



Our Valleys, Our Future: Progress Update September 2019



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Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Introduction

In 2017 the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys undertook extensive engagement with people living and working in the Valleys. The taskforce was told about their priorities for the future.

This formed *Our Valleys, Our Future*, the taskforce's high-level plan, published in July 2017. The plan was based around the following three priority areas:



Good-quality jobs and the skills to do them



Better public services



My local community

Now into its second year of delivery, the taskforce remains committed to the actions in the plan, supporting the drive to make a positive, sustainable difference to every person living and working in the South Wales Valleys.

Our Valleys, Our Future remains the key driver of the taskforce's work as it was the result of what they were told was most important to Valleys communities.

The taskforce is in place until 2021 so in this final phase it is important to maximise the potential of the expertise and resources available during this time. Whilst the taskforce will continue to work to deliver all the actions included in *Our Valleys, Our Future: Delivery Plan*, our efforts will focus in particular on the following seven areas.

- **Housing**
- **Foundational Economy**
- **Entrepreneurship and business support**
- **Transport**
- **Strategic hubs**
- **Valleys Taskforce Innovation Fund**
- **Valleys Regional Park**

This document summarizes some of the key highlights of 2018–19 as well as giving a flavour of some of the work that will be taken forward in the coming months.

2018–19 Key Highlights

Good quality jobs and the skills to do them



£1.5 million
allocated to Valleys based
Foundational Economy projects

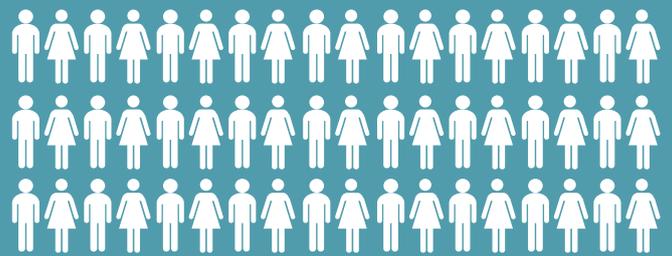


43
Valleys based entrepreneurs
pitched for £75,000 investment

125 business support workshops
held across the Valleys



1391 unemployed people received
employability support



809
people provided with one to one
support or through workshops

Better Public Services

**Developing community
transport pilots**
in Neath and Blaenau Gwent



**Out of hours
bus pilot**
in Valleys communities

£10 million
allocated to the Valleys
Empty Homes initiative

My Local Community

£7 million
invested in 11
Discovery Gateways



£8 million
invested in tourism

Dedicated
**Valleys
Regional
Park**
team



Accommodation
at Rock UK, Llechwen Hall
and Bike Park Wales



**Promotion of
the Valleys** as a high
quality visitor destination

The Taskforce's Workstreams

The Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys was set up by the Welsh Government in July 2016 after the National Assembly election and the EU referendum. Lee Waters, the Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport took up the role of Chair in 2018. Since taking up the role, the Deputy Minister has met with Leaders of the Valleys authorities to seek out best practice which could be scaled up and rolled out across the Valleys Taskforce area. He also consulted with the existing members of the Taskforce and Backbench and Regional AMs for their views on the future direction and priorities. As a result of this engagement, the focus of the taskforce has been reviewed to ensure it can deliver the most sustainable impact over the next 18 months.

Whilst the taskforce will continue to work to deliver all the actions included in *Our Valleys, Our Future: Delivery Plan*, our efforts will focus in particular on seven areas.

- **Housing**
- **Foundational Economy**
- **Entrepreneurship and business support**
- **Transport**
- **Strategic hubs**
- **Valleys taskforce innovation fund**
- **Valleys Regional Park**

The following section provides some detail about each of the workstreams.

Housing

During my meetings with Leaders of the Valleys authorities, I asked for examples of best practice that could be scaled up and rolled out across the Valleys taskforce areas. Andrew Morgan leader of Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) and member of the Valleys Taskforce highlighted their successful empty homes scheme.

