

**BLAENAVON
HERITAGE
PARTNERSHIP**

**BLAENAVON:
HERITAGE AND
REGENERATION
STUDY**

A Final Report

September 1998

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STUDY**

A Final Report

by

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 DTZ Pbeda Consulting, in association with Gillespies and Jonathan and Kay Bryant, was appointed by Torfaen County Borough Council, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council, the Brecon Beacons National Park, the National Trust and the Wales Tourist Board in September 1997 to undertake a heritage and regeneration strategy for Blaenavon. The purpose of the study was to provide an integrated strategic vision, action and management plan, based on the heritage potential for stimulating economic regeneration in the area. The study is expected to provide the basis for the preparation of applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund and other agencies.

1.2 The aims of the study were to:

- establish base line information on the heritage, economic, environment and social composition of the town and surrounding area
- recommend proposals for change to provide an effective and sustainable economic future for the town centre
- identify key areas/buildings within the town for protection/enhancement and sustainable end uses, including specifically:
 - undertake a feasibility study into establishing an Environment Task Force/Heritage Restoration Training Centre based at St. Peters School and develop a business plan in liaison with the National Trust
 - examine viable new uses for Blaenavon Town Hall
- make recommendations on the balance between land reclamation and protection of heritage features
- recommend actions to maximise the sustainable tourism potential of existing and possible new tourism attractions to optimise the economic benefit to both town and the surrounding landscape
- provide specific proposals for improving the interpretation of the heritage features of the town and surrounding area
- evaluate the benefits of, and potential for, achieving World Heritage Site status

- evaluate the market potential and financial viability of all proposals
- produce a prioritised and costed Action Plan and Implementation Programme
- investigate all potential sources of funding and propose funding packages for each element of the Action Plan
- establish the need for and quantify an Endowment Fund to cover all ongoing management costs of all proposals
- suggest appropriate organisational/management mechanisms for the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan, and
- assess the potential economic, heritage, environmental and social benefits of the proposed Strategy and Action Plan and identify measurable outputs.

STUDY AREA-DEFINITION

- 1.3 With agreement from the study partners the study area as defined in the brief was widened to encompass a more realistic geographical area from a landscape and heritage perspective.

INTERIM SUMMARY REPORT

- 1.4 An interim summary report was prepared for the client in November 1997. It provided a statement of conclusions emerging from work to that date on both the Blaenavon Heritage and Regeneration Study and the Pwll du Land Reclamation Study (by Ove Arup and Partners). The report was used to assist in negotiations with the Coal Authority over the possible purchase of 3,060 hectares of land in the Blaenavon area.

THIS REPORT

- 1.5 This is the final report which is presented in three parts. Part 1 sets out the baseline information, summarises the results of our consultations and identifies key issues and priorities. Part 2 develops the strategy and vision for Blaenavon and Part 3 provides the Action Plan which describes the details on projects and programmes, and discusses funding mechanisms and management issues.

2. BLAENAVON STUDY AREA

2.1 The purpose of this section is to provide a baseline summary analysis of the physical aspects of the study area. This section draws on relevant past work which has studied the landscape, environmental and heritage aspects of Blaenavon to present a baseline, but does not attempt to represent the large body of available information. Documents which have been referred to include:

- Torfaen Tourism Development Strategy, John Brown and Company, 1993
- The Torfaen Landscape Strategy, Derek Lovejoy Partnership, 1997
- Schedule for the Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales produced by CADW, the Countryside Council for Wales and ICOMOS UK
- Various entries to the Schedule of Ancient Monuments, CADW
- Pwll-du an Archaeological Desktop Assessment, The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Archaeological Unit, 1994
- Evaluation of Slopes on Artificial Landforms, Blaenavon, UK, Martin J Haigh, 1978.

STUDY AREA LOCATION

2.2 Blaenavon is located at the north-east margin of the South Wales Coalfield. To the north of the town lies the Brecon Beacons National Park, Abergavenny and the spectacular Usk valley (see Figure 2.1). To the south is the industrialised coast of South Wales. The study area is easily accessible from Cardiff, Bristol, Newport and numerous other regional centres.

GEOLOGY

2.3 Much of the physical form of the study area landscape and its use has been strongly determined by the underlying geology. The area can be broadly divided into two regions, The South Wales Coalfield and The Black Mountains. These are shown in Figure 2.2 and are described briefly below.

- **The South Wales Coalfield:** the majority of the area around Blaenavon consists of a central dissected plateau region consisting of Pennant Sandstones around which are narrow peripheral belts of high moorland underlain by Lower Coal Measures, Millstone Grit and Carboniferous Limestone.

- **The Black Mountains:** the geology of the Black Mountains consists of varying types of Old Red Sandstone. This extends to the South and West of the Usk to the base of the limestone escarpment which delineates the edge of the coalfield.

TOPOGRAPHY

2.4 The natural topography of the region is clearly related to the uplift and weathering of the underlying geology. The study area is an excellent example of how geology informs topography. The key topographic characteristics are shown in Figure 2.3 and are briefly described below:

- The Pennant Sandstone upland plateau.
- The steep sided glacial valleys that run from the northern margin of the Coalfield in a generally southerly direction.
- The coalfield fringe dramatically defined by the limestone escarpment and millstone grit outcrops.
- The ‘Blaenavon Basin’ at the head of the Lwyd Valley with shallow slopes formed by the erosion of the Lower Coal Measures.
- The gentle slopes of the Usk valley over the more easily eroded underlying sandstone.

2.5 The study area also has interest due to its artificial landforms. Martin Haigh, 1978, has studied ‘Anthropogenic Landform Generation in the Blaenavon Area’ and states that the area is “*a striking example of an area whose landscape is completely dominated by artificial landforms*”.

2.6 The main artificial landforms to be found in the area are the following:

- **Patch-working/scouring of the Blaenavon Ironstones:** Patch-working entailed virtually turning over the mountainside like a garden. Haigh describes the process, “*Small streams were ponded then flooded into miners hollows. The surge flushed out the lighter shales and left behind the heavier Ironstones*”. Large tracts of the landscape around Blaenavon show evidence of this method of working.

- **High Ridge Tips:** formed by tipping from an aerial bucketway or from an extending lattice girder frame resting on the actual tip.
- **Conical Tips:** created by a conveyor belt system.
- **Flat Topped Tips:** formed by tipping rail wagons or rubber tyred dumper trucks operating over the flat surface of the tip and advancing on one or more faces. These are the most numerous historic tips in the Blaenavon area and fall into two categories:
 - Fan ridge tips
 - Plateau tips

The flat topped tips are prominent in the Garn yr erw and Pwll du areas and are an important component of the heritage landscape. They were predominantly built up by tipping from tramways extending from the entrance of the drift or level. When the tip moved too far from the source of the waste the tramroad was moved building up a characteristic radial pattern.

- **Opencast:** Opencast activity began in the Second World War and continued (on and off) until 1972. The majority of areas have been left unrestored, or poorly restored. The most dramatic topographic elements are the two huge 'exploration' trenches at Blaen Pig and the 'moonscape' of the Canada Tips near Pwll du.
- **Reclamation:** contrary to many perceptions, there has been extensive reclamation of the landscape around Blaenavon including what would have been dramatic landscape features such as the Washeries Tip, the MacClane Shute Tip at Big Pit and the Dragon Site.

ECOLOGY

2.7 The region has considerable ecological significance and contains the following Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) as shown in Figure 2.4.

- The Bloreng
- Gilwern Hill
- Cwm Clydach
- Mynydd Llangatwg
- Cym Llanwewarth
- Llanover Quarry
- Coed-y-person

- Siambre Ddu

The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) considers the entire area of open moor within the region to be of conservation interest. Pryce Ecological Consultants working with Ove Arup on the Pwll du Land Reclamation Study have identified a number of zones within the industrial heritage landscape as having ‘arguable national and county’ ecological significance. In addition a large proportion of the study area lies over an extensive cave system of geological significance that is likely to be nominated as an SSSI in the foreseeable future.

LANDSCAPE CLASSIFICATION

2.8 Landscape Classification is the process of dividing landscape into visually distinct areas for the purpose of description and evaluation. The study area has been previously studied by the Derek Lovejoy Partnership (DLP) for Torfaen County Borough Council and the Welsh Development Agency (WDA). The resulting document, ‘The Torfaen Landscape Strategy’ sub-divides the County into three broad areas:

- Upper Valley: Blaenavon
- Middle Valley: Abersychan and Pontypool
- Lower Valley: New Inn and Cwmbran

2.9 The majority of the study area for the Blaenavon Heritage and Regeneration Study falls within the Upper Valley. This is subdivided into four landscape character areas:

- Coity Mountain
- Pwll Du and Garn yr erw tip
- Upper Afon Lwyd and Industrial estate
- Bloreng SSSI and Mynydd Garnclochy

These landscape character areas are examined in detail in section 7.0 of the Torfaen Landscape Strategy.

2.10 The DLP study has been reviewed and the extent of the area classified, described and evaluated has been extended to take account of the regional grain of the Blaenavon Heritage and Regeneration Study. This has resulted in a slightly different system of landscape classification which is described below.

2.11 The landscape of the study area can be divided into 4 landscape types that can be further divided into visually distinct landscape character areas. The broad landscape types are:

- Upland Plateau
- Coal field fringe
- Upper Lwyd Valley (as identified by the DLP study)
- Usk Valley

These are described and evaluated below and shown in Figure 2.5.

Upland Plateau

2.12 The character of the Upland Plateau is defined by the large-scale open hilltops and moor with a total lack of enclosing elements. Views to the Brecon Beacons National Park and into the South Wales Coalfield are important. The plateau top at Pwll du and Blaen Pig has been extensively modified by opencast activity. This has left some large scale artificial landforms that contrast with the smooth open character of adjacent areas.

2.13 The Upland Plateau can be further broken down into the following landscape character areas:

- Bloreng
- Gilwern
- Coity Mountain
- Blaen Pig
- Pen-ffordd-goch
- Castle rag
- Mynydd Llangatwg

2.14 The bleak open character of the Upland Plateau and the long-range views to the Usk Valley and south over the coalfield gives the study area scenic drama and imparts a feeling of wildness. The artificial landforms, although they contrast with the natural landforms, contribute to the drama of the landscape. The scale of the disruption to the landscape is breath-taking and tells a story about the degree of landscape change that is necessary to exploit mineral wealth – a story that few post-industrial landscapes in the region now tell due to effective reclamation.

Coalfield Fringe

- 2.15 The Coalfield Fringe is defined by the juxtaposition of dramatic topography with the industrial heritage associated with mineral extraction and exploitation. In the Clydach Gorge woodland and topography act as enclosing elements creating a landscape with an intimate scale.
- 2.16 The Coalfield fringe is comprised of four landscape character areas:
- Clydach
 - Bloreng Upper Slopes
 - Llanelly Hill and Pwll du
 - Mynydd Rheinalt
- 2.17 The Coalfield fringe is likely to be perceived as a ‘high quality’ landscape by the majority of viewers. The dramatic topography contrasts with agriculture, woodland and industrial heritage relics to create a visually rich and spatially interesting landscape that strongly contrasts with the open moorland near Blaenavon. The Coalfield fringe is a vital component of the heritage landscape and contributes considerably to its overall landscape value.

Upper Lwyd Valley

- 2.18 The Upper Lwyd Valley is defined by the interaction of the large scale topographic features, openness, semi natural vegetation, settlement and the highly visible evidence of the area’s industrial past.
- 2.19 The Upper Lwyd Valley is comprised of 9 distinct landscape character areas. These are compatible with the landscape character areas and sub areas identified by DLP.
- Coity Mountain Slopes
 - Bloreng Slopes
 - Garn-yr-erw
 - Waun Afon
 - Coity farm
 - Big Pit
 - Garn-yr-erw reclamation
 - Waun Hoscyn
 - Cwm Afon

- 2.20 The Upper Lwyd valley is the heart of the historic landscape. It has considerable visual diversity. The various landscape character areas tell the story of the evolution of the landscape from agricultural to post-industrial times. However despite an interesting history, environmental degradation of the area may be negatively perceived by people who do not have prior knowledge of, or interest in, the area's industrial past.

Usk Valley

- 2.21 The agricultural land use interspersed with small scale settlement defines the Usk Valley's rural character. Important features such as the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal add to the historic character of the area. This landscape type has not been subdivided into landscape character areas, however, the landscape value of the Usk Valley is well acknowledged and appreciated as a landscape of national scenic significance.

Summary of Landscape Value

- 2.22 The key findings of the analysis of landscape value can be summarised as follows:
- The study area contains a rich and diverse landscape. The story it tells is a microcosm of the history of Wales.
 - The basic geological structure of the landscape is clearly expressed by the topography, which has been overlain with a land use pattern that illustrates the evolution of the area from a pre-agricultural to a post-industrial society.
 - The study area offers a wide range of landscape experience from industrial despoliation to rural tranquility. The scenic contrasts are one of the area's strong points.
 - The heart of the study area is Blaenavon. However Llanfoist and the Clydach Gorge, although peripheral to the main industrial activity centred on Blaenavon, are important to the landscape and heritage integrity of the area.
 - The landscape assessment confirms the boundaries of the area included or proposed for inclusion in the Register of Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales.
 - Some of the more recent industrial heritage such as the Canada Tips are a 'double-edged' sword in terms of landscape character and quality. Although contributing to the richness of the landscape, ingrained perceptual biases

towards 'industry' 'untidiness' 'unnaturalness' may result in negative viewer perceptions. However, appropriate education and interpretation facilities could overcome these prejudices.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

2.23 The main visual characteristics of the study area are determined by topography and viewing points and are shown in Figure 2.6. The key findings of the visual analysis are:

- Vehicular and pedestrian arrival points into the study area are dramatic and spatially interesting, however there is potential for the generation of negative viewer perceptions on arrival unless there is prior education/interpretation.
- Blaenavon lies in a 'basin' strongly enclosed by key ridge/lines. These key ridge/lines and their slopes, including Coity Mountain and the Blorenges are visually sensitive to change.
- The town of Blaenavon is visually oriented towards Coity Mountain and has little visual relationship with the heritage landscape of Pwll du, Pen-ffordd-goch and Garn-yr-erw.
- A number of prominent elements within the study area may be perceived as visual detractors. These include the Blaenavon Steam Railway, the industrial area and reclamation in the valley floor north west of Blaenavon and the black spoil at Pwll du.

TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS

2.24 Blaenavon is an interesting example of a South Wales Valley settlement. It lacks the characteristic linearity of many of valley towns, and although unplanned, it has some interesting townscape qualities and a number of buildings of historic interest. Figure 2.7, the Tithe Map for Blaenavon, 1844 illustrates how the town has evolved from three separate clusters of development around the Ironworks, King Street and St Peters Church into the large homogeneous settlement we see today. The centre of the town has been designated as a conservation area. The town is beset with economic problems and suffers from numerous environmental problems.

2.25 The key issues relating to visitor and resident amenity within the town centre are shown in Figure 2.8 and include:

- The streetscape is generally of a poor quality, particularly in Broad Street where unused buildings add to the feeling of decline and neglect.
- The few visual linkages between the ‘bypass’ and the Town Centre do not encourage exploration by visitors.
- There is nowhere to stop on Church Road / Prince Street, consequently the Town centre does not benefit from passing traffic.
- The extensive double yellow lines visually detract from streetscape quality and appear to be excessive for the amount of traffic in the Town Centre.
- There is a lack of pedestrian linkages between the Ironworks and the Town Centre.
- The Ironworks frontage has a poor visual quality due to fencing and walling. There is an opportunity to create a very strong image for the town by improving the frontage.
- The approaches to Big Pit are of a poor visual quality, although the recently implemented planting will eventually improve the situation. However the frontage of ‘All Dimension Scaffolding’ is likely to contribute to negative visitor perceptions.
- There is an important visual linkage between Town and Coity Mountain. Consequently Coity Mountain is sensitive to change.
- The beech woodland in the centre of town has the potential to be more heavily utilised. Its’ proximity to the Ironworks potentially gives it considerable value as a route to the town centre and a place to picnic. Unfortunately it is currently unmanaged and overgrown and ownership may be a problem.
- Features such as the Working Men’s Hall are important landmarks and give the town a sense of identity. The heritage buildings around the end of the High Street create an identifiable ‘Heritage Precinct’. There is considerable opportunity to reinforce this and contribute to the creation of an identifiable town core.
- Parking is generally poorly located for visitors and does not encourage pedestrian concentration due to its disperse layout.

Photographic evidence of this analysis is provided in the appendices to this report.

HERITAGE

2.26 The majority of the Study Area is on the Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales (Figure 2.9). It is important to note that register is not a statutory designation. It's status only ensures that the heritage value of the area should be taken into account in any decision relating to a planning application.

2.27 There are numerous scheduled ancient monuments and listed buildings but in addition to these are numerous artefacts related to mineral extraction and exploration. The majority of these have not been mapped. However broad areas that contain evidence of past workings can be identified. The Pwll du area was studied in some detail by Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Archaeological Unit (1994). The study concluded:

“... the assessment site contains a well preserved industrial landscape, important in its own right and with direct connections to a wider industrial landscape, giving it very high group value. It is doubtful that another site exists where the relationship between an ironworks, its mineral exploitation area and associated transport network can be so readily appreciated as at Blaenavon”.

2.28 The study identified that “the most outstanding area of preserved industrial landscape within the assessment site is located on the northern side of the B4248.” (Garn yr erw and Pwll-du). The main tracks, tramways and tunnels are also documented by various non-official sources, e.g. Chris Barber and Michael Blackmore, Portraits of the Past 1996.

2.29 The Town Centre contains several listed buildings (Figure 2.10). There is an identifiable heritage precinct around Church Street and Broad Street defined by:

- St Peters School
- St Peters Church
- Post Office
- Co-operative building
- Workmens Hall and Institute
- Horeb Baptist Church.

STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

2.30 The study area is rich in heritage, scenically diverse and ecologically important.

2.31 Blaenavon and its surrounding landscape is unique for a number of reasons. The current enthusiasm for the area's listing as a World Heritage Site is warranted, however this enthusiasm should be tempered by the fact that for many, including residents, the area is degraded and disadvantaged, despoiled by two centuries of industrial exploitation and requires regeneration: physically, economically and socially.

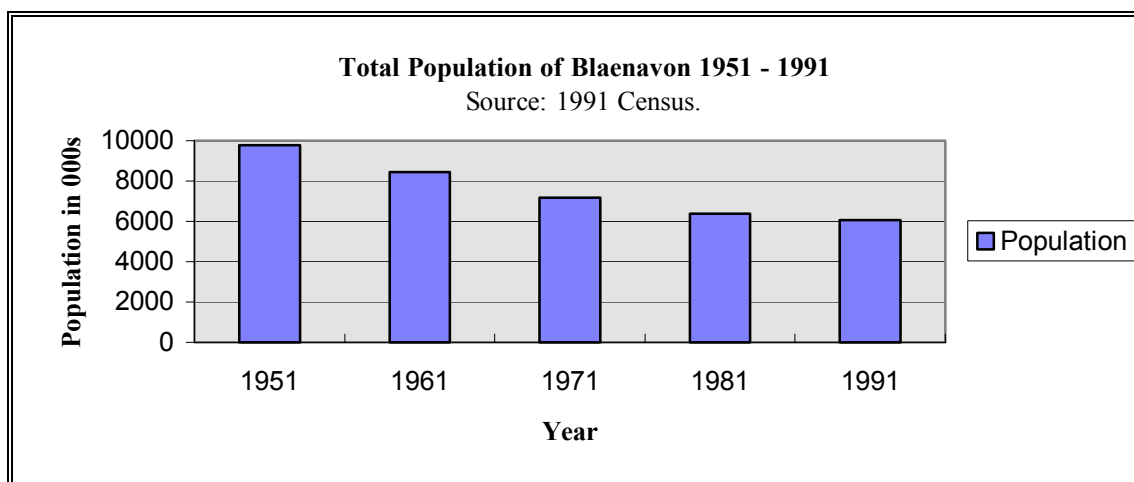
3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

3.1 This section of the report examines the socio-economic characteristics of Blaenavon, focusing particularly on the economic situation in Blaenavon itself. The profile covers the general characteristics of the town and its surrounding area, using comparative socio-economic statistics and survey data where appropriate.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

3.2 Census of Population statistics demonstrate that the demographic trend in Blaenavon is one of general long-term decline. Figure 3.1 plots the population of the town over the last four decades between 1951 and 1991. The total number of residents has fallen from 9,777 in 1951 to just over 6,000 in 1991.

FIGURE 3.1



3.3 Table 3.1 shows the number of residents in Blaenavon between 1951 and 1991, and the relative percentage decrease in population over each decade compared to the 1991 population figure. It is clear that the rate at which the population is declining has slowed in recent decades.

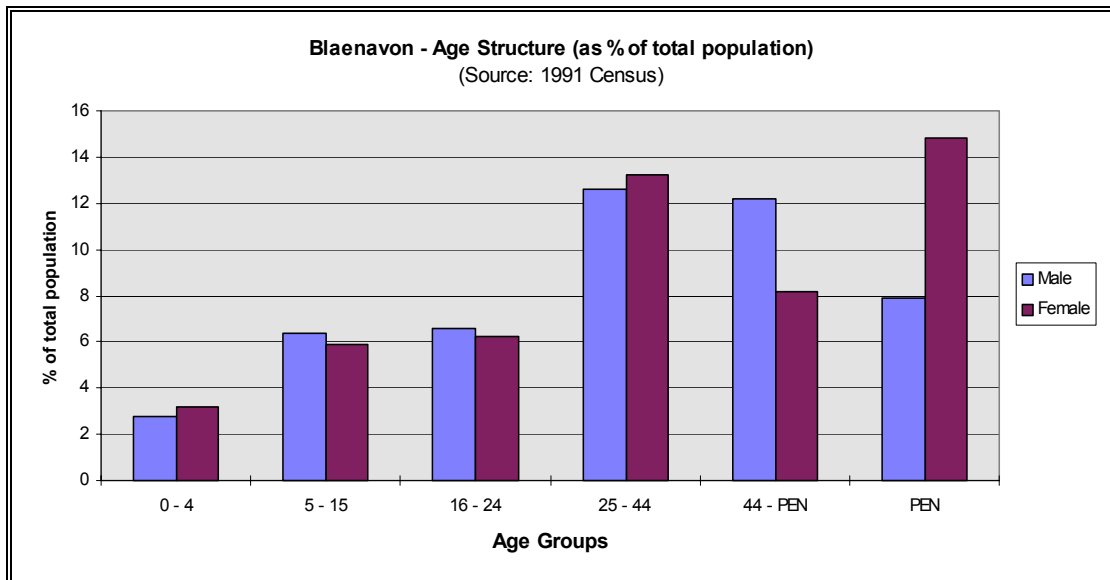
	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
Population of previous census	9,777	8,451	7,186	6,386	6,066
Percentage change to 1991 base year	-38.0	-28.2	-15.6	-5.0	-
Source: Census of Population, various years					

- 3.4 Table 3.2 illustrates that the population profile of the town is skewed towards the older, less economically active age groups in the community. The percentage of Blaenavon residents of pensionable age is 2% above the average proportion of pensioners for the rest of Wales, and 4% above the British average.

Age	Blaenavon	Wales	GB
0 - 15	18.3	20.4	20.1
16 - 44	38.6	39.8	42.0
45 - Pen	20.4	19.7	19.2
Pensioner	22.7	20.1	18.7
Total	100	100	100
Source: 1991 Census of Population			

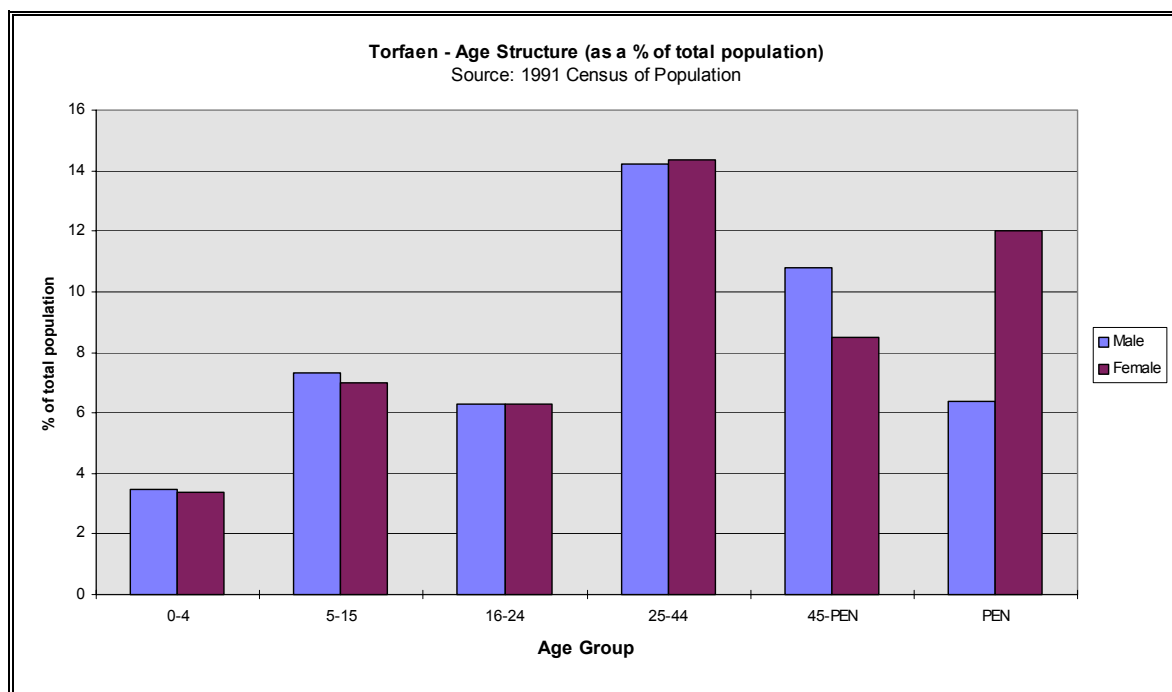
- 3.5 In addition, an examination of the ratio of male to female residents in Blaenavon in Figure 3.2 shows that the population distribution by gender is also heavily skewed. There are 2,938 males and 3,128 females in Blaenavon (1991 Census of Population), with a significant proportion (29%) of females at retirement age or over. The number of females of retirement age is significantly higher than the equivalent statistic (23%) for the Borough of Torfaen as a whole.

FIGURE 3.2



3.6 The population distribution by age for all residents in Torfaen is shown in Figure 3.3. This figure demonstrates that, in addition to its higher proportion of pensioners, Blaenavon has comparatively fewer individuals in the age groups: 0-4, 5-15, and 25-44 than the rest of Torfaen.

FIGURE 3.3



WORKFORCE SIZE AND ACTIVITY RATE

- 3.7 The total economic population of Blaenavon is assessed as containing 4,955 out of 6,066 residents, and is calculated by excluding children under 16 years of age from the total census figure. The economic population is further sub-divided into those classified as ‘economically active’¹ and those classified as ‘economically inactive’.² Using these definitions, Blaenavon has less than 53% of its population classified as ‘economically active’; which compares unfavourably with economic activity rates of 57%, for both the Borough of Torfaen and County of Gwent.
- 3.8 The 2,329 economically inactive residents of Blaenavon are made up of individuals who are either retired (20% of economic population), permanently sick (9.1% of economic population), students (5% of economic population). There are also a number of residents who are either full or part-time carers and therefore ineligible to claim unemployment benefit (up to 15% of economic population).

¹ i.e. employed, self-employed, registered unemployed, or on a government training scheme.

² i.e. students, permanently sick, or retired individuals.

WORKFORCE COMPOSITION

- 3.9 The structural problems inherent in the Blaenavon labour market are most clearly demonstrated by an analysis of percentage of economically active residents in permanent employment. In 1991, only 64% (1,676 individuals) of the economically active population were in permanent employment, including those who were self-employed. This compares with a Welsh average of 71.2% and a GB average of 73.3% in the same year. As a percentage of the total 'economic population' those in permanent employment in Blaenavon in 1991 represent only 45% of the total. This figure compares poorly with the Welsh average of 59% and the GB average of 62%

FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT RATES.

- 3.10 Table 3.3 shows that Blaenavon has relatively low rates of part-time employment. This is likely to be a function of the geographic isolation of the town, which increases travel time and costs to the point at which it may become uneconomic to undertake this type of work. However, this statistic could also reflect skills shortages in the town and/or a strategic failure to attract employers offering suitable part-time employment.

Economic Status	Blaenavon		Wales	GB
	No	%	%	%
Employed Full Time	1,675	64.0	71.2	73.3
Employed Part Time	349	13.3	16.1	16.1

* Economically Active Population = 2619
Source: 1991 Census of Population

- 3.11 Table 3.4 gives a more detailed breakdown of workforce composition by gender and by economic status. It confirms that the proportion of residents of both sexes who undertake part time employment is particularly low in Blaenavon.

TABLE 3.4			
COMPOSITION OF BLAENAVON WORKFORCE *			
(AS PERCENTAGE OF ALL WORKERS)			
Economic Status	Blaenavon		Wales
	No	%	%
Part Time Employment - Male	25	1.2	4.5
Part Time Employment - Female	324	16.0	22.8
* Total Number of Employees in Blaenavon = 2025			
Source: 1991 Census of Population: NOMIS			

UNEMPLOYMENT

- 3.12 The level of unemployment in Blaenavon was 6.4% (317 individuals) of the total economic population (of 4,995) in 1991. This has subsequently fallen to 2.8% (143 individuals)³ of the total economic population by August 1997. The level of unemployment is therefore substantially below the national average of 5.2% as at August 1997.
- 3.13 There are a number of factors which can explain this apparent anomaly. First, Blaenavon has a relatively low number of adult males available for work. Second, there are a substantial number of adults who are ineligible for unemployment benefit but who represent up to 15% (776 individuals) of the total economic population of Blaenavon (source: Torfaen County Borough Council, 1997). These individuals are likely to be female carers, although the labour survey data on Blaenavon is not sufficiently detailed to be able to confirm this assertion.

EMPLOYMENT PROFILE

- 3.14 A profile of the 1991 Census of Population data on employment structure in Blaenavon and its surrounding wards has already been presented in the 'Mid and North Torfaen Valley Strategic Action Plan (1995)'. The action plan shows that the area has experienced a long term decline in the number of employees in the construction and energy/mineral extraction sectors. The economy is, relative to Gwent and Wales as a whole, relatively dependent on manufacturing (a sector in long term decline in the UK) and construction (a sector particularly vulnerable to the economic cycle) in providing employment.

³ Source: Department of Employment (NOMIS), Aug 1997.

- 3.15 The service sector in the Blaenavon area has experienced a significant increase in the number of individuals it employs in recent years although the numbers of employees in the service sector (approximately 52% of employees in the main industrial sectors), is considerably below the British average (71%). It can be anticipated that the service sector in Blaenavon will continue to increase in significance. Projected growth in this sector may have implications for any future employment training strategy to be developed by local agencies.
- 3.16 The Strategic Action Plan also identified the significance of the public sector in employment provision in Blaenavon and the wards close to it: over a third of all jobs are with public sector organisations. It is interesting to note that the influence of the public sector on the local labour market may be considerable; both in terms of its demand for labour, and the potentially distortionary effects of the remuneration packages it offers to employees. This influence may lead to a 'crowding out' by the public sector of workers who would otherwise have found employment in the private sector. Gaps in the local private sector labour market may result.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION INDICATORS

- 3.17 Blaenavon is ranked in the most deprived quarter of all Welsh wards, as measured by the 1991 Welsh Office's 'Ward Index of Socio-Economic Conditions': i.e. Blaenavon is ranked 214 of the total of 908. The 1991 Ward Index identifies three areas in which Blaenavon is 'well-below the Welsh average':
- unemployment
 - proportion of low socio-economic groups in the population
 - numbers of permanently sick in population.
- 3.18 The index also identifies three areas in which Blaenavon is 'below the Welsh average':
- the proportion of the population who are economically active
 - population loss in the 20 - 59 years age group
 - the level of basic housing amenities.
- 3.19 Using the South Glamorgan County Council socio-economic deprivation index, the town is ranked 117 out of all Welsh wards. This index therefore places Blaenavon in the top quartile of deprived wards in Wales.

- 3.20 An additional socio-economic indicator is the number of households with access to vehicles, taken from the 1991 Census of Population. Despite its geographical isolation, only 58% of Blaenavon households have access to a car, which is considerably lower than the 66 % average across all households in the Borough of Torfaen.

INCOME AND WEALTH

- 3.21 Earnings data is not disaggregated to a level which would allow the earnings of Blaenavon residents to be compared with other workers in comparable employment in other wards. However, the Mid and North-Torfaen Valley Strategic Action Plan (1995) does identify that wage levels for workers in Gwent were the lowest of the four counties of Wales in 1991, i.e. earnings for men in Gwent are 85% of the national average. It can therefore be assumed that wage levels in Blaenavon will be at a comparably low level.
- 3.22 In addition, as noted earlier there are proportionately fewer income earners in the town than in the rest of the Borough. Both these factors combine to reduce the average level of income per household in Blaenavon and to have negative implications for the goods and service sector of the local economy.

SKILLS AND TRAINING

- 3.23 The geographical isolation of Blaenavon, combined with low levels of private car ownership and public transport difficulties makes travel to other locations to carry out skills training difficult, time-consuming and expensive. The structural weakness in Blaenavon's labour market also means that the town lacks a pool of unemployed individuals to whom skills and jobs training would be suitable.

PERFORMANCE OF LOCAL ECONOMY

- 3.24 Due to the difficulty in obtaining recent economic data on Blaenavon itself we have decided to look at property market values as a 'proxy' indicator in order to be able to identify the relative economic performance of that economy. A full analysis of the property market is given in Section 5 of this report.
- 3.25 Retail, residential and industrial property prices provide an excellent source of secondary economic data and have been used to make inferences concerning the

relative level of economic activity in the local economy of Blaenavon. In this respect, the property data presented below both complements and corroborates the primary socio-economic data already presented in earlier paragraphs.⁴

- 3.26 Table 3.5 clearly shows that the residential property prices in the town are considerably lower than those in the nearby town of Abergavenny. Low residential prices are indicative of low demand and/or excess supply. In this case, it would appear likely that the situation in the Blaenavon residential market has been subject to a combination of both forces.
- 3.27 Weak demand for housing can be attributed to the relatively low income levels earned by those employed in the local economy, and the qualitative perceptions of individuals concerning the town as a place to live, both aesthetically and in terms of its range of goods, services and infrastructure.
- 3.28 Excess supply of housing is likely to have occurred in an economy which has lost over 38% of its residents since 1951, unless the stock of housing has been much reduced. There is no evidence of a significant reduction in housing stock in Blaenavon over the period.

