

# **Caerphilly County Borough Council Draft Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019-2029 Consultation Report**

## **APPENDIX 4: Digest of written comments**

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## **C Mann, Councillor, Llanbradach and Leader of Plaid Cymru**

### **LEISURE AND RECREATION STRATEGY RESPONSE**

#### **Council Corporate priorities**

My comments refer mainly to Council Corporate priorities of Health and Regeneration and Wellbeing objectives, the healthy living agenda and how the strategy relates to this.

The closure of leisure facilities does nothing to encourage use. The availability of a centre within a reasonable distance of a person's home is obviously an encouragement to use the facilities

A particular concern is that swimming pools are under threat. In many areas swimming pools tend are provided by the public sector as they regarded as unviable by the private sector, especially in areas where incomes are low.

Swimming pools provide a vital resource for teaching children to acquire the very important life skill of being able to swim. Unfortunately many of our children would not get the opportunity apart, possibly, from a very limited amount of time via their school. A facility within reasonable distance of home obviously gives a better chance of children learning to swim

Another factor that must be considered is the lack of decent public transport and the ongoing threat to the transport services that do exist. People who need to travel east-west in the county face additional difficulties in many areas

I quote the Equalities statement – ‘People should have equal access to all the services available, also equal benefit from the facilities “or do not lose out in more severe ways”. How is the council proposing to meet the Equalities obligation. There is a real danger that many people will be forced out on the grounds of affordability and accessibility

I recognise that the strategy mentions facilities being taken over by others. If this does happen it is obvious that the council, which I would suggest has

prime responsibility, should ensure that other organisations are given sufficient help to ensure that the facility has a viable future

What actual help will be offered to ensure that clubs are sustainable in the long term and achieve the stated aim of “Strong and sustainable sports clubs”? My information from talking to people running clubs is that suitable assistance is often not available (or doesn’t exist?) It is particularly important not to take away facilities until alternatives are properly established

I recognise that informal exercise, e.g walking, can be carried out by groups or individuals on a no-cost basis, although the use of our country parks was hit by the imposition of parking fees. You will recall that the income collected from these car parks fell well short of the target originally set. Every action has a consequence!

Another part of the strategy mentions maximising use of school halls, which I would not disagree with. I wonder how realistic it is to expect school halls to be used regularly. There is, in fact, a long track record of many halls not being used. Reasons given for this include affordability, concerns from within the schools about the public using premises ‘out of hours’ and practicalities such as opening and closing arrangements. How will these and other issues be overcome?

In conclusion I feel that the council must consider accessibility for residents, especially those with no access to private transport. Also not pricing out our residents by unaffordable fees

What is the cost/benefit analysis of the proposals? How likely is it that hoped for results will actually materialise or will our residents be left with diminished services?

If a range of issues are not met the strategy will fail and the authority will certainly not meet several of its Corporate priorities

Colin Mann

## H David AM for Caerphilly (Labour)

**Sent:** 02 August 2018 15:53

**Subject:** Our ref: HD/CH/020817-03: CCBC Sport and Active Recreation Strategy Consultation

Dear Christina,

This is my response to the much publicised consultation outlining the Local Authorities ten year Sport and Recreation Strategy 2019 - 2029. The consultation has generated debate within my constituency, particularly regarding the long - term use for leisure centres and the potential consequences of restructuring to just four strategic sites.

Firstly, I want to acknowledge the level of current provision in Caerphilly Borough. Caerphilly County Borough has the highest number of leisure centres of any Welsh local authority. In the draft strategy you say there are poor levels of health, particularly in some parts of the county. I believe health inequalities within a relatively deprived borough such as Caerphilly should be tackled by a local authority that is determined to provide higher than average levels of recreational opportunities. Therefore, it's been welcome that Caerphilly Council have maintained a high number of leisure centres to help mitigate poor health outcomes.

It's pleasing to see the number of direct debit memberships increasing by 3% between 2016/17. Continued year on year increases give reason for me to believe that officers and the political leadership of the Council have been successful in generating demand in leisure services, so the current strategy is clearly working. Satisfaction levels in the service are also noted in the consultation document. 85 per cent of people are satisfied with the sport, leisure, recreation and sports ground services. Also, customer satisfaction being 8 per cent higher in Caerphilly than the UK average is something to welcome.

In the Strategy, Purpose, Principles and Priorities section there is a commitment to deliver on Sport Wales's goals such as targeting inequalities and barriers to participation. Targeted intervention measures are fully supported and distance and accessibility to facilities in the Borough is clearly a key consideration. My constituency has a mix of differing socio-economic areas with pockets of long-term deprivation, as well as those with relative affluence. My concern would be if decisions were made to remove services away from areas of greatest need and the potential undoing of previous work to reduce health inequalities. I'm mindful that re-organisation of any Council services usually generates strong feelings in those communities who feel under threat from having such services removed.

It's clear that this review of Leisure Services has been brought forward by continued austerity measures being implemented by the U.K Government. The consultation document states;

"Despite our Leisure Centre subsidy being reduced by 500k over the last five years, it still demands 70% of the Sport and Leisure budget, affordability needs to be addressed".

Concerns over affordability is also explained in page four. 'Reducing budgets' is listed as one of four challenges, along with deterioration of buildings, poor health and increasing population and consumer demand. Further continued austerity measures imposed by the U.K Government look set

to influence local authorities in to making decisions they would not seek to implement otherwise. As a local Assembly Member I see the impacts of austerity on a daily basis.

Several of the proposals will have a specific impact on my constituents. There are three leisure centres that could face an uncertain future and one which will probably be improved. I would firstly like to make the case for Bedwas, Sue Noake and Heolddu.

Bedwas Leisure Centre is located close to Graig Y Rhacca, an estate regularly featured high in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. The sub ward is the 25th most deprived ward of 1909 in Wales. Should Bedwas Leisure Centre be closed then a relatively local resource will be removed from the area. The nearest leisure centre would be Caerphilly, some three to four miles away. Given Graig Y Rhacca already is an estate located outside of the Bedwas and Trethomas area, additional travel distances could, in my view, increase health inequalities in the area.