Since 2016 RCT Council have operated their '*Empty Homes*' grant scheme' which offers applicants support to bring their empty houses back in to use. The Minister for Housing and Local Government has agreed to support the Valleys taskforce with rolling this initiative out to all local authorities in the taskforce areas as a pilot this Autumn. £10 million has been set aside for Empty properties over the next two years, though we will be reviewing take up during this time.

This is an exciting piece of work, which will directly address concerns raised during initial engagement with Valleys communities. It will create affordable, much needed homes for valleys residents and support the foundational economy by engaging local business in renovation works.

The scheme will have a two phase approach. Phase one will be the roll-out of the current RCT model. The priority will then be the development of phase two which will have more of a focus on benefits to the people and businesses within the Valleys communities, as well as supporting the foundational economy.

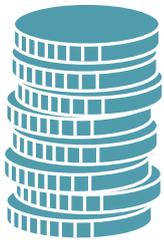
We know applicants using the current RCT model are choosing local businesses to undertake the work, and the taskforce want to support and encourage this further. Decarbonisation and other energy efficiency benefits are being considered to be included within the scheme. It is also an example of real collaboration as the Valleys taskforce will be working alongside RCT who will deliver this on behalf of the taskforce working closely with the other local authorities and across Welsh Government.



Foundational Economy

A key area for action is the foundational economy. These essential parts of economic activity are wellbeing critical, that is to say, the interruption of their supply undermines safe and civilised life. Access to clean air and water, the food we eat, the homes we live in, the energy we use and the care we receive are those basic services on which every citizen relies and which form an important part of the fabric of the Welsh economy.

This is a really important part of the economy for the Valleys and the taskforce are working to ensure that businesses, employers and individuals are aware of the different types of support and opportunities available to them to boost their financial sustainability and that of their local and national economy. This includes improving awareness of career pathways, skills provision, employment practices and jobs and fair work opportunities.



**The Taskforce is contributing
£1.5m
to the Foundational Economy
Challenge Fund for projects
based in the Valleys.**

The focus on the Foundational Economy is initially in three areas of action:

- Using the Foundational Economy Challenge Fund to test new and innovative approaches leading to a strong community of practice to help raise the profile of the foundational economy and to stimulate debate and learning on what works.
- Spreading and scaling best practice starting with re-establishing Wales at the forefront of realising social value in procurement with the associated support for strong local supply chains.
- A renewed focus on Government's economic interventions to increase the number of grounded firms, particularly a strong base of medium sized Welsh firms.

Entrepreneurship and business support

The taskforce is working to develop a thriving entrepreneurship culture in the Valleys. The taskforce has worked closely with Business Wales, Be the Spark, Welsh ICE, Development Bank of Wales and other business partners across the region to deliver some real achievements in this area.

The 'Pitch It Valleys' event was launched earlier this year where 43 Valleys based entrepreneurs applied to take part. 15 successful applicants were invited to pitch their business idea to a panel of judges. 6 entrepreneurs were selected to go through to the final round due to take place in November and are working with mentors before the final where each entrepreneur will pitch for up to £75,000 equity investment per business. The panel of judges were so impressed with one business from the early round that they started an investment conversation with them immediately after the event. A real example of the talent and skills being grown in our Valleys towns.

Resulting from an entrepreneurship workshop held in April, the taskforce worked with Hefin David AM, Business Wales and other partners to pilot a Local Business Surgery in Bargoed in June. All Valleys constituency AMs have received an offer to work together with the taskforce to roll out a similar model in their area. The surgeries will provide an opportunity to engage and provide advice and support for entrepreneurs and businesses locally.

A Peer to Peer Network has been established to bring together a group of Valleys business founders. This pilot project aims to support founders to enhance their individual decision making skills by working in a trusted group environment on real-world business growth challenges. The peer group will be facilitated by an experienced business leader who will support the cohort throughout the pilot. Learning from the pilot will be captured and used to inform future support.

Working with partners at Welsh ICE in Caerphilly, the Valleys enterprise hub provides a co-working space for entrepreneurs and businesses and delivers a range of outreach activities across Valleys communities to promote entrepreneurship. This links seamlessly with Business Wales and Big Ideas Wales in promoting entrepreneurship and supporting new business creation in the Valleys alongside local authorities, schools, colleges and Universities.



