



Well-being Objective 4

Protect, enhance and value our environment

As one of our greatest assets there is a need to take collective action to protect, enhance and value our environment for now and for future generations, ensuring that the Vale of Glamorgan is globally responsible.



As we understand better our links with biodiversity, ecosystems and the services they provide it becomes a matter of social justice to ensure that our living patterns are sustainable and sensitive to the limitations of the world around us and that we enact our responsibility to future generations.

United Nations



Our Vale

Where are we now

Our Well-being Assessment highlighted that one of the Vale's greatest assets and an inherent part of the Vale's culture is the natural environment. The environment underpins all aspects of life and it is essential that we protect, enhance and value our environment to ensure the well-being of our future generations. Engagement undertaken at a range of events used to inform our assessment highlighted that the local environment is hugely important to residents who value proximity and access to the countryside/seaside and greenspaces. The environment was seen as one of the most important factors to having good well-being by our residents.

The importance of the environment was highlighted within the well-being assessment not only as an asset for residents and visitors to enjoy but as an important provider of services. Coasts and seas can provide jobs, food and opportunities for recreation, energy generation and enjoyment of wildlife, landscape and cultural heritage. Animals, plants and other organisms and their habitats play many functional roles in ecosystems. Woodland and trees can help regulate our climate, provide income and jobs, store carbon, contribute to reducing flood and low river flow risk, safeguard soils, improve air quality, reduce noise and regulate pests and diseases. Outdoor recreation can make a significant contribution to the physical health and mental well-being of adults and children, highlighting that access to the countryside, water and green space close to where people live is increasingly important towards providing health, economic and social benefits. The assessment highlighted that there are a vast number of environmental assets in the Vale of Glamorgan including the following:

- 27 sites of Special Scientific Interest, The Severn Estuary Special Protection Area, RAMSAR and Special Area of Conservation site, Dunraven Bay Special Area of Conservation and the adjoining Merthyr Mawr National Nature Reserve.
- 740 listed buildings, over 100 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, 39 Conservation areas, 18 areas included in the Register of Landscapes of Historic Parks and Gardens and 2 areas on the Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales.
- Nineteen parks, a number of which have green flag status which is a mark of excellence, demonstrating good amenities and community involvement in parks.
- Two Country Parks, Porthkerry Park on the outskirts of Barry and Cosmeston Lakes near Penarth. The parks offer over 200 hectares of woodlands, meadows and beaches.
- 10 Council run allotment sites (8 in Barry and 2 in the Western Vale).
- The Glamorgan Heritage Coast stretches for 14 miles, from Aberthaw to Porthcawl and provides opportunities for walkers and cyclists.
- Two recycling centres, one in Barry and one in Llandow.
- Two Vale beaches have blue flag status and a number have received seaside awards.

The Vale has a range of attractions for tourists that utilise the natural environment to improve the area's economic well-being. This includes the Glamorgan Heritage Coast, the Wales Coast Path and well established seaside resorts; attractive countryside and country parks; unique historic features; a number of outdoor pursuit activities; and a well established network of walking routes. We need to work together with our communities to ensure that we can continue to utilise our assets in a sustainable way to ensure our future social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being is enhanced.

Despite the wealth of environmental assets that exist in the Vale of Glamorgan challenges also exist. Nine Vale of Glamorgan Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are within the top 10% of the most deprived LSOAs within the environment domain of the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation. These areas are the same parts of the Vale that experience deprivation in relation to a range of other domains within the index, demonstrating the relationship that exists between our natural environment and other facets of well-being. Although air quality within the Vale of Glamorgan complies with regulations to protect human health and meets the relevant air quality objectives this will continue to be monitored as the Vale has one of the highest levels of man-made air pollution in Wales and is higher than the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish averages. Air emission scores are much higher in the south and east of the county, including Barry, where population densities, traffic volumes and proximity to heavy industry are higher than in the more rural areas of the county. Air emissions disproportionately affect the Vale's more deprived communities which can exacerbate already high levels of health inequality by increasing levels of respiratory disease and other illnesses.

