

# Our Living Space

An Environmental  
Improvement Strategy  
for Rhondda Cynon Taf



LIVING SPACE  
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## Forward

This Strategy forms the framework for improving the living space of Rhondda Cynon Taf from 2005 and up to 2015. In this strategy document we aim to set our priorities for action within an environmental improvement context and demonstrate how we will enhance the quality of our living space over the next ten years.

The members of the Environmental Improvement Partnership have agreed and set out 10 aims within 7 themes for the improvement of our living Space. These themes form the basis both of our strategy and the action plans targeted at improving different aspects of our environment which have been identified as priorities locally

The Living Space Action Plan is one of five themes for action within the Rhondda Cynon Taf Community Plan. The Community Plan is the driver for change under which this strategy sits and forms the basis for creating a brighter future for everyone who lives and works in the County borough.

Our Living Space is a vitally important component of the Community Plan. The quality of the living space in Rhondda Cynon Taf is recognised as fundamental to the wider regeneration of the area and surveys of local residents demonstrate the importance of the local environment to those that live here.

The development of this strategy has grown from early in 2004 through joint working between a number of key organisations. Although there are 22 lead organisations which sit on the Environmental Improvement Partnership, all other organisations and individuals with an interest in improving the environment of Rhondda Cynon Taf are invited and encouraged to play their part in the implementation of this strategy.

Signed by(Leader)

Signed by (Partnership Chair)



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## Why have an Environmental Improvement Strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taf?

During the production of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Community Plan it became apparent that environmental improvement needed a higher profile and that those consulted wanted to see it take its place alongside the other four themes for action. Since the inclusion of the 'Our Living Space' section in the community plan, improving the environment has gained an even higher profile leading to the establishment of a new Environmental Improvement Partnership for Rhondda Cynon Taf. This Partnership now contains equal representation from the voluntary, public and business sectors although it is recognised that there needs to be greater interaction with a much wider range of organisations and individuals.

This strategy has been developed to enable the Partnership to oversee environmental Improvement in Rhondda Cynon Taf, address action in one of the five themed areas of Our Community Plan, identify priorities and build on and co-ordinate the good work already underway. The Strategy is not designed to replace existing strategies or plans but does provide a framework within which to integrate different objectives and direct everyone's activities to target areas where change is most needed or improvement slowest. The Strategy and the Environmental Improvement Partnership also provides a way of drawing together the views of a wide range of organisations across all of our themed areas for action into one coherent strategy.

This strategy will provide a more effective tool in championing and addressing our environmental improvement priorities. It will also help us be more effective at influencing National policy, communicating where changes need to be made and informing people about what decisions need to be taken or which actions must be targeted. In order to achieve many of the objectives of this strategy and deliver change, commitment is needed not just from environmental specialist organisations or people but from all those who play a part in shaping the future of Rhondda Cynon Taf. A key outcome for this strategy is the integration of its priorities with the priorities of other partnerships and organisations.



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## Global Responsibility

The individuals, businesses, community groups and public organisations living and working in Rhondda Cynon Taf make numerous decisions every day which affect the environment. If the results of all these decisions are added together our cumulative effect on the local and global environment can begin to be seen.

- Creating Sustainable communities and protecting the common global good
- Responding to issues raised Internationally and at World Summits
- Recognising the link between our consumption of raw materials and food and the destruction of natural habitats around the world. Realising local action affects global environmental health



### National Responsibility

Responding to and implementing Welsh Assembly strategies. Including The Wales Spatial Plan, Wales Environment Strategy and Wales: A Better Country

Working to meet Welsh National targets in terms of reducing waste going to landfill, air pollution levels and neighbourhood renewal amongst other targets

### Everyone's Responsibility

Everyone to some degree experiences environmental problems. From flooding affecting homes to living in communities where littering and graffiti are common sights. Community surveys tell us that the environment matters to people.

Most people care for the quality of their surroundings. Everyone needs green open spaces, clean air and water, reassurance that resources will not run out and the infrastructure to get from place to place. We all also share the consequences of taking actions that pollute the environment, make our neighbourhoods unattractive or destroy wildlife habitats. We all therefore need to take responsibility for making sure that our own activities protect or improve the environment and do not damage it.

### Local Responsibility

Ensuring that we recognise our urban and rural areas as assets protecting areas of natural or historic value. Managing our green spaces for the community's and nature's benefit

Meeting the local challenges of reducing waste and energy use, resolving traffic and transport problems, addressing pollution, tackling litter and urban dereliction

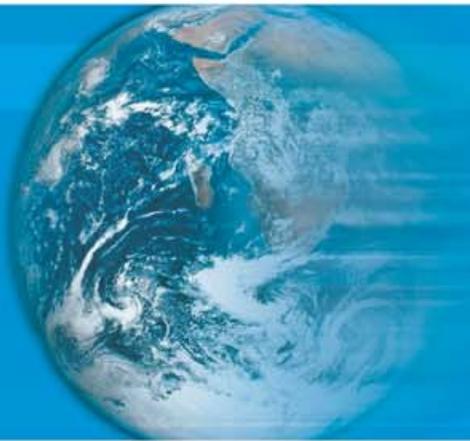
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## Our Themes for Action - Where We Need to Make Progress

This strategy is shaped around seven themes. These are not listed in any order of importance and although they are set out separately they are all interrelated in many ways and are all of high importance locally. In addition to the seven themes it was decided that a separate section concerning education and awareness raising was necessary to highlight the importance of this topic.