CREU | BE THE
SBARC | SPARK

WIN businesses to win an... v fast.
u to... Wales

Transport

During the first round of Valleys taskforce public engagement in 2017, frequent and reliable public transport was the single most important issue for Valleys communities.

We know that transport can make a real difference to people's lives. Transport underpins access to everyday services, helps us get to work, attend important health appointments and take part in social activities.

This is why we have been working with colleagues in Welsh Government, Transport for Wales, local authorities and other partner organisations to explore solutions to some of the barriers faced by communities.

We have worked with the Department of Work and Pensions to pilot flexible transport in the Valleys taskforce area, as part of the pilot activity to test new approaches to employment support in the Valleys. The 'Valleys to Work' pilot launched in May and provides a flexible option of transport for people to get to work. It gives people the opportunity to take up work outside of their immediate locality, and fits around the necessary working hours of employers.

The buses – supplied by the Village and Valleys Transport Company - serve the communities of Maerdy, Ferndale, Blaenllechau, Tylorstown, and Pontygwaith, as well as surrounding areas. They then continue on to the Cardiff, Treforest, Nantgarw, Pontyclun and Llantrisant areas.



This pilot has given us the chance to explore how communities and employers can work together to create bespoke, flexible, work-focused transport options to supplement regular public transport. We are already seeing evidence that by introducing responsive travel, employment potential that would otherwise be lost to the Welsh economy is being unlocked.

We are currently developing demand responsive community transport pilots in other areas of the valleys. We hope that, if successful, this type of public transport model can be rolled out where transport options are unreliable.

To support this work, we are visiting Merthyr, Neath, Bargoed, Tondu, Ebbw Vale, Aberdare and Pontypridd with Transport for Wales to discuss local transport issues in more detail and explore solutions in partnership with communities.



Strategic Hubs

There are seven Strategic Hub areas which were designated by the Valleys Taskforce – Ebbw Vale; Merthyr Tydfil; Pontypridd/Taffs Well; Cwmbran; Northern Bridgend; Neath; Caerphilly/Ystrad Mynach.

Local authorities in each of the Valleys taskforce strategic hub areas have been progressing a range of priority projects – all with different funding packages, delivery models and timescales which the taskforce are closely working with. The majority of projects have already secured multiple funding sources (including match funding from local authorities) and are delivered through a partnership approach with private, public or third sector. At Annex 1, a report details the key projects being progressed in each Strategic Hub area.

A thematic approach is being taken to spending the £25m originally allocated to the Strategic hubs. This will ensure the £25m is used to scale up and spread good quality projects and initiatives designed in the Valleys is more in keeping with the ambitions of taskforce, rather than a top down bid into a fund that will not go very far split amongst seven hubs.

Through the ongoing work with local authorities on the Strategic Hubs, £600k of additional revenue funding has been provided to Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf to commission Strategic Masterplans for Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil and Pontypridd respectively which incorporate ambitious integrated transport options. The designs will take into account the wider regeneration ambitions for the areas providing a masterplan and initial investment programme, allowing local authorities to take forward the next phases of physical regeneration and place making.

Alongside the work on developing the Strategic Hubs, Welsh Government officials have been working with local authorities, academia and the Cardiff City Deal to develop proposals for maximising the benefits of the A465 and developing the Heads of the Valleys into a growth corridor.

The A465, or Heads of the Valleys road, is one of the key east-west strategic links in Wales. It forms part of the Trans-European Road Network and is an international gateway for the South Wales economy. The improvements being made to the road are critical to the social and economic regeneration of the Heads of the Valleys area which, when finished, will deliver a continuous dual carriageway from the M4 along the A465 to the midlands and beyond.

Following on from the work undertaken by the University of South Wales last year the Valleys taskforce has brought together a group of key stakeholders from across the Valleys who are currently assessing how this work could be progressed further.



Valleys Taskforce Innovation Fund

It was always the intention for the taskforce that the Valleys would be used as a testbed for innovative, pioneering projects, which could be rolled out across Wales, where appropriate.

