

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY REGENERATION CABINET BOARD

14 MAY 2015

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PARTICIPATION - CHRIS MILLIS

SECTION A– MATTER FOR INFORMATION

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DELIVERY PLAN – UPDATE 2014 – 2015

Purpose of the Report

To update the Members regarding activity completed during the last financial year.

Background

The Community Development Delivery Plan has been collated for the past two years and consists of a number of programme areas namely, Communities First, Community Economic Regeneration and Tourism and Community Centres. During the last financial year the organisation has lost the majority of the community centre element of the plan and also the Tourism arm except the Cognation project.

This will in turn mean the updated plan will have less elements moving forward. The programme manager wanted to give a brief update of the work completed during the past year with regard to the remaining programmes.

Project Developments

Social Enterprise and Third Sector Support – Collaborative Communities was operating during this reporting period and came to a close in September 2014. The following were achieved during the life of the project –

- 45,000 people accessing services
- 450 organisations assisted
- 30 social enterprises created
- 40 organisations financially supported
- 200 gross jobs created

In addition to this Social Enterprises are supported in Neath Port Talbot by the Strategic Officer when required. Canolfen Maerdy have been supported by the Officer and in addition RDP support is given when funding is considered by the organisation.

Third sector funding has been administered by the Strategic Officer for 5 community organisations based in the most deprived areas of the Borough which supports core funding. The financial support given equates to £144,297.

This has helped –

- Support 39 community organisations in the geographical areas

- 527 people trained

- 73 volunteers recruited across the geographical areas.

(The above data is for the first six months of the financial year)

Further financial support has been allocated for the next financial year. A review is currently taking place of the third sector funding, which will continue into the next financial year.

The Social Enterprise strategy has been discussed with NPTCVS however due to restricted funds for this type of support this is currently on hold.

Communities First – all four Clusters have been continuing activity during the current year. The themes are health, learning and prosperity. 71 projects have been completed over the financial year which includes PDG activity. This is broken down into 30 learning projects, 19 health projects and 22 prosperity projects (Afan, Neath and Western). 77% of projects have a green rag status, 20% amber and 3% red.

A flavour of the various projects can be seen below –

The Add to Life health checks for people aged 50 and over is available on line across Wales. The programme has been promoted strongly in the Communities First Clusters through leaflets, social media, 6,500 newsletters and talks aimed at the over 50s. The Afan and Neath Communities First Clusters are supporting and encouraging people to have their check in the last quarter of this year. The Clusters are working closely with POBL and NPTCVS to promote this service and have 53 assessments with residents. Afan Valley Communities First and local residents featured in the National Launch.

With regard to Mental Health projects 102 participants from Neath, Afan and Western Communities First Cluster have reported that they feel more positive about their mental health.

With regard to Prosperous activity, Partnership projects have been operating over the 12 months and have proved to be very successful –
-22 prosperous projects have been completed to date (Afan, Western and Neath Cluster)

-95% of projects have a green or amber status at the end of December 2014. The Afan, Neath and Western Communities First Clusters have worked with 694 participants, running 701 sessions under employment support, advice and building confidence projects.

-The LIFT project (Tackling Workless Households) is an innovative Welsh Government initiative. In Neath Port Talbot the Afan Valley Communities First area was identified as the delivery mechanism for the programme. There are approximately 400 workless households in the Afan Valley. 61 people are actively engaged as of end March 2015. 25 people have entered work since April 2014.

-Jobs fairs can be an excellent way of attracting residents to consider employment options. In the Neath Communities First cluster, the first Jobs Fayre was held in March with 800 individuals attending the event and 35 stands were at the event manned by various Partners. Feedback from organisations were overall positive with many referrals and contacts made. This has now become an annual event for the Cluster.

-Welfare rights support for the Clusters have been overall positive. Neath Cluster raised £1,940,543.87 during the year, closing 352 cases and working with 393 individuals. Additional welfare rights support can be seen throughout Afan and Western Communities First Clusters also.

With regard to Learning activity projects completed over the period include Family Learning, Pupil Deprivation Grant projects with the schools and community learning projects. Over the last 12 months Communities First have worked with 1,231 participants across the three Clusters under learning projects and run 2264 sessions. 482 participants have gained a qualification.

The Pupil Deprivation Grant projects have been running for the full year. The Afan Cluster have worked with 399 participants, running 955 sessions to date. 67% of pupils on the mentoring and family liaison projects in the Afan Cluster have reported improved academic performance. The Western Cluster has worked with 590 participants, running 3114 sessions to date. 62% of pupils on the developing positive outcomes project reported better understanding of the importance of school. The Neath Cluster have worked with 639 participants, running 2648 sessions. 57% of parents on the supporting families project have reported they feel their child is coping better at school.