Each of the seven themed sections is set out to provide for each aspiration:

- A summary of some of the issues
- Key current projects and initiatives
- What we want to achieve
- Future priorities for Action
- Examples of links to other Community Plan themes

# Our Seven Themes

Biodiversity and Rivers

Local Environments

Energy, Resource use and Climate Change

The Built Environment

A Cleaner, Safer Environment

Transport

Waste

### Biodiversity and Rivers

To increase the biodiversity value of land within Rhondda Cynon Taf

- To improve the quality of local rivers

### Waste

To successfully develop a sustainable waste management culture so that recycling and reuse become predominant as opposed to landfill

### A Cleaner, Safer Environment

To successfully clean-up land, streets, rivers and to create a climate of civic pride amongst residents where spoiling the environment is unacceptable. To reduce the pollution to which our residents are exposed

### Local Environments

To improve the quality and attractiveness of our green spaces

- To increase the safe reuse and development of former industrial or currently underused land

### The Built Environment

To improve the quality and attractiveness of our neighbourhoods and town centres

### Transport

To successfully develop an integrated accessible transport network so that more people are empowered to live their lives unhindered, and travel in healthy, Non-polluting ways

### Energy, Resource use and Climate Change

To successfully develop an integrated accessible transport network so that more people are empowered to live their lives unhindered, and travel in healthy, Non-polluting ways



# Waste



# Our Aim

To successfully develop a sustainable waste management culture so that recycling and reuse become predominant as opposed to landfill

## The Issue

The amount of waste we produce is steadily growing. A typical household produces a tonne of waste a year although this is much lower than that produced by business and industry. In 2003/2004 Rhondda Cynon Taff sent over 89% of its waste to Landfill. This compares unfavourably with other Local Authorities in Wales. Rhondda Cynon Taff also falls below the Welsh National Average in terms of tonnage of waste recycled and tonnage of waste composted. This although we have the highest tonnage collected through a kerbside collection service. This and the known need to greatly reduce our reliance on landfill and reduce waste at source represents one of the biggest environmental challenges facing the area.

Effective waste management and waste minimisation involves the reduction of waste at source and increased levels of reuse and recycling therefore reducing the amount of waste which is taken to landfill sites. Government and European legislation alongside a recognition that the amount of waste being landfilled is causing long term environmental damage has meant that new ways of managing waste are needed. New directives regarding the disposal of fridges, vehicles and other items designed to reduce any negative environmental impact could also create problems if people choose to dump these items rather than enable their safe recycling or processing.



## What is currently being done?

The Local Authority and partner organisations have adopted a waste management strategy entitled 'Respecting Waste', with 12 actions for dealing with waste. These actions are designed to minimise the amount of waste created, increase recycling throughout the waste stream and increase the capacity for recycling to be delivered across the County Borough. Visible initiatives within the strategy include increased kerbside recycling, the construction of a new material recycling facility and new community recycling centres. The strategy also emphasises the importance of raising awareness about waste now being tackled through the Sort out Recycling Together (SORT) team and other new initiatives. Toogoodtowaste also provide a valuable furniture re-use service through providing essential household items to people and homes who need them



To successfully develop a sustainable waste management culture...



## What we want to Achieve

- A Reduction in the amount of waste going to landfill to meet legislative and local targets
- An increase in Rhondda Cynon Taf's capacity to reuse and recycle more of the waste that its homes and businesses produce, both in terms of volume and type of waste.
- An increase in public awareness about the volume of waste we all generate and in measures we can all take to reduce or eliminate waste
- An increase in the use of purchasing policies by organisations operating in The County Borough which consider the environmental impact of what they are purchasing and the impact on waste management



## Future Priorities For Action

- The Expansion of and continuation of the Kerbside recycling scheme to all householders and development of new clean materials recycling facility.
- Initiatives to increase the number of reuse schemes through new and improved partnerships with businesses and the voluntary sector and the encouragement of new processing enterprises within RCT and regionally.
- The Improvement of existing and provision of new Community Recycling Centres (Civic Amenity Sites,) improvement of existing and provision of new SORT Centres (Bring sites) and the provision of recycling banks throughout the County Borough.
- Expansion of initiatives to raise awareness of why recycling is important and how to recycle through the SORT programme and other initiatives.

