

CONTACT



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

Newspaper for the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil

Issue 65

July 2023



Diversity
Dragons -
rugby for
every child
see page 3



merthyrtydfilCBC



@MerthyrCBC



merthyr.gov.uk



CORPORATE



Welcome to the summer edition of our Contact Community Magazine

I hope everyone has managed to keep cool and well during this spell of hot weather. Please check on those most vulnerable within your communities and let us know if they need support.

It's been another busy few months with lots happening across our County Borough.

On page 6 you'll see an update on the progress of the swimming pool at Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre and links to the relevant website on memberships and pricing. The pool is expected to open this Autumn.

As a Council we're proud to support the LGBTQIA+ community. To help raise awareness of Pride Month the rainbow flag was raised outside the Civic Centre to celebrate diversity within our communities. Council officers and members also joined neighbouring local authorities at the Pride Cymru Parade as part of the 'Proud Council's network'. Details of this can be found on page 7.

We're also proud to support Armed Forces Week. Each year in June the Armed Forces flag is raised outside the Civic Centre to show our support to serving troops, service families, veterans, and cadets.

Funding has become available as part of the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund where businesses, social enterprises, community groups and sports clubs can access grants ranging from £500 to £20,000. In the next edition we'll update you on the take-up of these grants and the sectors that it has supported.

The Council continues to work towards the goal of being carbon neutral by 2023 and there has already been some great work done to achieve this. Please check page 5 for further details.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our outgoing Mayor, Councillor Declan Sammon. He really gave everything to the role and was most definitely a credit to our County Borough! See page 2 for information on how much Declan raised during his year in office. Good luck to the new Mayor, Councillor Malcolm Colbran during his Mayoral year.

Have a fantastic summer.

G. Thomas

Councillor Geraint Thomas
Leader

Malcolm becomes Mayor for a second time

Cllr Malcolm Colbran has been elected Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil for the second time in three years after Covid-19 prevented him from carrying out the role fully in 2021-22.

At the Council's Annual General Meeting, immediate past Deputy Mayor Cllr Colbran took over from Cllr Declan Sammon as First Citizen of the County Borough.

Having grown up in Hailsham, Sussex,

Malcolm moved to Merthyr Tydfil to take over Bedlinog Post Office in 2003. He has represented the Bedlinog electoral ward since 2017.

"While I'll always be proud of my Sussex roots, I'm equally proud to be an honorary Welshman and Merthyr Tydfilian," he said.

Malcolm's Consort for the municipal year 2023-24 is Nicola Bridges, who also served as his Consort last time.

The new Mayor's duties will include chairing full council meetings and representing the authority at formal and ceremonial occasions throughout the county borough, regionally, nationally, and internationally. He will also welcome visitors to Merthyr Tydfil and attend and support events organised by local people and

organisations.

He has chosen to support two local charities: #4Tom, which was set up by the Bedlinog family of Tomas David Smerdon, who died in 2019 aged just 22. The charity is helping other young people suffering from anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts and substance misuse causing mental health issues through counselling and support groups; and Friends of Greenfield, which raises funds to provide additional facilities to Greenfield Special School.

Deputy Mayor for the next year is Town ward member Cllr John Thomas, whose Deputy Mayoress will be his wife Debbie. John is well known in Merthyr Tydfil as a former pub licensee, football referee and League of Wales linesman,

and current taxi business proprietor.

If you wish to invite the Mayor to an event, please contact mayoral@merthyr.gov.uk



Youth Mayor Elected

On Friday 12th May 2023, the Youth Mayor Inauguration took place at the Civic Centre in Merthyr Tydfil.

Katy Richards who is 16 and a student at Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School (formerly Bishop Hedley) became the 13th Youth Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil.

Dylan Morgan Thomas, 16 and a student at Ysgol Rhydywaun became the Deputy Youth Mayor.

In her acceptance speech, the Youth Mayor outlined her three pledges for her term of office. Her first pledge being very personal to her is to raise awareness and develop support for

young people's mental health.

Katy's second pledge is to work with and challenge the education for young people by ensuring young people's mental health and wellbeing is high on the agenda and a key focus in schools, ensuring young people have the support to be the 'best they can be'.

Katy's third pledge is to raise awareness and promote equal rights for those young people with additional learning needs or those who consider themselves to be disabled.

Katy said, "I am very passionate about this issue as I have severe

hearing loss and ALN (Additional Learning Needs) therefore, it is important to bring about change that is positive that will benefit young people".

Katy is a member of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Wide Youth Forum and would like more young people to get involved in it.

If you would like further information about how to get involved then please contact Youth Support Participation Officers, Chloe Rees or Morgan Ellis Watkins at Safer Merthyr Tydfil on 01685 353999 or contact us via our Facebook, Instagram or Twitter @MTYouthforum.



Outgoing Mayor raises more than £15,000

The outgoing Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil raised £15,885 for his two nominated local charities during his term of office in 2022/23.

Cllr Declan Sammon, who handed over the reins to Cllr Malcolm Colbran at the Council's Annual General Meeting last week, will present Cancer Aid Merthyr Tydfil and Merthyr Cynon Foodbank with the cash collected through a range of activities and events.

Declan said: "It was an honour to serve as First Citizen of this wonderful county borough and a privilege to raise funds for two thoroughly deserving charities. Thank you to everyone who contributed."



