



Young people enjoying the new skate park in Penyrheol's Aneurin Park

WHQS Environmental Improvements update

As part of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) Environmental Improvements programme, communities throughout the borough are continuing to be transformed.

The WHQS programme is funded via the main Housing Revenue Account, which comprises largely of tenants' rental income. There are strict regulations governing how this money is spent to make sure that it is used to benefit tenants and the areas in which they live. Over the past few years, the council has engaged with residents throughout the borough to find out what they would like to see improved in their areas. The council are committed to ensure tenants are placed at the heart of decision-making on what improvements are made to their local community.



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COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CYNGOR BURDEISTREF SIROL
CAERFFILI

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg, ac mewn ieithoedd a fformatau eraill ar gais.
This document is available in Welsh, and in other languages and formats on request.

A large number of our tenants said that they wanted to see improvements to outdoor play facilities throughout the borough. October saw the launch of a new skate park and outdoor gym in Penyrheol's Aneurin Park, along with improvements to the existing children's play area.

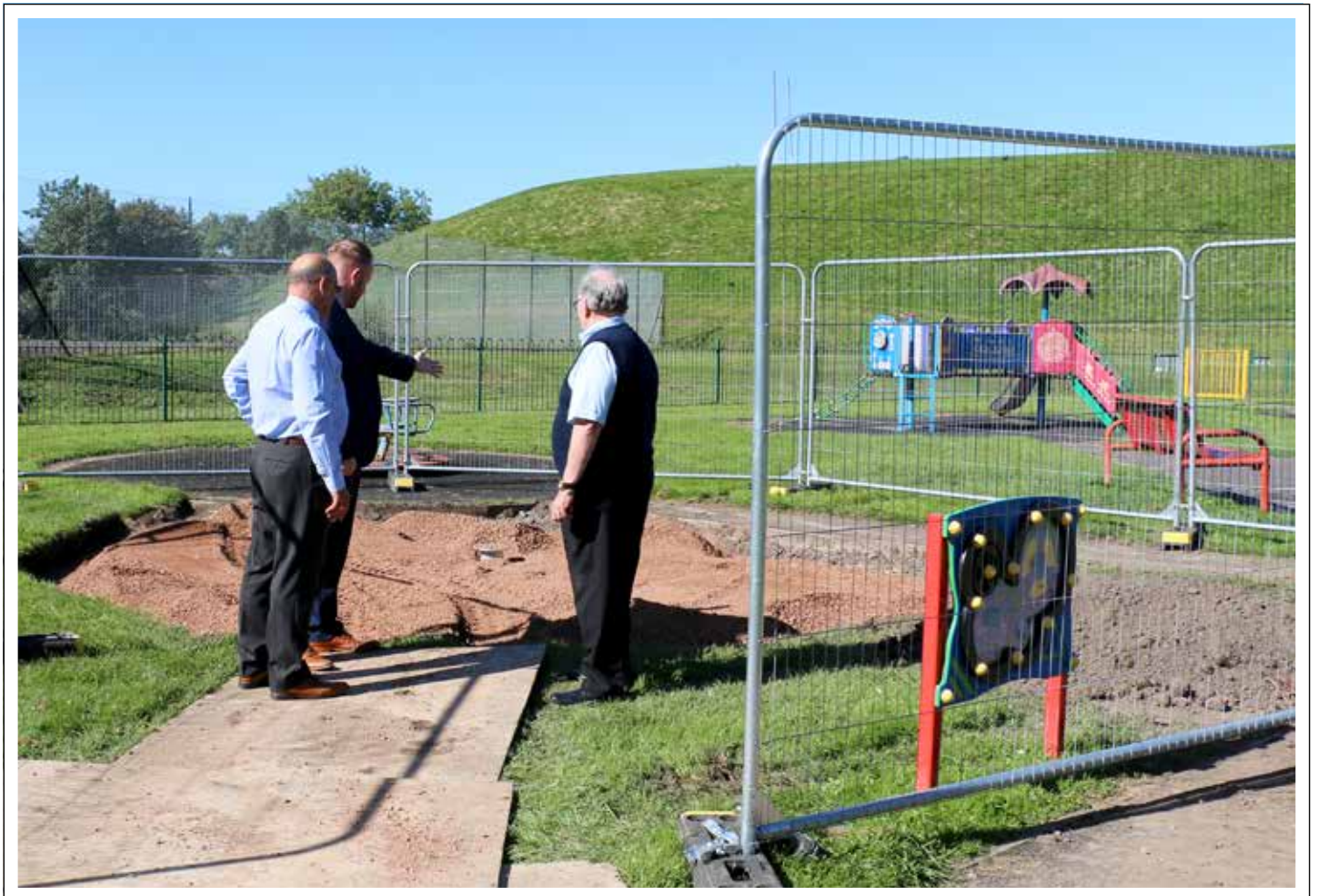
In the south of Caerphilly, it's not just Penyrheol that will see investment to play areas, but this month, the contract for upgrades to play parks in Lansbury Park, Trecenydd and Abertridwr has begun. This will see £130,000 of new outdoor play equipment delivered to these communities.