Type of Residence	Blaenavon	Abergavenny
Unmodernised Terrace	5,000	35,000
Modernised Terrace	25-35,000	50-60,000
Modern Estate House	50-60,000	70-80,000
Land Values (per acre)	50-60,000	200,000
Source: DTZ Debenham Thorpe, Cardiff (September 1997)		

- 3.29 Table 3.6 demonstrates that a similar situation exists with regard to Blaenavon retail and industrial property rents. There is a lack of demand for a range of different sized commercial properties, and the corresponding excess supply has depressed commercial rents considerably.

⁴ The relationship between the price of a fixed asset such as land and property and income/wealth is well established in the economic literature.

	Blaenavon	Abergavenny
Retail Rent	4-5	45-50
Industrial Rent	1-2	>4
Source: DTZ Debenham Thorpe, Cardiff (September 1997)		

- 3.30 The unsustainable nature of the Blaenavon economy, in terms of the relatively low number of economically active residents, has impacted on local demand for goods and services. In turn, this has had an impact on the derived demand for retail properties in the town. This has been exacerbated by wider trends in retailing with a shift towards modern convenience floorspace.
- 3.31 Low industrial rents in the industrial sites around the town do not necessarily reflect the strength of the local economy per se; it could simply reflect an over-provision of industrial units by development agencies. However, the considerable excess supply of small business units is likely to be indicative of a weak demand for local goods and services. Low industrial rents on larger industrial units are more likely to indicate barriers to inward investment, such as relatively poor transport infrastructure and a lack of a suitably sized and suitably skilled local labour market.
- 3.32 During a meeting of the Blaenavon Business Panel, a group of local business people,⁵ additional factors which may effect demand for industrial units were also discussed. They included: site security, lack of sufficient parking, lack of available development land of suitable quality, industrial estate infrastructural problems (including water mains and drainage), and distance from the main arterial routes, such as the M4.
- 3.33 Blaenavon has intermediate assisted area status only, despite its high scoring in the Welsh deprivation index. This is because the Borough of Torfaen is in the Newport 'commute to work' area. The Borough is therefore viewed as having less of a need for development assistance than other councils which are located further away from the M4 corridor. The lack of full development assistance affects Blaenavon's ability to compete with similarly located 'heads of the valleys' communities for inward investment.

OVERVIEW

- 3.34 The economic profile has established the economic basis for future regeneration in terms of its population and employment characteristics. The main conclusions are summarised below.

⁵ Organised by the Economic Development Department of Torfaen District Borough Council (14.11.97).

- The decline in the local economy is reflected in weak demand for local goods, services and property.
- Weak demand is attributable to adverse shifts in the demographic profile of the town and surrounding area.
- Conventional inward investment strategies have failed to protect all sectors of Blaenavon's economy from long run decline.
- Blaenavon's sole comparative advantage over other towns in the Valleys lies in its outstanding industrial heritage.
- Blaenavon has a significant proportion of its residents classified as economically inactive- either due to permanent sickness or retirement.
- In relative terms, it has a very low proportion of its residents in permanent employment.
- Using a range of socio-economic indicators, Blaenavon has been classified as one of the most deprived wards in Wales.
- Evidence of the lack of demand for local goods and services in the local economy is provided by the gross excess supply of retail space in Broad St.
- Low residential property values are indicative of both the excess supply of and weak demand for housing. Excess supply can be attributable to a long term fall in population without significant adjustment to the stock of housing. Weak demand can be attributed to low incomes and poor perceptions of Blaenavon as a place to live.
- Low commercial/industrial values are indicative of Blaenavon's inherent disadvantage in terms of transport infrastructure. Its relative remoteness in comparison with other parts of the Borough is likely to continue to undermine the success of conventional inward investment strategies.
- Low demand for small start-up units is likely to be related weak local demand for services and, possibly, to perceived skills gaps in the local labour market by local entrepreneurs.

4. TOURISM MARKET

4.1 This section provides an overview of the tourism market for the study area, in particular Blaenavon, and assesses the potential to draw on the large visitor market which are currently drawn to the Brecon Beacons National Park which lies adjacent to the study area. This baseline is crucial to developing market orientated, fundable programmes and projects aimed at the tourism and heritage market.

TOURISM MARKET

4.2 The main source of information for the review of the tourism market has been the Torfaen Tourism Development Strategy (TTDS) which provides the most comprehensive overview of tourism in the area. Rather than redo work which has already been carried out satisfactorily, this had been updated and added to where appropriate.

Domestic Tourism Market

4.3 No statistics are available for the area itself and therefore South Wales figures are our best guide as to the size and characteristics of the market. Table 4.1 shows the size of the domestic tourism market in South Wales and Wales as compared with England and UK totals. As the Wales Tourist Board (WTB) were unable to give us full details of the 1996 data for South Wales, in these instances 1995 comparison have been made.

Visit Type	UK	England		Wales		South Wales	
			% of UK		% of UK		% of UK
All Purposes	121.0	99.6	(82.3)	10.4	(8.6)	5.1	(4.2)
Holidays	66.2	52.8	(79.8)	6.7	(10.1)	2.8	(4.2)
1-3 nights	33.3	27.7	(83.2)	2.7	(8.1)	1.2	(3.6)
4+ nights	32.9	25.0	(76.0)	4.0	(12.2)	1.5	(4.6)
VFR	34.6	29.8	(86.1)	2.5	(7.2)	1.7	(4.9)
Business	14.8	12.6	(85.1)	0.8	(5.4)	0.4	(2.7)
Others	5.4	4.4	(81.5)	0.4	(7.4)	0.3	(4.8)

Source: The UK Tourist 96 and WTB

4.4 This analysis shows that some 10.4 million trips were taken to Wales in 1995 and of these almost half, 5.1 million, were to South Wales. This compares to figures of 8.7

million and 4.2 million respectively in 1991, the figures used in the TTDS report. This would suggest a modest growth in tourism over these five years. Table 4.2, however, illustrates how closely the tourism market is linked to national economic well being with falls in tourism in 1992 and 1993 with Wales and South Wales more affected than the UK as a whole. South Wales also appears to have run counter to trend of increasing trips in 1996, with a decrease of almost 6%.

TABLE 4.2 TRENDS IN TOURISM 1991-96 - NO. OF TRIPS (M)						
	UK	England	Wales	Change year on year (m)	S Wales	Change year on year (m)
1991	94.4	76.0	8.7		4.0	
1992	95.6	77.2	8.3	-0.4	3.9	-0.1
1993	90.9	73.0	7.7	-0.6	3.6	-0.3
1994	109.8	90.2	9.8	+2.1	4.8	+1.2
1995	121.0	99.6	10.4	+0.6	5.1	+0.3
1996	127.0	104.1	11.0	+0.6	4.8	-0.3

Source: The UK Tourist 96 and WTB

- 4.5 To provide an indication of the nature of the domestic visitor to South Wales, Table 4.3 breaks down the different types of tourism by trips, nights and spending and compares these with Wales.

TABLE 4.3				
BRITISH DOMESTIC TOURISM IN WALES 1994-96 (M)				
	Wales 1996	Wales 94-96 average	South Wales 94-96 average	South Wales as % of Wales
All Tourism				
Trips (m)	11.0	10.4	4.9	47.1
Nights (m)	46.4	43.2	18.1	41.9
Spending (£m)	1,180	1,095	440	40.2
Holidays				
Trips (m)	7.2	6.9	2.7	39.1
Nights (m)	36.0	33.8	12.1	35.8
Spending (£m)	980	900	315	35.0
Short Holidays (1-3 nights)				
Trips (m)	3.3	3.1	1.3	41.9
Nights (m)	7.1	6.6	2.6	83.9
Spending (£m)	215	215	85	39.5
Long Holidays (4+ nights)				
Trips (m)	3.9	3.8	1.3	34.2
Nights (m)	28.9	27.2	9.5	34.9
Spending (£m)	760	685	230	33.6
Business & Work				
Trips (m)	0.8	0.8	0.5	62.5
Nights (m)	2.1	2.0	1.2	60.0
Spending (£m)	95	95	65	68.4
VFR				
Trips (m)	2.5	2.3	1.6	69.6
Nights (m)	5.9	5.8	3.7	63.8
Spending (£m)	70	70	45	64.3
Source: UK Tourist 1996				

4.6 Looking at the average figures for 1994 to 1996 the key features of note are as follows:

- South Wales on average attracts around 47% of Welsh tourism trips, 42% of tourism nights and 40% of spending (£440 million)

- As regards business tourism, South Wales accounts for 63% of Wales business and work trips and 68% of spending.
- South Wales attracts the majority of the Wales VFR market with 70% of trips (1.6 million) and 64% of spending (£45million). It is interesting to note that compared with the TTDS report the number of trips has risen from 900,000 to 1.7m trips but that the spending has more or less stayed the same. At the time the TTDS report was written only 14% of holidays in Wales were VFR but in 1994-96 they accounted for 23% of all trips. This is significant when considering apparent rises in tourism trips since VFR trips have relatively low spending levels.
- The proportion of long holidays taken in South Wales (27% of trips) is less than for Wales as a whole (37% of trips). This proportion appears to have fallen since the TTDS report and indeed the number of long holiday trips has fallen by 200,000.
- The number of short holiday trips has increased since the TTDS report from 1.2 million to 1.3 million.

Welsh Tourism Market

- 4.7 The WTB strategy published in 1994 predicted average annual increases in the number of staying visitors of 1.5%, giving a growth in visitor numbers from 8.3 million trips in 1992 to 9.3 million trips in 2000. These growth targets have already been achieved with 11 million trips in 1996. Wales' share of the UK market has, however, dropped from 9.2% of UK trips in 1991 to 8.6% in 1995 and 8.7% in 1996. 'Tourism 2000' also set targets for growth in spending of 5% per annum. These targets have not been met and indeed Wales' share of total expenditure has fallen.
- 4.8 The 1994-1996 Progress Report of the WTB identifies the unexpected increase in long holidays in Wales and the decline in the short holiday but states that they believe the long term trends of increased short holidays should still be accepted and therefore the basis of the strategy still holds good. The importance of maintaining the long term market is however identified.

Overseas Tourism Market

- 4.9 The overseas market has continued to grow in Wales with growth over the past five years from 0.65 million trips in 1991 to 0.74 million trips in 1995. This is in line with UK trends as shown in Table 4.4.

	Wales			South Wales			UK
	(Trips (000's))	Nights (m)	Spending (£m)	Trips (000's)	Nights (m)	Spending (£m)	Visits (m)
1190	680	5.4	130	390	3.2	75	18.0
1991	650	5.0	33	400	2.9	80	17.1
1992	670	4.8	132	530	3.1	81	18.5
1993	690	5.2	173	460	3.3	112	19.9
1994	690	5.0	190	440	3.3	116	21.0
1995	740	5.5	203	-	-	-	24.0

Source: WTB and UK Digest of Statistics

- 4.10 In South Wales the picture is similar although we do not yet have figures for 1995. After several years of growth the number of trips fell in 1994 from 0.46 million to 0.44 million although the number of nights remained the same and spending increased. This may indicate that although fewer overseas tourists are coming they are staying longer and spending more. South Wales accounted for 59% of all overseas visitor trips to Wales in 1994 and 61 % of spending and therefore is attracting the majority of the current market.
- 4.11 WTB's strategy document 'Tourism 2000' set targets for overseas tourism based on 6% annual growth in numbers and 8% in spending. The 1994-1996 Progress Report confirms that growth in numbers has not been as high as predicted and indeed Wales' share of the overseas market has gone down. However growth in spending has been above the targets set. Despite the disappointing growth in numbers the targets set in the strategy of 1.1 million visits and £244 million spending have been maintained. We understand that overseas visitor trips to Wales in 1996 were 830,000 which is in line with the projected target for 2000.

Day Trip Market

- 4.12 The TTDS report recognised the day trip market as being particularly important for Torfaen and by association Blaenavon. It concluded that accommodation stock in the surrounding area is severely limited and therefore the wider catchment area needs to be a focus for leisure day trips.
- 4.13 Data on the day trip market is not fully compatible and in some instances is now quite dated, however, the key trends can be identified. The most recent data is to be found in the 1996 UK Day Visits Survey which should allow comparison with the 1991/92 Day Visits in Great Britain report. Unfortunately only summary results of this have so far been published. The most recent detailed information is therefore in the 1994 UK Day Visits Survey. This is somewhat misleading in that it does not differentiate between a 'tourism day visit' and a regular 'leisure day visit' which has no minimum time or distance constraints.
- 4.14 The 1996 survey defines tourism leisure day trips as those lasting more than three hours and not made on a regular basis. The number of such trips made in 1996 was 1,167 million for the UK and 46 million to Wales (4%). This would appear to be a large increase from the 1991/92 figures of 30 million trips and spending of £252 million in Wales. On the basis of the 1994 survey the WTB adjusted its targets upwards to 50 million visits and £482 million spending by 2000.
- 4.15 The TTDS report undertook detailed assessments of the day visit catchment population. We would accept these calculations as a good proxy for the potential catchment available to Blaenavon when combined with information from the Brecon Beacons National Park survey and survey data on Blaenavon itself.
- 4.16 In summary the key findings of the day visit catchment in the TTDS report are as follows:
- around 0.75 million within the 30 minute catchment
 - 1.25 million in the 60 minute catchment
 - between 4 and 4.25 million in the 90 minute catchment
 - levels of affluence in the 30 minute drivetime were lower than average
 - the 30 to 60 minute drivetime band is a key target area given the larger population concentrations and increased affluence
 - the 90 minute catchment is of average size and although affluent, travel times may be a deterrent.

Schools and Family Groups

4.17 The TTDS report identified schools as a major target for the Borough for the following reasons :

- the size of the market of primary schoolchildren is expected to grow by some 15 to 20% by the late 1990s
- taking children out is a major factor in motivating day trip visits
- the Borough is well endowed with products for school visits.

4.18 The TTDS report calculated school populations within the 60 minute catchment as over 440,000 in 1993 broken down into the different types of school as follows:

TABLE 4.5			
SCHOOL CATCHMENT POPULATION			
Primary	Secondary	Special	Total Pupils
260,908	176,096	3,664	440,668

Blaenavon Tourism Market

4.19 The only information available on the tourism market in Blaenavon itself is based on a number of incompatible surveys of visitors to Big Pit and the Ironworks summarised in the Blaenavon Tourism Action Plan 1995. Part of the consultants remit on the 1995 Action Plan was the preparation of a market assessment for industrial heritage attractions in Blaenavon.

4.20 We consider that it is reasonable to assume that the visitor profile of Big Pit is generally consistent with the town's current tourism market, with a few exceptions. We have, therefore, accepted the Action Plan's conclusions which rely heavily on data from Big Pit. Big Pit's understanding of its market as described in the 1995 Action Plan is therefore summarised below:

- Visitors come from a wide catchment area extending up to two and a half hours from the site. Only a small proportion are from within half an hour. This was confirmed by a Borough Council survey which showed that most visitors had travelled more than an hour. Only 25% of visitors came from Wales and under 10% from Gwent. A survey in 1994 showed that 72% of Big Pit visitors lived outside Wales and that 54% were on holiday (survey to assess the success of the Valleys Campaign).

- Big Pit believed that half their visitors were on a day trip from their homes. This conflicts with the Borough's survey which indicated 70% were on day trips from holiday destinations.
- As many as 30% of visitors are from overseas, a market which has been growing, especially from France and Spain.
- About half the visitors are individuals and about half in groups.
- The socio-economic profile of visitors is predominantly ABC1.
- Age profile is older than for other attractions in Wales. It is suggested that this could in part be due to the inability of the site to cater for young children.

4.21 The Action Plan comes to a number of conclusions about the existing market at Blaenavon:

- characteristics of Blaenavon's tourists are different to residents in terms of quality expectations
- inability to secure a large share of the local market may be an opportunity
- only half of visitors to Big Pit are currently able to spend more time in the area ie. they are not on an organised trip. It is considered difficult to persuade more than 10,000 to do so given current experience at the Ironworks
- long journeys to Big Pit discourage further spending and return visits
- **therefore** for all these reasons the Action Plan concluded that the idea that there is huge captive market waiting to be exploited is an over simplification.

BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK OPPORTUNITIES

4.22 The close proximity of Blaenavon to the National Park suggests an opportunity for Blaenavon to tap into the large numbers of visitors to the park. For this reason, a review of available data on park visitors has been summarised.

4.23 The only survey information we have been able to obtain on visitors to the National Park is the 1994 All Parks Visitor Survey. The survey consisted of site and roadside interviews on the main routes into the park. Estimates of total visitor days were made on the basis of grossing up peak period traffic flows and on the basis of knowledge of seasonality of visits. In the survey, a visitor day was defined as “a day or part of a day spent in the Park by a visitor” Such a person could be a day visitor from home or it may be one day of a holiday. Key points of the survey have been summarised under the following headings:

- Visitor Numbers
- Characteristics of Visitors
- Origins of Visitors
- Staying Visitors
- Frequency and Reasons for Visits
- Destinations of Visit.

Visitor Numbers

- 3.6 million visitor days were estimated to be spent in the park in 1994.
- 92 % of visitors days were made by private vehicle. Of these, 1.7 million were day visits from home and 1.6 million were holiday days by staying visitors both in and out of the park.
- Holidaymakers staying outside the park spent more visitor days than those staying in the park (1 million compared to 0.6 million).

Characteristics of Visitors

- 75% of visitors to the park were adults.
- Groups of two people were the most common, accounting for 43%.
- Group structure was dominated by 2 adult groups in the 16 to 59 age band (36 % of groups) and 3 or more adults with no children (30%). These did not include organised groups.
- 53% of visitors at survey sites were on day trips from home.

Origins of Visitors

- 61% (1.16 million) of day trip visitors came from areas within easy reach of the park, 22% from Gwent, 16% from Mid Glamorgan, 7% from West Glamorgan, 6% from Dyfed, 2% from Powys, and 9% from Hereford and Worcester. The remainder came primarily from other parts of Wales (17%) and the South West (13%).
- Of holiday visitors, 32% were from the South East, 15 % from the South West and 10% from Wales. 13% were from overseas.

Staying Visitors

- 4 out of 10 holiday visitors stayed in the Park.
- The most popular areas of the park to stay in were the Brecon and Usk Valley, Talgarth and the Black Mountains and Hay, Hay Common and Llanthony Valley.
- 53% of holidaymakers in the park stayed in self catering accommodation.

Frequency and Reasons for Visits

- 88% of day trip visitors had been to the park before, 56% of holidaymakers.
- 61% of visitors visited the park because of its “scenery/landscape”.
- The main purpose of a visit to the park by day visitors was for walking (21% for a short walk and 13% for a long walk over 2 hours), 16% of day visitors were visiting a tourist or historic attraction as their main purpose.
- 20% of day trip visitors and 49% of holiday visitors to the park were visiting a castle or historic site during their visit either in or outside the park.
- When asked about main activities undertaken during visit, 67% of all visitors were driving around sightseeing and 61% were sightseeing on foot.

Destination of Visits

- Brecon and the Upper Usk Valley attracted most day trip visits (35%) followed by the Brecon Beacons (29%) and Hay, Hay Common and Llanthony Valley (26%) (14% visited Sugar Loaf and Skirrid and 9% visited the Clydach gorge area).

- Holidaymakers tended to visit more areas of the Park but the same three areas as above were the main honeypots. (26% visited Sugar Loaf and 5% Clydach Gorge).
- 9% of all visitors walked towards the summit of Sugar Loaf , 11% towards Pen Y Fan and 8% visited the canal.

4.24 The analysis of these results suggests that visitors to those areas of the National Park areas closest to Blaenavon ie. Sugar Loaf, Clydach Gorge and the Canal, represent a significant potential market for the Blaenavon Heritage Area. Visitors are particularly interested in walking, visiting tourist or historic sites and generally sightseeing.

TOURISM ACCOMMODATION

4.25 Information on tourism accommodation within the study area is difficult to obtain, principally because many of the establishments are not verified and so there is no official record of their existence. According to WTB data the following verified establishments are in Blaenavon:

Name	Type	No. of Rooms
Castle Hotel	Hotel	3
Edlogan House	Guest House	- U/K
Hazelmere	Guest House	3

4.26 This does not give the full picture for the reasons mentioned above. The background paper produced in 1997 on bed and breakfast accommodation provides some useful information as regards Torfaen as a whole. In September 1997, there were known to be 16 bed and breakfast establishments providing 142 bedspaces. Of these, only five were verified, providing 44 bedspaces. Occupancy levels were stated to be in line with national averages. There were no verified camping or caravan sites.

4.27 The majority of establishments are in scenic locations and therefore relatively remote. The main business class establishments are located in Cwmbran, close to the M4 corridor.

- 4.28 The issue of the need to provide more accommodation has been raised. Although no hard evidence is available, it is perceived that there may be shortages in particular areas with the result that enquiries have to be diverted to other areas in particular the National Park. Blaenavon was identified as a location for possible further provision, although this would need to be verified so that establishments can be marketed through WTB and Council channels.
- 4.29 The available information, together with anecdotal evidence which has been collected during the course of the study, has identified a gap in provision of accommodation in Blaenavon. We believe that this is primarily for low cost, B&B and possible bunk house accommodation for the tourism and possibly education/study tour markets. There is also a lack of camping and caravanning accommodation which is surprising given its proximity to the National Park.

TOURISM MARKET OVERVIEW

- 4.30 In summary, the tourism market in the study area has continued to grow since the 1994 TTDS report with the following key trends emerging:
- after a period of growth 1995 saw a slight downturn in visitor numbers to South Wales against national trends
 - South Wales attracts almost half of all tourism trips to Wales with the business and VFR market of particular importance
 - South Wales also had a slight fall in the overseas market in 1994 although 59% of the Wales overseas market comes to South Wales
 - catchment populations are not above average but there are around 1.25 million in the 60 minute catchment rising to 4 to 4.25 million in the 90 minute catchment
 - in 1993 the potential school age catchment was over 440,000
 - the current Blaenavon market is characterised as being reliant on visitors from further afield, including overseas
 - the close proximity of the National Park presents an opportunity to widen the market for Blaenavon focusing on landscape/heritage and opportunities for active pursuits

- anecdotal evidence suggests there is a demand for accommodation in Blaenavon which is at present diverted to other areas. In particular, there is a need to encourage verification to ensure full marketing of existing accommodation.

5. PROPERTY MARKET

- 5.1 This section provides an overview of the property market conditions within the town of Blaenavon, considering each of the main sectors in turn. This provides the basis for identifying projects for regenerating the town which are both realistic and achievable given market constraints.
- 5.2 Before dealing with current market conditions, it is useful to review the historic growth of Blaenavon and to realise that the town centre grew up to serve an active and somewhat larger working community. It was fairly self contained with a full range of services and trades and a much larger complement than currently of chapels, clubs, pubs and other community social facilities.
- 5.3 The former mining and heavy industry has now largely gone with limited replacements. In addition, the town is small enough that it has been extremely vulnerable to the tide of re-organisation and rationalisation that has swept throughout the private and public sector. Casualties include such buildings as the council offices, various banks, chain shops (Granada) and the Job Centre.
- 5.4 The population decline over the last 20 or 30 years is in line with trends elsewhere in the Valleys. It is often the young who move away leaving an ageing and increasingly retired or out of work population which reduces local spending power to a much greater degree than would be suggested by a study of population numbers alone. These trends were confirmed in Section 3 of this report.
- 5.5 The town has generally proved too small to support a range of professionals with virtually no office sector outside of the limited amount of public service occupiers that are still there.
- 5.6 It is interesting to look at the current Valuation List to see what has survived of the local services which are briefly listed below:

Fire Station
Hospital
Health Centre
Magistrates Court
Police Station
Outward Bound Centre

Swimming Pool
Recreation Ground
Community Centre
Workmen's Halls and Institute
Public Conveniences
Adult Education Centre

Leisure Centre
Schools (Junior & Nursery) Library

A rough count of the various categories of properties in the List (excluding smaller workshops and lock up garages) shows the following numbers:

Commercial Garages/Filling Station	10
Factories/Workshops/Warehouses	58
Halls	4
Yards, Storage Land	3
Shops (Broad Street)	61
Shops (other)	23
Offices/Banks (Broad Street)	4
Offices/Banks (Other)	4
Surgeries	3
Licensed/Social Clubs	9
Public Houses	12
Private Mines	3

5.7 The following sectors have been considered in some detail:

- residential
- retail
- industrial
- miscellaneous.

RESIDENTIAL

5.8 Blaenavon has, over the years, remained its own little microcosm somewhat insulated from the rest of the property market. At the end of the 60's, there was very little in the way of a market for houses, these changing hands by inheritance, by private deals and though solicitors, estate agents only really making an impact in the town in the early 1970's by getting involved through the slum clearance programme taking place at the time.

5.9 Even so, the town has generally been serviced by agents operating from Pontypool with no long term sustained presence by any single agent in the town itself. The main local operator currently grew up around an insurance office adding estate agency. In addition, there are two agency chains based in Pontypool and Cwmbran who also service the town although their market penetration is relatively small.

- 5.10 The market is essentially a very limited local one which has often ignored or lagged behind major market movements in the UK generally. Currently, the increased activity and rising values elsewhere are not really showing through yet in the local market which remains very quiet and slow. The market is dominated by the smaller traditional terraced house concentrated in the main part of the town centre with a relatively small number of larger properties around the periphery.
- 5.11 The general pattern of values starts with unmodernised small basic terraced houses around the town centre which are usually extremely difficult to sell and often end up being auctioned at prices between £5,000 and £10,000. Reasonable modernised terraced houses tend to range from £25,000 to £35,000. The small number of modern estate houses available are typically between £50,000 and £60,000 with very few properties much above this level.
- 5.12 There has been very limited recent development. New residential property erected since the 1970's appears to be predominantly low cost Housing Association dwellings built in high densities near the town centre. Indeed, DTZ's Cardiff office has been running a receivership file on a failed modern development at Llanover Road, on the outskirts of the urban area, comprising around 12 houses on less than an acre. There are limited opportunities for any large scale new development and most modern houses are individual units or small pockets of infill development, generally outside the core central area. There are also a sizeable number of late inter-war or early post war council houses, generally occupying elevated sites well out of the town centre. Whilst there is little recent market evidence of land values, we would expect these to be of the order of £50,000 to £60,000 per acre.
- 5.13 In order to obtain some sort of profile of the local market, the main local agent was interviewed who has listed approximately 180 properties marketed since 1996 of which around 60 have been sold during this period. Table 5.1 provides a breakdown of the numbers falling within different price categories, although, it must be borne in mind that a majority of these are asking prices and thus may be overstated to a degree.

Price Range	Number of Houses
£5,000 - £10,000	11
£10,000 - £20,000	27
£20,000 - £30,000	63
£30,000 - £40,000	42
£40,000 - £50,000	10
£50,000 - £60,000	3
£60,000 - £90,000	6

RETAIL

- 5.14 Due to the history of the town as described earlier, there are now too many shop units despite the conversion of some to residential use. There are just over 60 units listed in the Valuation List for Broad Street alone. It is not surprising that they are struggling for survival, particularly when contrasted with a town such as Crickhowell. The latter is less than ten miles away and has a similar population, albeit mainly middle class and fully employed, with a vastly greater spending power, enhanced by its position on a main route and in a holiday centre. Crickhowell has around 30 shops and, despite its relative prosperity, the marginal ones tend to struggle when vacated and shopkeeping is a relatively marginal activity in the town despite the better opportunity.
- 5.15 Information has been obtained regarding the shops owned by the Council in Blaenavon which number around 17, virtually all in Broad Street and about half of which are vacant. The current policy is to virtually give them away if they can find an occupier who will take on the security and rates element and keep them going in some sort of repair. Leases tend to be short term or merely informal arrangements and rents are rarely in excess of £1,000 per annum for recent lettings of Council properties, some considerably less. Rents for retail space are typically in the region of £2-£4 per ft².
- 5.16 The Council has tried in the past to use Urban Aid Grants to refurbish units but have not found this cost effective since there had proved to be little market for these, particularly where they seek enhanced rents for the better quality units.
- 5.17 Occupiers in the town centre are now virtually all local businesses with no representation of major chains. Although there is a reasonable cross section of

activity, the Spar, Londis and another convenience shop have tended to compete effectively with a range of local specialist businesses such as grocers, newsagents and video shops.

- 5.18 Most of the town centre is a Conservation Area which tends to limit what can be done and can add to the expense of any work due to the need to use compatible materials to carry out repairs or reconstruction. In planning terms, we understand that the Council has started to encourage the conversion of shops at the bottom end of Broad Street into residential uses and there are other portions of the street where this change is permitted in order to try and reduce the number of shops available.
- 5.19 Due to the extremely poor take-up, there is little or no marketing effort being undertaken in respect of shop properties. A small number of the vacant units are in good condition and quite a few are still in reasonable condition, not yet having deteriorated to any serious degree. A significant number have deteriorated to the point which would render their occupation impossible without expenditure likely to be out of proportion to the end value created. A small number are in derelict condition and would require major reconstruction. A list of vacant shops at the time of our inspection is included as Appendix II.
- 5.20 In terms of development prospects, the existing over supply and the very low value base tend to rule this out almost completely. We understand that the Council have a site of around $\frac{3}{4}$ acre off Broad Street but have not been able to interest a small discount chain such as Lidl who apparently turned it down and were not interested in coming to the town. In these circumstances, there appears no prospect of interesting any of the food store chains, discount or otherwise.
- 5.21 The very low value base of the shops in Blaenavon is emphasised by the Rateable Values appearing in the current List. Bearing in mind that these are an estimate of the annual rental value of each property as at 1st April 1993 they are surprisingly low. The vast majority of properties in Broad Street lie in the range £800-£1,800 with only two in excess of £2,000. This equates to a range of rents between £15 and £35 per week, extremely low by almost any standards outside the South Wales Valleys.
- 5.22 Capital values are equally low, the poorest vacant properties typically being sold by auction for up to £10,000 and reasonable properties with a business presence around £15,000. Anything over £20,000 would be exceptional.

INDUSTRIAL

- 5.23 The older established industrial concerns in Blaenavon who were present post war have virtually all gone, the main representatives being Doncasters and Andrew Russell at Forgeside. Apart from these, there are only three units in excess of £50,000 Rateable Value in the Valuation List, this equating to a unit size of around 30,000 ft²
- 5.24 The bulk of modern units are situated on the Gilchrist Thomas Estate to the north of the town centre, this having been set up on reclaimed land during the 1970's. Most of the older units are medium size of between 5,000 ft² and 12,500 ft² and many now look somewhat dated and tatty. In addition, there are one or two more modern units together with a close of smaller modern units and a Council promoted development of a B1 Type business centre with numerous small units.
- 5.25 At the time of our inspection most of the older, larger units at Gilchrist Thomas were occupied. Unfortunately, the Council's high quality small units had significant numbers vacant.
- 5.26 The pattern of values in the past has generally seen the older properties struggling to attract rental levels much in excess of £1 ft² with the best perhaps making around £2 ft² but most falling well short of this.
- 5.27 The Council's current vacancy list includes two units of 1,500 ft² and 3,000 ft² respectively at Gilchrist Thomas where the Council are currently asking £2.50 ft² but will probably not see £2 unless major concessions are offered. At their Blaenavon Business Centre, the small B1 units are available in numbers with some 29 units on their current list. 20 of these are between 275 ft² and 450 ft². Rents being sought are up to £4 ft² although the prospect of achieving this looks poor, given the lack of demand.
- 5.28 New development has been very limited in recent years and entirely driven by the public sector since private sector construction is not commercially viable. The Council list approximately eight acres available at Gilchrist Thomas Estate ready to develop with a further 17 acres at Kays and Kears although the latter is apparently constrained from immediate development. In addition, there has been a site, covered in concrete footings, available at Varteg Road, Forgeside but this has not been able to find a purchaser over a prolonged period of years and there is no current evidence that it is being marketed.

- 5.29 Existing occupiers are mostly locally based companies with Eurofoil being the largest and most significant newcomer at Kays and Kears. Given the take up on the medium sized units at Gilchrist Thomas in recent years it seems likely that further speculative construction in this size range by WDA could attract tenants but only if the rents are held below £2.50 ft² which provides an inadequate return on the construction cost. As the town has been successful in attracting a small number of reasonably sized concerns, including a local specialist fish, game and fresh produce distributor there is no reason to suppose that a properly targeted initiative supported by the WDA could not continue to find additional occupiers of this type, although it must be accepted that this would be a slow and gradual process. There may also be some opportunity for very small basic starter units of a lower quality and rental value than are provided at the Council's Blaenavon Business Centre.
- 5.30 Serviced sites of between 0.5 and 3 acres are likely to be worth in the order of £25,000 to £30,000 per acre, although there is little prospect of new development being carried out by the private sector, certainly without grant aid. Capital values of older industrials will be less than £10 ft² with more modern property perhaps £15 to £30 ft² depending on size and quality of finishes.

Miscellaneous Property Types

- 5.31 The town still has a reasonable complement of licensed and members clubs, a legacy of considerably greater past activity. Members clubs of all kinds have always been a feature of the Welsh Valleys and those in Blaenavon have declined in number, in common with other similar areas. Nevertheless a number of the remaining clubs appear reasonably healthy and no doubt continue to compete effectively with local public houses.
- 5.32 There are relatively few public houses for the size of the town and a number have been cleared away in the past or converted to other uses. Some of the remaining ones appear marginal at best. This no doubt reflects the limited spending power of the local population and competition from clubs.
- 5.33 There are still a number of chapels which appear to be well supported and in good condition although, again, a significant number have in the past been cleared away or converted to other uses as the numerous non-conformist chapel communities have tended to reduce in number over a prolonged period. There are also two churches in the town and a range of halls and a day centre. Some of the halls are apparently under utilised and in relatively poor condition.

- 5.34 There is little or no office market in the town. The Council Offices at Lion Street have remained vacant since the staff were moved to Pontypool some years ago and the Job Centre proved difficult to dispose of. Very few of the shops support office activities above. There are a small number of doctors/dentist surgeries in converted shops.