Given that the Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen area is a defined electoral ward in its own right, it would seem logical to retain service provision in this area. The population in this electoral ward is the largest in Caerphilly Borough. There's a proposal contained in the Band B 21st Century Schools programme to create Welsh Medium provision in Trethomas. It would seem likely that demand for this new school would support increased numbers visiting Bedwas Leisure Centre.

However, if it remains truly unworkable to keep Bedwas open then I would like some assurance that alternative community health and leisure venues would be supported. For example, would the council be able to liaise with nearby Bedwas Workmen's Hall to explore the provision of gym facilities? Are there other community resource centres such as that in Graig Y Rhacca that could support focused healthy living activities? Could this approach be extended across the borough where there are distances from leisure centre provision?

Sue Noake Leisure Centre is located in Ystrad Mynach, one of the five principal towns in Caerphilly Borough. Page 17 of the consultation states the following;

"5 Town Centres and population hubs should be the future focus of strategic provision".

Given that Ystrad Mynach is a well-recognised principal town in Caerphilly Borough, the good public transport links the town enjoys, and the above recommendation, it stands to reason that service provision at Sue Noake should be retained. It's also worth noting the relatively low public subsidy (£1.54 per visit) it takes.

Heolddu Leisure Centre is located at the very northern part of my constituency. It's located very close to the sub Ward, Bargoed 4, an area high area of deprivation. The Park Estate comprises a large part of this sub Ward and it's ranked 23 of 1909 in the Welsh area of multiple deprivation. The Leisure Centre is utilised by Heolddu school and I note the possibility for schools to take over the running of such facilities not considered a strategic site. However, I also note that the Bargoed and Aberbargoed area is considered a new strategic site so naturally, I would welcome the creation of a new build site in the Bargoed / Aberbargoed area.

Finally, Caerphilly Leisure Centre. Caerphilly Leisure Centre attracts the highest number of visitors a year (265,624 in 17/18) and attract the least subsidy (£0.87) per visit of any Leisure Centre. Under the council's criteria for strategic sites (250,000 visits and between £1 - £1.20 per visit) it qualifies in

its own right to become a strategic site. My own view is the current location has been proven to attract visitors and a new build or refurbishment on the current site would seem the most sensible option.

Can you please consider my views.

Yours sincerely,

Hefin

## **Inspector J White, Gwent Police**

**Sent:** 07 August 2018 09:22

**Subject:** RE: Sport and Active Recreation Strategy

Really good document. I may have missed it but I can't see anything in there relating to using sport and recreation as a diversionary activity for youths on the cusp of, or involved in criminal/ASB type activity or outreach work in areas effected by crime or ASB.

Thanks

Jason

## **Local business owner**

**Sent:** 30 July 2018 22:07

**To:** Sharma, Elizabeth

To who it may concern. I'm a business owner .... and recently opened another business in Caerphilly

.....could take over the leisure centre, we would put a large amount of investment into the project and bring it up to the standard that the public would require.

.....

If this is any interest to you then please could we arrange a conversation to see if there is any life in this prospective project,

Many regards

## **Morgan Jones Labour Councillors (J Pritchard; Ward Councillor; S Cook, Ward Councillor and S Hodder, Town Councillor)**

**Sent:** 09 August 2018 18:18

**Subject:** Sport and Active Recreation Strategy Consultation

Please see the below consultation response by Morgan Jones Ward Labour county and town councillors. We've considered the consultation in great detail and prior to finalising the response we asked local Labour members in the the Upper Rhymney Valley, Bargoed, Gilfach, Pontllanfraith and Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen Ward for their views. We've made some amendments to our response in light of the responses received.

We would like to send this on to you for any comments before we publicise our consultation response on Monday 13th August. We believe the response strikes the correct balance between delivering efficiency savings and maintaining services closer to the public.

Many thanks

Cllr Jamie Pritchard Cllr Shayne Cook Cllr Shelly Hodder

### **Sport and Active Recreation Strategy Consultation**

As the local Labour county and town councillors representing the Morgan Jones Ward, Caerphilly we would like to respond to the much publicised consultation outlining the Local Authorities ten year Sport and Recreation Strategy 2019 - 2029. Whilst it's inevitable that local residents in our ward have been exercised by the future of Caerphilly Leisure Centre, we feel our response should consider the whole Borough as this is a county - wide consultation. We will however make a specific recommendation for Caerphilly Leisure Centre later in this submission.

The lead up to this consultation provoked fierce debate, particularly regarding the long - term future for Leisure centres in the County Borough. The potential consequences of restructuring to just four strategic sites has led residents to become concerned about the future for their local centre. This consultation response will examine alternatives and mitigating measures that could be introduced to enhance leisure services across the Borough, whilst recognising the public need for facilities to remain close to home.

Firstly, we want to acknowledge the level of current provision in Caerphilly Borough. Caerphilly County Borough has the highest number of Leisure Centres of any Welsh Local Authority and officers and the political leadership of the Council are rightly praised for maintaining a high number of centres. We can also take heart from recent advances within Leisure Services. It's pleasing to see the number of direct debit memberships increasing by 3% between 2016/17. Continued Year on Year increases demonstrate successful leadership. The generation of demand in leisure services indicates the current strategy is clearly working. Satisfaction levels in the service is also noted in the consultation document. 85 per cent of people are satisfied with the sport, leisure, recreation and

sports ground services. Also, customer satisfaction being 8 per cent higher in Caerphilly than the UK average is something to welcome.

So, we might wonder if the strategy is working, then why fix it? It's clear that political decisions being made in London have affectively made officers consider a restructuring they probably would not have given a second thought to had the austerity measures from the U.K Conservative Government been curtailed years ago. We believe this review of Leisure Services has been brought forward by continued reductions to the Welsh Assembly block grant and subsequent cuts to local government. The consultation document is silent on the political realities of continued UK Government austerity and we feel it's necessary for the reputation of this Council to explain that proposed cuts to leisure services are not out of political will from this Council, but because of UK Government cuts.

