

Pwyllgor Rhanbarth Dwyrain De Cymru

Cofnodion SWERC(2) 01-06

Dyddiad: Dydd Gwener 17 Chwefror 2006

Amser: 10:00am tan 12:15pm

Lleoliad: Theatr a Neuadd Ddawns Cendl, Glynebwy

Aelodau:

Enw	Etholaeth
William Graham (Cadeirydd)	Dwyrain De Cymru
Rosemary Butler	Gorllewin Casnewydd
Jeff Cuthbert	Caerffili
Jocelyn Davies	Dwyrain De Cymru
Mike German	Dwyrain De Cymru
John Griffiths	Dwyrain Casnewydd
Laura Anne Jones	Dwyrain De Cymru
Peter Law	Blaenau Gwent
Huw Lewis	Merthyr Tudful a Rhymni
Lynne Neagle	Tor-faen

Cyflwynwyr:

Enw	Yn cynrychioli
Patrick Lewis	Rhaglen Blaenau'r Cymoedd, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Richard Crook	Safle Corus

David Rosser	CBI Cymru
Beverley Owen	Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Merthyr Tudful
Carey Lewis	Ffederasiwn Busnesau Bach yng Nghymru

Gwasanaeth y Pwyllgorau:

Claire Griffiths	Y Clerc
Leanne Hatcher	Swyddog Cymorth y Pwyllgor

Eitem 1: Croeso, cyflwyniadau ac ymddiheuriadau

1.1 Derbyniwyd ymddiheuriadau gan David Davies ac Irene James.

1.2 Croesawodd y Cadeirydd bawb i gyfarfod Pwyllgor Rhanbarth Dwyrain De Cymru.

1.3 Croesawodd Peter Law, Aelod Cynulliad lleol ac Aelod Seneddol, y cyfarfod i'w etholaeth.

Eitem 2: Cofnodion y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 11 Tachwedd 2005

2.1 Cytunwyd bod y cofnodion yn gywir.

Eitem 3: Strategaeth Blaenau'r Cymoedd - Rhagolygon Adfywio Economaidd

3.1 Dywedodd y Cadeirydd mai prif ddiben y cyfarfod oedd trafod Rhagolygon Adfywio Economaidd yn Rhanbarth Blaenau'r Cymoedd a chlywed barn pobl ar y pwnc hwn.

3.2 Cafwyd cyflwyniadau gan y bobl a'r sefydliadau a restrir uchod. Mae copi o'r cyflwyniadau yn Atodiad 1.

3.3 Mewn ymateb i gwestiynau gan Aelodau, nododd Patrick Lewis y pwyntiau canlynol:

O ran arian Ewrop, rydym yn gweithio gydag Adran Ewropeaidd y Cynulliad, WEFO, i geisio sicrhau mai ardal Blaenau'r Cymoedd yw un o'i phrif ardaloedd yn y dyfodol ac y caiff yr arian ei dargedu'n briodol.

O ran trefi a phentrefi, mae'n rhaid i ni werthfawrogi'r tai a'r adeiladau a sicrhau nad ydynt yn sefyll yn eu hunfan. Mae hyn yn allweddol ynghyd â rhoi bywyd newydd i fusnesau bach er mwyn helpu'r ddarpariaeth o dai.

Cynhelir trafodaethau i sicrhau bod rhywun o'r Undeb Llafur ar y tîm gan ei fod yn amlwg bod ganddynt ran i'w chwarae.

Mae yna gyfleoedd gwyh i annog pobl i ddychwelyd i'r gwaith, yn arbennig yn y diwydiant adeiladu.

O ran twristiaeth, rydym yn gweithio gyda busnesau bach a thrwy wella'r amgylchedd, ein nod yw annog mwy o bobl yn yr ardal i gymryd rhan mewn gweithgareddau hamdden. Llwyddodd Pwll Mawr ym Mlaenafon i ddenu 140,000 o ymwelwyr y llynedd ond mae angen i ni annog yr ymwelwyr hyn i aros dros nos. Mae rhywfaint o'r seilwaith yn bodoli eisoes ond mae angen gwneud rhagor o waith i sicrhau bod ymwelwyr yn aros dros nos.

O ran cronfeydd cydgyfeirio, byddwn yn ystyried barn y bobl sydd yma heddiw o ran pwysigrwydd Blaenau'r Cymoedd yn y rhaglen honno ac yn ymgyrchu dros hyn gymaint â phosibl.

O ran treftadaeth, dyma fan cychwyn y byd modern, ond yn ogystal â diogelu'r dreftadaeth, mae'n bwysig bod y bobl yn edrych i'r dyfodol.