The Wider Context

- 5.35 The poor market conditions for most classes of property and very limited values currently attained are a common experience throughout the outer reaches of the Welsh Valleys and Blaenavon is by no means the worst of these. The upper Rhondda Valleys, parts of the Afan Valley and other areas in the north and western Valleys have similar or worse market conditions and are much less attractive places than Blaenavon.
- 5.36 For example, there is little difference in the general conditions or levels of values between Blaenavon and north Pontypool, but major changes in values and conditions, appear at Cwmbran. This reflects the modern nature of the town centre and the much larger population base and proximity to the M4 motorway.
- 5.37 The core of the problem lies with the declining earning power of the population coupled with relative isolation caused by poor communications with surrounding areas as discussed in Section 3. Although only a few minutes drive from the Usk Valley, Blaenavon is effectively in another world. The Usk Valley tends to be a dormitory area itself, providing limited employment for those travelling from Blaenavon. Principal employment opportunities lie in Newport/Cwmbran and, to a lesser extent along the Heads of the Valleys road at estates such as Rassau at Ebbw Vale. Road communications are relatively poor to these areas and prone to winter disruption whilst public transport represents a rather poor and expensive option for those travelling to work, particularly for those in less well paid jobs who will comprise much of the local workforce.
- 5.38 The town is not currently well positioned to compete as a commuter dormitory, nor is it able to attract substantial employment activity because of the poor communications. Significant upgrading of the link to Pontypool is likely to be necessary to improve matters. In the longer term, the duelling of the Heads of the Valleys road, if it occurs, will also attract more traffic along that route and offer further opportunities in the medium to longer term.

- 5.39 It is interesting to compare property values between Blaenavon and Abergavenny, approximately seven mile away. In terms of the town centre, Abergavenny is a world apart with peak Zone A shop rents between £45 and £50ft² compared to perhaps £4 to £5 in Blaenavon. The market town and dormitory function of Abergavenny with its substantial hinterland, coupled with its position on main routes is a significant factor in this difference.
- 5.40 Abergavenny has very limited numbers of industrial buildings and, with its National Parks setting, experiences tight control of land for employment purposes. As a consequence, rents and land values in this sector tend to be exceptionally high due to the very limited supply available,. Although we do not have current figures, industrial units in Abergavenny were achieving up to or slightly above £4 ft² some time ago.
- 5.41 In the residential market, Abergavenny provides a far more attractive setting and environment with vastly superior local facilities. A lack of good housing in the Valleys and around Newport, coupled with the expense of good quality housing in Cardiff has made Abergavenny a prime dormitory area with large numbers of professional and managerial people commuting from the area, making for a quite different housing market.
- 5.42 In the core town area, small to medium size terraced houses will typically start in the mid £30,000's for poor examples but most better houses will be in excess of £50,000. Small estate houses are likely to be in the range of £70,000 to £80,000 whilst larger four bedroom properties generally start around £95,000 to £100,000. There are also numbers of significantly larger and more expensive properties right up to mansion houses for several hundred thousand pounds, a class of property non-existent in Blaenavon. This sort of pattern of values is fairly similar to centres such as Usk and Crickhowell which fulfil a similar function.

SUMMARY

- 5.43 The property market context for the future regeneration of Blaenavon has been summarised below in a number of key points:
- the declining population and changing structure of the population has left the town with a low local spending power, which is the case in many other towns and villages in the Valleys

- this low spending power results in low residential values in what is primarily a local market
- despite very low rents there is insufficient demand for shop units and there are planning measures in place to allow conversion to residential use
- there are large numbers of vacant shops, some in a very poor state of repair
- the oversupply and low value base negate any prospects of retail development
- industrial rentals are low at around £2 ft² for small to medium sized units. Take up of medium to large scale units is relatively good but take up of small high quality units has been poor
- new development has been very limited in recent years and all public sector led
- there may be prospects for future WDA led development given the take up of medium sized units or very small basic starter units, but rents would have to be kept low
- members clubs have declined in number but those remaining appear to be successful
- the public houses in the town appear to be marginal
- there is no office market
- the core of the problem as regards the property market can be summed up as the declining earning power of the population and relative isolation caused by poor communications. This is most clearly seen when Blaenavon is compared to Abergavenny, a town with good communications and a more affluent population.

6. CURRENT VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

6.1 This section describes and comments on the main facilities in terms of tourism, heritage and community assets in the study area. It also reviews previous projects, proposals and current and on-going developments.

6.2 The following facilities are described below:

- Valley Inheritance Museum, Pontypool
- Blaenavon Ironworks
- Big Pit
- Blaenavon Workmen's Hall and Institute
- Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway
- Clydach Gorge
- Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal.

VALLEY INHERITANCE MUSEUM, PONTYPOOL

6.3 The Valley Inheritance Museum is the principal facility managed by Torfaen Heritage Trust which was established in the late 1970's, a time of growing interest in the industrial heritage. The trust has contributed to raising awareness of specific sites and the landscape as a whole but has been constrained in its activities by both the limited finances made available to it, and the locus and authority it commands in the area.

6.4 The Trust successfully secured and restored with others Forge Row, Cwmavon, which was subsequently sold for private housing. It also played its part in the establishment of Big Pit as an important industrial heritage visitor centre but was unable or unwilling to manage this directly.

6.5 Since 1985 Torfaen Museum Trust has managed for Cadw, limited and seasonal visitor services at Blaenavon Ironworks and continues to provide guided tours and workshops for school groups.

6.6 The Trust has a collection of industrial and social history artefacts from the area and provides a reference library and enquiry service. It is also responsible for Llanyrafon Farm Museum which currently requires investment.

- 6.7 The Valley Inheritance Museum, housed in the stable block of a former ironmasters house, also requires considerable reinvestment in its display and interpretation. It currently receives around 5,000 visitors a year and cannot be judged to fulfil one of its original purposes as a focus and interpretive gateway to the industrial landscape of the valley. In recent years the museum courtyard has provided a pleasant and interesting venue for seasonal performances and arts events.
- 6.8 Torfaen Museum Trust's annual expenditure is of the order of £80,000 of which approximately £74,000 is in the form of grants. Earned income includes a £6,000 fee from Cadw for services provided at Blaenavon Ironworks and £4,000 from retail sales and other trading. The Trust is understandably frustrated by the level of its current achievements and its present role as far as the industrial heritage is concerned.

BLAENAVON IRONWORKS

- 6.9 Blaenavon Ironworks is the most important feature of the industrial heritage of the study area. Established in the 1780's it was the first purpose built multi-furnace ironworks in Wales and by 1796 was the second largest in the principality. Located to exploit local reserves of both ironstone and coal, it represents in a very visible way, so much of the landscape and historical development of the area. In addition to the technical archaeology of industry the site also includes a fine and recently restored set of terraced workers dwellings around Stack Square.
- 6.10 The site, which is in the guardianship of the national agency, Cadw, is well and prominently located on the main Pontypool to Abergavenny road and offers good opportunities to enhance public awareness of the significance of Blaenavon's and the area's industrial heritage.
- 6.11 Cadw's interests in the ironworks are principally those of archaeology and conservation. Major work on the furnaces, and consolidation of retaining walls and the water balance tower, and roofing repairs, is a complex and lengthy project the speed of which is only partly governed by the availability of funds. Resources are inevitably an issue however and Cadw must balance its level of activity at this site with others for which it is responsible. It is estimated that public access to the cast houses and furnace base may be possible in three years. Completion of conservation work is not expected for at least ten years.

- 6.12 Cadw is determined that its ongoing archaeological and conservation work should not suffer interference from any proposals to enhance interpretation or public activities at the site. Current interpretation is very modest and attracts less than 3,000 visitors a year including school parties. As previously noted Torfaen Museum Trust is responsible for these visitors and takes a fee for providing the service. Cadw estimates that it subsidises each visitor by over £5 per head.
- 6.13 Cadw is willing to encourage, but not to fund, appropriate and occasional events at Blaenavon Ironworks, such as the popular son et lumière staged during BTA Industrial Heritage Year. It has successfully facilitated a similar biennial event at Chepstow which is now run by the community, attracts 8,000 - 10,000 visitors in each performance run and has achieved self sufficiency after operating for 8 years.
- 6.14 Given that very respectable visitor numbers are achieved by Big Pit, it is relevant to comment on the much lower level of attendance to Blaenavon Ironworks. During the course of this study it became apparent that there have been occasional tensions between the parties due principally to different priorities, sense of purpose and approach.

BIG PIT

- 6.15 The importance of Big Pit for the study area should not be underestimated. In the United Kingdom there have been three museums telling the story of coal through, in part, an underground tour. One in North Staffordshire failed financially as operational pits closed and ceased to pump and drain coal workings in the area. Another near Wakefield is now known as the National Mining Museum in England. It has recently had to close its underground section due to a build up of water and it is not yet clear how the required remedial work can be financed. Big Pit's great advantage is that its underground operation is not at risk from water and that it has a convenient adit which serves as an emergency means of egress without the necessity to double high maintenance costs of shafts and winding gear.
- 6.16 Going underground is a key part of a successful mining museum and contributes much to enhance public understanding of the industrial heritage of a region such as Torfaen. Although Rhondda Heritage park provides a very good simulated experience at the Lewis Merthyr Colliery, it remains 'simulated'. It is understood that Tower Colliery may offer public underground tours in due course and that this is being encouraged by the Industrial Trust (National Trust). Irrespective of both these developments Big Pit is regarded as an essential component in the study area.

- 6.17 For its size and location Big Pit has performed exceptionally well and has in the past achieved threshold visitor numbers of 125,000. Numbers have now dropped to around 90,000 per annum at which level of activity the operation requires a subsidy of between £60,000 and £100,000 per annum. This level of financial support is not forthcoming from local authorities on any regular basis. Discussions have therefore taken place involving the Welsh Office who appear willing to provide support through the National Museum of Wales. Funding for a major development study has been agreed by the HLF to try to put Big Pit on a secure basis.
- 6.18 During the course of the study, it has become clear that successful though Big Pit has been as an industrial heritage attraction, its relationship with the local community and other facilities has not been as constructive as it might be. Understandably in view of pressure to maximise income and minimise operating losses, Big Pit has had to focus on bringing visitors to the mine. The town of Blaenavon has not proved a sufficiently attractive or readily accessible proposition to visitors following an underground tour. At present, the railway is insufficiently developed to provide a joint attraction of substance even if it were operational on a more regular basis, and the failure to establish meaningful linkages between Big Pit and Blaenavon Ironworks has already been highlighted. These are challenges for the future.

BLAENAVON WORKMEN'S HALL AND INSTITUTE

- 6.19 The Workmen's Hall and Institute is an impressive and significant feature of the Blaenavon townscape. It is listed Grade II and has been subject to an extensive refurbishment in the early 1990's.
- 6.20 The operational issues now faced by Torfaen County Borough and the Joint Management Committee were covered in the Blaenavon Tourism Action Plan (1995) by Dick Cole and Sally Wright Associates. The nature of the hall refurbishment and the allocation of its internal areas continue to restrict the range of possible uses.
- 6.21 Despite this, the very presence of the hall close to the main Pontypool to Abergavenny Road makes an important and positive statement about the town.

PONTYPOOL & BLAENAVON RAILWAY

- 6.22 Previous reports (John Brown, Dick Cole) have considered the key issues affecting the railway and its further development as an industrial heritage attraction. These reports cover both financial and management features of the enterprise and highlight various options to be considered for expansion, either south towards Pontypool, or north on the potentially more attractive route towards Brynmawr.
- 6.23 The railway has been operating since 1983 over a line of 0.5 miles length and carries around 5,000 passengers per annum. This it does on 35 days of the year when it takes £7,000 in fares and other earned income. It is a very modest organisation in financial terms and depends upon the practical work undertaken by its 150 members and volunteers not many of whom live in the immediate vicinity of Blaenavon.
- 6.24 During the course of this study and consultations, key railway personnel, committee members etc., appeared to change several times. Given the size of the task to make any tangible improvements to the railway, those committee members consulted appeared alert to the issues and determined to resolve their own internal difficulties and to move forward. Most volunteer (and professional!) groups face internal problems from time to time, largely based on priorities, purpose and personalities.
- 6.25 Discussions have taken place between Torfaen County Borough Council and the Railway Group which have resulted in a generally positive view of the railway and its aspirations to develop. This is encouraging because the group will need substantial assistance if it is to make progress on a variety of management points before it is in a position to expand its activities.
- 6.26 One of the difficulties of the railway is the nature of the exposed site and the lack of suitable accommodation to keep engines and rolling stock protected from the elements. It has to be said that the current assemblage is not an appealing feature of the landscape and includes a variety of rolling stock, some of urban origin, which has little to do with the line and its part in the history of the area. It is not uncommon for railway preservation societies to become the playgrounds for the interests of individuals but every effort should be made in Blaenavon to focus attention and activity on a clear and agreed plan which accords with the plans of others and with World Heritage Site aspirations.

- 6.27 To the great credit of the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway Society, and in order to promote closer links with the town itself, the Society has established a shop in Blaenavon. This sells a range of railway and associated material and importantly, serves as a useful point for information and leaflets about the area.

CLYDACH GORGE

- 6.28 The Clydach Gorge has been compared with Ironbridge Gorge in Shropshire. It is now a very attractive area as well as a significant location in the industrial heritage landscape.
- 6.29 Clydach Ironworks, established in 1795, once employed over 1,350 persons including 133 children under the age of 13 years. The Ironwork remains were excavated in the 1970's and are in the Brecon Beacons National Park. The principal focus of public interest to this free admission site is the nature reserve, walks and picnic area. It is the scenic beauty which attracts rather than the industrial heritage though there is currently some limited historical information displayed in the car park.
- 6.30 More can be done to add the site's industrial relevance to the visitor's experience both with updated signage on site and by making clear the place of the Gorge in the broader picture of the industrial heritage of the study area. Every encouragement should be given to Clydach visitors to see Blaenavon and appreciate the industrial landscape in its raw form and to prompt Blaenavon visitors to the Gorge.

MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL

- 6.31 The Brecon & Abergavenny Canal opened in 1812 to link with the Monmouthshire Canal at Pontypool. It passes through very attractive countryside and is very popular with holiday craft. The canal is managed by British Waterways Board which issued 350 private boat, 50 hire boat, 1 restaurant boat, 2 trip boat and 14 day licenses during the course of 1997. Both walkers and cyclists use the canal's towpath as part of their planned excursion routes.
- 6.32 The most significant remains on the canal of immediate relevance to the study area, is the Llanfoist Canal Basin at the bottom of the tramroad and incline from Blorenghe. This was an established route for finished products from the Blaenavon Ironworks and is today a public footpath used by walkers throughout the year. Evidence of the incline, tramroad, and basin is readily available to the informed eye, but there is no interpretation at the site. Although now privately owned, the basin keepers house and

warehouse can be viewed from a distance and pedestrian access to the associated tunnel provides a very interesting experience. Access for cars is extremely difficult and should not be encouraged.

- 6.33 As with the Clydach Gorge, the site is very attractive but simple, effective signage could encourage walkers to take more interest in, and care for the industrial heritage. The incline itself is much eroded and overgrown. It should be cleared and its remaining features protected as part of the programme of tramway conservation.

PROJECTS PROPOSALS AND DEVELOPMENTS

- 6.34 During the course of the study, team members have reviewed earlier project proposals and kept themselves up to date with current and future developments.

NATIONAL MUSEUM STATUS FOR BIG PIT

- 6.35 As reported elsewhere, Big Pit is judged to be of substantial value to Blaenavon, to Torfaen and to the proposed inscription of the area as a World Heritage Site. While public access to underground workings may not prove to be the acid test for inscription, the survival of Big Pit in the landscape and its meaningful interpretation are clearly important factors in any overall management plan and to the economy of the town. It is also important to recognise that it is the underground workings rather than their situation in the landscape, which have consistently attracted around 100,000 visitors a year.
- 6.36 It is essential that Big Pit's survival and further development are secured. This is recognised by the Welsh Office, and by the National Museum of Wales. There is currently an agreed outline plan by which Big Pit could become part of the National Museum and benefit from an annual revenue subvention allocated by the Welsh Office (£100,000) specifically for this purpose.
- 6.37 Currently Big Pit is more of an attraction than a museum. It has an historic site and offers an excellent visitor experience, but lacks a significant collection or systematic approach to research or the organisation of comprehensive historical information and intellectual property. The National Museum of Wales has both a relevant collection and the professional capacity to elevate Big Pit from the status of an attraction to that of a nationally significant museum.
- 6.38 The National Museum of Wales however, will not contemplate absorbing Big Pit into its activities and taking responsibility for it, without a substantial financial

undertaking for both essential repairs and improvement works. Currently Heritage Lottery Fund appears to be the major readily identifiable source of finance for such works. An £8m scheme was prepared by Big Pit for the Heritage Lottery Fund in 1996 but now that national museum status is a possibility, a more detailed appraisal is required and HLF is prepared in principle to fund this, as evidenced by its recent decision to grant aid a £150,000 development study.

- 6.39 Meanwhile, the National Museum faces considerable difficulties as far as its own collections of industrial material are concerned. Its industrial and maritime museum was established in a new building and yard at Cardiff Bay in the late 1970's. This is shortly to close since a commercial offer for the attractive site has been accepted. The National Museum of Wales had intended to replace the Industrial and Maritime Museum with a lower running cost alternative, based on maritime collections, within the planned Cardiff Bay Millennium Centre. However, whilst the Centre is to proceed with Millennium Commission funds, Heritage Lottery Fund has rejected National Museum of Wales bid for funds to establish its new museum within this development.
- 6.40 However, the National Museum of Wales still intend to close the Industrial and Maritime Museum and to place its collections in store. The National Museum's stated plan has been to transfer coal and iron material to Big Pit if it were to assume responsibility for it, though there have been other offers made for the collection. The transport material includes some railway items which are likely to be transferred to Barry on extended loan. As things stand and bearing in mind the exposed nature of the Blaenavon and Pontypool Railway Society site, it is highly improbable that the transport collection would be made available to Blaenavon in the short term.

ST PETERS SCHOOL

- 6.41 The St Peter's School complex on the main road through Blaenavon comprises three buildings. The former Boys School, now the Ramfield Field Study Centre, is owned and used fairly regularly by the Priory School, Orpington, Kent. The Upper and Lower Schools (approx. 160sq m and 330sq m respectively) are owned by Torfaen County Borough Council. These have been empty since 1981 and a wide range of potential uses for the structures have been proposed since that time.
- 6.42 The buildings date from 1816, are listed grade II and rightly regarded as having significance to the history of the town of Blaenavon and features in the cultural landscape. Situated on the main Pontypool to Abergavenny road, they are highly visible to passing traffic. Their current and deteriorating condition creates an

impression of dereliction and decay and does little to enhance perceptions of the town or encourage visitors to it.

- 6.43 Since the main road separates the St Peter's School complex from the town centre, some new uses, e.g. a location for the new library, have been dismissed on the grounds of difficult pedestrian access. The site is tight and lacks the benefit of vehicular access except with the consent of the Ramfield Centre. Parking is in any event, very limited.
- 6.44 The difficulty of finding a viable use for St Peter's School is typical of the problems faced with similar structures throughout South Wales. Various earlier studies have proposed tourism based projects which have not proved possible to progress. In 1996 a Community Enterprise Project was proposed and funding sought from European sources. However it did not prove possible to progress this either. More recent suggestions have been made that St Peter's School might be the centre of an Environmental Task Force and Restoration Training Centre.

PONTYPOOL AND BLAENAVON RAILWAY

- 6.45 Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway Company (1983) Ltd development plan proposes a number of major and ambitious developments the total capital cost of which exceeds £2m. Its first priority is to restructure the organisation and obtain an appropriate Transport and Works Act Order to establish future operations on a proper statutory footing.
- 6.46 There is uncertainty over the precise cost of extending the railway, with a variety of estimates having been put forward. It appears that to establish an operating line between Blaenavon High Level Station and Whistle Inn, which is the existing terminus, would cost between £760,000 and £1million. Expanding the line further towards Brynmawr is likely to cost a further £1million.
- 6.47 The railway's development proposals assumes seven day a week operation on completion of the plan and the employment of key staff to what is currently an entirely voluntary activity. It is not clear that the railway group has the capacity to manage a project on this scale at the present time.

HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND

- 6.48 It will be useful to make a few observations here about Heritage Lottery Fund and its future priorities. Since the introduction of the national lottery in November 1994, the fund, one of five distributors, has in general been a solid supporter of museums and qualifying heritage projects throughout the United Kingdom. It has funded both new museums and major works at heritage sites, and helpfully adopted a liberal interpretation to the requirement for ‘partnership’ or ‘parallel’ funding.
- 6.49 Heritage Lottery Fund has recently reviewed its grant giving policies and as a result is likely to support far fewer major projects than hitherto. It also believes that museums have enjoyed more than their fair share to date and is likely to give priority to other sectors for at least the next two years. In addition to this shift, the new government has introduced a sixth good cause which means effectively that each of the current distributors will have between around £50m less each year.
- 6.50 Many museum projects, large and small, which have been supported by Heritage Lottery Fund were fortunate to have presented their applications at an earlier date. There appear to be far fewer signs for optimism over the next year or so at least, although with changing priorities other opportunities may open up.

SUMMARY

- 6.51 This section describes the principal managed and unmanaged facilities in the study area, which almost without exception require some element of reinvestment or interpretation. It also considers past and future projects and developments. The key points to be made are as follows:
- The Valley Inheritance Museum is in need of reinvestment to boost visitor numbers of only 5,000 a year.
 - Blaenavon Ironworks, which is managed by the Torfaen Museum Trust is in the process of repair and conservation work by Cadw. Current visitor facilities are modest with only 3,000 visitors a year. **It is the most important feature of industrial heritage in the area.**
 - Big Pit has performed exceptionally well in achieving the numbers it has achieved, with its main draw being the ‘real’ underground experience.

- Links between Big Pit and the town have been poor.
- Faced with the threat of closure the future for Big Pit now appears more assured at least in the short term with the decision by the HLF to fund a major development study which implies a strengthening of the commitment by the National Museum of Wales to Big Pit.
- The workmen's hall, although not used to its full potential, provides a positive statement about the town.
- The Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway is operated on a modest basis although they have major plans to develop. The Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway Company (1983 Ltd) have an ambitious development plan to extend their railway. There is some doubt however as to the capability of the company to manage a project on this scale. There would therefore appear to be a case for linking it with proposals for Big Pit. If successful, a strengthened railway attraction could be a significant addition to the tourism assets of Blaenavon. To extend the railway from Whistle Inn to Blaenavon High Level would cost about £1million.
- Clydach Gorge benefits from its location in the National Park, but more could be done in terms of interpretation and linkages to Blaenavon.
- The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal is again very attractive and more could be achieved by signage without destroying the sensitive features of the area.
- St Peter's School has not yet found an appropriate and viable alternative use despite numerous suggestions.

7. PLANNING CONTEXT

- 7.1 The planning policy framework for the study area is provided by Central Government planning policy guidance, and the Development Plan which encompasses Structure, Local Plans and Unitary Development Plans (UDP).
- 7.2 Although Gwent County Council is no longer in existence the Gwent Structure Plan 1991-2006 remains the adopted plan as regards strategic policy. The majority of the study area comes within Torfaen County Borough Council's area for which a Local Plan has been prepared. At the time of writing, the deposit version and proposed changes, was going to public inquiry. Ultimately, a Unitary Development Plan will be prepared which will supersede the Structure Plan as it will incorporate structure and local plans. Part of the study area also lies within Blaenau Gwent local plan area. This local plan was adopted in June 1997 and sets out policies and proposals for the period 1991-2006.
- 7.3 This section does not seek to present a full statement of planning policy but focuses on main planning issues influencing the regeneration of Blaenavon in particular possible opencast coal extraction in the Blaenavon area and the planning issues affecting World Heritage status. This involves consideration of strategic planning policy as set out in the Gwent Structure Plan 1991-2006, consideration of relevant local plan policy and the implications of the decision made in 1993 on British Coal's appeal in relation to opencasting at Pwll Du. The following issues are considered:
- countryside, leisure and landscape improvement
 - mineral development
 - economic development and tourism

COUNTRYSIDE AND LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENT

- 7.4 The Structure Plan key diagram highlights the main policies covering the study area, with particular reference to the National Park. These are described below.

7.5 Policies C3 and C4 (National Park and AONB)

C3 In the Brecon Beacons National Park the primary objectives are the conservation of the natural beauty of the countryside and the promotion of its public enjoyment. Where there is an irreconcilable conflict between these purposes conservation will take precedence over recreation.....

- C4** In the Brecon Beacons National Park due regard will be paid to the economic and social well being of these areas, but conservation of the natural beauty of the countryside will be given priority. Major development proposals will be permitted only in exceptional circumstances.
- 7.6 The explanation of these policies states that major development, including mineral working, should not take place in National Parks save in exceptional circumstances after the most rigorous examination which shows that the development is in the public interest having regard to the national need for the development, the local impact and alternative locations.
- 7.7 Given that the areas of potential coaling highlighted by Ove Arup in their study lie partially in and immediately adjacent to the National Park, any applicant would need to demonstrate that alternative, less damaging alternatives did not exist outside the National Park. Given the widespread distribution of coal reserves, this would be difficult to argue. Indeed, consultations with the National Park Authority indicated that they would strongly resist any open cast proposals.
- 7.8 Structure Plan policies as regards landscape are described below:

Policy C5 Landscape

In order to protect and enhance landscape of regional or county importance, special landscape areas (SLA) will be identified in Local Plans. Within SLAs, which will be based on the areas set out below, where development is permitted it should harmonise with and preferably enhance the landscape.....

- (iii) the upland and higher valley sides north east and east of the Afon Lwyd adjoining the National Park together with the Valley floor north of the Pontypool urban area.

Policy C6 Landscape

Development which has a significant adverse effect on landscapes of historic importance will not normally be permitted, and the enhancement or restoration of such landscapes will be encouraged.

- 7.9 It should be noted that within SLAs, priority will be given to landscape conservation. Proposals for mineral working in SLAs and historic landscapes should recognise that harmony with the landscape or enhancement must be achieved by progressive restoration where permission is given. Sites on the Register of Landscapes of

Outstanding Historic Interest will be afforded special protection. Any necessary restoration or management of the landscape will be encouraged.

Relevant Local Plan Policies on Countryside and Landscape

- 7.10 The deposit Torfaen Local Plan states that within areas designated as SLA's the conservation of the environment and landscape will be the primary consideration. Development will only be permitted where it constitutes an acceptable rural use.
- 7.11 Any potential coal extraction would therefore need to respect the special landscape qualities for which the area was designated. This is likely to be difficult to achieve given that traditionally opencasting has 'swept the slate clean' by removing past evidence of mining which is now considered as a heritage feature.
- 7.12 Of particular concern is the possibility that further coal extraction could impact adversely on the heritage landscape, and undermine the potential of the area as a possible World Heritage Site. This concern is reflected in the proposed new Policy H7 in the Torfaen Local Plan.

Policy H7 Heritage

'Development proposals which are of such scale that they would adversely affect or visually impinge upon the overall integrity of the 'Landscape of Outstanding Historical Interest' at Blaenavon will not be permitted.'

Reasoned Justification:

The area shown on the Proposals Map has been included in the Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales. The area around Blaenavon has been designated as it is considered to be one of the best preserved industrial landscapes in Wales. It contains extensive remains of early mineral works and processing, as well as the remains of the later commercial production of coal, iron and steel. These elements together with the town of Blaenavon, which is one of the best examples in Wales of a valley head industrial community, are considered to form one of the most complete and best surviving historic landscapes in Wales. This landscape is of such importance that it may be accorded World Heritage site status.

Development in this area will only be allowed where it is in the national interest and where no alternative site is available. There are, however, areas within the defined Historic Landscape allocation which overlap with other

policy designations, particularly within the existing built up areas. In these instances the presumption in favour of development accorded by a development proposals location within the built up areas as defined by logical or designated settlement boundaries, or by its specific allocation in the Local Plan, is not overridden. The only exception relates to land allocated under policy E3/3 where this policy has precedence in terms of landscape improvement areas.

- 7.13 The Blaenau Gwent Local Plan also identifies these special landscape areas and states that the primary consideration in these areas will be landscape conservation and enhancement. In determining planning applications in such areas the Blaenau Gwent Landscape Initiative will be used.

DERELICT LAND AND RECLAMATION

- 7.14 Key policies in relation to derelict land and reclamation are as follows:

Policy L1 Derelict Land (Structure Plan)

Particular encouragement will be given to the reclamation of derelict land and to measures which prevent additional, or reversion to, dereliction. Uses of reclaimed land conforming to other policies of this plan will be defined in local plans.

- 7.15 The Structure Plan explains that not all land disturbed by man's past activities is derelict; natural regeneration has often created a sufficient beneficial use or there may be a heritage value. This is clearly the case at Blaenavon which the plan identifies as being in need of selective treatment. Care must be taken to ensure that resources for reclamation are directed where necessary community benefits will result and features of historical interest are not unnecessarily damaged. Public safety will, of course, be the primary objective. The plan notes that reclamation may occasionally be achieved as a by-product of mineral working or other development, where this is acceptable in terms of other planning policies.

7.16 Policy L2 Landscape Improvement Areas

The County Council considers that priority should be given to land reclamation and other environmental improvements in 'Landscape Improvement Areas' which will be identified in Local Plans including...

- (ii) the area north and west of Blaenavon.

- 7.17 These are areas where the urban and rural environments and the transition between them would still benefit from improvement. The plan notes that the emphasis is shifting from large scale reclamation, which is now substantially complete, to well detailed attention to many smaller sites and properties even within built up areas, in order to eradicate the competitive disadvantage of these areas as places to live, invest and visit.

LOCAL POLICIES

- 7.18 The deposit Torfaen Local Plan proposes that a large area around Blaenavon be included as a landscape improvement area, where the removal of dereliction would be afforded high priority.

Policy E3 Environment

E3 - The following areas are identified as Landscape Improvement areas:-

- E3/1 Lower and Upper Race and Cwm Lickey
- E3/2 Pen Tranch
- E3/3 Land to the West of the B4246 from Snatchwood in the South to Gam-yr-Erw/Pwll-Du in the North (including Blaenserchan Colliery and Pontglas)

Land Reclamation and Environmental enhancement schemes within Landscape Improvement Areas will be permitted where the proposal improves and enhances the quality, character, visual and ecological amenities of the area.

Reasoned Justification

There are areas of dereliction remaining in Torfaen that would benefit from land reclamation. Landscape Improvement Areas (LIA) have been designated to identify areas within which the removal of dereliction should be afforded a high priority. The Council will seek to promote land reclamation projects within LIAs. Part of the area included within E3/3 has been identified as Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest and is, therefore, afforded special protection under Policy H7. Any reclamation projects which may have an adverse impact upon this area will be opposed.

- 7.19 The exception to this policy is included in the proposed changes to the deposit Plan where the area included on the Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest will be excluded from this, Policy H7 discussed previously.

MINERAL DEVELOPMENT

7.20 Policies in relation to mineral development are set out in the Structure Plan which states:

Policy M1 General Mineral Development

Proposals for mineral development will be considered against the following criteria as appropriate:

- i) the acceptability of the impact upon neighbouring communities of the operations and associated works, paying particular attention to noise, vibration, dust and safety
- ii) the consequences of traffic movements likely to be generated by the proposal
- iii) the effect on the landscape of the area in both the near and long term
- iv) the effect on surface and subsurface drainage and water supplies in both the near and long term
- v) the effect on the nature conservation interests of the site and adjoining areas in both the near and long term, paying particular regard to areas designated for nature conservation purposes
- vi) the effect on agricultural interests in the area in both the near and long term
- vii) the effect on archaeological interests in the area in both the near and long term
- viii) the duration of the operations, restoration and after care works
- ix) the economic contribution of the proposals including the need for the mineral, alternative sources of supply, alternative materials and the employment opportunities likely to be provided
- x) the existing nature and condition of the proposed site and extent and nature of any improvements that will result from the operations

- xi) the likelihood of minerals being sterilised by other forms of development
- xii) the extent of damage to or interference with, or improvement to and enhance of, other existing or proposed uses and amenities.

7.21 Specifically in relation to coal: **Policy M5** states that:

Applications for opencast mining of coal will be examined against the criteria of Policy M1. That examination will be particularly stringent where such development would be large scale or likely to become long term or excessive near term environmental damage or disturbance to nearby communities.

7.22 This policy indicates that any open cast operation would face strong opposition, not just from the National Park but also from local councils unless extraction could be undertaken in such a way as to avoid problems of noise, vibration, dust, traffic and disturbance to drainage patterns, habitats, archaeology, rights of way and, most importantly, communities. To demonstrate this it would be necessary to prepare full Environmental Assessments and satisfy an Inspector at a public inquiry.

7.23 In this regard recent experience is instructive. The Inspector's decision on British Coal's appeal in 1993 concluded that the benefits which opencast would provide in terms of low cost coal were offset by the significant visual impact which would arise, and in particular the effect on the image of the area and public enjoyment of the Brecon Beacons National Park. In addition to local traffic and amenity issues, the Inspector raised doubts about the ability to satisfactorily restore land which was already naturally regenerating. The heritage value of the area while acknowledged did not appear to weigh heavily in the Inspector's decision. However, since this time there has been growing recognition of the area as a Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest and as a potential World Heritage Site. In this regard planning consent is likely to become even harder to obtain.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

7.24 The Structure Plan identifies sites for industrial development and has a policy for urban regeneration allowing the development of derelict, underused and vacant urban land and the conversion of suitable urban buildings, for appropriate employment and other uses. As regards tourism, the development and improvement of visitor attractions and accommodation will be allowed where consistent with conservation policies.

Torfaen Deposit Local Plan

- 7.25 The deposit local plan for Torfaen has the following relevant policies as regards tourism:

ED8 The former high level railway line between Waunavon and Talywain is identified for the development of a steam railway. A steam railway will be permitted where it satisfies all the criteria which include amongst others viability and part of a planned expansion and does not prejudice the implementation of the Newport - Abergavenny Cycle Route.

ED9 Sites identified for tourism related development:

- Big Pit
- Blaenavon
- Garn Lakes

- 7.26 The Blaenau Gwent Local Plan also recognises the importance of tourism and is committed to encouraging tourism as a means of providing additional employment opportunities and incomes, subject to environmental considerations. To this end there are policies which support the development of tourism and recreational developments, subject to limits in terms of location, size and nature of developments. There is also a specific policy as regards the development of tourist accommodation where they will provide advice on grant availability and assistance in the submission of grant applications.

CONCLUSION

- 7.27 This overview of relevant planning policy in the study area indicates that the area is subject to a high degree of protection from any development which would adversely impact on its landscape character and historic importance. This applies with particular force to the National Park where there is a strong presumption against large scale development and in the area designated as a Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest.
- 7.28 Elsewhere in the study area there is a concern to achieve the protection and enhancement of landscape character. While this does not rule out development this would need to be sensitively designed and subject to detailed scrutiny. If the Local Plan is adopted there appears to be sufficient protection of the heritage landscape and recognition of its importance, particularly if World Heritage site status is accorded

- 7.29 In the case of opencast mining, recent precedent suggests that any developer would be faced by the cost and uncertainty of a strongly contested public inquiry. With the Blaenavon area now identified as a Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest and a potential World Heritage Site it is difficult to imagine a successful appeal without a substantial change in policy. This appears unlikely in the foreseeable future.
- 7.30 As regards tourism as a contribution to economic development this is regarded favourably, subject to restrictions as regards the environment.