The taskforce has been considering how they can improve the outcomes for young people in our Valleys communities, increase their aspirations and promote entrepreneurship. They are working with a group of entrepreneurs, small businesses and secondary schools to develop a suite of schemes that help young people to tap into local role models and alumni from their areas – to open up career paths they may not be aware of or didn't know how to access.

They are also working with current providers of similar schemes to understand what works, what doesn't and why – the aim being that all secondary school pupils from schools across the Valleys have access to advice, support and career opportunities to thrive in their chosen sector or career path.



Valleys Regional Park

The taskforce has committed to setting up a Valleys Regional Park, by 2021, to help local communities celebrate and maximise the use of the natural resources and heritage.

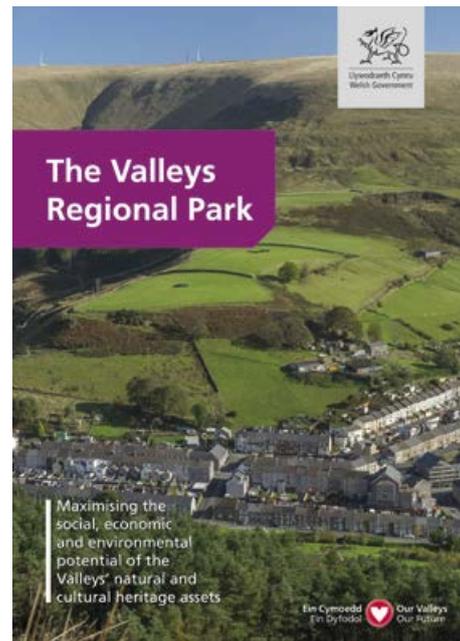
The Valleys Regional Park has three interlinked delivery themes: landscape, culture and identity; recreation and wellbeing; communities and enterprise. The Valleys Regional Park prospectus was published in October 2018. It was developed through extensive engagement with Valleys communities and with key stakeholders including all of the Valleys local authorities and Natural Resources Wales. This has received widespread support.

Welsh Government has worked closely with Valleys community groups to organise a 'Our Valleys Regional Park' event in February 2019, bringing together groups from all over the Valleys to share best practice when considering volunteering opportunities, creating social enterprising models and to look at the sustainability of the Valleys Regional Park. 85 members of grass roots community groups from across the Valleys attended the event which provided a marketplace setting which encouraged groups to share their projects and allow networking to support peer-to-peer working.

Discovery Gateways at eleven sites have been approved and funding awarded through the £7m Valleys Regional Park capital fund. This money will be used to maximise the potential of the area's natural and cultural assets.

The sites are listed below and as well as becoming destinations in their own right they will be joined up to ensure we make the most of the world class and diverse landscape we have in the Valleys:-

- **Cefn Coed Mining Museum in Neath Port Talbot**
- **Parc Penallta in Caerphilly**
- **Dare Valley Country Park**
- **Bryngarw Country Park**
- **Blaenavon World Heritage Centre**
- **Cyfarthfa Park**
- **Cwmcarn Forest Drive**
- **Caerphilly Castle**
- **Parc Brynbach**
- **Parc Slip**
- **Ynysangharad War Memorial Park**





The governance structure will learn from the regional partnership approach developed through the City Deals. This will be operate through a Memorandum of Understanding between the local authorities within the Capital City Region with the addition of Neath Port Talbot, Swansea and Carmarthenshire Councils. The local authority leaders will form the governance Board, a Forum set up with involving local authority officers and key stakeholders including health board, Natural Resources Wales and Third sector and community stakeholders. This will oversee the day to day delivery of the Valleys Regional Park.

A community focussed team funded by £1m from the Valleys taskforce will work across the region with a focus supporting the development of the three themes. The team will develop a partnership approach with the aim of better connecting communities (and indeed visitors) with their natural and cultural heritage assets, through educational, skills, and wellbeing activities. This will help people in the Valleys to benefit socially, cultural and economically and help address environmental challenges.



Membership of the Ministerial Valleys Taskforce

In order to ensure the taskforce reflects this renewed focus the membership has been reviewed. Taskforce members will also be chairing specific subgroups which will focus on the seven priorities.

