



**Risca welcomes
203 (Welsh) Field Hospital
for homecoming parade.**

See page 5 for details.

Budget plans approved

Caerphilly County Borough Council approved a series of budget proposals for the forthcoming year at a Special Meeting of Council recently (26th February).

Faced with unprecedented financial pressures, like local authorities right across Wales, Members approved a series of budget proposals which will see savings across the council for 2014/15 in excess of £14.2 million.

Cllr Keith Reynolds, Deputy Leader said, "There certainly

is no getting away from the fact that local government in Wales faces a period of severe austerity, however despite this, our budget remains wholly deliverable, efficient and manageable, and is keeping to an absolute minimum the impact of the severe cuts imposed by the UK government upon our residents."

The setting of the budget for 2014/15 and the budget proposals contained within it were agreed following a process of consultation with a range of audiences - including councillors as part of the Scrutiny and Cabinet functions, trade unions, tenants, partners and Caerphilly county borough residents.

Cllr Reynolds is keen to highlight that these views and concerns were taken into account in determining the budget.

He said, "Although they may not necessarily always be popular decisions, and there undoubtedly have been compromises made in order to ensure the financial pain is shared fairly, we have always sought throughout to minimise the impact that these cuts have upon our residents, local businesses and council staff."

"In the setting of this budget, every effort has been made to limit the saving requirements on the key services which directly support our core priorities, including reinforcing

our commitment to protecting the most vulnerable members of our communities."

Continues on page 2.



How does the council budget affect me?

Caerphilly council, like all local authorities across Wales, is faced with unprecedented financial challenges as a result of UK Government cuts. Last month councillors approved a series of budget proposals which will lead to savings in excess of **£14.2 million** in 2014/15.

Cllr Keith Reynolds, Deputy Leader said, "Residents and staff will be relieved that here in Caerphilly we have not seen the type of deep cuts that are being announced in other parts of Wales. We are managing this difficult process through effective financial planning and our commitment remains to protect services and protect jobs."

Here we look at some of the specific proposals which have been approved for 2014/15.

One of the lowest Council Tax rises in Wales

At the Special Meeting of Council, a **3.9% increase in Council Tax** was approved, which in monetary terms equates to just **69 pence per week increase for a Band D property** in Caerphilly county borough.

| Council Tax Band | Weekly Increase |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Band A | 46p |
| Band B | 54p |
| Band C | 61p |
| Band D | 69p |
| Band E | 84p |
| Band F | 99p |
| Band G | £1.15 |

The majority of homes in the county borough fall into Council Tax Bands A, B or C.

Cllr Reynolds commented, "Admittedly, this increase is higher than we would have liked, but it is important to note that it still makes Caerphilly's council tax increase among the lowest in Wales."

"We also continue to help to protect the most vulnerable through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which will mean that 15,000 homes across our county borough will pay no council tax, and a further 5,000 households will receive partial support."

Listening to YOUR views on savings

Before agreeing the budget, the council carried out a major public consultation exercise to gather views about the proposals. Almost 800 people had their say and this feedback was taken into account during the decision-making process.

Cllr Keith Reynolds said, "It was inevitable that some budget proposals were not going to be popular, but we have listened to feedback and made compromises, where appropriate, in order to ensure the financial pain is shared fairly. We have sought to minimise the impact these UK Government cuts have upon our residents, local businesses and council staff."

Some of the savings proposals withdrawn following consultation include:

- Retaining Voluntary Sector support to CAB and GAVO (£19,000).
- Increasing Meals on Wheels charge by 25p per meal instead of the originally proposed £1 increase per meal (£60,000).
- Increasing outdoor facilities charges by 10% instead of the originally proposed 20% (£10,000).
- Reducing weekend park cleansing (£10,000).
- Charging for replacement waste containers (£63,000).
- Charging for garden waste collection (£80,000).
- Closing Rhymney Civic Amenity site (£65,000).
- Charging to treat rat infestations (£19,000).

Cllr Reynolds continued, "We have had to make some difficult and controversial decisions, but I want to make it clear that we really have listened to feedback and have taken these views into account in determining a budget which minimises the impact on our residents."

However a number of savings proposals were agreed as part of the 2014/15 budget, some of which generated concern from community members following the consultation process.

These included:

- Closure of Caerphilly Leisure Centre cafeteria (£20,000 saving).