8. HERITAGE VALUE OF THE STUDY AREA

- 8.1 The purpose of this section is to review the value of the heritage assets in the study area, paying particular regard to the potential for securing World Heritage status.

VALUE OF THE INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE

- 8.2 The northern rim of the South Wales Coalfield from Abergavenny to Port Talbot has been highlighted by Richard Keen, Historic Buildings Representative of the National Trust as an especially important area of South Wales in terms of the industrial archeology.
- 8.3 The pace of change which transformed this area from a rural to an industrial landscape was extraordinary.

‘Within the space of a few decades the landscape changed from that of a sparsely populated rural backwater into industrial communities with all the features of urban life. Around the works grew towns, initially small communities closely allied to a particular works and company. As industry grew so the houses and streets multiplied until in places they formed continuous conurbations following the floor of the valleys and climbing up the intervening hills. Although to the outsider presenting a homogeneous mass, to the local people there were, and to a lesser extent there still are, clear and precise boundaries.’ (Richard Keen)

- 8.4 Over the past twenty years or so economic change coupled with large scale land reclamation has transformed the appearance of this area. Commenting upon this, Dr Henry Cleere, World Heritage Co-ordinator of ICOMOS, highlights Blaenavon as being of particular importance.

‘Here there are two major preserved industrial sites - the Blaenavon blast furnaces and Big Pit Mining Museum. There are also substantial survivals of housing and other buildings, associated with an urban layout that is characteristic of this type of industrial settlement. What is also interesting is the relationship of this industrial area with the undisturbed rural landscape lying just a few miles to the north, which demonstrates dramatically how industry was implanted in the late 18th Century.’ (Dr Henry Cleere)

- 8.5 From a landscape perspective John Davies, author of 'The Making of Wales' highlights the importance of The Blorenge above Blaenavon to an understanding of the Welsh landscape, marking the north-eastern corner of South Wales Coalfield, and dominating the only area where the coal valleys are in close, if uneasy, contact with agricultural land.

'The twentieth century is visible here. Looking to the east from The Blorenge, the eye is drawn to the modern roadway, the A40, now a semi-motorway, which gashes its route across the greener lushness of central Monmouthshire. To the west, the Anacomp building rears up above Brynmawr, its regular bulk housing one of the World's most modern computer software factories. The second half of the nineteenth century is here too: the Newport to Hereford railway (1854), the Big Pit on the upper reaches of the river Llwyd (1860) and Forgeside, Blaenavon, where Gilchrist Thomas pioneered the smelting of phosphoric ores (1877). So is the first part of that century: the Blorenge overlooks the great cirque of Llanwenarth, where evidence of the vanished community celebrated by Alexander Cordell is immediately apparent. Equally apparent is the location of the tram road which slid down the mountain to the canal below; the canal is still there and I can see holiday makers clambering over the decks of the barges moored at the Govilon quay. And a very different early nineteenth century is represented, beyond Abergavenny where Clytha House, Wales' finest Greek revival building, edges into view. But the features which dominate the view from the Blorenge are fields - thousands of them - and hedgerows - hundreds of miles of them. The turning of the forests of the Usk Valley and its flanking hills into fields was a long, long process. It began 6000 and more years ago and there beyond Crickhowell, I can see the grave of some of the pioneer field creators. Thus the view from the Blorenge offers a panorama of a palimpsest - a landscape upon which at least two hundred generations of human beings have left layer upon layer of impressions.' (John Davies)

- 8.6 The significance of the interaction between landscape and heritage is reflected in the recognition of the importance of the study area through its inclusion in designations which apply to the study area:
- the Brecon Beacons National Park the southern boundary of which follows the ridge line between the Usk and Llwyd Valleys; and

- The Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales produced by CADW, the CCW and ICOMOS UK

8.7 Significantly, industrial South Wales and the Blaenavon area in particular has been highlighted by Dr Henry Cleere for conservation and possible inscription on the World Heritage List. Here the emphasis must be placed on the landscape and not on individual monuments and sites.

‘The fabric of the region has preserved, not just industrial sites and communities but also the all-important links between them and the markets that they served. These take the form of intricate systems of tramways, roads, canals and railways, with their bridges, aqueducts, tunnels and warehouses which survive to a remarkable degree.’ (Dr Henry Cleere)

8.8 Figure 2.9 shows the principal features of heritage value in this wider study area. The information contained in the figure has been drawn from previous work/ consultations with the Countryside Council for Wales, Cadw, the National Trust and the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Archaeological Trust.

SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS AND LISTED BUILDINGS

8.9 The following features are among those within the Study Area which the Secretary of State has designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Listed Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest:

Blaenavon Ironworks	Dating from the 1780s, the Ironworks is the world’s most complete example from this period.
Big Pit Mining Museum	Sunk in the 1860s to reach late 18th century ironstone working. Open to the public, offering access to the underground workings.
Pwll Du Limestone Quarry and Waterbalance Lift	
Garnddyrys Ironworks and adjacent Tramway	Dating from 1816.

Pwll Du Tramroad Tunnel and site of Lower Rank) Pwll Dur Tramroad and tunnel south approach)))	Accesses to a 1.5 mile tunnel providing a link between the ironworks and the canal via tramways and incline to Llanfoist.
Stone Chimney		
Patching and Scouring area for iron ore and coal		Important late 18th and 19th century coal and ironstone workings
Llanfoist Wharf Tunnel and Bridge		Terminus of tramroad that runs across Blorenge and down incline. Basin includes large warehouse and keeper's house.
Clydach Ironworks		Established shortly before 1795, employed over 1,350 people by 1841. Declined after 1850s.
Llanelly Furnace		In Clydach Gorge
Baileys Tramroad Bridge) Llannenarth Bridge) Gilwrn Embankment) Quarry Bridge)))))	Remnants of extensive network of tramways/bridges supporting the manufacture and transport of iron/coal.
Lime Kilns		
Embanked Aqueduct) Late Medieval Chapel) Standing Stones))))	Evidence from earlier periods of settlement
Nantyglo Roundhouse		Built in 1816 as circular fortified fireproof tower by local ironmaster in anticipation of workers uprising.

LANDSCAPE OF HISTORIC INTEREST

- 8.10 CADW are continuing to assess the case for scheduling further industrial archaeological features, although it should again be stressed that it is the totality of the landscape which is of greatest significance. For example, while the Ironbridge Museum Trust's assessment casts doubt upon the archaeological importance of the 1940s opencast, it is clear that these remains are an integral part of a rich and diverse

landscape. The workings have dramatic topographic characteristics that graphically tell the story of how the mineral wealth of the South Wales Coalfield was recently exploited. Indeed, they lie at the core of the area identified as a Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest.

- 8.11 Not only was Blaenavon one of the most significant and earliest examples of development in the formative years of the Industrial Revolution but, the significance of the remains of mining and ironworking around Blaenavon is enhanced by the fact that land reclamation in South Wales has been so successful that such areas are now rare. It is getting increasingly difficult to get a feel for the enormity of the landscape changes that occurred until relatively recently, in South Wales. Blaenavon can therefore be seen as unique in South Wales in that it is the only place where so much remains to explain the story of the evolution of Industrial South Wales.
- 8.12 Nevertheless, large areas around Blaenavon have been reclaimed. This reclamation has reduced the evidence of the industrial history of the area, thus weakening links with the past. In order for the landscape to be able to tell its story, it is important that as much visual evidence of the past working of the landscape is retained as possible. This was the strong feeling of a recent Conference which was organised by Torfaen CBC to consider the potential of the area as a World Heritage Site.
- 8.13 It is not just in the ‘rural’ landscape that the heritage of the area is reflected. Blaenavon itself provides an excellent example of a valleys industrial town, part of which has been designated as a Conservation Area. Among large numbers of listed buildings worthy of preservation are:
- Workman’s Institute Built in 1894, from voluntary contributions by workers. Now restored.
 - St Peter’s School Built in 1816, first purpose built school in Wales to be financed by an industrialist. In derelict condition.
 - St Peter’s Church 1805, built by Ironmasters.
 - Ty Mawr Ironmaster’s House, early C19th in use as nursing home.
 - Police Station and Magistrate’s Court 1867, funded by Ironmasters

- Forgeside Small group of village housing associated with Gilchrist Thomas.

8.14 The potential which the Blaenavon area has to acquire World Heritage Site status underlines its importance in both national (Welsh and UK) and international terms. Given the nature of the heritage resource which encompasses the town's industrial relics and their wider setting, it is clear that it is as a 'cultural landscape' that Blaenavon is likely to be inscribed as a World Heritage Site.

8.15 Based upon the criteria set out by UNESCO for World Heritage Sites, Blaenavon probably falls into the category of an 'organically evolved landscape' in which the evolutionary process (industrialisation) came to an end at some time in the past, either abruptly or over a period, but retaining its significant distinguishing features. Any form of development which adversely impinges upon this unique organically evolved cultural landscape runs the risk of putting Blaenavon's bid for World Heritage Status in jeopardy.

SECURING WORLD HERITAGE STATUS

- 8.16 Steps have been taken to actively pursue achieving World Heritage Status with the aim of a nomination being made by the UK Government in July 1998. These include:
- the Blaenavon Heritage Regeneration Conference which discussed the aim of securing World Heritage Status
 - the appointment of Consultants to prepare a Heritage and Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan for Blaenavon
 - submission of a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the acquisition of land from the Coal Authority
 - formation of a partnership of key local authority, conservation, heritage and community interests.

- 8.17 This builds upon a continuing record of success, for example:
- the establishment of Big Pit as the UK's leading underground mining museum attracting visitors from a wide area
 - the protection and continuous restoration of the Blaenavon Ironworks and Stack Square
 - the restoration of Blaenavon Workman's Institute for community use.
- 8.18 The long term future of Big Pit is being pursued through a series of applications to HLF and negotiations with the National Museum for Wales, who are actively considering transferring part of their industrial collection to Blaenavon.
- 8.19 The UK Government, through the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) are presently in the process of preparing a new 'tentative list' of potential World Heritage Sites from which it may make nominations. It is understood that Blaenavon is one of the sites under consideration to be included on the tentative list.
- 8.20 Should Blaenavon be included on the tentative list in order to go forward as a nomination (only one or two sites are nominated by the UK each year) it will be necessary to demonstrate an ability to meet both fundamental and operational criteria for inscription as a World Heritage Site laid down by UNESCO. This involves:
- an objective evaluation by experts from ICOMOS of the 'outstanding universal value' of the site and its compliance with at least one of the six basic criteria; and
 - an evaluation of arrangements for the management and conservation of the proposed designated area.
- 8.21 With respect to the former, we believe that the area identified as a Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest, together with the Clydach Gorge which we understand is being considered for Part 2 of the Register being compiled by CADW, the Countryside Council for Wales and ICOMOS UK, provides an appropriate boundary of a relict cultural landscape. It should be noted that Dr Henry Cleere who advises on the designation of World Heritage Sites considers that there 'is a strong case for the selection of a South Wales industrial landscape to represent Britain's seminal contribution to human technological and social development'.

- 8.22 Putting in place a sustainable management plan for the area will require resources to be drawn from a wide range of sources. Existing programmes will need to be examined to establish the extent to which they can be used to fund the ongoing management of the area building on progress to date. New sources of funding will also need to be identified, including new revenue generating opportunities resulting from increased visitor interest. A considerable amount of work is required before a deliverable management plan can be clearly demonstrated. This will be a key focus for the remainder of this report.
- 8.23 There are clear benefits to be gained from the process of seeking World Heritage Status. While the outcome is necessarily uncertain, meeting the requirements ensures a co-ordinated approach to the conservation and management of key heritage assets. In addition, the pursuit and ultimate achievement of World Heritage Status attracts the attention and interest of both the immediate and wider community. In this regard it can help to foster local pride and generate important marketing benefits, which will bring about the much needed regeneration of the local economy.

HERITAGE VALUE OVERVIEW

- 8.24 The key conclusions to emerge from the review of the prospects for World Heritage Status are as follows:
- the area is considered to have the potential to be designated as a World Heritage Site. Such designation could be on the basis of a 'relict cultural landscape' which contains important sites and features which together provide evidence of the monumental changes which occurred with the rapid development of the iron and coal industry in South Wales at a key stage in the Industrial Revolution
 - the area recommended as the basis for World Heritage Site status is that identified as a Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest by CADW, ICOMOS and the Countryside Council for Wales. This covers an extensive area including not just the key industrial sites (Blaenavon Ironworks, Big Pit, and Garnddyrys Ironworks), and mineral workings (Pwll Du Quarry and tips) but also the town of Blaenavon and its important listed buildings and the all important network of tramways, roads, canals and railways which served the area
 - within this overall heritage landscape there are areas of land which pose problems in terms of dereliction and public safety. However, much of the area is designated as being of landscape and conservation importance. Work has highlighted the presence of opencast coal reserves. However, the main areas

of potential lie within and immediately adjacent to the Brecon Beacons National Park, and coincide with the core of the heritage landscape.

- emerging planning policy which follows on from past appeal decisions makes it much less likely that consent would be given for open cast mining, particularly where this impacted adversely on the quality of the area as a Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest and potential World Heritage Site.
- good progress is being made towards seeking nomination for World Heritage Status. Assuming that the Blaenavon area meets the fundamental criteria for inscription, the key to success will be to demonstrate effective conservation and management of the heritage asset and improved public access and interpretation.

9. COMMUNITY VIEW

9.1 This section provides an overview of the aspirations and opinions of the residents of the Blaenavon area. It has been based on:

- three days of one-on-one public consultations
- one evening public workshop
- a review of the minutes from the Blaenavon Action Committee.

ONE-ON-ONE CONSULTATIONS

9.2 ‘Surgery style’ public consultation sessions were held during 25th, 26th and 27th November 1997 at the Workmen’s Hall and Institute in Blaenavon. These events were organised by DTZ Piedad Consulting and the Blaenavon Heritage Partnership to provide an opportunity for individuals to meet on an individual basis, to discuss the issues affecting the town and project ideas.

9.3 Over 60 residents attended the consultation sessions which covered a wide range of topics and issues. The sessions were structured around a discussion of the approach the strategy should adopt, the priorities to be addressed by a strategy and discussion of specific project ideas. A summary of these sessions are given below.

A Strategy for Blaenavon

9.4 There was a clear consensus that a strategy needed to be developed to provide a framework for regenerating the town of Blaenavon and the surrounding area. Many felt that the town has suffered a serious decline and although some attempts have been made to address this, these have been piecemeal in nature and have not comprehensively addressed the variety of needs of the town and the community.

9.5 Views were also expressed regarding the area to be covered by the strategy. Many consultees felt that any strategy should focus primarily on the town of Blaenavon itself. It was interesting to note that a significant number also stressed that Forgeside should be included in any definition of Blaenavon. All consultees supported the view that the strategy should cover the landscape setting of the town since this was inextricably linked to the town and its future.

9.6 Overall there was a strong view that tourism and how to develop the tourism industry in the area, would need to be an important element of the strategy. The consensus was that tourism could be the catalyst to deliver the regeneration of the area, although there was some disagreement regarding the emphasis which should be placed on tourism in the strategy and how this should be delivered. There were three equally strong views:

- the strategy should focus on the needs of the visitor to the area and encourage initiatives which developed the tourism industry. These views assumed that the area around the town may be of more importance than the town itself
- the strategy should be centred around improving the town as a place to live for existing residents and potentially new residents, with the result that it would also become a nice place to visit
- the strategy should include tourism as one of a number of strands which are set to improve the town, including improving access and encouraging new employment. These views assumed that the nature of the tourism potential of the area was not such that it could deliver the number of visitors and therefore the income to regenerate the town.

9.7 It was within this discussion of the nature and scope of the strategy that the priorities for the strategy were discussed. These are reviewed in more detail below.

Strategy Priorities

9.8 The consultations attempted to generate a consensus regarding which issues should be addressed by the strategy and their relative level of importance. The principal issues highlighted by the consultations are detailed below which include a discussion of the key points raised.

Improving Blaenavon Town Centre

9.9 The current condition of Broad Street and the centre of Blaenavon was ranked highly as a priority by consultees. In particular, the poor physical conditions and the generally 'run down' feel and appearance of Broad Street was felt to be an important problem which needs addressing. Specifically consultees mentioned the number of vacant properties, the limited choice of retail outlets and the drawn-out nature of the main street with low townscape quality.

- 9.10 A number of further specific comments were made regarding the town centre, but these all focused on improving the physical condition of Broad Street and immediate area and the lack of facilities and opportunities in the centre. Generally consultees noted that there were currently few reasons to go to the town centre and many deliberately avoided the town centre themselves or when showing visitors around the area, because they were 'ashamed' of the condition of the central area.
- 9.11 It was accepted that some attempts had been made to improve shop fronts in the town centre and the Butchers shop was mentioned by consultees as a good example of what could happen in Blaenavon. However, there was a strong view that the phase of improving shop fronts had been a rather cosmetic exercise which had not been supported by other initiatives to support existing businesses and encourage new businesses, and to improve the town centre as a whole. A number of consultees noted that some of these improved buildings were already falling into disrepair. This has provided further support for the view that the centre is being neglected and needs a comprehensive approach to regeneration.

Tackling Social Problems

- 9.12 Within the town centre in particular many consultees noted that they felt unsafe, particularly in the evening. This was in the main attributed to the presence of derelict and vacant buildings and vandalism. However many consultees noted that the town has a particular problem with underage drinking and groups of youths 'hanging around' and 'looking for trouble'. It was accepted that this problem was probably due to the lack of facilities for 13-16 year olds and that many of these other issues may relate more to perceived rather than actual threats. However, these views were real and were strongly expressed.
- 9.13 The relevance of the issues noted above were confirmed by discussions with the police. Blaenavon has been the subject of a very successful community policing scheme which is used as a good practice example throughout the country. This scheme has reduced the actual crime rates for the town and much of the cause for concern can be attributed to perception rather than reality. However, even the police acknowledge the problem of underage drinking in the town and the resulting problems of vandalism etc. are a real issue which needs to be addressed.
- 9.14 It was noted by more than half of the consultees that Blaenavon seemed to be building a reputation as a 'benefit town'. It was suggested that because of the large number of available council houses, the town appeared to be attracting 'problem families' and resulting social problems.

Protecting and Enhancing The Area's Heritage

- 9.15 The tourism sector was widely regarded as being under developed, but as having considerable potential. Within the town many consultees noted the high quality of many of the older buildings even though some were in disrepair. It was highlighted that the built heritage of the town was much greater than many other towns in the area and that any redevelopment in the town should be attempting to preserve this heritage.
- 9.16 The heritage value of the landscape around the town was also noted and the importance of this with regard to developing the industrial heritage element of the tourism industry was viewed as being a good reason to preserve this landscape. Many noted that much would need to be done to the landscape to enable greater interpretation and to encourage greater interest by residents and visitors alike.
- 9.17 However, it was accepted by the majority of consultees that not all elements of the landscape would necessarily need to be preserved to the same extent. Some suggested that forestry could visually improve parts of the landscape, while other areas could be put to alternative uses without having a detrimental visual impact.

Developing Tourism Potential

- 9.18 In addition to the built and natural heritage, many consultees noted that new facilities and improvements to existing facilities would be needed to encourage a great number of visitors to the area. Particular reference was made to the existing facilities at the Ironworks and Big Pit. There was a general consensus that not enough was being made of these facilities.
- 9.19 There was a strong view that in addition to better use of existing facilities, new facilities would be needed to encourage visitors to the area. The main areas of deficiency were highlighted to be as follows:
- the lack of available accommodation for visitors
 - the lack of interest in the town in itself to attract visitors
 - the underutilisation of the redundant buildings such as St Peters School.

Need for Confidence Building and Community Development

- 9.20 A general issues which was highlighted by most consultees was the underlying belief that nothing could or would really be done to improve Blaenavon. It was suggested that apathy has been generated in the town because historically little has been achieved in the town since the mines were closed.
- 9.21 It was stressed that for regeneration to be successful in the town the residents would need to be on board. An important means of encouraging the support and involvement of local residents was noted as ensuring that following the preparation of the strategy that some project ideas were successfully delivered as soon as possible. Once some projects had started it was felt that the local community would be very supportive and keen to be involved.
- 9.22 Another issue which was stressed by consultees was that local residents were not forgotten as part of a tourism focused strategy. Many noted that there are a number of facilities which the community feel are lacking and which could be attractive to both visitors and residents alike. It was suggested that these should be given priority over other projects. For example, many noted that the Workmen's Hall was an excellent facility, but that it was very underutilised. Consultees noted that it was unclear when the facility was open, there were not regular events and that some of the facilities such as the cinema were not available at the weekend when residents and possibly visitors would be most interested in going to a film.

Creating New Employment Opportunities

- 9.23 Generally consultees considered that the generation of new employment opportunities in the area should be a very important element of the strategy. This should focus on providing for the current unemployed and to encourage some of the younger population to stay in the area rather than moving away.
- 9.24 The tourism industry was again cited as providing good opportunities. However many stressed that other areas should also be developed. Employment in connection with new forestry areas was suggested by several consultees.

- 9.25 Some suggested that the Gilchrist Thomas Estate was not providing as many employment opportunities as it could. In particular the new business units were criticised because they were perceived as being under strict and inflexible management which was not conducive to the start up and survival of small businesses.
- 9.26 Some consultees suggested that improvements would be needed to the Heads of the Valley Road to encourage more businesses into the area. However, the majority of consultees felt that it was unlikely that a new major employer would move to the area without major financial incentives which were unlikely to be forthcoming and that the tourism industry offered the best alternative.

Project Proposals

- 9.27 Consultees suggested a number of project ideas which they wished to see implemented. These are summarised in Table 9.1 under each of the key issues discussed above.

TABLE 9.1	
POTENTIAL PROJECTS: COMMUNITY VIEW	
Project Proposal	
<i>Improving Blaenavon Town Centre</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grant aid to improve shops and pubs in the town centre • physically concentrate town centre • improve car parking • establish a market in the town (Bethlehem Court, Lion Square) • new museum attraction • encourage small superstore into town • subsidise rates to assist existing small businesses • permit conversions of commercial/retail units to residential use 	
<i>Tackling Social Problems</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide grants to improve housing stock • organise regular disco/entertainment at Workmen's Hall for under 17s • provide more facilities for formal and informal recreation in the park • prepare sports lottery application for bowls hall • establish drop-in-centre/Siberia café 	
<i>Protecting and Enhancing The Areas Heritage</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preserve existing landscape features (tramways, tunnel etc.) • provide grants to improve existing buildings (e.g. St Peters School) • improve access to existing facilities (tunnel) • prepare an Arts Lottery application to establish an arts venues • formalise management of Workmen's Hall • create a school museum/visitor information area at St Peters School 	

TABLE 9.1 (CONT) POTENTIAL PROJECTS: COMMUNITY VIEW
<i>Developing Tourism Potential</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving physical links between existing facilities (shuttle bus, traditional horse and cart) • improving managerial links between existing facilities (joint ticketing) • improving existing information boards and signage (providing new interpretation facilities) • establishing working attractions e.g. a brass forge at the Ironworks • extend existing railway line • provide accommodation for visitors (hostel, pub, hotel, bunk house. B&B scheme) • provide coach parking for visitors • craft centre should be opened in the town • track for trail bikers • mountain bike routes • heritage walks • scenic drive • establish new outdoor centre (handgliding, orienteering, walking, paraglyding, cycling) • produce map to show location proximity of different attractions
<i>Need for Confidence Building and Community Development</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide grants to reuse existing historically important buildings • generate pride in local residents through community initiatives • move library into town centre • provide better play areas for children • improve marketing of existing and new facilities • assign a community worker to facilitate community projects and community involvement
<i>Creating New Employment Opportunities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forestry should be developed • open casting • physically improve existing industrial estates • attract retail or leisure facility onto the existing industrial estate

9.28 The projects identified clearly represent a “shopping list” of what the consultees would like to see in the town and the surrounding area. These will not necessarily all be deliverable, however, they do give an indication of the kind of projects which are likely to receive support from the local community.

PUBLIC WORKSHOP

9.29 A public workshop was held at the Workmen’s Hall on Wednesday 3rd December. This evening event was also organised by DTZ Pida Consulting and the Blaenavon Heritage Partnership in an attempt to generate a discussion among interested individuals and organisations regarding the future of the Blaenavon.

- 9.30 The workshop was attended by approximately 20 individuals and the discussion reflected the issues discussed above.

BLAENAVON ACTION COMMITTEE

- 9.31 The Blaenavon Action Committee (BAC) is a group which was established to represent local views on the future of Blaenavon. At a meeting of local traders in Blaenavon in June 1996 it was agreed that a formal committee should be established to co-ordinate the views of the local traders in particular in the town.
- 9.32 BAC have met regularly since it was established in June 1996 and have carried out a survey of opinion for all the traders in the town. Much of the output of these meetings and the survey are summarised in a report which contains suggestions for the future redevelopment of the town. The suggestions from this report are summarised below.
- 9.33 Within Broad Street and the immediate area the following suggestions were made:
- the area to the north of Broad Street could be redeveloped, with the town centre focused towards the south of the street. This could comprise new residential properties or conversions, car parking or landscaping
 - the bottom end of Broad Street should be redeveloped to provide new housing or landscaping
 - existing retail units should be focused in the middle of the street and shop fronts should be renovated in a traditional Victorian fashion. It was suggested that the Council should buy vacant premises and rent them out at heavily subsidised rents to encourage new businesses
 - existing public facilities should be improved such as the public toilets
 - a small supermarket should be encouraged to open in the centre of the town
 - a period cottage could be developed to act as a tourist attraction in the town centre
 - a working arts and crafts centre could be established providing employment opportunities in traditional crafts of woodcraft, pottery etc. and acting as a tourist attraction

- the police station should be moved into the centre of the town to address the problem of vandalism and consideration should be given to introducing security cameras and increasing policing.

OVERVIEW

- 9.34 The community consultation exercise has provided a useful insight into the views and concerns of some of the existing residents of the area. These views suggest that there is strong support for the production of a strategy which makes recommendations on how to regenerate Blaenavon and the immediate area, and that the tourism sector should form an important part of the strategy.
- 9.35 The priorities which have been highlighted by the consultation exercise suggest that the town centre should be the focus of immediate efforts in an attempt to regenerate the town as a place to live and visit. Both the heritage of the landscape and the town were regarded as important and should be preserved where possible.
- 9.36 However, it was highlighted that needs of the local community should not be lost in trying to encourage tourism in the area.

10. KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITIES

- 10.1 The analysis of the baseline information, and in particular the consultation exercise, has identified key issues which need to be taken into account in the development of a strategy and vision for Blaenavon. Clear priorities have emerged which need to be incorporated for the strategy to be effective and workable.

KEY ISSUES

- 10.2 It is apparent from the outset that interpretation and promotion of the industrial heritage of the study area can only be one element in the economic regeneration of Blaenavon. As stated in the John Brown and Company Report, 1993, about environmental quality in Torfaen, “It will take decades to overcome all the problems, and tourism will never be the primary justification for doing so. Unless these problems are tackled every aspect of the Borough’s economy and the quality of life it offers to its residents will be blighted”.
- 10.3 The other key landscape issue is how to deal with the 1940s opencast sites. These visually powerful landscape features are only very slowly being reclaimed by nature. They are potentially dangerous and maybe polluting the surrounding environment. However, regrading and regeneration would reduce their authenticity as elements of the industrial heritage of the area and be enormously expensive. Reclamation via coal extraction would seriously damage the landscape and heritage value of the area and would probably be against the wishes of most of the residents of Blaenavon.
- 10.4 The analysis of the economic and socio-economic data for the area highlighted a number of key issues, some of which will be difficult to resolve:
- long term shifts in the demographic profile, resulting in low levels of demand for goods and services
 - conventional inward investment has failed to stimulate a self-sustaining local economy
 - Blaenavon’s sole comparative advantage over other Valley towns is its outstanding industrial heritage, how can this advantage assist in the regeneration of the town?

- 10.5 The tourism market for the wider area has had its ups and downs over the last few years very much in line with economic trends. The main tourist attraction of Big Pit has been very successful, given its location. Its visitors have, typically, travelled long distances, with a large proportion of overseas visitors. At present only a very small proportion of Big Pit visitors go into the town. The potential to tap into the significant market in the national park is real and can be achieved by marketing, interpretation and signage.
- 10.6 The low levels of value and activity in the property market are a key issue as regards the future regeneration of the town. The combination of low spending power, oversupply and low demand is destroying any opportunities for private sector regeneration. Innovative and imaginative schemes need to be developed which will (albeit slowly) begin to change the townscape but only when the economic basis of the town itself improves will other factors improve as well.
- 10.7 The future of Big Pit is at a critical point in time and is reliant on the National Museum of Wales moving there which in turn is reliant on a Heritage Lottery funding bid. Without Big Pit, the tourism potential of the area would be seriously undermined.

WORLD HERITAGE STATUS

- 10.8 Blaenavon has the potential to acquire World Heritage Site Status and this has been the subject of much debate and work already. Any form of development which adversely impinges on the cultural landscape runs the risk of putting Blaenavon's bid for World Heritage Status in jeopardy.
- 10.9 Designation is by no means certain and the question may be asked as to how far should the possibility of World Heritage Status should be allowed to impinge on future development and on the environment desired by Blaenavon residents. The consultation exercise suggested that most residents appreciate the importance of the industrial heritage setting of the town and the prospects it may provide for promoting the tourism sector. It is our view that even if unsuccessful, the process of trying to secure World Heritage Status will be a worthwhile exercise.
- 10.10 Overall, the consultation exercise suggested strong support for the production of a strategy as long as it focuses on the town itself. There was agreement that the tourism

sector should form part of this but it was emphasised that the needs of the local community should not be lost.

- 10.11 There was a general underlying belief that nothing could or would be done to improve Blaenavon. Any strategy must have the support and involvement of local residents.

PRIORITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- 10.12 Our analysis suggests a number of priority areas which must be targeted by the regeneration strategy:

- the strategy should both improve environmental quality (without demeaning heritage value) and support and complement the documented historic interest of the landscape
- the issue of the 1940s opencast sites needs to be resolved by balancing the desires of the local population for a more pleasant/greener environment with the desire to retain the landscape/heritage value of the area
- recognition that there is no easy solution, these are long established trends which will take time to change but focusing on Blaenavon's one key asset may be the only way forward
- the future of Big Pit is crucial to the tourism development of the area. All efforts should be made to ensure a successful outcome to the negotiations
- the prospects of World Heritage Status needs to be balanced against future development and residents wishes
- changes in planning policy which recognise possible future World Heritage Status could provide added protection to the proposed designated area
- the townspeople want to see the town centre as a focus of immediate efforts in an attempt to regenerate the town as a place to live and visit.

- 10.13 The remainder of this report seeks to develop the strategy and vision for Blaenavon based on the findings of the baseline study, the consultation exercise and the refinement of issues and priorities.

11. HERITAGE AND REGENERATION STRATEGY FOR BLAENAVON

11.1 This section sets out the strategic approach which we believe should be followed to bring about the successful regeneration of Blaenavon and its surrounding heritage landscape which taken together form the potential World Heritage Site. This is based upon:

- the findings of the baseline analysis of heritage, economic, environmental and social conditions in the town and surrounding area
- the views of local people collected during the consultation exercise, and
- experience from the regeneration of other small towns and industrial heritage features.

11.2 While we have encountered considerable disillusionment amongst local people during the course of our work, due to the prolonged period of economic decline and a sense of frustration about the apparent lack of action to combat this, we believe that there is real cause for hope. There is optimism for the future built upon a recognition of the very special characteristics of Blaenavon and its surrounding countryside. This is expressed in the following vision statement:

The vision for Blaenavon is of a small town with a sustainable economy based upon the sensitive exploitation and management of a cultural heritage resource of world significance.

Maintaining a strong community and surrounding area identity the people of Blaenavon and its surrounding area will have pride in their past and an active involvement in realising their hopes for the future.

It will be a place/area where people want to live, visit and invest attracted by the quality and character of an historic town set in a unique heritage landscape with access to a wide range of employment and leisure opportunities.

11.3 The key elements of our recommended heritage and regeneration strategy are expressed in this vision statement. It is based upon the recognition that the area's key asset is a cultural heritage landscape of potentially world significance. If this can be sensitively preserved and developed it provides the potential for a viable small county town.

- 11.4 It is vital that the community is actively engaged in the process of regeneration. There is no easy way of bringing about positive change in Blaenavon and success will depend in large measure on an ability to harness the energies and enthusiasm of local people.
- 11.5 Ultimately, the aim must be to make Blaenavon a quality place where people want to live, visit and invest. We believe that there is a real opportunity for creating a uniquely attractive historic town where people choose to buy a house or set up in business.
- 11.6 This is not an unrealistic vision. For instance, we do not propose a major effort to attract new businesses to Blaenavon given its competitive position viz a viz other areas of South East Wales. Rather, we aim to build upon key strengths and deal with the most obvious and pressing needs. In this regard, the strategy is intended to provide a basis for long term planning and short term action. However, it would be unrealistic to expect rapid change. In our judgement the type of approach proposed is likely to take between 5 and 10 years to bear fruit. The vision seeks to establish a new 'raison d'être' for Blaenavon.
- 11.7 Adopting the vision as its long term goal, the strategy which is shown diagrammatically in Figure 11.1 can be described as follows:
- nine strategic aims have been identified as the focus for regeneration activities in and around Blaenavon. Potential projects have been assessed in terms of their potential contribution to these aims
 - the aims are supported by 40 specific objectives. These address both opportunities and constraints and provide the basis for developing a specific action plan.
- 11.8 The Action Plan described in Section 12, reflects the strategic aims and objectives. This is achieved in two ways:
- through the definition of six programmes covering
 - organisation development and management
 - recording, conserving and interpreting the heritage
 - visitor product development and marketing
 - access and environmental improvements; and
 - key sites and buildings.

- Figure 1.1 to be inserted

- through geographically targeted action focused upon the heritage landscape surrounding the town, the principal industrial heritage attractions and the town centre itself.

11.9 In this way we believe that our recommended strategy and Action Plan addresses key priorities and avoids becoming a ‘wish list’ of every desirable improvement. The remainder of this section goes on to discuss the strategic aims and objectives which underpin the Action Plan of projects described in Section 12.

