partners Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), who have provided us with funding and technical support.



Van permits now available online!

You can now apply for permits required for taking materials to the Household Waste and Recycling Centres in a van or using a trailer online at merthyr.gov.uk/do-it-online/request-or-apply/

Proof of residency is required when booking a permit online.

You can still obtain permits from the Civic Centre during opening hours.



Sensory Room Officially opened by Sir Stanley Thomas

On 24th October 2019, Sir Stanley Thomas officially opened the new Sensory Room at Ty Dysgu Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil; a unit which aims to support pupils with challenging behavioural issues.

Sir Stanley donated £10,000 back in October 2018 to set up the Sensory Room and to purchase art, science, maths and IT materials. He said the money was being presented from the charitable Trust set up by his father, Sir Stanley Snr, to give back to the community - particularly children and people in need; "My father always said that he wanted the children of Merthyr Tydfil to benefit and that after he died, he wanted his three children to look after the

Trust to ensure that they did."

Sir Stanley added: "This town made my family and we want to put back into it, and I am delighted that there is now an additional facility in Merthyr Tydfil."

Gail Meade, Head of Ty Dysgu, said: "The Sensory Room is an amazing addition to our provision and it's been absolutely invaluable in helping our children and improving their wellbeing. We can't believe our luck... Sir Stanley is very generous!"

Work on the Sensory Room started last academic year and has been used by the pupils at Ty Dysgu Dowlais since September this year.



Sarah Bowen, Sir Stanley and Gail Meade in the new Sensory Room



WINNERS! Pupils from Dowlais Primary School, representing Namibia

The Rugby World Cup comes to Merthyr!

(That's Tag Rugby!)

On Friday 25th October, over 200 children from 16 Merthyr primary schools participated in a Tag Rugby World Cup tournament, organised by pupils from Pantysgallog's Year 6 class.

Each school represented a different nation that competed in the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan.

And not even torrential rain could dampen the spirits of those who took part!

Craig Lynch, Deputy Head Teacher of Pantysgallog Primary School, said: "We wanted to give the pupils an authentic learning experience. In the weeks leading up to the event the pupils wrote letters to invite schools, planned the itinerary, gathered sponsorship from local businesses and ordered t-shirts/medals for all participants. Also, they all fulfilled important, real life roles on the day which helped the event run successfully. I was extremely proud of the efforts of everyone involved!"

Namibia (Dowlais Primary School) were the Victors, beating Fiji (Abercanaid Community School) in the Final. Well done to you all!

**MISS SCHOOL.
MISS OUT!**
#AttendanceMatters

merthyr.gov.uk/attendance



Learning about construction is child's play for pupils

Pupils at two Merthyr Tydfil primary schools are learning about the world of work early with the help of a set of mini construction plant donated by the team building the new bus station.

St Mary's Catholic and Caedraw Primary Schools, which are directly opposite the new station site, have taken delivery of micro excavators and tipper trucks from principal contractor Morgan Sindall.

The children lost no time in trying out the 'vehicles' under the supervision of Project Manager Ross Williams.

"We understand that children in the younger age classes learn through play and we wanted to do something that supports this and links to our project," said Ross.

"The toy machinery is mainly for fun, but it also serves a useful educational purpose in introducing the pupils to the world of construction. It was surprising that

a couple of them already knew the word 'digger' - given that they're only three and four years old!"

• The new Merthyr Tydfil bus station is currently being built on the site of the former police station in Swan Street, with an expected completion date of autumn 2020.

Welsh Government has awarded the County Borough Council £10m funding for the station, which will be located closer to the town's railway station, to complement its significant investment in the Core Valley Lines Rail Network.



Ross Williams with pupils from Caedraw Primary School

PUPILS' STEM EDUCATION FROM BUS STATION ENGINEERS

Pupils at St Mary's Catholic Primary School have been learning about the world of engineering, courtesy of a visit from members of the team building the new bus station.