The only centre in the county borough to have such a facility, it is unprofitable and required the replacement of equipment in the region of £130,000. The space will be used to provide improved exercise facilities and a high quality vending machine will be installed in line with the facilities available at other leisure centres. In addition, the seating space will still be available at certain times of the week, for example as a viewing area for children's swimming lessons.

- Closure of 3 public conveniences at Nelson, Newbridge and Fleur De Lys (£24,000 savings).

While members recognise the importance of public conveniences within town centres, these three sites are the least used. The council, through the Welsh Government, operates a Public Convenience Grant Scheme, which encourages local businesses to make their toilet facilities available for free public use.

- Cease domestic support to people in receipt of Supporting People commissioned service only (£183,000 savings).

This will only affect residents receiving a cleaning service in isolation, and not as a wider package of care.

- Reduced provision of management grants to Bowls Clubs and ceasing financial contribution to Senghenydd Splash Pad (£10,000 savings).

While the grants to the four Bowls Clubs have been reduced, they have not been removed completely, and will now be administered on an equitable basis.

In terms of the Splash Pad, the council contribution has been removed but other funding sources can continue to be utilised by the community partnership.

The full report on Budget Proposals for 2014/15 can be found at www.caerphilly.gov.uk

NewsLine Savings agreed

In line with savings proposals across the council, members agreed to reduce the frequency NEWSLINE from six editions per year to four editions, which will generate savings in excess of **£25,000**.



Your next edition of NEWSLINE will be produced in June, with further regular editions published in September, December and March of each year.

Residents' Recycling Reminder

Residents are being encouraged to 'Co-operate - Don't contaminate' when it comes to their household recycling.

Caerphilly County Borough Council are sending out an A4 flyer, with detailed guidance of recyclable materials to residents across the county borough, and we've also included a handy 'cut out and keep' version of the guide (right) in this edition of Newline. A video detailing recycling best practice is also available on the council's YouTube channel (caerphillycbctv).

The recycling reminder comes as the Council tries new methods to increase recycling rates and reduce the amount of waste being sent to landfill. Although the Council has one of the best recycling rates of local authorities in Wales, every year the Council spends thousands of pounds removing household waste that has been incorrectly placed in the recycling bin. The Council has a responsibility to meet recycling targets set by the Welsh Government, and is subject to a £200 fine for every tonne of waste that exceeds this target and is sent to landfill.

As part of new efforts to improve recycling rates and cut down on contamination, properties that put out contaminated recycling for collection will see an advisory sticker placed on their bin and their waste will not be collected until the non-recyclable materials are removed.

Waste Advisory Wardens will be offering advice and support to help residents, writing to properties not complying with their recycling responsibilities and following up with house visits if no action is taken.

Persistent offenders could incur a £75 fixed penalty notice (reduced to £50 if paid within 14 days).

For more information about recycling and household waste recycling centres, please visit www.caerphilly.gov.uk or call 01443 866533.



What can I recycle?



| Paper | Plastic | Cans | Cardboard | Glass |
|-------|---------|------|-----------|-------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

If you have a brown bin for recycling - please place items loose in the bin and refrain from placing items in bags.

DO NOT place items listed below in your recycling container:

| | | | | |
|---------------|------------------|---------------------|------------|----------------------------------|
| Crisp packets | Textiles | Toys & hard plastic | Nappies | Animal excrement |
| Black bags | Electrical items | Garden waste | Food waste | Carrier bags & plastic film/wrap |

The following items can be taken to one of our household waste recycling centres:

| | | | |
|------------------|----------|-------------|--------------|
| small appliances | discs | scrap metal | plastics |
| batteries | tetrapak | textiles | garden waste |

Failure to recycle or placing inappropriate materials in your recycling container may result in prosecution.

recycle for Caerphilly

www.caerphilly.gov.uk
Tel: 01443 866533

Cut out and keep.

COOL! Caerphilly's oldest fridge is found!

The Caerphilly RDP Sustainable Energy Team have been on the hunt for the oldest fridge freezer in Caerphilly County Borough.

The winners of this brilliant competition were Diane and Phillip Creedy from Trethomas, who proudly own a retro, cool-looking G.E.C fridge, with a small freezer section, dating from the early 1950's.

The 60 year old fridge, previously owned by Eileen Williams, Diane's Aunt, was an object of amazement. Diane said, "I remember seeing the fridge as a toddler and being fascinated by opening the door and seeing the light come on. It was really exciting to be allowed to go to the fridge and take out the milk. Very few people had fridges at this time - they were seen as a status symbol, only owned by the well-off."