3.4 Mewn ymateb i gwestiynau gan Aelodau, nododd Beverly Owen y pwyntiau canlynol:

O ran adeiladau treftadaeth, mae Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Merthyr Tudful yn gweithio gyda Chronfa Dreftadaeth y Loteri ar hyn o bryd i ddatblygu prosiect ger Parc Cyfarthfa ac mae'n rhaid i ni flaenoriaethu nifer o adeiladau allweddol o ran treftadaeth ac o ran sut i ddatblygu'r adeiladau hyn.

Drwy raglen Treftadaeth Diwydiannol De Cymru, Menter Herion, ceir nifer o gynlluniau lleol sy'n ceisio pwysleisio potensial safleoedd treftadaeth sy'n gweithio gyda chymunedau lleol. Mae hwn yn rhan annatod o waith adfywio Merthyr Tudful.

3.5 Mewn ymateb i gwestiynau gan Aelodau, nododd Richard Crook y pwyntiau canlynol:

Y tueddiad yw creu diwylliant rhagoriaeth. Mae ysgolion a phenaethiaid Blaenau Gwent yn ymrwymedig i'r agenda codi safonau a chyflwyno diwylliant rhagoriaeth.

Mae'n amlwg bod angen trafod ansawdd yr adeiladau addysgol ym Mlaenau Gwent ac mae hyn yn dechrau amlygu ei hun o ran ansawdd y ddarpariaeth. Mae ymagwedd gydgysylltiedig yn dechrau dod i'r amlwg ac Awdurdod Addysg Blaenau Gwent yw un o'r awdurdodau sy'n gwneud y cynnydd gorau.

Nodwyd bod 8% o bobl ifanc o Flaenau Gwent yn mynd ymlaen i addysg bellach ac addysg uwch yn yr ardal, sy'n rhif isel iawn ac mae angen newid y diwylliant hwn. Mae'r gymuned yn awyddus i annog mwy o bobl i wella eu haddysg gan fod y potensial yna'n barod.

Mae'r Fforwm Ieuencid a sefydlwyd gan y Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol yn cynnwys plant yng nghynigion

y cyngor. Mae hyn yn gweithio'n dda ac yn gyfle i glywed safbwyntiau newydd ar nifer o faterion. Bydd y fforwm hefyd yn gysylltiedig â'r prosiect gwaith dur ac yn edrych ar ei ddefnydd nawr ac ar gyfer y genhedlaeth nesaf.

Mae'r ddarpariaeth hamdden yn dibynnu ar y galw amdani. Mae gan bob tref ym Mlaenau Gwent ei chanolfan hamdden ei hun ac mae'r ddarpariaeth hon ar gael i bawb yn y fwrdeistref sirol. Ar hyn o bryd, rydym yn edrych ar sut y gallwn gysylltu pobl ifanc yn gyffredinol - naill ai trwy addysg neu chwaraeon.

3.6 Mewn ymateb i gwestiynau gan Aelodau, nododd Carey Lewis y pwynt canlynol:

Mae gan golegau lleol gyfleusterau ar gyfer cynnal cyrsiau a nodwyd peirianeg fel enghraifft. Fodd bynnag, oni bai bod nifer penodol o fyfyrwyr yn cofrestru ar gyfer y cwrs, ni ellir ei gynnal gan nad ydynt yn cael arian ar gyfer cynnal cyrsiau ar gyfer unigolion na grwpiau bach.

3.7 Gofynnodd Mr C Powis, Gwasanaethau Ambiwylans Cymru, ynghylch mynediad ar gyfer y tri gwasanaeth brys pan fydd y gwaith yn dechrau ym Mlaenau'r Cymoedd. Gofynnodd hefyd a fydd gan Ysbyty Glynebwy wasanaeth damweiniau ac achosion brys ac nid canolfan galw heibio yn unig. Ymateb: Dywedodd Patrick Lewis y byddai'n trafod y mater o wneud ffordd Blaenau'r Cymoedd yn ffordd ddeuol gyda'r Gyfarwyddiaeth Briffyrdd yn y Cynulliad Cenedlaethol. Dywedodd Richard Crook nad oedd yn gallu rhoi sylwadau ar yr ysbyty arfaethedig gan nad yw'n gallu siarad ar ran yr awdurdod iechyd. Ychwanegodd ei fod yn deall y bydd cyfleusterau damweiniau ac achosion brys ar gael yno.

