



They're going green!

Illustrating the dedication of Vale schools to reducing their environmental footprint, an outstanding 50 per cent have now won an award under the Eco-Schools Green Flag award scheme. See page 2



www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Vale Waves

The Vale of Glamorgan Council's Community Newspaper

Spring 2008 | Issue 19

New contact centre ready for all calls



Residents in the Vale of Glamorgan now only have to remember one phone number – 01446 700111 – for all council services, which is easy to remember and already used by many residents.

From 17 March the council's new contact centre, Contact OneVale, will handle enquiries for services across the council.

Leader of the council Margaret Alexander said: "We have opened a contact centre to help us deal with

residents' enquiries more quickly and efficiently. The contact centre will make it as easy as possible for Vale residents to request a service, report a problem and have their enquiry dealt with."

Council chief executive John Maitland Evans explained: "The difference between the contact centre and the old system, where enquiries came through to the council's switchboard, is that the bulk of queries will be dealt with by the contact centre staff themselves. They will also be able to handle multiple enquiries, so if a caller has two separate queries they won't have to call another department."

"We have decided to retain our existing number as the easiest option for our customers and as the most

cost effective way forward for both customers and the council," he added.

The 40 call handlers at the centre include eight Welsh speakers. Callers can opt to have their inquiry dealt with in Welsh.

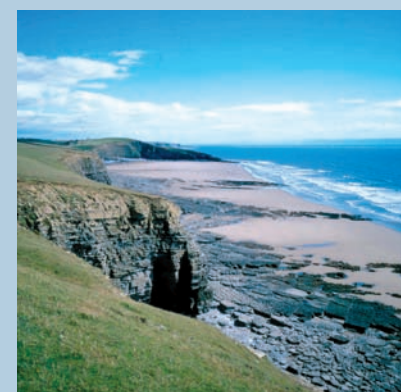
Currently the contact centre is open from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and there are plans to extend the opening hours until 8pm. It is intended to extend this to a 24/7 service as the service expands. Call handlers find that their busiest times are 8.30am to 12pm, with Monday the most popular day for callers.

Contact OneVale is available on 01446 700111, email C1V@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk or text C1V then your message to 60066.

NewsStories



Michaela O'Neill, from Rhoose, scooped top prize in the Vale Youth Service Awards. See page 3.



Conserving the heritage of the Vale's beautiful coastline is the job of a special team based at Dunraven Bay, Southerndown.

See page 5.

Do it online at www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Report it: abandoned vehicles, benefit fraud, complaints about food that was bought or made in the Vale, problems with street lighting, fly tipping and man-hole covers.

Pay it: business rates, council tax, housing rents and mortgages

Find it: childcare services, community centres, planning applications, courses, library books, information on fostering

and adoption, school term times, kerbside recycling days, public transport times, doctors, dentists, leisure centre timetables.

Say it: have your say on issues that affect you, see the consultation work that is currently in progress, as well as information on past projects. Or use our online form for comments, complaints and compliments.

Easter opening hours

Leisure centres

Good Friday, Saturday (22 March), Sunday (23 March), Tuesday (25 March) and Wednesday (26 March) – open as normal; Easter Monday open 7am-5pm.

Libraries

Good Friday, Sunday (23 March), Easter Monday and Tuesday (25 March) closed; Saturday (22 March) and Wednesday (26 March) – open as normal.

Housing allowance

If you are a landlord or a tenant of private rented accommodation, then the Local Housing Allowance, to be introduced in April, could affect you. It is a new way of working out Housing Benefits and will simplify the whole process of claiming. See page 6

Please ensure you recycle your copy of Vale Waves



News in brief

Great products

The Vale of Glamorgan has been granted Fairtrade county status.

A range of catering and retail units now sell Fairtrade items ranging from tea, coffee and snack products to more unique items such as jewellery and casual clothing.

Fairtrade products are available in Cowbridge, Barry, Penarth and Llantwit Major, while Barry College and Vale Council for Voluntary Services have committed to using Fairtrade products.

There are plans to create a dedicated directory on the council's website www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk, and cabinet member for visible services Cllr Rob Curtis said: "Vale retailers and catering outlets have really taken Fairtrade on board and are offering great products. I am really pleased that residents and businesses in the Vale are so supportive."



Loo-King good!

The council's King Square (Barry) and Cowbridge Town Hall loos have won national awards.

There were nearly 1,500 entries to this year's British Toilet Association awards and King Square and Cowbridge were independently assessed as being worthy recipients of four and three stars respectively. Cleansing staff at Barry were also awarded an 'Attendant of the Year' certificate.

Cabinet member for visible and building services Cllr Rob Curtis said: "The council is fully aware that residents and visitors need high standard loos and these awards clearly show we are moving in the right direction in raising standards."

Conserving our wildlife

Entries are being invited for this year's Vale of Glamorgan Biodiversity Awards. Now in its fourth year, the award rewards practical projects that promote biodiversity by creating, enhancing or managing sites for wildlife.

There are two classes for schools, education centres or children's groups and for voluntary groups or industrial or commercial businesses, including farms. Class winners each receive £100 and a wooden trophy, with prizes of £50 and £20 for second and third places.