ESTABLISHING ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Aim 1		
to establish effective organisation arrangements for the implementation and management of proposals for a regenerated Blaenavon Heritage Landscape		
Objective	1.1	to formalise the existing Blaenavon Heritage and Regeneration Partnership to oversee a Management Plan for a possible World Heritage Site
	1.2	to secure the agreement of all key interests to the co-ordinated development and management of the Blaenavon Heritage Landscape as a potential World Heritage Site
	1.3	to identify and if necessary establish appropriate bodies to take responsibility for the delivery of the Action Plan

11.10 We strongly believe that establishing effective organisational arrangements will be the key to a successful Heritage and Regeneration Strategy for Blaenavon. There have been many previous studies of the area. However, these have generally failed to deliver results. We believe that this points to the absence of an organisation dedicated to the task of protection and renewal on a comprehensive basis.

11.11 With the reorganisation of local government, the opportunities offered by the disposal of Coal Authority land and the need to secure the long term future of Big Pit, the time is right to deal with this issue. The evidence of joint working through the Blaenavon Heritage and Regeneration Partnership demonstrates the scope for joint action towards a common goal. We believe that these arrangements now need to be formalised to provide the basis of a strategic partnership to oversee the long term implementation and management of the area as a potential World Heritage Site.

- 11.12 Critically, this will mean securing the agreement of all key interests to the co-ordinated development and management of the heritage landscape. In particular, we would highlight the need to maintain and develop Big Pit as a leading industrial heritage attraction and to achieve control over areas of land in the process of disposal by the Coal Authority. If this can be achieved we believe that there is every reason to look to the future with confidence.
- 11.13 In addition to the formalisation of the Blaenavon Heritage Partnership it will be necessary to identify and, if necessary, establish appropriate organisations to take responsibility for key elements of the Action Programme. However, these should operate under the umbrella of the overall body to ensure a co-ordinated and cohesive approach. Without this there will be a real danger that the evident enthusiasm and support for action will be dissipated.

PROTECTING AND CONSERVING HERITAGE ASSETS

Aim 2	to identify, protect, preserve and conserve the key heritage assets which make up the potential Blaenavon World Heritage Site	
Objective	2.1	to agree and implement a Management Plan for the potential World Heritage Site
	2.2	to secure more control over key heritage assets
	2.3	to ensure that the potential of the area as a World Heritage Site is reflected in relevant policies, resource allocations and decision making
	2.4	to ensure the identification, protection, physical preservation, and where appropriate, restoration of key heritage assets
	2.5	to secure long term sustainable uses for vacant/derelict Listed Buildings

- 11.14 A key aim of the strategy must be to protect and conserve the key assets which make up the potential Blaenavon World Heritage Site which includes the town and its surrounding landscape. These were described in Section 8 which concluded by highlighting the need to exercise control over the future use and management of land which is being disposed of by the Coal Authority. Given that the other main assets, such as Big Pit and the Ironworks are already in public/ community ownership, it must be an objective of the strategy to secure more control over the remaining heritage assets either directly through ownership or in partnership with others. To this end Torfaen County Borough Council has submitted a number of bids to the Coal

Authority and has been in discussion with other successful bidders. The development of a co-operative approach between the various landowners is important given the possibility of early nomination of the area by the UK government for World Heritage Site Status.

- 11.15 The policies discussed in Section 7, in particular Policy H7 and E3/3 together with the fact that much of the Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park suggests that any future planning application for extensive open cast extraction is likely to be strongly resisted.
- 11.16 However, limited coal extraction could be seen as advantageous to the protection of heritage assets if it could be achieved at an acceptable environmental cost **and** generate funding for conservation and interpretation. To this end Ove Arup and Partners have examined a range of options for open cast mining. The main implications of their work which was focused upon the Pwll Du area were as follows:
- There are four areas containing potentially exploitable open cast coal reserves.
 - All of these would infringe to a greater or lesser degree upon the National Park, and the heritage landscape, depending upon the scale of operations.
 - Outside the ‘core heritage’ landscape options focused on Waun Afon bog/Ryans’s Tip area would appear to offer some prospect of extraction at an ‘acceptable’ environmental cost.
- 11.17 However any proposals would raise significant objections and would need to address adverse impacts on infrastructure, visitor amenities and landscape restoration through appropriate planning and their relevant agreements.
- 11.18 The potential which the Blaenavon area has as a World Heritage Site needs to be reflected in relevant policies, resource allocations and decision making. While much of the area is subject to stringent constraints over development which would adversely impact on the landscape, character and environmental quality of the National Park, there is a need to ensure that other planning policies reflect the area’s recent inclusion in the Register of Outstanding Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales prepared by CCW, Cadw and ICOMOS (UK).
- 11.19 While both Cadw and the Countryside Council for Wales have scheduled sites/features of historic and natural interest within the area, there is a need to keep designations under review to ensure effective protection against uncontrolled change.

In this regard we believe that there needs to be an ongoing programme of survey and research to improve the information base.

11.20 Critically, having identified the heritage assets, a key objective must be to ensure that these are physically protected, preserved and where appropriate, restored. This applies to:

- the former mineral workings where the unconsolidated nature of much of the land, and the absence of controlled drainage is leading to erosion
- linear features in the landscape such as water supply systems, tracks, tramways, and inclines which have fallen into disrepair and require attention
- relic structures which, like the Ironworks, require considerable expenditure to make them safe and secure for the future
- Big Pit has itself reached the point at which a considerable amount of expenditure is required to retain the integrity of what are essentially short life industrial structures.

11.21 For many of the historic/Listed buildings within the town of Blaenavon there is a need to attract long term viable uses. The Workmen's Hall and Institute is a good example of the opportunities and problems associated with achieving this in a small community. The Workmen's Hall and Institute offers an excellent range of facilities but their operation depends heavily on the availability of local volunteers.

11.22 The two prominent Listed buildings requiring most attention are both in the ownership of Torfaen County Borough Council - namely St Peter's School and the former Council Offices. The Action Plan contains specific proposals for the re-use of these buildings as a key part of the Heritage and Regeneration Strategy. For privately owned Listed buildings such as 15 to 19 Broad Street, a combination of advice and grants and, as a last resort, more active intervention will be required to bring about the necessary investment to secure beneficial use. In exceptional circumstances, demolition and new build may be the only solution, but whenever possible refurbishment and/or change of use should be encouraged.

11.23 The preparation, agreement and implementation of a World Heritage Site Management Plan at an early date must be a key objective of this strategy. A key feature of our recommended approach to heritage and regeneration for Blaenavon is the recognition of the importance of setting the town in its wider cultural heritage landscape. In this regard the following section sets out a proposed landscape management plan in which the rich natural and cultural heritage is conserved and

interpreted within an attractive sustainable landscape framework that meets the needs of the local community and visitors.

INCREASING ACCESS TO AND UNDERSTANDING OF BLAENAVON'S INDUSTRIAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Aim 3	to increase access to and understanding of the role which Blaenavon has played in industrial/technological processes, transportation and social/cultural development in Industrial South Wales	
Objective	3.1	to facilitate physical access to key heritage assets and the wider heritage landscape
	3.2	to develop effective linkages between the town, the landscape and key heritage assets
	3.3	to promote knowledge and understanding of the industrial/technological processes and transportation methods associated with Blaenavon
	3.4	to explain the social/cultural changes associated with the process of industrialisation in Blaenavon

- 11.24 Improving access to the industrial and cultural heritage of Blaenavon, in the wider sense of the term, must be a key aim of the strategy. This means addressing key physical, economic/market, social and psychological constraints to learning about and understanding the story of the Industrial Revolution in South Wales. This can be through pursuing a number of complementary objectives.
- 11.25 Given its perceived isolation, there is a need to address physical access to the area. Three principal routes serve the area leading from the Heads of the Valley road via Brynmawr and Govilon and from the M4 via Pontypool. While improvements are and could continue to be made to these routes, major improvements would be difficult to justify and inappropriate in environmental terms. However road improvements with associated environmental benefits at Abersychan would greatly benefit not just the regeneration to that area, but also Blaenavon. While other vehicular routes exist, these are considered to be unsuitable for use for visitor access.
- 11.26 It is therefore appropriate to consider developing more sustainable access routes particularly from the Brecon Beacons National Park. A firm proposal already exists to route a long distance cycle route along the line of the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway between the Lwyd and Usk valleys as part of the National Cycle Network being developed by Sustrans. Scope also exists for strengthening the network of

footpaths and tracks which are already used for informal recreation. In the longer term it may also be possible to utilise the railway as a means of transport, as well as part of the overall visitor experience.

11.27 While sustainable forms of transport such as cycling and walking should be encouraged as much as possible, a high proportion of visitors will continue to arrive by coach and car. In this regard it is important that attractive and convenient parking is provided at key points of arrival and interest linked to an enhanced network of cycleways and footpaths. In particular, we would highlight the following:

- car parking in and around the Blaenavon town centre/proposed heritage core
- car parking serving the Ironworks site
- car parking allowing public access into the wider heritage landscape.

The Management and Action Plans contain specific project proposals with this objective in mind.

11.28 While there is currently limited access to the wider heritage landscape and some historic sites, e.g. Pwll Du Quarry and Blaenavon Ironworks, promoting understanding and appreciation of the impact of the industrial/mining history of Blaenavon requires opening up more of the area to the public. This will require work to be undertaken with regard to potential hazards. Thereafter it will be necessary to develop both physical access opportunities, eg. routes/trails and interpretative material to enable the visitor to appreciate the importance and enormity of the changes which have taken place in the landscape over the last 200 years.

11.29 The development and application of industrial/technological processes and transportation methods in the mining and working of minerals and the manufacture of iron and steel is central to an understanding of Blaenavon's place in the industrial heritage of South Wales. The success of Big Pit as a visitor attraction promoting an understanding of coal mining. This must be extended to encompass iron and steel making. The Blaenavon Ironworks and other relics in the industrial landscape provide an opportunity for achieving this and generating increased visits. While the focus of interpretation will necessarily be upon the progress of the industrial revolution in Blaenavon it will be important to highlight the significance of local events for South Wales and the wider world, including the importance of Gilchrist Thomas' technical breakthrough and the links to the growth of steelmaking in North America, Russia and elsewhere.

11.30 While the heritage landscape is a manifestation of industrialisation in Blaenavon, the social and cultural changes are of equal importance to an understanding of the area's past. Many of the town's buildings have strong associations with the area's social

history: the Workmen's Hall, and Institute, St Peter's School, the Lion Public House and the Ironmasters House. There remain unexploited opportunities: St Peter's graveyard and the memories of an ageing population, as well as the literature of Alexander Cordell. Together these resources provide the basis for an educational, yet entertaining interpretation of Blaenavon's culture inheritance including oral history.

- 11.31 Indeed, such is the scope of resources associated with Blaenavon's heritage, that there is a strong case for developing a community heritage project through which visitors and residents can gain an appreciation of the range of opportunities available to them to learn about the history of an area of potential World Heritage significance.

DEVELOPING BLAENAVON AS A VISITOR GATEWAY TO THE INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE OF SOUTH WALES

Aim 4	to establish the potential Blaenavon World Heritage Site as a principal gateway for visitors to the Industrial Heritage of South Wales	
Objective	4.1	to achieve World Heritage Site status for the Blaenavon Landscape of Outstanding Historic Importance
	4.2	to secure the commitment of key national heritage bodies to developing the potential of the Blaenavon World Heritage Site
	4.3	to strengthen management and visitor links with the Brecon Beacons National Park
	4.4	to increase the number, duration and quality of visits to the Blaenavon Heritage Area
	4.5	to promote joint marketing of the area with other industrial heritage attractions in South Wales

- 11.32 We believe that Blaenavon has the potential to develop into a principal gateway for visitors to Industrial South Wales. This reflects:

- the quality of its cultural heritage landscape as a potential World Heritage Site provides a natural gateway for visitors wishing to explore the industrial heritage of South Wales.
- its strategic positioning with access from the M4 corridor via Pontypool and from the A40/Heads of the Valley road

- its proximity to the Brecon Beacons National Park which is a major recreational destination in South Wales, particularly through Abergavenny which is a major gateway
- the fact that Big Pit already attracts in excess of 100,000 visitors a year, demonstrating the area's potential.

To achieve such gateway status will require the pursuit of a number of operational objectives.

- 11.33 Designation as a World Heritage Site will help establish the position of Blaenavon as the 'jewel in the crown' of the industrial heritage attractions of South Wales. This is not to undermine the significance of other sites/areas, rather it emphasises the fact that Blaenavon is the one remaining place where sufficient evidence remains to appreciate the changes which have moulded the present shape of Industrial South Wales. It is important to note that World Heritage Site Status should not become an end in its own right, given that it is not necessary for the successful implementation of the strategy. However, it should be a target which can provide the focus for developing and implementing a comprehensive plan for the protecting, preservation, conservation management and interpretation of the area's outstanding heritage resources.
- 11.34 If Blaenavon is to achieve the status of a principal gateway for visitors to South Wales it needs to secure the active involvement of the key national bodies concerned with the conservation and interpretation of heritage. In particular, we would highlight the National Museum and Galleries of Wales which is moving towards a more active role in the management of Big Pit; Cadw who have a continuing role to play in the conservation of the Ironworks; and the National Trust who are showing strong interest in industrial heritage in Wales which has expressed interest in the ownership and management of key landscape features.
- 11.35 All these organisations are included in the current Blaenavon Partnership. The key must be to secure their position at the heart of efforts to develop a heritage-led regeneration strategy and action plan. We believe that Blaenavon offers an outstanding opportunity. For example current uncertainty over the future of the National Museum and Galleries of Wales' industrial collection at Cardiff Bay raises the possibility of transferring some or all of its collection to Blaenavon, as part of a programme of re-investment in the Big Pit. For the National Trust, Blaenavon offers an opportunity to address their under-representation in the field of industrial heritage, through the ownership and management of key landscape resources and an active involvement in the restoration of Blaenavon's heritage.

11.36 Much of the potential Blaenavon World Heritage Site lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park. We believe that the area needs to be actively promoted as a destination zone within the National Park. This would have a number of advantages:

- it would strengthen the base of the existing tourism economy. Local accommodation and service providers within the Park already benefit from tourist trips to Blaenavon, in particular Big Pit. Widening and improving the appeal of the area should ensure that such benefits continue to flow, and create new opportunities for the town itself.
- it would help to divert visitor pressure away from sensitive locations within the Park which are suffering from excessive use, such as the Sugar Loaf
- it could introduce existing canal users to wider appreciation of its industrial heritage context
- it could provide Blaenavon with a significant source of visitor spending to support existing/new business within the town centre.

11.37 Achieving an increase in the number, duration and quality of visits to the potential Blaenavon World Heritage Site must be a key objective, particularly if heritage is to act as a catalyst for regeneration. In this regard it will be essential to secure the long term future of Big Pit as the area's largest visitor attraction. The current move by the Museum of Wales, and the National Heritage Lottery Fund towards resolving uncertainties over the future of Big Pit is to be welcomed, particularly if this leads to the creation of a wider industrial heritage attraction.

11.38 Such an initiative needs to be complemented by the development of other key heritage assets as part of a multi-site visitor package capable of generating both longer and repeat visits to the area. The key elements in such a package could be

- Blaenavon Ironworks
- Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal
- Pontypool/Blaenavon Railway
- Blaenavon Town Centre
- Heritage Trails
- Community Heritage Resource Centre
- Pwll Du Tramway tunnel experience.
- Garn Lakes

Some of these attractions already exist but need to be enhanced, while others represent opportunities which will only be developed in the longer term. However,

the vision of a linked package of heritage and countryside attractions capable of drawing and holding growing numbers of visitors is clear and, we believe, attainable.

11.39 There needs to be a clear view as to the target markets from whom growth in visitor numbers will be derived. We do not envisage any significant change in the geographical origin of visitors, rather we believe that the aim should be to increase market penetration by offering a much more attractive product. Key targets should be:

- holiday markets focused on active countryside pursuits for which the area has a clear competitive advantage such as hang gliding, cycling/mountain biking and caving, and canal based activities
- day trip and short break markets for whom industrial heritage attractions are of special appeal. Typically, these are focused on ABC₁ market segments
- educational visitor market covering both day visits and longer study tours based around the rich teaching/research resource which the area offers
- recreational day visitor market. As previously indicated, proximity to the Brecon Beacons National Park represents a market opportunity which can be exploited through the development of physical and marketing links.

11.40 To fulfil its potential as a visitor gateway and the place from which to start exploring the industrial heritage of South Wales it will be important to develop joint marketing initiatives with other areas/attractions. This could take a variety of forms ranging from production of a joint leaflet through to the development of a full blown south Wales Industrial Heritage trail. While recognising the natural inclination for attractions to compete for an apparent scarce supply of visitors, experience shows that joint promotion and marketing can produce positive benefits all round. We see the Wales Tourist Board having a key role to play in helping to develop a joint marketing approach in conjunction with Tourism South and West Wales, in which Blaenavon would play a key role.

IMPROVING THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF BLAENAVON

Aim 5 to enhance the attractiveness of Blaenavon as a place to live, invest and visit		
Objective	5.1	to improve the environmental quality and setting of Blaenavon
	5.2	to tackle the physical dereliction and decay of the Town Centre
	5.3	to promote safe and convenient access by pedestrians and vehicles into and around the Town Centre
	5.4	to ensure provision of good quality education and recreational facilities for the town's young people
	5.5	to address actual and perceived problems of crime and vandalism
	5.6	to reduce the social exclusion of disadvantaged groups in the community

11.41 Making Blaenavon a more attractive place must be a key aim of the strategy if the town is to stem long term population decline and attract much needed investment. A great many factors influence people's choices of where to live, including:

- an attractive image and environment
- good quality, affordable housing
- access to good employment opportunities
- good local schools and colleges
- a range of good quality local services.

11.42 Blaenavon has found it difficult to compete as an industrial town with new development areas clustered along the M4 corridor. As a result, the town has lost many of its younger people, resulting in an unbalanced population and social/economic structure. If Blaenavon is to break this cycle of decline it needs to establish a new "raison d'être". While existing industrial employment should be retained and increased if possible, our view, which is shared by many of the residents we have spoken to, is that Blaenavon should aim to become a small town where people choose to live by virtue of the quality of the community life and environment which it offers. In this regard, most people will work outside the area, in the major employment areas of South East Wales. This is precisely the pattern found in places such as Abergavenny and Crickhowell.

11.43 While we believe that Blaenavon has inherent strengths which can form the basis of a highly attractive historic town, there is a need to address significant environmental detractors such as key routes into town, and physical decay around major focal points such as the town centre. In addition, there is a need to improve the immediate setting of the town. This includes enhancing key approaches and focal points and as defined on Plan, softening local views of and from surrounding areas. We do not believe, neither do the majority of those spoken to during consultations, that the presence of

the historic mine workings which comprise much of the heritage landscape are a major detractor, provided that they are subject to minor restoration and managed in a way which demonstrates their historic significance.

- 11.44 Critically, the physical dereliction and decay of the Town Centre needs to be tackled as a matter of priority. While a significant number of buildings are in public ownership, it would be unrealistic to expect public funding to be available for dealing with all but a handful of new properties. In this regard it is vital that public sector investment is targeted towards those projects likely to have a wider catalytic impact on the area. In the longer term however, it will be essential to attract private investment through pump priming and creating favourable development market conditions.
- 11.45 Our observations suggest that the present access and circulation arrangements in and around the Town Centre do not encourage either local or visitor use. In many respects, road improvements have been too successful in allowing traffic to by-pass the centre. For those wishing to use the Town Centre, routes are often unclear and inconvenient. A key element of our strategy for the Town Centre seeks to overcome some of these problems within the highway engineering constraints. The objective must be to make the heart of the town a more convenient and environmentally friendly place for residents and visitors alike. Unless this can be achieved, Blaenavon will fail to capture the potential benefits of increasing visitor interest. This requires a comprehensive review of traffic parking and pedestrian movement
- 11.46 While we do not consider it appropriate for the regeneration strategy to specifically address the quality of education provision for local children, it must be recognised that good schools help to attract and retain families in an area. In this regard, Torfaen County Borough Council as local education authority, have a key role to play in maintaining and enhancing standards and facilities within the town's two primary schools and the local catchment comprehensive at Abersychan.
- 11.47 The absence of facilities specifically targeted towards teenage children emerged as a key deficiency during consultations. Proposals for a drop-in centre and/or cybercafe could provide a means of addressing this need, although they need to be examined closely in terms of value for money. Experience shows that the active involvement of young people in the development and management of such projects is a key ingredient for success. In this regard we are hesitant about suggesting a specific location/solution.
- 11.48 Generally we believe that Blaenavon is well provided for in terms of social and community facilities. Indeed for a town of its size it benefits from a wide range of

facilities, including a Leisure Centre/Pool, Cinema/Theatre and Snooker Club. Beyond the deficiencies in youth provision noted above, we do not believe that it is realistic to expect further significant provision. Rather, we believe that the aim should be to improve levels of use through tackling obstacles to use. We believe that an imaginative approach is required to the development of new library facilities, including the provision of IT, and opening hours which will facilitate use by all sections of the community.

- 11.49 Improving youth provision and tackling areas of dereliction and decay within the Town Centre is likely to help in dealing with local problems of crime and vandalism, although discussions with the local police suggest that Blaenavon does not suffer from serious problems. This is not the perception, however, of local businesses located both within the Town Centre and on the Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estate. This points to the need for enhanced security measures introduced as part of the regeneration strategy.
- 11.50 While a key feature of Blaenavon is the strength of the local community, there is evidence of social exclusion amongst certain disadvantaged groups in the community. In particular we would highlight the problems faced by the high proportion of the population unavailable for work due to long term sickness and single parent families attracted to the town by the availability of affordable accommodation. The presence of the latter group, in particular, has given rise to local concerns about social cohesion.
- 11.51 With the development of Government policy and programmes aimed at tackling social exclusion, for example Welfare to Work, there is likely to be scope to involve at least some disadvantaged people in the opportunities arising from the heritage and regeneration strategy. This could include involvement in community based research, identifying and recording heritage features and developing/implementing environmental projects. If this can be achieved, then the heritage and regeneration strategy could be of interest to those in greatest need.

BLAENAVON'S ROLE AS A SERVICE CENTRE

Aim 6		
to maintain and improve Blaenavon's role as a centre serving resident and visitors to the area		
Objective	6.1	to retain and support the development of the local retail and service base
	6.2	to promote the provision of accommodation to serve visitors to the area
	6.3	to enhance the availability of information on things to do and see for both residents and visitors to the area
	6.4	to improve the range and quality of visitors attractions/experience in and around Blaenavon

- 11.52 In common with many small towns, Blaenavon has suffered from erosion of its traditional retail and service functions. This reflects its position in the settlement hierarchy, which means that it has insufficient catchment population/expenditure to attract modern retail/service investment. In this regard, the town's function has changed from that of a district centre offering a mix of comparison and convenience shopping, to a local centre functioning primarily for local convenience/top up shopping. This has resulted in high levels of vacancy within the traditional town centre, reducing turnover and profit margins.
- 11.53 We see little prospect of fundamentally reversing these trends. While the Local Plan has allocated a site for modern retail floorspace, it is unlikely that a developer/operator can be attracted in the short term given the size of the available catchment population. The priority must therefore be to consolidate existing retail provision which is aimed at local residents and further exploit opportunities arising from visitors to the area. In this regard we believe that there may be potential for specialist retail operations eg. outdoor, cycling and antique shops as part of an environmentally attractive 'heritage' shopping street which visitors could conveniently access, and where they can eat, drink and browse. This requires a detailed review of traffic circulation and car parking in support of the type of proposals contained in Section 12.
- 11.54 Critically, Blaenavon will not benefit significantly from tourism unless it can develop its own accommodation base. At present it is Abergavenny and the wider Usk Valley which gains in terms of spending from visitors to Blaenavon. Evidence on the tourism accommodation sector described in Section 4 suggests there is scope for more provision in Blaenavon, although this is primarily anecdotal. Quantifying the level of information is not possible given the level of information available, ie. the lack of

existing expressed demand primarily due to the lack of supply but evidence from other locations, such as Ironbridge, suggests that the influx of visitor gradually encourages the private sector to invest in the provision of accommodation, and this is likely to be the case in the study area.

- 11.55 The Action Plan identifies opportunities which need to be marketed to potential entrepreneurs for whom Blaenavon could become an attractive investment proposition. Forms of accommodation which might be made to work with/or without grant support are:
- budget serviced accommodation, eg. hostel/bunkhouse serving activity holiday/educational markets
 - pub based accommodation. This already exists in parts of the study area
 - bed and breakfast/guest house accommodation
 - camping and caravanning sites accessible to the planned cycleway and walking routes.
- 11.56 The Council's role will primarily be that of encouragement and advice, as financial assistance will be restricted to WTB grants. The WTB require strong evidence that the scheme will create demand, which may be difficult to demonstrate initially given the lack of existing evidence.
- 11.57 There should also be encouragement to join the WTB's verification scheme to ensure that standards of accommodation are controlled and to ensure the widest marketing possible. The process will be slow and will probably require some of the proposals contained in the Action Plan to be up and running before the private sector is prepared to invest.
- 11.58 While there are a wide range of activities and facilities available to residents and visitors to the Blaenavon area, these need to be more effectively promoted. Local people and visitors need to be made aware of the opportunities open to them. For example, at present it is difficult to find out what film is showing at the Workmen's Hall and Institute and tourism signage is dominated by Big Pit. If Blaenavon is to achieve its full potential as a visitor gateway, we are convinced that there needs to be effective organisation and communication of information through a strategically positioned tourist information centre at the Ironworks.

- 11.59 Blaenavon's failure to benefit significantly from tourism and visitor activity to date reflects the absence of a package of attractions. Visitor activity is dominated by Big Pit which operates as an 'island' by virtue of its location and the need to maximise on-site revenues. This could be overcome in part by joint marketing with other attractions.
- 11.60 The strategy envisages a more balanced package of activities requiring further development of the visitor product; including
- industrial heritage focusing on coal mining and iron-making at Big Pit and the Ironworks and through a Heritage Trail leading visitors through the industrial landscape
 - further development of the railway and canal as heritage transport features.
 - social history built around a community-based heritage project located in the town and offering educational study tours and visitor trails including historic sites and buildings eg. Workmen's Hall and Institute and a refurbished St Peter's School
 - active outdoor pursuits within the wider heritage landscape eg. mountain biking, hang gliding, caving, canal use, and walking.
- 11.61 We believe that this provides the basis for significant growth in both day visits and short breaks, which can be sustained by repeat visits as has been achieved at other major industrial heritage sites, such as Ironbridge Gorge, although we would stress the uniqueness of the package which Blaenavon is able to offer given its location on the edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park and its potential as a gateway for industrial heritage in South Wales.

BLAENAVON'S EMPLOYMENT BASE

Aim 7 to maintain and improve the local employment base		
Objective	7.1	to help maintain and improve the competitiveness of local Blaenavon businesses
	7.2	to encourage the establishment and growth of new local businesses in Blaenavon
	7.3	to provide business opportunities arising from the anticipated growth in heritage conservation/management and increased visitor activity

11.62 Section 3 described the economic conditions facing businesses operating in the Blaenavon area. Against this background it is necessary to be realistic about what can be done to maintain and improve the local employment base. It is unlikely that an employment-led regeneration strategy can work. Rather the aim must be to build new business opportunities out of a concerted effort to make the area a more attractive place to live, and visit.

11.63 Despite this conclusion, it is clearly important to continue efforts to maintain and improve the competitiveness of the local business base. This requires the continuation of existing local economic development and business support programmes, delivered through the local authorities, WDA and the TEC.

11.64 Specifically, this should involve:

- ensuring an adequate supply of employment land and premises. This does not appear to be a constraint on business activity in the area, although concerns have been expressed about environmental quality and security on the Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estate which forms part of our proposed Action Plan
- supply chain developments for the few companies selling products into national/international markets through involvement in programmes such as Source Wales
- staff development and training at all levels in pursuit of business objectives.

The formation of a local Business Forum provides an opportunity to identify the specific needs of businesses and to develop appropriate programmes of assistance to maintain the current employment base.

- 11.65 Future growth is likely to be modest and largely come through the expansion of existing local businesses and the establishment of new local firms. While we have identified a number of businesses interested in the opportunities arising from heritage-led regeneration these are largely in the construction and tourism sector. The difficulty of attracting other forms of economic activities is reflected in the poor take up of the small business units provided on the Gilchrist Thomas Estate. This points to the absence of clear business opportunities and real entrepreneurship in the local area. The aim must be to create the conditions in which Blaenavon can attract new small businesses.
- 11.66 Our proposed strategy aims to exploit Blaenavon's major competitive advantage - namely its potential as a World Heritage Site capable of attracting a growing number of visitors. Experience from elsewhere suggests that this can create opportunities for new small businesses based upon servicing visitors eg. specialist shops, accommodation and catering providers, arts and crafts producers.
- 11.67 If Blaenavon can establish itself as a uniquely attractive historic town we believe that it may then be possible to attract new forms of small enterprise serving wider geographic markets, perhaps through the use of telematics, although this is dependent upon the existence of an appropriate telecommunications infrastructure. This is likely to be a slow process dependent upon attracting both former Blaenavon residents and incomers into the town.

REGENERATION BENEFITS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

Aim 8	to ensure that local people are able to benefit from opportunities arising from heritage-led regeneration	
Objective	8.1	to ensure the active involvement of local people in the development and implementation of heritage/regeneration plans and projects for Blaenavon
	8.2	to enhance the capacity and capabilities of existing and new community organisations
	8.3	to ensure that the local skills base is capable of meeting the anticipated changes in the local economy
	8.4	to make local people aware of business opportunities arising from heritage-led regeneration.

- 11.68 A key aim of the strategy is to ensure that local people will benefit from the opportunities which will be created through heritage-led regeneration. Experience shows that this is best achieved through the active involvement of the community in the regeneration process. In small towns in particular, externally imposed solutions will not work. Indeed, our whole approach is governed by the belief that the Action Plan has to be community-led. In this regard how things are done is as important as what is done.
- 11.69 Despite their limitations, the consultations described in Section 9 have formed a key input to the development of the proposed Strategy and Action Plan. However, this report needs to be subject to a fuller consultation exercise. This should ensure that as far as possible there is support for the strategic approach to be followed and the key projects to be delivered through the Action Plan.
- 11.70 Organisations such as the Big Pit Museum Trust and the Workmen's Hall and Institute Management Committee have demonstrated the effectiveness of local groups in delivering major projects. However, it has to be recognised that the capacity and capabilities of community-based organisations is limited. To this end a key element of the strategy should be concerned with community capacity building and local action.
- 11.71 While we have been unable to systematically assess the skill requirements likely to arise from heritage-led regeneration and to match these against the local skills base, it

is likely that training needs and opportunities will result from implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan. For example, additional skills may be required in building conservation, environmental works, catering and customer care. While it may be possible to source these from the wider labour market, local recruitment and training would help ensure that local people benefit from the opportunities created. The numbers involved are likely to be small, and would not justify specific training programmes. However, wherever possible, opportunities for local training and recruitment should be seized.

- 11.72 Given the anticipated nature of the visitor market, we believe that there would be value in raising local awareness of the business opportunities likely to arise from heritage-led regeneration. In particular we believe that it may be possible to stimulate the development of a local accommodation base through bed and breakfast, and a cadre of local guides and instructors. Again, while the numbers involved may be relatively small initially, such initiatives provide a direct means of capturing the benefits of tourism locally. The potential for developing such initiatives should be pursued further through the involvement of Gwent TEC, WTB and the local authorities.

ENHANCING THE IMAGE OF BLAENAVON

Aim 9 to foster a positive image of Blaenavon amongst residents, businesses and visitors		
Objective	9.1	to provide evidence of early progress with the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan
	9.2	to maintain and enhance the existing programme of community-based events
	9.3	to promote Blaenavon as a venue for regional/ national/international events across a wide range of activities
	9.4	to market the heritage assets of Blaenavon to a national and international audience
	9.5	to pursue an active press and PR campaign with the local and national media

- 11.73 A key element of the strategy must be aimed at generating a positive image of Blaenavon for both residents, businesses and visitors. A negative image can act as a significant constraint to regeneration. We have been struck by the strong sense of local pride amongst people of all ages in Blaenavon. This reflects an understanding

of the important role which it played in the creation of Industrial South Wales. Set against this pride there is a lack of confidence in the future and a feeling that this once important place has become an isolated backwater at the top of the valley.

- 11.74 Externally, there is strong interest in the heritage value of Blaenavon. This comes from its value as an educational resource: it is used as an example in many school geography texts and as a potential site of World Heritage significance. In this regard we believe that there is the potential for Blaenavon to become nationally and internationally renowned.
- 11.75 Initially, however, we believe that attention should be focused upon improving the town's self-image. The key priority must therefore be to establish an organisation dedicated to the delivery of an agreed heritage-led regeneration strategy and Action Plan and to follow this up by early action to improve conditions in the Town Centre.
- 11.76 Developing an active programme of community-based events provides an effective means of making people feel better about their town. We recognise the considerable efforts which have been made to promote such events. These need to be continued and developed further, exploiting potential heritage themes.
- 11.77 Blaenavon is already a recognised venue for mountain-biking and hang gliding competitions. The area needs to be actively promoted for such events. This provides a cost-effective means of raising its profile. In addition, events can act as a stimulus to the development of local accommodation to meet visitor needs.
- 11.78 Pursuit of World Heritage Site status and the promotion of Blaenavon as a gateway to Industrial South Wales will provide the opportunity to market the heritage assets of Blaenavon to a national and international audience. As previously noted we believe that this requires collaboration between industrial heritage attractions in South Wales and a leading role for the Wales Tourist Board.
- 11.79 The attention captured by Blaenavon's pursuit potential to gain World Heritage Site status provides evidence of the need for an active press and PR campaign. The objective must be to attract press coverage as a means of raising awareness of the positive changes occurring in and around Blaenavon. This will help to create favourable conditions within which investment and regeneration can take place.

12. MANAGEMENT AND ACTION PLAN

12.1 The purpose of this section is to translate the strategic aims and objectives into a management plan and prioritised programme of action. To achieve this we have developed proposals at a number of different scales covering the whole of the proposed World Heritage Site, including organisational arrangements, the core heritage landscape, which coincides with the area covered by the Pwll Du Reclamation Study, key heritage sites and the Town Centre.

12.2 Specifically we have identified a range of projects under five main programme areas. These are:

- **Organisational development** dealing with the actions necessary to ensure effective delivery and long term management of the Heritage and Regeneration Strategy
- **Heritage Conservation and Interpretation** concerned with securing the long term future of the key heritage assets
- **Access and Environmental Enhancement** involving a series of projects aimed at opening up and improving the appearance of the area
- **Visitor Product Development and Marketing** aimed at enhancing key attractions and providing basic tourism infrastructure
- **Key Sites and Buildings** focused on proposals for tackling the derelict/vacant properties in the Town Centre

ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

12.3 Before dealing with proposals for specific areas we believe that it is necessary to address the issue of deliverability. The task which lies ahead is considerable, not just in financial terms but in the critical area of organisation and management. Substantial progress has been made in bringing a partnership together to pursue World Heritage Site status and more recently to bid for Coal Authority land. However, there is now a need to consider the most appropriate mechanism and vehicle for the delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan.