The Electoral Commission

Bring photo ID to vote in some elections

Voters in Wales now need to show photo ID at the polling station to vote in some elections.

This only applies to:

- Police and Crime Commissioner elections
- UK Parliamentary by-elections
- Recall petitions

From October 2023 it will also apply to UK Parliamentary general elections.

You do not need to show photo ID to vote at Senedd elections or local council elections.



Don't have ID? Apply for free voter ID. For more information, visit

electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID

Celebrate St Tydfil's Day with us

On Wednesday 23 August, for the very first time, we will come together in Merthyr Tydfil to celebrate St Tydfil's Day.

Join us at St Tydfil's Old Parish Church for a special service from 11am, hear the bells ring out and the choir sing to mark this memorable occasion.

There will be various fun activities to get involved with on the church grounds, including delicious food on offer, and historical exhibitions, as well as arts and crafts stalls to learn more about local

history, heritage and culture.

For more information on the upcoming event, please visit www.welovemerthyr.net



If you need support with the cost of living please visit our dedicated web pages merthyr.gov.uk/cost-of-living for advice. Alternatively, you can call

01685 725000

Join our Citizens' Panel

This is an exciting opportunity for you to help shape local services!

We're inviting residents to join us and play a part in improving the lives of those living and working in Merthyr

Tydfil.

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.

The commitment is low – you will simply be invited to take part in online engagements, such as surveys, and you can choose which activities

you would like to take part in.

To register your interest email corporate.communications@merthyr.gov.uk

All information contained within this publication was correct at time of print.

SOCIAL CARE

Snakes 'N' Ladders – The Other Pandemic

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, key partners and young people of Merthyr Tydfil had a desire to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people living in the County Borough.

The partnership 'Mind Our Futures' received a grant of £1.2m over five years, from The National Lottery Community Fund, to facilitate an exciting new project among the young people of Merthyr Tydfil... It is 'Snakes 'N' Ladders – The Other Pandemic'

The Lottery award allows the Council to co-produce this initiative with its' partners, and with young people aged 11-25 years old, and who also have an interest in improving mental health services.

Currently still in the development stage, the project has got off to an excellent start. Young people are working together with project partners and have formed a 'Youth Advisory Panel'.

The Panel is meeting together monthly;

attending training for the tasks ahead; learning and researching together to lead and guide the future development of the project. They are excited and passionate to hear from all young people in the County Borough and to make their collective voices heard!



For more information please contact Janice Watkins, Project Co-ordinator 07949 684 130 or email jw3@smt.org.uk



Claim what's yours

If you're eligible for Free School Meals, you could get help with other School Essentials too. Find out more: www.gov.wales/get-help-school-costs



Diversity Dragons

Diversity Dragons is an inclusive rugby provision for children with additional learning needs set in Merthyr Tydfil. Diversity Dragons is for every child that needs the space, time and freedom to do their own thing in a controlled environment.

We offer a relaxed environment that allows all children at all levels to

thoroughly enjoy themselves but also get a taster of rugby influenced games where parents can get involved.

Diversity Dragons is run solely by volunteers and without these our aspirations for this project would not have taken off.

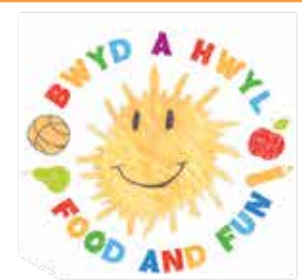
Initial funding has been sourced from sports grants and sponsorship opportunities through local businesses.

However we are organising

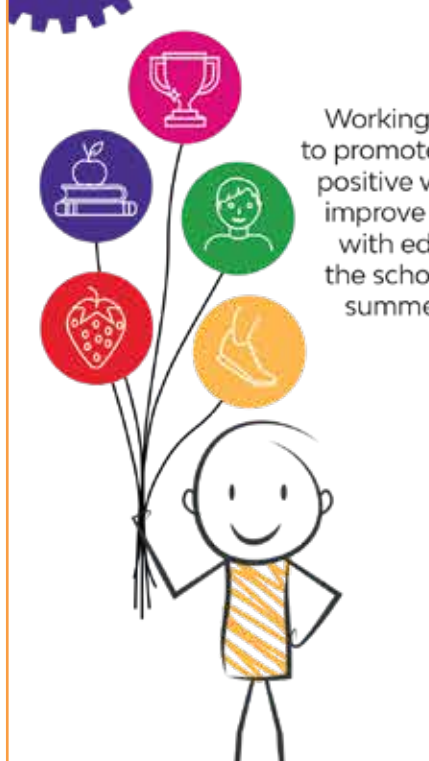
as many fundraising events throughout the year as we can to allow us to continue our sessions at a high level.

If you wish to attend or support in any way, please email admin@diversitydragons.co.uk or visit our website www.diversitydragons.com

We thank you all for your continued support!



Working together to promote healthy living, positive well-being and improve engagement with education and the school during the summer holidays.



What is Food and Fun?

Food and Fun is a school-based education programme that provides food and nutrition education, physical activity, enrichment sessions and healthy meals to children during the school summer holidays.