Taskforce members are:

- **Kellie Beirne**
Chief Executive of Cardiff Capital Region City Deal
- **Dawn Bowden**
Welsh Labour Assembly Member, Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney
- **James Davies**
Executive Chairman, Industry Wales
- **Josh Miles**
Policy Manager, Federation of Small Businesses
- **Andrew Morgan**
Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council
- **Wendy Walters**
Chief Executive, Carmarthenshire County Council.

Annex: Strategic Hubs Key Projects

Please find below a short summary of some of the key projects the councils are taking forward in the identified Strategic Hub areas.

Pontypridd

Pontypridd Town Centre Masterplan – Work is well underway to produce a new Pontypridd Town Centre Masterplan which is being financially supported by the Valleys Taskforce (£200,000). Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is working closely with Welsh Government and Transport for Wales to produce the plan supported by advice from Mott McDonald, The Urbanists and Alder King. The draft plan should be completed by October and will provide an important framework to maximise the significant opportunities for growth and investment that Pontypridd currently offers and will build on planned investment in the Metro.

It will also concentrate on bringing forward key investment project in focussed areas of the town including the redevelopment of the former Bingo Hall and Angharads buildings, the former Marks and Spencer site, Sardis Road Carpark, Pontypridd Market Quarter and the Pontypridd YMCA redevelopment. This will build on the momentum of investment currently being delivered and about to commence.

Taff Vale Redevelopment: Llys Cadwyn – This project will transform the northern gateway to the town centre by providing 14,000 square feet of new commercial space in three landmark buildings. It is being led by the Council with a £48 million investment supported with £10 million from the Welsh Government Building for the Future initiative. It will comprise two office buildings with ground floor commercial units and a state of the art third building run by the Council with library and health and fitness gym suite facilities. The development will accommodate 1000 new jobs in the town with the largest office building being occupied by Transport for Wales with positive demand for the remaining space.

The building programme is on target to be completed in Spring 2020 and occupied later in the year. As part of the construction work the contractor is delivering a successful and extensive community benefit programme which includes: more than 1900 weeks of training to date for apprentices, trainees, work experience candidates and new entrants to the industry; worked with more than 1800 pupils in local schools through six STEM activities; reinvested the equivalent of £1.2 million back into the community as part of the social value plan.

Llys Cadwyn: Ynysangharad Park Footbridge – This new facility will enable much greater connectivity and access for pedestrians and cyclists between the town centre and Park which will enable visitors, workers and local people to benefit from the offer of the Park and Town Centre in an integrated way making the most of their joint offer. The footbridge is being delivered by the Council with an investment of £2 million with support from Targeted Regeneration Investment funding of £822,000. Construction works are underway and will be concurrent with the Llys Cadwyn construction programme.

Pontypridd Property Investment Programme – This programme is currently available and will run until April 2021. It offers grant support to property and business owners and developers for investments which improve buildings in Pontypridd town centre.

It comprises two elements:-

The Urban Property Enhancement Fund will support the physical improvement of commercial premises to enhance their condition and appearance especially where vacant property and floorspace is brought back into use.

The Urban Centre Living Fund will support the physical improvement of buildings for residential purposes especially where underused space in vacant buildings and in floors above commercial units is used to create new homes.

The programme is funded with £1 million Targeted Regeneration Investment support and is expected to lever in a further £500,000 of private sector investment. This should achieve the target outcomes which include: 55 jobs created and accommodated; 5 new businesses accommodated and 1000 square metres of commercial space improved.

Ynysangharad Park – The Park has been successfully designated as a Discovery Gateway as part of the Valleys Regional Park initiative. This will help to reinforce the Park as a key destination for visitors to the Valleys and help them to take advantage of attractions elsewhere in the area because of its excellent accessibility through public transport and for walkers and cyclists.

As part of this approach a VRP Discovery Gateway grant of £300,000 will support the improvement of visitor access and facilities in the Park. This forms part of a wider package of improvements in the Park to enhance its growing reputation as a regional visitor attraction which is currently subject of a Heritage Lottery Fund.

