



VOLUNTARY SECTOR LIAISON COMMITTEE – 17TH SEPTEMBER 2014

SUBJECT: THE WORK OF GROUNDWORK IN THE CAERPHILLY BOROUGH

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER GROUNDWORK CAERPHILLY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This is a background report for Committee Members on the work of Groundwork in the Caerphilly borough to accompany the presentation to be given to the Committee by Katy Stevenson and Mark Evans from Groundwork.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The report documents Groundwork Caerphilly current work programmes.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

3.1 The work of Groundwork links to the Greener outcome of *Caerphilly Delivers The Single Integrated Plan 2013-14*. Katy Stevenson is the Lead for the Greener Outcome sitting on the Leads Group for the Single Integrated Plan.

4. THE REPORT

4.1 Groundwork Communities First Projects

This suite of projects takes place within the Communities First cluster areas in the borough funded by the Communities First Programme.

- **Active in the Outdoors**

The main purpose of the project is to encourage community members to become more physically active, and improve their health. The Environmental Participation Officers engage and encourage community members to participate in physical activity within their local natural environment. The key purpose of this project is to increase the mental and physical health of participants and assist with gaining new skills and to help people who are disengaged in society to participate in a positive programme.

- **Foodwise**

This project involves the Communities First Health and Wellbeing Officer and the Environmental Participation Officer working with a variety of community members, covering a wide demographic range, to raise awareness of healthy eating and practical cooking skills. The project is two fold:-

- a structured 8-week weight management programme
- practical cooking sessions to provide participants the opportunity to practically reinforce the messages provided through Foodwise.

Sessions are delivered in an interactive, adaptable manner to suit the needs of the attendees and predominantly focused on integrating healthy eating messages into participants' lives in order to improve their nutritional intake.

- **Green Doctor**

This project engages community members who are in fuel poverty or at risk of fuel poverty, leading to problems relating to household debt. Through workshops and home visits community members are given specialist impartial advice on energy saving measures and review the community's current energy providers. By providing encouragement and advice to community members to undertake and implement energy saving measures and explore cheaper tariffs, people start feeling confident in managing their energy bills. Partners play a key role in this project as a joined up approach is necessary to support these customers, as the fuel poverty element may only be one part of the customer's debt problems.

- **Outdoor Action**

The project engages and trains people in an outdoor setting in the implementation of small-scale environmental projects identified by the community and partners. The environment is used to help people into long-term employment through programmes that build their social and personal skills, whilst providing accreditation and opening up potential career options. The project provides environmental project work to those who are unemployed with the aim of providing skills and experience which can be used to enhance employment prospects.

In 2013 Groundwork supported Communities First Areas of Caerphilly through a **Healthy Homes Project** and received 120 referrals in just 2 months. During the life of this project the following installations were made:-

Internal Door Brushes	Shower Timer	Freestanding Clothes Airier	Window Foam Trim	Energy Efficient Light Bulbs	Reflective Radiator Panels	Bath 2 Shower Adapter	Flush Saver	Thermo meters	Letter Box Cover
100	4	29	70	233	115	7	65	9	2

Case studies were drafted on the beneficiaries of this initiative; here is just one example -

Cefn Forest

The tenants of this property are a middle-aged couple at the lower end of the economic range and were in severe fuel poverty. The tenant discussed that she cannot afford to heat her home using the conventional method of gas and was instead using a high energy consumption electric heater as this provided instant relief from the cold. The gas was only used for cooking and was not used to warm the home at all. The lights were off in the property and the house felt cold and draughty. It was soon identified that there was a real need for energy saving measures to be installed including hippo bag, draught excluders, energy saving light bulbs and investigation into shower adapters as the tenant was only able to bath at the property which would obviously use a considerable level of water and gas to heat the water. Groundwork referred the tenant for additional support via Citizens Advice Bureau and Caerphilly County Borough Council Mental Health Team. The tenant had made contact with the council and was awaiting further information with regards to downgrading the property in order to be able to heat the home and buy food. Groundwork staff followed up with the council housing department on behalf of the tenant.

4.2 Healthy Rivers Programme

The South East Wales Rivers Trust (SEWRT) and Natural Resource Wales (NRW) have undertaken walkover surveys that have identified issues that are impacting on fish populations and other aspects of the ecology on the Sirhowy River. The objective of Healthy Rivers is to work in partnership with South East Wales Rivers Trust and Natural Resources Wales to co-ordinate the removal or modification of barriers of fish migration, The other objective of

Healthy Rivers is to promote the river to the local communities and groups, whilst also improving the local environment around the water way. The Healthy Rivers Programme has:-

- worked with a range of partners including Caerphilly County Borough Council, SEWRT and NRW, and other organisations to co-ordinate and facilitate the removal of barriers that restrict fish migration along the Sirhowy River
- maintained a steering group of interested parties
- researched and identified landowners on which the barriers are present, and sourced permissions from land owners to in order to remove these barriers
- co-ordinated the removal of barriers, conserved, and restored the water environment and associated habitats of the River Sirhowy
- promoted and educated the River Sirhowy and Fishing to local communities, groups and schools.