Fridges and freezers are on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and are among the highest energy consuming appliances in the home. Cllr Ken James, Cabinet Member Regeneration, Planning & Sustainable Development said "Residents may think they're saving money by holding onto an old appliance - but older models actually use more energy. Have a look at the rating on your fridge freezer and see if you could be saving energy and money."

Visit www.electrolux.co.uk to learn more about the latest energy efficient appliances.



Working to prevent flooding

As residents will be aware through the recent news reports, Britain has faced one of the wettest winters in over 200 years, and the worst flooding in decades.

The council's pro-active management and a positive investment in drainage and flood alleviation schemes has meant that, in comparison, the impact felt by Caerphilly county borough residents has been minimal.

To help ensure this continues, the council has set up a programme for the cleansing of gullies bi-annually and has set up an inspection/cleansing regime for its culverts and ditches that are deemed to cause the greatest risk to the public, properties and the highway.



These culverts and ditches are cleansed prior to any severe weather forecast so that the water stays underground or in ditches as they are designed to do, and not to affect other areas.

Some useful contacts numbers:

Natural Resources Wales:

General enquiries - tel: 0300 065 3000

(Monday - Friday 8am - 6pm)

Floodline: (24 hour service) -

tel: 0845 988 1188 / 0345 988 1188

Welsh Water: Sewerage enquiries tel: 0800 085 3968

Caerphilly County Borough Council:

Highway Customer Care - tel: 01495 236 511

(Monday - Thursday 8.30am - 5pm, Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm)

Emergency out of hours - tel: 01443 863445

Met Office: Weather update information

www.metoffice.gov.uk

Report underage sales

The council's Trading Standards department has a duty to enforce laws designed to protect the health and wellbeing of children and young people from harmful and damaging products.

The team is urging residents to help them enforce these laws by reporting instances of underage sales to them, so that targeted enforcement action can be taken.

Instances can include underage sales of:

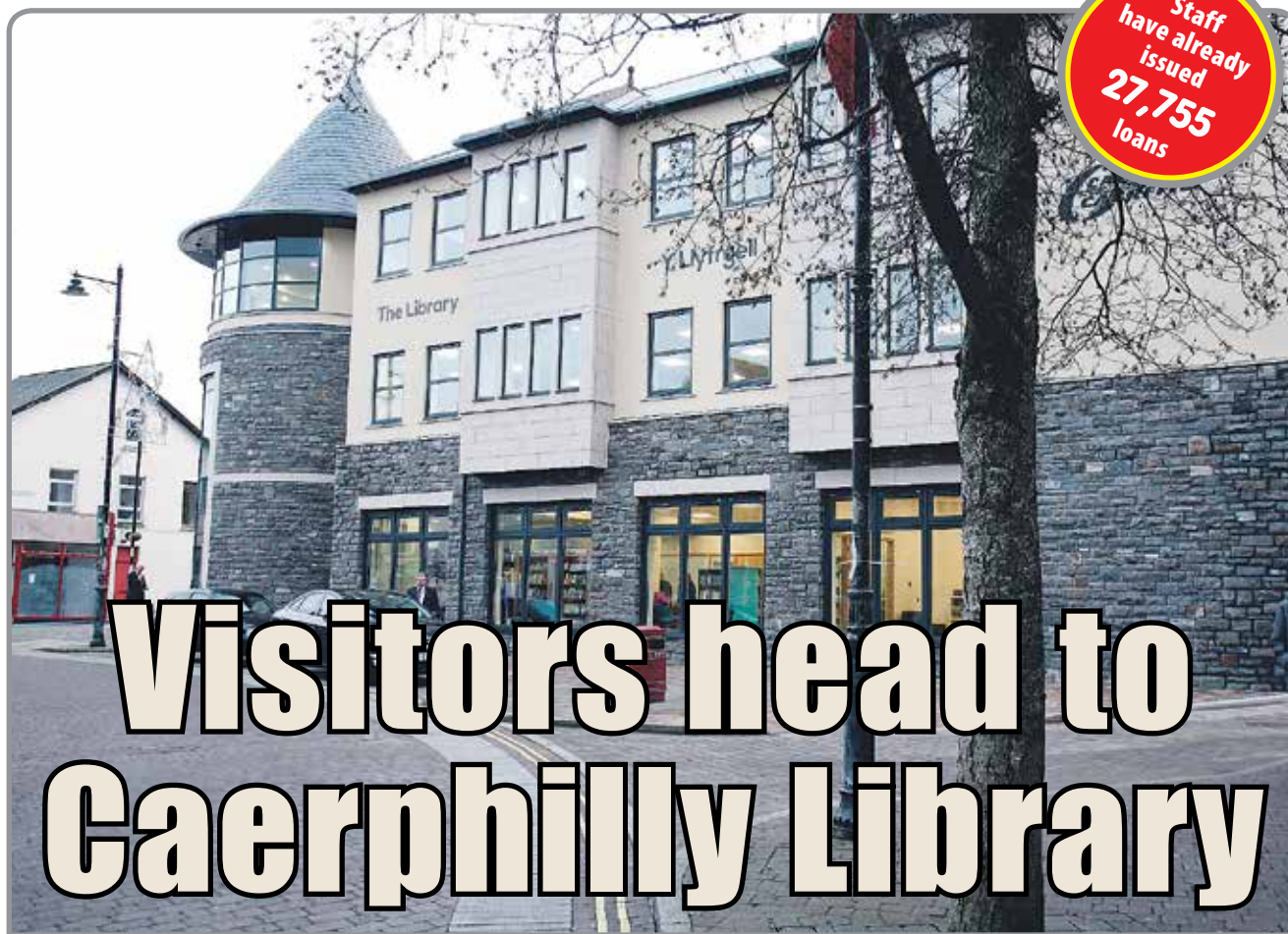
- Alcohol
- Cigarettes
- Solvents & butane lighter refills
- Fireworks
- Aerosol spray paints
- Knives
- Age restricted DVDs
- Petrol



