

CYNGOR CYMUNED TAWE UCHAF COMMUNITY COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2023 – MARCH 2024

Introduction	<p>Welcome to the third annual report of Tawe Uchaf Community Council. The Council is required by Welsh Government legislation through the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to prepare and publish an annual report. This report covers the financial year from April 2023 to March 2024.</p>												
The Council	<p>The Council has three electoral wards represented by 13 Councillors. Following Council elections in May 2022 the following councillors were elected or co-opted to serve as Councillors</p> <p>The Councillors in each ward are listed below;</p> <table border="0"><tr><td>Coelbren Ward</td><td>Penycae Ward</td></tr><tr><td>Stephen Davies (Chairman)</td><td>Ann Watkins</td></tr><tr><td>Arlene Jones</td><td>Alun Thomas</td></tr><tr><td>Auriol Graham</td><td>Sandra Clayton</td></tr><tr><td>Sandra Howard</td><td>Monique Craine</td></tr><tr><td>Geoffrey Woods</td><td>Vacancy</td></tr></table> <p>Caehopkin Ward</p> <p>Susan Pyart (Vice Chair) Huw Williams Gail Hopkins-Williams</p> <p>The Council employs a part-time Clerk Website: www.taweuchafcommunitycouncil.co.uk Email – taweuchaf@yahoo.co.uk</p>	Coelbren Ward	Penycae Ward	Stephen Davies (Chairman)	Ann Watkins	Arlene Jones	Alun Thomas	Auriol Graham	Sandra Clayton	Sandra Howard	Monique Craine	Geoffrey Woods	Vacancy
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The Community	<p>The Community of Tawe Uchaf is located at the top of the Swansea Valley within the County of Powys. The Community includes the villages of Coelbren, Caehopkin, Ynyswen and Penycae. The majority of residents reside in these villages. Part of the Community sits within the Brecon Beacons National Park. Tawe Uchaf is an area of outstanding natural beauty that includes major national tourist attractions, The National Show Caves of Wales, The Henrhyd Waterfall, The Craig y Nos Castle and Country Park. The Council area includes the villages of Coelbren, Caehopkin, Ynyswen, Penycae. The above attractions together with agriculture provide employment.</p> <p>To the South the Community sits within the geological boundary of the South Wales Coalfield. Coal Mining had been a major employer during the 20th century. The dominance of the coal industry as an employer has now ended and new employment opportunities will be required. Work has commenced on developing a Global Centre of Rail Excellence on the site of the Onllwyn Washery and the Nant Helen Opencast site. The Council has a delegate on the GCRE liaison committee.</p>												

<p>Council Objectives</p>	<p>The Council’s objective is to represent its residents effectively. Local Councillors are the first point of contact where local residents can raise their concerns. Any concerns raised are dealt with in a number of ways. The Council offers help and advice; The Council has a close working relationship with the local County Councillor, who attends Council meetings. The close working relationship means local concerns can be referred quickly to Powys County Council where and when required. The Ystradgynlais Police also attend Council meetings, as resources allow, to provide local updates and receive any local concerns requiring Police help and advice.</p> <p>The Council is open and transparent and is required to publish all public notices on the Council website including agendas, minutes, finance reports, audit notices and opinion provided by Audit Wales.</p> <p>The Council welcomes residents to observe Council meetings in person or over ZOOM from your home. To observe a Council meeting over ZOOM please contact the Clerk, who will send out a link to join.</p>
<p>Council Priorities</p>	<p>The key priorities of Tawe Uchaf Community Council are listed below;</p> <p>Represent the residents of Tawe Uchaf – partnership working with the local County Councillor</p> <p>Effective management of Council Finance and Budget complying with Governance and Audit requirements set by Audit Wales</p> <p>Improving communication with residents, using local social media groups;</p> <p>A Speed Indicator Device was purchased to deliver traffic calming solutions on the A4067 from Ynyswen to Craig y Nos and Cefnbyrle Road. The Council has received positive feedback from residents at Penycae. The intention is to relocate the SID between Penycae, Craig y Nos and Cefnbyrle. However, the recently installed 20mph zones may require the Council to review its intentions;</p> <p>Working in partnership with National Trust, PCC and BBNP on tourism and regeneration at Coelbren;</p> <p>Commenting on re-opening of rights of way and common land proposals at Mynydd y Drum and surrounding area.</p> <p>The Council has been included in the Paths to Prosperity scheme, being run by Powys County Council and The Rambler’s Association. A drop in session was held at Coelbren on 17th February. Councillors made representations to the drop in sessions highlighting the annual work of the Council on footpath maintenance and highlighting the areas of bio diversity in the Community. Councillors offered local knowledge on developing walks in the area.</p> <p>Maintain the Councillor training programme;</p>

