

CONTACT





Welcome to my first issue as new Council Leader of your Contact Community Newspaper



After a challenging 2020 it's fair to say that we all had high hopes for 2021; however, it did not start off as well as we anticipated it would, with the first few months of the year spent in a second lockdown. The dedication and commitment shown by Council staff, elected members, partner organisations and those who volunteered across our communities has been incredible, and I want to acknowledge those who have continued to go above and beyond during the coronavirus crisis. We can all look back and take stock of our achievements during the past 16 months with pride, recognising the significant challenges we all faced.

While responding to the pandemic, we have progressed work to transform the Council through regular meetings with the Improvement and Assurance Board, commissioned by Welsh Government. These meetings have been very positive and presented an exciting opportunity to transform this council into more efficient and effective ways of working.

Outside of the pandemic a lot has been going on behind the scenes with the Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Masterplan – a scheme which will see our county borough go from strength to strength. Anyone who's been to the town centre recently would have noticed that our new bus station is now open. I'm sure you'll agree that this fantastic building has transformed that part of the town centre, and we've received so many positive comments from service users, as well as local residents. On page 4 you can read how pupils from St Mary's Catholic School got involved with plans for the station by urging councillors to install a water bottle-filling machine in the concourse.

In May, the new Mayor Councillor Malcolm Colbran was inaugurated. His predecessor, my fellow ward member Councillor Howard Barrett, was the longest serving Mayor - having been in office for two years. See the articles adjacent to this.

Our new Chief Executive was announced at Full Council on 16 June, and I would again like to congratulate Ellis Cooper on his appointment. More information can be seen opposite.

Finally, I would like to say how proud I am to be your new Leader. For me, it's never been about politics – it's always been about what's right for Merthyr Tydfil, for the people – and what we can do to improve how we work, where we live, and the opportunities for everyone. There will always be difficult decisions along the way, but I believe the positives will outweigh them. I will do all I can as Leader to bring about change and continue on the transformation journey we are on.

Stay safe.

Councillor Lisa Mytton
Leader

Councillor Malcolm Colbran, Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil 2021/22

At the council's AGM, Councillor Malcolm Colbran was elected as Mayor for the municipal year 2021 – 2022. His Consort will be Nicola Bridges.

Malcolm, who lives in Bedlinog, has represented the Bedlinog Electoral Ward since 2017.

Malcolm grew up in Hailsham, a Sussex town eight miles inland from Eastbourne and lived for many years in a small village called Horam, famous as the home of Merrydown cider.

In 2003 he bought the Post Office in

Bedlinog where he was welcomed by the local community.

Malcolm remembers the first time he drove up the valley through Trelewis past Stormtown and getting his first glimpse of Bedlinog in the distance, thinking "Wow!" All these years later he still gets that same feeling every time. Speaking of Bedlinog, Malcolm says there is a strong sense of community spirit and he can't imagine ever living anywhere else.

Malcolm has chosen two charities to support during his year in office, both of

which are close to his heart. They are 2 Wish Upon A Star – a charity that offers bereavement support for anyone affected by the death of a child or young adult, and #4Tom – a charity raising awareness around the issues of mental health in young adults, set up in memory of Tom Smerdon from Bedlinog, who sadly took his own life in March 2019.

Deputy Mayor for 2021/22 is Councillor Declan Sammon, Ward Councillor for Dowlais.

If you'd like to invite the Mayor to an event please contact mayoral@merthyr.gov.uk



Merthyr Tydfil's longest serving Mayor hangs up his chains



Cllr Howard Barrett was in office from 15th May 2019 to 19th May 2021; the

first time in the Council's history that a Mayor has served two consecutive terms.

Of course, this was not the intention and current Mayor Malcolm Colbran was due to take the over as First Citizen in 2020, however Covid-19 had other plans.

Howard said of his term in office: "It has been a wonderful experience to represent the people of Merthyr Tydfil at so many varied events and occasions. A personal high for me was attending the Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in 2019.

"I've thoroughly enjoyed meeting people from all walks of life and it's something I'll remember for a long time to come.

"This last year has been one of many challenges and changes, however it was my honour to extend my time as Mayor.

"I wish Malcolm all the best for his term in office."

During his time in office Howard raised almost £35,000 for his chosen charity, Macmillan Cancer Care Merthyr Tydfil Branch.

The Council appoints new Chief Executive



On Wednesday 16th June 2021, it was approved at a Full Council meeting to appoint Ellis Cooper as the new Chief Executive of Merthyr Tydfil County

Borough Council.

Ellis who is married with two young children has worked for the local authority since 2002.

Leader, Councillor Lisa Mytton, said: "I am delighted that Ellis has finally been confirmed as our new Chief Executive and I congratulate him on his success. A robust interview process was required to ensure that we got the right person for the job. Due to the high calibre of applications, it was a challenging process for all, however Ellis demonstrated a wealth of knowledge and experience which made his suitability for the role extremely clear."

Ellis said: "It is an honour and privilege to have been appointed as the new Chief Executive of MTCBC. Having grown up in Merthyr Tydfil and living in the County Borough, I am passionate about the continued success of this Authority and doing the very best for the people we serve.

Ellis took up post as of Thursday 17th June 2021.

Youth Mayor Andrew is inaugurated



Andrew would like more young people to get involved in the Forum! If you'd like further information please contact Janice Watkins at Safer Merthyr Tydfil on 01685 353999, or via Facebook @MTYouthForum or Twitter @MTYouth.

HRH Prince of Wales visits Merthyr Tydfil's pandemic community hub at Dowlais Engine House

In May the Prince of Wales visited a Merthyr Tydfil community centre that has played a key role in supporting residents throughout the pandemic.

HRH Prince Charles was at Dowlais Engine House to hear about the significant amount of work carried out by staff and volunteers across services ranging from food parcel handling to Covid-19 testing in partnership with the Military.