Starting as a pilot run by Cardiff Council in 2015, Food and Fun has developed into a national, fully funded Welsh Government programme administered by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). In 2021, 137 schools delivered the programme and provided over 7500 places for children each day that it ran.

The Welsh Government has committed to fund SHEP in 2022 with £4.85m allocated in the budget. The WLGA will continue to coordinate the roll-out by working closely with local authorities and partner agencies.

What are Food and Fun's intended outcomes?

- Improved mental health and emotional well-being
- School engagement and educational attainment
- Improved aspirations
- Improved physical activity
- Improved dietary behaviour.

What are the main benefits of Food and Fun?

- The schemes encourage children to be more active over the summer
- Improvements in children's diets
- Making new friends and having fun
- Learning and engagement with school
- Improving parents' health and well-being
- Parents learn new skills
- Involves the whole family
- Facilitates collaboration between agencies
- Makes better use of existing facilities
- Encourages community engagement
- Offers paid and voluntary employment
- Signposts to other services
- Helps parents meet the costs of school holidays

For more information contact:
Janine Brill
Janine.Brill@wales.nhs.uk
Mobile : 07890896679

"I really enjoyed my time at Food and Fun. It has kept me busy and less bored only wish it lasted longer."

"My child has had a lot of fun at Food and Fun and spending time hanging out with her friends instead of being at home on her tablet or phone."

"An excellent service and a great help over the holidays. Gets the kids out of the house and active and learning about healthy foods."

LEARNING

Climate Charter: 10 promises to help our planet

The children and young people of Merthyr Tydfil have made their voices heard with the launch of the Merthyr Tydfil Schools' Climate Charter.

At a student conference held last July, schoolchildren from years four to 10 shared their ideas and suggestions about what schools could do to support the world-wide climate crisis.

Through a range of workshops with local organisations, charities and businesses, the students were challenged to identify ten commitments that would allow them to play their part in addressing this serious issue.

In line with Curriculum for Wales, they rose to the challenge of thinking like ethically informed citizens, making positive choices to help save our world.

The Climate Charter consists of 10 commitments covering a range of sustainability topics. These calls to action are;

- Keep learning
- Be a leader
- Reduce plastic
- Work with the community
- Grow plants and food



- Choose sustainable transport
- Reduce energy
- Reduce. Reuse. Recycle.
- Encourage biodiversity
- Link with other schools

The Charter will empower schools, their students and their communities to have a choice and plan their part in climate action. Schools can commit to action in the smallest of ways. As a result of their engagement, they will achieve incredible outcomes, leading to the creation of a clean and green Merthyr Tydfil and a brighter future for their world.

Councillor Michelle Symonds, Climate Change Champion said:

"The children and young people of Merthyr Tydfil are leading the way and their work will contribute to this world problem. The 10 commitments may only appear to be small steps but if everyone in our school communities pledge their support and turn this into action, together we can make a great difference. I look forward to hearing more about the work of our schools and communities."

Coed Y Dderwen Primary School have been instrumental during the development stages of the charter. They wanted to ensure the language was clear and that everyone could easily understand and contribute. Cyfarthfa High School also contributed by sharing their thoughts and perspectives.

The Schools Climate Charter is a call to action. We can all act. We can all make a difference.

Treat yourself this summer at Merthyr Food Festival

This July, a food festival is taking place in the heart of Merthyr Tydfil that promises to serve up top treats and delicious delights - you'll be leaving with a full belly and a smile on your face.

Families will also have the chance to enjoy activities such as face painting, circus themed workshops, being mesmerised by talented magicians, the sounds of a steel band plus much more.

The festival is an ideal fun day out for all the family. Entry is FREE and it's just £1 to park all day in the town centre pay and display car parks. Winning!

Take it from us - don't miss out! **The Merthyr Food Festival will take place from 10am on Saturday, July 22, 2023, at Penderyn Square.**

Photo Credit: Patrick Olnier



Troedyrhiw Primary becomes Gold School in Community Engagement

Troedyrhiw Community Primary School have proudly launched their award-winning Preloved, Nearly New shop, the first of two shipping containers to be opened in Y Stryd Fawr Troedyrhiw.

Preloved, Nearly New offers good quality second-hand clothing and uniform for the local community at a 'pay as you feel' service, meaning families donate items they no longer need and pay whatever they can afford. The clothes available are from new-born to 16 years. The quality is varied, with some items brand new and still tagged.

The second container will be a food pantry known as the Big Bocs Bwyd and will be opening in the coming months. Working in partnership with FareShare Cymru, they will supply the food that the local community can access at a low, affordable cost or for free.

Rebecca Evans, Deputy Head and lead of the Foundation of Community

project said;

"Y Stryd Fawr is such an important project to us. We know these two community shop containers will support our families and local communities at a time where things are very challenging and the cost of living is getting unmanageable."

We want to do our best to ensure our children have clothing and food without an increased cost to the families. As well as supporting the community financially, this is also a sustainability project, as we will be stopping more clothing going to waste and the food pantry stops unwanted food going to landfill."



Refurbishment of Pen Y Dre School

Work is progressing at a significant refurbishment project at a school in Merthyr Tydfil which will pave the way for the future construction of educational facilities in Wales.

Morgan Sindall Construction was appointed the contract for Pen Y Dre High School by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council last summer, which once complete will be the first major school refurbishment project delivering net zero carbon in operation in Wales.