The school, which is directly opposite the new station site, were given the opportunity to explore equipment commonly used on construction sites.

The visit was part of the years 3 and 4 pupils' STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) studies and saw them using a rotating laser, Electronic Distance Measurement (EDM) instrument and other engineering equipment.

Employees of principal contractor Morgan Sindall, Greg Jones and Ross Williams were on hand to show the 50-plus children how the surveying kit works and allow them to 'have a go'.

The school's Leader of Science and Technology Sarah Thomas said: "The children had a wonderful time exploring different roles, using equipment and applying STEM related skills within a real life context."





Apprenticeship programme boosting local industry

Young people in Merthyr Tydfil are helping boost the growth of the local manufacturing and engineering industry as part of a successful employment apprenticeship initiative.

Over the past three years, the Welsh Government funded Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme has seen more than 30 young people placed with host employer companies while

studying at the College Merthyr Tydfil, Coleg Y Cymoedd and Cardiff and Vale College.

Aspire is a partnership project in which apprentices are employed by the County Borough Council, trained by the colleges and Tydfil Training and placed with a local firm for two to three years, depending on the length of their apprenticeship course.



They are encouraged to rotate around employers in the advanced manufacturing and engineering sector to fill any skills gaps in relation to their learning pathway, and are paid above minimum apprenticeship wages. There are also some financial incentives for employers to take part in the programme.

Aspire applicants have to be aged between 16 and 24 years; possess five GCSEs grades A-C including STEM subjects and an A level pass in STEM subjects – especially maths and science; and either be starting VRQ, or have completed the Enhanced Engineering Programme or Pathways to Apprenticeships, or completed VRQ at college.

- If you run a Merthyr Tydfil manufacturing and/or engineering company and would like to learn more about the programme, please contact Jared Green on 01685 725309, email jared.green@merthyr.gov.uk

Meanwhile scheme brings food and clothing shops to town



Plant-based food and fashion enthusiasts are in for a treat following the opening of the latest businesses supported by Merthyr Tydfil's 'Meanwhile' scheme.

St Tydfil Shopping Centre is the venue for the two new ventures, a boutique and art gallery - and the county borough's first plant-based and vegan/gluten-free friendly store and café.

Plantbased Natural Foods is a newly refurbished unit upstairs in the indoor market run by local couple Mark Evan Oakley and Natalia De Celis. Mark, 41, who has suffered from mental health problems, says he is a walking advert for the lifestyle.

"I'd had multiple stays in hospital," he said. "The last time I came out of one, feeling awful, I started researching lifestyle choices and gradually introduced plant-based eating to my diet." He eliminated sugar, processed foods and caffeine, took up cycling - completing a 100-mile sponsored bike ride - and lost 6st in weight. Mark discovered the Council's Meanwhile scheme, a partnership approach improving the

appearance of the town centre by bringing empty premises back into use. He had help in drawing up his business plan and finding his premises at a reduced rent.

Downstairs in the shopping centre in New Market Walk, Paula's Boutique and Art Gallery is the brainchild of former Cardiff hotelier Andrew Owen and Gary Bailey, who has over 30 years' experience in retail.

After opening their first shop together in Bridgend, the partners have moved on to Merthyr Tydfil, with Gary - who was New Look's regional manager for Wales and the South West - and Andrew the store's directors, and Andrew's sister-in-law Paula Owen, from Treharris, the manager.

Paula's stocks a wide range of quality ladies' clothes from Italy and France. There are also shoes, jewellery, cashmere scarves and an art gallery selling contemporary paintings and prints.

- If you would like some support from the Meanwhile scheme, please contact Merthyr Tydfil Enterprise Centre on 01685 727509.



COMMUNITY HELP THE CYFARTHFA PLAN

'Story gathering' sessions hosted by the architects' team designing the Cyfarthfa Plan have seen local groups and individuals share their memories of and hopes for the area's continuing development.