Throughout Wales there are many threatened species that everyone's heard of such as dormice, nightjar, lesser horseshoe bats and otter. But what's just as important is the conservation of all our other wildlife from slugs to slow-worms and blackbirds to bumble bees.

Local wildlife areas such as those on schools grounds, farmland or industrial sites can be managed for these plants and animals.

The overall winners in 2007 were Wick and District Playgroup and Dow Corning – both sites that are making a positive contribution to local conservation and are working hard to raise the profile of our wildlife.

Work on the wildlife and learning garden at Wick began in 2005 in a corner of the local churchyard, and the dedication and hard work has created an outstanding area that benefits local wildlife, the children and their community.

Dow Corning's Cadoxton Pond project is a perfect example of how sustainability and biodiversity can go hand in hand with industry. Extensive reed beds and two lakes support a wide range of flora and fauna including kingfisher and reed bunting.

Applications for this year's award must be received by Friday, 2 May.

If you help to manage a site for wildlife in the Vale or know someone that does, contact the Vale of Glamorgan Biodiversity Partnership, c/o Richard May – 01446 704855; email rimay@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk



Wick and District Playgroup and Dow Corning were winners of 2007 Vale Biodiversity Awards

www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk or visit

and search for 'biodiversity award.'

Going Green - schools reach the big 50

An outstanding 50 per cent of Vale schools have now attained an award under the Eco-Schools Green Flag

award scheme.

Illustrating the dedication of schools to reducing their environmental footprint, this is an impressive landmark for the

Vale.

Thirty-one schools have either a bronze, silver or prestigious Green Flag award and, to have achieved this, they will have set up an eco-committee, led by pupils, completed a review of what the school currently does to be more sustainable and decided on some improvement actions.

There are eight topics schools can tackle under the scheme, covering sustainable development and global citizenship. One of the most popular topics is waste minimization, which encourages pupils to reduce, reuse and recycle. Support for the schools' efforts in this key green area comes from the council as part of the 'What's in your bin?'

waste awareness campaign.

Dinas Powys infants is currently one of the schools with a silver award who are diligently working towards achieving Green Flag status. Pupils at the school have been composting, eating more fruit and reducing energy consumption. All are looking forward to flying the green flag.

The challenge now is to reach that 100 per cent mark! There are only eight schools not yet registered on the programme so, hopefully, it won't take too long to be a truly eco-friendly county.

Eco-Schools is an international programme managed by Keep Wales Tidy in Wales and is supported by the Welsh Assembly.



Dinas Powys infants celebrate their silver award. Back row, from left: Teacher Caroline Lewis, Eco-Schools development officer Julie Giles and learning support assistant Angela Peterken. Front: Eco committee children Lydia, Cyril, Delyth and Emma.



News in brief

Less paper - better service

The council plans to cut the amount of paper it uses by computerising as much of its paperwork as possible. New computer software is being introduced that will centrally manage information, including correspondence, documents and emails. The system will allow information to be shared by council departments and will help to make sure information held by the council is accurate.

Head of performance and development Huw Isaac explained: "The new system will make savings and make the council's work more efficient. It will make life easier for residents too - meaning they will only have to provide information, such as change of address, once and all the council's records will be updated. This is a secure system and safeguards are in place to keep information private. The system is based within the council and will only be accessed by authorised council staff."

If you have any questions on the new system, please email Amanda Pocknell at ajpocknell@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Meetings

All members of the public are invited to attend meetings of the council which start at 6pm in the Civic Offices unless otherwise stated:

- Cabinet (2pm) - 2, 16 and 23 April and 9 and 23 May.
 - Council - 23 April and 16 May (annual).
 - Planning - 17 April, 24 May and 14 June.
 - Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison - 29 April and 10 July.
 - Community Liaison (7pm) - 30 May and 18 July.
 - Licensing (10am) - 8 May.
- Scrutiny meetings start at 6pm and are generally held at the Civic Offices:
- Lifelong Learning - 31 March, 21 April, 23 May and 25 June.
 - Corporate Resources - 1 and 22 April, 29 May and 26 June.
 - Community Wellbeing and Safety - 14 April, 21 May and 18 June.
 - Economy and Environment - 15 April, 22 May and 20 June.

Michaela wins Vale's top youth award

Cowbridge Comprehensive pupil Michaela O'Neill from Rhoose scooped top prize in the Vale Youth Service Awards.

Seventeen-year-old Michaela's enthusiasm for youth work particularly impressed the judges. Not only has she been an active member of the popular Cowbridge youth centre, she has also encouraged other young people to get involved.

Michaela completed her work experience at the youth centre and was involved in producing a film for the Open University youth work course. She has certainly been hands on at the centre, even organ-

ising a redesign of the ladies' toilets and helping to paint them.

The awards, organised by the council's youth service, are now in their sixth year. Youth workers from across the Vale nominated more than 270 youngsters for this year's awards.

Council leader Margaret Alexander said: "The awards show the enormous amount of talent and potential in the Vale's young people. All the youngsters nominated can take pride in their achievements, they are a credit to themselves and their families, their youth workers and the Vale."