3.8 Gofynnodd Mr D Davies o Lynebwy a yw'r gwaith adeiladu a diweddarau wedi dechrau ar y cyswllt rheilffordd rhwng Caerdydd/Casnewydd a Glynebwy. Gofynnodd a oedd unrhyw gynlluniau i uno ystâd ddiwydiannol Rassau a Tafarnawbach gyda mynediad uniongyrchol o ffordd Blaenau'r Cymoedd a beth yw'r amserlen ar gyfer buddsoddi mewn twristiaeth a threftadaeth ledled ardal Blaenau'r Cymoedd. Ymateb: Dywedodd Richard Crook fod y trac wedi'i archebu a'i fod yn mynd i gyrraedd ym mis Mawrth a bod gyrwyr wrthi'n cael eu hyfforddi fel rhan o broses diogelwch Network Rail. O ran cysylltu'r ystadau diwydiannol, dywedodd Richard Crook fod y mynediad yn fater yr oedd y Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol wedi ceisio'i wella ond oherwydd y lleoliad, yn anffodus, ni fydd byth yn ddelfrydol. Nododd Patrick Lewis fod cysylltiadau ar waith ar gyfer ffordd treftadaeth ond bod angen cymryd camau eraill a nododd goleuo adeiladau hanesyddol yn y nos fel enghraifft.

3.9 Dywedodd Mr K Jones o Lynebwy ei fod yn cefnogi rhaglen Blaenau'r Cymoedd a'i fod yn gyffrous gweld yr holl bartneriaethau'n cydweithio. Gofynnodd am sicrwydd y byddai'r sector cymunedol a'r sector gwirfoddol yn cymryd rhan lawn yn y broses. Ymateb: Dywedodd Patrick Lewis fod rhywun wedi codi'r pwynt pwysig hwn o'r blaen a'i fod yn ceisio dod o hyd i ffordd o annog grwpiau gwirfoddol i gymryd rhan a bod rhywfaint o gynrychiolaeth o'r sector hwn ar fwrdd sefydliadau Partneriaeth Blaenau'r Cymoedd. Ychwanegodd y byddai'n sicrhau bod y ddogfen a gynhyrchwyd gyda'r rhaglenni gwaith yn cael ei dosbarthu i sefydliadau gwirfoddol.

3.10 Dywedodd Ms S Robinson o Fenter Gymunedol Cymru Cyf fod Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru wedi nodi bod mentrau cymdeithasol yn cyfrannu'n helaeth at adfywio economaidd. Gofynnodd pwy sy'n cynrychioli mentrau cymdeithasol ar Fwrdd Partneriaeth Blaenau'r Cymoedd, ac os oes rhywun yn eu cynrychioli, a yw'n cynrychioli'r cymunedau'n gywir? Ymateb: Dywedodd Patrick Lewis fod y Bwrdd wedi derbyn sylwadau gan sefydliadau cymunedol. Dywedodd nad oedd yn sicr a oedd unrhyw sylwadau penodol wedi'u derbyn gan grwpiau o fentrau cymdeithasol ond ei fod am weld mentrau cymdeithasol yn llwyddo a bod hyn yn fater allweddol i'w hystyried yn y dyfodol.

3.11 Gofynnodd Mr M Jacob o Gyfeillion y Ddaear Cymru sut y mae'r ddarpariaeth o safleoedd at ddefnydd cymysg o fewn cynlluniau datblygu lleol yn cyd-fynd â strategaeth Blaenau'r Cymoedd. Ymateb: Dywedodd Patrick Lewis fod y syniad o ddatblygiad defnydd cymysg yn ffordd ymlaen ac ychwanegodd y bydd y safle gwaith dur yn ddatblygiad cymysg sy'n cynnwys pob math o weithgareddau. Dywedodd Carey Lewis fod angen newid diwylliant y gymuned fusnes o ran gweithdrefnau cynllunio.

3.12 Gofynnodd Ms D Jeffreys o Glybiau Plant Cymru a oes unrhyw gymorth ariannol ar gael drwy'r rhaglen adfywio y gellir ei gyfeirio tuag at glybiau plant gwirfoddol. Ymateb: Dywedodd Peter Law, fel yr Aelod lleol, ei fod yn fodlon mynd i'r afael â'r mater hwn.

Eitem 4: Lleoliad ar gyfer cyfarfod nesaf Pwyllgor Rhanbarth Dwyrain De Cymru.

4.1 Dywedodd y Cadeirydd y byddai pwnc a dyddiad y cyfarfod nesaf yn cael eu penderfynu cyn hir a gofynnwyd i Aelodau gyflwyno unrhyw awgrymiadau i'r Clerc.

Gwasanaeth y Pwyllgorau Chwefror 2006

Annex 1

South Wales East Regional Committee

SWERC(2) 01-06 (p.1)

Date: 17 February 2006

Venue: Beaufort Theatre and Ballroom, Beaufort, Ebbw Vale

Title: Patrick Lewis - WDA

Heads of the Valleys Programme

Programme Director's Report to the South East Wales Regional Committee

Introduction to the Programme

'Heads We Win: A Strategic Framework for the Heads of the Valleys' was launched in March 2005. It provides a focus for discussion about the main issues, challenges and opportunities facing the area, and consultation with communities, stakeholders and other interested parties.