June saw a contract awarded to deliver £187,000 of new play equipment in the north of Caerphilly county borough. As part of this contract, upgrades to War Memorial Park in Rhymney are well underway, and

work to parks in Pontlottyn and Phillipstown will begin shortly. Aberbargoed, Fochriw and Gilfach Park Estate will also benefit from new play equipment, as well as the installation of new outdoor gyms.

There are many areas in the borough that still have ongoing consultations for you to have a chance to have your say. The consultations for Claude Road, Persondy, Westend, Oakdale and Risca are currently active, so get in touch to give your views.

In Bedwas, Maesycwmmmer, Markham and Cefn Fforest, the consultations are coming to an end, but if you have any proposals for these areas we still have time to review them, although you will need to contact our appointed team of WHQS Environmental Officers directly on 01443 864398 / 864002 / 864291.



Cllrs Carl Cuss, David Harse and John Bevan visiting the work being carried out to the children's play area in War Memorial Park, Rhymney.

WHQS – Community Benefits

Here at the council, we are committed to ensure that the £260 million investment into the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) improvement programme is used to deliver much wider benefits for tenants and local communities.



Members of the Over 50's club in Van Community Centre using their new chairs donated from Robert Price.

We work with suppliers and contractors who are helping to deliver our WHQS programme to make sure that the investment we make with them is also used to help local communities.

The past few months have seen a number of projects supported by our single source supply partner Robert Price Builders' Merchants and ENGIE, one of the contractors appointed to help deliver WHQS improvements.

Over the summer, Robert Price donated tools to year 10 school pupils from Blackwood Comprehensive School to enable them to plant an array of colourful flowers, that were donated by ENGIE, in Bloomfield Road, Blackwood. The tools were then kept by the school to use in future projects.

More recently, Robert Price donated brand new chairs to Caerphilly's over 50's group in Van Community Centre which are designed with arms specifically to aid those who struggle with mobility issues and wish to partake in meetings and activities held at the Centre.

Donations have also been made to Trevelyan Court Residents Group, including compost, shrubs, plants and bulbs and to Van Ward Allotments, where Robert Price supplied dash for the creation of a new accessible pathway. A number of other local benefits have also been delivered by ENGIE, including support for the council's annual food bank initiative and the donation of tools to support the development of a community tool bank in Risca.



Pupils from Blackwood Comprehensive School planting donated flowers.



To avoid any dangerous and expensive repercussions this winter, now is a good time to think about how to best prepare your home for the upcoming months ahead.

Keeping Warm

Staying warm during winter can be expensive. Here are some cost-effective tips to insulate your home against the cold properly this winter:

- **Use your curtains** – make the most of the heat from the sun. Keep your curtains open during the day to let the sunlight heat up the room. When it gets dark, shut them fully to retain warmth in your rooms.
- **Move your furniture** – although you may enjoy having your favourite chair in front of the radiator, it could be absorbing the heat that should be warming your home. You get the most out of your heat source if nothing is blocking it. It is also important to consider the negative effect on your heating bill if you use radiators to dry your clothes. A layer of clothes draped over a radiator will greatly reduce the radiator's efficiency in heating up the room - use a clothes horse instead.
- **Reflect the heat** – your radiators radiate heat both into the room, and into the wall behind it. Specialist foil reflectors can be installed behind the radiator to help prevent any heat that is lost into the wall by reflecting the heat back into the room.
- **Close internal doors** – heat rises so if a door is left open the heat can escape from the room into the hallway and landing areas.