If an age-restricted product is sold to an underage person, the retailer and the sales person can be guilty of a criminal offence. This applies even if the underage person claims they are buying the item for an adult.

Reports to the Trading Standards team will be handled confidentially. To report an issue, please contact the team on **01495 235 291** or email tradingstandards@caerphilly.gov.uk

Local traders who want to find out more about preventing underage sales can also contact the team on **01495 235 291**.



Visitors head to Caerphilly Library

More than 38,000 visitors have flocked to the new Caerphilly Library and Customer Service Centre since the building opened.

The new building, on The Twyn in Caerphilly town centre, houses a museum point, customer service payments and dedicated learning spaces.

In just two months a staggering 38,197 visitors have visited the facility and staff have already issued 27,755 loans, 12,339 of which have been to children and young people.

Cllr Rhianon Passmore, Caerphilly County Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Education & Lifelong Learning, said: "I'm thrilled to hear that so many people are visiting the new library and utilising the services available, and it's particularly pleasing to hear that issues of books and other media are so high. I'm sure this building will continue to be an asset for the community for many years to come."

The Library operates Monday to Friday, 9.30am - 6pm, closing at the slightly later time of 7pm on Wednesday, and Saturday 9.30am to 4pm.

The Customer Service provision is available Monday to Thursday 8.45am - 4.45pm, Friday 8.45am - 4.15pm and Saturday 9am - 1pm.



Risca gives medics a rousing welcome home

Thousands of residents and visitors lined the streets of Risca earlier this month to cheer the heroic medics of the 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital unit.

The squadron received a heroes' welcome as they marched through the town in an event to mark the unit's homecoming following a tour of duty in Afghanistan.

The unit, who are Caerphilly county borough's designated partners for the Armed Forces Community Covenant scheme, were welcomed to the town for a homecoming parade and medal presentation ceremony.

More than 100 Reserve soldiers, who work in hospitals and local health boards across Wales and beyond, took part in the ceremony.

Colonel Tina Donnelly TD DL CCMI, Commanding Officer for 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital said, "The parade was absolutely superb from our point of view. To come back from our tour of duty and have so many people turn out to support us was very special. When we were out in Afghanistan on operations we had a job to do. We've completed that job, and a ceremony like this has been the perfect closure."