'The Way Ahead: Towards a Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys'

Grouping the objectives of the Programme under five key themes:

- An attractive and well-used natural and built environment
- An appealing and coherent tourism and leisure experience
- A vibrant economic landscape offering new opportunities
- A well educated, skilled and healthier population
- Public confidence in a shared bright future

Current 'early win' projects include

- Sustainable Energy Zone
- Cleaner Valleys Task Force
- Clean Week and Clean Rivers
- Wood User Cluster
- Community Portal
- Trail of Light
- JobMatch Evaluation
- Social Procurement

Patrick Lewis
Director, Heads of the Valleys Programme
Project Office
Ebbw Vale Works
Steelworks Road
Ebbw Vale
NP23 6YL
Email: patrick.lewis@wales.gsi.gov.uk
www.wales.gov.uk/headsofthevalleys

South Wales East Regional Committee

SWERC(2) 01-06 (p.2)

Date: 17 February 2006

Venue: Beaufort Theatre and Ballroom, Beaufort, Ebbw Vale

Title: Richard Crook – Blaenau Gwent CBC

Heads of the Valleys Strategy – Prospects for Economic Regeneration

- The thrust of this presentation will be that the prospects for regeneration in the HoV are positive as long as the opportunities now available to the area are grasped and driven forward with a sense of purpose and unity
- The opportunities that I refer to encompass the following areas: Strategic fit between the stakeholders, an understanding of the issues that need to be addressed, the potential to join up the spend in the area and the availability of initiatives and projects that can deliver on the agenda.
- To explain these comments I will focus upon two interrelated projects; The Learning Campus and the redevelopment of the former steelworks in Ebbw Vale.
- The issue of learning is the key issue which has to be tackled if sustainable regeneration is to be delivered as it is the only significant economic tool that the area possess which is in our gift to influence
- The training/skills/education deficit that exists in the area is a major constraint to the economic development of the area.
- Whilst economic circumstances change, the demand from employers for higher levels of skills remains, the area has been successful in attracting inward investment and to retain and build upon this investment a higher skills base is needed. In addition to this, the availability of quality schools will support the retention of the economically active, and again assist in attracting/safeguarding investment. The raising of skill levels with the ability to access employment that reflects these abilities is one of the keys to raising GDP. More low skilled jobs will not raise GDP and raised skills with increased mobility will raise GDP.
- The other key to raising GDP is to increase the economic activity rates and education has a key role in this providing opportunity and confidence.
- The final element that education has to offer is in terms of raising entrepreneurship rates, which will provide a large part of the future economic growth. The education system can help spread the message around entrepreneurship and assist in the development of an enterprise culture.
- The second dimension to my presentation is that of the opportunities offered by the redevelopment of the former steelworks to be an exemplar regeneration initiative, which can embody the themes in WAG strategies and deliver policy in practice.
- The redevelopment of the site to the highest environmental standards will establish our commitment to sustainable regeneration

- The quality of the site will raise aspirations and set out what can be achieved in the HoV corridor, giving confidence in the market
- The development of The Learning Campus is a bold project that can provide an economic engine for the area linking training with work based learning and academic provision
- A community hospital will assist in enhancing health care (reducing economic inactivity) and creating employment in the health care sector
- The new residential development will create new and strengthen existing communities
- The provision of employment space will support the diversification of the economy into the office/commercial sectors
- The social and economic benefits of this investment can also be captured through social clauses and land sales allowing the maximum impact to be secured – this can only be achieved through a joined up approach that is being advocated in the area
- The site will be linked by rail to Cardiff and at a latter stage to Newport

South Wales East Regional Committee

SWERC(2) 01-06 (p.3)

Date: 17 February 2006

Venue: Beaufort Theatre and Ballroom, Beaufort, Ebbw Vale

Title: David Rosser and Emma Watkins – Confederation of British Industry Cymru Wales

CBI Wales Paper on the Welsh Assembly Government Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys area (Heads we win: A Strategic framework for the Heads of the Valleys)

Introduction

CBI Wales welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Welsh Assembly Government's Strategic Framework for the Heads of the Valleys: Heads We Win. Whilst we appreciate the formal consultation period for the Framework ended in June, we hope these comments will be considered as work on the programme gets underway.

The CBI is the UK's foremost business representative body dealing principally with cross-sectoral issues affecting the business environment in which all companies operate. The CBI's strength lies in its breadth

of membership, which includes companies of every size, including over 200 trade associations and academic institutions, and from all sectors of the economy – manufacturing, construction, retailing, financial services, e-commerce leisure, transport and so on. The CBI represents companies employing about 50% of the private sector workforce in Wales, and has substantial representation in the Heads of the Valleys area.

This paper is the result of consultation with CBI members throughout the south Wales area, but particularly in the Heads of the Valleys area.

In formulating this paper the CBI gathered together a range of businesses representing a wide cross-section of industry, operating in the Heads of the Valleys region. These included large manufacturers employing between 100 and 600 people – both subsidiaries of a global group and those with local headquarters; universities; infrastructure providers – telecommunications, ICT, water; housebuilders and representatives from the commercial property sector.