The document states;

*"Despite our Leisure Centre subsidy being reduced by 500k over the last five years, it still demands 70% of the Sport and Leisure budget, affordability needs to be addressed".*

*"The Sport and Leisure Services estate across the whole of the authority is not sustainable in the long - term due to the cuts in revenue available to the Local Authority".*

Concerns over affordability is also explained in page four. 'Reducing budgets' is listed as one of four challenges, along with deterioration of buildings, poor health and increasing population and consumer demand. Further continued austerity measures imposed by the U.K Government look set to influence local authorities in to making decisions they would not seek to implement otherwise. We would recommend a much stronger emphasis on UK Government cuts to decision making within Leisure Services when responding to the consultation.

In the draft strategy it states there're poor levels of health, particularly in some parts of the county. This is something we recognise as local councillors and we would urge a continued emphasis on reducing health inequalities in Caerphilly Borough. We believe health inequalities within a relatively deprived Borough such as Caerphilly should be tackled by a Local Authority that's determined to provide higher than average levels of recreational opportunities. Therefore, it's welcome that Caerphilly Council have maintained a high number of Leisure Centre's to help mitigate poor health outcomes.

However, we're concerned that a reduction in the number of Leisure Centres could widen Health inequalities if users of earmarked closed sites are not able to access strategic sites. The Equalities Impact Assessment states the following;

*"Some existing facilities might close which may result in some users having longer travel time to facilities".*

The Equalities Impact Assessment pledges to 'take steps' to mitigate any negative impacts due to longer travel distances. Again, we will highlight some recommendations to counter negative impacts.

In your Strategy, Purpose, Principles and Priorities section there's a commitment to deliver Sport Wales' goals such as targeting inequalities and barriers to participation. Nobody would disagree with targeted intervention measures and a key consideration is clearly distance and accessibility to

facilities in the Borough. As previously mentioned, there're long - term pockets of deprivation in parts of the County Borough. We have concerns that some of the potential sites for closure are located within areas of poor health and income. We believe it's crucial that leisure facilities are retained as best as possible in areas of high deprivation to help reduce the gap between those communities and their more affluent neighbours.

We would now like to turn to specific sites and set out our views and recommendations. From the outset we would like to place on record our support for a new build of Caerphilly Leisure Centre on the current site. The electoral ward of Morgan Jones has seen the number of electors growing from 4931 to 5507 between 2012 and 2017. The 576 elector increase represents a growth of more than ten per cent in just five years. The adjoining wards of St James and St Martin's have also experienced growth, albeit on a lower scale. It's acknowledged in the consultation document that the south western part of Caerphilly is an area of potential population growth, so enhanced provision at the existing Caerphilly Leisure Centre site is clearly justified.

The Sub Ward of St James 3 is the most deprived ward in Wales and lies within catchment of this facility. Therefore, a new build in an alternative location would likely compromise visitor numbers from Lansbury Park, thus potentially increasing health inequalities. Morgan Jones 2 (predominantly Churchill Park) is ranked 220<sup>th</sup> most deprived sub ward of 1909. Again, if services were removed from the current site and placed further away, this could detrimentally impact on residents living in Churchill Park.

Caerphilly Leisure Centre attracts the highest number of visitors a year (265,624 in 17/18) and attracts the least subsidy (£0.87) per visit of any Leisure Centre. Under the council's criteria for strategic sites (250,000 visits and between £1 - £1.20 per visit) it qualifies in its own right to become a strategic site. Our own view is the current location has been proven to attract visitors and a new build or refurbishment on the current site would seem the most sensible option. A new build option was contained in a report to the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee in June 2018. Creating a new-build Leisure Centre in Caerphilly, with increased visitor numbers, would meet Objective 5 of the policy in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

There're a number of Leisure centres however that could face an uncertain future. We would therefore like to dedicate some time to outline our views on how services could be maintained and how support for services users could be best targeted.

Bedwas Leisure Centre is located close to Graig Y Rhacca, an estate regularly featured high in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. The sub ward is number 25 among 1909 in Wales. Should Bedwas Leisure Centre be closed then a relatively local resource will be removed from the area. The nearest leisure centre would be Caerphilly, some three to four miles away. Given Graig Yr Rhacca already is an estate located outside of the Bedwas and Trethomas area, additional travel distances could increase health inequalities in the area.

It must also be noted that the sub Ward BTM 2 is ranked in the top 15 per cent most deprived areas in Wales. This area is within walking distance of Bedwas Leisure Centre and would be detrimentally impacted by a closure. Given that the Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen area is a defined electoral ward in its own right, it would seem logical to retain service provision in this area. The population in

this electoral ward is the largest in Caerphilly Borough. There's a proposal contained in the Band B 21st Century Schools programme to create Welsh Medium provision in Trethomas. It would seem likely that demand for this new school would support increased numbers visiting Bedwas Leisure Centre.

Sue Noake Leisure Centre is located in Ystrad Mynach, one of the five principal towns in Caerphilly Borough. Page 17 of the consultation states the following:

*"5 Town Centres and population hubs should be the future focus of strategic provision".*

Given that Ystrad Mynach is a well-recognised principal town in Caerphilly Borough, the above recommendation and the good public transport links the town enjoys, it stands to reason that service provision at Sue Noake should be retained in some form. It's also worth noting the relatively low public subsidy (£1.54 per visit) it takes from the tax payer.

Heolddu Leisure Centre is located very close to the sub Ward, Bargoed 4, an area of high deprivation. The Park Estate comprises a large part of this sub Ward and its ranked 23 of 1909 in the Welsh Index of multiple deprivation. We note the commitment to pursuing a joint - use facility when facilities are on a school site. As this facility is on a school site we would assume discussions will be taking place. However, we also note that the Bargoed and Aberbargoed area is being considered to become a strategic site. Given the in - principle agreement for a new and improved strategic site in this area, we can see no problems with dedicating an improved facility in this location, but we would ask for clarity on where this particular site is located, and whether it forms part of a new – build school.

Our only observation is that no strategic site is earmarked for the upper Rhymney Valley. Its worth noting that Twyn Carno 1 (Rhymney) is the seventh most deprived sub ward in the whole of Wales. New Tredegar 3 (70) and Moriah 3 (62) will have services moved further away from them if New Tredegar Leisure Centre closes. We do have concerns that services are earmarked to be removed from the Upper Rhymney Valley and believe there may be unintended consequences if mitigation measures aren't administered to address distance and access problems that may arise.

Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre has courted much public attention over the last twelve months. The recent public consultation on the future of the Leisure Centre resulted in a strong response not to close the venue. A decision was taken at full Council in February 2018 to defer closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre, but like all Leisure Centres, Pontllanfraith is now being reviewed again. We believe it's important to carry public opinion with you when undertaking decisions. It should be noted in the Cabinet report on 13th December 2017 entitled 'The future of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre' made reference to the fact that 90 per cent of responders (299) to the consultation on closure said there were no alternative arrangements / facilities in place to meet their needs. Just 10 per cent (34) said there were.

It would seem that a decision to close the centre would leave local residents having to access services at either Newbridge or a new build in Bargoed / Aberbargoed. It's worth noting that the sub Ward Pontllanfraith 2 is the 309th deprived area of 1909 in Wales so those residents are likely to be suffering with lower than average income and health outcomes.

### Our Recommendations

These recommendations are designed to increase participation in leisure services for all residents living in the county. The recommendations address health and income problems and they seek to ensure a more equitable geographical spread. We believe the Council needs to be innovative and explore options with elected members following the consultation deadline.

- 1) A commitment that no changes will result in a poorer health outcomes for residents.
- 2) Subsidised monthly costs or additional support with travelling costs for users of any closed Leisure Centre to ensure users of that service are able to access a strategic site. This addresses the commitment to 'take steps' to mitigate any negative impacts due to longer travel distances.
- 3) The commitment to ensuring the continuation of services in some form at all shared school / leisure use facilities, including Bedwas Leisure Centre.
- 4) A facility of some kind to continue in the Upper Rhymney Valley in recognition of poorer health outcomes and access to services.
- 5) New build at existing Caerphilly Leisure Centre site.
- 6) A service to continue in some form at Sue Noake and Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre to ensure a fairer geographical spread of services in the mid and east of the County Borough.

## **PSB Natural Environment Action Area**



### **Consultation response to the Caerphilly CBC Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019-2029 on behalf of Caerphilly Public Service Board's Action Area: Protect and enhance the local natural environment**

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on Caerphilly CBC's Sport and Active Recreation Strategy.

We welcome the explicit links made to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the recognition of the vital role that the natural environment can play in underpinning opportunities for sport and active recreation for all.

We have some comments, which we hope will be taken into consideration as part of the consultation and the ongoing development/implementation of the Strategy.

#### **General comments:-**

While the Strategy contains explicit links to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act, we suggest that it would be beneficial to consider the links and synergies with Caerphilly PSB's Wellbeing Plan. Sport and active recreation is a 'part of a much bigger whole' – a thematic area that is intrinsically linked to health and well-being, social connections and cohesive communities, volunteering and active citizenship, culture, economic opportunity and the natural environment. As such, linking the Strategy more closely to the delivery of the Wellbeing Plan will embrace the wider context and opportunities, as well as helping to involve a broad spectrum of stakeholders. In particular, we feel that there are opportunities to tie into delivery through the Wellbeing Plan Action Areas (including, but not limited to, the Natural Environment, Volunteering and Good Health & Wellbeing).

It would be helpful for the Strategy to also link more closely to other key thematic areas - for example, Active Travel and Play. CCBC has statutory responsibilities for both topic areas and both are fundamentally linked to the provision of opportunities for sport and active recreation. While these topics are mentioned within the Strategy, we feel that there are significant opportunities to

work more closely together to develop a shared vision and joint delivery, particularly because active travel and play can offer opportunities for people to be physically active as part of their daily routine.

The Strategy recognises that Caerphilly's natural resources 'provide significant opportunities to increase activity levels'. This recognition is welcomed, as is the existing delivery of diverse outdoor sport and recreation activities within the county borough. We suggest that a key way to secure more sustainable future provision is to ensure that the direction of travel is the delivery of services and natural/built infrastructure that deliver multiple benefits. As an example, the provision of sport and active recreation in outdoor settings relies on the provision and maintenance of good quality green spaces. As well as enhancing health and well-being, these spaces deliver a multitude of benefits – climate regulation, improvements to air quality, flood resilience, biodiversity, pollination – for the investment made. The emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy for Caerphilly will provide a key opportunity to make these linkages.

Caerphilly's emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy will consider the provision and maintenance of green space within the county borough, as well as how and when people use the natural environment and how this use can be facilitated, encouraged and increased. Understanding the reasons why people do and don't access green spaces is key and an area of focus for the Natural Environment Action Area under Caerphilly PSB's Wellbeing Plan. Barriers include lack of knowledge, skills and self-confidence; lack of public transport and car-parking charges; anti-social behaviour and community safety within parks; the quality of the green space and how well it is maintained; as well as the 'physical activity offer'. We would be keen to work with CCBC's Sport & Leisure Services to find sustainable solutions to such barriers and realise the potential of Caerphilly's natural environment to increase physical activity levels for all.

While we acknowledge the pressure to build housing (including affordable housing) across the county borough, this can put impact on the provision of green space. There needs to be early consideration of usable leisure spaces at the planning stage of housing developments to ensure adequate communal green space is included. More dialogue and 'planning for real' type engagement with housing development, planning and communities could improve this provision on housing development schemes to enhance the wellbeing of residents.

We welcome the emphasis on involving people and communities and support a community-led approach. The skills, enthusiasm, ideas and time offered by volunteers and communities are one of the greatest assets to this thematic area. Community-led innovation and involvement will not only lead to better sport and active recreation delivery but will also deliver enhanced benefits, such as community cohesion. Community involvement is vital to finding the right solutions/delivery in each place.

We suggest that there could be a section of the Strategy which explains the synergies and opportunities linking to other key Strategies and Plans – for example the Local Development Plan (complementing the need to make provision for housing and economic growth), the Wellbeing Plan and the emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy.

We also suggest that it would be helpful for the Strategy to use more realistic images that resonate with the local area and local people, as this helps to offer a more achievable vision.