Merthyr Tydfil

Bus Station – In Spring 2019, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council secured £10million for the delivery of the Merthyr Tydfil Bus Station Project. The award was over a two year period with an offer of £3.6million in 2019/20 with the further allocation of £6.5million in 2020/21. The funding was secured through the Welsh Government's Local Transport Fund.

The contractor appointed to construct the new Bus Station is Morgan Sindall, who positively for Merthyr, have a proven track record of delivering complex regeneration projects. The project has been co-designed with the Cardiff Capital Region Transport Authority and the Council and the professional services of Capita will be used to support the management of the construction contract. Construction of the Bus Station started on the 15 July with an expected completion date of autumn 2020. The Bus Station will be located on the former police station site in Swan Street. The new Bus Station will be located closer to the Town's railway station creating a modern, high quality transport interchange facility. It will also allow exciting new development opportunities to be considered for the current Bus Station site.

Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Masterplan – Work is well underway to produce a new Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Masterplan which is being financially supported by the Valleys Taskforce (£200,000). The Council is working closely with Welsh Government and Transport for Wales to produce the plan supported by advice from Mott McDonald, The Urbanists and Alder King. The draft plan should be completed by October and will ensure that the new bus and rail investments create an integrated transport solution as part of a new phase of regeneration for Merthyr Tydfil town centre and its wider communities.

Cyfartha Park – The Park has been successfully designated as a Discovery Gateway as part of the Valleys Regional Park initiative. The proposal identified a plan to develop facilities to provide food and catering facilities for visitors and a base for community activities.

Caerphilly

ICE/Caerphilly Business Park – Since opening in 2012 Welsh Ice has quickly flourished to become the largest community of co-working, start up and micro businesses in Wales, supporting over 300 businesses to develop and grow. It is currently home to over 350 entrepreneurs. Ice have a 10 year Business Plan where they wish to grow their family. This is a major opportunity for business development in Caerphilly town centre. The project has several components comprising flexible business accommodation and employment units (office and workshop space).

The Hub has also provided outreach programmes (including 5-9 Business Clubs) in Ebbw Vale and Merthyr Tydfil, two of the Strategic Hub areas.)

Caerphilly Town Centre Masterplan – A sub-regional transport interchange in Caerphilly is a vital component in the long term vitality and competitiveness of the whole town. Work is well underway to produce a new Caerphilly Town Centre Masterplan which is being financially supported by the Valleys Taskforce (£200,000). The Council is working closely with Welsh Government and Transport for Wales to produce the plan supported by advice from Mott McDonald, The Urbanists and Alder King. The draft plan should be completed by October and will ensure that the the combined bus/train station can be redeveloped to create a landmark transport hub

and stimulate the local economy by providing commercial and retail space (possibly residential) as part of any redevelopment.

Caerphilly town centre has been identified by the Council as the focus for the Targeted Regeneration Investment programme - those properties that are empty or underutilised and that frame the castle or are prominent in town centre will be prioritised – they are gearing up to spend £1m over the next two years in this area.

Caerphilly Castle – Cadw are looking to invest up to £5m into Caerphilly Castle to transform it into a Tier One Tourist attraction. ARAD consultants have produced a final masterplan for CADW which identifies a number of projects that could be delivered on the back of Cadw's launch of two new tourist attractions – Dragon's Lair and Gilbert's Maze.

Parc Penallta – The Park has been successfully designated as a Discovery Gateway as part of the Valleys Regional Park initiative. The Council have been successful in obtaining funding for a multipurpose visitor centre to act as a community centre/hub and launch pad for residents and visitors incorporating education facilities, interpretation (physical and digital), conference centre, a café, act as a health hub and provide toilets along with showers. This will be delivered by March 2021.

Ty Du: Joint Venture with Welsh Government – The masterplan for the site, for which outline planning permission has been granted, is a major mixed use urban development comprising residential provision of up to 200 dwellings and the development of 3.8HA (approx. 6,300 m²) of employment units, plus associated physical infrastructure, including access routes, drainage, public open space, high quality public realm and landscaping.

