



North Torfaen Holistic Area Regeneration Plan (HARP)

Final Baseline Analysis

December 2008



Torfaen County Borough Council



North Torfaen Holistic Area Regeneration Plan

Final Baseline Analysis

Author: D. Jones / D. Brown / S. Williams /
R. Lister / A. Warr / C. Jones / N.
Miller

Checker: D. Jones

Approver: G. Webber



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Hyder Consulting (UK) Limited

2212959

HCL House, St Mellons Business Park, St Mellons, Cardiff CF3 0EY, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)870 000 3001 Fax: +44 (0)870 000 3901 www.hyderconsulting.com



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1 Introduction

Hyder Consulting (UK) Ltd has been commissioned by Torfaen County Borough Council, in partnership with the Heads of the Valleys Board and the Welsh Assembly Government (Department of Economy and Transport) to consider the holistic regeneration needs of the North Torfaen sub area of the Heads of the Valleys (HOV).

The outcome of this commission will be a Holistic Area Regeneration Plan (HARP) to provide a strategy framework for regeneration up until 2020 supported by an action plan to guide the investment decisions of the main funding bodies at a national and local level in North Torfaen over a three year period, 2009-2012.

The HARP represents a step change in the regeneration process, with a move away from the current focus on meeting the physical regeneration needs and opportunities of an area to one based on a wider, more holistic approach, addressing the range of programmes set out in the Heads of the Valley “Turning Heads” Strategy 2020, and more recently the “One Wales” documents.

The introduction to the ‘Turning Heads – A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020’ states that by the year 2020, the area will be:

- A culturally rich, dynamic network of vibrant and safe communities
- A place where people want to live, work and play with a sustainable, high quality of life and a thriving population
- Helping to drive the success of South East Wales as an internationally recognised Capital Region.

The strategy considered a number of options for delivering the above and recommended that the best way forward was by ‘Developing Balanced Communities’ The strategy states that:

‘To be successful in the future, the Heads of the Valleys need a mix of strong employment opportunities and distinctive communities that are attractive, accessible, and offer an excellent quality of life in an improved natural environment. Identified centres of economic growth and employment must be complemented by a network of connected communities providing a mix of housing, retail and leisure/tourism facilities and supporting a broad range of high quality public services.

The above is particularly true for the North Torfaen area.

Until now it was recognised that key issues such as raising skills levels and helping people into work were considered priorities throughout the lifetime of the programme. To complement this approach the HOV strategy identified the following three areas which have acted as the focus over the three years of the themed programme:

- 2006/07: Major Environmental (landscape) projects
- 2007/08: Renewal of Key Town Centres
- 2008/09: Development of the Tourism & Leisure Offer

The new holistic plans require a more integrated and co-ordinated approach, based on a commitment to pursue sustainable, holistic regeneration in which the physical, economic, social as well as community aspirations are fully integrated and where regeneration priorities can be delivered in a more structured and co-ordinated way.

The resulting shared agenda for regeneration will play a pivotal role in informing the investment plans of HOV, other WAG Departments, local authority and community /voluntary organisations over the initial 3 year period of the HARP. Early completion and approval is therefore required in order that the remaining HARPs can be prepared in time to inform decisions across the HOV Programme area on future funding programmes, commencing in 2009/10.

It is acknowledged that within the 11 sub areas / urban clusters of the HOV programme area much has already been done, particularly through the work of the town centres group in developing a spatial strategy for the HOV. However, it is considered that there is a need to now move away from purely physical (transport, settlement / site function etc) strategy planning and take a wider, more holistic view of the 11 sub areas, dealing with the full range of programmes set out in '[Turning Heads: A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys](#)' and more recently '[One Wales](#)'. Alongside these programmes, the HARPS will also look to support the delivery of local community strategies and consider aspirations at the ward level, resulting in a shared agenda for regeneration and service improvement which will inform investment plans of the HOV and other organisations over the initial specified three year Action Plan period.

Strategically, North Torfaen is located on the eastern boundary of the Heads of the Valley programme area to the north-west of the city of Newport. The area, as defined for the purposes of this study, includes the Torfaen local authority wards of Blaenavon, Abersychan, Trevethin, Snatchwood and Pontnewynydd.

This report presents the baseline analysis and policy review for North Torfaen and where appropriate its wider regional and national context and sits within the wider structure of the HARPS strategy and must be read in that context. The information contained within this report has materialised from a series of consultation meetings and events with local members, relevant Council Officers and Stakeholders, along with review and analysis of relevant policy documents, published strategies and socio-economic data for the area

1.1 Approach

Hyder's approach to the study has been a systematic one, reviewing and building upon existing plans and strategies covering the North Torfaen and HOV areas, analysing existing and planned public service delivery, reviewing baseline data relating to all aspects of the study area, the identification of key issues and opportunities, through to the development of strategic objectives, project evaluation, individual project opportunities and an action plan for delivery.

The Study has been divided into 3 Volumes covering the Baseline Assessment and Policy Review (Volume 1), Evaluation Process and Plan Compatibility (Volume 2) and Strategy and Action Plan (Volume 3). This format has assisted in the presentation of the report and will allow ease of reference for plan users.

Volume 1 – Baseline Assessment and Policy Review

Strategy Appraisal

Presents the key demographic data for the study area and explores the main features and trends on a topic basis, covering health, education, skills and training, housing, retail and town centres, tourism and heritage, transportation and movement, the built and natural environment and community infrastructure. This section also contains a market appraisal of the retail and employment sectors.

Strategic and Local Context

Examines the policy background to the Study Area as set out in the various tiers of planning policy and strategy documentation, with particular reference to the Wales Spatial Plan, Turning Heads, Torfaen CBC Adopted Local Plan, Local Development Plan (LDP) Preferred Strategy, and Community Strategies. This section also highlights existing and planned initiatives / projects that are likely to have a bearing on the strategy development and future service delivery within the HARP area.

Consultation

A summary is presented of the outcome of the stakeholder consultations undertaken during the strategy development, along with a list of consultees. (Appendix 1).

Volume 2 - Evaluation & Compatibility

Summary of Issues

This section provides a summary of the issues identified in the preceding baseline analysis highlighting "hot spots" at a ward level.

Strategy Compatibility

The compatibility of the HARP strategic objectives and the issues identified; the consistency of strategy objectives with other key strategy documents, along with a sustainability appraisal of the strategic objectives is presented in a series of matrices.

Project Development and Evaluation

Provides a “long list” of project opportunities for North Torfaen HARP derived from the earlier analysis work and key stakeholder consultations. The evaluation of potential projects is assessed in line with a “3-Stage” evaluation process, with recommendations for projects to be included within the strategy Action Plan.

Volume 3 - Strategy and Action Plan

Key Issues

Provides a brief outline of the key issues identified earlier in relation to the HARP area

Strategic and Local Planning Context

Provides a strategic and local planning context to the HARP area, exploring North Torfaen in both its wider Torfaen CBC and Heads of the Valleys setting.

Visioning & Strategic Objectives

Outlines the vision for North Torfaen to 2020, represented spatially and through the strategic objectives that will assist in achieving the strategy vision.

Strategy Development and Action Plan 2009-2012

Sets out the project opportunities for the HARP under thematic programme headings at both a study area and settlement area level. This is followed by an Action Plan to guide delivery of key projects and opportunities within the North Torfaen area during the next 3 years.

1.2 Consultation

The North Torfaen HARP area contains a range of community representatives and stakeholders, offering a wealth of knowledge in relation to the local area. From the outset of the study, the involvement of these key individuals and groups has been crucial and in providing the opportunity for issues and ideas to be fed into the process thereby ensuring the delivering of a successful strategy. A full list of consultees is provided in [Appendix A](#). The main forms of consultation utilised throughout the study have included:

- A series of meetings / discussions held with local stakeholders, organisations and local Members;
- Detailed consultation with officers from the Welsh Assembly Government, and Torfaen County Borough Council; and
- Attendance at meetings of the Blaenavon Town Council and Communities First Forum groups.

It is anticipated that through undertaking such an extensive programme of key stakeholder consultation throughout the HARP area, the strategy and

action plan will have support and ownership across the sub area, leading to the successful delivery of the action plan and individual projects.

Face to face meetings and telephone conversations were conducted with identified key players within the wider regeneration process. These consultations often related to a specific subject area, nevertheless provided the study with a range of views and opinions in relation to general issues and opportunities within the strategy, thereby enhancing the baseline appraisal. The main organisations consulted included Bron Afon Community Housing, Doncaster's, Blaenavon Cheese Company, Blaenavon Ironworks, Big Pit, and Torfaen Tourism to name but a few. A full list of consultations can be found in [Appendix A](#).

Detailed consultation was undertaken with a wide range of officers from the Welsh Assembly Government and Torfaen CBC in order to gain a working understanding of key issues within the HARP area as well as discussing existing and future projects / proposals. Consultations were held with officers from a range of local authority departments (a full list can be found in [Appendix A](#)). These consultations provided the study with important information relating to key projects and also provided first hand experiences of potential opportunities and constraints within the study area. These have proved invaluable in informing the subsequent development of strategic and local actions.

As with the consultations outlined above, attendance of the study team at meetings of the relevant Communities First Forums, has proved beneficial in providing a focussed venue for discussing the specific needs of individual communities. Meetings held with relevant ward Councillors provided an opportunity for local members to input their respective experiences and knowledge into the development study.

A summary of the key issues arising out of the various stakeholder meetings / consultations is included within the Baseline Assessment, which, along with the other issues highlighted has been an important contribution in informing the subsequent stages of work.

We would like to take the opportunity to express our thanks to all those who provided an input to the Study and particularly officers from Torfaen CBC, DE+T and the HOV Programme who have assisted greatly with their advice and guidance and in providing information in support of the Study.

2 Baseline Analysis

In short, this section provides a baseline summary of the key demographic data for the study area and explores the key features and trends in health, education, skills and training, housing, retail and town centres, tourism and heritage, transportation and movement, the natural and built environment community infrastructure and commercial market analysis. As such, the analysis is split into distinct sections, whilst also respecting the synergies that exist. This exercise in itself highlights the holistic nature of the task at hand.

2.1 Population

Contextually, the study area is located to the North of the County Borough, covering five wards. Population is largely concentrated in settlements located on the valley floor and sides, in developments dating from the late nineteenth/early twentieth century that were built in close proximity to local industry. As such, the majority of the settlement pattern runs in a linear north-south direction reflecting the topography of the area.

According to the 2001 Census, the population of the Torfaen HARP area was just under 20,000. This figure equates to slightly under 25% of the total population of Torfaen CBC. Whilst a relatively small percentage increase of 0.9% occurred between 2001 and 2005, this was still higher than the rate of increase for the County Borough, yet less than the national increase in population of 1.5%.

In terms of future population projections, it is estimated that the Torfaen HARPS area will have a population of 22,800 before 2020, assuming that the current rate of increase remains similar to that recently experienced. This figure, based on current rates of increase would equate to a population of approximately 3,000 greater than that which was estimated in 2005. These trends are reflected in the table below.

Table 1 - Mid year estimates of population and population increase

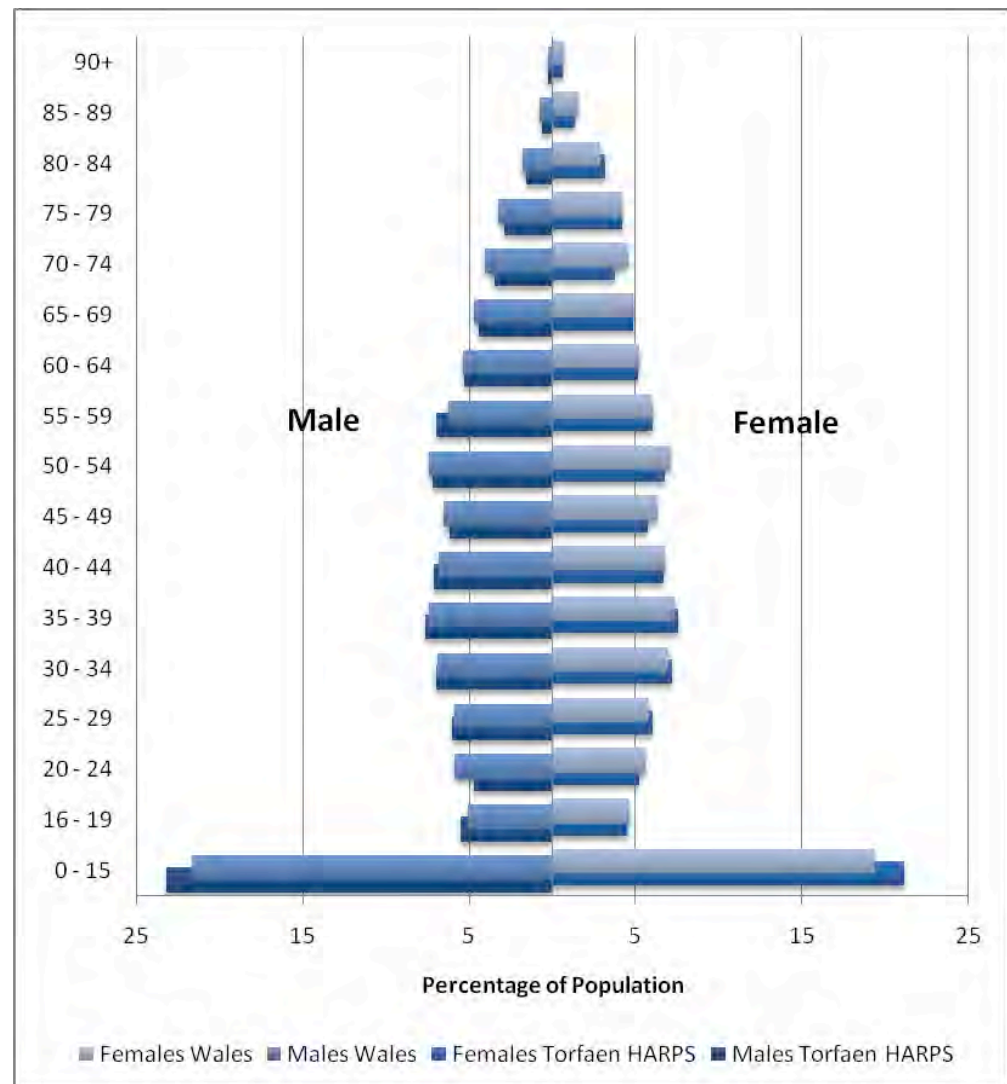
	Mid 2001 Population est.	Mid 2005 Population est.	Percentage Increase
Torfaen HARPS	19,749	19,936	0.9%
Torfaen	90,909	90,964	0.1%
Wales	2,910,195	2,953,550	1.5%

Source: *Census Area Statistics (CAS) Ward population estimates for England and Wales, mid-2001/2005 (experimental statistics)*, www.statistics.gov.uk

When looking at the ward specific data for the North Torfaen HARPS area, the ward of Snatchwood shows the greatest percentage population change with an increase of 4.4% between Mid-2001 and Mid-2005. By contrast, a decreasing population is apparent in the wards of Pontnewynydd and Trevethin, where population declined by 2.4% and 0.3% respectively.

Demography

Figure 1 - Age Demographic by Sex, North Torfaen HARPS & Wales



Source: National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk). Census of Population, 2001
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The age demographic for the Torfaen HARP area suggests that over the next 15 years to 2023, the working age population will increase, noting that the proportion of those aged 0 to 15 is higher than that of the 65+ age

group. However, this statement assumes that those in the 0-15 age group will remain living in the area and not out-migrate. It is also observed that the HARPS area includes a lower proportion of those aged over 60 than the average for Wales as a whole.

Birth and Death Rates

Table 2 - Birth and Death Rates (per 1000), 1998

	Torfaen HARPS	Torfaen	Wales
Birth Rate	13.0	11.9	11.5
Death Rate	11.0	10.8	11.7

Source: Neighbourhood Statistics. 1998. National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk). Census of Population, 2001. Crown copyright material is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO.

Ward data illustrates that Abersychan and Trevethin have the highest birth rates at 15 per 1000 with the lowest birth rate observed in Blaenavon at 9.3 per 1000. Snatchwood has the highest death rate at 14.6 per 1000 with Trevethin having the lowest rate at 6.2 per 1000. In general, birth rates tend to be at least 1.5% higher than the all Wales average with death rates following a similar trend.

The birth and death rates of Torfaen HARPS differ from those of the County Borough and Wales, insofar as the birth rates are higher than the death rates. Relating this back to the population increase over the period 2001-2005, the larger increase in Wales suggests that the North Torfaen HARPS area has a relatively low level of migration.

Key Issues

- The population has remained stable between 2001 and 2005 with only a small increase of 0.9%, which is statistically insignificant;
- Extrapolating, the current rate of increase to 2020, the Torfaen HARPS area will have of population of 22,800 before 2020, which would represent an increase of 3000 on the 2005 estimated figure;
- Among the over 60's, there are proportionately less people in the HARPS area than Wales. This trend is more prominent in males and could therefore reflect the poor working environment in the local mines and quarries during the 20th century and also the premature death rates;
- Both birth and death rates in the North Torfaen HARPS area are generally higher than the all-Wales and County Borough levels. Abersychan and Trevethin have the highest birth rates at 15 per 1000 while Snatchwood has the highest death rate at 14.6 per 1000.

2.2 Business, Employment & Income

Economic Characteristics

This section of the report focuses particularly on the current economic situation in the study area, covering activity rates, employment trends, business development and formation, future business needs covering also specific sectors of the economy.

Figure 2 indicates that 56.7% of the total population in the Torfaen HARPS area are of working age¹ – lower than the national figure of 61% but greater than the Heads of the Valley area, where only 54.4% of the population are of working age.

Table 3: Working Age Population, 2001

	All People Working Age	Males Working Age	Females Working Age
Torfaen HARPS	56.7%	63.6%	49.9%
HOV Area	54.4%	61.1%	47.9%
Torfaen	60.8%	67.8%	54.2%
Wales	61.0%	67.7%	54.5%

Source: *Census Area Statistics (CAS) Ward population estimates for England and Wales, Sex and Age by Economic Activity (2001)*, www.statistics.gov.uk

Relating this table with age demographics for both the Torfaen HARP area and Wales (Table 2), it is apparent that the Torfaen HARP area has a significantly higher proportion of males and females in the 0-15 age group than the nation as a whole. This is emphasised in the age demographic illustrated overleaf.

Employment

In 2006, 4,072 people were employed in the North Torfaen HARP area, compared to 3,462 in 2003. This represents an increase of 17.6% over a 3 year period. Employment in Wales and Great Britain grew at a lower rate than in North Torfaen HARP at 6.4% and 3.1% respectively.

Within the North Torfaen HARP area, Manufacturing and the Public Sector remain dominant employment sectors. Although the general trend within Wales and the UK more generally is for declining employment in the manufacturing sector, the number of people employed in this sector in the HARP area has increased from 780 in 2003, to 913 in 2006. The service sector has become more important in the area, however, growth has mainly

¹ Working age includes males aged 16 to 64 and females aged 16 to 59.

been in the public sector whilst private service sector employment generally has been declining. The following sub-sections elaborate on these noted characteristics.

Table 4: Employment by Broad Sector, 2006 (%)

Industry	Torfaen HARP	Torfaen	HOV Area	Wales
Total Employed	4,072	35,227	66,793	1,171,305
Agriculture and fishing (SIC A,B)	*	*	*	0.2%
Energy and water (SIC C,E)	*	0.3%	0.7%	0.6%
Manufacturing (SIC D)	22.4%	19.6%	20.9%	13.5%
Construction (SIC F)	6.5%	4.8%	4.8%	5.3%
Distribution, hotels and restaurants (SIC G,H)	11.3%	19.8%	22.2%	23.6%
Transport and communications (SIC I)	3.4%	3.2%	4.3%	4.3%
Banking, finance and insurance, etc (SIC J,K)	4.1%	9.0%	7.0%	14.3%
Public administration, education & health (SIC L,M,N)	48.3%	40.4%	35.1%	32.5%
Other services (SIC O,P,Q)	3.9%	2.9%	4.9%	5.6%
<i>* Data restricted for confidentiality purposes</i>				

Source: National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk). Annual Business Inquiry, 2006
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 =Data restricted

In analysing the distribution location of employment within the study area, Blaenavon (150 units) and Abersychan (114) contain the highest number of businesses, with Trevethin containing the lowest at 40 individual businesses. Manufacturing is most prominent in Blaenavon (28 businesses) with distribution, hotels and restaurants also being a dominant sector with a total of 47 businesses located in Blaenavon. Abersychan accommodates the largest amount of public administration, education and health with 21 individual services based within the Ward. Blaenavon and Abersychan are also the main locations for banking, finance and insurance services with 17 and 21 businesses respectively located in these wards.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing plays a major part in the economy of the study area and represents a disproportionately high level of employment. Nearly a quarter of all employees in North Torfaen work in this sector; more than in Torfaen (19.6%) and in Wales (13.5%). Whilst the last three years has shown a slight reduction in the importance of this sector, proportionately, the number of people employed in manufacturing has actually increased.

Within the manufacturing sector, companies are involved in the manufacture of transport equipment, chemicals and chemical products, and the manufacture of fabricated metal products. Major employers include: Solitec (produce processing equipment in mild and stainless steel, aluminium, plastics and rubber) and Biozyme. In addition, Doncaster's of Blaenavon who have recently announced that they are to increase the size of their workforce from 325 to 450 employees over the next twelve months.

Services

In line with general trends evident in the wider economy, the service sector has been increasing in importance in the North Torfaen HARP area, albeit at a very slow rate and also limited to certain sub-sectors. Growth in services has been lower than that in Torfaen CBC and Wales except in the public sector. Significantly, employment in the public sector has increased from 40% in 2003 to over 48% in 2006. The proportion of employment in the private services sector is considerably lower in the North Torfaen HARP area than in Torfaen and the rest of Wales. Whilst other areas of Wales are seeing sectors such as distribution and banking and finance growing and taking an increasing share of employment, in the HARP area these sectors are declining. This is illustrated by employment in distribution, hotels and restaurants declining from 15.7% in 2003 to 11.3% in 2006. Employment in banking and finance has also dropped from just under 6% in 2003 to 4.1% in 2006.

Knowledge Economy

On a national level, the knowledge economy is becoming increasingly important. Manufacturing firms in Wales can no longer compete on cost alone given the rise of low cost of manufacturing industries in China and India, to give two examples. In order to survive, it is widely accepted that products will need to utilise high skill levels and/or high levels of technology. Doncaster's is one example of a company within the study area moving towards these highly skilled jobs with a recently announced £16 million investment (assisted by the Welsh Assembly Government), which will create a further 125 highly skilled jobs at their plant in Blaenavon.

Table 5: Employment in the Knowledge Economy² in Torfaen HARP, 2006 (%)

Industry	HARPS	Torfaen	HOV Area	Wales
Consumer Services³	10.9%	16.6%	20.7%	21.8%
High Tech Manufacturing⁴	0.1%	1.2%	1.1%	1.3%
Knowledge Based Services⁵	3%	7.9%	5.9%	12.4%

Source: National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk). Annual Business Inquiry, 2006
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Nevertheless, despite the presence of Doncaster's within the study area, the table above highlights that employment in the knowledge economy sectors within the North Torfaen HARP area is still considerably lower than the averages for the County Borough and Wales as a whole.

Business and Entrepreneurship

Table 6 below shows that the majority of business units in the North Torfaen HARP area are based in the distribution, hotels and restaurants sector (27%) and also the banking, finance and insurance sector (16.6%). Whilst the proportion of distribution, hotel and restaurant business units is comparable to the County Borough and national averages, the proportion of manufacturing business units is considerably higher than that found in both Wales and Great Britain. The proportion of business units in the banking, finance and insurance sector is somewhat below the County Borough and national averages.

² Sectors defined by Ecotec Research and Consulting, 2006

³ Defined by SIC Codes 52,55,92

⁴ Defined by SIC Codes 22,244, 30, 32

⁵ Defined by SIC Codes 65, 66, 67, 72, 73, 74

Table 6: Business Units by Sector in Torfaen HARP, 2006

Industry	North Torfaen HARPS	Torfaen	HOV Area	Wales
Total Business Units	404	2,447	5,610	100,112
Agriculture and fishing (SIC A,B)	*	*	*	*
Energy and water (SIC C,E)	*	*	*	0.3%
Manufacturing (SIC D)	13.4%	11.3%	8.7%	6.9%
Construction (SIC F)	16.3%	12.2%	10.8%	10.5%
Distribution, hotels and restaurants (SIC G,H)	27.0%	30.6%	34.8%	32.2%
Transport and communications (SIC I)	4.7%	5.1%	5.2%	4.7%
Banking, finance and insurance, etc (SIC J,K)	16.6%	20.6%	15.6%	24.0%
Public administration, education & health (SIC L,M,N)	13.1%	13.4%	15.0%	12.2%
Other services (SIC O,P,Q)	8.4%	6.7%	9.4%	8.5%
* Data restricted for confidentiality purposes				

Source: National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk). Annual Business Inquiry, 2006
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There appears to be a distinct correlation between the number of employees and the number of business units in each sector, with Blaenavon providing 771 employees in manufacturing (38% of the workforce), together with 211 in distribution, hotels and restaurants (10% of the workforce). On a ward level, Blaenavon has the largest amount of employees working across these sectors with 2,035 employed, with Snatchwood having the lowest number of employees at 244.

VAT registration data can be used as an estimate of the levels of entrepreneurship within an area. Successful economies are characterised by a dynamic business base, which is both innovative and flexible enough to respond to new trends and market opportunities. Data is only available at a local authority level and above, but the information for Torfaen provides some indications of activity within the study area. Data illustrates a rise in the number of VAT registered businesses between 2000-2005 higher than the rise at a national level, although business survival rates in 2004 were

slightly below those presented for Wales. This trend at a Torfaen County Borough level is due to high business registration rates within south Torfaen, specifically within the Cwmbran area,

Table 7: Entrepreneurship in Torfaen

	Business Registration Rate⁶ (2005)	% Self Employed (2001)	Start up s in Financial and Business Services, %⁷ (2005)
Torfaen	47.3	4.9%	25%
Wales	21.9	7.7%	26.3%
GB	66.4	8.3% ⁸	37.6%

Source: National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk). VAT Registrations/Deregistrations, 2005 & Census of Population, 2001
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Table 7 above shows the levels of entrepreneurship in Torfaen by using the business registration rate, the proportion of people self employed and the number of start ups in financial and business services. In 2005, the business registration rate in Torfaen was 47.3 which is higher than the registration rate for Wales but lower than that occurring in Great Britain. Self employment rates are low in the County Borough, where only 4.9% of people in employment in 2001 are classified as self-employed compared to rates of 7.7% and 8.3% in Wales and England and Wales respectively. The proportion of new business start-ups in the financial and business service sectors (considered to be key drivers of future productivity) is slightly lower in Torfaen (25%) compared to the Welsh average (26.3%), which in turn is somewhat lower than the British average (37.6%).