Public consultation events were held at REDHOUSE Cymru and Cyfarthfa Castle and attended by representatives of organisations including the Merthyr Tydfil and District Naturalists' Society, Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust, Merthyr Tydfil Angling Association, local studio ARRT, county borough councillors and

members of the community.

"The team continues to learn from the Merthyr Tydfil public, who have revealed many exciting stories and opinions on Merthyr and the Cyfarthfa area," said Jonathan Shaw of Ian Ritchie Architects (iRAL).

"We're very grateful to those who came and contributed and will continue to connect with as many people and groups from the town as possible. The Cyfarthfa Plan will be founded on the thoughts, opinions and ideas of the Merthyr public."



Visitor Guide

We hope you like our new Visitor Guide!

One of our favourite bits is the quote from the marvellous star of Hinterland, our very own Richard Harrington.

Please let your family and friends know... better still, send them a copy!

You can pick it up locally or download it from visitmerthyr.co.uk/about-merthyr/request-a-visitor-guide/



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TAF BARGOED CATCHMENT AREA AWARDED OVER £1½M



A half-a-million-pound project to protect lakes in one of Merthyr Tydfil's most picturesque green spaces will also see local landowners, commoners,

residents and schools take on the role of 'community guardians'.

The 140-hectare Parc Taf Bargoed will see an ongoing clean-up programme

following a grant of £417,000 from Welsh Government, matched by £60,000 from the Council and £30,000 from Natural Resources Wales.

The park, which was created following the regeneration of three disused coal mines, has 3.6 hectares of lakes that attract a wide range of wildlife. But there are issues with minerals from its industrial past causing pollution, silt and sediment build-up and antisocial behaviour such as fly tipping.

The award is from Welsh Government's Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 Sustainable Management Scheme, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government, towards the total project costs of £507,287.

The Council has also approved the appointment of a three-year post to implement and manage the 'Taf Bargoed Catchment Restoration Project', engaging with the community and carrying out communication activities.

Work will include providing new fencing, tree planting, the restoration of river banks and protection against

their erosion, and reconnecting habitats to build resilience processes into the area's biodiversity and ecosystems.

The project is a collaborative scheme also involving Natural Resources Wales, South Wales River, Friends of Taff Bargoed Park, Merthyr Tydfil Biodiversity Partnership, Merthyr (South Wales) Ltd, Gelligaer & Merthyr Commoners' Association, Aberfan Canoe Club, Rock UK Summit Centre, Taf Bargoed Angling Association, Taf Bargoed Development Trust, Cardiff University and Caerphilly County Borough Council.

The Council's Head of Regeneration Chris Long said: "This is a community project which will work to engage landowners, commoners, local residents and schools with their river catchment and learn about the importance of healthy rivers and the biodiversity within them."

Regional Park £700,000 will transform Cyfarthfa's Canolfan

A total £700,000 awarded to Cyfarthfa Park as part of Welsh Government's Valleys Regional Park 'Discovery Gateways' plans will be used to provide better access to and opening hours at the Canolfan, a full-service café and community meeting space, and new toilets and changing provision at the Splash Pad.

With the aim of the Cyfarthfa Crucible Report to position the park and the surrounding area as a local, national and international visitor destination, the need to redevelop the Canolfan was described as 'essential' by the Council's Head of Regeneration Chris Long.

"The Discovery Gateways funding

couldn't be timelier as we begin work on our plans to transform the Cyfarthfa area into a heritage centre of international significance," he said.

"The Valleys Regional Park project's intentions to use the natural and cultural heritage of the region to generate social, economic and environmental benefits tie in perfectly with our own vision of what the Cyfarthfa Plan will achieve."

When the Canolfan was built 10 years ago, the original plan was to create a space for community usage.

But access to it is poor and the catering opportunities limited.

The redevelopment will ensure access is improved and the facilities are available all year around. The project will see the creation of the café, with full kitchen, food preparation, storage, counter and seating areas.