Cognition mtb trails South Wales - Cognition mtb trails South Wales is a regional project covering Neath Port Talbot, Merthyr and Caerphilly. Over the last 4 years £4.3 million has been invested in mountain biking via Visit Wales' Environment for Growth project, with funding from European Regional Development Fund and Welsh Government's Strategic Regeneration Fund covering Heads of the Valley and Western Valleys.

Of this £4.3 million total £1.4 million has been invested in mountain bike trails across Afan Forest Park and Margam Park, as well as the renovations to Afan Forest Park Visitor Centre. In Afan Forest Park alone visitor figures for 2014 are up 58% on 2011 figures.

In 2014/15 the Project Officer worked with Caerphilly CBC to draw down additional funds to design and implement a pump track aimed at young people and those developing their mountain biking skills. The track has been well utilised and Caerphilly CBC is looking to identify funding to extend the provision.

As part of the overall exit strategy the project team set up Cognition Ltd and initiated Bike Give Sustain, a visitor payback scheme, to generate income to maintain the additional trails. Another part of Bike Give Sustain is to continue the Cognition brand and marketing, which has proved extremely popular to visitors and residents alike. Bike Give Sustain has, to date, only been implemented across the Afan Valley and has raised over £3,000.

The project officer has also developed an expression of interest which was submitted to the Rural Development Plan team to apply for further funding to develop Bike Give Sustain. At present the only avenue investigated has been donations boxes but there is potential to look at membership schemes, sponsorship opportunities and a volunteer trail maintenance group. If successful the project would fund an officer to continue with the pilot and look at innovative ways to generate income and continue to attract mountain bikers to Neath Port Talbot and benefit the local tourism economy.

RDP - In 2010 Neath Port Talbot CBC provided the Lead Body function for Phase 2 of the 2007-2013 RDP programme in Neath Port Talbot. This programme ended on 31st December 2014 with the Lead Body continuing until 30th June 2015. In total £3.4m of RDP and matched funding was secured for Neath Port Talbot. £2.8m went towards the delivery of the following projects. The remainder was allocated to Partnership and Local Action group running costs (which equates to 7% of the total expenditure) as well as the Think Links project.

Neath Port Talbot was successful in securing RDP funding for the 4 following projects under Business Plan 2:

- *Enterprise Support for Rural Businesses* delivered in partnership between NPTCBC and Business Connect. This project provided developmental and mentoring support and advice to businesses in rural areas of Neath Port Talbot.
- *Improving Basic Services in Neath Port Talbot*. This project includes 3 elements; the DANSA Ring-a-Ride project which offered a demand responsive community transport service in rural areas, a project which helped fund Neath Port Talbot's Credit Union school savings and mobile savings services and a project delivered by Calan DVS which focused on the effects of domestic abuse on children.
- *Conserving & Upgrading the Rural Heritage within Neath Port Talbot*. This project includes the improvements to Citrus House at Margam Park as well as Groundwork's CoRE project which focuses on environmental enhancements in rural communities.
- *Think Links, Think Rural, Think Sustainability Project*. This project was designed to map rural needs across Neath Port Talbot and provide the evidence base for Neath Port Talbot for any future programme of RDP funding. This project is delivered in partnership between NPTCBC and the Neath Port Talbot Local Action Group.

Project Outcomes

1. Enterprise Support for Rural Businesses

Targets set for the project are detailed below. All the targets have been exceeded except for the final indicator listed, where the project team reported difficulties in working with participants to identify jobs safeguarded. The first indicator combines enterprises advised (which is classed as support up to 2 hours) and assisted (support of 2 hours or more).

Performance Indicator – Outputs	Target	Achieved
Number of micro enterprises advised or assisted	216	217
Number of individuals advised or assisted to support the creation of a new micro enterprise	190	256
Performance Indicator – Results	Target	Achieved
Gross number of jobs created	40	110
Number of micro enterprises created	28	66
Gross number of jobs safeguarded	90	77

Impact

The evaluation of Business Plan 2 carried out by Wavehill concluded that without RDP funding NPT CBC would not have had the resource to offer the level of support provided by the project's business advisers. Centre for Business is itself a private business so offering this service unfunded would also not be financially viable. Any alternative support would have been limited by time and managed through appointments and waiting lists. Most of the beneficiaries involved in this project had barriers to start-up, growth or diversification and required the additional and enhanced enterprise coaching

that was offered by this project over and above the mainstream start-up service's six hour limit one-to-one business mentoring.