The businesses we have consulted all demonstrate a genuine commitment to doing business in the Heads of the Valleys, and a desire to improve the environment in which they operate, and in which many of their employees live.

This paper is a note of these discussions, and includes priority areas for action.

General Economic Picture

CBI members located in the Heads of the Valleys – in Merthyr, Tredegar, Ebbw Vale and Rhymney - report an initially positive picture of what it is like doing business in the area. They widely acknowledge that the area has improved considerably over the last decade.

In terms of current operating conditions, many of the businesses have experienced varying degrees of expansion over the last five to ten years and reported improving levels of economic activity in the area.

Improvements to the transport infrastructure, particularly the dualling of the Heads of the Valleys road and the upgrading of the rail link down through the area have had a positive impact on the business operating in the area.

Companies also reported very few problems in recruiting staff and filling vacancies, particularly at the lower levels, though acute problems continue to exist in terms of skills levels of those both in and out of the workforce. After quite considerable efforts on the part of some companies and government agencies, businesses reported that absence levels have decreased in recent times.

Improvements to telecommunications, particularly the rollout of broadband services in the area, have also been made in recent years and have been well received.

Considerable improvements have also been made to the water and sewage infrastructure, and the main infrastructure is now in place to cope with any major local authority plans. However the system still remains constrained in places, and the process of improving the network further could be quite lengthy.

Underneath these improvements however, fundamental structural problems remain – some of which are specific to the area, others of which are common to industry across Wales and the UK. It is these problems which need to be addressed by the Assembly in taking forward its work on the Heads of the Valleys.

Priorities: Education & Employment

Education and skills emerged as the top priority for companies in the Heads of the Valleys region, with the need for high quality schools the number one priority, both in terms of educating the workforce of the future, and when recruiting staff.

Availability and quality of schools are a major factor in attracting people to the area, and particularly in recruiting staff at middle and senior management level. This feature was reported both by large employers in the area and also by housebuilders who comment that when promoting their new developments, the first question asked by potential buyers is on the quality of schools in the area. A culture of excellence, of academic and vocational success, very good facilities and very good teachers are all requirements for people moving into the area, and also for employers operating in the area.

Many companies expressed concerns that their current workforce is poorly educated, lacking basic, IT and social or interpersonal skills. Some businesses conduct their own tests when recruiting staff (literacy, numeracy, aptitude), rather than relying purely on the information being provided by applicants.

Despite high levels of economic inactivity in the area, the businesses commented that once they have attracted staff at the lower levels, particularly locally, they become very engaged in the company, and receptive to the training needs and opportunities presented to them. It is not enough to assume that people do not want to work but rather that many of them are not equipped with the requisite skills.

Financial incentives from government for companies to recruit economically inactive people would not necessarily provide a workable solution - companies would not employ someone who did not fit their requirements. One company in the area has undertaken work with the Shaw Trust in assisting disabled people return to work, and has recruited three members of staff through a process which does not necessarily involve a commitment from the employer to retain or recruit that person on a full time basis. Models such as this could be explored as a means of attracting the economically inactive into work, as opposed to providing companies with a simple financial incentive.

Businesses are committed to developing and training their workforce, and this was particularly evident among CBI members in the Heads of the Valleys region, all of whom were undertaking some form of

training within their business, both formal and informal, primarily self-funded by the company.

Concern was expressed however at the quality of engineering apprenticeships, which has reportedly worsened. Many companies have switched to using private training providers to meet their needs rather than their local college, as they feel that some FE colleges lack the work-based learning penetration or understanding of their private counterparts. Accessing funding continues to be a problem for some companies, particularly at the smaller end.

Many of the companies called for greater links between businesses and education, particularly schools, to overcome the problems they are experiencing in recruiting "employment-ready" staff. Some companies already undertake work in this area, whilst others are involved with the work of their local CCETs or with the Basic Skills Agency.

Whilst it is possible to recruit at the lower levels, companies reported difficulties in recruiting capable or semi-skilled people for more senior positions. It is often the case that companies have to await the demise of their competitors in the area in order to obtain staff as they are facing an increasing fight for skilled people.

Increasingly, senior staff are being recruited from outside the region, and they in turn choose not to live in Merthyr or Ebbw Vale but rather in areas such as Monmouthshire. This hinders further sociological change in the Heads of the Valleys region, and has led to a situation where the middle classes are virtually non-existent in the area.

Transport

Despite the considerable improvements, problems still remain with the transport system in the area. Businesses expressed concerns at the length of time it will take to complete the dualling of the Heads of the Valleys road. Many also felt that whilst the road is a benefit, for many it is seen as simply an easier route through the area directly to the Midlands, rather than enabling access to the area.