Other winners were:



- Visual arts – youngsters from Llantwit Major YC who designed and made a wall mosaic.
- Performing arts – Band 'We invented Voodoo' who are based at Cowbridge YC.
- Environment – St Athan YC.
- Sports – Wick, who have been involved in local and national competitions.
- Education – Dinas Powys YC for their commitment to the Romance Academy sex

education programme.

- Citizenship and participation – Major Music who have given their time to work with Minor Music, helping eight to 11 year olds develop their music skills.

- Global/international – Karl Harding and Gavin Packer, from the Byrd Crescent youth group in Penarth, who have taken part in a cultural exchange, 'Belongings,' with young people from Africa.

Wide range of options with TeleV

An advanced safety alarm system offering peace of mind and reassurance whenever it's needed is being promoted by the council. Designed to work with existing Lifeline home units and in sheltered housing settings, TeleV aims to help elderly and vulnerable people remain in their own homes and live independently for as long as possible.

The TeleV package consists of a Lifeline control unit, two

smoke detectors, which immediately alert a contact centre, and an extreme temperature detector.

Alongside the council's existing community alarm system, TeleV is a 24-hour service providing an instant response at the touch of a button.

Says one TeleV user: "Thank you for giving me and my family peace of mind knowing there is always help available at the press of a button."

Council leader Cllr Margaret Alexander said: "The service is

available for anyone of any age who would like to feel safer, more protected and independent in their own home. It offers a wide range of options to help manage risks in the home environment and, most importantly, to try and help people maintain their independence.

"TeleV will help more and more people and, hopefully, help avoid admission into care or hospital."

If you are interested in receiving more information on



TeleV, please telephone 01446 731100.

Special bins to recycle Tetra Pak cartons



Cabinet member for visible services Cllr Rob Curtis and Barry resident Joan Cameron at the newly-installed recycling bank at the Tesco store in Barry.

Food and drink cartons can now be recycled at five sites in the Vale of Glamorgan. Thanks to a scheme run in conjunction with Tetra Pak Ltd and the carton industry body ACE UK (Alliance for Beverage Cartons and the Environment), special collection bins have been installed at the council's household recycling centres in Sully and Llandow and at the Tesco stores in Barry, Penarth and Culverhouse Cross.

Tetra Pak Ltd will be responsible for emptying the bins and, once collected, the car-

tons will be taken away to be baled before being transported to a recycling mill.

Residents are reminded that Tetra Pak cartons cannot be collected as part of the council's kerbside scheme. As they need to be collected and treated separately, please only use the special bins at the five sites.

Cabinet member for visible services Cllr Rob Curtis said: "I have been working for a number of years to get Tetra cartons added to the list of items which can be recycled. Vale residents have always responded well to the different recycling schemes we have implemented."

News**in**brief

Flooding advice

If flooding looks likely, take the following precautions:

- Protect doorways and low level vents with sandbags (the council recently agreed to provide a total of 1,000 sandbags to help local residents protect homes at greatest risk in the event of possible flooding; they are available - with a maximum of 15 each on a first come, first served basis - from the authority's Court Road depot). Remember to unblock vents before switching everything back on.
- Move valuables, food and other possessions upstairs where possible. If you live in a bungalow, caravan, prefab or any other dwelling without access to a second storey, and you find yourself in difficulty, alert the emergency services so you can be evacuated. If you are able to self evacuate and stay with family and friends inform the emergency services so your location is known.
- Turn off gas and electricity if flooding is definitely about to happen.
- Assume that flood water contains sewage.
- Ensure that you wear gloves when handling affected items.
- Thoroughly disinfect and dry affected household items.

During/after flooding:

- Co-operate fully with the emergency services.
- DO NOT switch on electricity or gas until these have been inspected.
- DO NOT use food that has been in contact with flood water.

Visit www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/flooding for more information and to download our online leaflets

Useful websites:

- After a Flood - Environment Agency booklet: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk>
- Repair and restoration of buildings following floods: www.ciria.org.uk/flooding/disinfection.htm
- Sewer Flooding - Your questions answered: <http://www.watervoice.org.uk/>

CCTV operators' vital role in drugs haul

Two CCTV operators have been praised for their "magnificent work" in assisting in two arrests and the seizure of more than £50,000 worth of cannabis.

In one of her final official duties as Vale Police Divisional Commander, Superintendent Sue Hayes presented the two operators with special Superintendent's Commendations.

The incident occurred in Barry last year when the CCTV operators, working under the umbrella of the Safer Vale Partnership, observed a disturbance outside a public house. After those involved left the scene, the CCTV cameras followed their vehicle's movements and directed police to where the car was parked.

Superintendent Hayes said:

"The awards emphasise the importance of the successful partnership that exists between the police, the council and the CCTV unit in the Vale. It is through this partnership that we have been able to make these arrests and remove a large amount of illegal drugs from our community.

"The people operating the CCTV cameras in the Vale need to remain anonymous but that does not preclude them from being recognised and congratulated for their magnificent work. They help to keep the Vale one of the safest places in the country."