Lansbury Park – Lansbury Park has been identified as the most deprived Lower Super Output area in Wales. A Deep Place Plan has been prepared for Lansbury Park, which explores the complex challenges associated with reversing the cycle of long-term poverty on the estate. The Plan identifies a number of actions that will help to address the issues identified. It is important that a bottom up approach is taken and engagement with the community is ongoing and a draft masterplan is currently being consulted on with each courtyard community. An extensive Property Improvement Scheme is nearing completion on the estate.

Penallta Colliery – this project concentrates on the undeveloped parts of the Penallta Colliery site which has already witnessed regeneration activity in the form of Cwm Calon housing estate and Penallta Parc. Several components remain to be developed including the Powerhall and Bathhouse. The former lamphouse has been converted into 6 apartments and work is currently ongoing to convert some other small stock into residential use. The Powerhall has consent for residential use but the new owner is open to the idea of establishing the ground floor for live/work or flexible office space. The Council has appointed Knight Frank commercial property agents to test the market to establish if there is a demand for these employment uses at this location.

Northern Bridgend

Maesteg Town Hall – The re-development of the Town Hall aims to repair and refurbish the iconic 138-year-old Grade II listed building while providing modern new arts and culture facilities. On project completion the town hall will be transformed into a multi-use facility which will provide a space to socialise, learn, access information, improve skills, create jobs and celebrate the significant heritage that this building encompasses.

A design and build contract has been let for this project. The principal contractor Knox and Wells Ltd are currently carrying out the latter stages of technical design and costings for the project. On 6 August, Knox and Wells hosted a 'Meet the Buyer' event at the town hall advertised on Sell to Wales aimed at contractors and suppliers to tender for the upcoming works. This work is due to complete in October and at this stage assuming design and cost is agreed by the Council and Awen Cultural Trust we will be in a position to award the construction works to the principal contractor. Works are due to commence in November 2019 with a 15 month build period, completion spring 2021.

The financial support made available to Bridgend County Borough Council includes £858,000 from the Building for the Future programme, £2,001,990 of EU funding and £650,000 from the Valleys Task Force. The project is part of the Building for the Future programme, which is funded by the Welsh Government and the European Regional Development Fund, providing £54m over six years to acquire, refurbish or re-develop unused buildings and land within or close to town and city centres across West Wales and the Valleys. The fund is projected to stimulate further investment of at least another £54 million, injecting a total of £108 million boost to communities across Wales.

Caerau Heat Network – A techno-economic model for the project has been completed by Challoch Energy and the Coal Authority have completed a records review of mine workings in the area and have suggested potential drilling areas for the extraction and discharge boreholes for the project. Pinsent Masons have completed a high level report that looks at potential delivery structures for the project.

A tender is due to be published shortly for the appointment of a consultant to prepare an outline business case for the project, complete a geo-technical investigation around the extent of the mine water resource within the ground and develop and manage the procurement strategy and process for the appointment of a contractor for the project.

Bryngarw Park – The Park has been successfully designated as a Discovery Gateway as part of the Valleys Regional Park initiative. The proposal provides a broad range of projects including the development of a new education centre; improved access and interpretation throughout the park; facilities to promote active travel; and the development of biodiversity within the park including planting trees and the creation of a wildlife pond.

Parc Slip – The Park has been successfully designated as a Discovery Gateway as part of the Valleys Regional Park initiative. The proposal has a focus on biodiversity and wildlife as well as community links, well-being activities and education. It sets out the opportunities to work with Bryngarw Country Park as a joint gateway to the Ogwr and Llynfi Valleys fully embracing the concept of a Discovery Gateway. Ideas for interpretation and connectivity are strong, as is the provision of electric charging points for vehicles and additional cycle storage.

Cwmbran

Springboard 2 – Outline planning consent is in place for the re-development of a strategic site on the edge of the town centre. The first phase of redevelopment is now well underway with the steel framework for the Torfaen Learning Zone erected. The second phase – Springboard 2 – has a draft business plan which will be submitted for consideration in Autumn 2019. An outline prospectus is being prepared ready for January 2020 to outline the opportunities for public and private sector investment on employment sites in the hub.