Companies also expressed concerns at the condition and quality of the roads leading off the main routes through the area. Particular concern was expressed at the quality of the entrances to the industrial estates, and the roads going through them which are often in a state of disrepair. Many companies have moved to new premises in the area to accommodate expansion and are disappointed that the approaches to these sites are inadequate. For example, in order to get to the Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate any clients, suppliers, lorries etc have to pass through a residential area once they have left the main Heads of the Valleys road. One company actually reported that a decision was taken to locate its distribution site in Gloucester rather than Merthyr because of the accessibility for lorries and freight in and out of the site.

A properly integrated public transport system is crucial in enabling staff to travel to work in both urban and more remote areas. It is also important in allowing employees to access education at local colleges

or providers' premises.

Unfortunately despite recent improvements in this area, problems do remain. The topography of the region means that staff may live in one village but work in another and it is therefore crucial that there is an integrated public transport system in place to support this reality. Public transport must be operational beyond the traditional hours of nine to five, to fit in with shift patterns or evening classes, with proper connections between different modes of transport, particularly train and bus services. Currently for example, a fifteen-minute journey from Hirwaun to Rhymney by car would take over two hours by bus. Companies are aware of staff using taxis to travel to work due to deficiencies in public transport in some areas. This is clearly not acceptable.

Companies have also called for further extension of the rail link further down the Valley and into Cardiff as this would open up the potential recruitment base, and extend the catchment area for businesses.

Housing

The quality and availability of housing is a particular issue in the Heads of the Valleys area, and one where the private sector has a key role to play. There should be a greater emphasis on housing within the Heads of the Valleys Strategy, particularly on private sector provision, including in the area of affordable housing which tends to be dominated by local authority provision.

CBI members in the area commented that one reason that those in middle management live outside the region is the lack of larger, executive housing to accommodate them in the Heads of the Valleys. Whilst there is considerable support for affordable housing from government, there is less willingness to permit executive developments, of four bed houses for example.

Housing can play an important role in the regeneration of an area. Allowing executive developments to be built in the Heads of the Valleys region would help create a more attractive living and working environment both for those people already living in the area, and when recruiting staff. Attracting the middle classes back to the area could provide a boost to the local economy, as these people would support local shops and services, and crucially schools, provided the quality provision exists.

Promotion of the Area

It is widely accepted that the Valleys, and this area in particular, have acute problems in terms of how they are perceived. One major heavy manufacturer reported that despite his plant being the most efficient and most productive within the global group, its location in Merthyr led to the perception that it is not as sophisticated as other parts of the group. The high productivity and efficiency levels are not enough to change perceptions in the group.

Improvements in education, housing and transport, as well as aesthetic improvements, e.g. to industrial estates, will all contribute to making the area an attractive place to live and work, and will naturally help

regenerate the Heads of the Valleys area.

Delivering Change: Taking the Work Forward

CBI Wales members in the Heads of the Valleys indicated that they are willing to be involved in taking the work in the area forward, in a manner that is best for business, best for the Assembly, and best for the community.

To prevent unhealthy competition between local authorities in the region, there must be a co-ordinating body for this work, and we are pleased that the Assembly has appointed a programme co-ordinator to take this work forward.

As already outlined in this paper, the private sector has a crucial role to play in driving forward the development of the Heads of the Valleys, and should be involved in the process now underway. The CBI would be happy to discuss ways in which to obtain input from the private sector to ensure the best outcome for all in the Heads of the Valleys region.

South Wales East Regional Committee

SWERC(2) 01-06 (p.4)

Date: 17 February 2006

Venue: Beaufort Theatre and Ballroom, Beaufort, Ebbw Vale

Title: Jill Shuker – Merthyr Tydfil CBC

The Renaissance of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough and the development of the Town as an area hub for the Heads of the Valleys

Introduction

Two decades of reclamation and regeneration in the 1980's and 1990's provided over 41 hectares of land available for development throughout Merthyr Tydfil. This was the result of significant public and private sector investment costing over £55 million and has provided opportunities for industrial, commercial, retail, leisure and housing developments. Significant investment in infrastructure with the dualled A470 from Cardiff and the current programme to dual the Heads of the Valleys Road (A465) from Hirwaun to Abergavenny also places Merthyr Tydfil in an ideal location to develop as a strategic area hub.

Within the policy context of the Wales Spatial Plan, Merthyr Tydfil, as well as Ebbw Vale, is clearly identified as a key driver for regeneration in the Heads of the Valleys zone and the strategy for the South East – The Capital Network includes working "with our partners to develop an ambitious programme of joined-up regeneration action along the Heads of the Valleys corridor which will complement the

planned upgrading of the A465. The aim of this will be to improve quality of life, retain and attract residents, and increase the prosperity of the whole area focusing initially on unlocking the potential of Merthyr Tydfil and Ebbw Vale.....The Heads of the Valleys corridor will be strengthened as an attractive location for people to live and for development, to help secure more balanced prosperity across the area. Merthyr Tydfil and Ebbw Vale are the key centres on the corridor."