## **Other documents that may be of relevance when further developing the Strategy:**

Alternative funding models for parks and green spaces

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118111034/http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/paying-for-parks.pdf>

Public Health Wales and Sport Wales *Getting Wales Moving*

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/Getting%20Wales%20Moving%20V1.pdf>

Public Health Wales '*Best Buys for Increasing Physical Activity Levels*'

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/Physical%20Activity%20infographic.pdf>

## **Specific comments on the draft Strategy:-**

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Outcome:

- Look to use other buildings (example – church halls for exercise classes). There are lots of buildings that have spare capacity – need to look at the PSB Action Area on Asset Management. This will also help keep facilities local.

### Looking to the future:

- Also use Urban areas – walking group using the local town and surrounding area. Could be a ‘meet en route group’ to cover a variety of distances.
- Local gardening/ allotment groups – encourage people to get active and use the local green space in a way that interests them. (Incredible Edible – community project where people plant and manage an allotment area or fruit tree area and then share the rewards).

<https://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/>

### Facilities where physical activity can occur:

- Include green spaces - lots of local areas with enough space for physical activity
- Walking and cycling ‘active travel’ routes – can be used for a variety of physical activity, including jogging, running, walking, cycling, roller blading etc. Focus on these can help to make physical activity part of people’s daily routines and build healthy habits.
- Option for some leisure facilities to be managed privately and/or by ‘not for profit’ models. Removing the cost from the local authority, but still providing the facility to the local area.  
For example, <https://haloleisure.org.uk/info/about-halo>

### Outdoor Parks and Spaces:

- Although these are currently covered under bespoke, formally adopted plans and strategies, there is an opportunity for joint working. Services could work together to support the management/ maintenance of green space provision and use it to benefit their service aims.

- Way marking some areas would encourage local people to use the area. Also promoting how the area could be used, perhaps having a volunteer led walking group to encourage local people to get out and about in their local area.

What needs to be done:

- Outdoor Facilities – Develop a plan to enhance and maximise the impact of outdoor spaces, playing fields, parks and informal recreational spaces, where possible utilising investment resulting from planning gain – link with the PSB Action Areas for Natural Environment, Health & Wellbeing and Volunteering, plus the PSB Enabling Theme on Asset Management.
- Identify buildings that could be used for sport and recreation activities. Share assets to reduce costs.
- Link with planning. The LDP contains policies to ensure the protection and provision of leisure and open space.
- Work with schools and encourage them to use and help look after their local area and green spaces. Link to the local community and parents through the school.
- Work with volunteer-led groups to engage with all age groups, including older people to ensure they keep active. Schools could support intergenerational work.
- Gwent-wide approach – link with PSB Partners across the region. Who do we need to work with and include, what benefit will it have for everyone (highlight this in advance) – think of 5 ways of working under Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act. Could organisations/businesses provide facilities for sport and active recreation? Can they improve on this and/or give employees some time to do this?
- Link to the Council's Regeneration Strategy '*A Foundation for Success*' and its associated Masterplans.

Lastly, we feel that the aims of Caerphilly PSB's Action Area 'Protect and enhance the local natural environment' are consistent with the broad vision and aims of this draft Strategy. As such, we would very much welcome the opportunity to work more closely together as the Strategy progresses and moves into delivery planning.

**Helen Fletcher, Lead Officer - on behalf of the network of stakeholders for Caerphilly PSB Action Area 'Protect and enhance the local natural environment'**

## Public Services Board

### **Transcript of PSB Members' comments on the presentation of the Caerphilly County borough Sport and Active Recreation Strategy Consultation – 11<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

Robert Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community & Leisure Services and Jeffrey Reynolds, Sport & Leisure Facilities Manager showed a short promotional video and gave a PowerPoint presentation before inviting the PSB Members to comment. The following comments were made.

#### Mererid Bowley, Public Health Wales, Aneurin Bevan Public Health Team

MB noted that it was good that reference to “active” recreation was made. She referred to the health inequalities and the 19 year difference in life expectancy across the borough. She noted it was important to get young people active but possibly equally as important for those in their 40s and 50s to delay the onset of ill health to enable people to enjoy the benefits of a healthy life in old age.

There was a 20 year history of partnership working to provide active leisure prescription schemes through exercise referral. The greatest health gain comes from people moving on the activity scale from 0-1, not from the most active becoming more active.

#### Martin Featherstone, Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations

He noted the recognition of the contribution of partners and recommended there needed to be follow up to the consultation i.e. the need to ensure local sports groups were sustainable, and there was access to funding to support them. He also suggested that there was a need to layer the strategy with the well-being plan to ensure that the contribution/connection to each was clear.

#### Cllr David Poole, Chair of the PSB, Leader CCBC

Cllr DP noted the quantity of emails received regarding the proposed reduction in leisure centres quoting the question raised “How can you get more people active if you are reducing facilities?”

*RH responded by explaining that most sport and active recreation was not conducted in CCBC facilities. Tired stock and old buildings with poorer offer were compromising the use of the facilities and the strategy proposed a fairer distribution as access was currently inequitable.*

*There was a need for something more attractive that families and children will want to use; modern, contemporary facilities in growing communities; facilities that people will see as destination venues in their own right. E.g. Caerphilly Leisure Centre was right next door to the most deprived community in Wales. This was a 10 year strategy and a long term programme. The fourth site was currently Heolddu and new facilities would be needed for that part of the county. There were hundreds of other sites such as parks and open spaces that the strategy aimed to encourage people to use.*

*JR added that there were currently 11 leisure centres, 38 local authority community centres plus those additional facilities managed by other groups. He commented that physical facilities do play a key and essential role but they are not the whole solution as there was a need to educate residents*

*more broadly about physical activity and the range of opportunities that exist within the county borough.*

Jon Goldsworthy, Natural Resources Wales

JG commented that it was good to see the wider remit of the Strategy and that it was not just about leisure centres. He noted the strong overlap with the Well-being Plan and was pleased to see the inclusion of green space and parks. NRW also had extensive green space in the county borough e.g. Cwmcarn. Currently they are mapping the green space in the county borough, which could help with the development of the Strategy as accessible green spaces have an important part to play in increasing activity levels.

Bleddyn Jones, South Wales Fire & Rescue

BJ asked if, as part of the process of developing the strategy, would they be reconsidering previous decisions made, i.e. the previous closure of the running track in Bargoed, as runners were having to travel outside of the county borough for facilities? Would they be replacing/reopening a running track?