2. Improving Basic Services in Neath Port Talbot

This project aimed to enhance the basic service provision within the rural wards of Neath Port Talbot. The basic services supported included improvements to local transport, personal finance support and support for victims and families affected by domestic abuse. The project was delivered as 3 sub-projects:

- **DANSA community transport – Ring and Ride**

DANSA is a not-for-profit community transport organisation. This sub-project was designed to respond to a reduction in commercially operated bus routes and lack of regular bus service provision within rural wards of Neath Port Talbot. It is due to end in December 2014. It built upon the Transport for Communities project delivered by DANSA under Business Plan 1, which focused on establishing timetabled services running on pre-determined routes that commercial operators had found to be non-viable. This business Plan 2 project therefore developed a more flexible on-demand, or demand-responsive approach through a “dial-a-ride” service. While the dial-a-ride service is open to everyone, and this service does not offer a discount to bus-pass holders, the vast majority of users have been those with bus passes and are therefore aged 60+. The door-to-door service is delivered through disabled-access buses. The services offered have therefore developed to suit their needs, with 17 “eat, chat and shop” trips per week. However, it was intended that all rural residents with a transport need would access the dial-a-ride service, including therefore those requiring transport to access work or training, perhaps by simply providing connections to regular service routes.

- **NPT Credit Union – expansion of services**

This sub-project was delivered by the Neath Port Talbot Credit Union (NPT CU) and provided services to the financially excluded in rural wards of the County Borough with the aim of reducing major personal indebtedness particularly amongst young people. This project ended in December 2013. In order to expand participation of its member-run safe savings and affordable loans facility to residents and employers in the rural wards NPT CU established a network of 22 community collection points manned by volunteers and invested in a mobile office, a van to service areas where no community space was available and which advertised the service. It expanded its programme of financial education to schools within the rural wards of the County Borough and its payroll saving scheme to workplaces.

- Calan DVS – Family Worker

Calan DVS is an organisation that supports victims of domestic violence and abuse and campaigns to end its practice. Calan DVS was formally known as Lliw Valley and Neath Women’s Aid. This project which ended in March 2014, aimed to empower children and young people who have experienced the effects of domestic violence or abuse in the home in order to take greater control of their lives and to give them the opportunity and support they need to address the effects of domestic abuse. The project provided learning opportunities, developing skills and knowledge to address personal issues. Activities looked to rebuild family relationships, helping children and young people explore their feelings about keeping the family unit together and how to recognise a healthy family relationship. Activities included an after school club, family fun days, baby yoga, mums book club, one-to-one support sessions and signposting service.

Achievements

Performance Indicator – Outputs	Target	Achieved
Number of enterprises advised or assisted to develop projects relating to basic services for the economy and the rural population	58	59
Number of services and facilities identified as needed and supported	78	65
Number of individuals advised or assisted to develop projects relating to basic services for the economy and the rural population	65	73
Number of activities undertaken to raise awareness of the environmental	3	37

consequences of a project		
Population in rural areas benefiting from improved services	160,775	76,707
Number of individuals accessing services and facilities	64,851	3,168
Number of existing services and facilities sustained	20	41
Gross number of jobs safeguarded	30	25
Gross number of job created	50	20

Impact

DANSA noted that they would not have been able to expand their operations as greatly or as rapidly without the foundation that RDP funding has given them. The organisation has gone from strength to strength, has expanded its fleet of vehicles and increased its staff from 12 to 31 since 2009. It was also noted that the local garage that carries out servicing and repairs of DANSA's vehicles has also expanded its business as a result.

The dial-a-ride demand responsive service was considered "a lifeline for many of our local people". The project manager noted that many older people in rural areas of the County Borough risk social isolation and loneliness. The opportunities provided for social interaction by the dial-a-ride bus services have had a profound effect on the lives of some users. It is also suggested therefore that the service has contributed to improving health and wellbeing and may have relieved some pressure on other vital but stretched services, for example GP surgeries.

NPT CU highlighted the benefits of their schools savings schemes, which has allowed whole groups to save for school trips and young individuals to aspire to break a cycle of family debt. The changes to the benefits system, such as the reassessment of disability allowance has seen some benefits stopped during the

reassessment period, therefore the services of pay-day loan companies and loan-sharks are tempting. By raising awareness of the Credit Union and its functions in rural areas that may not even be serviced by local banks, more people have access to an ethical, trustworthy and legal alternative offering affordable loans.