Economic development and regeneration are at the heart of the Local Authority's Vision and Strategic Aims and there are a significant number of regeneration projects and initiatives both underway and planned for Merthyr Tydfil which are outlined below, aligned to the key themes of the Heads of the Valleys Strategic Framework.

Unlocking the Potential of our People:

- Development of a modern, integrated Lifelong Learning Campus working with Merthyr Tydfil College, University of Glamorgan & Tydfil Training Ltd to develop a site that offers exciting opportunities for curriculum development and linking learning and business.
- Neighbourhood Learning Centre set up in 2003 in the Gurnos Community Workshops, with £2.4mill of Objective One Funding, which offers help back into work for local people, with training provided in a range of areas, including ICT, retail, hairdressing, etc
- Working with Job Centre Plus to deliver the Want2Work project.
- Working with the Local Health Board and Trust to develop primary health care facilities to serve our communities.
- Approximately £12 million pounds committed through the 8 local Communities First Partnerships to tackle inequalities in the most deprived communities.

Unlocking the Potential of our Places:

- The County Borough is 100% Broadband enabled
- £35mill Cyfarthfa Retail Park opened in April 2005, bringing 500 new jobs and retailers B&Q, Matalan, Currys, JJB (Retail & Health Club), Brantano, NEXT and Outfit to the area.
- Brand new Tesco opened in the Town Centre in 2003, with a shopping arcade linking this to the main High Street.
- Major Town Centre Regeneration Programme including the development of a café quarter, gateway schemes, building enhancements, streetscape & environmental improvements, signage as well as larger projects including the Old Town Hall and Bus Station.

- New Housing Developments across the County Borough by companies such as Barratt Homes, Redrow and Persimmon.
- Relocation of the Welsh Assembly Government's Social Justice Ministry in September 2006, bringing 450 jobs into the town.
- The development of the VITEC, providing a modern business and training facility at the Cyfarthfa Furnaces with funding of c£5mill from Objective One, Local Regeneration Fund, WDA and the private sector.
- Development of an integrated transport facility at the railway station as well as seeking to improve train services to Cardiff.
- Opening of two new community schools at Abercanaid in 2002 and Twynhrodyn in 2004, an Integrated Children's Centre in 2005, with proposals for a further 5 new schools by 2010.
- Housing Renewal Area Schemes in Merthyr Vale & Dowlais with a total budget of just over £4 million providing a range of environmental works as well as 10 Group Repair Schemes.
- Redevelopment of the Gurnos Shopping Centre.
- A new Trago Mills development (150,000 sq ft) under construction which is a unique leisure/retail concept currently only located in South West England.
- Currently within the planning process are 3 major schemes, two of which are potentially of huge significance to the future development of Merthyr Tydfil - Merthyr Village, Ffos y Fran and Riverside Development on the Merthyr Vale Colliery Site.

Building a Confident Future:

- The development of a new sports centre and swimming pool at Rhydycar as well as other private sector led leisure facilities, eg cinema, hotels, etc.
- Taking forward proposals to develop cultural facilities for the area.
- Seeking funding to improve Cyfarthfa Park and Castle as well as the Furnaces site to enhance the tourism offer.
- Development of walking & cycling trails including the Trevithick Trail.

- Events programmes such as Children in Need (2003) the Trevithick Celebrations (2004), Centenary Celebrations (2005).

Delivering Change

- Play an active part in the Heads of the Valleys Programme Team and Programme Board to ensure effective delivery of the programme.
- Develop joint-working initiatives with Blaenau Gwent CBC, other local authorities and partners.
- Initial Projects supported through the 'Heads-We Win...' programme include the development of the community portal - Shape-it.org, a community transport pilot, illumination of the Ynysfach Engine House as part of the Trail of Light Project and the Bedlinog & Trelewis Gateways scheme.

Merthyr Tydfil CBC

South Wales East Regional Committee

SWERC(2) 01-06 (p.5)

Date: 17 February 2006

Venue: Beaufort Theatre and Ballroom, Beaufort, Ebbw Vale

Title: Federation of Small Businesses in Wales

Carey Lewis: Thank you for the invitation to address this meeting. One of the problems of being last in the line of speakers is that everyone is pretty well covered the essential subject. I'll try. The federation of small businesses has approximately 3 and a half thousand members in south-east Wales many of whom are in this area or immediately adjacent to it.

Economic regeneration, if it is to succeed, will be powered by the small business community,. They're the local wealth creators, the butchers, the bakers, the candlestick makers who work and live alongside their customers and workforce in the same communities sharing the same culture. They provide the core services any community needs and diversity of products and services is virtually limitless. 98 per cent of all businesses not just in this area but in Wales, United Kingdom, and through the greater part of Europe are small businesses. They're capable of entrepreneurship, growth and many demonstrated locally as well as everywhere else.