Supt Hayes was accompanied by council cabinet member for housing and community safety Cllr Margaret Wilkinson, who said: "The CCTV partnership is an extremely effective tool in the



Cabinet member for housing and community safety Cllr Margaret Wilkinson and Superintendent Sue Hayes.

fight against serious crime and has been very effective in supporting the police in combating criminal activities in the Vale."

- The Safer Vale Partnership comprises repre-

sentatives of the Vale council, Police, Fire and Rescue, Probation and Crown Prosecution Services, Vale Local Health Board, NHS Trust and statutory and voluntary bodies.

'Question Time' clicks with local youngsters

Young people have been encouraged to get involved in democracy and realise that their vote can make a difference.

As part of a series of events to mark Local Democracy Week, more than 160 secondary school students, aged 11 to 19, attended two 'Youth Question Time' events.

A panel of Vale councillors and officers, town and community councillors, police inspectors and local business representatives tackled questions covering issues as diverse as youth facilities, public transport, the environment, crime and personal safety and really challenged the stereotypical way in which young people are often viewed.

The young people also took part in an interactive electron-

ic voting system called 'educlick', enabling them to vote on what they thought of the day, the facilitators and even the panel members.

The council's youth participation officer, Ve Van de Voorde, said: "The young

people asked really good questions and contributed some really valid discussion points about issues close to their hearts. We are definitely hoping to organise further Youth Question Time events in the future."



Do not lose your right to vote

Elections for county councils and town/community councils are taking place on 1 May, 2008. In order for you to be able to vote, your name must appear on the Electoral Register. If your name is not on the register, you will not be able to vote.

If you want to check that your name is on the Electoral Register or if you require registration forms, you should contact the Vale of Glamorgan Electoral Registration Section on 01446 709304.

The Electoral Register is also used by credit agencies to verify your details and proof of residency for mortgage applications, loans, credit agreements and opening bank accounts. You should be aware that, if you are not on the electoral register, you may be refused credit.



What's On in the Vale this Spring

March

Fri 21 to Mon 24 – Easter Fun at Dyffryn Gardens

Easter activities and entertainment for all the family including face painting, storytelling and bouncy castles. From 10am to 6pm. Admission – £6 adults, £2 children, £15 family (two adults and four children). For details, call 02920 593328 or visit www.dyffryngardens.org.uk

Sat 22 – Farmers' Market, Westbourne School, Penarth

From 10am to 1pm. Call 01656 729305 for details.

Sat 22 to Mon 24 - Easter Bunny Rides, Barry Island Railway

Enjoy a ride on a train and children's activities, including a treasure hunt. Prices to be confirmed. Call 01446 748816 for details.

Sun 23 and Mon 24 – A Medieval Easter, Cosmeston Medieval Village, Penarth

Experience life in 14th Century Wales with bread baking, weapons and armour displays plus traditional medieval crafts and an Easter egg hunt! Admission – £3.50 adults, £2 children, £8 family. For more information, call 02920 701678.

Tues 25 to Sat 19 April - Photographic Exhibition, Barry Town Hall Exhibition Space

Barry Citizens' Action Group present 'Barry past and present,' a collection of photos from 1908 to 2008 of Barry Town Hall, Central Park and events at King Square over the years. Entry to the exhibition is free. For further information, call 01446 709805.

Fri 28 - Ballroom and Sequence Dance, The Paget Rooms, Penarth

All are welcome at this friendly social evening from 8 to 10.30pm. Bring your own drinks. Tickets cost £4. Call 01443 238867 or 07890 707759.

Fri 28 and Sat 29 - Atlantic College International Show, St Donats Arts Centre

Enjoy a whistle-stop tour around world culture in a show which is packed full of all the vibrancy that makes Atlantic College such a special place. Tickets: £5 and £3.50. Call 01446 799100 for details.

April

Sat 19 - Freedom of the Borough parade: Merchant Navy Association (Wales), Barry town centre

A parade of the Merchant Navy Association is planned between the Town Hall and the Civic Offices in Barry. They will form in front of the Town Hall shortly after 11am, before marching down Holton Road at 11.25am. A short ceremony will then take place by the Merchant Navy Memorial in front of the Civic Offices.

Sun 20 - Georgie Fame In Concert, St Donats Arts Centre

With a career spanning almost 50 years, Georgie Fame is an icon of the British music scene. Tickets: £21.50 (£20). For further information, call 01446 799100 or visit www.stdonats.com

Thurs 24 – Salsa Celtica, Barry Memorial Hall and Theatre

Cuban jazz with a Celtic accent. The band members hail from all over the world, and they fuse Afro-Latin rhythms and melodies with traditional Celtic and Scottish music to create sexy salsa grooves. Music doesn't get more exciting than this! To find out more, call 01446 738622, email boxoffice@barrymemo.co.uk or visit www.memorialhalltheatre.co.uk

Sun 27 April - Porthkerry Plod, Barry

The Penarth and Dinas Runners club, in association with the Vale Council, present a five-mile, multi-terrain race around Porthkerry Park in Barry. Either get in training to join the couple of hundred competitors who make this annual event such a success or go down to the park to cheer them on.