The Prince was met by Lord Lieutenant of Mid Glamorgan Peter Vaughan and Engine House Manager Cllr David Hughes, who took him on a tour of the building, including the donation room where all food donations are received and packed.

Cllr Hughes told him how the Engine House had given out more than 10.5 tonnes of food since day one of the



pandemic - as well as delivering for Merthyr Cynon Food Bank - feeding over 2,000 people throughout the county borough.

HRH was given presentations from two groups that use the facility which were Katrina Lyndon School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance and Zentai Karate Club. Moving on HRH then met the Leader Cllr Lisa Mytton, Beth Mytton and Lily Ellis who then outlined the history of the Engine House and showed

HRH photographs of a previous visit by his Grandfather, King George V. This followed by a brief presentation from Abercanaid School to explain about their project on 'Plogging' (Plogging is Picking up litter and jogging the same time)"

The Prince was then introduced to the Engine House Trustees, food delivery volunteers and members of Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil.

Before leaving, HRH unveiled a plaque to commemorate his visit.

The new Youth Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil is 14-year-old Andrew Millar, a student at Cyfarthfa High School.

Andrew became the 11th Youth Mayor of the county borough on his inauguration at the Civic Centre in May. Fellow Cyfarthfa High School student, Samee Furreed, became the Deputy Youth Mayor.

In his acceptance speech, the Youth Mayor outlined his three pledges for his

term of office. His first pledge was to 'encourage and improve life skills into the curriculum in schools'. Andrew's second pledge was to increase awareness about mental health and tackle the taboo stigma that surrounds it. And his third pledge was to encourage young people in the county borough to vote by increasing their knowledge about society and politics.

Andrew said: "I am honoured that

young people in Merthyr Tydfil have chosen me to be their Youth Mayor. It is a fantastic opportunity and I will do my best to represent you and ensure that the views and opinions of young people in Merthyr Tydfil are listened to and acted on."

During his term of office Andrew will be fundraising for the Merthyr Tydfil Only Boys Aloud charity.

Working together to Recover, Transform and Improve

Welsh Government advisors continue to work with the Council to assist in the delivery of its transformation plans.

Throughout the pandemic, a Board consisting of Welsh Government advisors, senior politicians and officers have continued to meet monthly to drive forward on the Council's transformation.

The inability to meet physically has not stopped the provision of direct support and the Council is pleased that the Welsh Government has funded advisors who have been able to assist in developing areas such as Social Services, Education and the Council's Corporate Centre.

We are grateful for the help of Welsh Government officials and the WLGA in securing this additional support.

The work of the board has concentrated on monitoring the Council's "Recovery,

Transformation and Improvement Plan" setting out our priorities to improve:

- Improve our education standards.
- Increase resilience in our social care.
- Economic recovery across the County Borough following the impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic.

As well as these 3 priorities for improvement, we also want to meet our carbon reduction and recycling targets. Therefore, we have developed an Environmental Well-being programme. To do this we also have to change the way we work by considering our digital opportunities, being more commercially aware, having the right resources and sound governance (the way we work).

How have we progressed?

- The Council's Economic Recovery

Board has been working on increasing the prospects for jobs and services.

This includes supporting local people that may require help with job opportunities or need to move into different forms of employment. Merthyr Tydfil has suffered a broad and long-term decline in the strength of its local economy over past decades although had seen significant improvement in recent years. The local economy will now need intensive and concerted action by all levels of government, community and private sectors to offset the impact of the pandemic.

- For schools, an Education Partnership Panel has been established to drive improvement by bringing together all the sectors involved in delivering education in Merthyr Tydfil. We will launch our new School

Improvement Strategy in the autumn when hopefully the schools and teaching will have fully returned without restrictions. This is called our Raising Aspirations Raising Standards' Strategy' (RARS)

- Social Services has progressed since the introduction of the Board.

A recent inspection was largely positive and reports examples of good practice in how they responded promptly to safeguarding concerns and appropriately prioritised risks to people's safety. Inspectors also found a committed workforce with Senior managers said to be working collaboratively with partners to understand the needs of the population in Merthyr Tydfil focussed on preventative approaches to respond to care and support needs.

In terms of the Council finances Merthyr Tydfil received a Revenue Settlement of 4.6% for 2021/22.

This meant a cash increase of £2.783 million being well received by the Council. Whilst a good settlement, this needs to be used wisely to build up financial resilience for future years. Sadly, with the condition of the public finances the prospect of a further significant tightening of public expenditure is likely and austerity may continue. Having sufficient finance and capacity remains one of the most significant risks facing the Council in the coming years.

As things progress, further updates on the Council's transformation plan will be published on the Council website and social media sites.

Aspire celebrates national award

Aspire Blaenau Gwent & Merthyr Tydfil's Shared Apprenticeship Programme won the Large Employer of the Year award at the virtual Apprenticeship Awards Cymru 2021 ceremony in June.

The Shared Apprenticeship Programme was created six years ago to tackle high unemployment and relatively low skill levels within the manufacturing industry across Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil.

The programme has directly benefited 123 apprentices as well as companies that have adopted its innovative approach. Learners are rotated around host employers to plug skills gaps by training on-the-job and working to achieve units towards their apprenticeship.

Celebrating outstanding achievement in training and apprenticeships, the Apprenticeship Awards Cymru 2021 saw 35 finalists compete in 12 categories.

Highlight of the work-based learning calendar, the awards showcased businesses and individuals who have excelled on the Welsh Government's Apprenticeship and Traineeship Programmes and gone the extra mile to achieve success during these unprecedented times.

Jointly organised by the Welsh Government and the National Training Federation for Wales (NTFW), the awards had Openreach, the UK's digital network business and passionate supporter of apprenticeships, as the headline sponsor.

The Apprenticeship Programme in Wales is funded by the Welsh Government with support from the European Social Fund. Welsh Government Apprenticeship Programmes have benefitted 50,360 people across South East Wales since May 2016.