For further information on the scheme, please visit www.caerphilly.gov.uk

Updates from Armed Forces partners



The Royal British Legion has recently launched a telephone helpline, which can offer advice and support on a wide range of topics including war pensions, benevolent/welfare help, benefits and money advice and information on independent living. The helpline number is **0808 802**

8080. Open 8am until 8pm, 7 days a week and calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks.

SSAFA are also looking to recruit volunteer caseworkers, to support the charity by calling on serving and ex service personnel and supporting them by filling in forms and contacting the relevant military charities to provide help as required. Training and an induction is provided. For further information, please contact Keith on **01633 246 269** (Mon, Wed, Fri 9.00am – 11.30am).



Heroes Welcome

Over 700 retailers across Caerphilly county borough also recently became the first in Wales to embrace a national initiative which promises to offer Armed Forces community members a warm welcome in shops and other retail outlets. The national initiative aims to provide a sustainable and simple vehicle to allow communities and organisations to express their quiet acknowledgement and gratitude to Armed Forces communities in a direct and positive manner.



The Big Spring Clean!

Residents, community groups and schools are being encouraged to grab their litter pickers, spades and wheelbarrows and join forces with Caerphilly County Borough Council for the Big Spring Clean 2014.

Now in its third year, the Big Spring Clean campaign is about showcasing and celebrating the county borough's stunning scenery and natural beauty. Last year, over 49 tonnes of litter and fly-tipped waste was collected during the 3-month long initiative.

Throughout the months of March, April and May this year, the council, in addition to the daily routine frontline maintenance and improvement works it carries out, is encouraging people to take pride in their local environment by getting involved in clean up projects, helping to make Caerphilly county borough an even cleaner and greener place.

Cllr David Poole said, "The Big Spring Clean is a great opportunity for residents, schools and community groups to celebrate all that our county borough has to offer, and also to work alongside us to make sure we all do our bit to ensure Caerphilly county borough remains a clean, green and pleasant place to live, work and visit."

Litter pickers and refuse sacks are available to residents and community groups wishing to get involved in the clean up. To register an interest in getting involved, please call **01443 873 758**.

The council can also arrange for the litter to be collected following the clean ups.



Safer Caerphilly County Borough
Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili Saffach

The film stars Gareth David Lloyd (Torchwood)

Drama highlights impact of drug misuse

A hard hitting drama, aimed at raising awareness of the dangers of synthetic drugs has been premiered recently.

The 60 minute film "The Good Drug Dealer" focuses on the impact of drugs including Mephedrone, also known as meow meow or MCAT, across the communities of Wales and the devastating impact that addiction can have on families and local communities.

The film stars Gareth David Lloyd (Torchwood) and Darren Evans (My Big Fat Diary) and is designed for use in PSE lessons in schools across Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent county boroughs to highlight the often devastating effects of synthetic drug addiction.

The project was part funded by the Safer Caerphilly Community Safety Partnership and was awarded £5,000 from the Gwent Police and

Crime Commissioner's Partnership Fund, which supports community led initiatives that aim to prevent crime and tackle anti-social behaviour throughout Gwent.

Cllr David Poole said, "I am full of praise for this excellent production, which will play a key role in helping to educate young people across both Caerphilly & Blaenau Gwent county borough's about the very real dangers and potentially devastating consequences associated with such substances."

Anyone concerned about the use of drugs should call DAN 24/7 for advice:

Freephone: 0808 808 2234

Facebook: DAN 24/7 Wales Drug & Alcohol Helpline

Text: DAN to 81066

Website: www.dan247.org.uk

Tenancy Support Officers provide a helping hand

The Council's team of Tenancy Support Officers have been out and about supporting Council tenants around the county borough.

One such tenant is Denise Wilkins of Gilfach, who had fallen into rent arrears as a result of under occupancy (bedroom tax) and a non-dependent charge for her son.

However, when friendly Tenancy Support Officers (TSOs) Sherell McLaughlan and Jo Thomas visited Denise and investigated her situation they discovered that she should not have been paying the non-dependant charge, which resulted in money being credited to her rent account and removed the arrears. The helpful TSO duo also informed Denise that she was eligible to claim an exemption from the removal of the spare room subsidy from April 2013, and she was awarded backdated housing benefit. The TSOs also saved Denise money on her water rates and offered her energy advice on her gas and electric bills.

Denise admitted that she had ignored the TSOs' previous attempts to help her, as she feared she was going to be moved to a smaller home or chased for rent arrears. But after reading in Newsline about a fellow tenant who received the support of the TSO team, she thought she'd give it a go herself – and she couldn't be happier that she did.