Tues 29 – All Saints' Church (Barry) centenary service

To celebrate the centenary of All Saints' Church in Barry, there are a number of events to look out for in the coming months. In addition to this special service, the celebrations will include a concert bringing together the Barry Ladies' Choir, Barry Male Voice Choir and the Barry Choral Society on 31 May, and a centenary flower festival from 5 to 7 June. For further information about the series of events, visit www.barryallsaints.org.uk

May

Sun 4 - An Evening with the Blues Band's Dave Kelly and Maggie Bell, Scotland's Queen of Soul, St Donats Arts Centre

Two stalwarts of the British rhythm and blues scene perform on what will be an evening of acoustic blues, soul and good times. The show starts at 7.30pm and tickets cost from £15. For further details, call 01446 799100

or visit www.stdonats.com

Sun 4 and Mon 5 - Medieval Welsh Rebellion, Cosmeston Medieval Village

May Day is a time of celebration and feasting but, in the village of Cosmeston, it is a time of rebellion! Admission – £3.50 adults, £2 children, £8 family. For details, call 02920 701678.

Sat 17 - Potted Potter, St Donats Arts Centre

Watch comic double act Dan and Jeff take on the challenge to tell the story of the Harry Potter books in just 60 minutes! The show includes endless costumes, humour, brilliant songs, ridiculous props, and a generous helping of Hogwarts magic. For ages six and upwards. For further information about the show and tickets, call 01446 799100 or visit www.stdonats.com

Sun 25 and Mon 26 - History Through The Ages, Cosmeston Medieval Village

Join the fun at Cosmeston Medieval Village where travellers from other times and places will gather for the weekend, including the ever popular warriors of ancient Greece and the Duke of Wellington infantry. Also watch out for Tudor Time Travellers and Queen Victoria's Redcoats. Admission – £3.50 adults, £2 children, £8 family. To find out more, call 02920 701678.

June

Sat 7 and Sun 8 - Barry Transport Festival

The festival will include buses, cars and motorcycles with free classic bus rides around the local area. Both steam and diesel hauled trains will be in operation over the two days on an intensive service linking Barry Island, Hood Road and Woodham Halt. For further information, call 01446 748816, email valeofglamrail@hotmail.com or visit www.valeofglamorganrailway.co.uk

Sun 8 – Champagne and strawberries summer concert, St Donat's Arts centre

A summer concert with soprano Dame Emma Kirkby and lute player Anthony Rooley. For details, call 01446 799100.

Mon 16 to Sun 29 - Midsummer Festival of Music and Theatre, Dyffryn Gardens

The festival of music and theatre returns to Dyffryn's open-air theatre garden. Call 02920 593328 for further information or visit www.midsommersfestival.co.uk

Protecting our Coastline

Conserving the heritage of the Vale's beautiful coastline is the job of a special team based at Dunraven Bay, Southerndown.

The council's Glamorgan Heritage Coast team ensures that the spectacular coastline is enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of annual visitors.

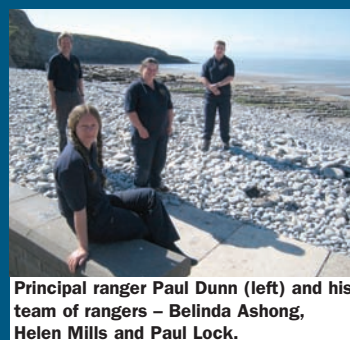
Principal ranger Paul Dunn leads the team of Belinda Ashong, Paul Lock and Helen Mills, which is based at the Heritage Coast centre and whose work includes: sensitive habitat and species management to improve grasslands for plants, butterflies and other wildlife; enhancing the landscape by planting trees and organising litter-picks; improving access through footpath clearance, stile and wall repairs; raising awareness of the area with 'talks and walks', public events and interpretation, and working closely in partnership with local farmers and communities.

Numerous schools also visit (sometimes from as far away as the Midlands) to learn about a coastline rich in wildlife and history.

Paul, who has worked as a ranger for 28 years, said: "We can be working on a wide variety of tasks in any one day, and in how many other jobs can you do that? It is such a dramatic place to work throughout the year as you get the extremes of weather on the coast."

Paul added: "Seeing a job through and watching conservation projects develop year on year gives you great satisfaction. However, we also see things that make you feel like tearing your hair out such as litter and vandalism."

The ranger team's work varies



Principal ranger Paul Dunn (left) and his team of rangers – Belinda Ashong, Helen Mills and Paul Lock.

through out the year, as Belinda explains: "A lot of practical conservation work is carried out

in the autumn and winter months but the summer is more people orientated."

However, with the British weather being reliably unpredictable, people often head for the beach any time the sun shines.

Paul said: 'Most importantly, we want everyone to enjoy themselves but please respect the coast and help us look after it for the future.'

In addition to the four rangers, other staff include Louise Bebb who works at the Heritage Coast's 'Seawatch Centre' at Boverton, Louise Price, the project assistant and an estate worker at Dunraven Park.



School visits are extremely successful.