## Examples of links to other themes

- **Learning** - Awareness raising about recycling with public and targeted at schools
- **Community Safety** - Reduction in illegal dumping of waste
- **Economic Regeneration** - Encouragement of new recycling and reuse initiatives
- **Health and Wellbeing** - Reduction of health hazards associated with pollution



**Energy,  
Resource Use &  
Climate Change**

# Our Aim

To reduce the waste of natural resources through the efficient use of energy, water and materials and recognise our impact on Climate Change



## The Issue

Energy is required in our homes, for public and private transport, in our places of work and in providing us with a wide range of services. There is however the need to reduce or minimise the amount of fossil fuels we consume as the extraction and use of these finite resources contributes to the pollution of our environment and to climate change on a global scale. We also all have a duty to use all resources wisely therefore minimising waste. For example consuming locally produced food or utilising sustainably produced materials. The constant supply of clean water in our area of the world is something that we should not take for granted as in many areas clean water is much less easily available. The water we consume arrives with an environmental cost as the cleansing, collection and delivery of clean water requires a lot of energy. We therefore need to minimise the over consumption of water and prevent its wastage through poorly maintained infrastructure.

Nationally and Internationally Energy Policies have been developed which aim to achieve long-term sustainable energy supply and use. In Rhondda Cynon Taf we need to ensure we are helping Wales to meet its national targets for reducing Carbon emissions, improving energy efficiency and utilising more energy produced from

renewable sources. There are already studies which demonstrate the negative effects on Wales of Climate Change. We therefore need to act, both to provide local benefits and contribute to the global need for action but also to ensure that we are prepared to meet the local challenges Climate Change may bring. In order to combat Climate Change it is recognised that there is a need to reduce the amount we consume in terms of energy and everyday materials used in the home, in industry and at our places of work. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on utilising locally or sustainably produced food. The production and distribution of food continues to have a wide range of environmental impacts. This including the effects of intensive agriculture and the creation of pollution associated with the fact that much of our food travels hundreds of miles from source, for packaging and processing before it reaches supermarket shelves. Industry and all other consumers use a wide range of raw materials including metals, wood and aggregates. Many of these materials are produced or extracted in non-sustainable ways and greater commitment is needed to source materials that have been produced in ways that are benign or beneficial to the local or global environment.





## What is currently **being done?**

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is already tackling domestic energy use through its Fuel Poverty Strategy and property maintenance plans and has recently produced a new Energy and Water Management Policy. Garth Olwg Lifelong Learning Centre and Y Gorlan, Early Years Centre, Abercynon both utilise solar energy for heating purposes. Rhondda Cynon Taf was the First Local Authority to invest in the British Gas Here to Help scheme. Provides a 'one stop shop' solution to fuel poverty, delivering a free support package to residents including energy efficiency measures, access to benefits and access to charity partners.

Many companies and organisations based or operating in Rhondda Cynon Taf operate environmental management systems which help to reduce energy consumption. A leading company locally in this respect is L'oreal. The Green Dragon programme operated by Groundwork Merthyr and Rhondda Cynon Taff already has a track record of working with local businesses and organisation to help them achieve higher accredited standards of environmental management. Dwr Cwmru has an ongoing programme of improving our underground pipe network to reduce wastage through broken pipes and is committed to reducing the environmental cost of delivering water to our homes. In 2004 a Welsh Food and Agriculture Festival was held in Ynysangharad Park in Pontypridd. This event showcased the excellence of local food and drink producers and manufacturers. . In one positive example, Catering Direct, the Council's in-house catering service has committed itself to buying lamb that has been reared by local farmers



To reduce the waste of natural resources



## What we want to Achieve

A reduction in energy usage across Rhondda Cynon Taf in all sectors
A reduction in Carbon emissions throughout RCT
In increase in the use of energy from renewable sources both generated within RCT and elsewhere
A reduction in the wastage of water through poorly maintained infrastructure and unnecessary use throughout RCT
An increase in local purchasing of materials and consumption of locally produced food reducing energy usage through transportation across all sectors and other negative environmental costs
Greater recognition locally concerning both our impacts on climate change and our need to plan for the potential effects of climate change

## Future Priorities For Action

The implementation of the Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Energy and water management policy and adoption of best practice locally
Ongoing support for the Green Dragon Programme and other methods of helping businesses and organisations improve their environmental management
Greater co-ordination of activities locally to reduce energy consumption, increase energy efficiency and investigate new sources of renewable energy
Encourage all organisations including businesses to adopt a sustainable purchasing policy contributing to waste minimisation
Increased research aimed at improving our understanding of the energy big picture locally in terms of how much energy is used locally and by whom alongside a commitment by all partners on the Environmental Improvement Partnership to change and review their energy usage and address Climate Change as an issue of local importance



## Examples of links to other themes

- **Learning** - Green Dragon and other schemes which train businesses and organisations to improve their environmental management practices
- **Community Safety** - Providing energy efficient lighting where improved lighting could help reduce crime
- **Economic Regeneration** - Increased local purchasing and support for local businesses/manufacturers/food growers etc.
- **Health and Wellbeing** - Implementing energy efficiency measures such as low energy lighting and insulation and addressing fuel poverty