As a PSB, we have recognised the huge impact that we can have as organisations working within the Vale, both in terms of promoting the importance of the environment with our residents but also in relation to our own practices and the actions within our plan reflect this. When undertaking our self-assessment exercise, in general partners scored themselves highly in relation to policy and activities geared towards protecting, enhancing and valuing our environment although it was recognised that we could all do more than we currently do. It was recognised that a number of partners will undertake activities to promote sustainable behaviours although these are not currently joined up. There were low scores across the board in relation to monitoring the impact of our policies and activities. It was highlighted that as public and third sector organisations ensuring our own practices and estates are sustainable can make a huge impact on the Vale's environment.

Our Future

We know that we must act now to protect our environment and the well-being benefits this brings for our future generations. The assessment highlighted a number of risks to the Vale's environment linked to climate change and poor air quality and the PSB has therefore highlighted the importance of working together to mitigate, manage or resolve these risks over the short, medium and long-term. We need to better understand the motivations for the ways in which people behave and can only do so by working together with our residents to ensure we protect our environment for future generations. The Annual Report of the Director of Public Health for Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan 2017 demonstrates the links our environment can play on all aspects of our well-being highlighting that "declining levels of physical activity...widespread air pollution, social isolation and worsening health inequalities are all pressing public health issues in our area [and] climate change is a severe threat which is already being felt in the UK and across the world". By working together to protect our environment we can seek to manage and mitigate the effects of climate change in the Vale and address these pressing issues.

The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment highlights a number of future key risks for Wales that have implications for the Vale of Glamorgan. These include; reductions in river flows and water availability in summers but also increases in flooding, coastal evolution, increases in the risk of pests and diseases and changes in soil conditions and biodiversity. Potential rises in sea levels as a result of climate change may pose a threat to our coastal environment as well as towns and villages situated on the coast. Although the Vale of Glamorgan has a slightly lower than average percentage of properties at risk of flooding, when considering these properties by the level of risk, the percentage of properties at risk of flooding that are a high risk is higher in the Vale than the Welsh average.

The consequences of climate change need to be managed and risks mitigated to ensure our environment continues to provide services, be enjoyed by residents and visitors and is protected for future generations. Our environment is a major asset for the Vale and attracts a huge number of visitors to the Vale each year. We must work to ensure that opportunities to promote the Vale and enhance our economy as a result of tourism are realised in a sustainable manner and that we continue to explore new opportunities as they arise and respond to changing consumer demands.

This includes considering how people travel to the Vale, and within the Vale whilst they are here and this also applies to those who live and work in the Vale. Changing patterns in the way we travel and how we design our environments for travel can have a significant affect on well-being. We know that approximately 10,000 people currently commute to the Vale from other areas for work, in addition to the numbers of people who both live and work in the Vale. We also know that many residents commute to other areas and we must work with the Cardiff Capital City Region to ensure our future transport infrastructure allows our residents to easily travel within the region to access opportunities and similarly for people to easily access the Vale for employment and for leisure opportunities.

To protect our environment for future generations this must include a modal shift in how we travel across the region and further afield. We must work together with our residents and with our regional and national partners to improve public transport infrastructure and options and make public transport a more accessible option for people. Currently private car use is the most popular form of transport for commuters in the Vale of Glamorgan

and we must seek to change this to reduce air emissions and reduce the risks associated with climate change, lowering our ecological footprint and ensuring the Vale of Glamorgan is globally responsible. Linked to this we must also make active travel options available and promote the benefits of cycling and walking to our residents. Protecting, enhancing and valuing our environment will improve our residents well-being and quality of life, boost our economy and bring about a range of health benefits from improved air quality and access to green spaces.