Further opportunities created will include space for meetings and functions, event catering, children's parties, provision of picnic hampers, and mobile catering to service areas of the park such as the lake and Pandy

Field.

The creation of new toilets and changing provision – including disabled facilities – at the Splash Pad is seen as a priority not only for peak season in the summer, but also to accommodate local families and visitors attending high profile events held in the park all year round.

The Council will work in partnership with Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust to deliver the project.

Interactive map pinpoints visitor attractions

Visitors who want to become more familiar with Merthyr Tydfil will be able to pinpoint exactly where they need to go through our new interactive website map.

The Visit Merthyr Location Finder allows users to find everything from places to stay and tourist attractions to food and drink options, shops, trails and even public works of art.

The website has more than 230 listings, including accommodation

ranging from Visit Wales four-star rated B&Bs to camping, glamping and bunkhouses; visitor attractions such as outdoor activity centres and listed heritage buildings; fine dining restaurants and takeaways; indoor and outdoor markets; lakes, parks and walking routes.

"The map is one of a number of tourism marketing platforms just launched by the Council to ensure visitors have the information they need to make the most of every trip here," said Destination Management Co-ordinator

Lyndsey Handley.

"We're very pleased with the map's contents so far, but there will inevitably be a few things that we've missed," she added. "It's a live mapping system which will be continually evolving to reflect changes in the industry."

"We'd be delighted to hear from anyone who has some information or places to add to it – and we'd particularly welcome any new images to further enhance it."

The map is on the Visit Merthyr website and available at visitmerthyr.co.uk/map-page

£100m tourism success story continuing apace

Merthyr Tydfil's tourism success story is continuing apace, with the sector having a £100m economic impact locally in 2018 – an increase of almost £30m from the previous year, the Council's annual 'Destination Day' conference heard.

The 35.4% rise was due to a 41% increase in the number of annual visitors from 1.27m to 1.79m and the number of full-time equivalent jobs supported by tourism up 31% from 917 to 1,200.

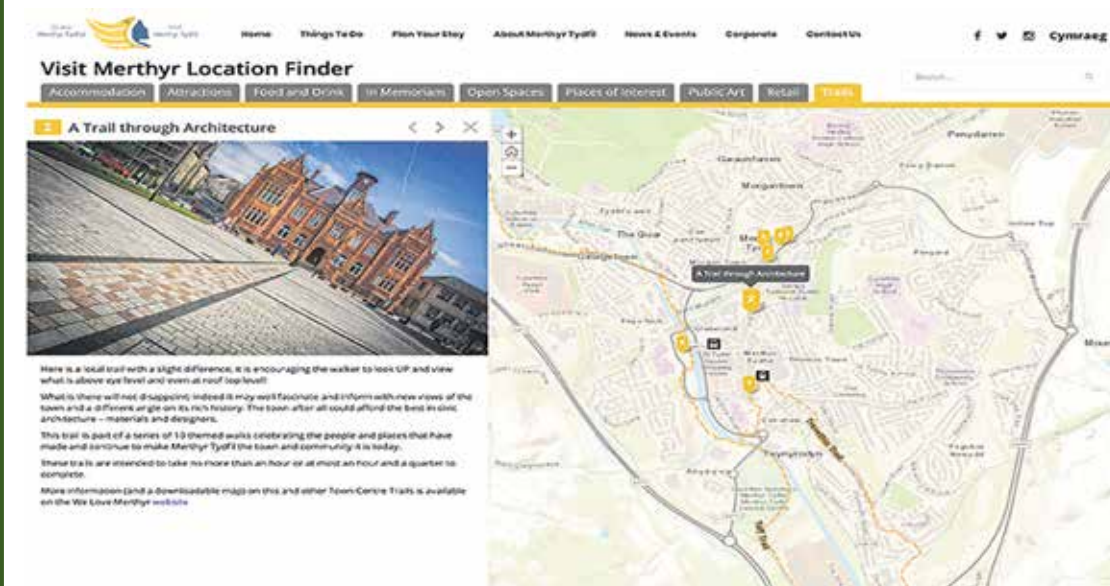
The increase in day visitor numbers was due partly to a big rise in attendances at the 17 visitor attractions across the county borough, along with 'influential factors' including the opening of the Trago Merthyr store.