*JR responded by explaining there were active running clubs in some centres and it would be about the changing landscape of need. Discussions were taking place re the Britannia Fields in Cefn Fforest but it was noted these work in the summer but there was a need for an all-weather track to meet the demand throughout the year. CH added that there was an opportunity through the strategy for a new facility serving the north of the borough which could link to the 21st<sup>h</sup> Century Schools programme and could include a track in these discussions.*

## **Resident 1**

Date: 11/09/2018 17:24 (GMT+00:00)

### **Subject: PROPOSED CLOSURES OF LEISURE FACILITIES**

I wish to raise concerns regarding the proposed closures of leisure facilities with the borough particularly Pontllanfraith and Cefn Fforest. As a disabled person who has been advised by the medical profession to use my local swimming pool facilities to continue with my physiotherapy needs I find it distressing that your proposals aim to close both my local swimming pools namely Cefn Fforest and Heolddu. Particularly in view that a large sum of money has recently been spent to reopen the facility at Cefn Fforest it now seems ludicrous to me that the local authority would consider closing this facility added to this I am aware that there is a waiting list at this pool for children wanting to learn to swim. As for Pontllanfraith Leisure centre why would you close this well used facility. Might I add as a disabled person I do not feel confident enough to drive any distance and all these facilities are within my driving range I would not feel comfortable driving myself to Newbridge or further afield.

Yours sincerely

## **Resident 2**

**Date:** 19 September 2018 19:34:17 BST

**Subject: Consultation of leisure centre strategy**

Dear Sir/Madam

Both my wife and I have attempted to fill in the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy Consultation twice and found it impossible to complete due to not having any leeway on the way we would like to present our answers.

So therefore for this reason we have decided not to complete the questionnaire. But, we do wish to make our views known; that is we do not want to see any of the leisure centres in the borough closed due to the vital role they play in encouraging healthy lifestyles for the Caerphilly residents.

My wife and I would greatly miss using Cefn Fforest swimming baths if it were closed, as we have been advised by our physiotherapist that swimming is beneficial for our health.

We hope that our views will be taken into consideration.

With regards

Resident

## Resident 3

**From:** Resident, Machen  
**Sent:** 19 September 2018 12:23  
**Subject:** Bedwas Leisure Centre

Further to our meeting at the Council Offices on Monday of this week I am writing to confirm my views on this facility.

1. I am not sure how many people in the Borough are aware of what might happen to the pool. A questionnaire and Strategy document were available at the Pool entrance but the Strategy Doc had to stay in situ. Both were not very visible and were not highlighted by notices at the window.
2. I am aware that there are folk living in the area – some having lived here for many years – that are not aware of a swimming facility in Bedwas. This would imply that the facility does not engage in marketing of any kind. Years ago when my children were young we were able to hold Swimming parties at Bedwas Pool and with the café also there we enjoyed many happy times. Now it seems the upstairs area remains unused. Why is this? Surely it would provide the much needed extra income that the Council require in order for the Pool to remain open. My point is that if it was marketed better by the management as a going concern instead of the ‘managed decline’ attitude which seems prevalent the future might seem brighter.
3. If the pool closes there are many schools in the area which would be affected. How will they all be able to use one central facility? A) there would not be available space in the day for all schools to use, B) the extra distance they would have to travel would take more precious time out of the school day.
4. Swimming is a life skill which we all need to have. It is good for our health and, more importantly, it could save our life. Children should be taught to swim within the school timetable because we know that there are many parents who would not normally take their children to a pool.
5. The Caerphilly Leisure Centre is not well placed for access by everyone. It is not on an easy bus route. It really needs a car and this might not be feasible for the elderly or poorer families.
6. I have access to swimming in this area using my OAP card for which I am grateful but I know that I and many of my friends would be happy to pay for swimming – or any swimming activity including Aqua Aerobics if it means our local pool at Bedwas can stay open.

I hope this will be used as supporting information for the proposal to keep Bedwas Pool open. Please can you pass this message on to the other councillors who need to gather comments. I don't know their email addresses.....

Kind regards

## **Resident 4**

Sent: 21 September 2018 10:27  
Subject: Bedwas Leisure Centre

With reference to our meeting on 17th September regarding the above I would like to add further comment. I have sight of the e mail sent to you ..... and also the response ..... I am resident in Machen and I use Bedwas swimming pool. I am in the older person category but points I make are relevant to all ages.

My understanding from the meeting is that a final decision regarding the Leisure centre is yet to be made. The prospect of the centre remaining open is not hopeful as the Local Authority is planning to focus on four centres in the County Borough, Caerphilly being the nearest. I am told that an approach has been made to Bedwas High School to take over the running of Leisure Centre but the school is not interested in doing so.

I believe that the closure of Bedwas Leisure Centre would be a detriment to the well being of residents in the area and also believe that closure would not be in the spirit of the Consultation document.

The SARS document states :

(page 5), it is the intention to "...support our residents to be more active more often". "To ...encourage physical activity through the provision of varied, attractive and accessible opportunities".  
(Page 10), " Supporting citizens to remain independent and improve their well being-helping keep people involved and active in their local community"  
(Page 11), ....'helping local Community clubs and groups to engage older adults...". "We will work with communities and local groups to support interventions that help keep older people active and involved in local communities".

Closure of Bedwas Leisure Centre will not achieve any of the above for the following reasons:

- 1) Accessibility -Caerphilly Leisure Centre is not directly accessible on a bus route and frequency of buses tails off after 6pm. There is also the extra money families and others will have to find for travel.This is a barrier for the elderly, families and persons with disabilities during daytime and evening.
- 2) I understand this is a 10 year plan. This makes it vital that the Centre remains open. Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen is an expanding area with a growing population and the need for the facility will be greater in the future. Swimming pool use can be enjoyed by all ages and indeed may be one of the few activities that an older person can physically achieve.
- 3) Bedwas Leisure Centre is described as "State of the Art" on the web page. Substantial improvements were undertaken a few years ago to the changing rooms. Cllr Reynolds in his e mail dated 20th September to Cllr Aldsworth sets out how well the Leisure centre performs by supporting clubs etc and that the centre is " a key provider to a number of primary schools...". So why the possibility of closure? I

believe that if Bedwas closes available pool time for all schools in the Caerphilly area will be at a premium and, possibly at the expense of other residents use. Closure would be a huge loss to the local community.