The scheme is partially funded by the Welsh Government, as part of its Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme which aims to invest in and improve educational facilities.

The news follows an announcement from MPs, who have called for a cut in building demolitions to save carbon, instead prioritising retrofit and reuse of buildings over knock down and rebuild.

The project will see the use of CarboniCa, Morgan Sindall's innovative digital carbon reduction tool that is enabling the contractor to support its customers to decarbonise local communities.

CarboniCa is part of Morgan Sindall's Intelligent Solutions approach, bringing



together digital and platform design capabilities with modern construction methods and innovative carbon reduction tools to create unique, sustainable, and inspiring places for customers.

The design has been tailored for maximum reduction in carbon with the help of CarboniCa and will use air source heat pumps and mechanical electrical equipment, meaning the building will run without the use of fossil fuels. Pen Y Dre is one of the largest school refurbishments in Wales and will increase its capacity from 800 to 1,100 places for 11-to 16-year-olds.

The new design of the three-storey 14,000 sq metre comprehensive will make the school more accessible, removing a lot of steps from the original site and massively improving provisions.

Plans also include a refurb of the existing swimming pool which is open to the public, enhancing the school's existing legacy for fantastic sport facilities.



Pen y Dre won the Net Zero Award at the Constructing Excellence Awards 2023

Community Focused Schools

Following a pilot research project with Welsh Government in Spring 2022, a Community Focused Schools team has been working with schools and the wider community across the areas covered by Pen Y Dre and Blessed Carlo Acutis catchment. From this September, similar teams will be working across the cluster areas of the other secondary schools in our borough.

The Community Focused Schools agenda is a priority for Welsh Government with the expectation that schools will better meet the needs of pupils, families and the wider community by;

- building strong partnerships with families
- responding to the needs of their communities
- collaborating effectively with other services

A highly successful Play Festival was run in partnership with the local authority Play Team and Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association's 'Fit and Fed' project, which saw an incredible 248 individuals attend an action-packed community event at Pantyscallog School.

Stay & Play initiatives are currently being piloted in Pantyscallog Primary, Goetre Primary and St Aloysius Primary to promote use of school grounds for play.

Over 400 families have been involved in engagement activities through primary schools and taking part in community events. During the summer holidays, all schools in the north cluster are hosting Food and Fun sessions for their pupils. You can read more about Food and Fun in this issue of Contact.

Welsh Government has also provided grant funding to enhance community facilities for several schools across Merthyr Tydfil. We will share more news on this over the coming months.

For more information please contact lisa.bruford@merthyr.gov.uk



REGENERATION

Fly-tipping investigations lead to culprits in court

In the past year, 25 criminal investigations in to fly-tipping have led to 19 cases referred for prosecution, with six Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) of £400 paid and fines of almost £1,500 ordered. A further seven cases are

waiting to be heard.

Councillor Michelle Symonds, Cabinet Member Public Protection, said: "It's great to see that people are being brought to justice for this blatant disrespect for our beautiful countryside.

"The Council's public protection team is doing a great job in cracking down on fly-tipping and these successful prosecutions are testament to their hard work and determination."

The team will now be doing targeted enforcement operations, using covert cameras in known fly-tipping hot spots.

Clr Symonds continued, "I'd like to take this opportunity to remind members of the public of the importance of checking for waste carrier licenses when using third parties to dispose of excess waste. You should always ask to

see their license and make a record of the company name, vehicle registration and the name of the person taking your waste. Unfortunately, we see time and time again waste collected by third parties being fly-tipped, resulting in the waste owner being investigated and prosecuted.

"Don't fall victim to bogus waste removal businesses – always check they are licensed or you could end up with a Fixed Penalty Notice of £300, or even face criminal prosecution."





NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

Trade Recycling now accepted at Dowlais HWRC

If you're a business operating in Merthyr Tydfil, you can now dispose of certain recyclable items at Dowlais HWRC.

If you're an existing trade kerbside

collection customer, you have the flexibility of utilising both the kerbside and HWRC services – simply produce your waste transfer note at the HWRC to use the service.

If you're not currently a Trade Waste customer, you can register by contacting the Trade Waste Officer on (01685) 725363. There is an annual charge of £46.60 for the provision of an annual waste transfer note, which is a legal requirement.

Did you know?

Vapes and E-Cigarettes are the fastest growing waste stream in the UK, with over a million being binned here each week.

How to recycle vapes and E-Cigarettes:

- Remove the battery and recycle it in our purple battery bags.
- Place the remainder of the unit (or the whole unit if the battery cannot be removed) into a clear bag.

Materials in single-use vapes thrown away every year could power **1,200 ELECTRIC VEHICLES**



- Place the clear bag on top of or beside your kerbside recycling containers.

• DO NOT place these bags inside any recycling containers.

- Vapes can also be disposed of at our HWRCs.

- o Batteries must be placed into the battery container.
- o The remainder of the unit (or any whole units that can't be separated) should be placed in the small domestic appliance container.
- o Always check with our staff if you're unsure.

Recycle Your food waste

Research has shown that 30% of the content of our residents' wheeled bins on collection days is food waste.

This equates to approximately 3,000 tonnes of food sent to Energy from Waste instead of more sustainable methods each year.