The number of staying visitor days was also up 13.6%. This was due to the growth of bed stock, particularly in the non-serviced sector – hostel-

type accommodation, caravan and camping, an extra 104 bed spaces at Rock UK Summit Centre and a mushrooming number of Airbnb establishments.

Presenting the findings, Interim Chief Executive Ellis Cooper told the conference: "There are many exciting plans and projects in development for Merthyr Tydfil – too many to mention – but the following, which are already beginning to come to fruition, are merely a snapshot of all the good work that will happen."

The Orbit Business Centre event had a diverse range of speakers including experts in the fields of tourism, architecture and construction, along with entrepreneurs providing adventure activities, accommodation, shopping, dining and entertainment.





Thousands to benefit from Ffos-y-fran funding for sports projects

Two Merthyr Tydfil sports projects are to be awarded £420,000 for improvements to facilities that will benefit thousands of people across the county borough.

Merthyr Rugby Club and Treharris Area Community Trust (TACT) will receive the funding from the Ffos-y-fran Large Grant Scheme, the rugby club for the construction of a community hub at its Wern pitch and TACT to upgrade floodlights at its Parc Taf Bargoed football ground.

The community hub is the second phase of Merthyr RFC's New Shoots: Grassroots project and will provide space

not just for rugby but for other local activities and initiatives, with a host of other organisations set to use it.

Merthyr RFC says its main target group will continue to be young men and women, but with increased focus on females and the ambition to recreate a ladies team. It is also exploring the introduction of deaf rugby, Unified (mixed ability) and wheelchair rugby.

The project will receive £400,000 towards total costs of £800,000, which will also include car park resurfacing and improved floodlighting.

In Treharris, the project will receive £20,000 towards the provision of

floodlighting on the sportsground at Parc Taf Bargoed. The £500,000 facility, which was previously awarded another Ffos-y-fran grant of more than £200,000, is near completion and includes a spectator stand, changing rooms and a café.

The club currently offers football to almost 200 young boys and girls and also supports a fully bilingual team and coaches. There are plans to encourage more girls to the sport through new approaches such as 'beatball', which combines dance, music and football skills.

The Ffos-y-fran Community Grants

Scheme was established by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council in collaboration with Merthyr (South Wales) Limited, which donates £1 for every ton of coal sold from the Ffos-y-

fran land reclamation scheme. More than £8m has been awarded to a wide range of groups and causes since the site opened in 2007.





GWYBOD BETH YDYCH CHI'N MYND MEWN IDDO!



KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GETTING IN TO!

<p>Ydych chi'n defnyddio tacsï? A yw'n drwyddedig? Ydych chi'n gwybod beth yw'r risgiau?</p> <p>Gwnewch yn siŵr eich bod dim ond yn defnyddio tacsï trwyddedig!</p> <p>Rhaid i gerbydau sydd wedi'u trwyddedu gan CBS Merthyr Tydfil addangos yr arwyddion a'r sticeri drws hyn:</p> <div style="text-align: center;">   </div> <p>Gallai defnyddio cerbydau heb drwydded eich rhoi mewn perygl! Mae gynyw'r cerbydau trwyddedig yn cael gwiriadau niferus gan y Cyngor i sicrhau diogelwch y cyhoedd.</p> <p>I adrodd am gerbyd heb drwydded neu am ragor o wybodaeth, cysylltwch â'r Adran Drwyddedu - trwyddedu@merthyr.gov.uk neu 01685 725000.</p>	<p>Do you use a taxi? Is it licensed? Do you know the risks?</p> <p>Make sure you only use a licensed taxi!</p> <p>Vehicles licensed by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council have to display these signs and door stickers:</p> <div style="text-align: center;">   </div> <p>Using unlicensed vehicles could put you in danger! Licensed drivers and vehicles undergo numerous checks by the Council to ensure public safety.</p> <p>To report an unlicensed vehicle or for more information, please contact the Licensing Department - licensing@merthyr.gov.uk or 01685 725000.</p>
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Free swimming changes

The number of local free swimming sessions for over 60s and young people aged 16 and under has been reduced since November 1 due to Welsh Government halving funding for them.