12.4 Examination of other World Heritage Sites and landscape areas is instructive in identifying potential models for the implementation and management of the Strategy

and Action Plan for Blaenavon. Two approaches appear worthy of particular consideration. These are:

- **an independent charitable trust:** this is the approach which has been used to conserve, develop and manage the assets comprising the Ironbridge World Heritage Site. This is the only industrial-based World Heritage Site in the UK
- **a Partnership approach** of local authority and other key interests to oversee and advise on the implementation of the Management Plan. This is the approach which has been devised for the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site which passes through 12 local authority areas and two National Parks and is largely in private ownership.

Charitable Trust Model

- 12.5 From the 1970s onwards, the emerging interest in industrial archaeology made it clear that new structures and frameworks were needed if this aspect of the nation's heritage were to be meaningfully researched, conserved and presented to the public. Not only were traditional structures of central and local government then insufficiently alert to the importance of the industrial heritage, but their organisations were not sufficiently flexible and lacked resources to respond to new challenges.
- 12.6 The type of organisation which emerged, of which the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust was a prime example, was the independent charitable trust, normally but not exclusively operating as a company limited by guarantee, and having charitable status due to its principal purpose of public benefit and education. It should be noted that this is the model which has been adopted for the development and operation of Big Pit, and the Torfaen Museum Trust.
- 12.7 Charitable status can confer significant advantages including eligibility for certain grants which may not be available to local authorities, statutory (80%) and discretionary (20%) relief from rates and the potential to raise funds from a wide variety of sources including both public and private sectors. For example, during its formative years, Ironbridge benefited substantially from financial support from the then Telford Development Corporation, and Manpower Services Commission's job creation schemes.
- 12.8 As long as charitable companies' activities are wholly and exclusively charitable, a liability for corporation tax does not arise. It is therefore frequent practice for charitable companies to establish non charitable subsidiaries to be responsible for activities such as retailing and catering. Such subsidiaries then covenant profits to the

charitable parent company to avoid corporation tax liabilities. However, charitable companies are liable to value-added tax, for example, on admission charges.

- 12.9 Charitable Companies are subject to the rules governing local government companies. These define the number/proportion of local authority representatives (members and officers) who may sit on a Company Board before it becomes an ‘influenced’ or ‘regulated’ company. Once these thresholds are passed the company becomes subject to regulations governing local authority finance and proceedings. This can significantly undermine the benefits of flexibility which independent charitable trusts can confer.
- 12.10 The question of the inalienability or otherwise of assets held by charitable companies is an issue which is frequently discussed. Charitable status does not provide any higher degree of protection of property from creditors in the event of a failure. In this respect public ownership of assets provides more certainty.
- 12.11 The status ‘limited guarantee’ rather than ‘by shares’ reflects the collaborative intention of most charitable companies. Limited liability status provides an appropriate and adequate degree of protection for directors of charitable companies, who are not permitted to be remunerated, although they may receive ‘reasonable expenses’ in connection with duties undertaken.
- 12.12 As Ironbridge demonstrates, the progress which can be made through an independent, charitable company can be impressive. However, not all are successful. Experience shows that to be successful a key requirement is that boards of directors (trustees) speak with a single voice and act for the company rather than on behalf of any other organisation of which they may also be a representative. This demands strong independent leadership from the chair. There are many advantages in choosing a chairman who has both private and public sector experience.
- 12.13 A second key requirement is leadership and experience at the executive level. Tact, authority and a passion for getting things done rather than allowing obstacles to block the way are essential qualifications but not in themselves sufficient. Without practical support and encouragement from supporting bodies in particular from elected members and local authority officers little can be achieved. As with most organisations, individuals are therefore critical. We believe that an independent charitable trust founded with the aim of achieving World Heritage Status could attract the type of entrepreneurial individual needed.

- 12.14 Given the existence of two established charitable trusts concerned with heritage management in and around Blaenavon, it is appropriate to consider whether or not they might provide an appropriate vehicle for the task ahead.
- 12.15 The capacity of the Torfaen Museum Trust to take on a series of new and substantial projects is reflected in its present scale of activities, its ability to generate funds and the level of public attention it is able to command at the sites for which it is responsible. The Trust has its roots in Pontypool rather than Blaenavon and it also has plans to upgrade its own museum and improve the Llanyrafon Farm Museum. It is recommended that the Trust be encouraged to continue these projects and to focus exclusively on them. It would not be appropriate to expect substantially more of this organisation.
- 12.16 In contrast, the Big Pit (Blaenavon) Trust is a larger body and one which has demonstrated its management capabilities, particularly in operating a major visitor attraction. While the attentions of this Trust are understandably focused on securing the long term future of Big Pit, perhaps as part of the National Museum of Wales, it could be argued that with relevant adjustments to the articles and memorandum of association and to the composition of the Big Pit Board, there is an established charitable company ready to assume wider responsibilities.
- 12.17 However, if the Charitable Trust model is adopted, we would recommend that a new organisation is established in order to embrace the commitment of all the current parties to the Blaenavon Heritage Partnership. From the reaction to the proposals for a Trust, set out in our draft report, however, we believe that there may be obstacles to the participation of key bodies such as Cadw. It is in this context that we go on to examine a possible partnership model.

Partnership Model

- 12.18 As previously mentioned, the partnership model has been adopted as the basis for the Management Plan for Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. It has evolved from a consultative process led by English Heritage aimed at forging new relationships between the large number of local authorities, statutory bodies, eg. National Parks and Countryside Commission and private landowners. A Management Group has been established involving some 45 people representing all of those who have signed up to the Plan. This group is serviced by English Heritage's Hadrian's Wall Unit, consisting of four and a half people, with responsibility for overseeing and advising on the implementation of the Plan. English Heritage are in a key position by virtue of their ability to influence the distribution of grant and use their statutory powers with respect to the scheduled ancient monument.

- 12.19 The partnership model has also been applied successfully in the management of Areas of Outstanding National Beauty such as the Wye Valley which has a Joint Advisory Committee comprising local authorities, amenity groups and recreational and land management interests, supported by an AONB Project Officer.
- 12.20 A recent review of funding and management of AONB's highlights some of the weaknesses inherent in such a partnership approach to management. These include:
- the difficulty of attracting and retaining good staff in a situation where the majority of officers are appointed on short term contracts. This reduces continuity, prevents skills being developed and makes it difficult to develop lasting working partnerships with other organisations
 - the absence of core funding such as that available to National Parks. This is compounded by the difficulties which local authorities face in maintaining spending on non-statutory functions.
- 12.21 There is a danger that a partnership approach to the management of the Blaenavon Industrial Heritage Landscape would face similar problems, particularly with respect to core funding. There is no obvious way of overcoming this although increasingly AONBs are turning to project-based funding as a means of implementing their management plans. In some instances, AONBs have also established charitable bodies to complement local authority activity.

A Hybrid Model

- 12.22 This review of options points to the need for a hybrid approach which is able to combine the strengths of both models in fulfilling the roles set out in the following paragraphs.
- 12.23 **Statutory responsibilities with respect to the identification, protection and preservation of the heritage assets** of the area, eg. scheduled ancient monuments, sites of scientific interest, conservation areas, listed buildings, and designated landscapes. These are clearly defined and fall to the local authorities, National Park Authority, and statutory agencies, eg. Cadw and Countryside Council for Wales.
- 12.24 **Ownership of land and key heritage assets** will encompass a very wide range of individuals and organisations covering public, private and voluntary sectors. The nature of their interest vary considerably and include those with rights over land such as the Commoners. The aim should be to get as much agreement as possible on

appropriate forms of development, management, use and access to land and buildings. The aim should be to obtain commitment to the overall Management Plan and where appropriate individual management agreements. Clearly the greatest concern will be with the key assets such as Big Pit, the Ironworks and the core heritage landscape. In this regard, the key owners are the Coal Authority and those to whom it is disposing its assets, the local authorities/National Park, Big Pit (Blaenavon) Museum Trust/National Museum for Wales, the Blaenavon/Pontypool Railway, British Waterways Board and the Commoners.

12.25 **Preparation and Review of the Management Plan for the possible World Heritage site** is a key requirement for a successful bid for World Heritage Site status and will be required in any event to ensure co-ordination between the various bodies involved in the presentation, enhancement, and interpretation of the cultural heritage landscape. While we believe that many of the elements of a Management Plan are already in place, further consultation will be required to resolve outstanding issues. For example, the Commoners need to be closely involved in identifying appropriate means of achieving landscape restoration, if any. We believe that this requires a Partnership approach similar to that developed for AONBs or Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. This would involve widening the present Blaenavon Partnership to encompass the full range of interests covering heritage, amenity, and land management. Operating as a Heritage Partnership, the group would be responsible for development of the Management Plan to which they would be signatories, or consultees, and for overseeing its implementation and periodic review. This would require support from a secretariat of, say, two staff operating in a similar manner to the present project team funded by Torfaen CBC. We would suggest that the Management Partnership would meet only two or three times a year, but during the period of Plan preparation, it might be necessary for a smaller Steering Group to meet on a more regular basis, say, monthly.

12.26 **Project Development and Implementation** will need to involve a wide range of bodies. No one single organisation will have the expertise or resources to develop and implement all the projects set out in the Action Plan. While the local authorities, and Torfaen CBC in particular, have important roles to play in this areas, we believe that new approaches need to be developed. This reflects:

- the increasing emphasis on local authorities as enablers rather than implementors are reflected in the Prime Minister's new vision for local government 'Leading the Way', which calls for new ways of working
- some scepticism within some members of the local community about the Council's commitment and ability to deliver

- the growing interest of bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund to direct funding towards organisations which can demonstrate the effective engagement of local people.

12.27 This points to the need for new community based organisations to work alongside the existing organisations in developing and implementing key projects. Specifically, we would recommend the establishment of:

- a Blaenavon Community Heritage Trust to take the lead in recording, presenting and interpreting the cultural heritage of Blaenavon and its surrounding landscape
- a Blaenavon Building Preservation Trust to focus specifically upon the task of restoring and finding new uses for vacant/derelict buildings in the Town Centre.

12.28 In addition, we see key roles for the following existing organisations:

- National Museum and Galleries of Wales, working with the Big Pit (Blaenavon) Museum Trust, in preparing proposals for and implementing a scheme to secure the long term future of Big Pit as the UK's premier coal mining museum and enhance its role as a key industrial heritage attraction
- the Blaenavon and Pontypool Railway Society in continuing its efforts to extend and develop its operations as part of a package of complementary industrial heritage attractions - perhaps linked directly with Big Pit as part of establishment and management of transport museum.
- Cadw, in continuing its programme of conservation and interpretation of the Ironworks site in conjunction with other partners
- the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal Society, in promoting greater interest in the industrial heritage aspects of this leisure waterway and its links to the surrounding heritage landscape and there may be scope to involve the British Waterways Board.
- the S E Wales Hang Gliding Club, in promoting and managing access to The Bloreng for both recreational and sporting activity.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list but it does illustrate the need for the Blaenavon Heritage Partnership to include a wide range of interests, in addition to local authorities and statutory agencies, if a co-ordinated approach to the implementation of the Management Plan is to be achieved.

- 12.29 **Management and Marketing of individual sites and facilities** will also need to be carefully co-ordinated to ensure that undue competition for visitors and revenue is avoided and that the attractions of the area are promoted as a whole. While it will clearly be the responsibility of individual organisations to manage their facilities within available resources, the aim should be to encourage greater co-operation through joint ticketing and targeted marketing. We see Torfaen CBC's Tourism Officer as an appropriate individual to take the lead in achieving such collaboration liaising with BBNP and Monmouthshire County Council under the umbrella of the Blaenavon Heritage Partnership.
- 12.30 Figure 12.1 sets out our recommendations for the type of hybrid organisational structure required to fulfil the principal functions. We recognise that this needs to be the subject of ongoing discussion and negotiation. However, we believe that it provides a reasonable basis on which to proceed. The specific actions and resources needed to implement such a structure are included within the Action Plan later in this section. It is considered that attention is needed soon to proceed to a formal agreement.

MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE PROPOSED WORLD HERITAGE SITE

- 12.31 Figure 12.2 shows the overall approach proposed for the management of the landscape within the proposed World Heritage Site. The landscape tells a rich and evocative story, a story that illustrates how geology and topography have combined to create a landscape that was exploited first by agriculture and then, dramatically, by industry.

Insert Figure 12.1

12.32 The management plan should aim to open a new chapter in the story, one in which the cultural heritage is conserved and interpreted within an attractive, sustainable landscape framework that meets the needs of the local community and visitors. We believe that this is incompatible with large scale, open cast coal extraction, particularly within the core heritage landscape, although as the previous section recognises, there might be opportunities for some coaling at an acceptable environmental cost although this is by no means certain. Any proposals would need to be compatible with relevant planning policies in particular Policy H7 of the Deposit Local Plan.

12.33 There are two potential pitfalls in interpreting and managing heritage landscapes:

- a tendency to romanticise the past and present a sanitised image of the real deprivation in which many people lived
- a desire to stifle change and preserve the past.

Both tendencies can lead to a situation where the landscape becomes little more than a museum piece or a theme park experience.

12.34 Our recommended approach seeks to avoid these pitfalls. Cosmetic landscape treatments are avoided and the proposed management and interpretation measures aim to help nature reclaim the land whilst allowing for improved access and links to key visitor attractions.

12.35 The key objectives for landscape and visitor management may be stated as

- to protect and enhance the existing positive aspects of the landscape's character;
- to improve environmental amenity for residents and visitors to the area and create a landscape and townscape framework that complements the various attractions and features;
- to promote ecological values through the use of sustainable design and management techniques;
- to encourage visitors to stop in the Town Centre by improving parking, access and townscape quality
- to progressively identify and interpret heritage elements within the town and landscape;

- to improve access to the heritage landscape.

12.36 The above approach sets the framework for future management of the area, complementing Torfaen's Landscape Strategy and the approach set out in the National Park Plan. It is described below under the following five complementary themes. These are:

- Landscape character
- Environmental quality
- Townscape
- Interpretation and education
- Access.

Landscape character

12.37 The management of landscape character is fundamental to how the area will be perceived and interpreted in the future. Figure 12.2 identifies proposals which can protect and enhance the existing character of the study area. The approach complements the sub-area proposals within the Torfaen Landscape Strategy and adds an additional layer to ensure management and enhancement of both common grazing rights and heritage elements. This will require extensive consultations with the Commoners as their support is essential if the approach outlined below is to be successfully implemented:

- **Pre 1940's industrial heritage landscape:** allow the existing character of the former tips to develop naturally as eroded and derelict areas are re-colonised by nature. Archaeological and interpretative work should reveal the way in which the raw materials were exploited to feed industry. This may involve some reconstruction of leats, ponds, tramways, etc to develop a picture of the principal physical and historical relationships between landscape features.
- **The Coalfield fringe:** landscape character should be reinforced with new woodland planting where possible and appropriate.
- **Enclosures:** identify sustainable uses which enhances their existing character as defined by the walls, hedges and pasture.
- **Open moorland:** Management for the retention of the existing semi-natural character.
- **1940's Opencast:** These areas should naturally evolve from their existing character as vegetation is gradually re-established. Large-scale re-grading or revegetation would be enormously expensive, would reduce the authenticity of

the landforms and should not be considered. Due to variations in conditions across the opencast sites, management techniques will need to vary to reflect local conditions.

- **Waun Hoscyn:** This area should develop a moorland character.
- **Lwyd Valley:** The diverse mosaic of woodland and small-scale farmland in the valley floor should be retained and re-established where appropriate.

Environmental Quality

12.38 The study area has a number of physical and visual environmental problems. A detailed audit and management regime needs to be prepared through the involvement of all key interests. Our proposals encourage the maintenance of environmental quality in the following ways:

- **Pre-1940 industrial heritage landscape:** limited intervention to safeguard heritage features and ecological values.
- **Open moorland:** Manage to enhance ecological, agricultural and amenity values.
- **1940's Opencast:** Some small scale low energy reclamation for safety/ecological/erosion control. Techniques used should aim to create a safe and sustainable landscape system with gradually improving ecological value.
- **Waun Hoscyn:** Management to reduce erosion and aid plant establishment.
- **Afon Lwyd:** Working with the Environment Agency and Keep Wales Tidy to, develop a long term strategy to reduce the level of pollution entering the Afon Lwyd.
- **General Environmental Improvements:**
 - Planting to improve microclimate, enhance visual quality and control erosion
 - Management to enhance biodiversity
 - Ensure that development uses (and promotes) ecologically sustainable design techniques.

Townscape

12.39 Figure 12.3 sets out the principal components of our recommended approach to improving the Town Centre. This envisages:

- concentration of investment on the lower end of Broad Street and Church Road (see Figure 12.3) to create a focus for retail and heritage activity.
- enhancement of surrounds to the old Council Offices (proposed New Library) to act as a new focal point with improved links into Broad Street
- improvements to the Ironworks frontage as a visitor arrival point close to the town
- general enhancement of streetscape quality in Lower Broad Street through paving, facade improvements and encouraging change of use from commercial to residential
- landscape improvements at the entrances to Blaenavon and Big Pit.
- corridor enhancements

Interpretation and Education

12.40 The proposals for interpretation and education seek to complement the specific projects in and around the Town Centre and aim to:

- progressively identify, map and interpret the heritage of the landscape
- define the vehicular entry points into the study area in such a way that the motorist is made aware of the significance of the landscape, possibly using an industrial relic or art work. Education and interpretation should start on arrival before negative perceptions relating to industrial degradation have set in
- define non-vehicular entry points into the area in a similar way as described above. Any signage would need to be unobtrusive and of a small scale
- identify points of transition between Landscape Types, or at key viewpoints which are excellent places at which to explain the evolution of the landscape. Small scale parking areas and some interpretation of the views, or the change

in the character of the landscape would help to educate visitors about specific landscape elements. Education can turn negative perceptions into interest

- promote an Arts Lottery bid to develop a programme of public works of art that interpret the industrial heritage of the area

Access

12.41 Figure 12.4 summarises the proposed approach to promoting access through the development of a Blaenavon Heritage Trail. This provides for off road access. This will be a major means by which people experience the heritage of the area. Trails should be devised so that they tell the story of the landscape, rather than simply visit a number of locations. Ideally this should be sequential, ie. agriculture - iron - steel - coal. However there are also thematic possibilities eg. raw materials, transport, people. The network will consist of walking and cycling and trails linked to the main visitor attractions and the Sustrans National Cycle Route. In addition, we would emphasise the need for:

- pedestrian linkages between the Ironworks and the Town Centre
- linkages between the key elements in the Town Centre and the wider landscape via the creation of a heritage walk and new footpaths
- improved traffic circulation and parking serving the town centre and parking arrangements. In particular, there is need to review traffic circulation within the town centre.
- other forms of transport that could be integrated into the landscape eg. railway extension, tramway reconstruction, inclines, water balance lift
- improved public transport to the area.

12.42 Within this overall physical framework our proposed Action Plan focuses upon key steps and priority projects which contribute to the overall Heritage and Regeneration Strategy with the aim of securing World Heritage Site status.

ACTION PLAN

- 12.43 Previous reports have recommended a wide range of projects and initiatives many of which have had a tourism focus and many of which have not been realised. To make progress against this background, advantage must be taken of the new sense of partnership and purpose evident in the client and respective constituent groups. It appears quite possible that World Heritage Site status can be achieved and every conceivable effort should be made to do this, not just for the end, but for the benefits to be derived from the process itself.
- 12.44 It must be recognised, however, that considerable risks and uncertainties remain. These include:
- the outcome of the Coal Authority land disposal process. While this now appears to be largely settled, it does raise the long term prospect of coaling which needs to be extremely carefully managed if it is not to undermine the value of the area as a possible World Heritage Site and damage consensus within the Partnership
 - uncertainty over the future of Big Pit. While significant progress has been made in attracting the support of the National Museum and Galleries of Wales, the long term viability of this key attraction depends upon the successful outcome of the development study to be funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund
 - the impact of changes to funding regimes, in particular uncertainty surrounding the future availability of WDA and EU funding and the implications of the new approach being followed by the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- 12.45 In these circumstances, we believe that attention should be focused, on key projects. In particular, we believe that action focused on townscape conservation and enhancement and community involvement in its heritage, education and information technology is likely to be attractive to potential funders, although there is clearly a need to progress a number of projects.
- 12.46 It is against this background that we have proposed a number of projects and activities under the following programme areas:
- organisation development
 - heritage conservation and interpretation

- access and environmental enhancement
- product development and marketing
- key sites and buildings.

Figure 12.5 summarises the projects under each of these headings and provides an indication of the likely phasing of each of these projects over a five-year period. The projects themselves are described in detail below under each of the programme areas.

Figure 12.5 to be inserted

ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

12.47 Three main projects are proposed as part of this programme. These reflect the recommendations set out earlier in this section and focus on the establishment of appropriate vehicles for the management and delivery of the Heritage and Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan. These are:

- OD1 Formalisation of Blaenavon Heritage Partnership
- OD2 Establishment of Blaenavon Community Heritage Trust
- OD3 Establishment of Blaenavon Buildings Preservation Trust

These projects are described in the following project descriptions.

PROJECT TITLE: FORMALISATION OF BLAENAVON HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP PROJECT CHAMPION: TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	PROJECT NUMBER: OD1
PROJECT DESCRIPTION: <p>This project is aimed at establishing the existing Blaenavon Partnership as a formal organisation to oversee the preparation of a Management Plan for the Blaenavon Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest, and promote the area as a World Heritage Site. Building from its existing membership base the Partnership should be widened to include town and community councils, heritage interests, major landowners/users and amenity interests. The partnership needs to be properly constituted, although initially at least it is not envisaged as a legal entity. It will need to agree clear objectives and terms of reference and work out an appropriate modus operandi. This might include the establishment of a management team and a partnership secretariat either on a seconded or contract basis. Initially a 3 to 5 year commitment should be sought to be reviewed in the light of progress towards World Heritage Site status.</p>	
PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS: <p>The purpose of establishing a formal partnership is to bring together all the interests necessary for the preparation and ongoing review of a Management Plan. This is an essential pre-requisite for a successful bid for World Heritage Site status, and is required in any event to ensure the effective implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan set out in this report. Key action points include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consulting on and agreeing the overall strategic approach and objectives • agreeing the membership and constitution of the Partnership • putting in place the necessary management/operational arrangements • identifying and funding an appropriate secretariat • preparing a work programme for next 3 to 5 years. 	
PROJECT COSTS: <p>Estimated Capital Costs: nil. It is assumed that the Partnership would continue to be supported by staff based in Torfaen CBC offices.</p> <p>Estimated Revenue Costs: say £60,000 per annum. This is based upon a small secretariat of 1 to 2 staff, plus expenditure for the preparation of the Management Plan.</p>	
PROJECT FUNDING/PARTNERSHIPS: <p>Potential funding through direct and in kind contributions sources might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities, in particular Torfaen CBC and Monmouthshire CC • Brecon Beacons National Park • CCW and Cadw 	
TARGET TIMESCALES: <p>Initially, 3 years. To be reviewed thereafter in light of progress towards achieving World Heritage Site status.</p>	

<p>PROJECT TITLE: ESTABLISHMENT OF BLAENAVON HERITAGE COMMUNITY HERITAGE TRUST</p> <p>PROJECT CHAMPION: BLAENAVON HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP</p>	<p>PROJECT NUMBER: OD2</p>
<p>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</p> <p>This project is aimed at establishing a broadly based community Heritage Trust to champion key projects in the Blaenavon Areas of Outstanding Historic Interest. Based on the town of Blaenavon, the Trust would take a key role in researching, developing and interpreting the industrial and cultural heritage of the area. A key feature of its approach would be to work closely with the local community to ensure their active involvement in the delivery of the heritage and regeneration strategy. Key projects likely to be led by the Community Heritage Trust are: Recording and Interpreting the Industrial Landscape (HCI 2); Town Centre Interpretative Trail (HCI 7); Community Heritage and Arts (PDM 3).</p>	
<p>PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS:</p> <p>A Blaenavon Community Heritage Trust would provide local leadership and entrepreneurship to help deliver benefits to local people from the process of regeneration based on heritage. It would provide an organisation with the commitment to develop and implement key projects and ensure that they are sustainable in the long term. It is doubtful whether there is anyone with the necessary background and experience to lead such a project in the local area. However, the Trust should comprise local people with an interest in and commitment to heritage locally. The following key action points are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to identify individuals to act as Trustees • to draw up appropriate Articles and Memoranda, and to seek Charitable Status • to prepare a business plan and seek funding • to advertise for and recruit an experienced Chief Executive to lead the work of the Trust • to identify a plan of action built around the development and delivery of key projects. 	
<p>PROJECT COSTS:</p> <p>Estimated Capital Costs: assume to be allocated to specific projects.</p> <p>Estimated Revenue Costs: £125,000 over first 2 years to allow recruitment and operation of experienced Chief Executive and support staff.</p>	
<p>PROJECT FUNDING/PARTNERSHIPS:</p> <p>Potential time limited revenue funding now available for innovative educational/community based heritage projects. Would require partnership funding from other members of Blaenavon Heritage Partnership, in particular local authorities and town/community councils. Could possibly also attract support as a new Community enterprise.</p>	
<p>TARGET TIMESCALES:</p> <p>Two years required to establish Trust as an effective organisation in developing and delivering Community-based heritage projects in Blaenavon. Subsequent funding would depend upon ability to demonstrate significant achievements, with aim of establishing Trust as a long term player.</p>	

<p>PROJECT TITLE: FORMALISATION OF BLAENAVON BUILDING PRESERVATION TRUST</p> <p>PROJECT CHAMPION: TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL</p>	<p>PROJECT NUMBER: OD3</p>
<p>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</p> <p>This project is aimed at establishing an organisation to take on the task of preserving buildings of architectural or historic importance in Blaenavon whose survival is threatened and for which an economically viable solution is beyond the reach of the owner and the normal operation of the market. The aim of the organisation would be to establish a rolling programme of projects by acquiring, restoring and disposing of properties and applying the proceeds of one project to the working capital required for the next. Initially, the Trust would take on the task of restoring St Peter's School for subsequent use by the Community Heritage Trust, although subsequently it is envisaged that it would turn its attention to tackling the vacant shops and buildings in Broad Street.</p>	
<p>PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS:</p> <p>Following a well established model which has proved cost effective in implementing schemes in partnership with central government, local authorities, housing associations and the private sector, the Blaenavon Building Preservation Trust would set about the task of dealing with key buildings which are being left to decay. Key action points include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing a Steering Group to harness enthusiasm of local interests and agree composition of Trust • register the Trust with the Charity Commission • identifying a 'hit list' of potential projects along the lines suggested in this report • prepare programme of projects and apply for necessary funding. 	
<p>PROJECT COSTS:</p> <p>Estimated Capital Costs: minimal, largely involving legal fees for establishment of Trust.</p> <p>Estimated Revenue Costs: say £25,000 per annum to employ a member of staff, possibly on a part time/contract basis to develop and implement programme of projects.</p>	
<p>PROJECT FUNDING/PARTNERSHIPS:</p> <p>A Blaenavon Buildings Preservation Trust is envisaged as a joint venture involving Torfaen CBC, who own a number of properties likely to be targeted; Blaenavon Town Council and voluntary interests. It is envisaged that it would work closely and share resources with the proposed Community Heritage Trust. Depending upon the projects involved the Trust is likely to attract funding from a variety of sources including the HLF (for buildings of heritage importance), Cadw, and the WDA. The Trust may also be able to access low interest loans from the Architectural Heritage Fund.</p>	
<p>TARGET TIMESCALES:</p> <p>The aim should be to establish the Building Preservation Trust in parallel with the Community Heritage Trust. An initial 2 year period should be allowed to establish the effectiveness of the Trust in meeting the objective of tackling the problem of vacant/derelict buildings.</p>	

- 12.48 These projects are the key to the delivery of the strategy and action plan. They include the establishment of the Blaenavon Heritage Partnership with the role of overseeing the preparation of a management plan for the Blaenavon Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest and its promotion. The Community Heritage Trust would take a role in researching, developing and interpreting the area in close involvement with the local community. The Preservation Trust's role would be to preserve threatened buildings of importance in Blaenavon
- 12.49 While these organisations would clearly be closely related, they would have distinct roles. We believe that a high priority should be placed upon putting this organisational structure in place, as we believe that effective delivery mechanisms are vital if the potential of the area as a World Heritage Site is to be realised. In this regard, the active involvement of both the local authorities, heritage interests and the community are essential as is the identification of individuals with the necessary leadership skills and experience.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION PROGRAMME

- 12.50 This programme is concerned with the key tasks of identifying, protecting, conserving and interpreting the area's heritage assets. This will require ongoing work, the scale and rate of which will be highly dependent upon the availability of resources. In addition, given the intended disposal of land by the Coal Authority to private coaling interests, it will be necessary to secure appropriate agreements to protect key assets and promote public access and safety. In relation to key heritage features such as Big Pit, the Ironworks and St Peter's School, it is difficult to separate out conservation and interpretation from wider proposals to enhance their attractiveness to visitors or secure a long term use. The specific projects included under this programme are:

HCI 1	Recording and Interpretation of the Industrial Landscape
HCI 2	Securing Agreement on Protection of and Public Access to Key Heritage Assets in Private Ownership
HCI 3	Safety and drainage works to Pwll Du area
HCI 4	Continuing conservation work on Blaenavon Ironworks
HCI 5	Essential conservation work on other Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Heritage features
HCI 6	Town Centre Interpretative Trail

These are described in the following project descriptions

PROJECT TITLE: RECORDING AND INTERPRETATION OF INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE	PROJECT NUMBER:
PROJECT CHAMPION: BLAENAVON COMMUNITY HERITAGE TRUST	HCI 1
<p>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</p> <p>This project will provide a package of measures to assist with the interpretation of the industrial landscape of Blaenavon. This will include supporting on-going research and mapping of the area of land until recently owned by the Coal Authority. The project will support the appointment of a curator to oversee the research work which it is anticipated will be carried out by contracted organisations. Simple guide books will be published to enable visitors to enhance their understanding of features in the landscape, and small scale parking areas will be provided with viewpoints and interpretation boards providing basic interpretation facilities. The project will also include the provision of a guided walk programme.</p>	
<p>PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS</p> <p>The purpose of this project is to provide a more comprehensive and complete record of the sites and remains of interest within the Blaenavon Heritage Landscape and to provide interpretation facilities which will increase the public awareness and understanding of the industrial archaeological landscape features. Some features are obvious but are unstable and unsuitable for more formalised public access, while others are not completely recorded and require further research and mapping work. It is unlikely that funding could be secured to support a full time archaeological team and it is anticipated that the Blaenavon Community Heritage Trust would support the position of a curator to manage contracted organisations and individuals. To maximise the awareness raising potential, improved interpretation features will need to be accessible to visitors. Car parking with permeable surfaces and appropriate weather proof interpretation facilities should be provided across the heritage landscape, and interpretation leaflets and guide books should be published in order that those individuals with a more specialised interest can also improve their understanding. The provision of a programme of guided walks in the landscape and the town during the main tourist season will provide a complementary awareness raising initiative which has the advantage of limiting the impact on the environment while providing employment opportunities.</p> <p>Suggested actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • funding on-going research and mapping of industrial archaeological features • design studies and working drawings of what work will be required. This could cost an additional £2000 capital costs. • ensuring that a member of the proposed Community Heritage Trust has the capabilities to manage contractors to carry out a comprehensive research work • produce interpretation guide books and leaflets and make available at strategic attractions throughout the area • develop small car parking area with weather proof interpretation facilities. Suggested locations are: Garn-yr-erw, Pen-ffordd-goch, Garn Ddrys, Llanelly Hill • developing a guided walk programme and routes for specialist and general interest tours 	
<p>PROJECT COSTS:</p> <p>Estimated Capital Costs: £70,000 Estimated Revenue Costs: £30,000 per annum over each of the first four years</p>	

PROJECT FUNDING:

Potential funding sources include:

- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Torfaen County Borough Council
- Monmouthshire County Council
- RCAM
- Brecon Beacons National Park
- Cadw
- CCW

TARGET TIMESCALES:

1-4 years

<p>PROJECT TITLE: SECURING AGREEMENT ON PROTECTION OF AND PUBLIC ACCESS TO KEY HERITAGE ASSETS</p> <p>PROJECT CHAMPION: TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL ON BEHALF OF BLAENAVON HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP</p>	<p>PROJECT NUMBER: HCI 2</p>
<p>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</p> <p>Following the recent decision by the Coal Authority to dispose of its assets to a variety of bidders, including coaling interests, it will be important to secure agreement to ensure that key heritage assets are protected, and, where appropriate, made accessible to the public. While the preference should be to acquire the land comprising the core heritage area, this may not be possible. Accordingly, it may be necessary to negotiate a range of management and access agreements to allow implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan.</p>	
<p>PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS:</p> <p>The clear purpose of pursuing this project is to provide added protection to key heritage assets over and above that provided by the Schedule of Ancient Monuments and planning controls. If key areas of land can be acquired, and/or management access agreement negotiated it may be appropriate for the public sector to contribute to safety and preservation works. Key action points include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussion with private landowners to explain approach to planning, heritage conservation and regeneration • negotiation of appropriate agreements covering land purchase, management and public access. 	
<p>PROJECT COSTS:</p> <p>Estimated Capital Costs: Not known. This will be subject to specific negotiations, the outcome of which cannot be predicted.</p> <p>Estimated Revenue Costs: Not known. Unlikely to be significant.</p>	
<p>PROJECT FUNDING/PARTNERSHIPS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities, in particular Torfaen County Borough Council and Monmouthshire County Council • Brecon Beacons National Park • Countryside Council for Wales • Heritage Lottery Fund. The bid for acquisition of the whole of the Coal Authority land was not actively pursued. Now Blaenavon is included in the ‘tentative’ list of World Heritage Sites, it may be possible to develop a new bid to HLF. 	
<p>TARGET TIMESCALES:</p> <p>Immediate. The outcome of negotiations are likely to significantly influence the shape and direction of the Strategy and Action Plan and therefore need to be pursued as a matter of priority.</p>	