Economic Activity and Unemployment

Using data from the 2001 Census, it can be seen that 56.7% of the working age population within the North Torfaen HARPS area were economically active. This is less than the average economic activity rates for both the County Borough (60.8%) and Wales (61%). Consequently, levels of economic inactivity within the area are higher than the County Borough and nationally. In comparison, the HOV area on the whole has a lower economic activity rate.

⁶ Number of start ups per 10,000 people working age population

⁷ SIC Codes J and K

⁸ England and Wales

Table 8: Economic Activity

	Economic Activity Rate			Economic Inactivity		
	All	Males	Females	All	Males	Females
Torfaen HARP	56.7%	63.6%	49.9%	43.3%	36.4%	50.1%
Torfaen	60.8%	67.8%	54.2%	39.2%	32.2%	45.8%
HOV Area	54.4%	61.1%	47.9%	45.6%	38.9%	52.1%
All Wales	61.0%	67.7%	54.5%	39.0%	32.3%	45.5%

Source: National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk). Census of Population, 2001
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From an analysis of the economic activity data at individual ward level, Pontnewynydd has the greatest economic activity rate for all people at 63.4% with the lowest rate found in Trevethin at 52.2%. When looking at differences between male and female activity rates, males tend to be more economically active than females with the narrowest difference experienced in Snatchwood with 62.7% of males economically active and 54.6% of females also economically active. Trevethin has the greatest margin of difference with 60% of males and 44.8% of females economically active.

Of those who are economically inactive, there is a high proportion (13.3%) who are permanently sick or disabled; which is somewhat higher than the corresponding proportion noted for the North Torfaen HARPs area and Wales at 13.3% and 9.2% respectively, but less so than in the Heads Of the Valley area, which is at 15.1%.

Table 9: Economic Inactivity in Torfaen HARP, 2001

	Economically Inactive					
	All	Retired	Student	Looking after home/family	Permanently sick or disabled	Other
Torfaen HARPS	43.3%	14.1%	3.5%	8.0%	13.3%	4.4%
Torfaen	39.2%	15.4%	3.5%	6.7%	10.2%	3.4%
HOV Area	45.6%	14.4%	3.9%	7.3%	15.1%	4.9%
All Wales	39.0%	14.8%	5.1%	6.4%	9.2%	3.5%

Source: National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk). Census of Population, 2001
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In the 2001 Census, 3.7% of the working age population were unemployed which is a slightly higher rate than that for the County Borough and Wales, but lower than the HOV area. It is also observed that more males than females were classed as unemployed, (ranging from 5.2% in Trevethin to 3% in Pontnewynydd). As a result, it is unsurprising that the greatest unemployment rate by gender was for unemployed males in Trevethin at 7.5% and the lowest rate was experienced in Abersychan at 2.15% for unemployed females.

Within the HARPs wards the lowest economic inactivity rates were experienced in Pontnewynydd at 36.5%, with the highest in Trevethin at 47.8%. The other wards average between 41% and 43%.

When looking at the individual segments of inactivity, Blaenavon has the greatest amount of retired people at 15.5% with Trevethin the lowest at 11.3%. This is associated with lowering birth rates in Blaenavon compared to higher rates in Trevethin. As Blaenavon is a former industrial town, these have strong historical and family ties, which has resulted in residents remaining. There is also a cyclical issue in terms of the age profile of residents, specifically linked to when the larger housing estates were built and its relative recent development compared to the long-standing settlement of Blaenavon. There is generally a small student population resident within the North Torfaen HARPS, with the greatest percentage of students (4.1%) residing in Snatchwood and the smallest percentage in Pontnewynydd (2.8%). Inactivity as a result of being permanently sick or disabled is the highest in Trevethin at 16.5% with the lowest in Pontnewynydd at 11.1%, although still above the national average.

In January 2008, the claimant count unemployment rate was higher in the North Torfaen HARP than in Torfaen CBC and Wales, though less than the HOV area. However, the proportion of working age population who were unemployed for more than a year is considerably higher in Torfaen HARP (15.1%) than in Torfaen (10.7%), the rest of Wales (10.7%) and HOV area (13.8%). In analysing specific wards, the highest claimant rate for all those of working age is Trevethin at 5.2%, almost in line with the HOV area figure, with the lowest claimant rate in Pontnewynydd at 1.7%. Claimants tend to be amongst males in Trevethin with 8% of the working age male population claiming unemployment benefit with the lowest male claimant count being in Pontnewynydd at 2.3%. These figures demonstrate issues relating to skills levels and qualifications, re-training and a general lack of mobility in terms of access to workplaces outside of their place of residence.

Table 10: Claimant Count, 2008 and Unemployment, 2001

	Claimant Count (%)			Unemployment (%)			LTU
	All	Male	Female	All	Males	Females	
HARPS	3.3	4.8	1.7	3.7	4.7	2.7	15.1%
Torfaen	2.6	3.8	1.2	3.4	4.4	2.5	10.7%
HOV Area	5.7	6.8	2.5	4.3	4.7	2.8	13.8%
All Wales	2.3	3.3	1.2	3.5	4.4	2.4	10.7%

Source: National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk). Census of Population, 2001 & Claimant Count, January 2008.

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Occupational Structure

According to the 2001 Census, there was a higher proportion of residents in the North Torfaen HARPS area working as process, plant and machinery operatives than the Torfaen CBC and national averages. The HARPS area has a lower proportion of residents working as managers or professionals. Occupations in the area tend to be skewed towards jobs requiring lower skills levels.

Table 11: Occupational Structure, 2001

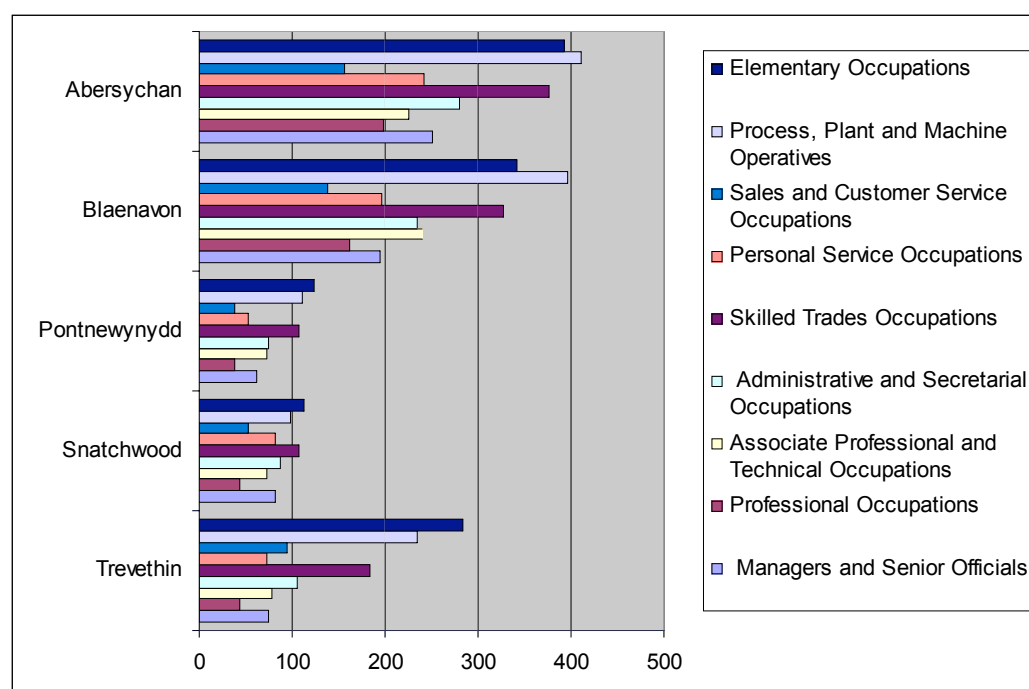
	HARPS	Torfaen	HOV Area	All Wales
ALL PEOPLE	7,327	36,854	88,056	1,186,256
Managers and Senior Officials	9.1%	11.1%	9.3%	12.2%
Professional Occupations	6.6%	8.5%	6.8%	10.4%
Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	9.8%	11.7%	11.1%	12.8%
Administrative And Secretarial Occupations	10.7%	12.3%	11.1%	12.2%
Skilled Trades Occupations	14.8%	12.6%	13.2%	13.4%
Personal Service Occupations	8.6%	7.1%	7.7%	7.4%
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	6.4%	8.1%	7.7%	8.0%
Process; Plant and Machine Operatives	17.0%	13.5%	15.5%	10.2%
Elementary Occupations	17.0%	15.0%	17.5%	13.3%

Source: National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk). Census of Population, 2001

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In analysing individual wards, Abersychan tends to have the greatest proportion of employees in managerial and senior roles within professional occupations, associate professional and technical occupations. In terms of the geographical spread/distribution of manual occupations, these tend to be residents within Trevethin at 23.8% and 19.7% respectively with Snatchwood having the lowest representation of these occupations at 16% and 13.6%. Those employed in skilled trade occupations tend to be between 14% -15% of the working age population across all of the five wards.

Table 12: North Torfaen HARPs wards - Occupational Structure, 2001



Source: National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk).S033: Sex and Occupation by Age Census of Population, 2001

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Income and Earnings

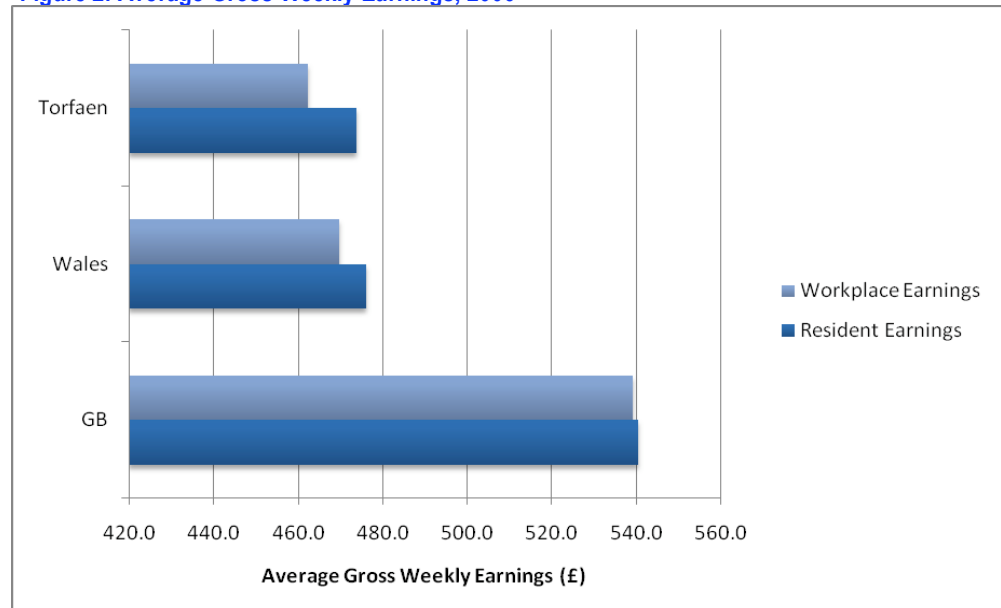
In 2004/05 the Average estimated weekly household income estimate⁹ for the North Torfaen HARP area was £388 compared to £500 in Wales.

The variation between annual earnings by place of residence and place of work indicates the extent to which the resident and working populations of an area are different, allowing inferences to be drawn about the impact of commuting. Data from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2006)

⁹ Source: Neighbourhood Statistics - Income: Model-Based Estimates, 2004/05

shows that residential average weekly income in North Torfaen HARPS was £11.50 more than workplace earnings in the County Borough. This implies that residents of North Torfaen HARPS are commuting to workplaces outside of the county Borough. At a ward level, Abersychan has the greatest weekly residential income at £450 with the lowest income in the Trevethin Ward at £300.

Figure 2: Average Gross Weekly Earnings, 2006



Source: National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk). Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2006

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Skills Gaps and Skills Shortages

Between February and July 2003 around 6,000 employers and 6,000 individuals were interviewed as part of the Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey. In Torfaen 207 households and 200 employers were interviewed. The aim of the survey was to audit the skills requirements of employers in Wales and the skills offered by the people who live there.

Whilst specific information is not available for the HARPS area, key findings from the study in Torfaen were inter alia:

- Employers in Torfaen rated understanding customer needs and the ability to follow instructions as the generic skills most in demand at a high or advanced level;
- 50% of employers who recruit school or college leavers reported a significant gap between the skills possessed by a school or college leaver and those expected by the employer. However, this is in line with the Wales average;
- 35% of employers who recruit school and college leavers found communication skills to be lacking amongst recruits – again in line with Wales as a whole;
- 16% of employers surveyed reported that a significant skills gap existed amongst their employees, that is, between the type of skills their

employees possessed at the time of the survey and those required to meet their business objectives;

- Of these employers, 53% reported that some or all of these vacancies were hard-to-fill;
- Amongst individuals, 27% of people who were not working would like to be in either full time or part time paid work;
- 51% of all individuals interviewed said that they would like to be involved in training and the majority had undertaken some kind of training in the previous 12 months. The majority preferred to learn by doing practical things, as opposed to exchanging ideas or watching demonstrations;
- However, almost half of all individuals said that they experienced some kind of barrier to learning or studying new things – primarily family and childcare commitments, followed by lack of time or pressure of work.

Key Issues

- The working age population in Torfaen HARPS is about 4% less than the national proportion. Using the age demographics as a comparison, the disparity becomes apparent in the 0-15 age cohort where the HARPS area's proportion is greater than that nationally.
- Employment increased by 17.6% between 2003 and 2006, which is a higher rate of increase than County Borough and National levels.
- Employment in the North Torfaen HARPS area is over-represented in the Manufacturing sector. The number of people employed in this sector actually increased between 2003 and 2006, thus, going against national trends.
- The public sector is a major employer within the North Torfaen HARP area. Other service sector employment is declining.
- There is limited employment in sectors which are classified as being part of the 'knowledge economy'
- The majority of businesses in the Torfaen HARP area are either in the distribution, hotels and restaurant sector or the construction sector.
- The North Torfaen HARP has higher than average levels of economic inactivity and unemployment. A larger number of people are economically inactive rather than unemployed, with the main reason being either permanently sick or disabled, with the exception of retirement.

- Employees in the North Torfaen HARP area tend to be those in 'lower skilled' jobs. Most are employed as process, plant and machinery operatives.
- At a ward specific level, Trevethin is the most economically disadvantaged ward in relation to unemployment levels, economic inactivity and lower-skilled jobs. Pontnewynydd, and in some part Abersychan, tend to be more economically prosperous with other wards such as Blaenavon demonstrating evidence of economic growth;
- There is a willingness to train expressed by residents of Torfaen, especially in work-related or other experiential settings. A significant proportion of those not currently working would like to be able to access work, but childcare and other family commitments may present a barrier here.

2.3 Health

This section draws upon information to establish the health characteristics of the study area. Some data is only available on a County-Borough wide level, whilst other data is specific to the HARP area. Where the former is used, it is only as a general guide in the absence of more locally available information.

The Torfaen Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategy has recently been updated to run between 2008 – 2011. The Strategy describes the actions required to improve the health and well being of the population of Torfaen. The main priorities within the strategy reflect the issues identified below and include:

- Education, Skills & Training;
- Substance Misuse;
- Healthy Living;
- Vulnerable Adults & Carers;
- Promoting Independence & Choice;
- Long Term Limiting Illness; and
- Inequalities.

Birth and Death Rates

Birth and Death rates were briefly discussed in the earlier population and demographics section, and are here discussed further. Overall, Torfaen as a whole has a high birth rate in comparison to Wales, while the death rate is the same. The high birth rate supports the demographic profile presented; in particular the presence of higher proportions aged 0 to 15 than found nationally.

Table 13: Birth and Death Rates, 2007

	Birth	Death
Torfaen	62.4	11
HOV	59.2	11
Wales	56.2	11

Source: Health Statistics Wales 2007(National Statistics)

With regards to recorded death rates, it is noted that there is a higher incidence of death caused by lung cancer within Torfaen CBC compared to Wales. In fact, this is the only selected cause of death where rates are higher than those for the Heads of the Valleys area and Wales as a whole. This is shown in the table below.

Table 14: Death Rates from Selected Causes, 2005

Cause of Death	Wales	HoV Authorities	Torfaen
Lung Cancer			
Males	53.6	55.4	56.2
Respiratory Disease			
Males	94.6	114.1	92.5
Females	71.0	71.2	68.7
Ischaemic Heart Disease			
Males	166.6	175.8	146.9
Females	79.4	89.0	79.9
Bronchitis			
Males	40.4	61.6	31.4
Females	24.7	28.7	20.7
Breast Cancer			
Female	28.5	30.0	23.8

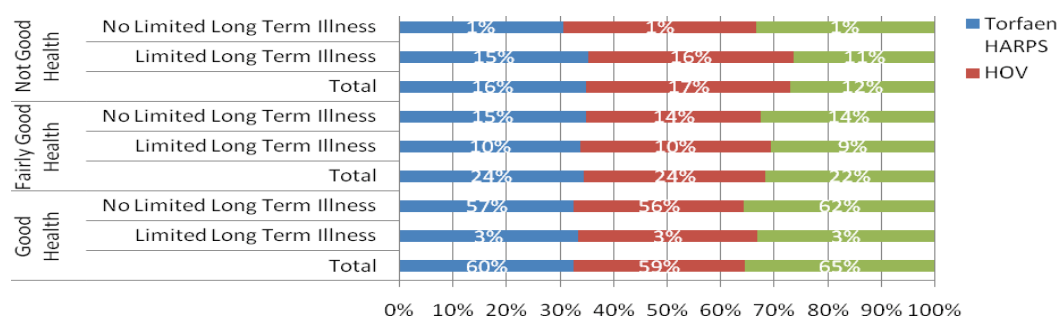
Despite these observations, a high proportion of residents within the study area considered themselves to be in good or fairly good health. The table below outlines the breakdown on the perceptions of personal health by residents. The results for the Torfaen HARPS appear to correspond with the results for the Heads of the Valley and Wales levels.

Table 15: Health Rate

	Good Health	Fairly Good Health	Not Good Health
Torfaen HARPS	60%	24%	16%
HOV	59%	24%	17%
Wales	65%	22%	12%

Source: National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk)

Figure 3: Perceptions of Health by North Torfaen HARPs Area, Heads of the Valley and all Wales level



Notwithstanding this, Table 15: Health Rate) above shows that there is still a higher proportion of residents suffering from a long term illness within the study area than in Wales overall, though admittedly both these rates are below that for the Heads of the Valley area as a whole. This would appear to reflect the higher proportion of residents with long term illness relating to the traditional industrial base within the area.

Table 16: % with Long Term Illness

	Limited Long Term Illness	No Limited Long Term Illness
Torfaen HARPS	27%	73%
HOV	29%	71%
Wales	23%	77%

Source: National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk)

In terms of selected sources of long term illness, it can be seen that Torfaen includes a higher proportion of residents with high blood pressure than for Wales as a whole. However, in general, the proportions of

residents with other illnesses, such as respiratory illnesses, tends to correspond with those recorded nationally and for the Heads of the Valley region.

Table 17: % with selected illnesses

	High Blood Pressure	Heart Condition	Respiratory Illness	Mental Illness
Torfaen	20%	9%	14%	10%
HOV	20%	10%	15%	12%
Wales	18%	10%	14%	9%

Table 18 below shows that the observed pregnancy rates are higher in Torfaen CBC than for Wales as a whole. This is the case for those aged under 16, under 18 and also under 20, (and closely mirrors the rates observed for the Heads of the Valley region). Significantly, that recorded for the under 20's, is considerably higher than nationally, and helps to explain the prevalent higher birth rate in the study area.

Table 18: Teenage Conceptions: Number & Rate by Age of Mother, 2002 to 2004 (a)

	Under 16		Under 18		Under 20	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Wales	1,380	8.0	7,815	45.5	18,090	63.3
Torfaen	58	10.1	328	58.3	753	84.8
HoV Authorities	416	10.8	2191	56.4	4,970	81.2
RCT	173	12.3	860	60.3	1,886	80.8
Merthyr	35	9.8	207	57.1	501	87.2
Blaenau Gwent	60	13.1	247	54.1	559	79.1
Caerphilly	90	8.5	549	52.3	1,271	76.0

(a) Conceptions which resulted in either a live or still birth or termination by legal abortion. Rates for the 16, under 18 and under 20 age groups are per 1,000 female residents aged 13-15, 15-17 and 15-19 respectively.

Health Provision

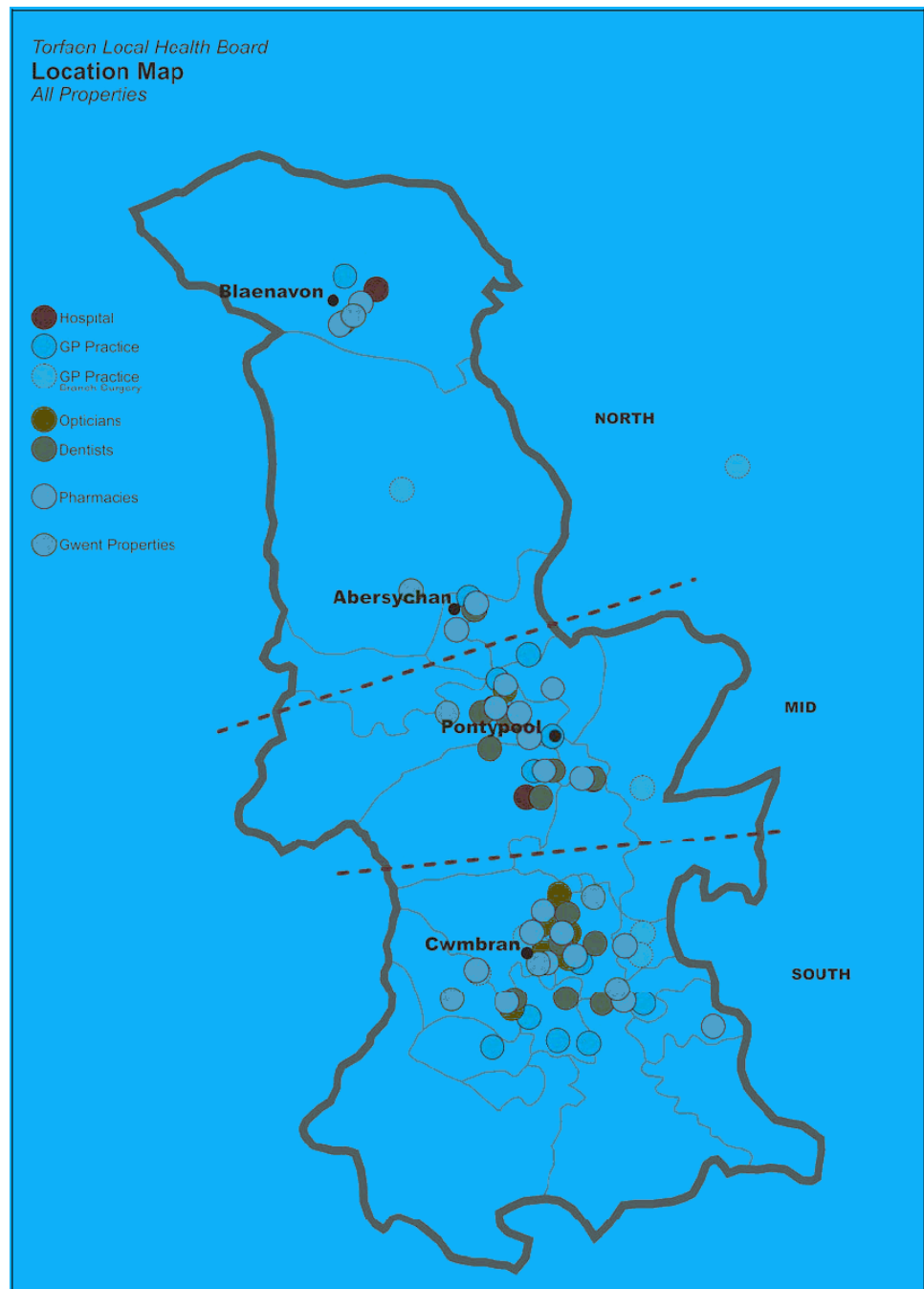
Torfaen Local Health Board provides primary healthcare services to the residents of the Study Area. Further facilities are available within Pontypool and Cwmbran to serve the HARP area which can be reached by public transport.

Gwent Healthcare NHS Trust provides community and secondary healthcare services for the study area, including the Blaenavon Health Care Unit and the health clinic in Trevethin. The main hospitals serving the study area are Nevill Hall Hospital in Abergavenny and the Royal Gwent Hospital in Newport (both have Accident and Emergency departments).

A number of services are provided by a number of organisations for older people including nursing and residential care and the Meals on Wheels initiative. In Pontypool, there is a drop in centre which is managed by Torfaen Mind to provide assistance for residents of Torfaen with mental health problems. A range of voluntary schemes, such as the Torfaen Voluntary Scheme and Volcare Scheme also provide health and care to residents of the study area. The Pharmacy First Scheme was introduced in 2006 to provide free advice and treatment for those suffering with minor health problems such as the common cold or indigestion.

To improve health services within the County Borough, Gwent Healthcare, NHS Trust in Partnership with the 5 'Gwent' LHBs are developing proposals for a Gwent-wide facility for the diagnosis and treatment of seriously ill patients in the form of a Specialist and Critical Care Centre (SCCC). A development framework has been produced by Torfaen CBC in association with Gwent Health Trust which was the subject to public consultation in July / August 2008. It is recognised that it is not possible to provide specialist services from all local hospitals and this SCCC will provide care for those who are seriously ill or who have complex problems which cannot be safely treated in a local hospital. Llanfrechfa Grange has been identified by the Gwent NHS as their preferred site for such a facility to deliver a comprehensive range of specialist health care facilities for Gwent.

The illustrative map below shows the geographical location of health facilities within the Torfaen County Borough, within which the HARPS study area forms the northern part. Most noticeably, this shows the complete absence of opticians and dental practices within the study area; the absence of pharmacies outside the Blaenavon ward and the relatively poor provision of GP surgeries across the HARP area.