As the result of a Wales-wide review finding that the national free swimming initiative is not cost effective, over 60s will be entitled to two free sessions per week and under-16s will get

them at weekends and during summer holidays.

The review carried out by Sport Wales found that the number of young people using the free swimming scheme across Wales had been falling for six years - and only six per cent of over 60s used it.

Under the new programme, young people aged 16 & under will get:

- one free hour of splash on

Saturday at Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre

- one free hour of splash on Sunday at Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Community Centre

People aged 60 and over will get:

- one free hour of splash on Tuesday and one free hour of structured activity on Thursday at Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre
- one free hour of splash on Wednesday and one free hour of structured on Monday at Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Community



Adnewyddu eich cerdyn bws

Renew your bus pass





HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR BUS PASS YET?

The current bus passes are expiring on 31st December 2019.

This applies to all green type 60 or over and disabled persons passes.

How to apply for your new style bus pass

- You can visit tfw.wales/travelcards and select "60 and over" or "Disabled" then "Replace an old-style card" then enter the requested details

- Paper application forms are available at the main reception of the Civic Centre (which then must be returned to

the address on the application form) or by contacting 0300 303 4240

If you are having issues renewing your bus pass, you can call 0300 303 4240.

Further information relating to the bus passes and other Transport for Wales initiatives is available on www.tfw.wales/travelcards

If you've already applied for a replacement bus pass, please be patient - due to the volume of applications being received, they are taking slightly longer to be processed.



Winter Weather Information



Winter weather of snow and ice can cause disruption to services, transport and affect access to communities within Merthyr Tydfil.

The Highways Department has drawn up a Winter Maintenance Plan which covers MTCBC's response to winter weather, specifically low temperatures and heavy snowfall.

The aim of the plan is to facilitate and coordinate MTCBC's assistance to communities during winter weather.

How do we decide when to treat the roads?

When roads are icy and covered by snow, naturally residents ask what is being done to clear the roads and footpaths.

MTCBC, as the Highway Authority, is responsible for providing a winter maintenance service. This enables us to assist the travelling public to use the road network with reasonable safety throughout

adverse winter weather. Our aim is to maintain or reinstate the traffic flow as quickly as possible on all routes and to ensure that vehicles and pedestrians can use them with safety.

Between 1st November and 31st March daily weather forecasts are received from the Met Office. These are carefully analysed, and a decision is then made on what action is required on that day.

Where the forecast does not give a clear indication of ice or snow, the Council can call upon a number of road sensors around the County Borough, which give up to the minute information on the surface temperature of the road.

When do we grit?

Gritting usually takes place overnight during snow or icy road conditions. The gritting routes will be treated as a precaution and we will re-treat the area if snow or ice is still present after precautionary treatment.

We will carry out a precautionary treatment if either snow has been forecast, or if freezing conditions occur immediately following rain.

If snow levels build up, snow ploughs will be used.

If you notice a grit bin that needs filling, please use our online form to request a refill.

Clear snow from a road, path or cycleway

You can clear snow and ice from pavements yourself. It's unlikely that you'll be sued or held responsible if someone is injured on a path or pavement if you've cleared it carefully!

The following information is supplied by the Department of Transport gov.uk/clear-snow-road-path-cycleway:

How to clear snow and ice

- do it early in the day - it's easier to move fresh, loose snow.
- don't use water - it might refreeze and turn to black ice.