If we direct more of this food via our kerbside food waste collections to an Anaerobic Digestion (AD) facility, we will help to generate a clean source of electricity that can be used to power homes and businesses within Merthyr Tydfil. This process also produces a chemical-free digestate that is used on Welsh farmland to produce crops.

Let's all treat food in the correct manner:

✓ Only purchase what you require to reduce waste.

✓ Dispose of food waste in the correct containers to be sent for energy generation and as a soil improver.

Food Facts!

- 32 recycled banana peels could create enough energy to power a typical home for an hour.
- 12 recycled teabags could create enough energy to fully charge a tablet.
- Recycling a caddy load of food waste could generate enough electricity to power a fridge for 18 hours.
- Recycled food waste generated enough energy to power over 10,000 homes in Wales last year alone!

Ffos-y-Fran update

(Please note that the below information was correct at time of print. For the most recent updates visit the Council's website)

On 26th April 2023 the Council's Planning Committee refused the application to extend the time for mineral extraction and restoration at Ffos-y-Fran. The proposal failed to meet the test of 'wholly exceptional circumstances,' contrary to National and local Planning Policy.

It also failed to provide an adequate contribution towards the restoration, aftercare and after-use of the site, to the detriment of the surrounding environment, contrary to the requirements of Local Development Plan Policies.

On 24th May 2023, following

independent legal advice, an Enforcement Notice was issued to Merthyr (South Wales) Ltd and any other persons with an interest in the land at Ffos-y-Fran. The notice requires the following:

- Cease the extraction of coal from the land.
- Cease carrying out development at the land under the planning permission granted on 6 May 2011, other than wholly in accordance with the approved restoration and management strategy.

The notice will take effect on 27th June 2023 (a statutory period of at least 28 days is required) unless an appeal is made to the Planning Inspector before this date.

Once the notice has taken effect the developer has 28 days to comply. Failure to do so within this time may lead to a further escalation of enforcement action.

The operator of the mine is in early discussions with the Council to consider a revised restoration strategy.

Want to find out more about REAL NAPPIES?

By using real nappies, you will save around £500 per baby, and using just one reusable nappy per day would prevent 730 disposable nappies going to landfill per baby

For further information on real nappies visit www.merthyr.gov.uk/resident/bins-and-recycling/ or email us at wasteservices@merthyr.gov.uk

FREE*

reusable period products are now available to collect from local libraries and leisure centres

Visit www.merthyr.gov.uk/binsandrecycling or call us on 01685 725000 to find your nearest collection point

Love your period, Love your planet!

* until funding ends

A NEW LEASE OF LIFE REUSE SUPERSTORE PENTREBACH

Come and grab a bargain Unit 20 Merthyr Tydfil Industrial Park Pentrebach CF48 4DR 07827 519325

Donations Welcome* 9.30am-3.30pm Tues-Sat

OPENING HOURS!

Monday 9:30am-4:30pm
Tuesday 9:30am-4:30pm
Wednesday 9:30am-4:30pm
Thursday 9:30am-4:30pm
Friday 9:30am-4:30pm
Saturday 9:00am-4:00pm
Sunday Closed

We are looking for volunteers!

* Please call ahead to check we are accepting donations

Get ready for 20mph



From 17th September,

most 30mph limits will change to 20mph in Wales.

#ReadyFor20mph



To view which roads will be subject to a 20mph limit and where exceptions will exist, visit: datamap.gov.wales/maps/roads-affected-by-changes-to-the-speed-limit-on-re

For further information visit: gov.wales/getreadyfor20



Pontsarn Road Closure

In early September the section of Vaynor Road between The Spanish House and the Aberglais Inn will be closed for approximately six months for engineering works to take place to stabilise the embankment above the road.

Multiple landslips in recent years means that this work is unavoidable, and whilst we appreciate the inconvenience this may cause, we hope residents and road users will understand the urgent need to do these works.

A road closure will be put in place, details of which will be shared on our website and social media closer to the time.

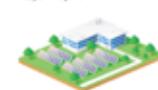
Decarbonisation Update

Since 2019/2020 the Council has reduced its' overall carbon emissions on buildings, street lighting, business travel and land use by **27%**



Solar Power:

We have installed 2,400 solar panels on our buildings, equating to a lifetime saving of approximately 1785 tCO₂e / £2,863,634



LED Lighting:

We have upgraded approximately 6,900 light fittings to LED, saving £96,000 per annum

We have targets for all our buildings to have LED lighting by 2030



Energy Efficiency:

We are now registered with the Energy Efficiency Association



Fleet:

In the past 12 months we have replaced 6 vehicles with electric vehicles in our Parking, Recycling and IT departments; with a further 8 electric vehicles expected to be delivered in 2023.



We currently have 38 charging points providing charging infrastructure for around 75 vehicles. The Council currently has 3 sweeper vehicles and plans are being developed to replace these with electric vehicles by 2028.

Biodiversity:

16 grassland sites throughout the Merthyr Tydfil are now being managed by our new 'cut and collect' machines. This means 4.5 hectares of grassland are now being managed purely for biodiversity (that's the equivalent of about 8 football fields).



Net Zero:

We are currently developing the council's first Net Zero Carbon plan.