Aspire's Shared Apprenticeship Programme was first established in 2015 when Ebbw Vale Enterprise Zone Board identified a significant lack of employees with skills at Level 3 and above in Blaenau Gwent. Two years later, Merthyr Tydfil joined to develop its business growth and enhance skills whilst tackling unemployment.

Aspire is now working with both Coleg y Cymoedd and The College Merthyr Tydfil to foster the next generation of skilled workers through apprenticeships covering Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, ICT, Applied Science, Quality Engineering as well as Business/Commercial Administration and Finance.

School meal prices frozen for current year

The cost of school meals in Merthyr Tydfil will not be increased during the current financial year.

A meeting of the full County Borough Council has agreed to a price freeze for 2021/22 for the second year in a row.

The price was most recently increased in April 2019, by 20p, to £2.30 in primary schools and £2.70 in secondary schools.

Members heard that no rise was considered last year due to the pandemic

and the anticipated interruption to the service delivery.

No school meals were provided during the summer term 2020, with a reduced menu offered when reintroduced in the autumn term.

Chief Officer for Learning Sue Walker said: "Whilst schools hopefully settle down to some more normal services, and while we need to monitor the impact of any supplier price changes - either due to

Brexit or the impact of the pandemic - it would not be the right time to consider a price increase.

"It was proposed - and agreed by members - that during this period of uncertainty the cost of school meals remain at current prices, with a further review as part of budget setting for the financial year 2022/23."

Return of Free Swim programme

Merthyr residents under the age of 16 or over 60 can now swim for free throughout the week at Aberfan Centre, thanks to the return of the National Free Swim programme.

Active Merthyr, MTCBC's Sports Development department, have teamed up with WellbeingMerthyr to overhaul the previous Free Swim programme to allow residents that fall in the Free Swim age range to use the pool at times that suit them, maximising the opportunities for swimming whilst Merthyr Leisure Centre pools remain closed.

Residents (or their parents / guardians for those in the younger age) should contact Aberfan & Merthyr Vale Community Centre to apply for a Free Swim slot.

Further developments to the Free Swim programme, including the return of lessons and structured sessions are currently being planned in a phased return to swimming opportunities.

For more information contact dan.buften@merthyr.gov.uk



Care Homes leisure scheme

Merthyr Tydfil Care Homes are being supported to improve the health and wellbeing of their residents by a new scheme coordinated by Active Merthyr, MTCBC's Sport Development department, in partnership with WellbeingMerthyr.

The programme, funded through Welsh Government's Over 60's Active Leisure Scheme and the Cwm Taf wide Super Agers Over 50 programme, has seen the delivery of a range of physical activity equipment including Table Tennis and Indoor Bowls to care homes.

Venues that have needed it have been supported to access online provision with the delivery of HDMI cables, speakers and other IT equipment.

As part of the programme, WellbeingMerthyr have now launched new online Armchair Aerobics sessions specifically for care home residents, with care homes joining a live online session on a weekly basis, run by one of WellbeingMerthyr's experienced instructors.

Further opportunities are being planned for this year, allowing care homes to develop their own physical activity programmes in the future, supported by Active Merthyr.

For further information contact kate.gray@merthyr.gov.uk



Minister's maiden school visit - to Ysgol Santes Tudful

New Welsh Government Education and Welsh Language Minister Jeremy Miles's first visit to a school in his new role was at Ysgol Santes Tudful in Pantyffyn Road.

A Welsh Government spokesperson said: "He was delighted with the warm welcome, and really enjoyed meeting the staff and pupils, seeing all the great work the children are doing ahead of the New Curriculum for Wales which will be statutory from 2022."

Headteacher Lynne Rose-Jones said: "We were honoured to welcome Mr Miles to Ysgol Santes Tudful for his first visit as Education Minister - we were so encouraged that he chose a Welsh medium primary."

"He spent time with each and every class and engaged with our pupils and staff. We believe the future and new curriculum are in safe hands."



New bus station gets bottle-filling machine after pupil pressure

Merthyr Tydfil's new bus interchange also features a water bottle-filling station after pressure from local primary school pupils convinced councillors of its need.

Seven members of St Mary's Catholic Primary School's School Council took part in a Teams meeting with the Cabinet to pitch their idea in an online presentation.

The school was the first in Merthyr Tydfil to achieve UNICEF's Rights Respecting School GOLD Award, in 2018, and the 10 and 11-year-old pupils persuaded councillors that the availability of fresh drinking water was essential to people's health and wellbeing.

"The unit has now been fitted in the concourse at the new station," said Ross Williams, Project Lead with main contractor Morgan Sindall. "This is entirely down to the hard work, passion and teamwork of the St Mary's School Council and their commitment to positive change."

"The School Council had worked hard on their presentation, researched all angles with diligence and were thorough. There were clear signs that all people were considered and it was not simply from the perspective of themselves - and they truly represented the local community and others."

Big Heart's prestigious award

The Merthyr Tydfil Business Improvement District (BID) - The Big Heart of Merthyr Tydfil - has been named one of the best business-led town centre partnerships in the UK, winning official accreditation status from British BIDS.

The prestigious award is presented for good governance, strong financial systems and transparency, and The Big Heart of Merthyr Tydfil is one of just 27 BIDS in the UK to achieve accreditation.

More than 200 shops and businesses in Merthyr Tydfil contribute to the BID to promote the town, welcome visitors and create a healthy trading environment. Accreditation means businesses have

assurance they are getting value for money from a well-managed BID.

Elizabeth Bedford, Manager of the Big Heart of Merthyr Tydfil, said: "This is a huge accolade for the town and the timing is perfect, with shops and businesses reopening and our thriving town centre welcoming visitors again."

"We will be running continuous marketing campaigns throughout the year to support businesses. Other areas of priority are looking at digital needs at a time when companies are looking at e-commerce more than ever. But it's likely to be next year before the BID can reboot its popular events programme,

including the annual food and chilli festivals."