4) I understand that day time swimming and aerobic classes are very well attended at Caerphilly pool, so well that additional capacity may deter others from taking part, particularly the older person. Further I am told that no changing cubicles are available in the wet area at Caerphilly. Bedwas has 3 cubicles and a disabled changing room despite having a relatively small changing area.

It is appreciated that the net cost per user head is relatively high in Bedwas and provision is not statutory. However the Welsh Assembly contributes to some usage and there is an option for the Council to look into and introduce charges for use that is currently free and which is not met by the Assembly. I am concerned that the final decision is respected of all possible closures may be dictated by finance alone as other models have not been considered.

To summarise, I submit that there is a case for keeping Bedwas Leisure centre open because closure would mean a failure to meet the aims of the consultation document and will be detrimental to the well-being of current and future generations living in the Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen areas. Whilst I am writing this e mail as a member of the older generation I believe the above points put forward are equally applicable to all ages.

I would ask that you kindly forward this e mail to other relevant Councillors.  
Thankyou.

Regards

## **Resident 5**

9 September 2018

Dear Sirs,

Closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre & Cefn Fforest Baths/Leisure Centre

I am quite alarmed to find that once again Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre is being targeted by Caerphilly County Borough Council for closure, this centre is well used by old and young alike. My son and grandson use these facilities on a regular basis.

After attending a meeting at Cefn Fforest we now find that the Council intend closing the Leisure facilities here, it is an absolute disgrace when facilities are well used, especially the swimming pool.

What do the Council intend putting in the Blackwood/pontllanfraith/Cefn Fforest area, it was stated that new facilities are going to be built at obviously Caerphilly/Risca/Bargoed and Newbridge.

Wayne Gethin AM has stated on many occasions of the well being of the people of Wales and exercise is essential for old and young and especially the rate of obesity in our areas.

I have taken the time to read your "Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019/2029. It sounds good on paper.

Since the amalgamation with Caerphilly, Blackwood was a major town, now it seems we are being downgraded and are the poor relations. We have no park, very few play areas, it just seems that houses are being built with no facilities being included in the plans.

With regard to your recreation strategy consultation, there are questions I feel should not be included and I have left them off the form.

I wholeheartedly request that all members of the Council stop these closures and not leave our areas without such leisure facilities.

Yours faithfully

## **Resident 6**

Date: 05/09/2018 23:39 (GMT+00:00)

Subject: Leisure Centre Closures

Dear All,

Further to attending a public meeting at Cefn Fforest CC last night 5/9/18, I was pleased by the amount of support to keep Pontllanfraith and Cefn Fforest Leisure Centres open.

There were many excellent points made against the closures namely the authorities responsibilities to ensure all school children learn to swim, and that 15 schools use the facilities at Cefn Fforest, where could they go? a point was made that Newbridge wouldn't be able to fit all the schools into their already full schedule, the cost of extra travel transport to get them further afield. I have been present at early morning, lunchtime adult swims, and they have been busy to say the least, being an asthma sufferer I have been applauded by my doctors and healthcare support workers about my general health improvement since I started regular daily sessions.

Is the cost of a proposed building of a new LC in the Aberbargoed area really necessary? surely it would be more beneficial to upgrade the existing buildings to bring them up to standard and keep the communities alive.

The consultation form you have compiled for us to fill in and give our views is a diabolical way of trying to confuse and bamboozle the public,(It's a trick I have got used to, being an ex employee I have seen this kind of rhetoric used in order to bully us, and in most circumstances we had no choice whether or not to complete) many of the questions irrelevant, badly worded as that no single answer can be used. I thought it was very difficult to fill in, and many have decided not to do so because it's looks difficult. The general consensus was to try and fill in as much as possible, and to make plain that we need all the centres kept open

This meeting, hopefully is the first of many to form action groups and means to oppose any closures, and I hope Cabinet will eventually see to leave our LC's alone. Further action is being planned to oppose, and hopefully you will all realise that cutting the hearts out of our towns and villages is not the way forward.

## **Resident 7**

Date: 05/09/2018 23:26 (GMT+00:00)

Subject: Leisure Strategy

I attended a public meeting at Cefn Fforest Community on 5<sup>th</sup> September, where more than 130 members of the community came along to talk frankly about the 10-year Leisure strategy and the consultation process.

During this meeting many members of the public made known verbally to the county borough members at the meeting their dismay and concerns in regarding the closure of our public facilities in Cefn Fforest and the wider community with Pontllanfraith.

There was representation made from all parts of the community, from the Parents of pupils using the swimming pools for part of their curriculum to senior citizens clubs, groups general public and even those being referred to by their G.P.

To achieve the goal set out by Nofio Ysgol Framework "All children should be able to swim un-aided the distance of 25 meters fully clothed by the age of 11." As we are a deprived community some of these children only get the chance to do swimming with the schools. With there being 15 schools using Cefn Fforest at present there is no thought for them to be taught at another site as Newbridge already has 7 using their facilities and 15 using Heolddu.

Pontllanfraith serves the community with their 3G pitch, indoor hall that is used by various clubs, fitness suite and much more. To think that the schools can sub-let their pitches and halls out for public use is ridiculous. They already give block bookings to clubs in the Evenings and on weekends. What is the provision you have planned from 8:00 to 16:00? During the working hours of the school, there will not be any facilities available locally for the general public as school sites cannot be used due to safeguarding.

The Sport and active recreation strategy 2019-2029 you have listed that there is 5 Principle Towns, with Blackwood also being the second biggest Town in the borough, you are leaving it without any local Leisure Centre with Newbridge being the closest.

In the consultation questionnaire there is no question asking us if we would be willing to pay a higher premium for services, or any suggestions for a new business plan being formulated. At the moment the 3G and hall is charged as a single cost, instead you could charge per person per hour like other boroughs and like our tennis courts.

I have only touched on a small part of this consultation with many other concerns. Please will you oppose the Leisure Strategy at the cabinet meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> November until a better outcome can be reached.