The following is a case study example from the initiative:-

Case Study: Penmaen Weir

Penmaen weir was a medium sized concrete weir across the river channel. It was a barrier to fish migration particularly in low flow conditions. To overcome the barrier Healthy Rivers coordinated the modification of the weir. A block stone pre barrage was built downstream of the weir to raise the water level below the weir. This has created 2 small jumps for migratory fish instead of 1 large jump. Salmon have been able to successfully jump over and swim past the weir this winter to lay their eggs.

4.3 Rural Green Doctors Programme

Groundwork Caerphilly's Rural Green Doctors helps sustain community venues, reduces carbon emissions, offers free energy advice to householders and community venues and helps them save money. Rural Green Doctors are qualified energy advisers who provide free and comprehensive energy advice to people who run community buildings in designated rural wards of the Caerphilly county borough. The programme began in January 2012 and is part-funded by the Rural Development Plan (RDP) to improve services in rural areas. This is done by visiting a community building, assessing where energy is used and wasted, comparing fuel suppliers and producing a full report recommending cost saving measures. Community buildings can then improve their energy efficiency, reduce their carbon footprint and reduce their energy bills. The Rural Green Doctors support the people who run the venues to implement changes. Most community venues are run by unpaid volunteers, who often lack the skills or confidence to increase the energy efficiency of the venue or negotiate with energy firms.

The following is a case study example from the initiative:-

Case Study – Ebenezer Baptist Church, Llanbradach

In 2012, the Rural Green Doctors carried out a free comprehensive energy assessment of the building and the way it is used by groups. They surveyed the Hall and sat down with the Church committee to discuss the use of the building and when it needed to be heated. The Rural Green Doctors then produced a report with recommendations for improvement and helped the Church look for funding. The energy assessment of the building found that only 50% of the building had double-glazing, the existing gas boiler was old and ineffective and the heating controls were inadequate. Groundwork Caerphilly obtained quotes for improvement work and the Church acquired funding from the Community Regeneration Fund to make the changes. The new energy efficient boiler allowed heating to be zoned to the ground and first floors separately over different time periods.

Before the Rural Green Doctors visited the Hall the Committee had difficulty heating the building. Now the 70 people who use the Hall every week can enjoy an old building that's a warm and inviting community space.

Ron Walton, Secretary of Ebenezer Baptist Church Hall, said - *I was pleased to be contacted by the Rural Green Doctors team. They gave professional advice on how our Church Hall could be made more energy efficient and carbon emissions reduced. I was pleasantly pleased with the report, which, following consideration by the Church Committee we were happy to implement. Our 'Mother and Toddler' group and 'Knitting Circle' have said the building is a much cosier place since the improvements were made.*

4.4 Healthy Villages Programme

Healthy Villages carries out physical, economic or social benefit projects in designated rural wards of the Caerphilly county borough. It supports groups and individuals to carry out projects, attract funding and make residents feel that their communities are a better place to live. The programme began in March 2011 and is part-funded by the Rural Development Plan (RDP) to make communities healthier. The term 'healthy' can be interpreted in various ways; in the past Healthy Villages have set up walking groups, secured funding for projects, supported community groups get online and have carried out physical improvement projects to encourage community cohesion.

The following is a case study example from the initiative:

Case Study – Aber Valley Cycle Path, Wildlife Interpretation Board

The Aber Valley Community Council felt that an existing cycle route joining the Penyrheol community with the Aber Valley had little information or signs and wanted to contribute an information board as a community. They chose to display information on local wildlife. The group contacted the Healthy Villages team and, working in partnership, applied for funding from the People's Postcode Trust that could be used to make improvements to the area. The group wanted to stamp their mark on what they felt was an uninspiring cycle route. They hoped that it would bring more people onto the route and so improve tourism in the local area. Crucially, the group wanted to implement a project that could pave the way for more community projects such as art and poetry walks along the route. The Community Council would like to see people using the cycle and learning about the local area as it has a rich heritage as a former mining town. Healthy Villages liaised with the Council to attain permissions for the installation of a wildlife interpretation board, forwarded community member's ideas to the board manufacturer and arranged work days to install the board. Members of the Community Council and the local primary school attended the work days that were arranged by experienced Healthy Villages' staff. Local people took an interest in the work that was carried out and expressed satisfaction with what the community group members achieved. During one of the work days, some children commented that digging the holes was the best part of their summer holiday!

4.5 Routes 2 Life Programme

Routes 2 Life is a skills development project that upskills groups individuals and engages them in a mentoring scheme. It offers formal and informal training from a horticulture site in Cwmfelinfach and a carpentry workshop in Aberbargoed. Two beneficiaries returned to work as a result of the support they received from Routes 2 Life. It is part-funded by the Rural Development Plan (RDP) to develop the skills of people living in designated rural wards of the Caerphilly county borough. The programme offers horticultural, agricultural and traditional skills training for individuals hoping to develop their employment prospects, self-esteem and general well-being whilst promoting the benefits of the natural environment and horticulture activities as a means of physical and mental recovery from a range of health problems. Training is tailored to individual needs and can deliver formal qualifications to individuals.