Integrated Transport Hub – Funding has been secured for the final stages of design work on improvements to the Park and Ride system at Pontypool/New Inn station and for the feasibility work to provide a decked car park at Cwmbran Railway Station.

Health Park Development – A key partnership involving Welsh Government, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Torfaen Council, Cardiff University, Cardiff metropolitan University, University of South Wales and the Life Sciences Hub is steering the production of a Strategic Outline Case for the Grange University Hospital Medi Park which is scheduled for completion in September 2019.

Entrepreneurship & Business Support – The Council commissioned the Pop-Up business school to run sessions to potential entrepreneurs within the Strategic Hub area, which were well received with 105 sign ups; 28% of businesses made a sale before the end of the sessions and 64% of attendees were new to the business world.

Neath

Crown Packaging Strategic Site – The project will acquire and redevelop the area as a strategic employment site. The site was acquired in March 2019 and construction is due to commence in October 2019. Plans have also been submitted to the Council by the major employer on the site for a Biomass Boiler House on the site, supporting sustainable energy requirements.

County Court Redevelopment – The project has now been completed to acquire and convert the former County Court to accommodate eighty Council staff within a town centre location.

Integrated Transport Hub – Network Rail, Transport for Wales and Welsh Government are already engaged in the project will be multi-funded including contributions from Neath Port Talbot and other dedicated funding sources. The project will deliver a new bus terminal, taxi, cycling and pedestrian links.

Town Centre Regeneration – Refurbishment of 8 Wind Street to provide high specification office space to facilitate business incubation and growth providing local employment and training opportunities. Business case has been approved and planning applications submitted. The project is due to commence in November 2019. A separate mixed use redevelopment scheme incorporating a major new leisure investment with new retail floorspace to modernise, sustain and diversify the town centre offer will commence in early 2020/21.

Homes As Power Stations – A business case for this innovative pathfinder programme will shortly be submitted for funding to the Swansea Bay City Deal Programme. It will deliver 50 smart low carbon housing units that will improve energy performance, reduce carbon and assist in alleviating fuel poverty.

Ebbw Vale

National Digital Exploitation Centre – The Welsh Government is working with global technology company Thales to establish a £20m cyber centre which will sit at the heart of its Tech Valleys programme. The Centre will be the first research and development facility of its kind in Wales, and will provide the perfect setting for SMEs and microbusinesses to test and develop their digital concepts. The Centre, located in Ebbw Vale, will be delivered by Thales in collaboration with the University of South Wales (USW). Both the Welsh Government and Thales have committed £10m each to the project which is expected to generate significant income.

Rhyd-Y-Blew: Joint Venture with Welsh Government – 50,000sq ft development proposed – planning consent has been obtained, subject to conditions which are being worked through in advance of a start on site.

Bryn Serth South Development Site – Lovell (in partnership with Melin Homes) is on site with construction underway for a mix of open market (70) and affordable (30) homes, with local employment opportunities and supply chain contracts secured as part of the development. First units will be ready before end December 2019, with the recent launch generating a good level of interest from prospective purchases.

Ebbw Vale Development Site (School & College) – A partnership development opportunity between Persimmon and United Welsh to develop a total of 277 open market and affordable homes on the site is progressing with land purchase negotiations on both sides progressing and the planning application for the site submitted.

Boxworks – This project will create affordable office space for start-ups and growth orientated micro enterprises at the Works site, Ebbw Vale. The project will provide 21 shipping containers configured to accommodate business, who, if successful have the

potential to expand and grow into the business units being developed at Lime Avenue Business Park.

Lime Avenue Business Park – Joint Venture with Welsh Government being developed for the creation of 8 industrial units to attract entrepreneurs seeking to take forward high value businesses in key sectors.

The Works Northgate Development Site – This site has been successfully tendered and a preferred bidder identified to bring forward 70 units including affordable housing. The developer has aspirations to start on site by Summer 2020.

Glanffrwdd Court/Glan-Yr-Afon Court Development Site – Demolition contracts on both sites awarded and on site to bring forward new homes, including affordable housing. Anticipated start on site for construction of the Glanffrwdd development is February 2020.