As part of the capacity and demand analysis across Torfaen for GMS services which was undertaken to inform the development of the Estates Strategy, the Local Health Board looked at the potential for cross border flow between itself and other Local Health Boards. Analysis of patient flows demonstrated that cross border flow was less of an issue in north (and south) Torfaen than in Mid Torfaen where it borders with Monmouthshire. Significantly, this categorisation of Mid Torfaen includes parts of the HARPS wards Pontnewynydd and Snatchwood, and the whole of the wards Trevethin and Cwmynyscoy.

One of the main general practice surgeries in Mid Torfaen currently has a Branch Surgery in Goytre (Monmouthshire), a rural area with limited NHS service provision which serves approximately 1,100 of Monmouthshire residents. The branch service provides GMS and dispensing services and although not providing services within Torfaen, a reduction or termination of the service would have a direct impact on Monmouthshire Local Health Board and the neighbouring practices in Usk. Practices in Usk are currently operating at full capacity with planned housing developments for additional 400 - 450 residents. As a consequence, Monmouthshire Local Health Board has signalled their support for the Torfaen Practice to continue to maintain the building and provide medical services to the residents of Goytre.

Health Programmes

The baseline review process has drawn upon a number of health programmes / activities already occurring within the HARP area. Many of these programmes are funded jointly by Torfaen CBC, Welsh Assembly Government, and Heads of the Valleys. The main programmes operational within the study area include:

Health Challenge Valleys Network – This project is co-ordinated by a newly appointed HoV Health Improvement Coordinator. To date Torfaen CBC has received a total of 44k funding to support Network activities in relation to tackling health inequalities in the HoV area.

Garnsychan Partnership – This partnership is responsible for the delivery of a health and wellbeing project, part funded by the HoV and Torfaen CBC.

Healthy Options Café – A community social enterprise project operating as a healthy options café on the Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estate.

Community Health Coordinator – Trevethin has a Community Health Coordinator in place employed by the LHB, focussing on health improvement in Community First areas.

WAG Community Focussed School Project – Blaenavon is a focus for a school project that facilitates a range of community activities including health improvement.

Key Issues

- A higher birth rate within Torfaen CBC than both the Heads of the Valley region and Wales as a whole. This is most evident in the 18 -20 age bracket;
- A comparable death rate within Torfaen CBC to that for the HOV and Wales as a whole, although a higher incidence of death caused by lung cancer is observed;

- Whilst a large proportion of residents within Torfaen CBC consider themselves to be in good health, a higher percentage of residents with a limited long term illness is recorded;
- Limited health facilities within the study area, mostly located outside and to the south of the County Borough.

2.4 Education, Skills & Training

Local learning Infrastructure

Within the North Torfaen HARPS area there are two secondary schools, nine primary schools and three early years' providers delivering pre-school learning services

Examination and assessment results are not available at HARPS area level, but across Torfaen at key stages one to three the county compares unfavourably with national figures.

- At key stage one 76.4% of children achieved the expected level (80.1% in Wales);
- At key stage two 71% (74.1% in Wales);
- At key stage three 52.2% (56.7% in Wales).

However, significant numbers of pupils in Torfaen schools have reading ages lower than their chronological age and that this gap persists throughout their years in education.

Amongst pupils aged 15, 52% achieved 5 or more grades A*-C or equivalent – close to the Wales average of 53%. However, in 2005-06, 3.3% of 16 year olds left school with no recognised qualifications, a figure that was higher than the Welsh average, and which suggests future problems for the workforce.

To put results in context, the Single Education Plan for 2006-2008 points out that performance on “value added” is considerably better than these figures would suggest and the LEA is in the top 20% in Wales for value added at Key Stage 3. The LEA has developed effective partnerships with schools on issues such as exclusions, which has resulted in Torfaen schools moving from 15th in Wales to the lowest in terms of pupil exclusions. .

Early Years

Early year's provision is available in three locations across the HARPS area, providing reasonable access to all residents.

Table 19: Early Years Provision

Provider	Ward
Pontymoile Under 5's - Abersychan	Abersychan
Blaenavon Hillside	Blaenavon
Cwmffrwdoer Play Group	Pontnewynydd

Early year's data on literacy and oracy is not available at HARPS level. However, the Single Education Plan shows that at a County Borough level more than 40% of four year olds have low levels of number development and 20% have low levels of oracy – both of which are low in a Wales context

Primary Schools

There are nine primary schools in the HARPS area, five of which are in the Abersychan Ward – including one Welsh medium.

It is interesting to note that the schools in the Blaenavon Ward have a significantly higher proportion of free meals entitlement than the Welsh average: In 2003, 34% of pupils on roll at Hillside Primary were registered as being entitled to receive free school dinners, along with 30% at St Peter's – against a Wales average of 17% and a Torfaen figure of 20%.

A number of the primary schools are in a poor condition in terms of their building fabric and facilities (outside toilets etc). Two primary schools are proposed to be demolished. This includes St Peter's Church in Wales School, which will require the current adult education facilities at the school to be replaced.

Table 20: Primary Schools Provision

Provider	Ward
Abersychan Brynteg	Abersychan
Garnteg Primary	Abersychan
St Francis RC Primary	Abersychan
Victoria Primary	Abersychan
Ysgol Bryn Onnen	Abersychan
Hillside Primary	Blaenavon
St Peter's Church in Wales Primary	Blaenavon
Cwmffrwdoer Primary	Pontnewynydd
Pontnewynydd Primary	Trevethin

Secondary Schools

At secondary school level, a significant number of young people travel out of the North Torfaen HARP to either Croesyceiliog School in Cwmbran, St

Albans RC School, Pontypool, or West Monmouth School in Pontypool. St Albans also offers 6th form provision for its pupils and those from other schools in Torfaen.

Within the HARPS area, there are two comprehensive schools, one of which is Welsh medium. Abersychan Comprehensive is recognised as taking a high proportion of less able pupils, reflecting to some extent its catchment, and provides an overall good standard of education as recognised by Estyn. Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw is the only Welsh medium secondary school in the former Gwent area and consequently serves pupils from as far afield as Monmouth and Risca. It was judged by Estyn to provide education of good quality with a remarkable school ethos. The wider pull of this school is not shared by large pupil numbers from the local community. With the majority of those of school age from Trevethin going to school in Pontypool.

Table 21: Secondary Schools Provision

Provider	Ward
Abersychan School	Abersychan
Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw	Trevethin

Community Learning

In terms of community learning facilities Blaenavon has three additional community learning establishments, namely the Blaenavon Centre for IT Learning, the Adult Education Centre attached to St Peter's School and the WEA facility in Church View which houses an IT suite and several classrooms. These facilities provide a venue for a range of adult community education courses (ACL). However, the St. Peter's School facilities may be lost as a result of the Blaenavon Campus and alternative facilities may need to be found.

Post – 16 Education

Participation in post – 16 learning in Torfaen in 2004 -2005 compares to the average level for Wales as a whole.

The only school sixth form provision in the HARPS Area is at the Welsh medium Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw. Hence a significant majority of post-16 learners attend Coleg Gwent in Pontypool. The absence of an English medium sixth form facility to cater for the North Torfaen HARPS area is therefore an identified issue. Small numbers of adult learners access provision from the WEA and Torfaen CBC, as well as a range of work-based learning with private training providers.

Discussions with the major local employer Doncaster's, located in Blaenavon, has shown that they utilise resources outside of the study area (and the County Borough for that matter) for all workforce training. Training provision is provided by Blaenau Gwent at their base on the Trefannau

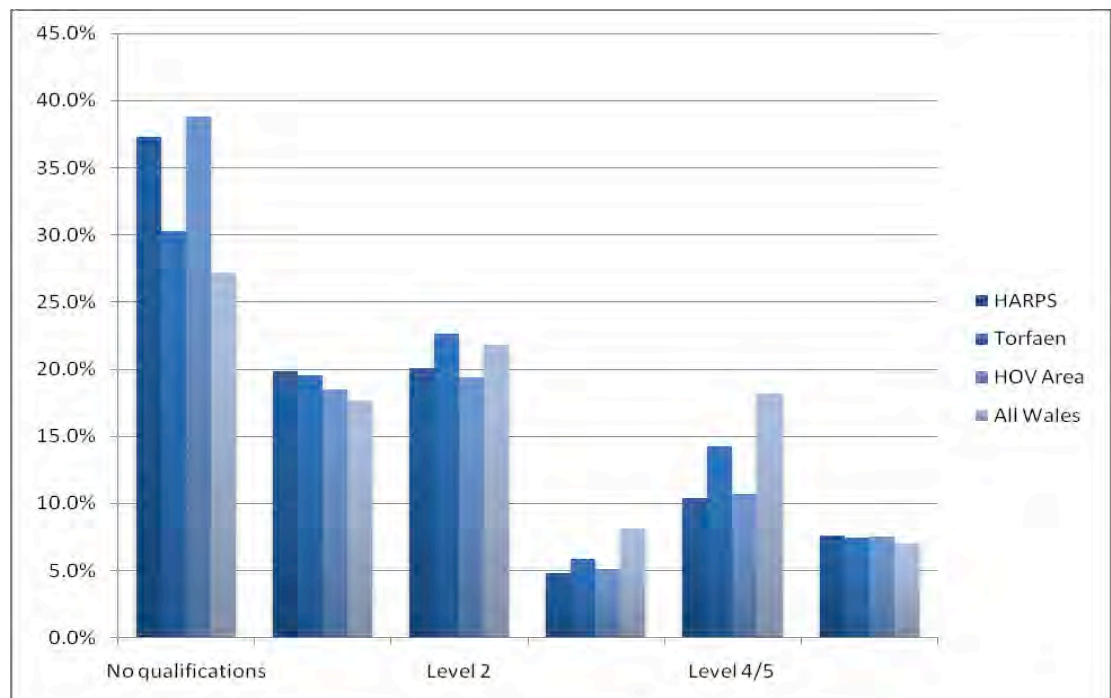
Bach Industrial Estate, adjacent to the Heads of the Valley Road in Ebbw Vale. Doncaster's commented that they initially looked for a local training provider, first within Blaenavon, and later within Torfaen. However, the absence of such a resource directly led to them looking further afield. At present, they are content with the training provision and would not now change in the foreseeable future to a more local provider despite the distance that employees are expected to travel to the facility.

Local Skill Levels

The proportion of working age people with no or low qualifications (NVQ 1 or below) is higher in the HARP area (57%) than in Torfaen (50%) and Wales (49%) and comparable to the HOV area as a whole (57%). Particularly worrying is the high proportion (37%) of people with no qualifications at all. The standard of basic skills amongst adults is poor across Torfaen. According to the Single Education Plan, 60% of adults have lower than Level 1 numeracy (Wales 53%) and 26% lower than level 1 literacy (Wales 25%). This is a significant deficiency that needs immediate action.

The proportion of people with a degree level qualification or higher (NVQ level 4/5) in the North Torfaen HARPS area (10%) is significantly lower than the proportion in either the County Borough or Wales as a whole. This is reflected in the low proportion of people working in professional or managerial roles, as shown earlier in this analysis.

Figure 4: Qualifications Levels



Source: National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk). Census of Population, 2001

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Basic Skills Cymru estimates that 26% of the overall Torfaen CBC population lacks level 1 literacy skills, and that 60% of the County Borough's population lacks level 1 numeracy skills. This compares with all-Wales figures of 53% for numeracy and 25% for literacy. Therefore whilst the population in the County Borough is in line with Wales as a whole in terms of literacy, there is a discrepancy with regard to numeracy. And it is likely that this same problem is evident within the HARPS study area.

Welsh language skill levels

The proportion of adult Welsh speakers within the HARPS area is in line with both Torfaen CBC and the Heads of the Valleys area, at 11%. This is considerably lower than the Wales average of 20%, and reflects the historic pattern of in-migration associated with traditional valley industry.

Table 22: Welsh Language Skills

	Torfaen HARPS	Torfaen	HoV	Wales
ALL PEOPLE	19,732	90,949	250,677	2,903,085
Speaks Welsh	11%	11%	11%	20%
Does not speak Welsh	89%	89%	89%	80%

2001 Census: Census Area Statistics: Welsh Language Skills

Key Points

- A low level of educational attainment overall, with 37% of working age people having no qualifications and only 10% possessing a level 4 or 5 award.
- The majority of learners aged 16 plus having to travel out of the HARPS area at 16+, with the majority travelling to Coleg Gwent in Pontypool.
- Few learners attend school sixth forms, as there is no English medium provision at this level in the HARPS Area.
- Welsh medium school provision in the area serves a catchment beyond both HARPS and Torfaen CBC areas, and not the immediate community of Trevechin.

2.5 Housing

As stated earlier in this study, the population of the HARPS region showed an increase up to the 2001 Census date. This has corresponded with an increase in the number of households, following national trends of smaller and a greater number.

Mirroring national trends, housing tenure is dominated by Owner Occupation in the study area. However, a significant portion of households rent their homes from Bron Afon Housing Association (following wholesale stock transfer). Indeed, whilst the Heads of the Valley region is characterised by a higher total percentage of council house tenure than that recorded nationally, the North Torfaen HARPS area includes a proportion that is even higher. This is illustrated in Table 23 below.

Table 23: Housing Tenure – Council Tenure

	No. Households	No. in Council Tenure	% in Council Tenure
Wales	1,209,047	166,046	13.73%
HoV Region	104,659	20,244	19.34%
Torfaen HARP	8,252	2,300	27.87%

Source: 2001 Census Data

The HARPS area is characterised by a dated housing stock (largely pre-1919), that exceeds that found both nationally and for the Heads of the Valley Region. Significantly, over 50% of the housing stock present in the Blaenavon ward were built before 1919 (Torfaen Local Housing Market Assessment, 2007). The implication of this is directly related to the size of property, with greater concentrations of households living in dwellings with a smaller numbers of rooms.

Table 24: Households – No of rooms

	No. Households	1-5 Rooms (%)	6+ Rooms (%)
Wales	1,209,047	52.14%	47.86%
HoV Region	104,659	62.02%	37.88%
Torfaen HARP	8,252	62.43%	37.57%

Source: 2001 Census Data

Similar to the proportions for the Heads of the Valley Region, the North Torfaen HARPS area is also characterised by a large proportion of households living in terraced properties. This statistic illustrates the strong historical link between traditional mining industry and local worker accommodation in the region, with the latter characterised by significant concentrations of small terraced dwellings built on the valley sides. Conversely, the HARPS area is characterised by smaller proportions of detached and semi-detached dwellings – evidence of more dense patterns of residential development in North Torfaen, than for the Heads of the Valley area and Wales as a whole.

Table 25: Households – Dwelling type

	No. Households	Detached (%)	Semi- Detached (%)	Terraced (%)	Other (%)
Wales	1,209,047	27.12%	32.46%	29.22%	11.2%
HoV Region	104,659	10.80%	24.71%	55.81%	8.68%
Torfaen HARPS	8,252	12.82%	24.96%	50.08%	12.14%

Source: 2001 Census Data

Settlements such as Garndiffaith, Talywain, Varteg, Forgeside and the upper parts of Pontnewynydd that grew close to traditional industry are now increasingly isolated from key services following the decline of these local employment sources and community facilities. In general, however, communities within the North Torfaen HARPS area are characterised by the predominance of a particular dwelling type and/or style in that location – be it the pre-1919 terraced dwelling or the concentration of 1960's semi/terraced dwellings typical of the period within Trevethin.

The absence of a diversity of housing mix is compounded by a growing affordability gap and also the inability of households to maintain the physical standard of dwellings. An increasing affordability gap between house prices and incomes is threatening community cohesion and also the promotion of sustainable communities. Previous stock transfer ('right to buy') has combined with the dramatic slowing in rates of Council house building, so to exacerbate supply side deficiencies. At present, the affordability gap in the North Torfaen Local Housing Market Area is equivalent to 313 dwellings, consisting of 198 market housing, 33 intermediate and 81 socially rented (Torfaen Urban Housing Potential Study, 2007).

The low level of average incomes is also reflective of the inability of households to make improvements to their dwellings. These financial constraints, combined with high numbers of health problems and an ageing population, mean that the housing stock is, in general, beset by deficiencies in overall condition. Indeed, Torfaen County Borough Council determined in 2006 to undertake the comprehensive transfer of its housing stock to the Bron Afon Housing Association (as a means of meeting the Welsh Quality Housing Standard by 2012). Indeed, the urgent need to improve the condition of the housing stock became apparent following the publication of the Council's most recent Housing Condition Survey, which stated that not one Council-owned dwelling met the Welsh Quality Housing Standard. To meet this, Bron Afon holds an annual budget of £50 million, of which £30 million is to be dedicated for capital improvements. Overall, it is estimated that a sum of £187 million of capital investment will be required by Bron

Afon for the whole of Torfaen CBC's housing stock, a significant amount of which is applicable to the study area.

The inability of residents to maintain the standard of dwelling units is also a problem that is relevant to the private housing stock. In 1999, identified problems of dwelling dilapidation were considered to be so bad that Neighbourhood Renewal Areas were designated for areas of Blaenavon and Abersychan where such problems are geographically concentrated. These ten year programmes will end in 2009, and have to date been successful in achieving improvements to the condition of privately owned dwelling houses. Discussions with Torfaen CBC Housing officers have disclosed that of the 933 units identified for improvement in Blaenavon, 527 have been completed; in Abersychan the figure is approximately 300 out of 394 units. This suggests that considerable improvements have been achieved to date. However, significant housing stock deficiencies still exist in these locations, and also elsewhere in the study area. Two examples identified by TCBC officers include the following:-

- Varteg – Gladstone, Salisbury and Pembroke Terraces, and Kears Row;
- Forgeside – C, D and E Rows.

With regards to the former, all units have been constructed with 9 inch thick walls without the benefit of cavities and as a result are experiencing severe water penetration. It is considered that at least one third are unfit for occupation, and therefore that each terrace would benefit from a programme of block renovation. With regards to Forgeside, the identified properties are equally regarded to be in a poor state. Local examples exist of improvements under a programme of the retro-fitting of energy efficient measures (such as those evident at Griffiths Court). However such improvements do not relate to the private dwelling stock, whose occupiers do not have the means to make improvements, especially those of a kind which would be sympathetic to the World Heritage Site environment. Torfaen CBC officers believe that the best means for achieving such improvements would be the designation of Neighbourhood Renewal Areas for Varteg and Forgeside.

At present, the following would appear to be the distinct sub-categories of demand for property within the North Torfaen HARPS area:-

- 2-5 bed semi or detached properties;
- Flats or townhouses;
- Sheltered housing for the elderly; and
- Affordable housing (shared ownership and rent).

The future demand for housing in the study area has been established through of the preparation of the Local Development Plan for the period 2006-2021. Torfaen CBC is to make provision for 7,000 new dwellings over this period to meet forecast demand, with 900 to be provided in the

North Torfaen Local Housing Market Area. However, this Local Housing Market Area is geographically smaller than the HARPS study area, with the latter including the Trevethin ward. It therefore follows that the amount of new dwellings to be provided in the HARPS area is likely to be larger than the 900 stated. The main proposed strategic housing sites within the North Torfaen HARP area are presented below.

Table 26: Strategic Housing Sites

	Location (Ward)	No. Dwellings (units)
Boral Edenhall & Candlewick Sites	Blaenavon	123
The British	Abersychan	400
Former Trevethin Comprehensive School	Trevethin	140

Source: Torfaen LDP Preferred Strategy, 2007

Meeting future demand is therefore heavily reliant on the development of these sites by the private sector. As such, the housing mix will largely be determined by developer requirements and perceived market demand (save for a proportion of affordable housing via Section 106 agreements), giving no guarantee that housing development will cater for local demand. It is therefore questionable whether the affordability gap or outstanding local need will be treated by the reliance on market residential development.

Notwithstanding this, it is proposed that the LDP will contain a policy to negotiate an element of affordable housing, based on evidence from the latest Local Housing Market Assessment. This will include the targeting of social housing grant to all sites in North Torfaen and Pontypool where a site is shown to be otherwise uneconomical. These interventions will go some way to ensuring local demand is met.

In terms of other sources of housing provision, Torfaen County Borough Council modified the Empty Home Strategy in 2005, so as to broaden its scope. The Empty Property Strategy seeks to gain their rehabilitation for beneficial use. However, the launch of this strategy has not yet brought about significant benefits in terms of additional housing units, which the Torfaen Strategic Housing Forum put down to the absence of clear guidance. Whereas the commercial enveloping of parts of Broad Street in Blaenavon was successful in achieving additional residential units above shop premises, this has not been replicated elsewhere. No such initiatives have been implemented at the existing neighbourhood centres in the study area, many of which provide sustainable living locations with the potential for developing units at lower capital costs than for Blaenavon (due to the need to conform to conservation area design guidelines).

Key Issues

- A higher proportion of Council house tenure than national and Heads of the Valleys levels;
- A higher proportion of older and smaller housing stock than national and Heads of the Valleys levels;
- A dislocation in the historical link between employment sources and local worker accommodation. The latter remains, characterised by large masses of homogenous housing type and style, in locations now seen as functionally and sometimes physically remote;
- Problems of community cohesion through a lack of diversity in housing mix and a growing affordability gap;
- Poor conditions in both public and private sector housing stock, with geographical concentrations observed in Varteg and Forgeaside;
- Reliance on future housing demand being met by large sites, none of which are within or close to the more sustainable locations;
- The absence of means for the creation of residential units in the more sustainable locations.

2.6 Multiple Deprivation

The index of multiple deprivation is based on the idea that distinct aspects of deprivation can be recognised and measured separately. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) is described as a weighted area level aggregation of the following dimensions of deprivation:

- Income
- Employment
- Health
- Education, Skills and Training
- Housing

The WIMD is measured at Super Output Area level. Output areas sit within ward boundaries and thus in order to compare the level of deprivation in Torfaen HARPS area to national and local authority levels, a series of statistical calculations are required. The arithmetic mean¹⁰ of the inner output area levels of deprivation was calculated. However, extreme cases can affect this measure significantly and so two other statistical measures have been calculated; the median¹¹ and standard deviation¹². The median

¹⁰ The mean is the sum of all the members of the list divided by the number of items in the list.

¹¹ The median is the number separating the higher half of a sample from the lower half.

was decided as the most appropriate average to use and is therefore represented in the following tables.

Figure 5 - Multiple Deprivation Statistics, Wales 2005¹³

	Median
Torfaen HARPS	28.0
Torfaen	20.0
Wales	17.9

Source: *Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2005* www.statistics.gov.uk

In comparison to Torfaen CBC as a whole, the HARPS area is more deprived according to the WIMD. The substantially larger median value for the North Torfaen HARP compared to the Wales level suggests that on average, levels of income, health, employment, education, skills and training and housing are lower than the national average.

Table 11 shows the Welsh index of multiple deprivation broken down by ward. Trevethin shows the highest levels of deprivation and by comparison, Pontnewynydd shows the least. The remaining three wards of Blaenavon, Snatchwood and Abersychan display similar values.

Table 27 - Welsh IMD at ward level

	Median
Blaenavon	26.8
Abersychan	27.3
Trevethin	40.9
Snatchwood	27.5
Pontnewynydd	18.3

Table 28 - Individual indices of deprivation, 2005

		HARPS	Torfaen	Wales
Income	Median	27.9	21.9	15.7
Employment	Median	24.8	19.2	15.7

¹² The standard deviation of a set of values is a measure of the spread of its values.

¹³ A greater index equates to a higher level of deprivation.

Health	Median	21.8	16.2	15.7
Education	Median	28.3	24.4	15.7
Housing	Median	11.9	9.8	15.7

Source: Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2005 www.statistics.gov.uk

Table 28 above highlights the individual breakdown of indices that comprise the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD). Using the Welsh scores as a benchmark, noticeable disparities occur in all of the fields. The most considerable of these arise in the fields of Income and Education where levels are significantly poorer in the study area than national levels. Surprisingly, housing fares better; with standards in the Torfaen HARPS area appearing to be higher than the nation as a whole. This contrasts with the observations already noted in relation to the poor condition of the dated housing stock which characterises some valley communities within the HARPS area.

Table 29 - Individual indices of deprivation by Ward, 2005

	Housing	Education	Health	Employment	Income
Blaenavon	14.2	30.5	33.2	29.1	28.2
Abersychan	11.8	37.2	21.9	30.0	30.4
Trevethin	13.6	53.1	36.9	42.8	53.2
Snatchwood	9.8	24.6	31.2	34.5	27.9
Pontnewynydd	11.9	19.8	12.1	21.1	16.4

Source: Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2005 www.statistics.gov.uk

The above table displays the individual indices of housing, education, health, employment and income at ward level. The great range of values is immediately apparent and ranges from very low levels (housing in Snatchwood) to extremely high levels of deprivation (income in Trevethin). Agreeing with the information displayed in Table 11, the ward of Trevethin experiences the highest levels of deprivation across all fields with the exception of housing. In this category, Blaenavon fares the worst. Pontnewynydd, with the exception of housing, experiences the least amount of deprivation by a significant margin.

Key Issues

- The WMID indicates that deprivation in the North Torfaen HARPS area is a concern on all fronts (housing, education etc). The median value is over 10 points higher than the observed Welsh average;

- At ward level, Pontnewynydd displays the lowest average index with a value of 18.3. Trevethin, on contrast, displays a considerably larger figure of 40.9, and is therefore within the top 15% of deprived wards in Wales;
- The HARPS area shows a surprisingly low level of deprivation in the housing category. In comparison to an All Wales index of 15.7, the area has an index of 11.9;
- Levels of education and income are significantly poorer in the study area than nationally. Health and employment are also worse off, but by a lesser margin.
- Trevethin experiences extremely high levels of deprivation in the areas of income and education. With the exception of housing, this ward displays the highest levels of deprivation across all categories. Pontnewynydd, by comparison, shows relatively low levels of deprivation across the board.

2.7 Retail & Town Centres

The purpose of this section is to provide a baseline summary analysis of retail within the North Torfaen HARPs area. The first section involves a literature review of relevant past studies, with the main source being the September 2007 Torfaen Retail and Leisure Study conducted by GVA Grimley. A qualitative assessment has also been made by site visits, specifically to the neighbourhood centres, in addition to Blaenavon due to the lack of detailed information on provision and condition of trading.

Blaenavon

The study uses the Adopted Local Plan Proposals Map to define the town centre boundary area with Broad Street as the main shopping street with some adjoining streets providing some retail and services. The town centre is a conservation area and Blaenavon town is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. However, the majority of local authorities such as Blaenavon Ironworks, Big Pit (National Coal Museum) and the wider industrial landscape are located away from the town centre. The September 2007 study by GVA Grimley indicates that 60 retail units are located within the town centre boundary and an additional 18 located outside but within the wider settlement.