Get ready for winter - Frozen condensate pipes

A condensate pipe carries condensation from modern gas condensing boilers to your outside drain. During prolonged spells of extremely cold weather condensation in the pipe may freeze, resulting in a blockage that will cause the boiler to switch off and prevent the supply of heating and hot water. Below is some guidance on what to do if this happens. This is only a guide - please do not attempt if conditions are bad or you don't feel competent to do so. Instead, call or email our Housing Repair Operations team on **01443 864886**/dlopbe@caerphilly.gov.uk or **01443 875500** outside office hours.

How to defrost the pipe?

1. Confirm the condensate pipe is frozen

If your boiler has broken down due to freezing of the condensate pipe, a fault code will usually be shown on your boiler's digital display or by some other alarm. On some occasions the boiler will make a gurgling noise.

2. Locate the blockage

It is likely that the pipe is frozen at its most exposed point or where there is some obstruction to the flow; this could be the open end of the pipe, or at a bend or elbow. Running your hands over the pipe until you find a section that feels colder than the rest should help you identify the blockage quickly.

3. Thaw the pipe

The pipe can be thawed by applying a hot water bottle, microwaveable heating pack, or cloths soaked in warm water to the exterior of the pipe close to the point of the blockage. Warm water can also be poured onto it from a watering can or other container - do not use boiling water. Do not attempt to thaw a condensate pipe which cannot be easily reached from ground level. Also be aware that any water used can freeze quickly on pathways, causing a slip hazard.

4. Restart your boiler

Once the frozen section has been melted and cleared, check your boiler manual for instructions on how to reset the boiler correctly. Your boiler should now restart. If you boiler doesn't restart you will need to call our Housing Repairs Operation team.

How to prevent the condensate pipe from freezing

If your condensate pipe isn't already insulated, wrap it in some old towels immediately to prevent it freezing again. During extreme weather conditions, even proper insulation may not be enough to prevent the condensate pipe from freezing. It may help to temporarily run your boiler with the boiler thermostat set as high as possible for as long as the cold spell lasts. If you continue to experience problems, it's best to call our Housing Repair Operations team for help.



Bus Pass Renewal

As of September, Transport for Wales have been working with councils across Wales to issue around 750,000 new-style Concessionary Travel Cards with the deadline set for the end of December 2019.



This will replace all current green coloured bus passes across Wales, though the same free travel rights and benefits will remain when the new cards are issued. Residents

are encouraged to apply for their new-style card in plenty of time to ensure they can continue to receive the benefits of concessionary travel. The current green 'bus passes' will not be recognised after **31 December 2019** on buses across Wales.

To apply, residents, or someone they trust, should visit www.tfw.wales/travelcards with the following information:

- Long digit card number printed on the front of your green bus pass.
- Your date of birth.
- The postcode your current card is registered to.
- Your national insurance number.

If you need any help with your application, call the support team on **0300 303 4240** or email: travelcards@tfw.wales

Caerphilly Homes Floating Support Service

Caerphilly Homes Floating Support is a free and flexible support service that helps you manage your affairs and live as independently as possible.

This service provides support to people accessing, maintaining and managing their own accommodation, while developing or maintaining the necessary skills to live as independently as possible.

Our Floating Support Officers are specially trained to provide help and advice to people in their own homes, whether this is on a short term or longer basis. A plan between you and the Officer will be drawn up to meet each individual's specific needs.

The service is available for any individual person over the age of 16 and across any tenure requiring housing related support.



To find out more about how we can help, contact our Caerphilly Homes Floating Support Team on **01443 811425 or by emailing: floatingsupport@caerphilly**

+ Periodic Electrical Testing -

Our Housing Repair Operations team is carrying out a programme of periodic electrical testing. This means testing the condition of the electrics in your home to ensure the safety of you and your family.

Electrical checks will be carried out every 5 years, or 10 years after a home has been rewired. You will receive a letter providing appointment details for the test to be carried out in your home. The test takes around 4 hours to complete. If the appointment isn't convenient you must contact us as soon as possible to reschedule; cancellations on the day will only be accepted in the case of emergencies.

Please make sure that you're at home for the appointment and that your electric meter is in credit. If you miss your appointment you may be recharged.



Preventing Condensation

Condensation is the most common cause of damp and the growth of mould.

It can occur at any time in the year but it is mainly prevalent during the winter months as more heating is used, windows are often firmly shut and clothes are dried inside.