Sincerely,

S Skivens, Councillor, Penyrheol (Plaid Cymru)

# **Sport and Active Recreation**

## **Strategy 2019-2029**

### **Observations S.J.Skivens**

*It is a well understood fact that CCBC and many other organisations are under huge pressure on their financial positions and future forecasting is difficult to ensure any degree of accuracy. However, that is the very time that careful consideration of cuts, degradation, development or cessation of services must be made. In fact, not to may have long lasting impacts on future arrangements and generations. Also, even if the financial position is alleviated it may not be possible to return back to the levels of service previously delivered.*

*Often, I hear casual and non-helpful comments such as non-statutory services are ok to be cut, or chop off low hanging fruit like sports centres, clubs and pastoral activity programs. Not only is such comment often ill-informed it is immature given the whole nature as to why we as a council exist and our fundamental function in supporting the people in our area.*

*It is encouraging to see the “Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019-2029” offered up for discussion. We need this debate and need to fully understand the benefits and costs of supporting such activities in our communities. Or fully appreciate the long-term fallout from not having such activities available and accessible with ease to our communities.*

*Just to indulge me for a moment to pay a mark of respect for our predecessors at various councils in this area who have developed a network of such activities. This was a dark and dirty industrialised area with few sporting or recreational facilities available to the general public. Public parks, community centres, cycle routes, footpaths, support to schools and clubs' sports activities, adult education programs etc have changed this place to a greener and healthy community.*

*I completely agree that in this area of our activity we must engage with partner organisations to ensure an ongoing initiative and in fact if the "Wellbeing of Future Generations, (Wales) Act 2015" is to be anything other than a mantra trotted out on a regular basis such engagement is paramount.*

*A question often raised is have we invested as a council in the said facilities as our population has grown and is changing in profile and the very demographic distribution across our area. So are the existing facilities fit for purpose and balanced to the population requirements and needs. It seems an impossible task to now meet the communities needs in all parts of the CCBC area and balance changes against a reducing budget. So, given the lack of investment and deterioration of the services is the only option now available in real terms to cutback and reduce.*

*Centralising service centres may appear logical on a spreadsheet. However, the locations must be accessible and be at the correct location for the planned developments in the whole area. An example in both industrial parks and healthcare facilities being identified as difficult to access via public transport is not good. Often hitting the poorest in the community or those with no access to private transport.*

*A strategy which relies on other organisations over a extended period of some 10 years is unreliable. If these clubs, bodies or organisations are not controlled or tied in via a support package or SLA and have their own agendas. They cannot be expected to offer services previously delivered by CCBC over such an extended period and subject to changes.*

*So, if we look at our community and what is impacting and may actually need addressing in this area of service delivery we can identify trends and some predictions.*

*\*Loneliness, (youth and elderly)*

*\*Obesity, (children and middle-aged)*

*\*Mental health issues, (youth)*

*\*Physical inactivity*

*\*Alzheimer's/Parkinson's*

*\*Substance abuse/reliance, (elderly)*

*\*Rural poverty*

*How does this strategy and partnership seek to address these issues?*

*In fact, these issues on top of attempting to assist the community to generally develop a healthy lifestyle is without the need of empirical studies a clear growth area.*

*Not addressing such pressures do have long term affects on Social Services, Health Care provisions and community support services.*

*In conclusion the costs involved in not addressing the pressures identified above may far out way over the lifetime of the individual the cost of well supported, timely and accessible facilities and*

*programs to grow a healthy satisfied individual in society. Often a skewed result may occur on a partner services and their budget forecasting into the future.*

*Finally, the whole debate appears to require to be turned on its head. Identify the real pressures, identify the level of services indicated or required. Look at existing facilities, discuss with partners and then build a strategy to deliver the services.*

*Perhaps the sport centre, community hall or activity program may be some of the most important services we provide to a community with short and long term, often lifetime needs and pressures to actually deliver the wellbeing of future generations.*

**Cllr S.J.Skivens**

## Sport Wales

**Sent:** 03 September 2018 15:54

**Subject:** Feedback on Caerphilly Strategy:

## Feedback on Caerphilly Strategy:

06 August 2018

### Positives:

- Really like the slide on page 18 – this shows the need for change so maybe needs to be up front & more prominent.
- WBFG.....good to recognise and link to.
- The strategy talks about the need for change and being bold which is great - but reads as a traditional strategy that doesn't really explain how you are going to be bold.

### Missing:

- The document doesn't reference
- the vision for sport in Wales
- Reference to CSAP and Gwent Regional Working

P13

Opportunity to highlight the sustainable future regional approach - CSAP

P24

Looking to the future.....Regionalisation

- Potentially missing links to other key strategies – Prosperity for All? - Could link to pg7 "Helping to deliver" ....
- Nothing in there on inspiring, supporting or mobilising the workforce or people to enable the shift in changes they are looking for – lots of focus on buildings (schools, community buildings, leisure centre)
- Talk about looking to the future but nothing on engaging future generations to see what they want and listening to what they want (although this might be the "how") fits with wellbeing and future generations stuff.
- Images - equality / Diverse - missing. Q - Has an equality impact assessment been done on it? Or will it be done?
- Limited mention in there about collaboration with Gwent partners, Coleg Gwent, Uni South Wales, Aneurin Bevan Health Board etc

### Suggestions/Considerations:

- Feeling it's trying to do too much & trying to include everything, There is so much in there – perhaps a 1 page of key messages would be useful or....

Maybe split into strategy and vision sections with key statements of intent with what success will look like e.g. Bring out the key statements such as commitment to strategic facilities, shared use of education facilities...etc

- P2 - Definition....needs to actually define....

Rationale.....maybe put some headline data about activity levels in here.. - Just a thought.

- There is lots in there which are great, working together, needs of the individual etc which are great to see, it would be useful to understand how you are going to achieve it e.g.
- What are you trying to achieve
- What is your role?
- What are you going to/ intend to be held accountable for?

P8 - WBFG - how will you work...ways of working - approach and behaviours

P7 - Also the wider and Broader strategic contribution to sport not just sport wales goals - maybe the vision could now fit in here plus you are Taking positive action to remove barriers to participation etc.

The goals of CSAP, working regionally and what benefits that has already brought could have been pulled out on page 7 – to support what you need to do locally in Caerphilly