Carbon Literacy:

The Council has proudly achieved its Bronze Carbon Literacy Award



Waste:

The percentage of waste recycled in Merthyr Tydfil during 2021/22 was 67%



Street Lighting:

We have fitted approximately 7,504 units of LED street lighting. Resulting in a saving of street lighting energy use of 74%

We are changing our traffic signals; pelican crossings; and toucan crossings to LED lamps, which will save even more energy.



Mowing for Diversity

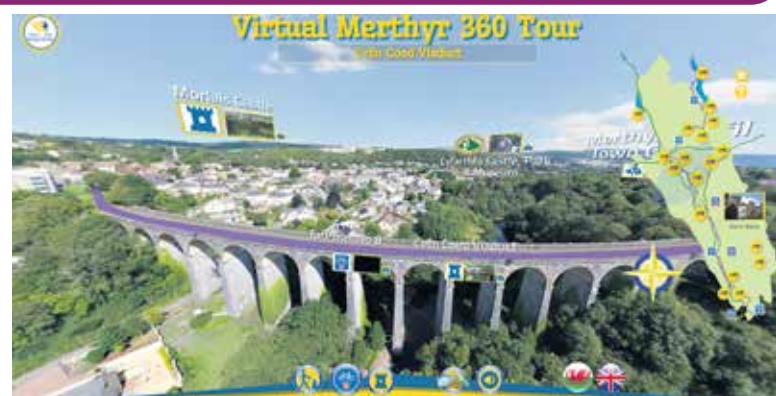
Here in Merthyr Tydfil, we regularly mow a sizable portion of our land, leaving behind a short sward of grass that provides little value to the environment.

We are gradually altering this management in some areas to produce a more natural habitat that is rich in wildflowers and feeds pollinators. You may have noticed our signage pointing to these locations. For further information

and understanding please visit merthyr.gov.uk/biodiversity



REGENERATION



Virtual Merthyr tour

Merthyr Tydfil is playing a prominent role in a national tourism promotional campaign coinciding with the launch of the Council's online tour of our fantastic landscape.

Virtual Merthyr – A 360° Tour guides visitors to the county borough's key attractions and points of interest with cultural significance, focusing on the Taff Trail and its connections to facilities, attractions and businesses.

This year has been designated **Llwybrau/ Wales by Trails** by Visit Wales, which is the latest in the 'series of themed years – following **Adventure, Legends, Sea, Discovery, and Outdoors**.

The Llwybrau campaign is currently running on TV across the

UK, supported by digital advertising and promotional materials at key London underground stations. It encourages both visitors and residents to 'curate their own epic trails' in Wales during 2023.

As part of the Council's partnership with the international Trail Gazers project, the Destination Management team at Visit Merthyr commissioned the creation of the Virtual Merthyr Tour.

The EU-funded Atlantic Area Trail Gazers was set up to encourage people in the UK, Ireland, Spain, Portugal and France 'off the paths and into the surrounding local and rural communities to immerse themselves in new cultural, culinary and life experiences'.

Council Leader Cllr Geraint Thomas

said: "During the pandemic, we all sought solace in nature, and our Trails in particular saw record usage.

"That interest has continued post-pandemic, with research showing that people now often prefer to spend their holidays enjoying more meaningful and personal experiences in beautiful locations that are often perceived as off the beaten track, rather than in conventional or popular holiday destinations."

- Please note that the Tour does not feature town centre businesses, but these are all listed on our Visit Merthyr Interactive Map: visitmerthyr.co.uk/map-page The team will strive to continue to add more sites and videos into its function in a response to popularity of the virtual tour programme.

Swimming pools progress tracked on microsite

A microsite has been launched by Wellbeing@Merthyr and the County Borough Council to keep residents updated on the redevelopment of swimming facilities at Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre.

As well as giving details of the building work progress, the page on Wellbeing@Merthyr and the Council's websites will include information on prices and membership offers that will be available across the whole centre. Please visit: merthyrleisuredevelopments.co.uk Good progress is being made on the work, set to be completed in the autumn with the recommissioned facilities providing a 25m, six-lane main pool and dedicated teaching pool with a full swimming education programme. There will also be a new splash pool designed to inspire water confidence

for toddlers, and the changing facilities will be updated and redesigned.

The project is being delivered by leisure development specialist Alliance Leisure through the UK Leisure Framework.

Skate park update

Work is about to begin on the new more 'family friendly' and modern skate park being built nearer the leisure centre main entrance. The facility will be more accessible and integrated into a new landscape scheme with trees, bushes, pathways and seating. The skate park will hopefully be completed by the end of this year.



Lead architect appointed for Synagogue transformation

A respected architecture company with extensive experience in the design and development of heritage sites and cultural facilities has been appointed to lead on the Merthyr Tydfil Synagogue Project.

GWP Architecture's recent contracts have included work on the new Penderyn Whisky Distillery and Visitor Centre in Swansea and refurbishment and adaptation of the historic Palace Theatre in Swansea.

The Foundation for Jewish Heritage has also announced Greenwood Projects as cost consultants on development of the Welsh Jewish Heritage Centre.

Chair of the Project Steering Committee Stephen Goldman said: "These appointments represent another important step forward for this

exciting project. We are delighted to have GWP and Greenwood on board and are looking forward to working with them."