In assessing the mix of retail within Blaenavon, the GVA Grimley study identified that in terms of convenience retailing the town centre offers “small scale, local convenience goods shops”, with only the Spar and Co-op representing larger retailers. In relation to comparison retailing there is a relatively low level offer with the remaining offer comprising mainly the service sector. When looking at representation, with the exception of the convenience stores and the HSBC bank, the town centre is predominantly

comprised of local shops. As part of the Council's scheme to improve the appearance of shop fronts and public realm within the town centre and to build on linkages within the World Heritage Visitor Centre, the emergence of a number of bookshops that has started to provide some critical mass of specialised and niche retailing.

At the time of the survey, the study identified a total of 18 vacant units in Blaenavon with 14 units located within the town centre boundary. Such vacant units tend to be within the top and bottom edges of the town centre, close to residential areas. The report notes the presence of the ongoing refurbishment works, specifically to 32-39 Broad Street which contributed to the level of vacancy rates. Nevertheless the study concludes that the "town centre experiences higher than national average vacancy rates, which is considered to represent the poor performance of the town centre".

The survey also highlighted that the town centre environment had particular detractors in relation to movement, pavement widths and generally a poor pedestrian experience. In relation to accessibility and parking, the study identified the following:

- No bus stops along the length of Broad Street;
- Some under-used car parking, specifically at the northern edge of the town centre;
- Pedestrian/vehicle conflict at the Broad Street/Ivor Street junction, especially at peak times;
- Presence and volume of traffic movement that tends to diminish the town centre environment.

When looking at the overall environmental quality of the town, the study identified a lack of continuity in the street scene, the lack of a focal point and a lack of connectivity with other attractors. It does however acknowledge the £1.7 million Blaenavon Town Centre Regeneration Scheme, which is being implemented over the 2006-09 period. The study briefly outlines the improvement sites as:

- Prince Street Car Park;
- Rear of 32 – 39 Broad Street;
- Boot Lane;
- Bethlehem Court;
- Broad Street Car Park;
- Lower Broad Street;
- Area adjacent to 57 – 60 Broad Street.

Pontypool and Other Competing Centres

Whilst Pontypool and Cwmbran sit outside of the North Torfaen HARPS area they do nevertheless have a direct relationship to the southern edge of the study area, with the wards of Abersychan, Pontnewydd, Snatchwood and Trevethin having an association with Pontypool as a key district centre and Cwmbran as a sub regional centre,. Excluding Blaenavon to the North, four of the HARPS wards sit within the Pontypool town centre catchment. As such, an assessment of Pontypool (and other competing retail centres) is considered to be necessary.

Pontypool.

In 2003 plans were drawn up to regenerate the town centre and today the town includes the new Tesco superstore along with Argos, Peacocks, Farm Foods and Wilkinson's at the redeveloped Crane Street. In April 2006, a new Wetherspoons pub was opened on Osborne Road.

The GVA study commented on the general performance, together with the vitality and viability of the town centre and shows that it is slightly below the national average (8% compared with 9%). However, in terms of floor space, the study states "convenience retailing is well above the national average, indicating that food store units in the town centre are (on average) large. ". This is largely due to the construction of the Tesco Extra store and the Farm Foods development.

In terms of the proportion of comparison goods, the study considers that *"Pontypool town centre is well below the national average (29% compared with 47.12%) and is also significantly lower in terms of floor space (25.88% compared with 52.66%). There has also been a 1% decline since 2004. This low level of comparison uses would appear to indicate that the town is not performing well, and is not able to attract a wide range of non-food retailers. Conversely, service uses in the centre have increased in recent years and are now well above the national average at 38% of all retail units in the town centre. Overall, it would appear that there is an on-going minor shift away from retail uses in the town centre, towards more of a service based function in Pontypool. "* The implication of this is that Pontypool's ability to serve the retail needs of its catchment area (especially the four HARPS wards in close proximity) is diminishing.

In relation to this study and the relationship to the North Torfaen HARPs area, the study undertook a 600 person shopper's survey to identify how residents show from different areas, including the study area. Key findings included:

- Of the respondents who used Pontypool town centre, around 32% visited at least once a week for food shopping, with a further 23% visiting for this purpose on at least a monthly basis. The figures for non-food shopping were slightly lower with 25% visiting at least once a week, and 24% visiting at least once a month.

- In terms of distribution, however, the majority of the frequent visits for both food and non-food were performed by residents from Zone 4 (Pontypool / Blaenavon / North of Cwmbran) with 53% visiting at least once a week for food shopping and 40% visiting at least once a week for non-food shopping.
- In terms of other uses of the town centre, the majority of respondents did not use Pontypool for leisure (80%), work (87%) or personal business (64%). Interestingly, however, the use of the town centre for personal business was considerably higher for respondents within Zones 4 (Pontypool / Blaenavon / North of Cwmbran) and 5 (Ebbw Vale / Abertillery / Blackwood / West of Cwmbran), with 43% and 27% respectively using the centre at least once a month.
- The vast majority of respondents who visit Pontypool town centre travel by car (71%) (either as driver or passenger), and a similar pattern was evident across the zones. In Zone 2 (Newport / North of Newport), all respondents visiting Pontypool did so by car. Bus was the preferred mode of transport to Pontypool for 16% of respondents, with the highest proportion (27%) using this mode from Zone 3 (Usk / Abergavenny / East of Cwmbran).
- In terms of people's views on different experiences within the town centre, convenience shops (18%) was considered to be the centre's most positive factor. Significantly, over half of respondents using Pontypool could not identify any particular aspects of the centre that they liked. These opinions were evident in broadly similar proportions across the survey zones.
- Of those respondents who use Pontypool town centre, just under a third felt that there was no negative aspects (or they didn't know of any) to the town centre. The remaining respondents identified the following as the town centre's principle negative aspects:
 - Poor range of shops (19%);
 - Unattractive environment (13%);
 - Too few shops (12%);
 - Difficult to park near shops (12%); and
 - Poor street cleaning / maintenance (9%)

Other Competing Centres.

The GVA Grimley study also recognised the role and attractiveness of competing centres outside Torfaen County Borough. In the specific context of the North Torfaen HARPS area, the location of Abergavenny and Brynmawr does provide for food and non-food retail provision that shoppers within the Blaenavon ward are drawn to, but not in significant numbers. With the opening of the new Asda store in Brynmawr in 2006 and the redevelopment proposals for the cattle market site in Abergavenny there

may be an increased choice for shoppers within the northern edge of the HARPS area for food shopping and a resultant draw to other non-food shopping activity within these competing centres.

The role of Newport and Cardiff is discussed within the GVA Grimley report and with the redevelopment of John Frost Square in Newport and the construction of St David's Phase 2 in Cardiff underway, the leakage of comparison expenditure from the area is considered a threat to the existing centres within Torfaen, especially in relation to Cwmbran town centre.

Retail Characteristics

The GVA Grimley Study also looked at quantitative and qualitative need, with quantitative need identified within the Torfaen County Borough Council's Strategic Options report, identifying approximately 28/30,000 sqm net of additional comparison floor space required within Torfaen by 2021, to be primarily allocated within Cwmbran town centre. On qualitative issues, the study looked at existing shopping patterns of local residents for convenience and comparison goods, the views of local residents in relation to current and future retail provision; and the influence of existing and committed retail provision in surrounding administrative areas on the future of retailing in Torfaen.

In the context of this study it is important to understand how residents within the North Torfaen HARPs area undertake their shopping trips and their future needs. Key findings included:

- Cwmbran has a strong food store presence with the large Asda and Sainsbury's stores within and on the edge of the town centre respectively. These 2 stores account for over 85% of main food shopping trips from Cwmbran residents and also attract over half of main food shopping trips from the Pontypool and Blaenavon survey zone.
- Between 40% and 80% of Pontypool and Blaenavon residents also travel to Cwmbran for their non-food shopping. Accordingly, there is very little leakage of comparison shopping trips from Torfaen residents outside of the local area into surrounding administrative districts such as Monmouthshire, Newport and Cardiff.
- In 2003, prior to the opening of the new Tesco store, only 17% of main food shopping trips within Zone 4 were being retained by stores in Pontypool. In 2006, following the opening of the new Tesco store, retention of main food shopping within Pontypool have increased dramatically to 40%.
- For non-food shopping, Pontypool is much less self-efficient than Cwmbran, with a higher level of leakage of locally generated shopping trips (Zone 4) than Cwmbran. The vast majority of leakage from Pontypool flows to Cwmbran and, in broad terms, leakage to Cwmbran amounts to around 50% of locally generated expenditure.

Retention rates in Pontypool and Zone 4 amount to no more than 10% for each of the 6 individual types of comparison goods shopping. There is therefore significant potential for qualitative improvements to the comparison goods retail offer in Pontypool. This is demonstrated by the views of local residents within Zone 4 of the Household Survey area with one quarter of all respondents within this area noting that they would like to see an improved choice of national retailers within the town. A similar percentage was also achieved in relation to required improvements for independent and specialist shops in Pontypool.

When looking at the Zone 4, which covers the North Torfaen HARPS area, the following specific shopping patterns were drawn from the shopper survey:

- 33% of shoppers visit Tesco, Pontypool for the main food shopping 25% visit Asda Cwmbran, 17.2% visit Sainsbury's Cwmbran, 2% visit Morrison's Ebbw Vale, 2% visit Waitrose, Abergavenny and 1% visit the Co-op in Blaenavon.
- 62% of shoppers are car borne drivers, with 11% using the bus and 7% walking to the shops
- 58.5% use Cwmbran for non-food shopping, 22.6% use Cwmbran and 1.9% visit Abergavenny
- When undertaking top-up food shopping, 16.2% visit Tesco, Pontypool, 7.4% use the Co-op in Blaenavon and 1% use the local shops in Brynmawr
- 7% of respondents visit restaurants in Abergavenny and Usk with 11.3% visiting Chepstow for this purpose
- 15.2% use the library in Blaenavon

Neighbourhood Centres

Existing studies and documents have limited information on the extent of retail provision within the North Torfaen HARPs area, with the main emphasis on the strategic function of Cwmbran and Pontypool as retail centres. Within the Adopted Local Plan 2000, neighbourhood centres within the Pontypool area are defined as Pontnewynydd, Trevethin, Abersychan and Garndiffaith.

The neighbourhood centres tend to either be located along the A4043 such as Pontnewynydd and Abersychan with Trevethin and Garndiffaith being centered within their communities on the south eastern and north western edges of the North Torfaen HARPs study area.

Pontnewynydd

This is the nearest neighbourhood centre to Pontypool, fronting onto the main A4043 servicing Pontnewynydd, Cwmffrwdor and lower Snatchwood. Key shops and services include a number of hairdressers, several fast food outlets, a convenience store and a post office. A car mechanics garage is also situated in the centre. Off-street parking provision is provided with industrial estates nearby.

Abersychan

Abersychan is at a strategic place within North Torfaen, equidistant from Blaenavon and Pontypool. It is also at the junction with the A4043 and the B4246 providing a focus for shops and services. These tend to front onto the main street for a significant amount of frontage for the size of community, mostly on the eastern side of the main street. Shops and services include a dentist, pharmacy, butchers, hardware store, fast food outlets, hairdressers, tattoo parlour, two public houses, a newsagent, post office, café and a mortgage brokers company. A good sized off-street car park is located on the junction with the A4043 and the B4246 with a smaller car park on the northern edge. The centre has had investment in its townscape, parking and general environmental quality through the Abersychan Improvement Works, which had the support of European Regional Development Funding, Welsh Development Agency/Welsh Assembly Government funding and Torfaen County Borough Council.

Trevethin

The main shopping centre is located off Church Avenue which is a precinct type provision, built at the same time as the housing development. The shops are set in the midst of central car park with rear servicing provision. The types of shops available include a convenience store, pharmacy, barbers, fruit and vegetable shop, and post office/newsagents. Trac2 – a social action centre is also situated within the parade of shops. A health centre, workingmen's club, community centre, police station (reported to be closed) and Communities First offices neighbour the centre, along with a multi-play surface and a local bus stop for the 15/23/30 bus services. A reasonable level of parking is provided with pedestrian links and crossings to the immediate housing estates.

Garndiffaith

There tends to be no specific focus to the shops and services within Garndiffaith, which tend to be situated at road junctions or along the B4246 road. A number of hairdressers, convenience stores, funeral director and associated clubs and public houses exist also the Garsychan Partnership offices. Parking is provided on-street. The area serves the local population and requires further enhancement – especially the Stanley Road shops.

Key Issues

- The North Torfaen HARP area is only represented by one local centre and a number of neighbourhood centres, with no substantial critical mass of retail provision with Blaenavon being a centre that services local needs.
- The southernmost wards of the HARP area tend to use Pontypool and Cwmbran as main shopping destinations. There is less of draw than expected to Brynmawr from the 2007 GVA Grimley survey.
- The range of goods and relatively good representation in Cwmbran is a primary destination for non-food shopping as well as food shopping. Pontypool with the new Tesco store and Crane Street development is becoming stronger although shoppers still identify quality and range as being areas for improvement and further consolidation.
- Blaenavon is seen as place for top-up shopping and for local services. The book town initiative has laid the foundations for a specialist, independent offer for visitors and with careful integration with the World Heritage site and other attractors, the town has potential to draw in new trade.
- Neighbourhood centres such as Abersychan are well provided for due to their strategic location with shopping provision in Pontynewynydd and Trevethin probably facing greater competition from nearby Pontypool, thereby probably facing future depletion of shops and services
- Eating out in North Torfaen is not seen as key destination for most respondents to the GVA Grimley survey, with people visiting Abergavenny, Usk and Chepstow for restaurants and other cultural activities.
- The quality of town centre environment and building a confident image for places such as Blaenavon as destinations requires more investment and co-ordination with complementary activities such as culture, tourism and heritage that is currently being developed as part of the World Heritage Site.

2.8 Tourism & Heritage

South East Wales Visitor Surveys 2003/2005

A South East Wales regional visitor survey, prompted by the need for bench marking as part of the development of Tourism Growth Areas, was undertaken on behalf of the Wales Tourist Board, Herian, Capital Regional Tourism and nine unitary authorities in 2003 and 2005. The objective of the survey was to profile visitors, establish perceptions and attitudes to their

visit and the area and provide comparisons with other surveys. Face to face interviews were conducted amongst visitors to 17 sites, one of which was Blaenavon (142 interviews of the 2,279). The report and data tables provide a breakdown of the Blaenavon responses.

The survey was repeated in 2005, with three sites surveyed in Blaenavon: Big Pit, the Ironworks and Blaenavon Town (a total of 300 interviews broken down by location 211, 69 and 20 respectively). Whilst some data is provided on the breakdown at these specific locations, the data is less detailed. The survey is expected to be repeated in 2008.

Table 30 – Visitor Age Profile

Age Profiles	2003	2005	
	Blaenavon	Blaenavon Town	Big Pit
Male/Female	54% / 46%	45% / 55%	52% / 48%
16-34 years	15%	30%	18%
35-54 years	53%	40%	49%
55+	32%	30%	34%

The 35-54 years age group was the most prevalent, with a higher percentage of younger visitors to the town. Visits were generally evenly spread across social groupings.

Table 31 – Type of Visit

Type of Visit	2003	2005
Day trip	35%	38%
On holiday in SE Wales	44%	39%
On holiday outside SE Wales	11%	7%
VFR	9%	16%
On business	1%	

In 2003, of those staying overnight in SE Wales, 16% stayed in Abergavenny, 13% in Cardiff and 11% in Brecon. The rest were staying in other destinations in SE Wales. Figures for 2005 are not available.

In the 2003 survey, visitors were asked if they were aware of the World Heritage Site. 70% responded positively, 30% negatively. No relationship between age or social groups was evident. Figures for 2005 are not available.

Of the attractions in the area, 91% were aware of Big Pit, 89% of the Brecon Beacons National Park, 67% of the Blaenavon Ironworks, 54 % of the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway and 51% aware of Llanfoist Wharf. 28% had heard of Blaenavon Book Town and the same percentage for Blaenavon Community Heritage Museum. All visitors to Blaenavon were aware of at least one of the attractions.

Although such a high proportion had visited Big Pit, for the rest of the attractions visitors were less likely to have been visited, with 58% having visited Brecon Beacons National Park, 27% Llanfoist Wharf, 21%

Blaenavon Ironworks, 11% the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway, 10% Blaenavon Booktown and 7% had visited Blaenavon Community Heritage Museum. 3% of visitors to Blaenavon said they had never visited any of the attractions listed.

In terms of the level of satisfaction in 2003, visitors were asked how enjoyable their visit had been. In the 2003 survey, 90% responded very enjoyable, 9% fairly enjoyable and 1% did not know. When asked for the least enjoyable aspects, 80% reported nothing and other comments included litter/poor cleanliness and poor/confusing signposting.

Red Kite Tourism Survey 2007

A small survey of visitors was undertaken at Big Pit (as part of the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape Visitor Experience and Interpretation Plan study) early in 2007 with 80 visitors surveyed, representing 280 people. Whilst the sample size was limited, it does provide some more recent data and general indications of visitor profiles and trends. The survey revealed that:

- 85% travelled less than 1 hr to visit the attraction, 8% travelled 1-2 hrs and 7% over 2 hours;
- 32% were on holiday, 68% on day visit (note: surveys were undertaken during half term holidays which may have resulted in a higher proportion on holiday);
- 40% accessed Big Pit by Pontypool Rd, 44% by Brynmawr Road and 15% Abergavenny Road;
- following their visit, 70% planned to return home, 27% visit another town or area or attraction, 3% visit Blaenavon Town or another attraction in Blaenavon WHS;
- 39% had visited Big Pit previously;
- 80% had never been to any other sites in Blaenavon or to the town and there was a general lack of knowledge and recognition of the other sites and understanding of World Heritage Site status.

Tourism in Wales

Tourism spend in Wales amounts to around £3 billion a year. Small independent operators dominate and approximately 100,000 people are employed in the sector, accounting for around 8.5% of the workforce in Wales. In 2006, 77% of UK tourists to Wales visit for a holiday, while 12% visited friends or relatives (VFR) and 9% visit for business purposes.

Figures from the United Kingdom Tourism Survey (UKTS) reveal that UK tourism Wales has fared well in recent years (with just under 12 million trips made in 2005), particularly in comparison to other UK regions. Although all

regions experienced a decline in tourist trips between 2002 and 2005, figures for Wales show the least decline and an actual increase in visitor expenditure.

Table 32 – Tourism Trips and Expenditure 2002-2005

Destination	Trips (millions)			Expenditure (£ millions)		
	2002	2005	% change	2002	2005	% Change
England	134.9	111.19	-17.6	22,659	17,832	-21.3
Scotland	18.54	14.87	-19.8	4,014	3,063	-23.7
Wales	11.95	11.29	-5.5	1,682	1,764	+4.9
Northern Ireland	2.8	2.56	-8.5	572	441	-22.9
UK Total	167.34	138.65	-17.1	29,103	22,667	-22.1

NB Changes to the survey methodology in 2005 result in figures for 2005 not directly comparable with previous years.

From 2004 to 2005, Wales demonstrated the most significant increase in trips and expenditure, with a 27% and 14% change respectively.

Table 33 – Tourism Trips and Expenditure 2004-2005

Destination	Trips (millions)			Expenditure (£ millions)		
	2004	2005	% change	2004	2005	% change
England	101.42	111.19	+9.6	19,561	17,832	-8.8
Scotland	14.38	14.87	+3.4	3,262	3,063	-6.1
Wales	8.89	11.29	+27.0	1,539	1,764	+14.6
Northern Ireland	2.28	2.56	+12.3	491	441	-10.2
UK Total	126.55	138.65	+9.6	25,129	22,667	-9.8

NB Changes to the survey methodology in 2005 result in figures for 2005 not directly comparable with previous years.

46% of trips by UK tourists to Wales go to the countryside or small towns / villages with the most popular activities undertaken including walking, swimming, visiting historic attractions and visiting museums and galleries.

In 2005 the International Passenger Survey (IPS) indicated 959,000 overseas visitors to Wales. Whilst the total number of overseas visitors increased by around 8% for the UK overall, figures suggested a slight decrease of 5% for Wales, a decrease of approximately 50,000 visitors. However, total spend by overseas visitors to Wales showed less of a decline, 2% down on the previous year to £305 million. Total spending by overseas visitors to the UK overall increased by 9% in comparison. The key overseas markets for Wales are the Republic of Ireland, America and Germany. Overseas visitors are higher spenders than UK counterparts.

Latest day visitor surveys indicate that tourism trips account for around £1.5 billion spend in Wales, with overall overnight visitors accounting for £2billion in spend.¹⁴

Tourism in the South East Wales Region

In 2005, the South East region of Wales received 2.8 million UK overnight visitors, staying 7.6 million nights and spending £408 million.

Table 34 – Tourism Trips and Expenditure – South East Wales - 2002-2005

	Trips (millions)	Nights (millions)	Spend (£m)
2002	2.9	7.3	351
2003	3.0	9.0	435
2004	2.2	6.1	381
2005	2.8	8.5	439

NB Changes to the survey methodology in 2005 result in figures for 2005 may not be directly comparable with previous years.

Figures for 2005 may not be directly comparable with previous years due to changes in methodology, but suggest that from 2002 to 2005 trips have remained relatively static whilst nights have increased along with spend.

The 2005 figures for SW Wales account for 25%, 19% and 23% respectively of the total for Wales with North Wales receiving the greatest number of trips, nights and spend. The percentages demonstrate that the average length of stay in the SE region is shorter than the other regions. The region has an average of 2.6 nights per stay compared with 3.6 in SW Wales, 3.7 nights in N Wales and 4.1 nights in Mid Wales.

Nearly 1 in 4 UK visitors were visiting friends and relatives in South East Wales, with 52% choosing to stay with friends and relatives rather than in any other form of accommodation.

¹⁴ Data obtained from Visit Wales/WAG

IPS data for South East Wales show a total of 471,000 trips were made, accounting for 3.4 million nights and £152m spend. Overseas trips to the region account for 45% of the total number of trips to Wales, and 50% of spend. Whilst the number of nights per trip have increased by 1.5 between 2004 and 2005, spend is down over the same period.

Table 35 – Tourism Trips and Expenditure – South East Wales - 2002-2005

	Trips (000s)	Nights (millions)	Spend (£m)
2002	435	3.4	126
2003	419	3.0	131
2004	478	2.8	158
2005	471	3.4	152

Tourism in the Heads of the Valleys

As part of the first phase of the Tourism Winners project, Capital Region Tourism (CRT) commissioned a STEAM report for the Heads of the Valleys sub-region. This provides trend data for tourism volume, value, profile, seasonality and employment. The report suggests that the existing visitor economy is significant – worth £108.4m in 2004 and supporting 2,205 FTE jobs – some 7.9% of the overall regional contribution. Tourism has grown 8.4% in real terms (i.e. excluding inflation) since 1999. This compares, however, with overall regional growth of 13%. Data suggests a significant over dependence on the visiting families and relatives (VFR) market in comparison with the rest of the region.¹⁵

Tourism in Torfaen

Tourism in Torfaen is believed to be worth in the region of £45million in visitor spend, attracting over 900,000 visitors during 2006/07 (figures derived through STEAM research). Continued growths in the tourism sector in Torfaen have occurred between 2001 and 2005, with visitor numbers and spend increasing by 5% per annum. The sector is a significant contributor to the economy, and hence employment, with 1,600 people believed to be employed in tourism (4.6% of total employment in Torfaen although somewhat lower than the Wales average of 8.5%).

Within North Torfaen, tourism is focused around the industrial heritage town of Blaenavon and the World Heritage Site which surrounds and extends into the Brecon Beacons National Park. The Blaenavon Industrial Landscape was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in November 2000 given its *“eloquent and exceptional testimony to the pre-eminence of South*

¹⁵ Data obtained from the Heads of the Valleys Tourism Audit.

Wales as the world's major producer of iron and coal in the 19th Century and its remarkably complete example of a 19th century landscape".¹⁶ Issues of marketing, cross-promotion, visitor welcome etc are all addressed within the WHS Visitor Management Plan.

Much of the past activities survive with evidence of extensive coal mining and iron making during the Industrial Revolution. Big Pit and Blaenavon Ironworks are the two main preserved sites, both now operating as visitor attractions. Big Pit, the National Mining Museum of Wales, provides first hand experience of mining during the industrial revolution with a unique underground guided tour of the historic coal mine below. Blaenavon Ironworks is a Scheduled Ancient Monument in the care of Cadw. In addition, the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape includes a range of Scheduled Ancient Monuments of national Importance, many Listed Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, the Blaenavon and Cwmavon Conservation Areas and numerous Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

The industrial landscape provides a rich resource for outdoor recreation with networks of footpaths and cycleways. North Torfaen is situated on the edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park with a proportion of the World Heritage Site, 45%, incorporated in the Park. The proximity to the Park provides further opportunities for outdoor recreation, as do other attractions outside the study area, such as the Monmouthshire and Brecon canal, the ski slope in Pontypool Park and Pontypool Museum.

Attractions in North Torfaen

Big Pit provides a major anchor for the World Heritage Site and the town, attracting the majority of visitors to the World Heritage Site, over 158,000 per annum. In terms of visitor numbers, Big Pit is in the top 10 free attractions in Wales

Blaenavon Ironworks, originally the largest ironworks in the world and dates back to 1789, is represents one of the most important monuments to have survived from the early part of the industrial revolution. The site, now under the care and management of Cadw, receives approximately 8,000 visitors per annum, of which a high proportion are on educational trips (40%). Recent investment has taken place to restore some of the original buildings and Cadw propose further works to restore the site and improve the visitor experience through interpretation. The attraction has recently changed to a free admission attraction and, with the works proposed, Cadw expect visitor numbers to significantly increase in the future.

The Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway, operated by volunteers on weekends and Bank Holidays, received approximately 5,500 visitors in 2006 with estimates of 7,000 visitors for 2007. Pontypool and Blaenavon

¹⁶ ICOMOS report to the World Heritage Committee 2000

Railway have major development aspirations for its future, with a series of phased development proposals which would ultimately result in a railway line from Brynmawr in the north to Pontypool in the south with a further spur to link Big Pit. The intention is to expand the line as a commercial community and visitor facility. The Railway has recently secured significant Heads of the Valleys funding for extending the line with a further funding application to be submitted to Heritage Lottery Fund to seek funding to extend the branch line to Big Pit and providing a visitor focus at Furnace Sidings.

