

Protecting, Enhancing and Valuing the Environment

- as one of our greatest assets to ensure natural resources are sustainably maintained, enhanced and used now and into the future

Why is this an area of focus for the PSB?

Engagement undertaken at a range of events used to inform the well-being assessment has highlighted that the local environment is hugely important to residents who value proximity to and access to the countryside/seaside and greenspaces. The environment was seen as one of the most important factors to good well-being by our residents and can be seen as the underpinning factor to the range of other issues that affect well-being.

The PSB recognised that as one of our greatest assets there is a need to take collective action to protect, enhance and value our environment for now and for future generations. Although the Vale's environment and position is one of the area's greatest assets challenges also exist with nine of the Vale LSOAs being within the 10% of most deprived LSOAs within the environment domain of the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation. This is the domain where the Vale has the most LSOAs in the 10% most deprived LSOAs in Wales.

The environment can be seen as a provider of services and some of these benefits are summarised below:

- Coasts and seas provide jobs, food and opportunities for recreation, energy generation and enjoyment of wildlife, landscape and cultural heritage.
- Animals, plants and other organisms and their habitats play many functional roles in ecosystems and the processes which underpin food production, clean water and pollination.
- Woodland and trees help regulate our climate, provide income and jobs, store carbon, contribute to reducing flood and low river flow risk, safeguard soils, improve air quality, reduce noise and regulate pests and diseases.
- Outdoor recreation can make a significant contribution to physical health and mental well-being.
- Access to countryside, water and green space close to where people live is increasingly important, providing health, economic and social benefits.

Findings from the assessment

The well-being assessment identified that there are a wide range of environmental assets within the Vale of Glamorgan.

- 27 sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), The Severn Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA), RAMSAR and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) site, Dunraven Bay SAC and the adjoining Merthyr Mawr National Nature Reserve (NNR), part of the Kenfig SAC.
- 740 listed buildings over 100 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, 39 Conservation Areas, 18 areas included in the Register of Landscapes of Historic Parks and Gardens and 2 areas on the Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales.
- Nineteen parks, seven of which have green flag status which is a mark of excellence, demonstrating good amenities and community involvement in parks.

- Two Country Parks, Porthkerry Park on the outskirts of Barry and Cosmeston Lakes on the outskirts of Penarth. The parks offer over 200 hectares of woodlands, meadows and beaches.
- 10 Council run allotment sites (8 in Barry and 2 in the Western Vale) these can be used to grow vegetables or flowers and to keep hens.
- The Glamorgan Heritage Coast stretches for 14 miles, from Aberthaw to Porthcawl and provides opportunities for walkers and cyclists.
- Two recycling centres, one in Barry and one in Llandow. The Vale had one of the highest recycling rates in Wales in 2015/16.
- The Vale has a diverse range of beaches including the resort of Barry Island which has recently undergone significant regeneration and the more rugged attractions of Southerndown. Two Vale beaches have blue flag status and four have received seaside awards.

To help determine the areas of focus for the PSB we have considered the well-being assessment in detail at a number of PSB workshops, consulted on the four areas and undertaken a prioritisation matrix exercise. The exercise was undertaken to consider the findings of the assessment both in terms of the data/ research indicating a need and what our residents told us, alongside how tackling the issue would contribute towards achieving the well-being goals, whether there was a significant policy driver around the issue and whether the issue was one that required a collaborative approach from the PSB. Within the theme of the environment, access to greenspaces for recreation and issues relating to air quality and climate change were the areas that emerged from the matrix as being of the highest priority for residents in the Vale. Transport also emerged from the matrix although the PSB recognises that the Cardiff Capital City Region will look to deliver a range of transport related activity and the PSB has a key role to play in this regional approach. However some specific local action relating to active travel and our environment may need consideration.

Greenspaces – Recreation and Access

-  Access to the natural environment was consistently highlighted throughout the engagement campaign undertaken to inform the assessment as one of the most important factors for good well-being with residents recognising the wide range of benefits such as health benefits good access can provide.
-  Greenspace and trees can contribute to physical and mental well-being but are not always located close to the people who need them most with a particular lack of access found in the more deprived areas.
-  The area has a range of attractions for tourists that utilise the natural environment to improve the area's economic well-being including the Glamorgan Heritage Coast, the Wales Coast Path and well established seaside resorts; attractive Countryside and country parks; unique heritage timeline of historic features, ranging from pre-historic and roman remains to Norman castles and Celtic churches; a strong activity product on land and sea – golf, sea fishing, cycling, surfing and horse-riding; and a well established network of walking routes.
-  Woodlands cover only 8.2% of the county which is below the Wales average of 14%.

Climate Change

-  The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment highlights a number of key risks for Wales that have implications for the Vale of Glamorgan. These include, reductions in river flows and water availability in summers but also increases in flooding. Other risks include changes in coastal evolution, increases in the risk of pests and diseases and changes in soil conditions and biodiversity.
-  Potential rises in sea levels as a result of climate change may pose a threat to our coastal environment as well as towns and villages situated on the coast. Although the Vale of Glamorgan has a slightly lower than average percentage of properties at risk of flooding, when considering these properties by the level of risk, the percentage of properties at risk of flooding that are a high risk is higher in the Vale than the Welsh average.
-  Wales' ecological footprint is estimated at 10.05 million global hectares (gha), roughly 5 times the size of Wales, or 3.28 global hectares per capita (gha/c). The Vale of Glamorgan is within the top three local authorities in Wales with the highest ecological footprint along with Ceredigion and Powys.

Air Quality

-  Although air quality within the Vale of Glamorgan complies with regulations to protect human health and meets the relevant air quality objectives this will continue to be monitored as the Vale has one of the highest levels of man-made air pollution in Wales and is higher than the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish averages. This is estimated to contribute to approximately 50 deaths each year in the county. Air emission scores are much higher in the south and east of the county, including Barry, where population densities, traffic volumes and proximity to heavy industry are higher than in the more rural areas of the county. Higher levels of emissions within deprived areas can exacerbate already high levels of health inequality by increasing levels of respiratory disease and other illnesses.

Example links to our other areas of focus

- Our natural environment can provide opportunities for play and physical activity providing a range of well-being benefits to help give **young children and good start in life**.
- A high quality environment can help **tackle inequalities** by improving mental well-being in deprived areas and encouraging people to spend time outdoors and be physically active. The assessment highlighted that people from across all communities valued the environment although it is recognised that green space is often less accessible in deprived areas.
- **Engaging with our residents** can help educate people on the importance of protecting our environment and volunteering opportunities can include activities relating to maintaining a high quality environment for all to enjoy.

What our self-assessment told us?

PSB partners are undertaking a self-assessment exercise to consider each organisation's current position against each of the four areas of focus with regards to policy, leadership, activities, resources and impact. The aim is to help identify where we can work together more effectively, learn from best practice and identify where gaps and duplication may exist. The assessment can also be used as a baseline assessment to monitor progress during the course of the Well-being Plan alongside other performance management arrangements. For the environment theme in general partners scored themselves highly in relation to policy and activities although recognised that we could all do more than we currently do. There were low scores across the board in relation to impact and monitoring.