The Synagogue is among the most important historic buildings in Merthyr Tydfil – a painting of it by Lowry was recently sold for £277,000.

However, it has stood empty since 2006, and was increasingly at risk until being acquired by the Foundation in 2019. Funding has been secured through the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Welsh Government to bring the building back into use as a Heritage Centre, telling the stories of the building and the history of the Welsh Jewish community in Merthyr Tydfil.

Work begins on 121 new homes in Twynyrodyn

Work has begun on the construction of 121 'quality' new homes at a site off Elm Tree Grove, Twynyrodyn.

Council Leader Cllr Geraint Thomas attended a ground-breaking ceremony to mark the start of substantial building programme which will include a new access road and junction.

The estate will have a mix of homes, from one to five-bed properties, and developer Persimmon is partnering with Merthyr Valleys Homes to provide 12 rental properties at the site.

The Council will also receive £300,632 from Persimmon through the Community Infrastructure Levy which will be used to deliver improvements locally.

Cllr Geraint Thomas said: "I'm pleased Persimmon is delivering 12 properties as part of the housebuilder's contribution to



the local community, and the Community Infrastructure Levy money will be welcome investment in Merthyr Tydfil.

The plans include a significant area of open green space in the northern part of the site which will include climbing boulders, balancing logs and grassed mounds. In the southern part,

there will be a large multi-functional area of open green space.

An Active Travel route will also be installed for pedestrians and cyclists, linking to the playground and Penheolferthyr to the north, and the open spaces and existing trails to the south.

The Valleys of Adventure on our doorstep

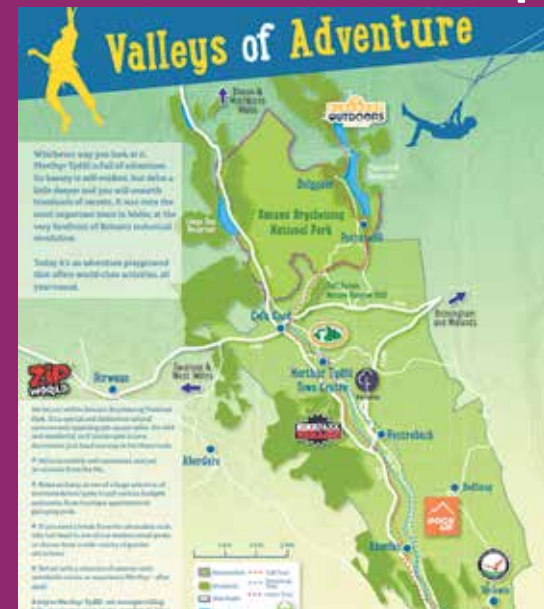
An information map designed to promote the wealth of exciting outdoor activities available across Merthyr Tydfil has been produced by the Council's Visit Merthyr team.

The 'Valleys of Adventure' leaflet details the county borough's diverse range of thrilling experiences, from BikePark Wales to Rock UK Summit Centre, along with more sedate visitor destinations such as Cyfarthfa Park.

As well as key attractions like Parkwood Outdoors, Dolygaer, Parc Taf Bargoed and Zip World, the map also highlights the three cross-county borough routes Taff Trail, Trevithick Trail and the Celtic Trail.

The Council's Tourism Ambassador Cllr Clive Tovey said: "The Valleys of Adventure campaign truly captures the essence of Merthyr Tydfil, presenting an incredible array of attractions and trails that embody the region's natural beauty and spirit of adventure."

The map is downloadable from Visit Merthyr website: visitmerthyr.co.uk/things-to-do/adventure-map/



REGENERATION

Top award for Council employability project



An innovative Council project supporting young people experiencing barriers to employment has won gold in a national public sector awards programme.

Members of our Employability and Children's Services Teams were presented with the top award in the Customer Focus category at the iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards 2023 in London.

During 2021-2022, the Pathway to Work project supported 63 care experienced young people. Of these, 16 secured employment, 12 went on to higher or further education, three secured apprenticeships with the local authority, and two gained apprenticeships with EE.

The project supports school leavers with careers advice; access to employment, training programmes

and apprenticeship schemes at MTCBC, and through networks of private business and industry; an active offer of education, work or training; and support to attend college or university.

The Council has also partnered with EE to pilot the 'Seren Dyfodol' employability scheme for 14 to 16-year-old for care experienced young people. The programme helps the young people with homework, work experience and sports activities of their choice over two years. They are then guaranteed an EE apprenticeship, if they wish to access it.

And as part of the scheme the Council's Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) project, a six-month paid work placement, three young people are now working for MTCBC in various roles.

Council Leader Cllr Geraint Thomas said: *"We are delighted that our Pathway to Work project was recognised for its achievements on a national stage, a fitting reward for the hard work carried out by the team to give disadvantaged young people the chance to succeed in life."*

The specialist store set to be runners' Sole Mate!



with helping his mental health and is aiming to 'build a community' around the business, with 'talking tables' in store to combat loneliness, where people 'can just come and have a coffee and a chat'. Paul and partner Lucy Powell, who works with him, are also looking to employ an on-site mental health therapist.

Having never run his own business before, Paul contacted the Council to ask about premises and was put in touch with Merthyr Tydfil Enterprise Centre (MTEC) for help with creating a business plan.