You can help prevent condensation in your home by following these tips:

- **If you are drying clothes inside, it should be done in an enclosed room with the window kept open. If a tumble dryer is being used, then it is vital that the ventilation pipe runs outside of the house.**
- **Condensation is more likely to occur on external walls as they are colder, because of this furniture should be kept away.**
- **Windows should be open when showering, bathing or cooking so the hot air can escape. When a hob is being used, lids should be on all saucepans. Not only does this help to hold steam in, but it can save you money as the cooking time is shorter.**
- **Avoid drying clothes on radiators as this produces a lot of moisture in a short space of time.**

Keep Caerphilly tidy



The majority of our residents act responsibly when they take their dogs out – they clean up after them and keep them under control in public places. However, we do receive complaints that not all dog owners behave in this way.

It's not just about the mess being unsightly and a nuisance to pedestrians and other walkers, but dog waste can carry diseases which are harmful to humans and other animals.

Caerphilly council have introduced a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to ensure that owners pick up after their dogs and keep them under control with leads.

A person will have 14 days to pay the Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) of £100 or a discounted amount of £75 if paid within 7 days. Failure to pay the fixed penalty will result in prosecution.

To avoid this, residents are asked to obey signage in certain areas and are required to carry appropriate resources to deal with dog waste. It's easy: bag it and bin it. In our county borough we have designated dog poo bins, but we want to stress that any litter bin will do – it is much better to put dog waste in any litter bin than leave it on the floor.

Dog owners are not the only people who could receive an FPN, but anyone who is caught littering can. Dropping any kind of litter is an offence. If it is your litter, then it is your responsibility to dispose of it in the correct manner.

If you witness a dog owner who is not picking up after their dog or a litter issue of any kind where you live you can report it to us on the Caerphilly County Borough Council website or by calling the Waste Management Team on 01443 866533.

Update on the Housing Improvement Partnership (HIP)

The Housing Improvement Partnership (HIP) is a group of tenants who work with us to improve housing services. The HIP focuses on real experiences of tenants & leaseholders when they request and receive a service from Caerphilly Homes. We have recently reviewed our Floating Support service.

This is what you told us about Floating Support: You said . . .

“I want to know that you will be there to support me for as long as I need you.”

“Before you leave, I want you to make sure I understand what is happening next / what I might need to do.”

“I want you to let me know when you will be visiting me next.”

What we did . . .

We now complete an action plan when we visit. It tells you when your next appointment is, how we have helped you during the visit (e.g. PIP application, telephoned utility supplier), and what we will do next. It also lets you know what you might need to do before our next visit. This plan is left with you so you have your own record.



Would you be interested in being part of the HIP and help us to improve services?

HIP sessions are friendly, enjoyable, relaxed and have helped us to improve services for ALL tenants. We will support you if you need assistance to be involved and pay your transport costs.

For more information, please call the Tenant & Community Involvement Team on: 01443 811433/ 811434, text us on 07919 627530 or email: tenantinvolvement@caerphilly.gov.uk

Telecare



Telecare is a monitoring service that offers remote support to people who may be elderly, disabled or vulnerable. It provides users with an alarm unit, **EMERGENCY BUTTON pendant and **24/7** monitoring from expert teams. It can help people retain their independence and confidence at home.**

In February, we held a Tenant Information Exchange (TIE) where our Telecare specialists chatted to tenants about the benefits of this service. They provided lots of useful information, and showed how easy the equipment was to use.

After the TIE, we recruited some volunteers to take part in a pilot exercise to test some of the new telecare devices on the market. The Telecare Team wanted a thorough understanding of how they worked to determine which of these new devices would be best suited to meet service users' needs.

The pilot took place over the summer. Caerphilly council want to thank our tenant volunteers, we are really grateful for your help. The pilot has given the installation staff a really good insight into how we can use the equipment to successfully help our tenants in need.

If you would like to know more about Telecare and how it can help you please contact **01443 873663** or email **CaerphillyCareline@caerphilly.gov.uk**

RUNNING A BUSINESS FROM HOME

Many small businesses start from home - it can be a cost-effective way to get your venture off the ground. If you are thinking about starting one from your council home, you will need to contact your local housing office to ask for permission.

There are now more options than ever when it comes to starting a business from home, especially with the internet. Whether you enjoy baking or catering, or beauty therapy or fitness, working from home can provide you with a flexible and independent way of making money. It can provide full time parents opportunities that would not be available to them if they worked away from the home, and can even include their children, such as childminding.

To find out more about running a business from home you can contact our housing advice online or by phoning the team on **01443 873552**