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Transformation and Commercialisation Cllr Geraint Thomas said: "Despite the difficult circumstances of the past year-plus, the BID Board and staff have continued to show good governance, staff management and levy payer communications."

"It offers an outstanding service to its member businesses and is helping to ensure they all get back on their feet and help our town centre bustle once again."

Abercanaid School Pupils raise money by Plogging



MTCBC Leader, Cllr Lisa Mytton and Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Member, Cllr David Hughes, recently joined children from Abercanaid School years 5 and 6 while they were out Plogging in the community.

Plogging involves going for a jog or walk and picking up litter at the same time - an initiative which not only encourages exercise but is great for

the community environment too!

In less than an hour the pupils and Councillors filled two black bags with litter.

On this occasion pupils were also raising money for new bikes and trikes for their younger counterparts, having been sponsored by friends and family members. Each Explorers pupil (Foundation Phase) aimed to

accumulate 2000 steps and Pioneers (Key Stage 2) aimed for 5000 steps. Due to their determination they all managed to achieve this target.

Over the course of a week the school raised £1,521 which will be used to buy bikes and trikes for the Explorers department.

Plans to make NLC residential and learning hub

The Council's Neighbourhood Learning Centre at Gurnos could be turned into 'a unique accommodation centre' providing young residents with both housing and onsite training.

The building has for 24 years been used as an educational base to help unemployed young people and adults get jobs in a range of vocations including carpentry, plumbing and construction, hairdressing, and pottery and ceramics.

As part of a Capital Programme investment project, the workshops would be relocated - the training facilities remaining - with one of the four building blocks converted into five self-contained flats.

The NLC currently has a hairdressing unit with professional hair salon equipment, a potter's kiln and a ceramics workshop - and the plan is to also encourage local residents to make use of the centre by offering

them community classes in the same skills.

The Council has received in-principle approval for funding for the project from the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Integrated Care Fund Discretionary Capital Programme, which has identified work with young people and looked after children as a key priority.

"We know that over many years the Neighbourhood Learning Centre has been an important aspect of many people's lives, helping them to gain skills and jobs," said Head of Regeneration and Housing Chris Long. "And that role will continue."

"However, the buildings themselves have seen better days, and this redevelopment will transform them into modern, safe accommodation with support staff rooms, improvements to the facades of all the blocks, and improved access and parking," he added.

"Welsh Government has set housing associations and local authorities a target of delivering 20,000 affordable homes between 2016 and 2021. We're keen to work with partners to meet these targets and want to ensure that there are enough suitable and affordable homes to meet local housing need in Merthyr Tydfil."

"The Neighbourhood Learning Centre creates an opportunity to help with this demand, providing a unique accommodation centre where its tenants will also have access to onsite training that could lead to higher education by attending their local college, and future employment."

"It's important that we are pioneering for our young people to give them opportunity to be ambitious and optimistic for their future."

Kickstart jobs found for 21

The Council is delighted to have been able to employ 21 people through its role as a 'Gateway' for the Department for Work and Pensions' Kickstart scheme.

We have been given funding to create new six-month work placements for unemployed young people, paying the National Minimum Wage.

There is a lot more planned recruitment, as we still have 74 vacancies left to fill. We have jobs available for grass cutters and litter pickers and are in the process of organising a recruitment event in Merthyr Jobcentre so that managers can meet potential eligible applicants. The date of that event will be confirmed through the Council's website and social media.

The 21 secured work placements are

in Neighbourhood Services, ICT, and the Neighbourhood Learning Centre.

Employability Manager Deb Ryan-Newton said: "The new recruits have settled well within their roles and are making valuable contributions to the Council's workforce and the community."

"They will all have access to a host of training opportunities that will complement their actual work placement experience, which will allow them to enhance their appeal to future employers once their placement opportunity ends."

More jobs will be released over the coming months, and anyone interested between the ages of 16-24 and claiming Universal Credit should speak to their Work Coach in the Jobcentre to make an application.



John's name lives on in Afon Tâf track

The Council is delighted that the redeveloped running track at Afon Tâf High School has been named the John Sellwood Community Track after our former Head of Culture, Leisure and Sports Development, who died last year of Covid-19.

One project John was working on was seeking funding for the much needed redevelopment of the track at Afon Tâf, where he was also vice chair of governors.

John's Active Merthyr team picked up where he left off - working in collaboration with Afon Taf - and secured funding for the project, with support from Sport Wales.

Active Merthyr Manager Dan Bufton said: "John's passion for sport and the community was second to none, and we've been committed to maintaining that passion in John's memory."

"This project was something John was determined to make happen. To put it in sporting terms, whilst we may have crossed the finish line with this, it was John who handed us the baton."

"It's fantastic to be able to see a lasting legacy from John in the community. It's going to be a fantastic facility for

the community and John really drove it forward in the early stages. It's great that people will be able to remember John every time they step on to the track."

Deputy Head Teacher of Afon Tâf Stephen Baber said: "John was a past pupil, serving governor and fantastic friend to Afon Tâf. His passing impacted immensely on everyone connected with our school."

"From the minute the funding was secured for the redevelopment of the track, there was no doubt in our mind about what it would be called. Everything John stood for was about community and fostering a love for sport and physical activity."

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Chief Executive Ellis Cooper said: "John's life revolved around sport - he played for and coached teams, managed facilities and programmes, and volunteered his free time to help clubs and groups flourish. He would have been so proud to see this track, which he campaigned to improve, named after him. It's a fitting tribute and will ensure his memory lives on."

Record number of projects get Ffos-y-fran funding

Merthyr Tydfil community groups have received a record amount of funding from a programme reinvesting profits from the Ffos-y-fran land reclamation scheme.

The Ffos-y-fran Intermediate Grants Scheme has awarded more than £80,000 to 35 local groups running projects mainly focusing on activities to improve physical and mental wellbeing.