Through delivering our actions and achieving this objective our long term vision for the future Vale is:

Well-being Objective 4: Our Vision

The value of our natural resources and the local environment and how they contribute to our well-being is understood by all. Our global responsibility to protect and enhance the environment for future generations is understood by every sector and across each community. The Vale is an area where the public sector shows strong leadership and manages its estates sustainably. There is an understanding about the environmental impact of how services are delivered and accessed and the need for negative effects to be minimised. The whole community are involved in protecting and enhancing our natural assets and we know what motivates sustainable behaviours. There are increased rates of active and sustainable travel and recycling, improved air and water quality and a lower ecological footprint for the Vale. Interventions are in place to help prevent, manage and mitigate the long-term impacts that extreme weather events caused by climate change pose for the Vale. The whole community has access to green spaces, value these places and contribute towards maintaining them so everyone can realise the benefits of having access to a diverse environment and landscape, rich in wildlife. The opportunities of a high quality natural environment as the Vale's biggest asset are realised which benefits both residents and visitors; sustainable tourism is promoted and contributes to enhanced cultural and economic well-being in the area.

Our Steps

Outlined below are the actions we will deliver towards achieving this objective and shows the first set of steps we will be taking from 2018 to 2023 towards realising our longer term vision for the future Vale of Glamorgan.

What will we start doing today?

Deliver on a joint commitment to “green” our estates by:

Developing a better understanding of our net carbon status and exploring opportunities to reduce our carbon impact (e.g. energy efficiency, renewable energy sources and emissions from our activities and the goods and services we buy)

Reviewing how we manage our open spaces to maximise their contribution to ecosystem resilience and to enhance biodiversity (e.g. managing for pollinators and other wildlife)

Minimising flood risk and water pollution

Understanding and mitigating our impacts on air quality

Promote walking and cycling for staff, residents and visitors through shared messages and by providing facilities that enable active travel choices. This work will be undertaken in conjunction with the Capital City Region.

What will take us a little longer to deliver?

Work with the Capital City Region to promote and facilitate more sustainable travel within the Vale and across the region and where necessary influencing and lobbying transport providers for better public transport options.

Review public land assets and maximise their potential for community use and value as an environmental resource.

Develop a better understanding across our organisations of environmental issues, and the impact of how we work/deliver services and links between a poor environment and deprived communities.

Work with local businesses and industry to maximise the economic benefits of our environment e.g. through tourism and agriculture whilst taking steps to minimise negative impacts and seek opportunities to enhance the environment of the Vale.

Explore how procurement policies and practice can support the local economy and protect the local environment.

Work through the Food Vale partnership to gain Sustainable Food Cities status, ensuring we have a shared understanding of the contribution food can make to all aspects of well-being and the Vale has a sustainable, quality food environment which supports our economy, agriculture and tourism.

What will success look like in 2023?

A better understanding across our organisations and Vale residents of the impact of our actions on the environment and how much of an asset our local environment is.

Partners share expertise and intelligence to support each other to reduce their negative impact on the environment and deliver enhancements where possible.

All members of the PSB have revised and/or adopted policies which demonstrate a commitment to minimise negative impacts on the environment and promote positive behaviours.

Visitors, workers and residents of the Vale have greater options for active and sustainable travel.

The Vale PSB provides strong leadership in terms of the importance of the environment for all aspects of well-being.

Our Contribution

The following illustrates just some of the ways we will be contributing to the national well-being goals, how we will be putting the five ways of working into practice and how by achieving this objective we will also contribute towards achieving our other well-being objectives

By protecting, enhancing and valuing our environment we will also contribute towards achieving our other objectives



By working sustainably to deliver this objective...



Ensuring any activities we undertake do not have a **long-term** negative effect on our environment



Understanding how we can reduce our impact on the environment to **prevent** issues worsening e.g. through procurement policies



Integrating environmental considerations into different policies and practices e.g. procurement and take a more strategic approach to reducing our impact on the environment



Collaborating to share expertise and intelligence to better understand how to address environmental issues and the impacts of how we work and deliver services



Involving our communities to increase understanding of the ways in which we can all protect the Vale's environment

...we will maximise our contribution to the national well-being goals...