She explained: "The support has been fantastic. The TSO team have been so friendly and they couldn't have been anymore helpful.

"It's taken so much off my mind, because you do worry about it. My life is completely different – I can live a little bit now and I don't have to watch every single penny when I go shopping. It's made everything a lot better.

"I've told all my friends about the help I've received and encouraged them to get in touch too."

Council TSO Jo Thomas, added: "We are passionate about putting our tenants first and we want to get the message out there that our friendly, face-to-face advice and support is only a phone call away."

For more information about the Tenancy Support Officers please call **01495 235600**, or if you are a Council tenant text **RENTHelp** to **81400**. Other tenants and homeowners can also access support by calling **01443 864548** or texting **HOUSUPPORT** to **81400**.



■ Tenancy Support Officers Jo Thomas and Sherell McLaughlan chat to tenant Denise Wilkins.

Early birds catch the fitness bug

Customers at Caerphilly Leisure Centre can now power their day with an early morning workout thanks to new opening times!

Customers have praised the earlier opening times, which give them the chance to swim a length or two, train in the fitness suite or get involved in a class from 6:15am.

Gareth Hutcherson, 25, from Bedwas, is a Quantity Surveyor. He commented: "It is a lot easier to get exercise in before I start work now. I think the new opening times are great, they should have done this ages ago!"

Martin Duddridge, 65, from Senghenydd, uses the fitness suite almost every morning. He commented: "Being able to get an hour and a half of exercise this early really sets me up for the day."

Investment has also been made to purchase brand new static bikes for both Caerphilly and Risca Leisure Centres. These are being used for the new, very popular, group cycling classes.

Cllr Dave Poole, Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services, commented, "Where other authorities are cutting Sport and Leisure provision, Caerphilly County Borough Council are highlighting the importance we think leisure plays in improving our communities by investing time and money."

Do you accept the challenge?

The popular Caerphilly Challenge Series returns for 2014 on Saturday 10th May, with an exciting series of new walks starting and finishing at Rhymney Comprehensive School and walkers of all abilities are invited to join in.



The walks vary, from a 1 mile stroll along the banks of the Rhymney River to the Wild Boar challenge, a monstrous 22 mile walk – and everything in between!

Visitors can choose whether to take part in a led or self-led walk - the 1-5 mile "Let's Walk Challenge" is led and Ramblers Cymru are leading a 9 mile walk as part of the Challenge, while the Wild Boar Challenges are self-led and participants can run, jog or walk the 14 or 22 mile routes.

Entrants can sign up for the "Let's Walk Challenge" on the day for free but will need to sign up for the Ramblers Cymru and Wild Boar walks prior to 22nd April. These challenges are £10 per person. Under 18's receive a £2 discount, but younger participants must be over 12 years old and accompanied by an adult.

To book a place on the Caerphilly Challenge Series, visit www.caerphillychallengeseries.co.uk

For more information on the event visit the website or contact the Countryside Department on **01495 235092**

1-5 MILE • 9 MILE • 14 MILE • 22 MILE

A smarter way to save

Did you know that you can access a range of useful financial services through a local organisation called a Credit Union?

In the Caerphilly County Borough there are three Credit Unions:

■ BAG Credit Union Ltd

(covers Ystrad Mynach north into the Upper Rhymney Valley).

■ Islwyn Community Credit Union

(covers Islwyn area plus parts of Ystrad Mynach).

■ Smart Money Cymru

(covers whole area).

Once you become a member of a credit union you can access loans with competitive interest rates and join savings schemes. All the population that live or work within the Caerphilly county borough have access to the Credit Union service. To date there are over 7,000 members across the three organisations, but they are keen to get even more people involved. Credit Unions are financial co-operatives and there are also opportunities to help run the organisations as they rely heavily on voluntary support as well as full-time staff.



For more information please contact the following numbers:

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| BAG Credit Union Ltd | 01443 838605 |
| Islwyn Community Credit Union | 01495 222832 |
| Smartmoney Cymru | 02920 88 3751 |

Adult placement scheme changing lives

Since its launch in April 2012 The South East Wales Adult Placement 'Shared Lives' Scheme has made a huge difference to the lives of people across the region.

The South East Wales Adult Placement (SEWAP) 'Shared Lives' Scheme offers a service for vulnerable adults with adult placement carers living in their local area. The scheme offers long term, short term, respite, emergency and sessional support placements.