They include Aberfan Canoe Club, which received £1,500 for extra equipment; Pant Girls' Club, which was awarded £2,500 for football kits; and Merthyr Triathlon Club, granted £2,418 for loan bikes.

The Ffos-y-fran Community Benefit Fund programme was established by the County Borough Council in collaboration with local mining company Merthyr (South Wales) Limited.

It donates £1 for every ton of coal sold from, and since the site opened in 2007, more than £6m has been

awarded to a wide range of groups and causes.

The Intermediate Grants Scheme awards up to £5,000, while there is also a Small Grants Scheme of up to £1,000, which runs throughout the year and can be accessed through local councillors.

"The panel received an unprecedented number of applications this time and a record number of projects were funded," said Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Transformation and Commercialisation Cllr Geraint Thomas.

"We were extremely pleased that so many applications recognised the importance of helping people get active and look after both their physical and mental health."

Keep an eye on the Council's social media over the coming months as we focus on what our successful groups are doing with their awards.

Morlais Castle to become community focal point



Another historic Merthyr Tydfil pub has reopened after a spectacular transformation, thanks to support from the County Borough Council's Regeneration Team and two national grants schemes.

The Morlais Castle Inn, which was closed for more than 20 years, will be offering residential accommodation, indoor and outdoor restaurants, live music and themed evenings for care home residents when it reopens at the weekend.

The building has been bought and redeveloped by local company GTH Developments at a total cost of more than £500,000. The company received an Urban Centre Living Grant of £250,000 from Welsh Government's Transforming Towns initiative, and funding of £159,000 from the National Heritage Lottery Fund, with over £100,000 contributed by the developers.

The redevelopment has seen the first and second floors converted into residential flats with new kitchens and bathrooms, rear car parking, improved access and restoration of the building's façade, which was in extensive disrepair.

The ground floor and basement feature a live performance area, cellar bar, indoor and outdoor dining areas, new flooring and ceilings, a specially commissioned handmade oak bar, and traditional and contemporary fixtures and fittings.

The pub is being leased by a couple with extensive hospitality experience, whose goal was to put something back into the community by reviving an old institution, providing jobs and creating a venue for people of all ages.

Merthyr Tydfil-born Dayle Evans has worked in the hospitality sector all his life. He once managed the largest pub, restaurant and nightclub in Worcestershire and was responsible for a business that generated a turnover of close to £3m. Dayle's partner Kirsty is an experienced pub manager, although currently full-time mum to the couple's

son Noah.

The building is thought to be early Victorian, appearing in historic images attributed to the 1800s. But there have been alterations over time, including recent replacement of the roof and windows, and the shopfront and door surrounds evident in historic images have also been lost.

The current refurbishment was carried out under the Pontmorlais Townscape Heritage Scheme, which is restoring the appearance of the historic town centre by reinstating many traditional features such as shopfronts, timber sash windows, traditional renders, natural slate roof coverings and cast iron rainwater goods.

GTH Developments CEO James Howe said that the company saw in the Morlais Castle an ideal opportunity to bring back to life an iconic building which held many fond memories for local residents. "During the refurbishment work, numerous people would enquire when the building would reopen and relate their stories of when they used the pub," he added.

"We're a local company who feel it's important to redevelop buildings in Merthyr Tydfil which also bring revenue into the town. We use all local businesses and traders, which helps drive the local economy and benefits everyone, providing jobs, tax revenue, and improving the lives of residents."

The inn is also the latest project in the County Borough Council's Meanwhile scheme, which is responsible for much of the current regeneration in the town.

Have you seen our new 'Recycle on the Go' bins?

Thanks to a successful funding bid by our waste services team, 120 of our street bins are being upgraded to offer a separate recycling option for users.

The bins are being replaced throughout Merthyr Tydfil over

the summer months, so please keep a look out for them!

We hope that this will help to increase recycling and reduce litter - improving our public spaces for residents and visitors alike.



Did you know...?

Putting household waste in or at the side of public litter bins is fly tipping!

Street litter bins are to be used for street litter ONLY.

You should use your black wheelie bin or recycling boxes to dispose of household waste on your kerbside collection day. Any excess waste should be taken to one of the household waste and recycling centres in Dowlais or Aberfan.

Any waste dumped in or near public litter bins will be fully investigated and may result in prosecution.

Vehicle access restricted at Pant and Cefn Cemeteries

Following historic anti-social behaviour issues, including large amounts of fly-tipping, the vehicle access gates at both Pant and Cefn cemeteries will now close at night.

Cllr Declan Sammon said: "This is something Cllr David Hughes and myself have been working on for quite a while and hopefully, now that vehicle access to the Cemetery has been stopped during the hours of darkness, it will give peace of mind to many families."

"I'd like to thank The Independent Group for being so supportive in getting this issue to Full Council and to all my fellow Councillors for voting in favour of restricting access at night into those Cemeteries that have been plagued by anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping."

The gates will be closed as follows:

Summer months (1st April - 30th September): 8pm - 8am

Winter months (1st October - 31st March) 5pm - 8am

Pedestrian access remains unchanged.

Solar panel installations at recycling depots

As part of the council's ambition to decarbonise, we were successful in securing Welsh Government Circular Economy funding for 2 x Solar PV installations at our recycling centres.

The installations were successfully

completed on time and within budget in June 2021.

These installations will help offset and minimise our carbon emissions, while also reducing the running costs of the two centres!



GRASS CUTTING AND BIODIVERSITY

Did you know...

16 of our grassland sites throughout the county borough are now being managed by our new 'cut and collect' machines, which have been purchased through the Welsh Government Local Places for Nature grant.

This means 4.5 hectares of local

grasslands are now being managed purely for biodiversity – that's the equivalent of around 8 football fields!

You might see some of our signs installed in these areas, highlighting that we are managing them for pollinators and wildflowers.

These new measures will help protect our pollinators and bring nature back to our doorsteps.