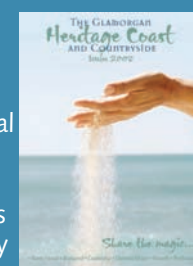
Brochure on the shelves

The 2008 Glamorgan Heritage Coast and Countryside tourism brochure has hit the shelves.

A host of attractions are featured in the free and informative annual brochure, which has won national recognition in recent years, and is produced by the council in close collaboration with Bridgend County Borough Council.

Cabinet member for tourism and leisure Cllr Gwyn John said: "The brochure is now available to download from the council website. We promote the Heritage Coast and countryside in a variety of ways and work closely with partners such as Visit Wales to ensure maximum exposure for the area."

For more information or to get your free copy of the brochure and other leaflets, telephone 01446 709328. Alternatively, visit the website at www.visitthevale.com.





News in brief

Blankets replaced free of charge

As part of annual Safe and Sound roadshows in Barry and Penarth, council trading standards officers intercepted numerous faulty electric blankets used by elderly people across the county.

More than 60 per cent of 64 blankets failed the tests and were replaced free of charge.

Many were worn out, had poor wiring, broken controls or no protection against overheating.

Consumer education officer Kate Palmer said:

"These results show how important it is to have electric blankets checked regularly."

Those attending the roadshows were also offered advice on consumer issues, fire safety and energy efficiency.



'Sea' all the information

Residents and visitors are reminded that up to date information on the quality of bathing waters in the Vale is available between May and September on the council website www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk.

The council and the Environment Agency Wales monitor the quality of the sea water at Penarth, Jackson's Bay (Barry), Whitmore Bay (Barry), Watchouse Bay (Barry), Cold Knap (Barry), Fontygary Bay, Limpert Bay (Gileston), Llantwit Major, Southerndown and Ogmere. samples are taken on a weekly basis and quality categorised as 'excellent,' 'good' or 'poor.'

Results, which show that bathing water quality continues to improve, are also displayed on notice boards at each of the beaches.

Valuable contributions to countryside improvements

Organisations and individuals across the area have been thanked for their contributions to a council plan covering access to the countryside over the next 10 years.

Focusing on footpaths and bridleways, the final Rights of Way Improvement Plan outlines management strategies covering the next 10 years, and will allow the council to prioritise work and focus resources.

The final report is based upon information gathered over a three-year period from consultations with interested groups, landowners, local people and visitors.

The document can be viewed at the Civic Offices and Docks Office reception

areas and on the council's website - www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/living/environment/countryside/public_rights_of_way/rowip.aspx

Copies can also be obtained by contacting:

- rowip@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
- telephone (01446) 704705
- Public Rights of Way Section, Vale of Glamorgan Council, Dock Offices, Barry CF63 4RT.

The document is available in English, Welsh, large print and on CD.

Cabinet member for tourism and leisure Cllr Gwyn John said: "I would like to thank everyone who has contributed ideas or concerns to help with the improvement and future management of countryside access in the Vale."



• There are about 550 kilometres of public rights of way – footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways – in the Vale. In addition, there are 500 hectares of common land, which, together with the Glamorgan Heritage Coast and the country parks at Cosmeston (Penarth) and Porthkerry (Barry), provide further opportunities for countryside leisure activities.

Changes to Housing Benefits

If you are a landlord or a tenant of private rented accommodation, then the following changes could affect you. The Local Housing Allowance, to be introduced in April, is a new way of working out housing benefits and will simplify the whole process of claiming.

What will the Local Housing Allowance mean to you?

It will give tenants more

choice as to where they choose to live; it will mean that tenants with similar circumstances who live in the same area will get the same amount; it's a flat rate based on the area in which the tenant lives and their household size; in most cases it will be paid to the tenant and not the landlord, and it will be paid into a tenant's bank account and not sent by cheque. So, if you do not have a bank account, you will need to open one.



Who will be affected by the Local Housing Allowance?

Tenants and landlords of deregulated tenancies in the private rented sector if the tenant: makes a new claim on or after 7 April 2008; moves to a new address on or after the 7 April 2008; has a break in their claim on or after the 7 April 2008.

If you want more information, please contact:

- Benefits@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
- Telephone 01446 709495
- Visit our website at www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Contacting your council has just got easier

Contact Holwch OneVale UnFro

01446 700111

www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

from 17 March 2008 Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm

by telephone, web, email C1V@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk or text C1V then your message to 60066

You said...

Overall satisfaction with the council and its services is increasing, according to a large-scale public opinion survey conducted at the end of last year.

During the survey, which was conducted independently, nearly 1,000 residents across the area were asked a variety of questions about the council and services from waste and recycling to adult education.

The results show the overall satisfaction figure has increased from a 2005 level of 74 per cent to 89 per cent.

The number of people indicating that they are proud to live in the Vale has increased from 87 per cent in 2005 to a current figure of 93 per cent.

Satisfaction with waste and recycling services, parks and open spaces maintenance and libraries has increased.

The survey has also raised some issues which the council will look at, for example, the way in which people receive information appears to be changing, with greater numbers using the council's website. Council consultation officer Rhian Thomas said: "All the information is particularly useful for the council in developing services."



What's in your bin this Spring?