	<p>To investigate, with village groups, the installation of Interpretive panels at strategic locations across the Community;</p> <p>To safely manage the three children’s playgrounds and land at Craig y Nos;</p> <p>To maintain the Community footpaths network;</p> <p>To comply with requirements set out in the Welsh Government Local Council Toolkit, including Councillor training;</p>
Well Being in Tawe Uchaf	Tawe Uchaf Community Council is committed to following the Wellbeing goals set by the Welsh Government of a prosperous, resilient, healthier, equal, cohesive, a vibrant culture and thriving welsh language and globally responsible;
	The seven well-being goals as set by the Welsh Government Act 2015 are set out below
A more prosperous Wales	Innovative, productive low carbon society, recognising the limits of the global environment and the use of resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change) and which develops a skilled and well educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through decent work
Prosperous Community	<p>The Council works in partnership with the local County Councillor. The partnership is a key component in a joined up approach from local Council to principal authority at a time when Local Authority budgets across Wales are under severe pressures.</p> <p>The Council supports inward investment initiatives with the potential to provide sustainable local employment opportunities;</p> <p>The Global Centre of Rail Excellence is being developed on the site of the former Onllwyn Washery and the Nant Helen Opencast site. The Council has a representative on the local liaison group</p> <p>The Council supports development initiatives by local tourism businesses</p> <p>The Council has a representative on the following bodies associated with safeguarding the environment and its communities and with managing tourism to maximise benefits to the communities.</p> <p>Waterfall Country Cymru Charitable Incorporated Organisation;</p> <p>Fforest Fawr Geopark Management Group</p> <p>Local representation, local consultation and knowledge has contributed to the development of a new temporary car park at Coelbren, to accommodate visitor traffic. The additional National Trust Car Park on their land opposite the Smithy, has encountered planning difficulties from comments submitted by Highways. The car park cannot be re-opened until vehicle splays are constructed. The responsibility for the work rests with the National Trust. The Council is trying to establish if progress is possible. Parking restrictions have also been included on local roads to reduce on road parking; The Council continues to monitor locally. Local residents of Coelbren are consulted to receive their views and ideas.</p>

	<p>The Council will support green energy generation initiatives; The Council comments responsibly and consistently on planning consultations from Powys County Council and Brecon Beacons National Park.</p> <p>The Council provides financial support for village halls and local village groups to maintain social fabric; together with financial assistance to local voluntary organisations and sport clubs to support local activities</p>
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A Resilient Wales	<p>A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change</p>
Resilient Community	<p>The Council continues to be, protective and caring of the rich bio-diversity in the Community. A Community Councillor is a member of The Brecknock Botany Recording Group and is able to help and advise the Council on biodiversity matters. Some rare plant species exist within the Community; To further protect the bio-diversity of the area the Council and County Councillor are maintaining a dialogue with Officers at Powys County discussing the mowing of verges on the cycle path to protect and avoid the mowing of wild flowers;</p> <p>The Council publishes a report, on it's website, under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Part 1 Section 6.</p> <p>The Council applies this knowledge in considering the impact on local bio-diversity when commenting on planning applications for developments in the Community;</p> <p>The end of coal production will impact employment in the Community; The Welsh Government proposal to create a Global Centre of Rail Excellence is in the early stages of development; The development will change the industrial landscape providing a change in employment opportunities;</p>