Residents agree plans to install average speed cameras

Following two rounds of consultation, residents of Merthyr Vale and Mount Pleasant have agreed on the installation of average speed cameras on the section of the A4054 Cardiff Road that runs through the villages.

In phase one of the consultation, 98% of those surveyed – which included residents and the wider public – agreed there was an issue with speeding traffic along the road, with 80% agreeing that traffic calming measures were necessary.

In phase two, 78% agreed with the installation of average speed cameras.

Ward Councillors, Darren Roberts and Scott Thomas, said: "Following several accidents and complaints

about speeding traffic through Merthyr Vale and Mount Pleasant we asked the Local Authority to hold a public consultation to ask residents and road users their comments and concerns.

"We would like to thank all that took the time to participate in the consultation and welcome the result. The addition of average speed cameras in the area will make the stretch of road between the two villages safer for everyone, including children who use the road to walk to and from school.

"As your Ward councillors we listened to the concerns raised, acted on them swiftly and delivered what residents requested. We would also like to thank the officers of the Local Authority who have assisted in delivering this positive outcome."

Council officers will now liaise with Go Safe, the Police and Welsh Government to get the cameras installed, with a projected date of September for works to start.

As a result of this survey and its findings we will now be consulting with other villages along the road to see if an extension of the average speed cameras is required between Quaker's Yard and Pentrebach.

GIVE ITEMS A 'NEW LEASE OF LIFE' AT MERTHYR TYDFIL'S NEWEST RE-USE SHOP!

The shop, which is located in Pentrebach, is operated by Wastesavers – a Third Sector Social Enterprise and registered charity based in south east Wales, dedicated to social, environmental, and economic sustainability.

Working in partnership with the council, their aim is to divert as many items as possible from landfill by giving people somewhere to take their unwanted items and selling them on at a discounted price. The charity also makes sure that people in need have access to things such as furniture and IT by making donations through local organisations to families and individuals who need them.

A New Lease of Life opened its doors on 12th April 2021 and in just one month saved over 2,500 items going to landfill. Beth Rosser, Wastesavers Area Manager said: "We've had an amazing response from people since opening. Customers constantly tell us they just can't believe what people throw away. Residents also love the idea that their unwanted items have a chance of finding a new home rather than going in a skip."

Alun Harries, Wastesavers Charity manager, said: "We are really pleased A New Lease of Life has got off to such a good start, especially considering the covid restrictions.

"But this is not only about saving reusable items from going to landfill.

"We have created three new jobs and plenty of volunteering opportunities. This would not have been possible



Did you know... you can now collect food waste bags and battery recycling bags from A New Lease of Life!



without the fantastic support and input from Merthyr Tydfil Council."

Councillor David Hughes, Portfolio Member for Neighbourhood Services, said: "I'm absolutely delighted that this shop has opened its doors in Merthyr Tydfil. It gives people the opportunity to recycle their unwanted items by giving back to the community and supporting those who may need it. That's a great feeling for everyone

involved.

"Customers of the shop often comment that it's a 'crime' what people will throw away, so we thought we'd have a bit of fun with that today!"

Where? Unit 20, Merthyr Industrial Park, Pentrebach CF48 4DR

When? Monday to Friday 09.30 - 16.30, Saturday 09.00 - 13.00.



Know your Duty of Care responsibilities!

If you pay someone to take away your household rubbish or unwanted items, then you must:

✓ Check that the person or company taking your rubbish is a registered waste

carrier (visit the naturalresources.wales website)

✓ Always ask where your waste is going
✓ Always keep the receipt!

MTCBC'S FLEET OF VEHICLES SET TO GO ELECTRIC!

With the aim of being Carbon Neutral by 2030, our fleet operations team have purchased 4 x Electric Vehicles (EVs), with 4 more being delivered by September this year.

The new vehicles, which are currently used by our Waste & Recycling Wardens, not only produce less CO2 per km compared to a diesel equivalent – making them better for the environment – but also provide a financial saving to the authority.

Warden, Chris Evans, said: "I take great pride in driving an EV with zero emission while doing my daily job of helping residents recycle efficiently. It feels like I'm doing something worthwhile for the environment and the community."

The 4 new vehicles due in September will support our IT, parking and waste & recycling services to travel producing zero carbon emissions.



21st century school building

The second 21st Century school scheme for Merthyr Tydfil is currently underway with the construction of the new build Ysgol Y Graig Primary School. The new school, which is being constructed by Kier Construction, will replace the existing ageing Ysgol Y Graig Primary School with a new two-storey state-of-the-art building and

will be situated on the former Vaynor & Penderyn School Site in Cefn Coed. The new school is approximately 2,142m² and comprises general teaching rooms, specialist areas, a learning resource base, hall, Nursery school, Pre-school, catering facilities and designated community room. A new car park and access road is



being constructed on the Godre'r Coed Fields Site which is accessed from Cyfarthfa Gardens.

The surrounding areas will be landscaped with a mixture of hard and soft play areas.

The school has been built with energy efficiency in mind:

✓ 175m² of Photovoltaic Panels have been installed on the roof which are expected to generate 21,285 kWh of

renewable energy each year.

✓ The heating will be provided by high efficiency boilers.

✓ Highly insulated roof and walls will provide a building with reduced energy demand and carbon emissions.

✓ The latest Hybrid Ventilation technology, which is controlled by an intelligent automatic control system, will consider seasonal conditions, internal temperature and indoor air



quality to provide natural, energy efficient, carbon neutral cooling and ventilation.

✓ State of the art LED lighting used throughout, with automatic lighting controls to further reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions.

The build is due for completion in readiness for the new school year in September 2021.

School's lasting tribute to former Headteacher

Staff and pupils at the new Ysgol Y Graig Primary School, Cefn Coed, will always remember the school's late Headteacher Matthew Harries after a bench has been unveiled and a tree planted in his memory. Immediate Past Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil Cllr Howard Barrett attended the new school site to present the bench he donated in memory of former Head Mr Harries.