St Peter's School, a Grade II listed building, has been restored and has recently opened as the new World Heritage Site Visitor Centre. Well located in the centre of the town, it provide a focal point for the World Heritage Site, with interpretation of the significance of the Industrial Landscape and seeking to link the various formal and informal sites in Blaenavon and elsewhere in South Wales. The Centre will also work towards encouraging visitors to explore the town, through E-Trails (using a GPS system to investigate the town and provide history and background on specific historic buildings) and promoting local businesses. The Centre will be further linked to the Herian initiative, providing an access point for information on other heritage sites in South Wales. The Centre expects to receive in the region of 15,000-25,000 visitors per annum in the early years.

The Blaenavon Community Heritage and Cordell Museum, based in Blaenavon Library, focuses on the history of the town, the early days of the industrial revolution and houses a World War II Collection, exhibits relating to Alexander Cordell and information on genealogy. The museum receives in the region of 1,200 visitors per annum, with a strong educational element.

In terms of trend data, visitor numbers to Big Pit have increased by 30% since 2001, reaching over 158,000 by 2006, following a free admissions policy and further investment in the attraction. From 2005 to 2006 an increase of 7% at Big Pit compares to a Wales average of 0.8% (1.7% for free attractions). Other attractions in Blaenavon experienced fluctuating visitor numbers during this period but with more steady growth in recent years.

Visits to Attractions

Table 36 – Visitor Numbers - Blaenavon Attractions

Attraction	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	1 st ½ 2007***	% change 05/06
Big Pit National Mining Museum of Wales*	121,133	119,015	112,045	141,127	156,977	158,115	76,542	+7.2
Blaenavon Ironworks	6,112	6,866	8,492	7,160	8,721	7,460	3,000	-14.5
Blaenavon Ironworks Events	1,200	1,070	1,278	1,393	900	50**	n/a	
Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway	8,710	6,631	3,678	4,235	4,594	5,436	2,047	+18.3
Blaenavon Community Heritage/Cordell Museum	n/a	540	808	1,153	1,310	1,138	629	-13.1

* In top 10 free attractions in Wales (in terms of visitor numbers)

** Some events relocated into the town

*** Figures for the second half of 2007 are not yet available

Across Wales, museums/art galleries generally experienced an increase (1.3%) with steam/heritage railways and workplaces a decrease (-3%) although this was not the case for the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway. Of the four regions in Wales, Mid Wales and North Wales showed little change between 2005/2006, South West Wales showed an increase (5.7%) whilst the South East was the only region with an overall decrease of 2.2%¹⁷. Reasons cited for poor performance at attractions in 2006 included the weather and the football World Cup.

Whilst some attractions in North Torfaen experienced much higher increases in visitors from 2005 to 2006 compared to the regional average, others received significantly lower visitors. Overall, the attractions increased visitors by 0.3%, compared to the regional decrease of 2.2%. However, consultations with attraction operators suggest a successful 2007, exceeding 2006 figures. Official figures are not yet available.

¹⁷ Data from VisitWales/WAG

Accommodation

Most of the accommodation provision within Torfaen is located in the south of the County Borough. The provision of visitor accommodation in North Torfaen is limited to a number of small operators spread across the area. Accommodation in Blaenavon is particularly limited with only one verified establishment available although another premise is currently being assessed. Whilst potentially 32 further bed spaces are available in and around the town centre (by four establishments), the accommodation is non-verified and therefore precludes VisitWales and the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) from promoting and recommending it to visitors. Some of this accommodation is also provided on a limited adhoc basis.

Camping/caravan accommodation is also extremely limited with some provision made by an Inn on the outskirts of Blaenavon, with basic camping facilities.

The Blaenavon Industrial Heritage Visitor Experience and Interpretation Plan identifies the Abergavenny area as offering 750 serviced beds, 544 self catering beds and 1368 bed spaces in caravan/camping sites, with occupancy rates suggesting capacity to accommodate further visitors¹⁸.

Outdoor Recreation

The North Torfaen landscape - including the relicts of its industrial past - provides a rich resource for outdoor recreation. Various initiatives are currently underway to further develop outdoor recreation and activities in North Torfaen, particularly within the World Heritage Site, and to improve linkages with the Brecon Beacons National Park and Monmouthshire's Vale of Usk. This would provide further access to the industrial landscape and sites and relicts of historic interest, and offer an alternative for those visitors not immediately interested in industrial heritage.

Recent Torfaen CBC figures show that use of the moorland for walking is increasing and would offer an appeal to the younger and more active age groups, with visitor emphasises moving to rural parts of the World Heritage Site. Cycling, horse riding and pot holing are also popular outdoor activities in the locality. Paragliding and other outdoor sports are already practiced from Bloreng and are helping to build a more progressive image for the area.

The Blaenavon Transport Strategy recommends promoting Blaenavon as a "Walking Town" given its location and potential links to the Usk Valley Walk, the Brecon Beacons National Park and the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal. It also recommends that visitors to key attractions, such as Big Pit and the Ironworks should be encouraged to walk/cycle between attractions.

¹⁸ Blaenavon Industrial Landscape Visitor Experience and Interpretation Plan, Red Kite, 2007

Various walking routes have recently been developed, such as the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape 17km circular walk, Whistle Stop 5km Tour, Iron Mountain 18km Trail and numerous Torfaen CBC walks such as the Cwmavon Heritage Trail, Cwm Lasgarn Circular Walk and walks linking Pontypool and Blaenavon. The intention is further to develop a link with the National Cycle route, providing a network of cycle trails and encourage cycle hire in the town. The World Heritage Site ranger service provides tours and links to the industrial heritage. The ranger service has a number of ideas for development of an “Active Heritage Programme” in the area partly in conjunction with outdoor centres who have already expressed a strong interest. The development of a volunteer ranger programme for the World Heritage Site is also underway.

A recent feasibility study was undertaken to consider improving recreational access along the Afon Llwyd from Whistle Inn north of Blaenavon, down through North Torfaen (connecting the communities of Blaenavon, Cwmavon, Abersychan, Pontnewynydd and Pontypool along a 12km route). The aim of the route is to increase links between residential areas, local amenities, tourist attractions, heritage features, places of work, and existing routes such as the Usk Valley Walk, the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal and, Sustrans 46.

The new operator of the Blaenavon Cheddar Company launched the Mountain Tours division of their business in May 2007. A wide range of guided walks are on offer, incorporating archaeology, industrial heritage and landscapes, railway/forest and river routes, views and town walks. Cycle hire is also provided and the company has recently invested in specially designed mountain bikes, through Sports Lottery funding, to provide guided cycle rides for people with various disability.

A Forgotten Landscapes application is currently awaiting a decision from Heritage Lottery Fund for further funding which, if successful, will provide a major contribution towards effective management of the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site.

Events

Torfaen CBC and Blaenavon Partnership secured in Objective 1 and the “Path to Prosperity” Programme for a three year events-led marketing project aiming to market and promote Blaenavon through an event led marketing and communications strategy to a target audience of professional and special interest groups, educational groups, family groups within ABC1 category. It sought to achieve repeat visitors, increased visitor numbers and an increase in visitor spend. A range of events already take place throughout the town including: Blues Festival, Literacy Festival, Spring Festival, Christmas Festival, World Heritage Day, Garn Lakes Country Fayre, Annual Big Pit lecture and interpretive walks. The ‘events’ programme has been successful and is worthy of continuing and developing further.

Joint Working Initiatives

A number of joint working initiatives, relevant to North Torfaen and the HoV region, are underway, including:

Herian – the South Wales Industrial Heritage Initiative is a partnership of public, voluntary and community groups working to promote the story of the world's first industrial nation and the rich heritage of South Wales, recognising the role of heritage as a catalyst for economic regeneration. It seeks to optimise the cultural heritage of the former industrial South Wales through enhanced levels of interpretation, regeneration of heritage assets and physical and thematic linkages between heritage sites, building on the achievement of certain sites, including the World Heritage Site status for Blaenavon. A major investment priority for Herian includes the implantation of an interpretation and presentation strategy based on “hubs” and “clusters”. In recognising the potential offered by Blaenavon World Heritage Site, HERIAN has identified Blaenavon and the World Heritage Centre as a major eastern “gateway” as it will also provide an access point for information on other heritage sites in South Wales.

Valleys Regional Park – an initiative being promoted by public, private and voluntary sector organisations with an aim to develop, coordinate and enhance outdoor countryside recreation opportunities and facilities across the valley's region. Funding has been secured through the HoV programme.

Cordell Initiative – supported through HoV funding, Cordell Country is a marketing initiative, promoted by a partnership of local authorities in the Valleys, providing touring routes for the visitor to discover the locations that feature in Alexander Cordell's novels. The tours span the Heads of the Valleys.

Churches and Chartism – a Herian led project, supported through HoV funding, to increase the profile of the Chartism stories of the region.

Walking Festival – originally established in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough, the initiative will incorporate four additional authority areas, including Torfaen. The festival seeks to raise the profile of the existing landscape by pulling together and promoting existing walks and activities.

European Route of Industrial Heritage – the World Heritage Site is involved in the initiative, working to link Blaenavon with other industrial heritage sites in Europe.

South Wales Intercultural Arts – linking arts and industrial heritage within the region.

Recent Achievements

Since gaining World Heritage Status in 2002 for the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape, and wide recognition of the rich value of the cultural asset, much work has been undertaken, and various strategies, plans and reports prepared to direct future investment and create a sustainable visitor destination, offering a unique product with significant potential whilst conserving the very essence which defines the area as a World Heritage Site.

These achievements have been made through partnership working of the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, to enhance North Torfaen as a visitor destination in terms of the range and quality of attractions, facilities and services offered. Many projects and initiatives have been or in the process of being implemented and the local community are further involved in promoting, welcoming and serving visitors, for example, through volunteer WHS rangers/guides.

The HoV programme has enabled significant investment in the tourism product, such as the recent funding towards the extension of the Pontypool and Blaenavon Steam Railway. Strong partnership working now exists within Torfaen, the HoV Area (working with other local authorities for example on the Walking Festival initiative) and across South Wales (e.g. the Herian initiative).

Whilst the Valley's still has a poor perception as a visitor destination, award winning branding, interpreting and marketing the WHS is greatly assisting in changing the perceptions of industrial heritage.

The day visitor market in North Torfaen is developing well with attraction operators reporting an increase in visitor numbers during 2007. Improvements and investment in existing attractions continues, particularly Big Pit and Blaenavon Ironworks, with significant investment proposed for the Pontypool and Blaenavon Steam Railway. A new attraction, the World Heritage Centre in Blaenavon has recently opened, 25,000 visitors anticipated per annum and the number of attractions offering free admission has further increased, with the recent inclusion of the World Heritage Centre and Blaenavon Ironworks. All attractions are developing a strong educational market.

Blaenavon town, whilst still shows signs of economic decline, has seen various town centre, shop front and traffic management improvements. The town has been successful in attracting new niche market retail outlets, such as the Blaenavon Cheddar Company, which also acts as a visitor attraction (and its associated tourism activities: cycle hire and walking/cycling tours). The Blaenavon Cheddar Company is further establishing links with Big Pit by encouraging visitors to Big Pit to visit the town (promoting the company by maturing cheese in the underground mine). Investments in improvements and additions to visitor facilities and services have occurred, such as the opening of the Tourist Information Centre, car parking, signposting and "gateway to the landscape"

improvement. A successful events programme has and continues to be developed.

An outdoor recreation programme is being developed, to include guided walks, trails, volunteer rangers and cycle hire, focused on the World Heritage Site and supported by the World Heritage Centre. Initiatives linking attractions and sites include the Iron Mountain Trail which links the World Heritage Site's key historic features.

Key Issues

- Poor perceptions of the 'Valleys' as a tourist destination;
- Lack of understanding of the term 'World Heritage Site' amongst visitors;
- The staying visitor/short break market is yet fully developed with a limited accommodation base in North Torfaen and a high proportion of non-verified accommodation in Blaenavon;
- The pivotal position of Big Pit is attracting visitors to North Torfaen, though only a relatively small proportion of these go on to visit other attractions or explore Blaenavon;
- Blaenavon town provides limited visitor offer (retail, places to eat and drink, unpredictable opening/closing times);
- North Torfaen is struggling to meet the needs of the coach market, with insufficient capacity and parking in Blaenavon. In and around Blaenavon, poor visitor orientation and physical linkages exist between attractions;
- Outdated signage which omits new attractions and logos, inappropriate positioning and general wear and tear;
- Outstanding opportunities to further develop outdoor/countryside recreation, linking with existing heritage and cultural product and outdoor activities, within North Torfaen and beyond (including Brecon Beacons National Park).
- An events programme has been successfully initiated and should be continued and developed.

2.9 Transportation & Movement

Strategic Network

Within North Torfaen, the main road corridor serving the area is the A4043, supported by the B4246 and the B4248. The area is fairly well connected with linkages south through Pontypool and Cwmbran to the M4 corridor and connections northwards to the A465 Heads of the Valleys road. This is

currently being duelled to improve accessibility from the Midlands and West Wales.

As the main communication route, the A4043 experiences high traffic flows and often excessive queuing during the AM and PM peak periods through Pontypool and Abersychan, particularly at its junction with the A472.

In some areas along the A4043, it is noted that the highway does not meet current standard guidelines in terms of the road surface, horizontal and vertical alignment and visibility. Moreover, the surface condition of some of the secondary roads such as the B4246 Foundry Road through the settlements of Garndiffaith, Talywain and Varteg, requires improvement. This road would play an important role should The British site be developed for mixed uses, and would not be sufficient to accommodate increased traffic flows in its current state.

Traffic flows and associated congestion can be affected by the efficiency of junctions. The North Torfaen Strategic Highway Improvement Programme (2006) identified the following junctions which would benefit from improvements to enable the network to cater for future growth:

- A472 / A4043 roundabout junction;
- A4043 / Albion Road roundabout junction;
- A4043 / Tesco roundabout junction;
- A4043 / Riverside roundabout junction;
- A4043 / Broad Street / B4246 Foundry Road junction;
- A4043 / B4246 Prince Street junction;
- B4246 North Street / Estate Road junction.

The South East Wales Transport Alliance (Sewta) has identified The North Torfaen Regeneration Transportation Scheme (A472 Pontypool – A4043 north of Abersychan Corridor Improvements) as a candidate scheme for the Regional Highways Strategy, as part of a strategic five year programme of works. The scheme would make both on and off-line improvements along the A4043 to bring the highway up to standard. The scheme is also intended to help improve safety, improve access and journey times from the south, introduce prioritise bus movements and complement the proposed Park and Ride facilities for Pontypool and New Inn Rail Station.

In terms of freight movement, there is a lack of areas available for overnight lorry parking adjacent to the strategic highway network.

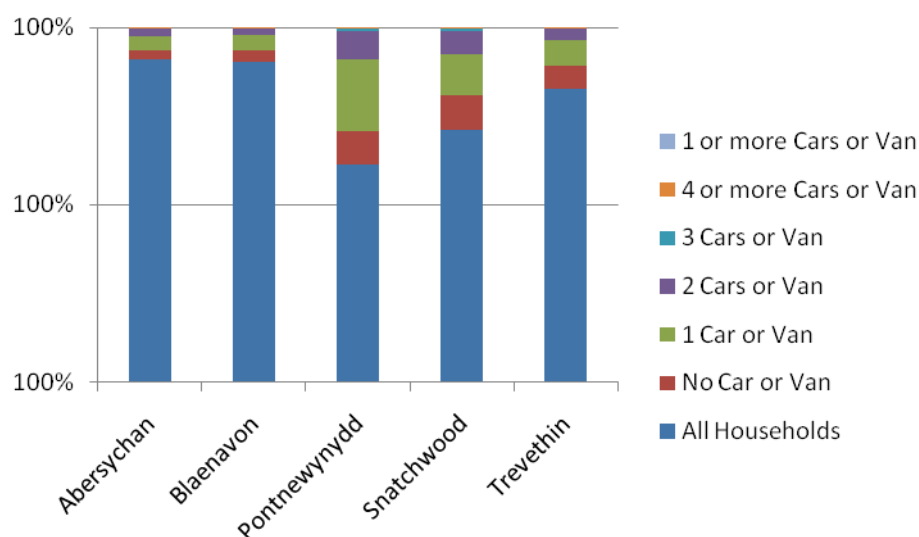
Car Ownership

Car ownership within the study area is slightly lower than the average levels recorded for Wales as a whole. This is extracted from the graph below, which shows the percentage of households without a car or van.

The Heads of the Valley region shows higher rates of households without access to cars, and by comparison it would appear that the households of the North Torfaen HARPS area are better positioned.

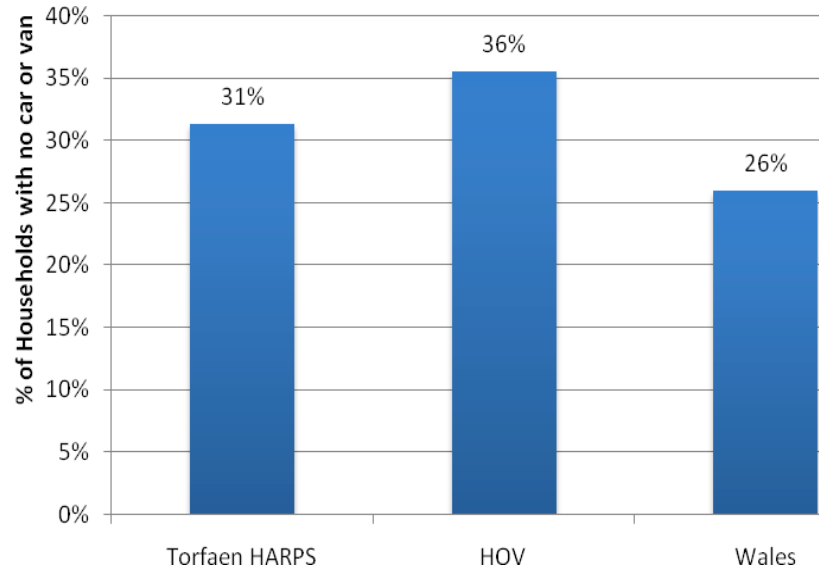
However, there are differences in the levels of car ownership between the wards of the study area. For example, within the ward of Trevethin, 38% of households do not own a car or van – a significant statistic, despite its close proximity to the facilities on offer in Pontypool.

Figure 6: Car ownership by North Torfaen HARPs Wards



Source: National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk)

Figure 7: Households with No Car or Van in North Torfaen HARPs Area

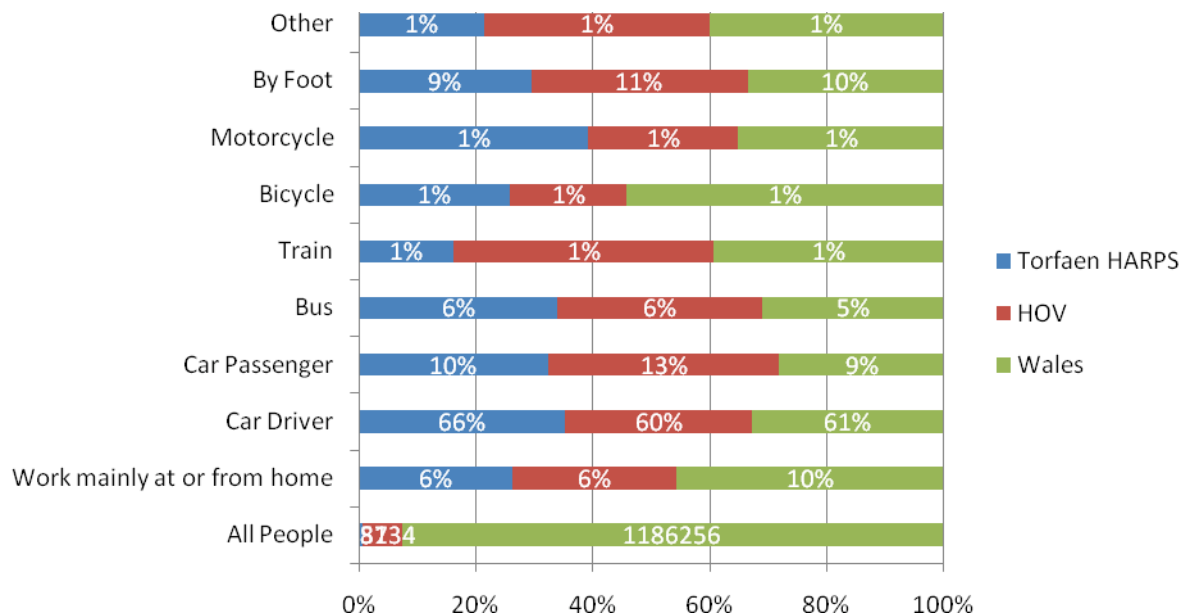


Source: National Statistics (Nomis: www.nomisweb.co.uk)

The low level of car ownership means that the provision of public transport is particularly important. The use of public transport may be the only method by which residents of households in the study area can access employment and vital services, such as shopping, leisure and health facilities. Noting the low car ownership figures for Trevethin, this would appear to be a community that is heavily reliant on public transport, especially as topography constraints limit access to Pontypool by foot.

Figure 9 shows that the journey to work is dominated by the car. It is noted that the proportion of local residents using the car is higher than the levels for both the Heads of the Valley and Wales as a whole, reflecting longer distances to work for individuals. Travel to work by other modes is in line with the rest of Wales.

Figure 8: Travel to work by mode for North Torfaen HARPs Area



Public Transport

North Torfaen is generally well served with six regular bus services provided by Stagecoach Wales (with the exception of services 13/14) operating to destinations both within the study area and outside, such as Newport. Pontypool town centre acts as the public transport hub / interchange for the north of the County Borough and there is a relatively high frequency of services, with four of the services operating a service an hour or more within the study area. A further three routes offer limited services to meet niche demands, to Pontypool College for example. It is understood that there is a reasonable level of capacity provision within the study area.

However, for those dependant on bus service provision, the lack of a Sunday service and in the evenings after 6.00pm is a major barrier to those without access to a car, both within the HARP and to destinations beyond. Also, there is no longer a bus service running from Trevethin to Snatchwood.

The bus corridors have recently been subject to an improvement scheme, so the majority of bus stops along the A4043, B4246 and B4248 corridors are of a high standard. However, the revised bus routes in Blaenavon and the introduction of the one-way system has caused accessibility problems for some residents in getting to bus stops.

Congestion on the A4043 impacts negatively on the bus services in terms on journey time reliability and the unreliable bus services undermining public confidence.

A seasonal Hopper service has been introduced from the 18th May 2008 to the 28th September 2008, to take tourists directly to the attractions in North Torfaen. However, it is noted that no long distance coach services currently operate to/from the study area and there are no coach parking facilities within Blaenavon town centre.

There are no feasible rail alternatives along the A4043, B4246 and B4247. The local rail network, which is operated by Arriva Trains Wales, only extends to Pontypool (Cwmbran and Pontypool are on the main line service to Manchester and Crewe). Pontypool and New Inn railway station is situated to the east of Pontypool town centre, between the town and New Inn. The station has recently undergone refurbishment and now benefits from Park and Ride facilities (Sewta Rail Prioritised Investment Programme Scheme due for completion 2013). For an additional cost, users of the station can purchase a PLUSBUS add-on which allows an unlimited number of bus journeys to be made on the services of participating bus operators anywhere within the Pontypool and New Inn PLUSBUS zone.

Walking

Footways which meet with current standards are not widespread within built up areas and along the A4043. Parked cars make it difficult for pedestrians to safely cross the road.

Torfaen CBC has recently published a draft Torfaen's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) (2008) which provides an assessment of the extent to which the local Public Rights of Way meet the present and likely future needs. The main aim of the ROWIP is to ensure that all members of the public have access to a safe and effective PRow network that meets their needs. Gaps do exist in the PRow network, although these can be complicated to identify, especially given that the definitive Borough-wide map is not up to date.

As part of the preparation of the ROWIP, an Access Questionnaire was conducted in 2005 which identified that overgrown routes, insufficient waymarks and a lack of information available were the most common problems encountered when residents used the routes. PRow's require regular maintenance, although resources to maintain them can be limited, especially during the growing season. In relation to ensuring that all PRow's are sufficiently waymarked, there is currently an issue with the signs becoming vandalised or stolen.

For recreational uses, there exist a network of walking routes within and surrounding the study area which run adjacent to a number of attractions, including the World Heritage Site and Garn Lakes. The Iron Mountain Trail Route is a circular route of the major sites within the Blaenavon World Heritage Site. It can be treated as two separate walks or combined as one 18km walk. The route benefits from a selection of car parks along the route, to the benefit of users.

Cycling

A National Cycle Network Route (NCN Route 46), also known as the Torfaen Leisure Route, runs through the study area following the line of the old mineral railway line and is traffic free for almost its entirety. It is approximately 18 miles in length and suitable for all users, with a gradual uphill incline from south to north. To the south, the route links closely with Newport railway station and bus stations via the NCN route 47. The cycle routes within and surrounding the study area are well placed to attract trips associated with work and school commuting in addition to recreational cycling. At present, there is no legal provision for any off-road vehicular sport users, and there is evidence of use of trial bikes in the area surrounding Blaenavon.

The Blaenavon Traffic and Transportation Study suggested that the establishment of a cycle route through the town centre should be investigated, and also the establishment of a biker trailer service on Bus Route 30. There is also a need to provide safe and secure cycle parking facilities to attract cycling within the study area.

Horse Riding

Assessment work in readiness for the proposed Valley's Regional Park has identified there to be a limited number of horse riding routes within the HARPS study area, and that these are of a fragmented nature. Horse-riders can use the Torfaen Leisure Route from Pontypool to Garn Lakes in Blaenavon. In addition, a new bridleway has been provided which runs from Woodside Road, Trevethin to Waterworks Lane, above the former reservoir. The new route links in with the existing bridleway leading to Blaenavon Community Wood. Moreover, the Furlong Route is a network of three linking loops through the Blaenavon World Heritage Site.

Safe Routes to School/Work

Improvements have already been made in the use of safe routes to school and the work place around Victoria and Pontnewynydd Primary Schools, together with Abersychan Comprehensive School, although many other schools in the area would benefit from improvements concerning safe travel to school. Work places would also benefit from such improvements.

Key Issues

- The supporting road network in general needs improvements, especially to function for future planned developments;
- Car ownership levels are lower than the national average, but higher than the Heads of the Valley Region as a whole.
- The car dominates as the chosen mode of travelling to work, suggesting that residents travel longer distances to places of employment;
- The road network allows good movement in a north to south direction through the study area for cars. Congestion exists through Pontypool and also at junctions off the main A4043 road.