	<p>PCC has obtained a lottery grant, to create a project to improve community facilities in Coelbren. The project is called Paths to Prosperity. The project will look at improving the rights of way network and possibly linking rights of way with footpaths reopening across Mynydd y Drum. The project will compliment tourism strategies around to Henrhyd Falls to increase its benefits to the community. Local Councillors are involved and public comment will be invited;</p>
A Healthier Wales	<p>A society in which people’s physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood</p>
Healthier Community	<p>The closure of the local Health Centre at Coelbren has created difficulties in accessing healthcare; Healthcare facilities are located at Seven Sisters and Ystradgynlais. Maintaining local bus services is essential to access healthcare services;</p> <p>The Council promotes a healthy Community and provides local amenities to support this aim.</p> <p>The Council runs three children’s play parks located at Cefnbyrle Road, Coelbren at Caehopkin and Penycae.</p> <p>The Council undertakes regular safety inspections of the playgrounds; The playgrounds are also subject to annual inspections by RoSPA. The Council takes action on safety recommendations contained in the annual RoSPA report;</p> <p>A new slide was installed at Cefnbyrle Play park following adverse safety comments made by RoSPA on the suitability and safety of the old slide;</p> <p>There is an extensive Footpath network in the Community with walks to suit everyone. The Council actively maintains the local footpath networks, within Powys to provide access for exercise and enjoyment for local walkers and visitors; Footpaths within the Brecon Beacons National Park are maintained by the Park authority. The Council is involved in discussions on reopening rights of way over the former Nant Helen Opencast mine. A lottery funded project entitled Paths to Prosperity, run by Powys and The Ramblers will support this initiative. The Council works closely with the County Council Rights of Way staff where significant repair and maintenance is required.</p> <p>The national cycle route 43 runs through the Community and is well used and enjoyed by both walkers and cyclists;</p>

	<p>The Council provides defibrillators in the village of Coelbren, Caehopkin and Ynyswen. Local guardians undertake regular inspections of the defibrillator to ensure regular availability of the units; The Council provides replacement batteries and pads when required. The Council has contributed towards the cost of a defibrillator at Penycae and the Craig y Nos Country Park;</p> <p>The North and East of the Community falls within the boundary of the Brecon Beacons National Park. The Park provides a wide range of activities, easily accessible, such as hill walking, pony trekking, Country parks and the National Showcaves of Wales.</p> <p>The Council has purchased a Speed Indicator Device to reduce speeding on the A4067; The speed indicator device will also be used on Cefnbyrle Road; to improve road safety across the Community; The implementation of the 20mph speed limits may require a review on the use of the SID.</p>
A more equal Wales	<p>A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic circumstances)</p>
Community equality	<p>Connectivity to the main commercial centres is essential to residents in the Community. However, the closure of local banking services creates a further level of difficulty for residents. Effective public transport is essential. The Council supports the County Councillor with efforts to maintain local bus services to allow residents to access education, employment, commercial and health services located outside the Community;</p> <p>Digital connectivity in the remote areas of the Community is a problem. The roll out of provision by Openreach continues but may not reach all properties;</p> <p>The Council maintains the local footpath network for access to local people to use and enjoy.</p> <p>The Council is being consulted on Paths to Prosperity a lottery funded footpath project at Coelbren promoted by Powys County Council and The Ramblers.</p>
A Wales of Cohesive Communities	<p>Attractive, safe, viable and well-connected</p>
Cohesive Community	<p>The Community has a natural beauty with many attractive well known tourist attractions. In the spring and summer the Community welcomes visitors to the many beauty spots and National attractions. The National Showcaves, Henrhyd Waterfall and Craig y Nos Castle and Country Park are all located in the Community. Tourism helps to sustain local businesses. Maintaining sustainable public transport links in the Community are essential. A Traws Cymru service T6 runs through the Community on the Swansea to Brecon route.</p> <p>The availability of effective public transport is critical to the Community in maintaining links and access to services.</p> <p>The purchase of a speed indicator device has contributed to reducing the speed of traffic through villages on the A4067 improve public safety and the environment.</p>