Later, fellow Cefn Coed ward member and Council Leader Cllr Lisa Mytton and Cllr Barrett performed the official bench unveiling and planting of the tree, a Jubilee Oak that Matthew had been nurturing for the new school.

Also attending the ceremony were current Head David Anstee, teachers, pupils and Chair of School Governors Ann James - along with representatives of construction company Kier, including Project Manager Mark Poole.

Cllr Barrett said: "I was keen to do something that would not only mark the building of the new school, but also serve as a lasting tribute to a much loved and much missed member of staff, Matthew Harries."

Storm Dennis update

We have now started the second year of a three-year programme to repair and rebuild the damaged infrastructure that occurred during Storm Dennis in February 2020.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) report that during 15-16 February 2020, Wales saw 61 flood alerts, 89 flood warning and two severe flood warnings – the highest number of warnings for rivers ever recorded at any one time in Wales, highlighting the severity and impact that Storm Dennis had on the local watercourses.

The impact in Merthyr Tydfil was 232 flooded properties, comprising of mainly residential and some commercial properties.

Following extensive investigation work in the months after Storm Dennis 50 projects were identified within Merthyr Tydfil, with an estimated cost of £8.5m.

The recovery works vary in nature from:

- Culvert repairs
- Reinstatement of river embankments
- Installation of trash screens and flood monitors to various culverts
- Increasing the capacity of watercourses
- Scour protection of bridges
- Stabilisation work to landslip areas

WORKS SO FAR

During 2020 and in to 2021 a number of culverts were repaired in Heolgerrig,

Penydarren, Pentrebach, Troedryhiw, Aberfan, Merthyr Vale and Fiddler's Elbow. New culverts were constructed in Pontsarn, Trelewis and Bedlinog, with further planned in 2021 in Pant and Troedryhiw.

Several river embankments suffered severe erosion during the storm and repairs have been completed at Riverside Park, Mill Road Quaker's Yard, together with underpinning of the Merthyr Vale Colliery Arches. Additional work is required at Pontycnafau and Quakers Yard.

Six flood monitors have been installed at high-risk culverts, together with trash screen repairs.

TROEDRYHIW

The village of Troedryhiw suffered extensive flooding because record high levels in the River Taff caused water to back up into the Plymouth feeder. The feeder could not contain the volume of water during the 1 in a 200-year event and the water eventually overtopped the feeder embankment and flooded 129 properties.

Work is almost complete at the Plymouth Feeder to construct a 2.5m high flood defence wall, together with dredging of the channel, re-profiling of the feeder embankment to increase its capacity, and the construction of a new footbridge to replace a previous bridge that caused a restriction in the feeder.

BRIDGES

In the immediate aftermath of Storm Dennis underwater inspections of all 40 bridges that cross rivers were undertaken to assess for any damage. Scour protection and the reinstatement of the west embankment of St Tydfil's road bridge was completed in June 2020.

Further repairs are required to other bridges, with work starting on Tyr Y Wen bridge in Bedlinog in June 2021 and Victoria Bridge, Quaker's Yard, later in the year.

LANDSLIPS

Eight landslips occurred during the storm and all have been inspected and assessed by an independent Geotechnical Engineering Consultant.

All landslip areas are currently safe; however, remedial works are being planned in Pontsarn, Pontsticill, Troedryhiw and Bedlinog to further stabilise these areas and prevent any future landslips developing at these locations.

All 131 disused coal waste tips and quarries were inspected twice by Merthyr Tydfil council Engineers during 2020, together with additional inspections by the Coal Authority on 18 High risk and 46 Medium risk tips throughout the county borough.

All tips have been assessed as safe, with minor remedial work required that will take place this year.

We will continue to update you as works progress.

REFIT Energy Efficiency Project



The importance of reducing carbon emissions is becoming ever more important, with Welsh Government setting targets for the Public Sector to be Carbon Neutral by 2030.

MTCBC is using the REFIT Cymru project to optimise the energy efficiency of properties, improve the condition of our schools, reduce CO₂ emissions and save money.

The programme supports energy efficiency and renewable energy measures, resulting in cash savings from lower energy use and reduced carbon emissions.

With over 100 properties in the council's property portfolio, and an energy spend in buildings of over £1.2 million per year, the potential benefits could be significant!

The Project is estimated to save £136,000 per year and reduce Carbon Emissions from buildings by 251 tonnes per year.

30 buildings included within the scheme include schools, care homes, office buildings and car parks.

On top of the savings, the buildings will also benefit from electrical and mechanical upgrades, resulting in an improved learning and working environment and more comfortable conditions. Measures due to be installed include:

- 30 x LED Lighting Upgrades
- 9 x Solar PV systems
- smart heating and hot water systems
- loft insulation.

Highways update

Additional funding has been obtained from Welsh Government to carry out pothole repairs and road resurfacing work throughout the county borough.



During April and May 900m of footways were resurfaced in Cefn Coed, Pontsticill, Gurnos and Trelewis. A further 202m of footway will be resurfaced in Penydarren during June.



Pothole repairs are currently underway and 645m of carriageway has already been resurfaced in Penydarren, Cefn Coed and Castle Park. A further 777m of carriageway will be resurfaced during June in Swansea Road and Penydarren.

Thank you for separating us



#workingtogether #thankyou

Merthyr Tydfil yn atgylchu
Merthyr Tydfil recycles

Thank you for supporting our kerbside collections by separating card and glass!

Mixing these materials caused issues with contamination, damage to machinery and injuries to staff, and since separating began in April we've seen

a vast improvement! Additional boxes were funded by the Welsh Government Circular Economy Fund.



WE ASKED...