- Good public transport provision throughout the study area, (except for evening and Sunday services) with recent improvements made to the network of bus stops;
- Poor Public Rights of Way provision throughout the study area;
- The presence of a traffic-free National Cycle Network Route is not supplemented by a larger network connecting the settlements and communities;
- There is a need to improve and promote the use of safe routes to school and the work place, to complement the work already completed adjacent to a small number of learning institutions.

2.10 Natural & Built Environment

River Corridors

Running in a southerly direction through the HARPS study area, the Afon Llwyd is in the most easterly valley of the South Wales Coalfield. The river extends for a distance of some 12 km through the study area, from its source at Waunafon (as the last intact upland bog in Gwent) in the North, through the communities of Blaenavon, Cwmavon, and Abersychan, to Pontnewynydd. South of the HARPS area, the river continues southwards through Pontypool and Cwmbran to its confluence with the River Usk at Caerleon.

Along its length, the river corridor presents a varied and contrasting picture, from the more disturbed industrial landscapes north of Blaenavon, to the attractive pasture, forestry and natural woodlands, south of the town, contrasting with stone walled sections through the urban areas south of Victoria Village. The topography of the valley has meant that much of the historic development of the area has been concentrated along the valley floor. Its significance is today reflected in the head of the river from Garn Lakes in the north to Cwmavon in the south being included within the boundary of the World Heritage Site, as well as conservation areas at Blaenavon and Cwmavon and a number of listed buildings and structures, including some river bridges.

Much of the river corridor is within the ownership of Torfaen County Borough Council, though the Forestry Commission owns the extensive area of Blaenavon Community Woodland and south of the town, the river runs through a number of farms in private ownership. The river valley contains areas of significant ecological interest, with a number of species and habitats included on the national and Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) lists. Parts of the river corridor are infested with invasive Japanese Knotweed.

There are also two designated local nature reserves (LNR) at Garn Lakes and Cwmavon Corridor.

Garn Lakes

- A reclaimed landscape, the three lakes which make up this reserve, are home to breeding wildfowl, wading birds and a variety of dragon flies such as the black tailed skimmer;

Cwmavon Corridor

- Based around the cycleway, this reserve covers over 45 hectares. It's main features is the cycle trail, which follows the route of an old railway through grassland and mature woodland of sessile oak, beach and hazel at an attitude of 300m. Present are woodland birds such as pied fly catcher, wood warbler and redstart.

Presently, access to the river, both for walkers and horse riders is limited to public rights of way and bridleways that tend to cross the valley floor rather than run along it. This is particularly evident along the river corridor between Blaenavon to the south of Cwmavon, where there is no public access, although the former Tram road, between Abersychan and Pontnewynydd, which is owned by Torfaen CBC is used informally by local residents, as a non public right of way. This relatively undisturbed section is of high conservation value and any potential public access needs to be fully assessed to ensure that the naturalness of this section is fully preserved. There are other constraints such as housing and industrial development which physically prevent access to the river through much of Abersychan and Pontnewynydd. Elsewhere, the National Network Cycle Route 46 runs from Garn Lakes southwards, mainly off-road, along the higher level former railway, to the west of the Afon Llwyd, connecting Blaenavon, Cwmavon, Talywain, Abersychan, Cwm-Ffrwd-Oer, Wainfelin and Pontypool and onto Newport.

Opportunities for improved recreational access of the Afon Llwyd running through Torfaen's administrative area, (covering the HARPS study area) was undertaken for Torfaen CBC by Mackley Davies Associates (Afon Llwyd, Access Feasibility Study, 2007). The report has identified two potential recreational routes: A preferred route running along the former tramway, linking the industrial areas of Blaenavon to the wider transport links at Pontypool, along an off-road route suitable for walking and cycling. However, a combination of significant areas of land in private ownership and sections of non public rights of way make this route unachievable in the short term. An alternative route, based on former transport links between Blaenavon and Pontnewynydd (including Sustrans route 46) is proposed. Although less constrained, the route diverts away from the river corridor and involves a number of road crossings.

Implementation of this route can nevertheless be achieved with minor revisions to the rights of road network, re-surfacing of some sections, signposting and vegetation management. The potential has also been identified of extending the route beyond Torfaen's administrative boundary with links to Caerleon, using existing rights of way as a potential tourist

route, linking the Roman settlement at Caerleon with the industrial town of Blaenavon.

Road Corridors

The principal communication routes running through the HARPS study area is the main A4043 road corridor, running along the valley floor connecting Pontypool, Pontnewynydd, Abersychan and Blaenavon. Running parallel for the most part is the B4245 which takes an elevated position between Abersychan and Blaenavon. North of Blaenavon, the town is connected to Nantyglo (and to the A465) by the B4246 over Llanelly Hill and to the north east to the A465 via the B4248 through the Blorenghe.

The confining valley landscape topography of the HARPS study area has dictated not only the settlement pattern but the communication routes that serve it. At its approach from the south, the separate communities of Pontnewynydd and Abersychan have combined to create a continuous urban environment which dominates the main road corridor northwards through Abersychan. As the gateway to the north of the County Borough (as well as the HARPS area), first impressions are poor, with buildings of varying quality and age. Collectively these provide an incoherent and disjointed urban form, dominated by 2 modern, but vacant commercial blocks. This lack of townscape definition is reinforced by poor edge and boundary treatments, along with instances of neglected urban structures in the form of street furniture. The overall appearance is one of a lack of care, with the poor state of repair of some properties, which have remained empty for long periods.

Elsewhere, more recent building developments adjoining the road corridor have disrupted the urban form in their scale, design and use of materials and appear out of keeping with the character of the area.

It is evident that the transport corridor within this area dictates and reinforces a sense of physical separation between properties on either side of the road. This creates an unsafe and unwelcoming pedestrian environment with narrow footways and few pedestrian crossing points along its length.

To the north of Abersychan, the visual experience of the A4043 changes where it enters a semi-rural landscape of enclosed woodland and open agricultural land within the former ironworking area of Cwmavon and its remnant early industrial housing.

Northwards, the road corridor climbs gently towards the more open townscape setting of Blaenavon. The approach to the town is somewhat understated with little to announce or distinguish a sense of arrival. The A4043 effectively skirts the western edge of the town, providing little draw into the town centre, with the lack of any visual linkages. Legibility is poor with confusing signage, presenting an unimpressive and ill-defined sense of arrival at this point of entry to the town.

The approach to the town from the north along the B4245 also fails to provide a positive impression and portrays an air of dereliction and abandonment, with low grade land-uses, coupled with areas of dereliction and poor maintenance. However, communication along the main routes through the town passes important landmark buildings, that help give the town a sense of identity and visual distinctiveness.

The main route to Big Pit Mining Museum is via the Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estate. The quality of the environment has been enhanced by recent environmental improvements, though further phases of work remain to be undertaken to improve the overall visitor experience.

The alternative route northwards to Blaenavon, diverts from the A4043 at Abersychan and passes through the urbanised and largely residential settlements of Talywain, Garndiffaith and Varteg, located to the north and west of Abersychan. The road corridor presents an indifferent picture, characterised with a diversity of house styles with rows of traditional terraced housing fronting directly onto the highway, early post-war housing and more recent speculative housing development. The scene is however, predominated with poorly defined spaces and edges, with a lack of any coherence in boundary treatments and enclosures. The area has benefitted from landscape improvements in parts, and contains several local historic features, a legacy from its industrial past, though localised pockets of degradation, vacant properties and sites remain. To the north of Garndiffaith the road runs through the upland settlement of Varteg. This small community occupies an elevated and largely exposed position and sits within a historically important former industrial and rural landscape setting.

The settlement itself is largely set-back from the main highway and provides a more open and rural feel. The overall impression is of an area characterised by under-used and poorly defined spaces, criss-crossed by a series of small roads. The opportunity exists through appropriate treatments to create greater definition and a sense of arrival/announcement to the village, particularly for those using this as an alternative route to Blaenavon.

Running north-westerly towards Blaenavon the road passes through spectacular scenery, with views across the valley. The immediate roadside environment has recently been upgraded including the lay-by overlooking Cwmavon Cottages and the Varteg Road Cemetery Area.

Town Centres

The Heads of the Valleys Spatial Strategy identifies the main settlements within the HARPS study area, by role and function, as Blaenavon (defined as a Secondary Hub) and Abersychan, (defined as a Secondary Centre). These settlements act as the primary town centres within the HARPS area, the remaining settlements performing a largely dormitory role, supported, in the case of Trevechin, Pontnewynydd and Garndiffaith by local shopping centres.

Blaenavon is regarded as one of the best surviving examples in South Wales of a valley head town, having retained many of its characteristic features from its industrial past, including rows of terraced housing, chapels, churches, schools and the Workman's Hall and Institute. This is reflected in the designation of much of the town as a Conservation Area and the presence of a number of listed building and scheduled ancient monuments. The town is also included within and forms a central part of the wider industrial landscape World Heritage Site.

The physical regeneration of the town is well advanced with considerable investment already undertaken on schemes of building enhancement and environmental improvements. Overall, this has had a marked impact on the quality of the urban environment, with more recent physical improvements having been undertaken to a high standard of design and use of materials. This includes shop front refurbishments, car park improvements and the restoration and re-use of key landmark buildings, including the Cordell Museum (formerly the Town Council offices) and the World Heritage Centre (formerly the St Peter's Church) along with the enhancement and reinforcement of the "heritage precinct" within the vicinity of the World Heritage Centre.

Whilst much of the historic quality of the town remains intact and is well preserved, there are a number of visual detractors evident. Collectively, these contribute to the poor townscape quality of the town (in parts), and is the result of a number of actions over a period of time including:

- The loss of early historic buildings within the town and their replacement with unsympathetic modern developments including suburban-style housing;
- The poor physical condition and run-down appearance of many buildings (including vacant properties);
- Unkempt and unused open spaces as a result of earlier building demolitions;
- Inappropriate modern details on traditionally important buildings;
- Poor quality materials and finishes to street surfaces and boundary treatments.

The need for a comprehensive approach to maintain the town's future preservation, conservation and enhancement is a pre-requisite of the town's inclusion (and that of individual buildings and artefacts) within its internationally and nationally recognised designations. The town's position within the World Heritage Site is an appreciation of its value within the wider Blaenavon industrial landscape and a recognition that the fabric and key heritage assets of the historic townscape have survived largely intact.

The historic status of the town does require that certain provisions are in place to ensure the future protection and conservation of the area's outstanding heritage assets. The designation of a central part of the town

as a Conservation Area underlines the need to promote the preservation and enhancement of the area's character and appearance. In addition, the presence of a number of Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments, places additional controls on their protection against uncontrolled change.

Opportunities do exist for further phases of environmental improvements, based on the upgrading of key areas of public open space and properties within the heart of the town. Many of these are poorly maintained and unused, and their enhancement would continue in raising the standard of environmental and conservation works within the town.

The urban form of Abersychan is dominated by communication routes running through the heart of the town. The traditional streetscape pattern has remained largely intact, with buildings of an appropriate scale and form, though a number have remained empty for long periods. Individual building refurbishment is evident, though this has been undertaken in a piecemeal fashion with little co-ordination, which has reduced its impact within the street scene.

Landscape

The landscape form and character found within the HARPS study area typifies much of industrial South Wales with steep-sided valley sides and narrow valley floors orientated in a north-south direction, with smaller valleys running off in an east-west direction. Its present day appearance is varied with traditional field patterns and areas of ancient semi-natural woodland around Cwmavon, contrasting with the more visibly disturbed upland moors to the north and west, with post industrial landscapes still in evidence and testament to its industrial past eg. Blaenserchan, the British and Varteg Tips.

Of particular significance is the landscape around Blaenavon, which graphically demonstrates the relationship between the area's industrial past and its industrial landscape, with many distinguishing features associated with the area's iron and coal industries still in evidence. This has been reflected in the inclusion of the landscape around Blaenavon within the CADW/CCW/ICOMOS (UK) Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales in 1996, "*as one of the best preserved industrial landscapes in Wales*". More importantly, in 2000, a more extensive area of industrial landscape significance was inscribed as a World Heritage Site as a "relic cultural landscape". In total the area of the World Heritage Site covers some 3,290 hectares representing the extent of the historic landscape associated with the Blaenavon Ironworks, although only some 1,579 hectares is included within the HARPS study area. The area includes the key heritage sites of Blaenavon Ironworks, Big Pit and Garnddyrys Ironworks, the mineral workings at Pwll Du Quarry, the associated network of tramways, roads, canals and railways, and the settlements of Blaenavon and Cwmavon.

In accordance with its obligations as a World Heritage Site, Torfaen CBC has prepared a Management Plan (with its partner organisations), setting-out various proposals and projects for the protection, conservation, repair, restoration and interpretation of the landscape. The status afforded to the industrial landscape of Blaenavon as a World Heritage Site not only requires the protection of the unique “cultural landscape” of Blaenavon but to put in place an effective programme of conservation and management of the heritage asset along with improved public access and interpretation. Key to this is having mechanisms in place to ensure that the unique quality of this heritage landscape is not irreversibly damaged by future developments, natural decay, vandalism etc.

Within the currently approved Management Plan, a number of key management issues and the main pressures affecting the World Heritage Site have been identified. This includes the protection and conservation of key monuments; improved accessibility and interpretation; the greater use of the landscape as a resource and countryside management.

A key component in the conservation and restoration of the wider historic and natural upland landscape around Blaenavon is Torfaen CBC’s “Forgotten Landscapes Project.” This aims to conserve the heritage of the landscape to deliver a number of inter-related and mutually supportive projects in a partnership approach. It is seen by the Council as a exemplar project, linking across key themes such as the conservation and enhancement of heritage features; the creation of new access and interpretation, landscape and habitat restoration; management of the commons and education programmes and training opportunities. The project is currently being progressed by the Council with a funding application submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in March 2008. Should this application be successful, implementation of projects will commence in 2011, as part of a 3 year programme.

There are a number of other landscape designations affecting the landscape quality and nature conservation interests within the HARPS study area. These confer a high degree of protection and conservation obligations and include the following:

- [Special Landscape Areas \(SLAs\):](#)

Land to the west of Mynydd Henllys in the south to Coity Mountain in the north.

Land to the east of Ponthir in the south to the Brecon Beacons National Park boundary in the north

Land to the east of the Brecon Beacons National Park boundary in the south to Mynydd-y-Garn in the north.

- [Landscape Improvement Areas \(LIAs\):](#)

Pen Tranch

Land to the west of the B4246 from Snatchwood in the south to Garn-yr-Erw/Pwll-Du in the north (including Blaenserchan Colliery and Pant Glas).

- [Sites of Special Scientific Interest \(SSSI\):](#)

The Bloreng

- [Local Nature Reserves \(LNR\)](#)

Garn Lakes

Cwmavon Corridor

- [Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation \(SINC\):](#)

Coity Mountain, Upland Bog (Pwll Du), Spoil Tip (Big Pit), Western Wooded slopes, Afon Llwyd

- [Special Area for Conservation \(SAC\)](#)

Pwll Du

In addition to the protection of key landscape features, as in the case with SLAs, designation of other areas and sites provides opportunities and priorities, through approved strategies and plans for landscape improvement and management, the conservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats and the removal of derelict sites and land reclamation schemes.

In particular, the post industrial landscape around Blaenavon is considered important for the variety of habitats within close proximity to each other eg marsh, heathland, lakes, streams, woodland. Their importance as areas for wildlife is being increasingly recognised, though they are considered to be very fragile. In addition, there are internationally rare species to be found within the area for eg rare moths that only breed on the Coity, whilst Red Grouse numbers are dangerously low on the Bloreng.

At a more local level, the character and quality of the urban landscape varies from well maintained and used public parks and open spaces to overgrown and unkempt vacant sites and churchyards, to areas of environmental degradation and poor visual quality, particularly along the edges of built-up areas, which combine to provide negative visitor perceptions of the area within large tracts of urban fringe. This is also affected in parts by vandalism and anti-social behaviour brought about by fly tipping, fire setting, off-road vehicles etc which have a damaging effect on the landscape and the quality of life within the area.

Industrial Areas

Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estate is located to the north of Blaenavon and also serves as the main access point for visitors to Big Pit. The estate sits astride a main spine road running along its length with a mix of industrial and office units on either side. The linear and open nature of the estate road presents an uninspiring and functional appearance. The

implementation of an earlier environmental scheme has helped soften its edges and improve orientation within the estate, particularly at its southern entrance closest to the Ironworks Car Park. However, further phases of work are required to comprehensively upgrade the remaining sections of the estate environment, particularly given its dual role as the main gateway to Big Pit.

Kays and Kears Industrial Estate is located immediately to the north of the Gilchrist Thomas Estate and is occupied solely at present by TWFoils located at its entrance. Landscape treatment is confined to the main approach into the estate and the immediate environment of TWFoils site, rather than extending into the remainder of the estate, which remains untreated.

Pontnewynydd Industrial Estate has recently benefitted from a landscaping scheme and car parking provision (which also serves the town) along its main entrance off the A4043. While improvements have been made to the entrance to the estate the remainder of the area requires enhancement, plus upgrading of individual plots and signage improvements.

Residential Areas

The North Torfaen HARPS study area is characterised by a complex and varied residential environment, from early industrial housing to modern housing estates and suburban housing areas. Many of the older residential properties and their boundary walls are locally distinctive, with terraces hugging the valley sides and made either with stone from local quarries or bricks manufactured in local brickworks (such as the Pontypool Brick Company). In places, accessibility and a lack of parking provision is evident, in addition to which, the older housing stock has been poorly maintained as a whole – a situation compounded by the absence of resources to allow effective maintenance by householders. Whilst not being a problem that is evident throughout the whole study area, there are particular settlements where this problem is greatly pronounced.

Trevethin is a hillside suburb of Pontypool, built around a small village in the 1960's, with close physical links to the neighbouring housing estates of St. Cadoc's and Penygarn (which lie outside of the study area). The predominance of mid 20th century semi detached and terraced dwellings overwhelms the environment, which is characterised by a lack of sense of place. Though typical of the period, a shortage of on-street parking (especially after recent traffic calming measures) has forced many householders to develop hardstandings to the front or side of their dwellings. The piecemeal approach to their development has been instrumental in creating a cluttered and unco-ordinated street scene.

Key Issues

- Visually attractive and ecologically important Afon Llwyd river corridor, restricted in sections by limited accessibility and areas of degradation;

- Heritage value of Blaenavon apparent in key buildings and spaces, though there is a need for an effective conservation programme to ensure the heritage asset is preserved and enhanced;
- Urban areas are dominated by communication routes running through the valley. Poorly defined spaces and edge treatments along the lengths of the study area, with a lack of visual cohesion and legibility in parts;
- Lack of definition and sense of arrival at key settlements and destination points;
- Recognition, both nationally and internationally, of the industrial landscape around Blaenavon and the importance attached to its future management and conservation;
- Indifferent quality of the industrial estates, with initial phases of environmental enhancements in evidence, though as yet incomplete, thereby limiting their impact;
- Overall townscape quality of Blaenavon town centre is undermined by a number of visual detractors. Opportunities for further schemes of enhancement of key buildings and spaces, continuing the recent standards set;
- Cluttered appearance of streetscape evident within larger housing estates.

2.11 Community Infrastructure

Police

The Torfaen HARPS area falls within B Division of the Gwent Constabulary. Each of the six HARPS wards have an identified Neighbourhood Officer presence consisting of (at least one) Police Constable and Community Support Officers, with the intention of localising the presence and therefore reducing response times. The size of Neighbourhood presence for each ward is detailed below:

Table 37 – Policing Numbers

Torfaen HARPS Ward Name	Neighbourhood Officer No.
Abersychan	3
Blaenavon	3
Pontnewynydd	2
Snatchwood	5

Trevethin	5
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(Source: Gwent Constabulary)

The size of the Police presence appears to be inversely related to the number of crimes in each ward, with Abersychan and Blaenavon featuring more prominently in this regard. Overall, based on figures for 2006/07 and 2007/08, it would appear that numbers of recorded crimes have fallen in all wards apart from Abersychan, and this is attributed to the greater neighbourhood presence and also clear identification of priorities. This is shown in the table below, and suggests that such improvements are positively contributing towards a stated priority of Torfaen's Community Strategy for people to feel safer in their communities.

Table 38 – No of recorded crimes by North Torfaen HARPs wards

Torfaen HARPS Ward Name	Number of Recorded Crimes	
	2006/07	2007/08
Abersychan	553	573
Blaenavon	528	441
Pontnewynydd	145	110
Snatchwood	285	259
Trevethin	483	393
Torfaen HARPS Total	1994	1776

(Source: Gwent Constabulary Ward Level Crime Report, April 2008)

The larger proportion of recorded crime relates to criminal damage, vehicle crime and personal violence. These are reflected in the divisional priorities of anti-social incidents, theft from vehicles, burglary and drug supply. However, it is the ward police priorities that indicate the problems occurring at a more local level. This shows that disorder is a problem in Abersychan, Blaenavon and Trevethin, especially in relation to youths. A prevalent problem in Blaenavon and Pontnewynydd is the proliferation of indiscriminate parking due to the absence of allocated parking facilities, and this is then linked to the high numbers of thefts from vehicles.

It is observed that not every HARPS ward benefits from a permanent base for its Neighbourhood Officer teams. Sub stations currently exist in Garndiffaith and Blaenavon (although not manned 24 hours a day), in addition to the sectional police station in Pontypool which is manned 24 hours a day. A sub police station existed in Trevethin until recently and the relocation of the Neighbourhood Officers to the sectional station in Pontypool. As such, whilst each of the HARPS wards has a dedicated Neighbourhood Officer presence, the wards of Pontnewynydd, Snatchwood and Trevethin and do not benefit from a local police sub-station base. This

presents a problem to the residents of the more remote communities of Varteg, Pentwyn and the outer reaches of Trevethin – all of which are located on the top of the valley sides and as a result the topography of the land inhibits easy access to the nearest such facilities.

Community Centres

The area's industrial heritage has been instrumental in creating a network of community facilities to serve the local community. Whilst the traditional industry base has since declined, its legacy has been to leave a series of buildings that are generally still the hub of local community activity. Blaenavon Workman's Hall is a prime example, being utilised for a wide range of purposes on a daily basis. Trevethin and Penygarn Workingmen's Club is a modern facility that is also used on a daily basis.

At the other end of the spectrum are the smaller community halls that play host to a range of basic community services. Such facilities are found in Forgeside, Elgam and District (Blaenavon), Garndiffaith and Pontnewynydd. Whilst such facilities are accessible to the local communities, they are generally underutilised by residents and therefore hold limited significance. Furthermore, the lack of use means that maintenance work (which is normally a high priority for these facilities) becomes a financial burden.

Recreation Space

Playing pitch / recreation provision within the North Torfaen HARP area is shown in [Table 38](#) below, the information for which is derived from Torfaen's own informal Playing Pitch Study. In total, the area contains some 12.7 hectares of playing pitches which cater for a range of sports, including mini and junior football, adult football and rugby. The area lacks provision of a cricket ground, although it is understood that provision is made by re-marking grounds used for other purposes during the winter months. In the majority of cases within the area the match / playing pitches double up and are used for training purposes which increases their use. Forgeside is the only recreation facility within the HARP area that contains a floodlit training pitch.

The report concludes that compared to accepted standards, there are observed deficiencies of provision within Blaenavon in relation to adult football, junior football and mini football. It is considered that the Coke Pitch suffers from a large gradient, has a poor playing surface, and due to its isolated location, is subject to vandalism. By contrast, pitches at Blaenavon Recreation Ground are considered to be of good quality. The pitches at Forgeside provide the only area within the town which benefits from flood lighting and this provision reflects the use of the training pitches in this area, with the only alternative option being the all-weather floodlit facility in Brynmawr. It is considered that if floodlighting was provided elsewhere, outdoor training provision would be greatly improved and pressures would be taken off training pitches at Forgeside.

Table 38 – Recreation/Open Space Provision in the Study Area

Location	Ward	Owner	Size	Changing Facilities	Provision
Coke Field	Blaenavon	TCBC	0.9 Ha	No	1 Mini Football Pitch
Rifle Green	Blaenavon	TCBC	1.2 Ha	No	1 Football Pitch
Forgeside	Blaenavon	Private	1.2 Ha	Yes	1 Rugby Pitch
Blaenavon Recreation Ground	Blaenavon	TCBC	1.5 Ha	Yes	1 Football Pitch 1 Rugby Pitch
Garndiffaith Welfare	Abersychan	TCBC	1 Ha	Yes	1 Rugby Pitch
The Big Arch	Abersychan	TCBC	1.2 Ha	No	1 Rugby Pitch
The Ravine, Fairfield	Abersychan	TCBC	1.7 Ha	Yes	1 Football Pitch
Gwenallt Industrial Estate	Pontnewynydd	TCBC	1.6 Ha	No	2 Junior Football Pitches
Gwenallt Industrial Estate	Pontnewynydd	Private	0.5 Ha	Yes	1 Football Pitch
Penlasgarn Playing Fields	Trevethin	TCBC	2.1 Ha	Yes	1 Mini Football Pitch 1 Junior Football Pitch

(Source: TCBC Playing Pitch Study – 2006)

As with pitches in Blaenavon, one of the main findings elsewhere within the North Torfaen HARPS area relates to the availability of training pitches which are floodlit and therefore enable evening training. The direct implication therefore is that many of the pitches in the areas are being overused, with training taking place on match day pitches, thereby reducing the overall standard. The pitch at Penlasgarn, Trevethin had a number of issues including the equipment (goal posts) being in poor condition, no changing facilities, and poor condition pitch surface.

Leisure Centres/Facilities

In general, it would appear that the provision of leisure centres and facilities at an appropriate level is centric to the functioning of the valley's main

settlements. Wider regional provision is found in Pontypool, immediately to the South of the HARPS wards, and also further afield in Cwmbran.

The Blaenavon Leisure Centre and Swimming Pool was closed in January 2007 following extensive storm damage, with the Council taking the decision in July 2007 not to reopen the facility but instead to redevelop the site to create a community-focussed school and health facilities. It is the Council's intention that the leisure and health facilities will be provided without the replacement of the swimming pool.

Abersychan Comprehensive School provides modern health and leisure facilities within a new vocational building. Work on this facility began in 2006 and it is completion of the facility will provide benefit for the wider community.