There is greater economic sustainability and safety in large number of small enterprises than a large number of large entities who have no root in the community. Our future now lies in our own hands. Many years ago I was fortunate to visit Rolls Royce aircraft engine factory in Derby. As you go in there is a large stained glass window with the words 'the skill of our hands was the salvation of our nation'. The day it is that same attitude that must prevail not just in our hands but in our intellect as well. For the business community to succeed many elements were required. Foremost we believe are an effective

science policy for all of Wales. Not just for the Heads of the Valleys area but that would be a component element to it. We've developed considerable proposals in this area which we've presented to the Assembly currently under assessment by the Assembly, so I shan't dwell on that and shan't go into that in any detail effective communications are imperative. Both for the movement of goods and for the movement of ideas. The first is physical and obvious. Good congestion free road networks are paramount.

There is little point in producing the most competitive product in the world if it is killed by excessive and difficult transport costs. The dualling of the A465 is a major step in this direction but please do not neglect the roads that feed it. They are crucial. The information super highway that the Internet has fuelled has developed unprecedented growth in certain sectors of transport. In America they assessed the biggest growth area with the Internet was local distribution, vehicle based. You shop, we drop. Is the mantra of e-commerce. Try getting a lawn mower or pound - politically incorrect - kilo sausages, down a broadband wire. It's very difficult. Ease of movement of goods is of equal importance to the movement of people. Please consider this in your strategic planning.

On the subject of IT and broadband, please ensure in your planning that these are given priority and please let's get away from the gun point policies of the land line providers. Along with many of my small business colleagues I face the scenario when upgrading to broadband of having to use the broadband service of the land line provider. To retain my e-mail over a 10 year period I'm forced to have an inferior broadband of half a mega byte when 2 mega-bytes is available if I transferred from the broadband service of the land line provider but this entails me changing my addresses, very difficult and dangerous occupation. Even this 2 mega byte is a free sample, effectively. When we look at competitive countries who have 40, 60 and 80 mega-byte services. When can we catch up please? Because we are only catching up.

Business premises is an area that requires serious consideration. We as businesses are constantly exhorted by government to innovate and we ask the same of you. Be innovative about your provision of commercial premises and throw off the yoke of local development plans which are often set in outmoded theoretical basis rather than ever changing reality. Encourage flexibility and innovative thinking, consider live work solutions rather than the forced community for the sake of planning apartheid.

The Heads of the Valleys communities evolved for the workforce being able mere merely to walk to work. Perhaps we should apply some 21st century thinking to this scenario and encourage some positive solutions. On Wednesday I deliberately visited some local employment site's the first in Aberbargoed is a large site of small workshops which exhibits almost 100 per cent occupancy and is close enough to local dwellings to provide ease of pedestrian access. The other was heads of valleys industrial estate at Rhymney. This comprises large units over half of which were empty, some falling into dereliction and only the most hardy worker who would consider pedestrian access and then probably only in the summer months. Lessons have to be drawn from this.

I've been fortunate in my career to have lived and worked in several different countries on 2 different continents. Coupled to my experience at the FSB here in south-east Wales and I have led the evolution of a potential solution in my own industry sector. With the support of the Welsh Development Agency, Forestry Commission Wales and south-east Wales wood group - I'm in the wood business, and working in conjunction with Welsh school of architecture and housing group an innovative live work plan has been developed.

This is a wood user cluster. For up to 25 businesses on the same site incorporating shared training, management and e-commerce facilities. This gives any one individual business the power of the size of 25 businesses. They cease to be micro businesses. They become medium businesses with the capacity that's involved. But retain their independence as micro businesses. We've used tested principles from elsewhere. And it would enable the participating businesses to overcome many of the barriers to growth which sole traders and many micro businesses experience. Whilst retaining their own commercial independence they would be enabled to work co-operatively to win larger contracts and capitalise on product developments and new markets effectively competitive units of multiple sole traders could combine to create innovative new practices and new products many of which already exist in a latent form but do not have the opportunity to develop. This development would embrace integrated workplace dwellings, live with your work.

Why waste a huge chunk of your life driving from A to B when A can be B as well. That will also have considerable social and security advantages. Common complaint from our members in south-east Wales generally not just Heads of the Valleys area is that of security and a few years ago we put an estimate that it costs a business 6,000 pounds a year, small business, small workshop, 6,000 pound a year in security; living next to your business would eliminate that. That hells your business to consider other activities. A site in the upper Rhymney valley is currently under investigation in conjunction with Caerphilly Borough Council and has already received support from Heads of the Valleys partnership for which we are very grateful. We believe we are laying the corner stones of a prosperous future today. You will hopefully be able to see it from the A465. Thank you very much