1. Following complaints about parking and road safety issues, through two phases of consultation we asked residents of Twynrodyn how we could improve road safety in the area.
2. Residents and road users of the Cardiff Road (A4054) through Merthyr Vale and Mount Pleasant were asked if they thought that road safety measures were needed to reduce the speed of traffic. This was following several accidents and a subsequent speed survey in the area, which revealed that the average speed is 38mph in a 30mph zone.
3. If you agreed that the vehicle access gates at Beechgrove (Edwardsville) Cemetery should be closed at night.

YOU SAID...

1. Suggestions included a one-way system, speed cushions and 20mph speed limit.
2. 98% of residents agreed that measures were required, 97% of which said that speeding traffic made them feel unsafe.
3. 73% agreed that they should be closed.

WE DID...

1. In March 2021, a one-way system and 20mph speed limit was introduced in the area.
2. We conducted a phase 2 consultation and, following agreement from those residents and road users who responded, have now progressed with funding for average speed cameras in the area. Works are due to start in the Autumn.
As a result of this survey and its findings we will now be consulting with other villages along the road to see if an extension of the average speed cameras is required between Quaker's Yard and Pentrebach.
3. The gates are now closed at 9pm each evening, reopening at 8am in the morning (summer hours). This will change to 6pm – 8am during the winter.

Working Skills for Adults 2
Nurture, Equip and Thrive

Are you employed and aged 16 or over?
Would you like to progress in your current job?
Want to change career?
Want to gain job related skills and or qualifications?
Need support to help you to stay in work?

I have a job but...



We can help you by...

Providing you with FREE job related qualifications!
Supporting you to stay in work and sustain your employment.
Assisting you to change your career.
Empowering you to progress in your career.

find us on Facebook – Working Skills for adults 2 Merthyr Tydfil
Tel: 01685 727070 Email: wsfa2@merthyr.gov.uk
Address: The Orbit Business Centre, Merthyr Tydfil CF48 1DL

Join our Customer
Focus Panel

It is our job to give all of our customers a platform to have their voices heard, and often that means seeking out the customers we don't hear from as much. We don't just want our fans or ambassadors — instead, we want customers that are going to push us to think differently and improve our services.

We are developing a new online customer focus panel and are inviting local residents to join us and play a part in improving the lives of those working and living in our County Borough.

We find it harder to reach younger residents, particularly those aged between 18-34, so if anyone in your household is this age, we would be especially keen for them to join.

This is an exciting opportunity to help shape local services, especially as we manage the recovery from the impacts of COVID-19. The commitment is low, you will simply be invited to take part in online engagement such as surveys and can choose which activities that you would like to take part in.

This panel will help us understand the views of our residents on a wide range of issues, such as the delivery of our front-line services, the environment and local economy. Feedback from the panel will inform our decisions and help us do the right things to meet local people's needs.

If you are interested in taking part, please email corporate.communications@merthyr.gov.uk and a member of the team will contact you with more detail and confirm your place on the panel.

The intention is to hold customer focus panels on a bi-monthly basis.

Don't forget there are other ways to share your views — either via the Council website or visit our social media sites.



QUEEN'S AWARDS

The Council would like to congratulate not one, but two Merthyr Tydfil community groups for picking up the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.



The Stephens and George Centenary Charitable Trust, which runs Dowlais Community Centre, and Gurnos Men's

Becoming Bilingual in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough

Thinking about sending your child to a Welsh Medium meithrin/school?

Please visit <https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/resident/schools-and-learning/begin-the-bilingual-journey/> for more information.

DID YOU KNOW?

- About 81% of pupils in Welsh Primary schools in Merthyr Tydfil come from non-Welsh speaking homes
- International research shows that bilingual children tend to achieve higher standards within the curriculum and perform better in exams. They also tend to work better under pressure. International Research by Prof. Colin Baker, Dr. Ellen Bailey, Prof. E. Bylund, Prof. P. Athanasopoulos and Dr. G. Poarch

Beth fyddai cymorth i dalu am gostau gofal plant yn ei olygu i'ch teulu chi?

What would support towards childcare costs mean to your family?

A dych chi'n gweithio ac yn rhiant i blentyn 3 neu 4 oed? Ydych chi'n ennill llai na £100k?

Gall y rhan fwyaf o rieni sy'n gweithio sydd â phlant 3 i 4 oed hawlio arian tuag at gost gofal plant.

Rydym ni eisau gwneud bywyd fymryn yn haws i rieni sy'n gweithio, p'un a yw hynny'n golygu ychydig o arian ychwanegol bob mis neu roi mwy o fyblygwydd i chi o ran sut a phwyd rydych chi'n gweithio.

Beth bynnag mae'r Cynnyg yn ei olygu i chi a'ch teulu — peidwch â cholli'r cyfle i gael cymorth y fywodraeth gyda gofal plant.

Gallwch wneud cais ledled Cymru nawr: www.merthyr.gov.uk/30awr

Are you a working parent of a 3 or 4 year old? Earn less than £100k?

Most working parents of 3 to 4 year olds can now claim funds towards the cost of childcare.

We want to make life a bit easier for working parents, whether that means a bit of extra money every month or giving you more flexibility in how and when you work.

Whatever the Offer means for you and your family — don't miss out on government support with childcare.

Applications are now open right across Wales: www.merthyr.gov.uk/30hours

Cynnyg Gofal Plant Cymru
The Childcare Offer for Wales

Uywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Agorwch eich cartref i ddatgloi eu dyfodol

Dewch yn rhiant maeth ar ran Merthyr Tudful.

Open your home to unlock their future

Become a foster carer for Merthyr Tydfil. www.fostercwmataf.co.uk/

Project have both been given the award. Created in 2002 to celebrate The Queen's Golden Jubilee, it is the equivalent to MBE and the highest award volunteers can receive in the UK. Gurnos Men's Project also received a

special designation for providing impactful support during the pandemic. Council Leader Cllr Lisa Mytton said: "This is a highly prestigious award and to have two Merthyr Tydfil organisations win it is certainly something to be very proud of! Well done to you all!"