NPT CU stated that they would not have actively expanded their services to rural wards without RDP funding and would have continued offering services only from their central offices. The funding contributed towards the employment of a business development officer, a credit control officer and a chief accountant, therefore it allowed the Credit Union to bring in new expertise to develop services and expand operations. NPT CU has exceeded targets set by WG making it the most successful credit union in Wales and the fastest growing. It runs the largest number of school savings schemes in the UK and has been used as a model of good practice across a number of platforms.

Calan DVS recognised the children, young people and mums supported under their project would have been highly unlikely to have found the suitable level of support elsewhere. When such families are in an immediate crisis situation, where there is high needs and high risk, they can access a refuge, however the project manager noted that there is little support for rebuilding families following this intervention. She claimed that funding for preventative low-level interventions such as offered by this project is more difficult to source.

3. Conserving and Upgrading the Rural Heritage in Neath Port Talbot

This project aimed to improve heritage and conservation sites in Neath Port Talbot and work with rural communities to raise awareness and deliver attitudinal change towards the local environment. This project was delivered as 2 sub-projects.

- **Upgrading buildings in Margam Park**

This project is delivered by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and is aimed to restore 2 adjoining buildings in Margam Park, the Grade II listed Citrus House and Propagation House. Both had been out of use for the past decade and were in a very dilapidated state, therefore the intention was to bring them back in to general use by the public with interpretation regarding their origin. This would also improve the landscape and environment within the conservation area by the removal of the derelict elements and their replacement within a newly conserved facility. This construction was completed in August 2013 and has been open to the public to visit whilst the Propagation House is now used by volunteers to propagate plants ready for planting in the gardens. In

November 2013 WG approved a project amendment to utilise underspend to restore another two Grade I buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments within Margam Park: Chapter House and the Infirmary. This work will be completed by 31st December 2014 and the buildings will be open to the general public in January 2014.

- CoRE

Groundwork Bridgend Neath Port Talbot's CoRE Programme builds on the success of its Community Gateways project under Business Plan 1. It aimed to deliver an inclusive programme of environmental activities to rural wards of Neath Port Talbot with an emphasis on community participation as a way of benefitting an individual's health and wellbeing and their local environment. This sub-project delivered sustainable physical and creative environmental improvements and has run over 50 activities, ranging from creating small bowl planting areas to planting community orchards and to designing and construction of a £20,000 natural play area. The Groundwork team has engaged and worked with community groups, school groups and individuals in activities that encourage people to see, and value the natural environment around them in a way they may not have done so before.

Achievements

Performance Indicator – Outputs	Target	Achieved
Number of studies undertaken relating to the maintenance, restoration and upgrading of the rural heritage	20	25
Number of projects in supporting of maintaining, restoring or upgrading the rural heritage financially supported	46	45
Number of enterprises advised or asiststed to develop projects in support of maintaining , restoring or upgrading the rural	65	83

heritage		
Performance indicator - results		
Population in rural areas benefiting from improved services	98,546	97,098
Number of individuals accessing services and facilities	105,700	242,636
Number of existing services and facilities sustained	1	1
Gross number of job created	15	21

Impact

In Margam Park, the predominant impact of the physical renovation of Citrus House and Propagation House and Chapter House and the Infirmary is a visible one. It is tangible and has enhanced the Park.

Management and other stakeholder in the restoration of the Margam Park buildings noted that without RDP funding the renovation of Citrus house and Propagation House would not have happened. Furthermore, without leveraging the RDP underspend to match WREN and local authority funding, they would have also struggled to put together the funding for Chapter House and the Infirmary project.

The renovated buildings are open to the public, however they are also used by the Friends of Margam Park Group who have a planting scheme and a programme for caring for an propagating plants.

Upgrading the buildings has also added value to the parallel Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF) and European Regional Development Funded (ERDF) project for restoration works on other building in the park.

Groundwork is also pleased that they have met their overarching aims and objectives. Certain impacts, such as the anticipated production of fruit from newly planted orchards cannot be measured as yet; however it is expected that health benefits have been promoted, from movement and exercise outdoors. This they call “stealth health” and aims to change attitudes.

Aside from tangible environmental improvements benefits for those who participated ranged from the empowerment to influence their own community, feeling a sense of ownership and pride in the project, to taking part in new volunteering experiences whilst exercising , building confidence through socialising and meeting new people and improved knowledge and skills.

Groundwork estimate that 80% of their activity would not have happened without RDP funding. While some proactive community groups may have put in a bid for Big Lottery funding, the larger natural paly area projects would not have taken place. They claim to have doubled their outreach activities from the business plan 1 project to this project.

4. Think Links, Think Rural, Think Sustainability Project

The Think Links, Think Rural, Think Sustainability Project is, in essence, a community audit that aimed to ascertain the most pressing needs of all rural communities in Neath Port Talbot. It therefore encompasses many different parts of the rural community, such as; businesses, residents, the elderly, farmers and young people.