- use salt if possible - it will melt the ice or snow and stop it from refreezing overnight (but don't use the salt from salting bins as this is used to keep roads clear).
- you can use ash and sand if you don't have enough salt - it will provide grip underfoot.
- pay extra attention when clearing steps and steep pathways - using more salt may help.

Check on your neighbours

Older people, those with long-term health conditions, pregnant women and young children are more at risk in cold weather. If you know or look after someone who may be particularly susceptible to the effects of very cold weather, please help them stay warm and well.

- Make sure they're warm enough, especially at night.
- Top up stocks of food and medicines so they don't need to go out during very cold weather.
- If they start to feel unwell, even if it's a cough or cold, don't wait until it gets more serious. Seek advice from your pharmacist or your local GP surgery.
- If you're worried about an older person, contact a family member or MTCBC's Adult Social Care on **01443 425011**.

For further information on how to keep your house warm and protecting yourself from common ailments, visit the NHS website: www.nhs.uk/staywell/

Recycling and Refuse Collections

During adverse weather conditions we will continually review the situation in relation to our refuse and recycling collections.

On occasions, collections may

have to be suspended. As soon as it is safe to resume our rounds we will continue with normal collections with catch-ups in between.

Please bear with us. During severe weather conditions, we may have to deploy our crews to assist in clearing the snow!

Regular updates will be posted to the Council's social media pages in this instance.

Schools

The decision to close a school is taken by the head teacher and chair of governors based on local conditions with the health and safety of pupils and staff being the major consideration.

MTCBC will not take a decision to close all schools but reserve the right to suspend school transport through discussion with transport contractors based on health and safety grounds.

To access information on school closures during adverse weather conditions visit the Council's website and follow the link to the school closure information.

For closure information regarding Merthyr Tydfil College visit www.merthyr.ac.uk

How to contact us during an emergency

The Council's Out of Hours and Emergency telephone number is **01685 385231**.

Public Transport

For public transport information you should contact the relevant companies directly:

- Traveline Cymru
- Transport for Wales Rail Services
- Stagecoach

Stay warm, well, and safe this winter

Winter wrapped up



A guide to keeping warm and well this winter

us.

Age UK have produced an informative leaflet called 'Winter Wrapped Up' which provides lots of useful advice on how to keep well and warm this winter. To view and download a copy, visit ageuk.org.uk

Many people can feel increasingly lonely during the dark, winter months, but it doesn't have to be this way.

There are local organisations in Merthyr Tydfil who provide Befriending services.

You can also visit ageingwellinwales.com to access a practical guide called 'Making a Difference' which provides advice

and effective ways on how to deal with isolation and loneliness. There are also other useful links to other organisations and services for older people.

If you, a family member or neighbour are worried about a relative or elderly neighbour, contact the Council on 01685 725000 or phone Age Cymru's helpline free on 08000 223 444 between Monday to Friday during the hours of 9am and 5pm.

If you are an older person or you care for an older person, please contact Claire Williams, your local Community Coordinator for information and advice on local services, groups or activities. Telephone 01685 353984 or 07580 866547 or email Claire.williams@vamt.net

Winter night shelter to re-open in the New Year

The Council's winter night shelter will re-open for 2020 on Friday 3 January and run until mid-March.

The shelter is staffed by volunteers and members of faith-based organisations and its start date is largely determined by the difficulty of recruiting volunteers over the Christmas and New Year period.

The volunteer group serves pre-cooked hot food and drinks in the evening and breakfasts via the Bus Station Café, supported by grant funding from Merthyr Valleys Homes.

Access is provided to known rough sleepers in discussion with the volunteers and the authority's Housing Solutions Team. Background checks are carried out to mitigate any risks to volunteers and other residents in the shelter.

Each day the shelter is open, nine or 10 volunteers are required to

cover three shifts: 6-10pm, 10pm-6am and 6-8am. Anyone who would like to help out is asked to contact the Council's housing solution team on 01865 725000, email housing@merthyr.gov.uk