PROJECT TITLE: SAFETY AND DRAINAGE WORKS TO PWLL DU HERITAGE AREA	PROJECT NUMBER:																												
PROJECT CHAMPION: BLAENAVON COMMUNITY HERITAGE TRUST	HC1 3																												
<p>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</p> <p>This project is aimed at tackling the most pressing safety items related to proposed public access routes through the core heritage area. It will also deal with localised problems arising from the drainage of the area, including erosion and contaminated run off. Based on the advice of Ove Arup, safety works would include: detailed inspections; installation of warning signs on cliff edges; remedial works to ponds; installation of barriers; warning signs and capping of shafts; excavation, backfilling and sealing of adits and selective infilling; warning signs and barriers for crownholes. Drainage works would involve the checking of views, construction of attenuation ponds, remediation of ponds and ditches and investigations into run off water quality. The works would be focused on the areas in close proximity to the proposed heritage trails.</p>																													
<p>PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS:</p> <p>These works need to be undertaken in parallel with the development of Heritage Trails which the public could be invited to use. Clearly issues of public safety and potential liabilities need to be addressed but a balance needs to be struck with the need to conserve an authentic mining and industrial landscape. Critically, the drainage works are required to reduce erosion and contaminated run off and assist the process of natural regeneration. Key action points are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to secure the necessary acquisition/management/access agreements on the land in question • to undertake detailed surveys along the route of the proposed Heritage trail • to draw up a specification of works and prepare funding bids. 																													
<p>PROJECT COSTS:</p> <p>Capital costs estimated, indicatively, by Ove Arup are as follows:</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Safety Works</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Inspections (not costed)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cliffs - warning signs (allow 30 No.) and scaling work</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£20,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pond remedial works</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£10,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Shafts - barriers, warning signs and capping works</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£30,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Adits - sealing works, excavate, backfilling</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£10,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Crownholes - barriers, warning signs, selective infilling</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>£5,000</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">£75,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Drainage Works</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Improve vegetation core (not costed)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Check weirs (150 No.)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£50,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Attenuation ponds (4 No.)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£60,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Investigate pH/iron content</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£10,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Remediate Gam-yr-Erw ponds/ditches</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£20,000</td> </tr> </table>		Safety Works		Inspections (not costed)	-	Cliffs - warning signs (allow 30 No.) and scaling work	£20,000	Pond remedial works	£10,000	Shafts - barriers, warning signs and capping works	£30,000	Adits - sealing works, excavate, backfilling	£10,000	Crownholes - barriers, warning signs, selective infilling	<u>£5,000</u>		£75,000	Drainage Works		Improve vegetation core (not costed)	-	Check weirs (150 No.)	£50,000	Attenuation ponds (4 No.)	£60,000	Investigate pH/iron content	£10,000	Remediate Gam-yr-Erw ponds/ditches	£20,000
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Reed beds (not costed)	-
	<u>£140,000</u>
Total	<u>£215,000</u>
Revenue costs: Not known	
PROJECT FUNDING/PARTNERSHIPS:	
<p>These works may qualify for funding from the Land Reclamation programme although it is recognised that works of this nature would not normally enjoy high priority. It might also be possible to attract HLF funding as part of an 'area-based' bid for a possible World Heritage Site. In the event that the land remains in private ownership, contributions could also be attracted from this source, although in practice these are most likely to arise as part of a 'planning gain' package associated with opencast coal extraction. Contributions will be required from Torfaen Monmouthshire Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council and private land owners</p>	
TARGET TIMESCALES:	
<p>The timing of this project is entirely dependent upon being able to negotiate acquisition/management/ access agreements with the landowner. Ideally, the project should take place relatively quickly as part of opening up the industrial heritage landscape, say Years 2 and 3.</p>	

<p>PROJECT TITLE: CONTINUING CONSERVATION WORK AT BLAENAVON IRONWORKS</p> <p>PROJECT CHAMPION: CADW</p>	<p>PROJECT NUMBER: HCI 4</p>
<p>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</p> <p>This project involves continuing the programme of safety and conservation works at Blaenavon Ironworks and is linked to proposals for enhancing both the environment surrounding the Ironworks and the facilities available on site.</p>	
<p>PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS:</p> <p>The process of conservation of an industrial site such as the Ironworks is necessarily slow and painstaking. However, it is essential that further progress is made if the full potential of the site is to be realised. This will involve continuing work on the stone water balance furnaces and rear wall, which is in parts unstable.</p>	
<p>PROJECT COSTS:</p> <p>Cannot be accurately determined due to investigatory nature of works which need to respond to circumstances as they arise. However, likely to involve on-going programme of works for a further 5 years based on past rate of progress, say £25,000 at £50,000 per annum.</p>	
<p>PROJECT FUNDING/PARTNERSHIPS:</p> <p>Cadw will need to be the principal funder of these works which fall squarely in its area of responsibility. Other sources of funding should be directed towards the other Ironworks project proposals.</p>	
<p>TARGET TIMESCALES:</p> <p>Years 1 to 5.years.</p>	

<p>PROJECT TITLE: ESSENTIAL CONSTRUCTION WORK ON SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS AND HERITAGE FEATURES</p>	<p>PROJECT NUMBER: HCI 5</p>
<p>PROJECT CHAMPION: BLAENAVON COMMUNITY HERITAGE TRUST</p>	
<p>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</p> <p>Following further detailed research on the Blaenavon Industrial Heritage Landscape (HCI 1), it will be necessary to develop and implement a programme of essential conservation works to preserve and if appropriate restore key heritage elements. It is not possible at this stage to be specific about what works are required to what features. In any event the rate and nature of conservation work will depend upon the availability of funding. This project should therefore be viewed as an on-going programme of works over an extended period of time, say 10 to 15 years.</p>	
<p>PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS:</p> <p>In addition to meeting the aim of preserving key elements in the industrial landscape, this project should also be concerned with enhancing visitor interest and understanding of the industrial and social history of the area. This is likely to be best achieved by focusing on sites which the public can access, from the proposed Industrial Heritage Trail (see Figure 12.4) and which in themselves provide possible access routes, eg. tramways, inclines etc.</p>	
<p>PROJECT COSTS:</p> <p>£10 to £20,000 per annum</p>	
<p>PROJECT FUNDING/PARTNERSHIPS:</p> <p>Potential funding sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cadw • Heritage Lottery Fund as part of an 'area-wide' bid • Private sector - sponsorship and/or planning gain. • Local authorities • Royal Commission of Ancient Monuments 	
<p>TARGET TIMESCALES:</p> <p>3 to 5 years and on-going thereafter.</p>	

PROJECT TITLE: TOWN CENTRE INTERPRETATIVE TRAIL PROJECT CHAMPION: BLAENAVON COMMUNITY HERITAGE TRUST	PROJECT NUMBER: HCI 6
PROJECT DESCRIPTION: This project will provide a pedestrian route through the town which links the key buildings and areas of interest within the town centre. This route will be signed and will start from the Tourist Information Centre at the Ironworks.	
PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS The purpose of this project is to provide a linkage between the existing attractions and buildings of interest and to increase the awareness of residents and visitors of the great heritage within the town. This project will link many of the other proposed projects and provide a means of encouraging visitors to spend time in the town centre Specific Actions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agreeing a specific route • developing route and put up pedestrian signage to publicise the trail • give priority to establishing the leg between the town centre and the Ironworks 	
PROJECT COSTS: Estimated Capital Costs: £20,000 Estimated Revenue Costs: n/a	
PROJECT FUNDING: Potential funding sources include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torfaen County Borough Council • Blaenavon Town Council 	
TARGET TIMESCALES: Year 2	

ACCESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME

- 12.51 This programme is concerned with providing enhanced access and environmental conditions in support of the landscape and town centre proposals shown in Figures 12.2 and 12.3. Attention is focused upon those parts of the study area where we believe that improvements could produce the greatest benefits for local people and visitors alike. Specifically, we have developed a package of proposals for the area surrounding the Ironworks (see Figure 12.6) and the Town Centre (see Figure 12.7). These need to be complemented by access and parking improvements and environmental improvement to key approaches and link routes. Our suggested projects, details of which are provided below, are as follows:

- | | |
|--------|---|
| AEE 1 | Ironworks Parking and Access Improvement |
| AEE 2 | Ironworks Linkages to Heritage Landscape |
| AEE 3 | Ironworks Frontage Enhancements |
| AEE 4 | Ironworks Town Park Link |
| AEE 5 | Town Centre Southern Gateway |
| AEE 6 | Blaenavon Northern Approach Improvements |
| AEE 7 | Big Pit Access Road and Gilchrist Thomas Estate Improvement |
| AEE 8 | Church Road Boundary Improvements |
| AEE9 | Town Centre Traffic Circulation Parking and Access Improvements |
| AEE 10 | Town Centre Core Area Improvements |
| AEE 11 | St Peter's Church and School Area Improvements |
| AEE 12 | Council Offices and Broad Street Area Improvements |

These are described in the following project description.

PROJECT TITLE: IRONWORKS PARKING AND ACCESS IMPROVEMENT	PROJECT NUMBER: AEE 1
PROJECT CHAMPION: TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	
<p>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</p> <p>This project comprises a number of improvements to the existing entrance and access to the Ironworks. This will include creating a new entrance space towards the south east of the site and a providing a public art feature with an industrial relict theme which will be lit at night. Existing landscape setting will be maintained and new improvements will be made. A small car park will be developed on Estate Road and the existing car parking area will be maintained to act as an overflow car park or coach park.</p>	
<p>PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS</p> <p>The purpose of this project is to create a new gateway to the Ironworks and to encourage more visitors to a currently under exploited attraction. The new entrance will be visible from the approach roads to increase its profile, and will be linked with greater car and coach parking areas to encourage visitors to stop and visit the Ironworks and associated Tourist Information Centre. Creating new public art features and lighting the entrance will create a greater sense of place. Improving existing landscape setting and carrying out improvements will improve the attractiveness of the immediate townscape and setting of the Ironworks.</p> <p>Specific Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing paved entrance space and a path to the ticket booth/Tourist Information Office • defining space by building a stone wall (using similar material to that in the Ironworks) • designing public art/identifying industrial relict as a gateway feature • developing small car park (20 spaces) • provide new planting around the new car park and the existing perimeter fence • landscape improvements around the junction of the Big Pit access road and around the existing industrial artefacts and Gilchrist monument 	
<p>PROJECT COSTS:</p> <p>Estimated Capital Costs: £90,000</p> <p>Estimated Revenue Costs: n/a</p>	
<p>PROJECT FUNDING:</p> <p>Potential funding sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Development Agency • Torfaen County Borough Council • Cadw 	
<p>TARGET TIMESCALES:</p> <p>Years 2-3</p>	

PROJECT TITLE: IRONWORKS LINKAGES TO HERITAGE LANDSCAPE PROJECT CHAMPION: BLAENAVON COMMUNITY HERITAGE TRUST	PROJECT NUMBER: AEE 2
PROJECT DESCRIPTION: <p>This project will develop links between the Ironworks and the surrounding heritage landscape. A routes will be developed for walking and cycling from the new Ironworks car park to the southern entrances of the Pwll-du tunnel.</p>	
PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS <p>The purpose of this project is to enhance the links between existing features of interest around Blaenavon and to increase the awareness of the role of Blaenavon in the industrial development of South Wales. Linking the existing built features with routes through the heritage landscape will enhance the understanding of the landscape for the visitor and will provide immediate access to the heritage landscape from one of the key visitor attractions in the area. These routes will provide opportunities for informal recreation by visitors and residents and by providing a dual use for the new car park area at the Ironworks this will increase the likelihood of visitors stopping and result in an increase in the number of visitors to the Ironworks.</p> <p>Specific Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify a potential route to link the new Ironworks car park with the southern entrance of the Pwll-du tunnel • agree route with existing landowners • develop a footpath/cycle route between the Ironworks and the southern entrance of the Pwll-du tunnel 	
PROJECT COSTS: <p>Estimated Capital Costs: £13,000</p> <p>Estimated Revenue Costs: n/a</p>	
PROJECT FUNDING: <p>Potential funding sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torfaen County Borough Council • Monmouthshire County Council • Countryside Council for Wales 	
TARGET TIMESCALES: <p>Year 3</p>	

PROJECT TITLE: IRONWORKS FRONTAGE ENHANCEMENTS	PROJECT NUMBER: AEE 3
PROJECT CHAMPION: TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	
PROJECT DESCRIPTION:	
<p>This project will enhance the existing setting of the Ironworks by creating a unified space on either side of North Road and by improving the appearance of the existing boundary features. The existing security fences will be reallocated and replaced with an alternative design. The existing gates will be moved away from North Road and the retaining wall along the eastern boundary will be upgraded. A new wall will be built on the east of North Road which will define the edge of the space which will be enhanced by new planting. The existing facing on the block boundary walls of the residential properties to the east of North Road will be upgraded to stone facing.</p>	
PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS	
<p>The purpose of this project is to improve the image of the town by upgrading the setting of the Ironworks. The improved setting will make the Ironworks more attractive for visitors and will provide a space which will encourage visitors to move between the Ironworks and Blaenavon town centre. The improvements to the space will complement the Ironworks remains and will remove some of the existing visually intrusive security fencing. The space will be designed to encourage visitors to cross North Road and will act as a gateway to encourage people to walk into Blaenavon town centre following the proposed interpreted town trail.</p> <p>Specific Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve appearance of retaining wall on the eastern boundary of the Ironworks (discuss with Cadw the options which will not sanitise the industrial image of the Ironworks: remove existing render on the upper section; remove upper section of wall completely and replace with new stone) • relocate existing security fence at the rear of the remains to the north of the 'pay office' - use alternative design (preferably painted black to minimise visual impact) and carefully integrate fence with the corner of Stack Square • remove security fence to the east of Stack Square (preferably black to minimise visual impact) • consider creating small back gardens with low unobtrusive fences at the rear of Stack Square to assist the space definition (subject to historic investigations) • move the existing Ironworks gates four metres away from North Road and into the Ironworks complex • build low wall on the east of North Road which marks the line of houses which once existed and carry out planting to the east of this wall to help enclose the space • replace or face the existing boundary walls of the residential properties with stone. 	
PROJECT COSTS:	
Estimated Capital Costs:	£500,000 (£350,000 without replacing walls to the existing residential properties)
Estimated Revenue Costs:	n/a
PROJECT FUNDING:	
Potential funding sources include:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torfaen County Borough Council • Welsh Development Agency • Cadw 	
TARGET TIMESCALES:	

Years 2-3

PROJECT TITLE: IRONWORKS TOWN PARK LINK PROJECT CHAMPION: TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	PROJECT NUMBER: AEE 4
PROJECT DESCRIPTION: <p>This project comprises the creation of a new park between the Ironworks and Blaenavon town centre. This will be created within the existing beech woodland to the west of the town centre and will form a pedestrian routeway between the town centre and the Ironworks.</p>	
PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS <p>The purpose of this project is to provide an enhanced recreational resource for residents and visitors to Blaenavon. The park will provide an area for informal recreation and will act as a linking mechanism between the town centre and the Ironworks and encourage pedestrian movement between the two centres of interest.</p> <p>Specific Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarify existing landownerships and rights of way through the beech woodland • develop a management plan and master plan for the development of the woodland • carry out a phased implementation programme 	
PROJECT COSTS: <p>Estimated Capital Costs: £50,000+</p> <p>Estimated Revenue Costs: n/a</p>	
PROJECT FUNDING: <p>Potential funding sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torfaen County Borough Council • Blaenavon Town Council 	
TARGET TIMESCALES: <p>Year 3-4</p>	

PROJECT TITLE: TOWN CENTRE SOUTHERN GATEWAY PROJECT CHAMPION: TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	PROJECT NUMBER: AEE 5
PROJECT DESCRIPTION: <p>This project will enhance the entrance to Blaenavon from the south by creating a new entry feature and improving the existing streetscape and landscape. The project will improve the signage to the town centre and improve the boundary fencing and planting.</p>	
PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS <p>The purpose of this project is to improve the image of Blaenavon town and create a sense of arrival when approaching from the south along Cwmavon Road. The streetscape and landscape improvements will make this main entrance route more attractive with the purpose of encouraging more people to stop and visit the town. The new entry feature and the improved signage will also encourage traffic to reduce speed and will discourage traffic immediately flowing around the by-pass to the main attractions to the north of the town.</p> <p>Specific Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • designing a new entry feature using an industrial relict or commissioning a new piece of public art on the triangle of land to the west of the existing roundabout • improving traffic and pedestrian signage to encourage movement into the town centre • replace existing chain link fence on Cwmavon Road • enhance and ‘bulk-up’ the existing planting adjacent to Cwmavon Road • consider replacing existing crash barriers with a stone wall (this will require a detailed consultation with the Highways Department and investigation of the structural strength of the existing retaining wall) 	
PROJECT COSTS: <p>Estimated Capital Costs: £50,000 (£30,000 without the replacement stone wall) Estimated Revenue Costs: n/a</p>	
PROJECT FUNDING: <p>Potential funding sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torfaen County Borough Council • Arts Lottery Arts Fund • Welsh Development Agency 	
TARGET TIMESCALES: <p>Year 2</p>	

PROJECT TITLE: BLAENAVON NORTHERN APPROACH IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT CHAMPION: TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	PROJECT NUMBER: AEE 6
PROJECT DESCRIPTION: <p>This project will enhance the sense of arrival when approaching from the north along North Road by implementing a landscape improvement programme. This will comprise improvements to the maintenance and management of existing planting and the provision of new planting. Streetscape improvements will also be made through the removal of derelict sites and renovation of facades and frontages of existing buildings .</p>	
PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS: <p>The purpose of this project is improve the image of the town of Blaenavon. The approach from the north currently does not offer a positive image of the town and portrays an image of dereliction and poor maintenance which does not encourage visitors into the town. By improving both the streetscape and the landscape, the image benefits will contribute to increasing the attractiveness of the town as a place to live and invest and will encourage a greater number of visitors to stop. In particular, improvements from the north will encourage a greater number of visitors to stop at the Ironworks.</p> <p>Specific Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing/improving viewpoint area with car parking and interpretation facilities • improving area to the north of the Riflemans PH including screening the sub-station and renovating the sheds • replace chain link fencing to football pitch and replace with sympathetic boundary style adjacent to the buildings and road between the Riflemans PH and the Ironworks • improve maintenance, enhance existing planted areas, and provide new planted areas • improve existing commercial building frontages and renovate facade of old hall (Traditional Oak Furniture) • consider the opportunities for developing the existing gap sites • improve facilities in and condition of small park to the north of the Blaenavon Rugby Football Club 	
PROJECT COSTS: <p>Estimated Capital Costs: £35,000 Estimated Revenue Costs: n/a</p>	
PROJECT FUNDING: <p>Potential funding sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torfaen County Borough Council • Welsh Development Agency • Private 	
TARGET TIMESCALES: <p>Years 3-4</p>	

PROJECT TITLE: BIG PIT ACCESS ROAD & GILCHRIST THOMAS ESTATE IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT CHAMPION: TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	PROJECT NUMBER: AEE 7
PROJECT DESCRIPTION: <p>This project comprises a continuation of the improvements to the access route between the Ironworks and Big Pit. This will involve, in the main, enhancing the landscape adjacent to the access road to Big Pit and will focus on improving the frontage of All Dimension Scaffolding.</p>	
PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS <p>The purpose of this project is to improve the area along the access route between the Ironworks and Big Pit. This will help the image of this area and should encourage more visitors to Big Pit and the Ironworks. By improving the streetscape and the landscape visitors are also more likely to make a trip to Blaenavon town centre.</p> <p>Specific Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying what existing landowners can contribute • continuing to implement a series of landscape enhancements along the access road, including off street parking and screening • give priority to upgrading the area fronting All Dimension Scaffolding 	
PROJECT COSTS: <p>Estimated Capital Costs: £25,000-£50,000 Estimated Revenue Costs: n/a</p>	
PROJECT FUNDING: <p>Potential funding sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torfaen County Borough Council • WDA • Private 	
TARGET TIMESCALES: <p>Year 1</p>	

PROJECT TITLE: CHURCH ROAD BOUNDARY IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT CHAMPION: TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	PROJECT NUMBER: AEE 8
PROJECT DESCRIPTION: <p>This project will maintain and enhance the streetscape quality of Church Road and the approach to the Ironworks from the South.</p>	
PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS <p>The purpose of this project is to create an attractive environment for visitors approaching from the south and to encourage them to stop at the Ironworks, to visit Big Pit and/or to visit the town itself. This area only needs limited additional works and effort should be made to maintaining the existing attractive approach</p> <p>Specific Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • re-pointing and repairing wall to ‘The Beeches’ • continuing current maintenance work 	
PROJECT COSTS: <p>Estimated Capital Costs: £5,000 Estimated Revenue Costs: n/a</p>	
PROJECT FUNDING: <p>Potential funding sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torfaen County Borough Council • Private • WDA 	
TARGET TIMESCALES: <p>Year 2</p>	

PROJECT TITLE: TOWN CENTRE ACCESS IMPROVEMENT	PROJECT NUMBER: AEE 9
PROJECT CHAMPION: TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	
<p>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</p> <p>This project will improve circulation and access to the town for cars and pedestrians. Following detailed investigations into traffic movement and parking the existing car parking will be improved and some new pavier areas will be constructed on both sides of Prince Street. It is suggested that a new mini-roundabout could be constructed at the junction of Cwmavon Road and Prince Street.</p>	
<p>PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS</p> <p>The purpose of this project is to encourage more visitors to stop and park their cars at the south of the town and to facilitate greater movement of pedestrians from this car parking area into the town centre. By providing more visible and inviting car parking areas, more visitors and residents are likely to be attracted by the opportunity to visit the town centre and use its local centre facilities. A new roundabout would improve traffic flow and ensure easier access in and out of the existing car park, and pavier areas on either side of Prince Street will improve pedestrian flows from the car park to and from the town centre.</p> <p>Specific Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • constructing a new mini-roundabout at the junction of Cwmavon Road and Prince Street. • removing wall at the north eastern edge of the existing car park to make the facilities more visible to cars approaching from Cwmavon Road • relocate the existing public art in the car park to a more prominent position adjacent to the new roundabout (some rationalisation of the services in this area could improve the setting) • construct pavier area on either side of Prince Street and link with new pavier area to be laid in the town centre 	
<p>PROJECT COSTS:</p> <p>Estimated Capital Costs: £35,000 Estimated Revenue Costs: n/a</p>	
<p>PROJECT FUNDING:</p> <p>Potential funding sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torfaen County Borough Council • Welsh Development Agency 	
<p>TARGET TIMESCALES:</p> <p>Years 1 and 2</p>	

PROJECT TITLE: TOWN CENTRE CORE AREA IMPROVEMENTS	PROJECT NUMBER: AEE 10
PROJECT CHAMPION: TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	
<p>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</p> <p>This project involves a package of streetscape improvements and town centre management initiatives to enhance the town centre. This project will provide two new public spaces including a new town square and will implement a traffic calming scheme within the town centre. A facade enhancement programme will be introduced in association with a 'mock' shop window scheme, and streetscape improvements will include some new planting and replacement paviers.</p>	
<p>PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS</p> <p>The purpose of this project is to enhance the attractiveness of Blaenavon as a place to visit and to promote the town as a local centre serving residents and visitors to the area as shown in Figure 12.7. Streetscape improvements will enhance the image of the town and make it a more inviting place to live and visit. New public spaces will provide focal points in the town which will create a greater sense of town centre identity and improve pedestrian flows through the town. Traffic calming measures will be introduced along Prince Street to slow and manage the traffic in the town centre. Mock shop window scheme will create used frontages to vacant premises and will remove the appearance of neglect and encourage new business start ups in the town centre. The design of these mock windows will reflect the heritage of the town centre and could be incorporated into the proposed town trail).</p> <p>Specific Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop new public space adjacent to the Co-operative building, with provision for high turnover short term parking for visitors. Repave the open space using high quality paviers and providing seating orientated towards the south. A Gilchrist Thomas memorial could provide a focal piece of public art • create new town square with new paving and seating at junction of Market Street and Broad Street • implement traffic calming scheme between St Peter's School and roundabout. Scheme should include use of chicanes to slow traffic, with priority for vehicles travelling up the hill. Existing short term parking areas should be formalised • a package of streetscape improvements should include the following: extending the paving on both sides of Prince Street; providing a rear wall to the houses on the west of the street; improve rear facades and walls to the east of the street, tree planting to enhance the vista from Prince Street into the town centre; repaving footpaths with local sourced stone and repaving the streets in the core retail area (possibly with a small unit pavier) • facade enhancement programme should be developed which will encourage shop and house owners to repaint facades according to an agreed colour scheme • implement 'mock' shop window scheme 	
<p>PROJECT COSTS:</p> <p>Estimated Capital Costs: £600,000 (£450,000 if road surfaces are not repaved) Estimated Revenue Costs: n/a</p>	

PROJECT FUNDING:

Potential funding sources include:

- Welsh Development Agency
- EU
- Torfaen County Borough Council
- Private

TARGET TIMESCALES:

Year 2-5

PROJECT TITLE: ST PETER'S CHURCH AND SCHOOL AREA IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT CHAMPION: TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	PROJECT NUMBER: AEE 11
PROJECT DESCRIPTION: <p>This project will enhance the streetscape along Church Road in association with the restoration of St Peters School. This will include extending the new paved areas along Church Road and continuing the traffic calming measures proposed in Project AEE 10 to St Peter's School. The project will include improving pedestrian access to and through St Peters Church graveyard.</p>	
PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS <p>The purpose of this project is to improve access to the properties to the south of Church Road, including St Peters Church and St Peters School, and to enable safe pedestrian movement along and across Church Road. The project will provide streetscape improvements which will enhance the existing quality of the environment and will be designed to improve accessibility. The traffic calming chicanes can be placed to improve access to the entrance of St Peters School. A formalised route through St Peters Church graveyard will provide an attractive pedestrian route and will link the car park at the junction of Cwmavon Road and Prince Street with the town centre.</p> <p>Specific Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extending high quality paving from the town centre along Church Road as far as St Peters School • install traffic calming chicanes between the town centre and St Peters School (consider possibility of providing a small car park between St Peters Church and St Peters School) • develop linkage through St Peters Church graveyard to the town centre from the car park at the junction of Cwmavon Road and Prince Street • develop path through the graveyard to the Ironbridge 	
PROJECT COSTS: <p>Estimated Capital Costs: £50,000 Estimated Revenue Costs: n/a</p>	
PROJECT FUNDING: <p>Potential funding sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Development Agency • EU • Torfaen County Borough Council • Voluntary, eg. BTCV re graveyard improvements. 	
TARGET TIMESCALES: <p>Year 2</p>	

<p>PROJECT TITLE: COUNCIL OFFICE AND BROAD STREET IMPROVEMENTS</p> <p>PROJECT CHAMPION: TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL</p>	<p>PROJECT NUMBER: AEE 12</p>
<p>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</p> <p>This project will implement a package of streetscape works to improve the streetscape of Broad Street which link with the other town centre management schemes and projects. A new square will be created in association with the reuse of the old Council offices as a Library. The redevelopment of the existing toilet block will be linked to this new open space. Better use of existing space will be provided in front of Bethlehem Church and the graveyard will be restored and integrated with Broad Street. The existing footpaths will be repaved and access will be improved to Broad Street through the improvement of the steps down to Burford Street from the new space adjacent to the old Council offices; the redesigning of the parking area on Lion Street to maximise parking spaces and new pedestrian signage.</p>	
<p>PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS</p> <p>The purpose of this project is to improve access to the town centre and create a more attractive town centre for people to live and visit. The streetscape improvements will create a higher quality built environment and will encourage more people to use the town as a local centre. The improved access will also facilitate a greater number of visits to the town centre by foot and car. Improved open spaces adjacent to the old Council offices and around Bethlehem Church will provide a more attractive physical environment for residents and visitors which will be better integrated into Broad Street.</p> <p>Specific Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create small square on the existing car park adjacent to the old Council offices with southerly facing seated areas, new planting and paved areas • redevelop existing toilet block and link with the redeveloped open space and improve steps down to Burford Street • restore Bethlehem Church graveyard and improve link with Broad Street by extending soft landscaping out to the street • redesign parking area on Lion Street to increase the number of available spaces • repave footpaths adjacent to Broad Street with stone and link to wider area improvements • improve signage from old Council offices open space to town centre • link area with a town centre facade enhancement programme to encourage shop and house owners to repaint their building facades to an agreed colour scheme 	

PROJECT COSTS:

Estimated Capital Costs: £130,000
Estimated Revenue Costs: n/a

PROJECT FUNDING:

Potential funding sources include:

- Welsh Development Agency
- EC
- Torfaen County Borough Council
- Private

TARGET TIMESCALES:

Years 2-5

VISITOR PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING PROGRAMME

12.52 This programme is focused upon improving the attractiveness of the Blaenavon area to visitors with the aim of getting more people to visit and stay longer. This requires action to improve the appeal of existing visitor attractions which need to be developed and promoted in such a way as to encourage extended and repeat visits. The following elements are deemed to be of critical importance.:

- securing the long term future of Big Pit, with the aim of establishing it as the principal mining and transport facility of the National Museum and Galleries of Wales
- ensuring that the visitor potential of the Ironworks is fully exploited as a means of attracting visitors into the town of Blaenavon
- developing opportunities to explore the wider industrial and cultural landscape through promoting access to the heritage landscape
- developing community-based heritage activities.

12.53 The future of Big Pit is to be explored through a £150,000 development study which is being grant aided by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Detailed consultations with the Big Pit (Blaenavon) Museum Trust and the National Museum of Wales which seems likely to play a key role in the future development, management and funding of Big Pit. Initial discussions have indicated that the first priority is to secure the integrity of the buildings, structures and equipment associated with the mining museum. However, in developing proposals it is evident that a viable future will depend upon enhancing visitor facilities and interpretation. Here a careful balance needs to be struck between maintaining the authenticity of Big Pit as a working coal mine and offering a more attractive visitor experience, which to our mind is likely to require significant investment in new buildings, collections and visitor interpretation.

12.54 Here the involvement of the National Museum and Galleries of Wales will prove critical. One option which is worthy of investigation through the development study is the establishment of Big Pit/Blaenavon as the Welsh Industrial and Transport Museum. This would involve transferring the relevant facility collections until recently housed in the Welsh Industrial and Maritime Museum at Cardiff Bay to Big Pit. While recognising that the National Museum for Wales is currently investigating a number of options, we believe that there is a strong logic for transferring those elements of the collection which relate to the coal and iron industry and transportation to Blaenavon where they could be interpreted in their proper context. This is likely to

require the construction of a new museum building which could either be located as part of the Big Pit complex or be situated to the north of the existing car park, adjacent to and perhaps linked with, the Blaenavon and Pontypool Railway Society's operations.

- 12.55 While recognising that the primary purpose of the development study is to prepare proposals to secure a viable long term future for Big Pit we consider it important that the terms of reference are not too narrowly focused. Specifically, we believe that the study must address the type of option outlined above. Quite simply, we believe that the strategic opportunity of establishing Big Pit as more than just a mining museum needs to be thoroughly explored, including possible unified management incorporating Big Pit, the Ironworks and the Steam Railway. This requires visionary thinking of the type demonstrated by the Ironbridge Museum Trust when it embarked upon the development of its sites such as Blists Hill.
- 12.56 For the Ironworks the aim must be to establish it as a destination which is sufficiently attractive to draw visitors into the town of Blaenavon. We have fundamental concerns about the ability to present and interpret the physical remains of the Ironworks in a way which will appeal to large numbers of visitors. Our recommended approach therefore aims to establish the Ironworks as a key 'point of arrival' to which the visitor will be directed to obtain information about the Blaenavon Heritage Landscape, and from where heritage and town trails would depart. This requires:
- conservation works (HC14)
 - improvements to parking serving the site (AEE 1)
 - enhancement to the environment surrounding the Ironworks (AEE 3)
 - development of a Tourist Information and Visitor Orientation Centre
 - development of on-site interpretation facilities making use of the opportunities provided by the restored Stack Square buildings.
- 12.57 A number of these projects form part of the proposed Product Development and Marketing Programme which includes:

PDM 1 Big Pit Development
PDM 2 Ironworks Facilities Enhancement: Stage 1
PDM 3 Ironworks Facilities Enhancement: Stage 2
PDM 4 Community Heritage and Arts Project
PDM 5 Blaenavon to Pontypool Railway improvements
PDM 6 Events Marketing Programme

Details of these projects are given below.