Among the many people to have already benefited from the flexible, person centred scheme are Jackie and John Mills.

Around a decade ago Jackie's husband John had a cardiac arrest that damaged his brain and left him with short-term memory loss. Initially John would visit residential homes, but his surroundings weren't really appropriate for his condition and his environment wasn't physically or mentally challenging. Jackie admitted respite care was a



■ Jackie Mills with husband John.

'big problem' for the couple. However, around a year ago, Jackie and John found a solution that worked for them in the form of the SEWAP 'Shared Lives' Scheme, which includes care for vulnerable adults. John now visits an adult placement carer, providing Jackie, who normally cares for John, with vital respite time.

She explained: "When John comes back from his stay with his carers it's obvious that during the day he has been doing things. Living in their home, he will do everyday things like take their dog for walks, go to the local pub for a meal or a drink, or perhaps go and do the shopping. All the little things that make his life more enjoyable - he seems a lot physically and mentally happier because of it.

"I'm getting much more of a break than I ever had over the last nine years because I'm happier with where John is going. It's been so good for us as the scheme is flexible. He gets what he needs and I get what I need. It's a win win situation."

The SEWAP 'Shared Lives' Scheme is managed by Caerphilly County Borough Council on behalf of six local authority areas: Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Newport, Monmouthshire, Torfaen and Merthyr Tydfil.

For more information contact: **01443 864586** or email: adultp@caerphilly.gov.uk

Safe Cycling

Recent improvements to the surface of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal - Crumlin Arm towpath has seen the number and type of user increase.

As a result, a 'Cycling Code' has been introduced for the use of the canal towpath, which is designed to raise awareness and improve the safety for cyclists and other users of the towpath.

Advice for users of the towpath includes:

- Slow down when approaching other users and be prepared to dismount or wait for people to get out of your way.
- Always have a bell fitted and use it when approaching other users.
- Be considerate to all other users of the towpath.
- Slow down when approaching bridges or barriers, especially when there is a blind bend and be prepared to stop.
- Be aware that occasionally the towpath crosses a road.
- Watch out for hazards on the towpath; allow anglers time to move their tackle before you try and pass.
- Wearing headphones is not recommended.
- Avoid cycling in large groups or having races with fellow cyclists.

GET... ON A MISSION!

Download the brilliant, free Mission Butterfly app for mobile phones. Turning a family walk at Aberbargoed Grasslands NNR into an incredible outdoor adventure game. Find it at www.your.caerphilly.gov.uk/countryside/media/apps

Experience the countryside in a new light with FREE Apps

Experience the county borough's countryside more interactively using the two new apps launched by the council's Countryside and Landscape Service.

Aberbargoed Grasslands National Nature Reserve (NNR) and the Upper Sirhowy Valley have been linked up to free apps that can be accessed on a smartphone.

Mission: Butterfly turns a walk at Aberbargoed Grasslands NNR into an incredible outdoor adventure game. The app, available to download in Android format, allows visitors to search for secret butterfly hotspots using GPS and camera functions on their smartphones and collect 11 hidden butterfly species!

Experience the historical region of the Upper Sirhowy Valley using the fascinating **Upper Sirhowy Historical Cycle Trail** app. The area is steeped in industrial history and this app, which can be downloaded in Android format, allows visitors to view historical photographs at different points along the former railway which is now a cycle trail and compare them to the modern view of the Valley. There are also 4 butterflies hidden along the cycle path in Markham - don't miss those secretive creatures either!

Both apps have been produced by [audiotrails.co.uk](http://www.audiotrails.co.uk) on behalf of Caerphilly County Borough Council's Countryside and Landscape Service. For more information, visit <http://your.caerphilly.gov.uk/countryside/media/apps>.

Same Sex Marriages

The first same sex weddings will take place in England and Wales from 29th March.

The Government is also working hard to ensure that couples who want to convert their civil partnerships into marriages - and married people wanting to change their legal gender while remaining married - are able to do so before the end of 2014.

Couples will be able to marry in a civil ceremony at register offices, hotels, stately homes, castles and other licensed venues, as now.

For couples who wish to have a religious same sex marriage, the church or other religious building will have to 'opt in'. Trustees or proprietors of religious buildings may 'opt in' to marriages for same sex couples providing they have the consent of their governing body.

For further advice, please contact the Superintendent Registrar on **01443 863 478** or email: registrars@caerphilly.gov.uk