The project aimed to capture an accurate reflection of rural life and to determine where the gaps are in provision to identify where potential funding could be directed for future projects. TLTRTS is funded by RDP for Wales (2007-2013) under Axis 4 of the plan. The funding provides a full time member of staff to carry out the project.

Project Activities

The project officer has carried out these main activities:

- 1: A comprehensive community needs audit carried out across the sectors within the rural wards of the County Borough. The audit's aim will establish how successfully current services are being delivered, and what areas there are for improvement.
- 2: Analysis of best practise in non-rural wards of Neath Port Talbot as well as outside of the County Borough will be carried out to identify best practise that could help to meet the needs of the rural wards of Neath Port Talbot.
- 3: Analysis of local strategies, to help identify strategically what is needed in rural communities and evaluate if they are being effectively implemented and if they have been successful in achieving their targets i.e. have the community seen the benefits.
- 4: The final activity of the project will draw together the findings under Activities 1 to 3 to produce an in-depth final report which maps current services, gaps and potential for future development. The report will also include a detailed action plan for the way forward, in particular how funding should be prioritised in the future to meet service gaps. The aim of this activity is to guide

the planning for the next round of LEADER funding. The report was completed in December 2014.

Achievements

The project has a number of performance indicators that were set by Welsh Government in order to measure progress.

Performance Indicator	Target	Totals Achieved to Date
Number of enterprises advised or assisted to develop and/or market tourism products	25	14
No. of farming household members advised or assisted to diversify into non agricultural activity	20	20
No. of awareness raising events held	5	5
No. of marketing and promotional activities undertaken	46	47
No. of young people participating in the project	150	172
No. of women participating in the project	173	344
No. of Welsh speakers participating in the project	150	152
No. of elderly people participating in the project	175	228
No. of individuals from underemployed groups participating in the project	150	112
No. of communities engaged	45	53
No. of individuals engaged	450	744

As the table above shows, 14 rural enterprises have been advised or assisted to develop or market tourism products as well as 20 farmers who have been advised or assisted to diversify their businesses. The project has exceeded most of the participation targets that were set, through people completing questionnaires or participating in focus groups, with the number of women and elderly persons especially being higher than required. The large numbers of people participating in the project can be put down to the amount of promotion that was carried out through awareness raising events and the production of several marketing materials. The final two performance indicators highlight the extent of the project's reach, with 53 different rural communities being engaged, and almost 750 people being engaged.

Impact

The project has been successful at engaging a high number of people and advising/assisting various rural enterprises and farmers. There have been three interim reports produced to date, with the latter being of great use in helping to produce the new Local Development Strategy for Neath Port Talbot. Through engaging with all members of rural communities a set of recommendations have been produced outlining the types of projects that should be given priority in the next round of RDP funding. Therefore the Think Links project has provided a sound evidence base for setting out how RDP funding should be spent in the future, in order to maximise the positive impacts.

Future Programme

A new Local Action Group has been created with membership of 25 representatives from the private, public and third sector who have an interest in the development of the rural wards in Neath Port Talbot. Regenerate NPT has been allocated £2.1million of RDP LEADER funding to spend during the period 2015 – 2020. A new local development strategy has been approved by WG that pinpoints 4 main themes for development:

Green NPT: maximising the potential of the green economy in NPT

Vibrant NPT: building on the unique physical, social and cultural assets of NPT

Enterprising NPT: creating an enterprising environment that encourages the growth of new and existing businesses in NPT.

Accessible NPT: improving access to basic services, considering new ways of supporting individuals to overcome barriers to employment and to reach their full potential.

8 key priorities have been identified through the Think Links research and the LAG are looking for innovative projects that can demonstrate outcomes around:

- Green energy for rural businesses
- Further promotion and development of mountain bike activities
- Cycle and walking trails
- Encouraging local produce markets and shops
- Tourism support services

- Broadband exploitation
- Skills development for rural residents
- Improvements in transport on evenings and weekends

WG are providing 100% funding for running costs and the LAG have requested that NPT CBC lead on providing this. NPT CBC have also proposed to match fund 3 officers to work within communities to provide advice and guidance for community groups to bring forward and prepare projects.

It is envisaged that the projects can start in September 2015 and the LAG will be responsible for selecting and appraising projects as well as managing the £2.1million allocation. Projects will need to demonstrate how they meet the key priorities of the Local Development Strategy.

Appendices

Community Development Delivery Plan 2015/16

List of Background Papers

Community Development Delivery Plan 2015/16

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