The community of Trevethin has recently benefited from a new leisure facility opened in 2007 in conjunction with the nearby Welsh-medium secondary school (Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw). The facility provides a 4 court sports hall, together with a dance/exercise studio and free car parking and is open to the public 5pm – 9pm during weekdays. It complements the existing leisure facilities available in Pontypool and is therefore a valuable resource for the local community.

Information Services

Community information provision for the North Torfaen HARPS wards is provided by Torfaen County Borough Council, through a mixture of fixed and mobile sources.

Blaenavon Library is open Monday to Thursday and also on Saturdays. Its location in the town centre makes it accessible to the local community, and offers a full range of information services. The library also provides a 'one-stop-shop' service, consisting of a helpdesk that deals with any Council-related queries and helps bridge the gap from the majority of Council functions that are provided in Pontypool and Cwmbran.

Abersychan Library has limited opening hours (Monday, Wednesday and Friday). The small building does not benefit from disabled access, although it is located centrally within the community and ward of Abersychan. The facility also provides full information sources.

In addition to the two permanent library facilities, the Torfaen HARPS area benefits from a mobile library facility – one of two such facilities operated by the Council to serve the whole of the County Borough. This runs to a three week timetable (roughly the same as the normal rental terms for books) and offers access for the residents of communities considered to be remote in relation to the location of other library facilities.

The importance of information technology resources has increased over recent years. Both Blaenavon and Abersychan libraries offer the use of computers to members of the public. However, it is such facilities that the

mobile library cannot provide for those residents and communities far removed from the permanent libraries – any access to emails and internet from within the mobile libraries is only possible at restricted locations within Pontypool and Cwmbran due to limited Wi-Fi access.

Waste and Recycling

Torfaen County Borough Council place heavy emphasis on the need for a large network of arrangements for the collection of waste and also the provision of facilities to enable residents to recycle any household substances or goods.

Refuse collection within the North Torfaen HARPS area is undertaken by the Borough Council, and takes place weekly on either Monday or Tuesday. An assisted service is available should any residents be assessed to be unable to put out their rubbish. Chargeable services for bulky goods and commercial waste collection are available to residents, with arrangements to be agreed in advance.

Council officers disclose that Borough-wide levels of household recycling are generally high. In terms of the North Torfaen HARPS area, with a network of bank recycling facilities present in the more accessible locations. Table 39 below summarises the extent current network. In addition, a central Household Waste Recycling Centre is located at Panteg Way, New Inn, geographically situated between Pontypool and Cwmbran. This facility is open 7 days a week and caters for both the refuse and recycling needs. Torfaen CBC officers have disclosed that since the site was redesigned 2 years ago, recycling figures and general usage has increased considerably. However, there is an obvious geographical constraint to the use of this facility, especially in relation to residents from the most northern parts of the study area.

Table 39 – Recycling Bank Provision

Location	Tins & Cans	Plastic Bottles	Glass Bottles & Jars	Paper & Magazines	Textiles & Clothes	Shoes	Cardboard	Tetra Paks
Prince St, Blaenavon	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Varteg Rugby Club	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Talywain Rugby Club	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Union St., Abersychan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
George St., Pontnewynydd	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Trevethin Shops	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗

(Source: TCBC Website)

At present, the Borough Council are in the process of rolling out a “Twin Bin” scheme that covers both household refuse (black bin) and recycling (green bin), collected in alternate weeks. This scheme is currently active in the south of the Borough, with the residents of Trevethin being the only one of the five HARPS wards benefiting from the scheme, and incidentally only since February 2008. For the other four HARPS wards, a weekly refuse collection service is available. However, noting the absence of the Twin Bin scheme for these four wards (in particular, the fortnightly green bin aspect), it is considered that there is a shortage of recycling collection in the HARPS study area. Aside from Trevethin, residents are reliant on local bank recycling facilities, or conversely travelling to the Borough’s Household Waste Recycling Centre located to the South of Pontypool.

Key Issues

- A reduction of 10.93% (between 2006/07 and 2007/08) in total crimes within the Torfaen HARPS area, with reductions recorded in all wards apart from Abersychan;
- Prevalent problems of disorder and indiscriminate parking throughout the HARPS area, with the associated crime of theft from vehicles.

- It is only the sectional station in Pontypool that is manned and open 24 hours a day, and only a limited number of sub-Police stations exist within the HARPS area;
- Blaenavon and Trevethin & Penygarn Workingmen's Clubs are used on a daily basis for a host of activities, and play an important role in their local communities. Conversely, other communities possess only limited facilities which are only used when booked for events and functions. The gulf, in this respect, is therefore considerable;
- Observed deficiencies in the recreational space provision, especially within Blaenavon. The general absence of floodlit facilities means that match-day pitches are over-used, to the detriment of their overall quality;
- The main leisure facilities to serve the HARPS area are located adjacent to the larger settlements outside of the study area (Pontypool, Cwmbran and Ebbw Vale). The largest settlement within the HARPS study area (Blaenavon) currently has more limited facilities to serve the local community;
- The provision of information services is generally good, with two permanent libraries and a mobile facility to cater for the more remote communities. Information technology facilities are available, although this is limited to specific locations from the mobile library;
- Good provision of refuse collection services throughout the study area. Notwithstanding the "Twin Bin" system introduced to residents of the Trevethin ward, there is an overall absence of recycling collection within the study area at present;
- A developed network of recycling bank facilities throughout the study area, although there is no Household Waste Recycling Facility in close proximity to cater for a wider range of waste and recyclable goods.

2.12 Commercial Market Analysis

This baseline has so far concentrated primarily on supply side analysis under the various preceding sections. Here, the focus is instead on the demand side aspect and, in particular, that relating to the demand for commercial property. This section will discuss each of these sectors in turn, although the reader is advised that that details of the retail market in particular are to be read in conjunction with Section 2.7.

In general, the industrial, office and retail markets within the study area comprise of fairly small local development, with limited market activity. Demand is certainly limited and much of the commercial property in the area has been provided by the public sector and with the generally low levels of rent achievable, this trend is likely to continue in the future. Interestingly, Blaenavon in the North of the study area and Pontnewynydd in the South have a relatively strong and active industrial sector, though

commercial activity for the rest of the study area is primarily limited to some local retailing and a very limited amount of office space. A combination of the topography of the area, limited levels of population and strong competition from the surrounding towns of Abergavenny, Pontypool and Ebbw Vale, are going to make fresh inward investment in the area difficult to achieve. More positively though, the undoubted strength of the area is the success of the industrial estates within it and these would seem to be the areas where opportunities for development and expansion exist.

Industrial Market

The industrial market would appear to hold the healthier aspects of the commercial sector, with all of the industrial buildings and estates within the study area are popular and have good levels of occupancy. By far the majority of the buildings are situated in Blaenavon to the North and Pontnewynydd to the South, and there would appear to be sufficient demand to warrant some further development in these areas.

The mainstay of the industrial property market in Blaenavon is the Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estate, located between the town centre and the Big Pit museum. With the notable exception of some modern workshop and office units built by Torfaen Council, the majority of buildings on the estate are quite elderly and a number of them are in a fairly poor state of repair. However, it is quite notable that all of the workshop/industrial space on the estate is fully occupied and at the current time there is not a single “To Let” or “For Sale” sign to be seen on the estate. The majority of businesses based on the estate are local businesses, with the exception of Doncaster’s, and many of these uses are at the heavier and dirtier end of the spectrum, for which the estate provides a good range of buildings supplemented by operational yards. Two modern buildings built more recently are the Torfaen Business Centre and Heritage Court, which offer smaller units. Evidence from local agents suggest that whilst they rarely get enquiries specifically for Blaenavon, when a property does come up for sale there are generally two or three parties chasing it, with the end result that a property seldom stays on the market for long. The main reason attributed to this is that properties that come on the market are likely to be freehold premises, giving investors the chance to own rather than rent. One of the main issues observed is the state of the access road, which is also the primary route to Big Pit. On-street parking causes congestion at busy times, coupled with the poor condition of the road verges, and this gives a poor impression for both visitors to Big Pit and also customers for the occupiers.

Kays and Kears is very much the ‘other’ industrial estate in Blaenavon. Despite being in close proximity to the Gilchrist Thomas estate it currently only has one occupier – ITW Foils – with the rest of the estate comprising 13 acres of vacant land. This vacant land is currently under the ownership of the Welsh Assembly Government, who have disclosed that they have no immediate plans for it, and because of the general lack of market interest it is not high on their list of priorities. Given the levels of occupancy on the

nearby Gilchirst Thomas Estate, it is possible that should the site be brought to the market in a more proactive manner then there would be interest in it, although there would be a need for the completion of the supporting infrastructure first (road improvements and mains sources).

There is a small industrial estate in Abersychan, currently owned by the Borough Council, with all eight units currently occupied and evidence showing that they are relatively easy to re-let when they become vacant. All units are modern and purpose built starter-type units. However, there does not appear to be any obvious room to expand the existing development, although going by the success of the scheme there would appear to be sufficient demand in the area to justify some additional development of a similar nature. Adjacent to this estate are two larger units in private ownership, with both sites well maintained and in good condition. There is a former builder's yard also available in Abersychan that has been on the market for some time now. It comprises of a workshop, offices and a yard totalling 7,500 sq. ft. and whilst the owners appear to be flexible in terms of its future sub-division, there has been little interest in the unit. This underlines the fact that local demand is for small units, more in line with what is provided by the Borough at the nearby industrial estate.

There are a number of industrial estates at Pontnewynydd and they primarily comprise the Pontypool North Industrial Estate, Pontnewynydd Industrial Estate, Pontnewynydd Small Business Centre and Gwenallt Industrial Estate. They are all situated adjacent to each other, with the exception of Gwenallt which is somewhat remote, and in general they effectively form a single industrial area. Gwenallt is also an exception as otherwise the industrial estates are all in reasonably good condition and comprise of a range of sizes and uses – varying from blue chip organisations such as the Post Office and Transco, through to small local businesses. Geographically, the area is close to Cwmbran and the M4 corridor and it is considered that one of the reasons for its obvious success is its location together with the fact that rental values are about 20% lower than for comparable accommodation in Cwmbran or Newport.

Both Pontypool North Industrial Estate and Pontnewynydd Small Business Centre are owned by Torfaen County Borough Council and typically they have good levels of occupancy and are relatively easy to re-let when they become vacant. The former development offers occupiers high access doors and is arranged in a courtyard layout with a communal circulation area, and is relatively modern smart in appearance. The latter comprises of small units with small access doors, which is more restrictive of activities. Although the premises are aimed at start-up businesses, the reality is that many tenants do not grow and move on to larger premises as might be expected, with some being on the site for the past 15 years. Some of the units are showing signs of deterioration and there has been some fire damage and problems with graffiti.

The Borough Council also own the Gwenallt Industrial Estate, which is occupied by a range of “bad neighbour” type tenants. It comprises a

terrace of units that has been subdivided and is in a generally poor state of repair. It would appear to attract problems of vandalism, with apparent strained relations between tenants and landlord. Pontnewynydd Industrial Estate includes units which are in private ownership and are well-occupied. The opinion of local agents is that the estate is popular and that it is relatively easy to re-let units when they become vacant.

Office Market

In general, there is not really a sufficient amount of office space within the study area to draw hard and fast conclusions, although instances do exist where there would demand for small units if they were available. At present, there is also a political desire to support the nearby town centre of Pontypool and small businesses have been encouraged to utilise existing opportunities within the town, perhaps at the expense of some of the surrounding locations. The general sentiment from local agents is that the study area is not a recognised office location and it would be difficult to make a business case to justify further office development in the area, certainly for the private sector. Whilst there will always be some local demand, the likes of Pontypool, Cwmbran and to a lesser extent Abergavenny would be far better placed to attract any external office demand that might exist.

There appears to be no real established office market in Blaenavon, with the only purpose-built accommodation being located on the Gilchrist Thomas Estate and comprising three buildings. These buildings are owned by Torfaen County Borough Council, who confirms that demand for offices is more limited than for industrial space, with there being vacant accommodation available. Occupation is primarily by local businesses, with the average rental value being £4.50 per sq. ft. per annum. This is not an economically sustainable rate for private sector development and typically rents for this type of accommodation in towns closer to the M4 would be in the region of £10 to £15 per sq. ft. The town centre does not provide any available office space, although it is possible that some retail units could double as offices if the demand existed. However, given that there is purpose-built office accommodation available on the Gilchrist Thomas Estate at a competitive rental level, there would appear to be only limited justification for advocating further office development in the town.

At Abersychan, there is an office unit within the industrial estate owned by the Borough Council adjacent to Limekiln Road, called Pontnewynydd House. This is purpose-built, comprising 8 office units and is proving to be quite popular as a small business location, with only 1 unit currently vacant. Being inclusive of the majority of occupational costs, these units are considered to represent good value from a tenant's point of view. The former Celtic Springs building, also on Limekiln Road, has approximately 2,000 sq. ft. of office space within it. However, the marketing agent reports that there has been little interest in the building because it is not purpose-built and also the size is too large for most businesses in the area.

Torfaen County Borough Council is currently exploring the potential for the creation of small start-up/incubator type units within a building called the Corn Bin on Stanley Road in Garndiffaith. The building comprises three floors and at present there is a form of community use on the ground floor, and it is intended that the incubator units will occupy the upper two floors, with the scheme to be marketed as a centre for businesses involved with sustainable energy and development in the area.

In Pontnewynydd, there is a scheme of hybrid units fronting the A4043 (St. Luke's Road) called The Pavillions, which is owned by the Borough Council and comprises 8 two-storey units constructed in the early 1990's. The marketing agents have confirmed that, at present, there are three available and that they had not proved a particularly popular concept, being difficult to let. As they are hybrid units, they are neither offices nor industrial and there is believed to only be a limited amount of tenants looking for this type of accommodation, mainly for the office content, rather than the industrial part. This is probably a reflection of the proximity of a number of good industrial units nearby, though no other real office premises.

Retail Market

As already stated under Section 2.7, the retail market within the North Torfaen HARPS area is very limited. From a demand standpoint, this is largely attributable to the small number of people living in the study area, with the result being that there is insufficient demand to justify any great expansion. The surrounding area is well provided with supermarkets, with the majority of the major occupiers being represented in Pontypool, Cwmbran or Abergavenny. The Tesco store in North Pontypool is particularly close and it is increasingly difficult for local traders to compete with established supermarkets.

There are a number of different convenience stores located within the study area, the majority of which are operated by franchisees. The demand for such stores is driven by prospective franchisees rather than by the franchisor and hence they are generally reactive about opportunities. For example, Spar prefers to operate from freehold premises rather than from leasehold premises and this might influence the thinking behind any further opportunities that might be made available. On a general note, there may be problems with funding any new development on a commercial basis, as it is unlikely that the rental values achievable would be high enough to support the development.

There are only a small number of retailers in Blaenavon and due to the modest size of the town and its catchment area, it is questionable whether this trend will change in the near future. The basic needs for the town are catered for by two convenience stores (Spar and Co-Op), a chemist (also operated by Co-Op), a HSBC bank branch and also a small Post Office. Local agents report limited interest in any available retail premises despite prevalent competitive rent levels, and also reported limited knock-on success from the Booktown Initiative in terms of business investment.

Abersychan includes a number of small shops in the area of Snatchwood Road and Station Street and these include a barbers shop, a Spar convenience store, a pharmacy, newsagents and post office. They are grouped closely together, with the area being quite busy and well used. Elsewhere within the ward, there is a small parade of shop units on Stanley Road in Garndiffaith, comprising of a Co-Op convenience store, pharmacy, hairdresser and a kebab shop. The uses are typical of the local convenience type shops and businesses that one would expect to see in the area. It may be possible that the area is large enough to support another small convenience store and takeaway, perhaps to the North so that it would also serve Varteg.

In Pontnewynydd, there are a number of small local shops situated on St. Luke's Road, similar to those in Abersychan. They include a Premier convenience store, Post Office, two hairdressers, a sandwich shop, two fast food outlets and a computer shop. No vacant units are currently observed, with the area being generally busy and characterised by a lot of passing traffic and custom. There would appear to be potential demand to expand this particular area if suitable low cost premises were available, and if not possibly Abersychan.

Trevethin is serviced by a small parade of seven retail units situated on Folly Road, which is owned by the Borough Council. There is a mix of uses in the units which are typical for this type of location and they include a Post Office, fish and chip shop, hairdresser, grocers, pharmacy and a convenience store. The parade appears to be busy, with many customers not in cars, indicating that it primarily serves the local area. The site does look a little tired and would certainly benefit from some cosmetic improvements to the shop fronts, paved areas and the car parking area to the front. On the whole, however, it serves the purpose that it was built for and seems to be trading satisfactorily.

Key Issues

- The study area is characterised primarily by small-level local development, with limited market activity;
- Topography constraints, limited local population and strong competition from surrounding towns (Abergavenny, Cwmbran, Pontypool and Ebbw Vale) combine to limit the extent of inward investment;
- Blaenavon in the north and Pontnewynydd in the south have a reasonably strong and active industrial sector;
- The study area is not a recognised office location, with a limited amount of units to meet local demand;

- The retail market is very limited, largely attributable to the small number of people living in the study area, with the result being that there is insufficient demand to justify any great expansion;
- The majority of convenience stores within the study area are operated by franchisees. The demand for such stores is driven by prospective franchisees rather than by the franchisor and hence they are generally reactive about opportunities.
- There may be problems with funding any new retail development on a commercial basis, as it is unlikely that the rental values achievable would be high enough to support the development.

3 Strategic & Local Context

3.1 Planning / Strategy Context

The preparation of a Holistic Regeneration Plan for North Torfaen has considered the planning and strategy framework at the national, regional, sub-regional and local authority levels. Relevant policy documents and guidance have been reviewed and these are set out in full in [Appendix 2](#). A summary of the key documents relevant to the Study Area are considered below:

National

- One Wales
- Wales Spatial Plan

Regional / Sub-Regional

- South East Wales Development Strategy: Enter the Dragon Economy (February 2005)
- Turning Heads: A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys (June 2006)
- World Heritage Management Plan
- Sewta Draft Regional Transport Plan

Local Authority

- Torfaen Corporate Plan
- Torfaen Local Plan (Adopted July 2000)
- Torfaen Local Development Plan
- Torfaen Regeneration Strategy (2004-2016)
- Torfaen Community Strategy (2006)

One Wales (June 2007)

One Wales presents the high level strategic direction agreed by the Labour and Plaid Cymru groups in the National Assembly. The broad aspirations of the agreed agenda are presented under the following key themes:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • A Healthy Future | • A Prosperous Society |
| • Living Communities | • Learning for Life |
| • A Fair and Just Society | • A Sustainable Environment |
| • A Rich and Diverse Culture | |

Many of the priorities look to overcome issues of relevance to the HARPS Study Area, such as access to healthcare, creation of jobs, promoting tourism, adult learning, and the environment.

Wales Spatial Plan 2008 Update Consultation (January 08)

The Wales Spatial Plan was first adopted by the National Assembly for Wales in 2004 and is currently undergoing an update consultation. *'People, Places, Futures: Wales Spatial Plan 2008 Update Consultation'* provides a national vision which focuses on regions working together across 'fuzzy boundaries', growth and development of 'key settlements' identified for each spatial plan area, 'cross boundary settlements' and the key 'international, interregional and regional links' that will allow regions to look outwards and work with their neighbours.

The Plan also contains a detailed strategy for the six spatial plan areas of Wales. This includes South East Wales (The Capital Network) within which North Torfaen is situated. The vision for this area is *'An innovative skilled area offering a high quality of life – international yet distinctively Welsh. It will compete internationally by increasing its global visibility through stronger links between the Valleys and the coast and with the UK and the rest of Europe, helping to spread prosperity within the area and benefitting other parts of Wales'* and is reflected in the spatial plan map below.



Figure 3-1: South East Wales – The Capital Network

The Plan identifies Pontypool, immediately south of the Study Area as a primary key settlement where future growth will be focussed. It is also clear that North Torfaen is within proximity of a number of both national and regional connectivity points including national links across the Seven Estuary, regional links towards Abergavenny, and the wider Connections Corridor. The plan also shows the study area forming the eastern boundary of the Heads of the Valleys Plus area of South east Wales. Priorities for the South East Wales Study Area are discussed within the plan under key themes. The main priorities of relevance to the North Torfaen HARP are highlighted below:

Building Sustainable Communities

- The Plan underlines the need for South East Wales to function as a city-region, shifting the benefits of the major settlements of Cardiff and Newport northwards.
- Pontypool is identified as a hub settlement which not only provides a role to play in the city-region but also to function as a service and employment hub for surrounding settlements.
- Housing is identified as a priority in the HoV area with the need to develop a greater mix and balance of housing types.
- It is recognised that settlements in the mid and upper Valleys of the HOV require modern shopping, leisure, community and cultural facilities, clean, vibrant town centres, accessible open countryside and employment opportunities.

Achieving Sustainable Accessibility

- The Plan recognises that road building is not a sustainable solution to the pattern of traffic growth and emphasises the provision of sustainable access to jobs and services.
- To achieve this, priorities include bus services and community transport, and linking communities to main public transport corridors.
- Safe cycling and walking routes are also identified as a priority.

Promoting a Sustainable Economy

- The Plan recognises the potential of the tourism and leisure sector to contribute more to the mid and upper Valleys.
- There is a need to raise the level of skills and education at pre-school. (Flying Start Programme / RAISE).
- The Plan area promotes the development of vocational opportunities through the 14-19 curriculum, alongside expansion of modern apprenticeships.
- The Plan looks to build upon Pathways to Work, Want2Work and Jobmatch as best practice programmes to get people into work.

Valuing Our Environment

- The Plan recognises the need to protect and enhance the environment in South East Wales by getting the best of quality urban living within close proximity to stunning countryside, careful management of development pressures, lower levels of traffic congestion and effective public transport, places that are safe for walking and cycling, and protecting environmentally sensitive areas;
- CCW are the develop proposals for strategic wildlife corridors to join natural habitats to allow populations of vulnerable species to remain viable;
- The plan identifies the importance of river habitats as important wildlife corridors; and
- The plan references the importance within the area of environmental networks to enhance quality of life and support tourism and leisure and identifies the importance of the Valleys Regional Park to developing distinctive and positive images.

Respecting Distinctiveness

In relation to distinctiveness, the Plan identifies the transition being made by SE Wales to a city region offering distinctive character with a specifically Welsh culture and identity but a cosmopolitan population. Specifically, the plan focuses on:

- Each town and city fostering a sense of identity, building on its history and culture to create a network of settlements with real character;
- Each settlement requires high quality civic environments, with quality buildings and spaces;
- A need to embrace the presence of minority ethnic communities for the positive part they can play in the vision; and
- Continued support for the arts and creative industries which already are a significant part of the region's identity.

South East Wales Development Strategy: Enter the Dragon Economy (February 2005)

This presents a 10 year development strategy for South East Wales. The vision presented in the document reads:

"A region on the way to becoming one of the most prosperous in Europe, and providing opportunities for every individual, enterprise and community to share in that prosperity"

The Strategy identifies a number of key features which are seen to influence the economy of South East Wales, including:

- High rates of joblessness;
- Lower GDP per head than other European regions;

- Higher population densities than the Welsh average;
- High economic growth in the coastal plain; and
- Topography often-constraining development potential.

Taking these influences into consideration, the strategy for South East Wales aims to realise the economic vision through:

- Developing strong links to the high-growth, high-innovation and knowledge economies of Europe;
- Seeing the emergence of a limited number of key sectors and innovative firms within 10 years of the Spatial Plan;
- Business services, tourism and manufacturing becoming key sectors of the future;
- Using the region's university and research establishments to encourage research talent to locate into the region;
- Improved levels of qualifications among adults; and
- Cardiff being regarded as a true European capital, with an international reputation and outlook.

Turning Heads: A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys (June 2006)

The Heads of the Valleys Programme is a 15 year regeneration strategy developed in full partnership with the five local authorities of Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Caerphilly and Torfaen. The programme aims to tackle the root causes of economic inactivity and other key issues in the area within the context of the Wales Spatial Plan. The programme uses special funding from the Welsh Assembly Government totalling £140 million, and will seek to maximize the benefits arising from all forms of public sector expenditure, (estimated at £1 billion per year) to lever in at least £360 million of private sector investment.

The Strategy has at its heart a vision that by 2020 the Heads of the Valleys will be:

- a culturally rich, dynamic network of vibrant and safe communities;
- a place where people want to live, work and play with a sustainable, high quality of life and a thriving population;
- helping to drive the success of South East Wales as an internationally recognised Capital Region.

The strategy identifies key issues and opportunities that are reflective and relevant to those found in North Torfaen. These include the following

Issues	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high levels of economic inactivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positive developments in the South East Wales labour market
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low educational attainment and skills levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continued major public investment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low quality of jobs and opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planned large scale renewal of public sector/social housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a high incidence of long term health problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vast areas of accessible countryside within a rich historic and built environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an unfavourable image 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deprivation, a lack of quality housing and poorly equipped town centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A robust national and local policy context.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited transport and telecommunications links in some areas • poor maintenance and management of key natural and historic assets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

The strategy identifies five key themes around which the programme is based:

1. An attractive and well-used natural, historic and built environment
2. A vibrant economic landscape offering new opportunities
3. A well-educated, skilled and healthier population
4. An appealing and coherent tourism and leisure experience
5. Public confidence in a shared bright future

Valleys Regional Park Strategy. Greening the Valleys Partnership. Working Draft, July 2007

The Valleys Regional Park vision is:

Of a high quality, sustainable network of greenspace offering outstanding recreational opportunities which will change the image and perception of the Valleys for ever, improve the quality of life, health and well being for local people, generate pride in their area, create an environment that stimulates inward investment and becomes an attractive destination for visitors.

The project aims to improve the attractiveness, quality and sustainability of sites, routes and gateways to encourage access and increase the use of key assets whilst improving the tourism offer for day visitors and tourists.

Ultimately, the positive change to the natural landscape of the Valleys that the Regional Park will bring about will help to engender a more positive attitude amongst those living in the area and for those moving into the area to live and work.

Blaenavon World Heritage Site Management Plan

This document was produced by the Blaenavon Partnership in October 1999 to support the successful nomination of Blaenavon Industrial Landscape for World Heritage Site designation. The identified landscape extends to 32.9 square kilometres, much of which is open mountain land, but also featuring the Blaenavon Ironworks, the Big Pit Mine and the town of Blaenavon.