He then worked with the Development Bank of Wales to secure funding for the stock and to 'see us through the first six months with a bit of a buffer'. The Council then supported Sole Mate with the costs of setting the business up, and funding items including shop fittings, an anti-theft system, CCTV and mannequins.

sole-mate.uk
01685 673988
[instagram.com/solemate](https://www.instagram.com/solemate)
[facebook.com/solematerunning](https://www.facebook.com/solematerunning)

South Wales Valleys running enthusiasts no longer need to travel to have their gait analysed for the most suitable footwear - thanks to the arrival of Merthyr Tydfil's first specialist store.

Sole Mate in Pontmorlais is the only store of its kind between Cardiff and Liverpool. Along with an extensive range of shoes, clothing and accessories, it offers biomechanical assessment, while a physiotherapist specialising in sports rehabilitation visits twice a week.

Unique training and residential hub opened by Minister



A unique training and residential centre in Merthyr Tydfil was officially opened on 22 March, 2023 by Welsh Government Deputy Minister for Social Services Julie Morgan MS.

The Compass Community Hub and Pen y Dre Apartments at Gurnos, formerly the Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC), has undergone a £1.4m redevelopment with funding from the Council and a range of partners.

Originally a block of residential flats, for the past 25 years the centre has been an educational base to help unemployed young people and adults get jobs in a range of vocations. It will continue to offer employability and training facilities, with one of the three buildings converted into five self-contained apartments for young people aged between 16-24 at risk of homelessness.

The project has been supported through £1,129,174 from Cwm Taf Morgannwg's Regional Partnership Board - funded by Welsh Government - as part of the Integrated Care Fund Main Capital



Programme, which has identified work with young people and looked after children as a key priority.

A further £260,000 came from the Council's Capital Programme investment project and £129,115 was also awarded from Welsh Government's Housing with Care Fund through the Regional Partnership Board.

Alongside our formal training, there is the opportunity to attend more community based groups such as coffee mornings, ceramics and craft activities.

Anyone aged 16+ looking to train, upskill or simply take up a new hobby or activity are invited to come along - just call 01685 727099 to register an interest. Access to

activities & courses are free of charge.

Over the holidays, the Hub will be hosting a summer programme suitable for the whole family with a variety of activities. This will run Mondays and Wednesdays throughout the summer holiday starting 31 July. The programme is free to attend but any children under 16 must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

Glebeland redevelopment

A proposal to redevelop the former bus station site at Glebeland to provide a flexible and attractive open plaza has been submitted for planning permission.

The Council has been working closely with Natural Resources Wales (NRW), as a statutory planning consultee, to address issues raised by them on the potential for flooding as a consequence of the project. Subject to planning permission being granted, it is anticipated that works will commence on site later this year.



Home Bargains gets staff boost - with support from CfW+

Merthyr Tydfil's recently refurbished Home Bargains store took on a team of new staff members with help from a recruitment campaign organised by the Council's Communities for Work Plus team (CfW+).

After being approached by partners Jobcentre Plus, CfW+ booked a number of rooms for four days at the Orbit Business Centre and offered appointments and drop-in sessions for potential applicants to receive interview and preparation support.

This included CfW+ mentors and the programme's Employment Liaison Officer providing a relaxed environment, with attendees able to use IT equipment to complete online application forms.

They were also given interview hints and tips and printed resources to help with preparation for interviews, and their CVs were updated and tailored to meet the jobs criteria.

Of the Pentrebach Retail Park store's total of 78 new recruits, nine had taken part in the Orbit Centre recruitment days, while 31 of those

who attended became sign-ups for employability support from CfW+.

The store was officially opened by Council Leader Cllr Geraint Thomas, who said: *"Not only is it great to see the extremely popular Home Bargains store expanding and employing so many more people, but it's also pleasing to see the continuous support our fantastic Communities for Work team are giving to jobseekers in Merthyr Tydfil."*



PRIDE

On Saturday 17 June, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council joined neighbouring local authorities in South East and Mid Wales to show support for the LGBTQIA+ community and help promote equality and diversity.

Councillor Gareth Richards, Equalities and Diversity Champion, said

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank those Councillors and Officers who attended Pride Cymru again this year as part of the Proud Councils network. It was a very vibrant and colourful event with thousands of people on the streets of our capital city. Pride is a time to celebrate the many advances made in recent decades, there is still more work to do and there's a need to be vigilant to ensure that these advances are not rolled back."

On 1st June, the Pride flag was raised outside the Civic Centre.





A new, exciting Government funded programme.

JGW+



ARE YOU AGED 16-19?

Looking to develop your skills?
Interested in paid work experience?

- ➡ Public transport cost reimbursed.
- ➡ Daily meal allowance given.
- ➡ Receive up to £60 per week.
- ➡ Paid Work experience.
- ➡ Wellbeing activities.
- ➡ Gain Level 2 qualifications and CSCS card with accredited training courses tailored to your needs.



Well look no further -
we @ WREC can support with
all the above and more, get in
touch or call in to our office for a chat.



T: 01685 702470

E: wales@wrec ltd.co.uk

Office 13,14 & 15, Crownford House, Swan Street, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8EU


Whitehead & Ross
Education & Consulting