<p>PROJECT TITLE: BIG PIT DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>PROJECT CHAMPION: BIG PIT (BLAENAVON) MUSEUM TRUST/NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WALES</p>	<p>PROJECT NUMBER: PDM 1</p>
<p>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</p> <p>This project is aimed to establish a long term, viable future for Big Pit as the UK's leading mining museum and a key element in the area's heritage attractions. The starting point will be a detailed development study which will establish a package of proposals to upgrade existing facilities and provide new interpretation. As part of the study, a range of options need to be considered taking account of the needs and potential of the existing museum operations which are firmly focused upon coal mining, and the scope for developing the site as an outpost of the National Museum of Wales housing parts of its industrial and transport collections, including possible links to the Blaenavon and Pontypool Railway.</p> <p>Following on from the study, funding bids will have to be prepared for a major programme of investment in repair and maintenance of existing structures, and the provision of new interpretative facilities.</p>	
<p>PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS</p> <p>Big Pit is currently attracting fewer visitors than is necessary to break even. Inadequate surpluses in recent years have restricted investment on anything other than safety and maintenance of the equipment underground. The purpose of this project is therefore to re-establish Big Pit as a major industrial heritage attraction with sustainable visitor numbers in excess of 100,000 per annum. This would help significantly in the promotion of the Blaenavon Heritage Landscape. Against the background of recent negotiations involving the National Museum of Wales and the agreement of the Heritage Lottery Fund to the funding of a major development study the following actions are suggested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that the brief for the development study takes account of the strategic options for the development of Big Pit as an outpost of the National Museum of Wales housing relevant industrial and transport collections • ensuring that revenue support for Big Pit is maintained whilst development options are being investigated and long term funding sought • implementing proposals in line with the recommendations of the study. This could include: repair and maintenance of existing structures, new hillside gallery, infra-red broadcast tour; better access for disabled visitors, improved interpretation in canteen and pit head buildings; transfer of coal and transport collections, held by National Museum of Wales to Big Pit, including development of appropriate storage facilities. 	
<p>PROJECT COSTS:</p> <p>Estimated Capital Costs: Study costs £150,000. Development costs, say £5 to 10 million</p> <p>Estimated Revenue Costs: Not known. Subject to outcome of study</p>	

PROJECT FUNDING:

Potential funding sources include:

- National Museum and Galleries of Wales
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- EC
- WDA/WTB

TARGET TIMESCALES:

Study: 1 year

Development: 2 to 5 years

<p>PROJECT TITLE: IRONWORKS FACILITIES ENHANCEMENT: STAGE 1</p> <p>PROJECT CHAMPION: TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL</p>	<p>PROJECT NUMBER: PDM 2</p>
<p>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</p> <p>This project is the first phase of a programme of works to establish the Ironworks as a key ‘point of arrival’ in Blaenavon. This will require the development of the existing reception and exhibition area as a Tourist and Visitor Orientation Centre providing information including a video presentation on the central place of the Ironworks with regard to the surrounding landscape and town. Linked to this, we propose improvements to the Engine Row cottages to provide illustration of what it was like to live when the Ironworks were operating, and the provision of an expanded education room to accommodate school groups. Stage 1 will also make provision for improved toilet facilities.</p>	
<p>PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS</p> <p>The Ironworks is an exceptional archaeological site which is of major significance in terms of industrial history and archaeology. The site is currently undergoing a long term conservation and restoration programme by Cadw. The position of the Ironworks on the main road close to the Town makes it well situated to act as a point of arrival and orientation centre from which visits can explore the town and wider heritage landscape. Relatively modest investment could substantially improve these interpretation facilities to be of greater interest to the general public as well as the specialist and to provide a greater understanding of the role of the Ironworks and its significance with regard to the landscape, and the importance of the restoration programme and the anticipated final results. Minor improvements to the public areas such as the current portacabin toilet facilities could greatly enhance the visitor experience, and making more provision for school groups would provided a valuable educational resource.</p> <p>Specific Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upgrade the current exhibition and reception area to incorporate information for visitors. This should include: the physical improvements to the exhibition and reception area including space for video presentations; and the production of one short video on the landscape/townscape and one covering the restoration programme which provides a clear and stimulating picture of the Ironworks as it once operated • two of the Engine Row cottages should be furnished to illustrate what it was like to live when the Ironworks were operational, with each cottage being furnished to represent a different period. The experience at the National Museum of Wales St Fagans should be drawn on and an informed commentary should be developed to accompany visitors around the cottages • an education room should be provided in North Row to accommodate school parties in particular. A number of interactive exhibits should be designed to explain the rather complicated principles of ironmaking and hence the nature and function of the Blaenavon Ironworks site • sensitively designed public toilet facilities should be provided close to the reception area 	

PROJECT COSTS:

Estimated Capital Costs:

• upgrade exhibition	£120,000
• Engine Row	£50,000
• education room	£65,000
• toilets	£30,000
• Total Capital	£265,000

Estimated Revenue Costs:

• staff (include. Education)	£30,000
• utilities	£5,000
• marketing	£15,000
• replacements/repairs	£6,000
• theatrical interpretation	£10,000
• sundries	£4,000
Less Income (20,000 @ £2.50 @ 60%)	£30,000
	£40,000

Likely Revenue Support**PROJECT FUNDING:**

Potential funding sources include:

- Cadw
- Torfaen County Borough Council
- WTB
- Cadw

TARGET TIMESCALES:

Years 1-2

PROJECT TITLE: IRONWORKS FACILITIES ENHANCEMENT: STAGE 2		PROJECT NUMBER: PDM 3
PROJECT CHAMPION: BLAENAVON COMMUNITY HERITAGE TRUST		
PROJECT DESCRIPTION:		
<p>This project is the second phase of a programme of works to improve the public interpretation facilities at the Ironworks. This will build on the stage 1 improvements and enable greater access by the public and provide additional accommodation for seasonal and voluntary employees and the development of a detailed working model of the Ironworks.</p>		
PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS		
<p>As the restoration programme develops it will be advantageous to make available accommodation on site for students of industrial archaeology or heritage management seeking research and project work, or seasonal and voluntary employees who could contribute to the renovation works. This accommodation need only be basic in standard but would provide an opportunity to attract additional labour to assist the programme of works. A major long term attraction which is currently not provided would be the provision of a large scale detailed model of the Ironworks. This model should include a number of working features such as the water balance to maximise the attraction to most visitors.</p> <p>Specific Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • convert some space at the first floor of Engine Row and North Row and at ground and first floor levels on Middle Row to basic living accommodation • commission the development of a large scale working model of the Ironworks. The foundry house may be the best location for a large scale model (a detailed model will take months to complete and should be commissioned as soon as funding is available) • as restoration work progresses, greater public access should be permitted (public should be allowed close to the furnaces, tunnels and cast houses - hard hats may be necessary) 		
PROJECT COSTS:		
Estimated Capital Costs:		Estimated Revenue
• accommodation	£200,000	Costs: n/a
• model	£50,000	
• Total Capital	£250,000	
PROJECT FUNDING:		
<p>Potential funding sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cadw • Torfaen County Borough Council • Charitable Trusts 		
TARGET TIMESCALES:		
Years 3-4		

PROJECT TITLE: COMMUNITY HERITAGE & ARTS	PROJECT NUMBER: PDM 4
<p>PROJECT CHAMPION: BLAENAVON COMMUNITY HERITAGE TRUST</p> <p>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</p> <p>This project will develop a package of community arts schemes. Ideally this will be led by the newly formed Community Heritage Trust although it may need the active involvement of Torfaen CBC's Arts Development Officer. The project will work with the large number of clubs and associations in Blaenavon and the schools to develop a number of initiatives which will promote an interest in and an understanding of the industrial heritage of the town. The schemes will include the production of community videos, establishing an artist in residence scheme, developing school project work and theatre productions.</p>	
<p>PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS</p> <p>The purpose of this project is to generate and develop a real interest by local residents in the heritage of Blaenavon, and through a community wide arts initiative to actively encourage a commitment by the local community to support the heritage regeneration work. Blaenavon has a large number of active community groups and clubs and this project seeks to build on this resource, and to develop further the existing successful arts and community projects such as the son et lumiere at the Ironworks and the Caribbean Carnival. The details of this initiative will need to evolve from within the local community, but to realise the potential appropriate professional guidance, advice and leadership will be required.</p> <p>The types of projects which could be developed are suggested below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing a community video: this should be professionally produced but featuring local people, and should be about the town, the people and the heritage of industry and enterprise of Blaenavon. This video could be available for viewing at the library and/or the Ironworks • theatre production: this would involve local people working with professional script writers and actors to produce a large scale production such as the Ironworks son et lumiere. This could involve the development of character pieces to stand alone productions • walking and driving tour scripts: scripts and sound dramas could be produced in the form of recorded walking or driving tours for visitors to Blaenavon • artists in residence scheme: writers, painters or sculptors could be encouraged to take up 'residence positions' in Blaenavon to develop programmes of work focusing on the community. The Workingmen's Hall, the new library exhibition area, and a restored St Peter's School are all ideal venues for developing this scheme and providing exhibition space • local arts displays: sculpture and collage pieces produced by local people and directed by the chosen artists in residence could become permanent features of public buildings in Blaenavon • school project work: there are extensive opportunities for developing school project work in association with the many regeneration initiatives. This could include the production of a local World Heritage newsletter for young people • community web site: a site could be set up to act as a publicity tool or point of information exchange to support a number of the regeneration initiatives 	

PROJECT COSTS:

Estimated Capital Costs: 100,000
Estimated Revenue Costs: £50,000 per annum

PROJECT FUNDING:

Potential funding sources include:

- Arts Council, Wales (Arts for All)
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- EC
- Torfaen County Borough Council

TARGET TIMESCALES:

Years 1-5

PROJECT TITLE: BLAENAVON TO PONTYPOOL RAILWAY ENHANCEMENT	PROJECT NUMBER: PDM 5
PROJECT CHAMPION: BLAENAVON INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE TRUST	
<p>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</p> <p>This project will provide assistance to the Blaenavon Railway Company and the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway Society to further develop the railway as a tourist attraction, and to assist with the establishment of an operational management structure to deliver this next phase of development.</p>	
<p>PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS</p> <p>The railway is an important part of the industrial landscape of Blaenavon since it represents the next stage of transport development after the tramways and the canal system, which moved coal and iron to the industrial areas of south Wales. The links with the industrial heritage of the area should therefore be the focus of the development proposals for the railway line, with the purpose of illustrating the important role of the railway and providing public access to the type of stock and engineering which supported the industrial development of the region. The improvements should focus on providing links with Big Pit and providing a high quality product with a high standard of line and railway operation over a limited length of track within the Blaenavon area. If these priority areas are not addressed in the development proposals, the railway line could be considered a liability to the broader objectives of increasing awareness and enhancing the heritage landscape around Blaenavon. To deliver the redevelopment of the railway line and to secure the necessary funding a reorganisation of the existing voluntary management arrangements may be necessary.</p> <p>Suggested actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assisting with the reorganisation of the existing management structure • provide professional assistance to advise on the planning and implementation of the development plans of the Blaenavon Railway Company • obtain the necessary Transport and Works Orders to allow extension of running line • give priority to securing funding for the following upgrades: extending the operational line to Blaenavon High Level Station and The Whistle Inn (the additional costs of extending the line to Talywain can not really be justified in terms of additional benefits as a tourist attraction in the medium term); providing a halt at Big Pit; upgrading Furnace Sidings • rationalise existing railway stock and locomotives to provide the most appropriate collection 	
<p>PROJECT COSTS:</p> <p>Estimated Capital Costs: £1,000,000 (if extend to Brynmawr - a further £1,000,000) Estimated Revenue Costs: n/a</p>	

PROJECT FUNDING:

Potential funding sources include:

- Blaenavon and Pontypool Railway Society
- National Museum for Wales, if developed as part of development of Big Pit as industrial and transport outpost
- EC
- Monmouthshire County Council and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (if extend to Brynmawr)

TARGET TIMESCALES:

Years 3-5

PROJECT TITLE: EVENTS MARKETING PROGRAMME PROJECT CHAMPION: TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL (TOURISM OFFICER)	PROJECT NUMBER: PDM 6
PROJECT DESCRIPTION: <p>Development of a regular programme of activities and events in and around Blaenavon. This would build upon existing activities such as Steam Weekends, mountain bike and hang gliding events, son et lumière etc. Possible ideas include a programme of guided walks, a Cordell Festival, and arts events emerging from the Community Heritage project.</p>	
PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme will provide a focus for marketing activities and raise the profile of the area as a visitor destination and possible World Heritage site. 	
PROJECT COSTS: <p>Estimated Capital Costs: nil Estimated Revenue Costs: £20 to £40,000 depending upon events</p>	
PROJECT FUNDING: <p>Potential funding sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torfaen County Borough Council • Monmouthshire County Council • Brecon Beacons National Park • Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council • Blaenavon Town Council • Event organisers 	
TARGET TIMESCALES: <p>Years 1-5</p>	

KEY SITES AND BUILDINGS PROGRAMME

12.58 This programme contains proposals to deal with the problems of dereliction and decay in the heart of the town of Blaenavon. Specifically, it includes:

- proposals to use the former Council Offices for a new Library and Community facility
- proposals for the Blaenavon Buildings Preservation Trust to restore St Peter's School as a base for the World Heritage Site Management, Archive and Project Office for the Blaenavon Community Heritage Trust from which it could undertake its research and educational activities and implement projects in the town and surrounding area
- a number of grant schemes aimed at providing resources for the adaptation and reuse of town centre buildings in support of the overall strategy.

12.59 While Torfaen CBC are now well advanced with their proposal to convert the former Council Offices into a new library, having approved expenditure of £350,000, reuse of St Peter's School remains an unresolved issue. A variety of ideas have been put forward in the past but these have not come to fruition because of the difficulty of identifying a viable long term use.

12.60 We believe that the formation of the Blaenavon Community Heritage Trust and the related Blaenavon Building Preservation Trust offers potential mechanisms for both restoring and providing a long term use for St Peter's School which is now in a serious state of decay notwithstanding its status as a Listed Building of considerable significance in the social history of the town. It is therefore appropriate that restoring the building for long term use by the World Heritage Site and Community Heritage Trust should be an early target for the Building Preservation Trust. This will require detailed surveys and plans to be drawn up for approval and costing prior to seeking funding. This could include:

- contributions from Torfaen County Borough Council who own the buildings which have been allowed to fall into disrepair
- Cadw through its grants scheme
- European Commission through Objective 2

- Architectural Heritage Fund who are able to make funding available to Building Preservation Trusts.

12.61 Given the scale of expenditure required, which we estimate could be of the order of £500,000 we believe that this project should be tackled on a phased basis involving:

- emergency repairs to prevent further deterioration of the building fabric (see above HC15)
- restoration of the Lower School as a base for the World Heritage Site Office and the Community Heritage Trust
- restoration of the Upper School for expansion of the Trust's activities or other related uses e.g. World Heritage Site archives.

Success in restoring St Peter's School will therefore be closely linked to success in establishing organisations with a commitment to community based regeneration, building a future on the heritage assets of the town and surrounding area.

12.62 Tackling the problem of physical dereliction and decay within the Town Centre in general and Broad Street in particular requires careful targeting of resources with the aim of stimulating private sector interest and commitment. Specifically, we recommend:

- **refurbishment of 15-19 Broad Street** which are the only listed commercial properties on Broad Street and therefore worthy of special assistance. This would help to build confidence acting as a catalyst for other improvements
- **commercial renewal grants.** There is already precedent for the use of such grants for external works within the commercial renewal on Broad Street. In effect, such grants operate as 'gap funding' with the aim of meeting the high costs of adapting low value properties to provide for new commercial uses including visitor accommodation which could be located in the former public houses. Clearly, projects would need to be assessed on an individual basis to determine value for money. We would envisage a significant involvement of the proposed Building Preservation Trust in this task
- **housing improvement/renewal grants.** Conversion of former commercial property to residential use provides a potential means of reducing vacancies. This will require grant support which may be attracted through declaration of a Neighbourhood Renewal Area, which is presently being investigated, and/or through the involvement of Housing Associations funded through Tai Cmryu.

- 12.63 Clearly these programmes need to be developed and implemented in co-ordination with other projects as part of an overall town centre regeneration strategy including traffic circulation and parking, townscape heritage and environmental improvements.
- 12.64 The projects which we would recommend as part of the key sites and buildings programme are:

KSB 1 Council Offices Library and Community Facilities

KSB 2 St Peter's School Restoration

KSB 3 Broad Street facelift

KSB 4 Commercial Improvement Grants Scheme

KSB 5 Housing Conversion/Improvement Grants Scheme

The projects are described in the following project descriptions.

<p>PROJECT TITLE: ST PETERS SCHOOL RESTORATION AND REUSE</p> <p>PROJECT CHAMPION: BLAENAVON INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE TRUST</p>	<p>PROJECT NUMBER: KSB 1</p>
<p>PROJECT DESCRIPTION: This project will be the first phase redevelopment of St Peters School. The works will include carrying out restoration works on the shell of the building and redeveloping the Lower School building to accommodate the administrative centre of the newly formed Blaenavon Heritage Trust.</p>	
<p>PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS St Peters School is a very prominent building on the main route through Blaenavon and its serious state of disrepair portrays a poor image of the town. The purpose of this project is to halt the deterioration of one of the most historical and one of the most prominent buildings in Blaenavon, and to identify potential uses. The Blaenavon Heritage Trust will require a centre from which to operate and it is important that a location is identified within the town to emphasise the importance of the town and links between the town and the heritage landscape. The internal layout of the Lower School has been identified as a good location and priority should be given to restoring this area and establishing the Trust. Potential uses for the Upper School will depend on the progress with other projects and it will be vital that restoration works should begin on the Upper School without a definite end user in place because of the physical and historical prominence of the building. Potential end users include: artists/commercial workshops, gallery, cycling centre to link with the proposed Sustrans route, restoration training centre.</p> <p>Specific Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beginning restoration works on all St Peters School • convert Lower School to accommodate the Blaenavon Industrial Heritage Trust and subsidiaries • establish feasibility of different end users for the Upper School 	
<p>PROJECT COSTS:</p> <p>Estimated Capital Costs: £500,000 (restoration of Upper and Lower School buildings and making provision for Trust in the Lower School) Estimated Revenue Costs: n/a</p>	
<p>PROJECT FUNDING:</p> <p>Potential funding sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torfaen County Borough Council • Cadw • Welsh Development Agency • Heritage Lottery Fund • European funding • charitable trusts 	
<p>TARGET TIMESCALES:</p> <p>Years 1-3</p>	

PROJECT TITLE: COUNCIL OFFICES LIBRARY AND VISITOR CENTRE	PROJECT NUMBER:
PROJECT CHAMPION: TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	KSB 2
<p>PROJECT DESCRIPTION: This project will relocate the Blaenavon public library currently located in the new St Peters School, to the former Blaenavon Council grade II listed building in Lion Street. This building will also make provision for tourist information services and exhibition space, and will act as a focal point for visitors to the town.</p>	
<p>PROJECT PURPOSE AND ACTION POINTS The purpose of this project is to provide a new facility in the town centre to serve residents and visitors to the area, while bringing an important redundant building back into use. The existing public library is located in the new St Peters School but is under pressure to relocate because the school needs the space for teaching purposes. Moving the library into the centre will make it more accessible to residents and will provide a better space for other community activities. The space available on the ground floor could accommodate the library as long as appropriate disabled access was provided from the adjacent car park. The first floor area provides a good opportunity to provide a feature of interest for visitors and residents. This could comprise an exhibition area for the community arts projects, Alexander Cordell exhibition and could include a tourist information point. The redevelopment of the old Council buildings would provide an anchor attraction at the north end of the town and would be an important feature on the heritage trail and would form as a link between the town centre and the other attraction in the area.</p> <p>Specific Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish the full commitment of the Library Service and the Department of Leisure and Culture of Torfaen County Borough Council • renovate old Council building and relocate public library into the ground floor • identify range of uses for the upper floors (confirm opportunities for funding a Cordell exhibition by a local benefactor) • introduce new attraction on upper floors (given the nature of the facility and its location any attraction is unlikely to be able to support a charged admission other than through voluntary donations) • identify staff and volunteers to support the opening of the library for at least five days a week 	
<p>PROJECT COSTS: Estimated Capital Costs: £650,000 Estimated Revenue Costs: n/a</p>	
<p>PROJECT FUNDING: Potential funding sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torfaen County Borough Council • private benefactor • Arts Council, Wales • Cadw • charitable trusts • WTB 	
<p>TARGET TIMESCALES: Years 1-2</p>	

CONCLUSION

- 12.65 We believe that this Plan provides the basis for a five year programme of Action which will lay the foundations for building a sustainable future for Blaenavon as an attractive place to live, visit and invest based upon a cultural heritage landscape of World Significance. Reversing the decline in the fortunes of the town will require a concentrated effort based on a partnership approach of public, private and community interests. The final section of this report goes on to examine the resources which will be required and the benefits likely to arise.

13. FUNDING AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 13.1 The purpose of this final section is to examine the likely scale and sources of funding for the Action Plan described in Section 12 and to consider its potential impact in terms of economic, heritage, environmental and social benefits.

PROGRAMME COSTS

- 13.2 Table 13.1 sets out indicative estimates of the costs likely to be involved in delivering Year 1 and Year 1 to 5 programmes. This is broken down into the five sub-programmes described in the previous section and seeks to distinguish between capital and revenue expenditure. These estimates have been prepared by aggregating the project cost information contained in the project descriptions in Section 12.
- 13.3 Significant uncertainties remain over the cost of individual projects, for example the scale of investment required at Big Pit remains subject to detailed investigations, however, we believe that the figures presented in Table 13.1 provide a good indication of the level of expenditure required, both in the short term and over a longer timescale, to deliver heritage led regeneration in and around Blaenavon.

TABLE 13.1					
INDICATIVE COST OF 1 AND 5 YEAR ACTION PLAN FOR BLAENAVON					
HERITAGE AND REGENERATION STUDY (£M - FIGURES ARE ROUNDED)					
	1 Year Cost (£m)		5 Year Cost (£m)		
	Capital	Revenue	Capital	Revenue	%
Organisation Development	-	0.15	-	0.75	4.1
Heritage Conservation and Interpretation	0.20	0.04	0.93	0.15	5.9
Access and Environmental Enhancement	0.08	-	1.59	-	8.7
Product Development and Marketing	0.30	0.11	11.62	0.30	65.5
Key sites and buildings	0.28	-	2.86	-	15.7
Total	£0.86	£0.30	£17.00	£1.20	
Total	£1.16m		£18.2m		

13.4 Specifically we would comment as follows:

- the scale of resources likely to be required bears comparison with the experience of other major industrial heritage sites/attractions such as Ironbridge Gorge Museum. Such attractions require expenditure to be committed over extended timescales. A figure of between £15 and £20 million over 5 years equates to average annual expenditure of £3 to £4 million. In practice of course, expenditure will need to continue beyond the five year period covered by the Action Plan.
- the priority which needs to be given to developing the visitor product focused upon Big Pit, the Ironworks, the Railway and the Town Centre is reflected in the high proportion of expenditure focused upon this area. This is supported by expenditure targeted towards key sites and buildings in the Town Centre. By contrast, expenditure on other programme areas is relatively modest reflecting the low key approach proposed to the conservation, environmental enhancement and interpretation of the industrial heritage landscape.
- Year 1 expenditure is necessarily modest given the need to develop project proposals and obtain funding support. Of the little over £1 million identified, around 50% of funding is already committed to the new Library in the refurbished Council Offices, and the Big Pit development study. However, progress needs to be made in establishing an organisational structure capable of delivering the programme and making an early impact in key areas.

FUNDING SOURCES

13.5 The key potential public sector funding sources identified are as follows:

- Torfaen and other County Borough Councils
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Welsh Development Agency
- European Union
- Cadw
- CCW.
- WTB
- National Monuments and Galleries for Wales

There are a number of other potential sources including Blaenavon Town Council, the Arts Lottery Fund and the National Museum of Wales, but these have not been considered in detail.

Torfaen County Borough Council and Monmouthshire County Council

- 13.6 Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC) and Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) will need to be major contributors to many of the projects, both in terms of capital and revenue funding. The ability of the Councils to meet these financial demands is not clear but it is certain that if TCBC and to a lesser extent MCC, do not take a lead in the development of these projects then the future regeneration of Blaenavon is unlikely to take place. There is also scope for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to contribute to some of the projects.
- 13.7 In particular, TCBC will need to be a major contributor to the costs of establishing an appropriate organisation and a framework through the Blaenavon Heritage Partnership and the proposed Community Heritage, and Building Preservation Trusts. These organisations are crucial to the whole strategy as without them co-ordination and momentum will be lost.
- 13.8 TCBC are in the process of submitting applications which will assist them in their funding, if successful. This includes: Neighbourhood Renewal Area Status, which should provide additional funds for environmental improvements and improvements to vacant and rundown properties. In addition, they are seeking to secure European Funding through the Industrial South Wales SPD. For other projects, TCBC will have to rely on its mainstream capital and revenue programmes. Unfortunately, a Stage 1 application to the HLF for Townscape Heritage Initiative funding was unsuccessful.

Heritage Lottery Fund

- 13.9 The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is identified as a major contributor to the funding of several projects. Their commitment to a £150,000 development study for Big Pit has been confirmed but this may reduce their willingness to contribute to all the projects where they have been identified as a potential funding source.
- 13.10 As regards the other projects it is useful to be aware of the key criteria which projects have to meet to fulfil the requirements for HLF funding. Amended guidelines were announced in April 1998 against the background of reduced funding due to the introduction of the New Opportunities Fund as a sixth good cause. The HLF is also able to fund a wider range of projects than previously, including supporting stand-alone access and education projects, as well as projects to conserve and protect the heritage. Applicants will therefore need to show that their projects will help to

preserve, and enhance, or widen public access to, or understanding and enjoyment of, one or more aspects of the physical heritage including:

- natural habitats, and countryside of local, regional or national importance
- urban green spaces, including parks
- archaeological projects
- historic buildings and sites including, townscapes
- museum collections
- historic library collections and archives, including photographic, sound and film archives
- industrial, transport and maritime heritage.

In addition they also provide special assistance to Building Preservation Trusts which may be of assistance if a trust is set up.

- 13.11 Although the application for Townscape Heritage Initiative funding from HLF was refused, it may still be possible to promote an area-based bid to HLF for the whole of the proposed World Heritage site with the possible exception of Big Pit where the principle of support has already been established. The area based approach is intended to allow the development of a comprehensive approach in those circumstances where a range of heritage assets are found across a geographic area. This is precisely the situation prevailing in and around Blaenavon. Clearly the case for such an approach has been strengthened by the inclusion of Blaenavon on the UK Government's tentative list of sites for World Heritage Site status.

Welsh Development Agency

- 13.12 The Welsh Development Agency (WDA) has been identified as a potential funding partner in undertaking safety and drainage works to part of the study area, access works and improvements around the Ironworks, Big Pit and other sites and roads in the town centre, and the restoration of St Peter's School.

13.13 The WDA's key objectives are:

- successful marketing of Wales to attract quality inward investment.
- stimulating high quality environmental improvements, urban regeneration and property development, to enable Wales to compete for business investment and promote indigenous business growth
- creating opportunities for urban and rural communities to improve quality of life
- creating a competitive business infrastructure for growing firms.

13.14 The WDA have been a significant source of funding for economic and environmental projects in and around Blaenavon. Despite the uncertainty surrounding the Agency's future activities it is likely that some funding will continue to be available to support physical and economic regeneration. In the case of Blaenavon this is likely to be focused upon:

- land reclamation, and environmental enhancement for essential safety and drainage works within Pwll Du heritage landscape
- environmental improvements through an 'Urban Development Programme' aimed at creating favourable circumstances for private sector investment.

European Union

13.15 Blaenavon and the study area comes within the Single Programming Document of the Industrial South Wales Objective 2 area which expires in 1999. It is not certain how much funding remains in this programme as the latest batch of applications has just been received and no decisions have been made. The dates for future applications to this fund are as follow:

Timescale for submission

02/11/98 - 27/11/98
12/04/99 - 07/05/99

Timescale for Projects

01/02/99 - 30/09/99
01/09/99 - 31/12/99

Thereafter EU funding will be dependent on decisions resulting from the current review of Structural Funds.

13.16 The Single Programming Document identifies the following main priorities:

1. Community Economic Regeneration
2. Investment in the Valleys
3. Developing Indigenous SME Potential
4. Increasing the Innovative Capacity of SMEs
5. Action for Tourism.

It is clear from this that some of the projects identified as appropriate for European Funding could be included in Priority 5 but possibly also Priority 1. The probability of attracting such grants will depend upon competition for remaining funding and the ability to promote credible applications. This includes the ability to undertake expenditure within the specified timescales.

13.17 Under Priority 5, Action for Tourism, there are three measures:

- strategic tourism development
- marketing Industrial South Wales
- human resource development for the tourism sector.

It is understood that Blaenavon has not been selected as a strategic tourism project, although it might be possible to attract EU funding to key projects such as Big Pt and the Ironworks.

13.18 Grant is awarded at the minimum rate necessary to ensure that a project is carried out. Examples include:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • infrastructure capital investments without any revenue generating | 50% |
| • infrastructure capital investments with revenue generating | 40% |
| • communication and transport | 25% |

Cadw

13.19 Cadw is the executive agency within the Welsh Office responsible for managing those ancient monuments which are in state care. It also has responsibilities as regards the provision of grants in respect of ancient buildings and monuments. Grants are discretionary and based on a percentage of approved actual costs. Type of assistance available:

- grants to outstanding buildings - intended for secular and religious buildings of national interest

- grants to buildings in conservation area
- town schemes in historic towns where Cadw and the local authority allocate matching grants (no such scheme in Blaenavon)
- Civic Initiatives (Heritage) Grant Scheme - intended to preserve, enhance or improve the physical environment in Welsh towns and to increase social awareness of the heritage in Wales (must not be any other public funds).

There is therefore scope for attracting funding from Cadw, particularly for continuing conservation work on the ironworks and grant contributions for the restoration of buildings within the town centre conservation area eg. St Peter's School.

Countryside Council for Wales

13.20 The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) is the Government's statutory adviser on wildlife, countryside and maritime conservation matters in Wales. It works with other parties assisting them to pursue countryside management projects via grant aid.

13.21 Grants are available to public bodies, non public bodies and private individuals for projects or programmes which meet CCW's objectives. Grants are discretionary but do not normally exceed 50% of eligible costs. European and Lottery funds may be matched to CCW grant but applicants must invest at least 15% from their own resources. Priority areas for grant aid in 1997-2000 are:

- landscape - protection, conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape
 - management and practical projects in AONBs and heritage coasts
 - work of voluntary organisations undertaking landscape improvements
- in National Parks
 - assistance towards strategic purchase of land in designated areas
- Wildlife and Habitats
- Public access go, and enjoyment of, the countryside
- promoting understanding of the environment.

Taking these criteria into account we believe the CCW funding potentially has a key role to play in relation to the opening up of the wider heritage landscape for public access and interpretation.

Private Sector

13.22 As indicated previously a key aim of the Heritage and Regeneration Strategy is to attract sustained private sector investment into the area. This is likely to be a slow process, dependent upon halting and reversing past trends and building confidence in a new economic future for the town. The key areas where private sector investment is likely to arise are:

- **mineral extraction:** the recent land disposal by the Coal Authority illustrates continuing interest in the potential for coaling within the study area. This has been discussed at length earlier in this report. Generally, we believe that the opportunities are likely to be limited by the application of planning policies aimed at protecting the environment and heritage features of the area. There may however be some scope for small scale extraction which could be the source of funding through planning gain. The scale and timing of such contributions however remain subject to a high degree of uncertainty
- **business investment:** this will involve investment by individuals or small businesses in local enterprises. The most likely sectors where this will arise are construction, retail, tourism/leisure and agriculture. During the course of the study we have become aware of individuals seeking to develop a livelihood in the area
- **investment in housing:** the commonest form of private investment is through house purchase. As discussed elsewhere, the residential property market suffers from low levels of demand. A key to the success of the strategy must be to make Blaenavon a more attractive place in which to live or even to have a second home from which to enjoy the attractions of the surrounding area.

13.23 All three sources of private sector investment are likely to lag significantly behind investment by the public sector which will be necessary to demonstrate potential opportunities and to act as ‘pump priming’.

Voluntary Sector

13.24 In our opinion the success of the Strategy and Action Plan will depend critically upon the ability to harness the energies, expertise and commitment of the voluntary sector. The following groups are considered to be of particular importance:

- the National Trust will need to be actively involved in the Blaenavon Heritage Partnership and be represented on the proposed Community Heritage Trust.

While recognising the financial constraints within which the Trust operates, we believe that there are opportunities for it to take a more active role in a number of the projects. The potential of Blaenavon as a World Heritage Site offers the opportunity for the Trust to deepen its involvement in Welsh industrial archaeology and social history and provide access to expertise in fund raising, project management and marketing

- the local community has a central role to play in supporting projects through volunteer activities as it already does in relation to a number of initiatives in the town. The aim must be to widen the base of community support and harness the knowledge and commitment which only local people can offer
- voluntary groups such as the Hang Gliding club and the Blaenavon and Pontypool Railway Society also need to be harnessed as a source of potential funding for project development and implementation. While acknowledging their specific interests, these need to be incorporated within the overall Management Plan.

13.25 We believe that the general approach to funding outlined above represents a realistic way of harnessing the resources required to deliver heritage-led regeneration. The absence of any single source of funding emphasises the need to work in partnership in the way outlined in Section 12. While the public sector will undoubtedly have a leading role to play in kick starting the process of regeneration, it must be recognised that local community and private sector resources need to be harnessed if the long term vision of the town as a place to live, visit and invest is to be realised.

BENEFITS ASSESSMENT

13.26 The preceding paragraphs have highlighted the costs likely to be involved in implementing the Strategy and Action Plan. Clearly expenditure of this level needs to be justified in terms of the benefits which will arise. These are considered below under the following categories:

- economic benefit
- heritage
- environmental
- social/community

ECONOMIC IMPACT

13.27 If implemented, the Strategy and Action Plan can be expected to give rise to economic benefits. These are conventionally measured in terms of income, employment and investment

- increased income can be expected to arise from more visitors spending more time and money in the area. This will be spent in attractions and local businesses (shops, catering and accommodation providers). At present, approximately 100,000 visitors are attracted to Bit Pit. If these visitors can be persuaded to spend longer in the area and new visitors can be attracted, local income would be significantly enhanced. For example, if 25% of existing visitors could be encouraged to stay in the area, additional income of around £1.87 million would be generated. For each 50,000 additional visitors attracted (assuming a 3:1 day visitor : staying visitor split) a further £1.16 million would be generated
- if a target of £3.0 million additional visitor expenditure were achieved this could support around 150 full time equivalent job in addition to the employment likely to arise from construction activity. We believe that this is a realistic estimate of what could be achieved over a five year period from the type of programme proposed. Clearly, individual projects will need to be assessed in terms of their contribution to this job target
- investment by the private sector will arise through new businesses created and expenditure on land and buildings. Initially, given weak market conditions we do not believe that public : private sector leverage will exceed 1:1. However, as market confidence builds one could expect to see rising property values and increasing private sector contributions.

13.28 The key economic performance measures for the programme will therefore be:

- number and composition of visitors to the area
- construction employment (man years)
- permanent employment (FTE's)
- new business creation
- private sector investment leverage; and
- property values.

HERITAGE

13.29 A substantial part of the programme is concerned with recording and preserving the heritage features which comprise the Blaenavon Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. While a key objective must be to get this area inscribed as a 'World Heritage Site', the real aim must be to protect the area's heritage for its own sake and to use it as an educational resource. In this regard, we believe that the key performance measures for this aspect of the programme will be:

- percentage of heritage area surveyed and recorded
- status and extent (area and number) of heritage designations
- number of heritage features benefiting from preservation/conservation work
- number of heritage features accessible to the public
- number of educational visitors/study teams.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

13.30 The Strategy and Action Plan is intended to result in enhanced environmental conditions. This includes:

- removal or treatment of potential physical hazards
- improved vegetation of former mineral workings with enhanced ecological values
- environmental treatment of key frontages and facades
- improvement of derelict sites and buildings
- environmental improvements to the public realm.

Measures aimed at recording performance in these areas need to be both quantitative and qualitative and closely linked to improvements in economic performance and investment.

SOCIAL/COMMUNITY

13.31 Measures of social and community benefits need to record the number of local people participating in the heritage-led regeneration of Blaenavon. Clearly, the extent to which benefits are reaching those in greatest need is of particular concern and should be reflected in performance measures. These should include:

- number of new/improved community facilities
- numbers of local people participating in community-based projects
- numbers in target groups eg. young people, unemployed, sick, benefiting from programme.

OVERVIEW

13.32 Clearly, a range of measures need to be used to build up a comprehensive picture of the benefits to emerge from the Heritage and Regeneration Strategy set out in this report. Ultimately, however, the key test will be whether or not Blaenavon becomes an attractive historic town in which to live, visit and invest.

13.33