The plan addresses the main issues affecting the conservation of the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape and identifies objectives for effective management of the area, setting out proposals for the short and longer term. Significantly, the Management Plan comments that there is no pressure for substantial new development in the area, but that the following pressures do exist:

- The protection and conservation of key monuments;
- Continuing economic decline in the area;
- The use of the derelict landscape for recreational and agricultural purposes;
- The presence of residual coal reserves and interest in further coal recovery by opencasting;
- The Planning and Policy Framework;
- The need for and desirability of public access and enjoyment;
- The opportunities for further research into values and management of the site.
- In accordance with UNESCO requirements the Blaenavon WHS Plan is being reviewed.

Sewta (South Wales Transport Alliance) Regional Transport Plan – Consultation Draft July 2008

The Transport Wales Act 2006 and the Railways Act 2005 gave the Welsh Assembly Government duties and powers to plan and improve the transport system in Wales. Amongst the most important changes are the requirements to produce a Wales Transport Strategy and powers to promote regional transport planning together with direct control of local and regional rail services in Wales.

A Regulatory Order has been approved by the Welsh Assembly Government developing the requirement for the 22 local authorities in Wales to produce Local Transport Plans into the requirement for Regional Transport Plans (RTP's) to be prepared by the four Regional Transport Consortia formed by those authorities. Of relevance to the study are the South East Wales Transport Alliance (SEWTA), who submitted their draft RTP for consultation in July 2008.

The RTP's main priorities tackle the main problems faced by the area, thus setting the direction of the strategy. They are as follows:

1. To improve access to services, facilities and employment, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling;
2. To provide a transport system that increases the use of sustainable modes of travel;
3. To reduce the demand for travel;
4. To develop an efficient and reliable transport system with reduced levels of congestion and improved transport links within the SEWTA region and to the rest of Wales, the UK and Europe;
5. To provide a transport system that encourages healthy and active lifestyles, is safer and supports local communities;
6. To reduce significantly the emission of greenhouse gases and air pollution from transport;
7. To ensure that land use development in South East Wales is supported by sustainable transport measures.

The RTP seeks to address these priorities through a mixture of policies and actions. Policies are listed under the following categories;

- Planning Policies
- Walking & Cycling Policies
- Smarter Choices Policies
- Rail Policies
- Bus Policies
- Community Transport Policies
- Integration, Interchange and Information Policies;
- Highway Policies
- Road User Charging Policies
- Road Safety Policies
- Car Parking Policies
- Freight Policies

Actions are represented by the five year capital programme, which features the following projects of relevance to the study area.

Walking and Cycling

- Crumlin to Pontypool improvements (Project T17)
- Link between Blaenavon town centre, and Kays & Kears and Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estates. Link to additional over attractions such as Big Pit National Mining Museum (Project T6)

Roads

- A472/A4043 New Inn to Blaenavon (North Torfaen Transportation Regeneration Scheme)

Torfaen CBC Five Year Corporate Plan (Nov 2006)

The Corporate Plan sets a vision for Torfaen which is *'a safe, prosperous, sustainable place where everyone has the opportunity to be the best they can'*.

The Plan explains how it forms the council's commitment to delivering the Torfaen Community Strategy and has the following five priorities:

- To improve the quality, variety and affordability of housing, and reduce the level of **homelessness**;
- To reduce crime and **antisocial behaviour**, and take action to help people feel **safe** in their **neighbourhoods**;
- To improve the quality of **teaching and learning** for young people and other students and to **equip citizens** of all ages with the necessary skills for **employment** and the **regeneration** of their local communities;
- To improve **waste management** and increase **recycling**, creating a **cleaner**, more **energy efficient** area; and
- **To improve services for vulnerable people and improve health outcomes for everyone by promoting healthier lifestyles.**

These priorities will help shape project opportunities and changes within communities across Torfaen.

Torfaen Local Plan (Adopted July 2000)

The Adopted Local Plan covers a 15 year period between 1991 and 2006. The Plan will continue to form part of the Development Plan for the County Borough, alongside the Gwent Structure Plan, until it is superseded by the Adopted Local Development Plan (LDP). The Preferred Strategy was published for consultation between January – March 2008.

The role and primary aims of the Adopted Local Plan are:

- To ensure that development within the County Borough is sustainable, protecting non-renewable and finite resources for future generations;

- To ensure the best possible use of land for the benefit of the community; and
- To safeguard and improve the quality of life for the communities in Torfaen.

Torfaen Local Development Plan (LDP)

Torfaen's Forward Planning Team is currently working on the preparation of the LDP, in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The LDP will guide the development and use of land in the County Borough for the next 15 years up to 2021. It is anticipated that the LDP will be adopted in 2010 and will replace both the Structure Plan and the Local Plan, as the development plan for Torfaen CBC.

The Preferred Strategy presents the following vision for North Torfaen which will influence the objectives of the HARP.

"By 2021, through collaborative working, the development strategy for the Torfaen Local Development Plan will deliver planned, sustainable growth reflecting the specific role and function of settlements. It will provide a distinctive, vibrant and prosperous area where people have the skills, knowledge and opportunities to achieve a better quality of life in safe, healthy and thriving communities with accessible local facilities. It will promote the sustainable regeneration of our town centres ensuring they are a focus for social, commercial and community life, whilst also protecting and enhancing Torfaen's unique natural heritage and cultural and historic identity".

In order to deliver this vision the Strategy also contains a total of 19 objectives which will be considered during the development of objectives for the HARP area.

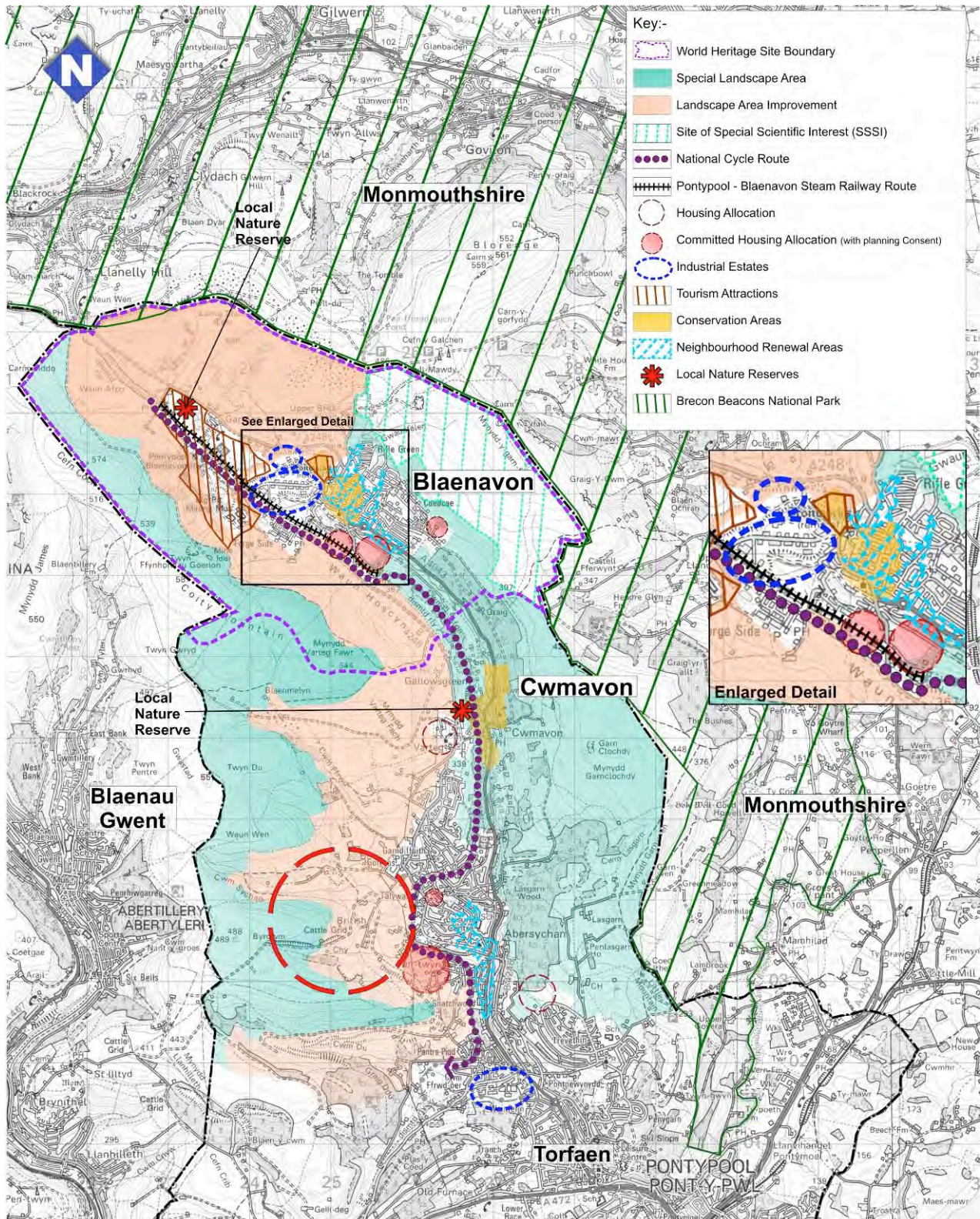


Figure 3-2 Local Planning Context

Torfaen Regeneration Strategy (2004-2016)

This Strategy presents a vision for Torfaen which reads *“in 2016, Torfaen is a desirable and safe place to live, work, play and visit. Its residents and businesses have developed their skills to embrace new technologies and global competition while treasuring their past. There is less distinction between quality of life in different communities. Torfaen and its people are well networked – with each other and with the rest of the world. There is a vibrancy that reinforces expectations that things are going to get even better”*

The Strategy contains seven prime objectives which are to be delivered through specific action programmes. These are:

Action Programme 1: Establishing a Strong Sustainable Economy – ensuring support to raise competitiveness, increasing business birth rate, providing modern premises and sites, ensuring good access, promoting use of ICT, developing the social economy and promoting opportunities for public service expansion / relocation.

Action Programme 2: Developing People – Raising aspirations to increase participation in learning, developing the learning network, raising adult skills levels, up-skilling the workforce, and promoting business skills, enterprise and innovation during learning.

Action Programme 3: Capitalising on Torfaen’s Heritage – Sensitive development of and around the World Heritage Site, establishing Torfaen as a quality destination for leisure and tourist activities and promoting the recreational and visitor potential of the countryside.

Action Programme 4: Re-energising Town and Neighbourhood Centres – Specifically a major rolling programme of renewal partnering public and private investment to consolidate delivery of services and housing.

Action Programme 5: Investing in Housing, Strengthening Communities, and Tackling Social Exclusion – Targeting areas of social deprivation, promoting community empowerment, ensuring suitable and well maintained homes are available, improving opportunities for young, and tackling crime and disorder and promoting community safety.

Action Programme 6: Securing a High Quality Environment – Reclaiming and re-using derelict land, conserving and restoring the areas character and heritage, improving resource usage, improving water, soil and air quality, securing a safe and healthy environment, promoting environmental education, and developing and promoting the environmental goods and services industries.

Action Programme 7: Raising the Local Regeneration Capacity and Capability – Raising the local capacity for ‘strategic planning’, communicating the strategy to improve understanding, improve cross-departmental working, and undertake a mapping exercise of existing funding sources.

Torfaen Community Strategy (2006)

The Torfaen Community Strategy looks to shape the future of the County Borough and is concerned with knitting together the activities of a diverse range of organisations towards common goals. The Strategy presents the aims of the Torfaen Partnership until 2015.

The vision for Torfaen presented in the Strategy looks to create opportunities that ensure that:

- People are able to work, live and play because they are healthier;
- People of all ages in all areas feel safe;
- Through education people are able to make informed choices about their lives;
- Residents and businesses have developed their skills to embrace new technologies and global competition whilst treasuring their past;
- People appreciate and enjoy the environment;
- People are able to find housing in the communities of their choice;
- Organisations have a citizen focus;
- People have an opportunity to make changes and influence organisations;
- Torfaen and its people are well networked with each other and with the rest of the world; and
- People and organisations working together are the solution to achieving a better quality of life for people in Torfaen.

The Strategy sets out, under key themes, what it would like to happen in Torfaen until 2015. The main targets of relevance to the HARPs strategy are highlighted below under those key themes.

Health & Wellbeing

- Ensuring a healthier population which is educated to make informed decisions on issues such as drug abuse, smoking and alcoholism.

Safer Communities

- Looking to tackle the issues that make people feel unsafe in their communities as well as put resources into preventing crime.

Education & Training for Life

- To ensure people of all ages have access to educational opportunities for career and lifestyle reasons.

Economy, Jobs and Business

- Ensuring people have more disposable income in secure, well paid jobs; businesses are attracted to Torfaen and people can realise employment aspirations.

Environment & Transport

- Focussing on new development within existing settlements and neighbourhoods, ensuring accessible, affordable and regular public transport, a species rich natural environment, greenspace which is clean and safe, quality built environment, less waste sent to landfill, an understanding of peoples impacts on the natural environment, reduced risk of flooding and a more stable climate.

Housing & the Homeless

- To ensure access to a decent home, at a price people can afford and in a community in which they wish to live.

3.2 Service Delivery

Service delivery and Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs) are an important element of the work of Government Departments and illustrate how they will deliver the high level targets set out in Public Service Agreements (PSAs) and detailed spending commitments.

For the purposes of the HARPs it is necessary to fully understand the programmes of the various service delivery organisations, in order that they can deliver on wider targets. The main elements of the service delivery agreements / business plans of the main organisations based / operating within North Torfaen have been reviewed namely:

- Torfaen CBC Departmental Capital Programme;
- Torfaen Local Health Board;
- Torfaen Training;
- Gwent Police; and
- Bron Afon Community Housing.

Torfaen CBC Capital Programme 2008/09 to 2012/13

Data provided by Torfaen CBC includes detail relating to the Capital Programme going forward and contains:

- Currently approved projects that have commenced in 2007/08;
- Rolling annual approvals;
- Externally funded schemes where known; and
- The current phasing around significant policy commitments.

The forecast does not at this stage contain allowance in respect to the following:

- Locally determined schemes after 2007/08;
- County Hall;
- Further School asset management investment;
- Highways;
- Information systems development; and
- General asset management requirements.

Blaenavon is identified within the Programme as a major scheme and is included in planning assumptions at around £15 million. Funding for the scheme will be from a combination of capital receipts, core capital, prudential borrowing, and potential grant funding from the Heads of the Valleys.

Discussions with relevant officers within each of the service areas of the Authority has provided further depth in relation to the Capital Programme and is summarised below. Projects which are not committed have been taken forward into the action planning stage of the strategy.

Convergence

The Inaugural Scoping Report relating to Convergence Programmes for Torfaen contains a number of projects, which are deemed to be relatively well developed and suitable for funding via the European Social Fund (ESF) Programme or the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Programme if the Authority is Successful in its funding bid.

The projects of most relevance to North Torfaen include:

- Bridges to Work
- NEET Act & SAVVY 2
- Flexible Grants for SME's
- Boom Town
- Creative Industries
- Garndiffaith Corn Bin
- Pontypool Regeneration
- The British

Torfaen Local Health Board Integrated Service & Estate Strategy

The Strategy proposes the provision of Health and Social Care Resource Centres (HSCRC) as hubs and GP services as spokes across North Torfaen. This 'hub and spoke' model is intended to provide residents with a local, integrated health system providing a wide range of services. The option will replace the current hospital and GP practice focussed model with one in which key diagnostic, therapeutic and treatment service are provided in the three Hubs, whilst day to day remains accessible either via these services in the Hubs or in GP practice spokes.

For North Torfaen the Strategy plans a Hub and two spokes. The HSCRC is to be provided in Blaenavon which will deliver services currently provided at Carregwen Surgery. GP services for Abersychan will be provided through a new build Abersychan spoke premises, replacing the existing Abersychan Surgery. The second North spoke would be the current Garndiffaith branch surgery. This model for North Torfaen is planned to be completed by 2009.

The estimated new build capital costs for the programme in North Torfaen are £6,577,680.

Torfaen Training: Strategic Development Plan

The following strategic aims form the basis of the Strategic Plan and are of relevance to the HARP:

- To contribute fully to the skills needs of the economic region of South East Wales with particular emphasis on Torfaen;
- To provide the skills necessary for successful progression of learners at all levels;
- To support the needs of local businesses and key business sectors through the provision of high quality services;
- To place the interests of learners at the centre of all the organisations activities;
- To achieve a quality profile that is Grade 2 or above in all areas of work; and
- To work with other organisations on a basis of mutual benefit and interest.

Torfaen Training has a number of core service objectives which the Plan looks to achieve. One of the main objectives is the delivery of training against the £3.4 million WAG (DCELLS) contract.

Gwent Police: Draft Policing Plan 2008-2011

The priorities presented within this Plan for the next three years are summarised below:

- 1 **Focus on the citizen**
Ensuring more people are satisfied with the service they receive and that the things which matter to the citizen are being tackled.
- 2 **Focus on quality**
Ensure victims receive good standard of service and suspects are detained according to safety standards.
- 3 **Focus on crime reduction**
Ensure reductions in overall crime and specifically serious violent crime and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the investigation process.
- 4 **Focus on participation / collaboration**
Continue partnerships to enhance community safety, progress collaboration and increase effectiveness and efficiency of business support services.
- 5 **Focus on resources**
Ensure the right people are in the right place at the right time, the workforce is healthy and that delivery is effective and financially efficient.

Specific targets / commitments within the Plan for the 2008/09 programme include:

- £3,262 million to maintain and improve the quality of the Authority's Estate and vehicles and ensure ICT is utilised in addressing the needs of modern policing.

Bron Afon Community Housing

Bron Afon Community Housing Ltd was established to manage and improve the homes previously owned by Torfaen CBC. The organisation has recently received the housing stock from the authority and is in the process of preparing service delivery and business plans to move forward with their programme of management and improvement. These plans and the commitments within them should be considered when available.

Appendix A

List of Consultees

List of Consultees

Bill Hill, Chief Officer, Regeneration, Torfaen CBC

Dave Ludlow, Head of Economic Development, Torfaen CBC

Phil Richards, Head of Business Development & Marketing, Torfaen CBC

Dana Eynon, Project Manager, Blaenavon Community Campus, Torfaen CBC

Graham Screen, Head of Strategic Change, Torfaen CBC

David Williams, Service Integration Project Manager, Torfaen CBC

Karen Padfield, Head of Adult Education, Torfaen CBC

Lyn Milward, Head of Learning & Community Participation, Torfaen CBC

Sally Church, Head of Leisure & Community Services, Torfaen CBC

Ann Davies, Centre Director for Torfaen Training

Duncan Smith, Chief Officer Planning & Environmental Protection, Torfaen CBC

Kellie Beirne, Housing Strategy Manager, Torfaen CBC

Duncan Forbes, Chief Executive, Bron Afon Community Housing

Sandy Lloyd, Bron Afon Community Housing

Gareth Phillips, Team Leader Countryside and Environmental Projects, Torfaen CBC

Alvin Nicholas, Countryside Warden, Torfaen CBC

Steve Williams, Senior Ecologist, Torfaen CBC

Ruth Reid, Senior ROW Officer, Torfaen CBC

Andrew Neville, Senior Environmental Projects Officer, Torfaen CBC

Bob Mavel, Shared Intelligence

Cath Thomas, Head of Capital Projects and Environmental Regeneration, Torfaen CBC

Rebecca Hartley, Principal Regeneration Officer, Blaenavon Project,

Steve Spode, Senior Environment Manager, WAG

Martin Hall, Regeneration Manager, WAG

Graham Morgan, HOV Programme, WAG

Chris Ashman, HOV Programme, WAG

Phil Elliott - Head of Human Resources, Doncasters, Blaenavon

Ian Parry - Principal Building Surveyor, Renewal & Strategy, Torfaen CBC

Ben Payne - Waste & Recycling Communications Officer, Torfaen CBC

Tracy Chapman - Conservation Officer, Torfaen CBC

Norman Jones - Area Team Leader, Development Control, Torfaen CBC

Rebecca McAndrew - Principal Planner, Development Control, Torfaen CBC

Sarah Hensby - Senior Planner, Development Control, Torfaen CBC

Lisa Charles - Communities First Co-ordinator (Trevethin), Torfaen CBC

Craig Mead - Forward Planning, Torfaen CBC

Stephen Thomas - Forward Planning, Torfaen CBC

Berry Coffman – Co-ordinator, Valleys Regional Park Initiative

Emyr Morgan – Education Manager / Centre Manager, World Heritage Centre

Jerry Fiander-Woodhouse – Owner, Blaenavon Cheddar Cheese Company

Peter Walker - Keeper & Mine Manager, Big Pit National Coal Museum

John Down - Development Director, Pontypool and Blaenavon Steam Railway (PBR)

Bogda Smreczak - Tourism Officer, Torfaen CBC

Robert Gulliford – Manager, Blaenavon Community Heritage and Cordell Museum

Brent Jones – Chairman, Torfaen Tourism Association

John Rodger - World Heritage Site Specialist Advisor, Torfaen CBC

Peter Cole - Regional Strategy Director, Capital Region Tourism

Pru Williams - Blaenavon Ironworks, Cadw

Roger Waters - Group Leader Transportation (bus/road/rail links & services) TCBC

Kevin Mulcahy - Group Leader Highways and Traffic (parking, road safety & crossing patrollers), TCBC

Jonathan West - Torfaen Local Public Health Board

PC Andrew Mason - Community Safety Officer, Gwent Constabulary

Claire McCorkindale - Planning Liaison Officer, Environment Agency

Richard Kevern - Cadw

Blaenavon Chamber of Trade and Commerce

Blaenavon Town Council

Future Blaenavon

Communities First Forum, Penygarn

Communities First Forum, Blaenavon

Communities First Forum, Trevethin

Cllr Ron Jones

Cllr Tom Gould

Cllr Ray Williams

Cllr Wayne Tomlinson

Cllr Lewis Jones

Cllr John Marshall

Cllr Gwyneira Clark

Appendix B

List of Documents Reviewed from Draft Report

List of Documents Reviewed

'Turning Heads' – A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020 (HOV/WAG, June 2006)

Heads of the Valleys Spatial Strategy 2006 – 2021 (HOV/WAG, February 2007)

Adopted Local Plan for the County Borough of Torfaen (27th July 2000)

Gwent Structure Plan (1991-2006)

Torfaen Community Strategy 2006 – 2015 (TCBC, 2006)

Local Development Plan Delivery Agreement for the County Borough of Torfaen (TCBC, 2nd Version, May 2007)

Local Development Plan for the County Borough of Torfaen – List of Candidate Sites (TCBC, 21st June 2006)

Local Development Plan for the County Borough of Torfaen – Preferred Strategy (TCBC, January 2008)

County Borough of Torfaen Local Development Plan Strategic Briefing Papers (TCBC, May 2007)

'Better Homes, Better Lives' – A Local Housing Strategy for Torfaen (2004 – 2009)

'It's All in the Mix': A Housing Strategy for Sustainable Communities (Torfaen Strategic Housing Forum, 2007)

Torfaen Joint Housing Land Availability Study (2006)

Local Development Plan Urban Housing Potential Study for Torfaen (Baker Associates, 2007)

Torfaen Local Housing Market Assessment (Opinion Research Services, 2007)

Torfaen Housing Condition Survey – Executive Summary (2006/07)

Torfaen Local Transport Plan 2000 – 2006 (TCBC, 2000)

South East Wales Transport Alliance (SEWTA) Regional Transport Plan 2007

Blaenavon Traffic and Transportation Study (Capita Symonds, 2006)

North Torfaen Accessibility Brief (TCBC, 2007)

North Torfaen Strategic Highway Improvement (Capita Symonds, 2006)

'Best Foot Forward': Draft Torfaen Rights of Way Improvement Plan (TCBC, 2007)

Torfaen Regeneration Strategy 2004 – 2016 (TCBC, Amended May 2004)

Torfaen Regeneration Strategy, First Year Action Plan (2004 – 05)

Pontypool Town Centre Regeneration Strategy – Phase 1 Report (LDA Design, 2007)

Torfaen Public Arts Strategy (Artworks Wales)

Torfaen Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Strategy 2005 – 08 (TCBC, 2005)

Torfaen Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Strategy 2008 – 2011

Torfaen Corporate Plan (TCBC, 2006)

Valleys Regional Park Action Plan 2008 – 2013 (Consultation Draft, 2008)

Torfaen Local Biodiversity Action Plan (TCBC, 2003)

Draft Torfaen Landscape Action Plan (TCBC, 2007)

The Ecological Footprint of Torfaen (Stockholm Environment Institute, 2006)

Torfaen Countryside Strategy – First Review 2003 – 2006 (TCBC, 2003)

Local Development Plan Retail and Leisure Study for Torfaen (GVA Grimley, 2007)

Local Development Plan Employment Sites and Premises Review for Torfaen (DTZ, 2007)

Blaenavon Heritage and Regeneration Study (DTZ, 1998)

'Destination Blaenavon': Blaenavon Industrial Landscape Marketing Strategy (TCBC, 2003)

Blaenavon Town Conservation Plan (Frans Nicholas Associates, 2003)

Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site – Visitor Experience and Interpretation Plan (Red Kite Environment, 2007)

Blaenavon Industrial Landscape - Nomination Document for Inclusion in the World Heritage List (TCBC, 1999)

Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site Nomination Management Plan (TCBC, 1999)

Blaenavon Industrial Landscape – Access and Heritage Study, Volume 1: Strategy & Proposals (Gillespies, 2000)

Blaenavon Economic Impact Study – Phase 1 Report: Big Pit (Welsh Economy Research Unit, 2000)

Blaenavon Economic Impact Study – Phase 2 Report: The Blaenavon Industrial Landscape (Welsh Economy Research Unit, 2000)

Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site – Principal Route Feasibility Study (Mackley Davies Associates, 2003)

Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estate Design Study – Volume 1: Strategy and Proposals (Haire Landscape Consultants, 2002)

Local Authority Carbon Management Programme – Strategy and Implementation Plan for Torfaen (TCBC & The Carbon Trust, 2008)

Torfaen Energy Policy (TCBC, 2007)

Draft Torfaen Climate Change Strategy and Policy (TCBC, 2007)

Torfaen Children and Young People's Framework Plan 2003 – 08 (TCBC, 2003)

Generic Skills Survey – Results for Torfaen (Future Skills Wales, 2003)

Economic Indicators and Data (National Assembly for Wales, May 2007)

Torfaen Economic Development Strategy 2007 – 2012 (TCBC, 2007)

Prevention of Crime and Disorder Strategy and Action Plan 2002 - 05 (Torfaen Crime and Disorder Statutory Partnership, 2002)

Draft Gwent Policing Plan 2008 – 2011 (Gwent Police Authority, 2008)

Torfaen Training Draft Strategic Development Plan 2008 – 2010 (Torfaen Training, 2008)