Garden waste service

It's a big thank you to everyone who participated in the garden waste service last year.

More than 2,000 tonnes of garden waste were composted during the seven months of the scheme; four times more than collected previously.

The fortnightly kerbside collection service will again be available between 17 March and the end of November replacing the winter 'ring and request' system. Residents will have a choice of placing their garden waste out in disposable biodegradable sacks or new re-usable fabric bags.

The bags will be collected once every two weeks on the same day as your plastic and cardboard is collected for recycling.

Both types of bags can be bought from council offices in Barry (Civic), Penarth, Llantwit Major and Cowbridge. The biodegradable bags are priced at three for £1, and the re-usable bags are £1 each.

The following can be disposed of – grass cuttings, hedge clippings, prun-

ings, leaves, plants, flowers and non-invasive weeds.

All garden waste is taken to a local farm where it is composted. This compost is then used on the farm, providing an environmentally friendly method of waste disposal.

The council is hoping that many more residents will use the service, helping us reach the challenging targets set by the Welsh Assembly which require local authorities to recycle and compost at least 40 per cent of their waste by 2009/10.

Cabinet member for visible services Cllr Rob Curtis explained: "I am really pleased that many residents in the Vale have taken this issue seriously and increased the amount of garden waste composted. Thank you for making this scheme such a success, but we really need to do better and increase the amount of garden waste composted further."

Garden waste can also be taken free of charge to designated skips at the Llandow and Sully Household



Local residents have warmly welcomed the council's kerbside collections of garden waste.

Recycling Centres. The green waste from these sites is also composted locally.

Your bags will be collected by a dedi-

cated recycling vehicle on your pre-arranged collection day. Please note that we will not collect any black bags containing garden waste.

Council offers free compost bins

Councillors have agreed to offer free compost bins to pensioners and those on benefits in the Vale.

Some 1,500 bins have been provided by the Welsh Assembly and will be distributed on a first come, first served basis. If you would like one of these bins, you can collect them from the Alps depot on a Tuesday and Thursday between 9am and 4pm. To receive a free compost bin, you need to show proof of eligibility and provide your name and address.

Making compost at home is really easy to do and it saves you money as you don't have to buy compost from the garden centre. It can also reduce your weekly rubbish by over 20 per cent so just think what a difference this would make if every household in the Vale did it!"

Materials that can be composted include uncooked fruit and vegetable waste, tea bags and coffee grounds,

egg shells and cardboard egg boxes, small amounts of paper and cardboard, grass cuttings, hedge and shrub clippings, old plants and flowers.

Discounted compost bins are also available to all Vale residents priced from just £10. Please call 01884 841 515 for details or see the composting pages on the council website.



Llantwit Major resident Pat Cooper has collected her free compost bin from the council.

What a huge difference

Christmas trees

As in previous years, all Christmas trees collected have been put to good use locally. Over 15,000 trees, up again from 2006, have been composted this year.

It's down to you

Our recycling rates are continuing to improve and that's all down to you – thank you!

We collected an additional 200 tonnes of waste for recycling over Christmas compared with the same time last year. This is equivalent in weight to saving 200 family cars from being buried in landfill and demonstrates what a huge difference we can all make by using local recycling services.

At Easter, thousands of chocolate eggs will be eaten in the Vale and residents are reminded that they can recycle the cardboard and plastic packaging using the council's free kerbside recycling service.

Top tip - If you haven't bought your eggs yet you may want to consider more environmentally-friendly options with less packaging, such as big bars of

chocolate and foil wrapped chocolate bunnies.

Foil – Our recycling contractor will not accept foil so please do not put this out with your cans. You can recycle clean foil in the banks at the following sites: Morrisons Car Park (opposite Halfords), Tesco, Waitrose, and Llandow and Sully Household Recycling Centres.

Sorry but they're gone!

Thanks to the overwhelming support of residents for our kerbside recycling service, we have run out of recycling boxes. Some 70,000 recycling boxes have been distributed since the start of the recycling scheme in 2003.

We are currently reviewing our recycling service and will not be replacing the boxes at the moment. However, residents can still use the service by placing recycling in plastic bags which are then recycled. We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

Please remember - do not place your recycling out in black bags as these are for refuse only and will not be collected by our recycling crew.



News in brief

Alex wins the award

Alex Daw, who has helped children cross the busy Ham Lane East outside Llantwit Major Comprehensive School and Llanilltud Fawr Primary School for nearly five years, has won the council's School Crossing Patrol of the Year Award.



Cllr Chris Williams with top 'lollipop' Alex Daw

Alex was a 'deserved winner,' said Cllr Chris Williams, cabinet member for planning and transportation, who hosted an annual awards ceremony that recognises the continuing high standards achieved by "lollipop ladies and gentlemen."

Alex said: "This was a lovely surprise. The children make the job enjoyable and I love doing it."

If anyone is interested in becoming a school crossing patrol officer, there are current vacancies in Barry, Penarth, Llantwit Major and Cowbridge. The rate of pay is £6.08 per hour, with a half pay retainer during school holidays.

For further information, please contact Karen Stokes in the council road safety unit on 01446 704775.