	<p>The Council is improving its local communication strategy as required under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. All public notices relating to Council meetings are advertised on the Council Facebook page with a link to the Council website to view the documents. Minutes of the Council meetings are published on the Council website within seven days following the Council meeting. Public documents are also shared with local social media groups in the Community.</p>
A Wales of Vibrant Culture and thriving Welsh language	A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage, and Welsh Language and which encourages people to participate in the arts and sports and recreation
Vibrant Community	<p>The Council supports and encourages the use of the Welsh language; The Council provides financial support to local village halls and local voluntary groups such as local OAP groups, village action groups and sport clubs;</p> <p>Local groups meet on a weekly basis. Village Action Groups play an important role in the culture and heritage of the villages providing regular events and annual carnivals. Welsh Language education, at primary level, is provided at Ysgol Dyffryn y Glowyr at Cwmtwrch and a new Welsh stream at Ysgol y Cribarth at Abercrave. Both schools are outside of the Community.</p>
Globally responsible Wales	A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being
Responsible Community	<p>The Council is protective of the rich bio-diversity in the Community which includes many species of rare plants;</p> <p>The Council has taken ownership of an overgrown parcel of land at Craig y Nos and transformed it by clearing the land, planting trees and undertaking an on-going programme of regular ground maintenance</p>

<p>Community Environment</p>	<p>The Council is caring of its environment and is involved in campaigns and strategies to make Tawe Uchaf an attractive destination for visitors; An active Campaign for speed cameras on the A4067 to improve road safety, air quality and prevention of road traffic accidents.</p> <p>The Council had actively campaigned making representation to Powys Highways and the Assembly Members for the provision of speed cameras along the A4067 from Ynyswen to Craig y Nos. The Council campaign was based on road safety in villages and personal safety of people living in properties alongside the road; in addition, the nature and characteristics of the road had been explained in detail highlighting the many road junctions and dangerous bends and blind spots; There is a local speed watch group at Penycae.</p> <p>The Highway Authority could not support the Council's request. The Council has purchased a Speed Indicator Device (SID) for use at Penycae and other locations in the Community.</p> <p>The Welsh Government introduction of 20mph speed limits have been installed at Penycae, Ynyswen and Coelbren.</p> <p>The Council protects the rich bio-diversity in the Community including rare species of wild flowers; The Council is commenting to GCRE to protect the bio-diversity on Mynydd y Drum;</p> <p>The Council has restored land at Craig y Nos returning the land to its original beauty by planting trees and regularly mowing the grounds; Further improvement is envisaged when a complimentary ground clearance offered by a public utility company is completed.</p> <p>The Council in partnership with the local County Councillor was successful in obtaining funding to complete significant improvement work on the FP 1 (Bog Path) at Coelbren, including the protection of the local bio-diversity of the area; The Council is also trying to liaise with a neighbouring Council to continue improvements of this footpath across the County boundary;</p> <p>Fly tipping is a problem for all Communities;</p> <p>The Councillors monitor and report fly tipping occurrences within their Wards; The partnership with the local County Councillor is an advantage in resolving fly tipping problems wherever possible;</p>
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Finance	<p>The Council annual budget is approximately £40,000; The Council precept was £27,000.</p> <p>The Council prepares and approves a responsible and sustainable budget based on the following cost headings;</p> <p>Administration and office costs, payroll and insurance, website support, IT support, Annual Audit fees, GDPR</p> <p>Strimming and clearing Footpath's to maintain and provide clear access for users.</p> <p>Regular inspection of playgrounds including maintenance and mowing</p> <p>Donations to local village halls, local voluntary groups and sports clubs to maintain the social fabric and culture of the Community;</p> <p>The finance reports together with the Annual Return and Audit opinion are available to view on the Council website</p> <p>http://www.taweuchafcommunitycouncil.co.uk The Council received a clean audit report from Audit Wales for the 2022/23 financial year; Audit Wales had no matters to raise.</p> <p>The key expenditure under the budget headings are;</p> <table data-bbox="507 824 1029 1088"> <tr> <td>General Administration</td> <td>£16,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Councillor Training</td> <td>£1000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Footpath Maintenance</td> <td>£5000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Playgrounds, Land and Benches</td> <td>£3500</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Donations</td> <td>£6300</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Speed Indicator Device</td> <td>£3500</td> </tr> <tr> <td>VC Equipment</td> <td>£2000</td> </tr> </table>	General Administration	£16,000	Councillor Training	£1000	Footpath Maintenance	£5000	Playgrounds, Land and Benches	£3500	Donations	£6300	Speed Indicator Device	£3500	VC Equipment	£2000
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