The following is a case study example from the initiative:-

Paul B (*started August 2013 continues to volunteer on a weekly basis 2-3x per week*). Paul had been unemployed for an excess of 12 months and wanted to gain practical skills. He has been informally trained at both the horticulture site and the carpentry workshop. He was one of the beneficiaries who helped built and create a garden at the RHS in Cardiff this year.

During his time with Routes 2 Life, Paul has undertaken Carpentry OCN modules, LANTRA Brushcutting qualifications and has a CSCS registration. Paul says - "*there has been a lot of new skills and techniques to be learned working at Groundwork's workshop facility, with an excellent tutor with a lot of experience. It's given me a thirst for more woodworking opportunities.*"

4.6 Community Environment Network

The aim of the network is to promote and support the development and delivery of community environmental and maintenance projects, and facilitating opportunities for local people and organisations to play a central part in environmental, social and economic regeneration within the Caerphilly borough, and Torfaen borough designated SRA's (Strategic Regeneration Areas).

4.7 Future Steps – January 2014 to March 2015 (Job Centre Plus Flexible Support)

The Future Steps project provides a platform for young people aged 18 - 24 to engage in training and practical opportunities to enhance chances of employability across the Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil boroughs. The programme provides young people with a work placement for enhancing skills, CV development and job search techniques. Trainees are provided with opportunities for a placement which include Countryside Management, Horticulture and at the social enterprise Furniture Revival. Training opportunities support interpersonal skills and development to improve gaining employment. In addition to work experience trainees are offered Agored Cymru accreditation in Working with Others Level 1 and a First Aid Qualification. Throughout the project participants are encouraged to Job search on a daily basis using the computers available and twice a month undertake Job search techniques i.e. CV writing and attending interviews. Ten participants have found employment during or just after finishing on the project. Jobs found have included working for a screening company, carpentry workshop assistant and plumbers mate.

The following is a case study example from the initiative:-

Case Study - James Davies

I started on the Future Steps programme in March. I was a little bit nervous starting meeting new people and also I didn't know what to expect. The programme was different to what I expected with different things going on, to keep it interesting. I enjoyed working on a Welsh dresser that needed total revamp including sanding, painting and varnishing. I left the programme with work experience, qualifications and knowledge of furniture revamp. I currently work at a Filling Station in Tredegar as a Cashier. I used my recent work experience, training and up to date references, to secure the post.

We have achieved a 79% completion rate.

4.8 Greencare

Greencare runs to a social enterprise and ILM model as a project within Groundwork Caerphilly, offering grounds maintenance services and installations. Greencare employs a core staff team and offers placement activity to those seeking employment skills.

4.9 Sustainable Play

Sustainable Play is an all Wales programme which will commence in October 2014. The Caerphilly borough will benefit from a team consisting of one senior play worker, three play workers and two apprentice play workers who will offer outdoor play sessions to children, young people and their families, and offering training to parents, young people and partner organisations in engagement with Children and Young People with Special Education Needs and Disabilities. The programme will run for three years to October 2017.

4.10 Go Green for Health

Go Green for Health will commence in November 2014 which will operate in the Mid Valleys West area, and offer, through partnership with GPs, a prescription for health using the outdoors and which offers innovative, technology based methods of tracking progress and demonstrating savings to the NHS.

4.11 Ty Mynyddislwyn Environment Centre

Ty Mynyddislwyn is our base, and a community facility available to groups and organisations within the borough to access modern office space, demo kitchen and IT training rooms and classroom for all suitable activities.

4.12 Key Groundwork Caerphilly Performance Data for 2013-2014

No. of Projects Actively Involving Schools	123
No. of Projects Actively Involving Partners	371
No. of businesses Supported	29
No. of Community Organisations Supported	150
Green Doctor Visits Delivered	56
No. of Spaces improved	738
Area of land improved	110,476 m2
Area of land maintained	1,430,805 m2
No. of Trees planted	637
No. of Adult Volunteering Days	5,534
No. of Young Person Volunteering Days	2,874
No. of Qualifications Community members have gained	51
Domestic CO2 emissions avoided/saved	559 tonnes

4.13 Key Groundwork Caerphilly Performance Data for April 2014 – June 2014

No. of Projects Actively Involving Schools	41
No. of Projects Actively Involving Partners	117
No. of businesses Supported	13
No. of Community Organisations Supported	40
Green Doctor Visits Delivered	6
No. of Spaces improved	251
Area of land improved	3,225 m2
Area of land maintained	328,074 m2
No. of Trees planted	3
No. of Adult Volunteering Days	1,169
No. of Young Person Volunteering Days	7,74
No. of Qualifications Community members have gained	6
Domestic CO2 emissions avoided/saved	45 tonnes

Author: Katy Stevenson, Chief Executive Officer, Groundwork Caerphilly