Easter collections

Residents are reminded that rubbish and recycling will be collected as normal on Good Friday and Easter Monday. Please ensure your waste is placed out by 7am on your collection day.

'Smart' way for you to travel

During the spring and early summer, new 'smart cards' are being issued to existing holders of free concessionary bus passes.

The move will improve accountability for repayment to local operators, and the new-style cards will be scanned by an electronic reader when the holder boards the bus.

Existing cardholders will automatically be sent replacement cards, and there is no need to contact the council.

If you are a resident within the Vale, aged over 60 years or have a disability covered by the scheme, but have not yet applied for a free concessionary bus pass, you can apply by telephoning 01446 709224 to request an application form. Forms can also be collected in person from the Civic Offices, Barry, and are available online at www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk under Public Transport, Concessions.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFORMATION

• TRAVELINE CYMRU – For information on all local bus, coach and rail services throughout Wales; telephone 0871 200 22 33; website www.traveline.info; text specific bus stop codes to 84268

LOCAL BUS SERVICE OPERATORS (for all timetable enquiries, telephone Traveline on 0871 200 22 33)

- Cardiff Bus – customer relations 029 20 666444; website www.cardiffbus.com
- Easyway – customer relations 01656 655655
- EST Bus Ltd & Cartel Travel Ltd – customer relations 01446 773333; website www.estcoachbus.com
- First Cymru Buses Ltd – customer relations 01792 572255; website www.first-group.com

• Veolia Transport Cymru – customer relations 01443 215105 ; website www.veolia-transport.co.uk

• Caring Coaches – customer relations 01446 736295 or 421117

RAIL SERVICES

National Rail Enquiries – For information on all rail services throughout the UK telephone 0845 7484950; website: www.nationalrail.co.uk

Arriva Trains Wales – customer relations – 0845 6061660; assistance for the disabled – 0845 3003005; website: www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk

VALE COUNCIL

- Public transport – supported local bus Services – 01446 704687 or 704637
- School transport – mainstream – 01446 704687 or 704664; special needs – 01446 709114
- Bus shelters – maintenance and cleansing – 029 2067 3000
- Concessionary bus passes – free concessionary bus pass applications for persons aged 60 plus and persons with certain disabilities – 01446 709224 or pick up an application form from the Civic Offices, Barry.

Website: www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Public Transport Guide

The council's public transportation unit produce a biannual public transport guide, which is available free of charge from council offices, public libraries and some post offices in rural areas. This booklet contains timetables for all local bus services and rail services



operating in the Vale at the time of publication. Copies of this booklet can be sent out automatically, as and when they are produced, on receipt of a written request. **Please complete the attached form and return it to the council's public transportation unit to receive future copies in the post.**

To the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Public Transportation Unit

Please include my contact details below on your database to receive future revised copies of the Vale of Glamorgan Public Transport Guide as and when they are produced. I understand that every effort is taken to ensure the information contained within the booklet is correct but the council does not accept liability for any errors, inaccuracies or service alterations made after production.

Mr/Miss/Mrs/Ms:
 Forename:
 Surname:
 Address:

 Postcode:
 Signed:
 Dated:

• Return to: Planning and Transportation Policy, Vale of Glamorgan Council, Dock Offices, Subway Road, Barry Docks, CF63 4RT

 **traveline cymru**
 public transport info
 gwybodaeth cludiant
0871 200 22 33
www.traveline.info
 txt 84268

Changes to business rate liability of empty properties

New regulations (from 1 April) are being introduced by the Welsh Assembly Government to provide an incentive to bring empty business properties back into use.

The regulations will help increase the supply of premises available to let, thereby reducing business rents and improving competitiveness.

What will this mean for your business rates liability?

• if the empty property is described as a commercial premises, there will be a three-month exempt period followed by a 100 per cent charge. The exempt period commenced on

1 January, 2008

• if the empty property is described as Industrial premises, there will be a six-month exempt period followed by a 100 per cent charge. The exempt period commenced on 1 October, 2007.

(NB – an exempt period starts on the day the property was last vacated)

The proposed exemptions from the charge are:

- the initial three or six month exempt period;
- properties with a rateable value less than £2,200;
- listed buildings;
- properties whose occupation is prohibited, and

• empty properties where the ratepayer is either a charity or a community amateur sports club which will be exempt from empty property rates.

Can I ask that my property be removed from the Rating List?

As presently, it is for the valuation officer to decide if the property should be held in the rating list and the rateable value/description which is appropriate.

Information

- website: www.voa.gov.uk
- post: Valuation Office Agency, South Wales Group, Ty Rhodfa, Ty Glas Avenue, Llanishen, Cardiff CF14 5GR
- tel: 02920 806800
- email: southWalesgroup.vo@voa.gsi.gov.uk

gov.uk

• website: Business Rates on www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

The Non Domestic Rate Section can be contacted by:

- post: NNDR Section Finance Department, Civic Offices, Holton Road, Barry CF63 4RU
- tel: 01446 709299
- email: nndr@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

ValeWaves
We want to hear your views...

Contact 01466 709454 or email press@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk