

Our Valleys, Our Future

These are the three priorities in Our Valleys, Our Future – the high-level action plan launched by the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys, in July.

The Blaenavon meeting is the latest in a series of public engagement events taking place in September and early October to discuss the plan.

Key themes to emerge from previous engagement sessions have included the need to work with businesses to develop skills; issues in relation to local transport and connectivity; the regeneration of local high streets; the need for public services to work better together and the cost and availability of child care.

All of these have been reflected in Our Valleys, Our Future, which was developed based on feedback from people living and working in the South Wales Valleys.

Minister for Lifelong Learning and the Welsh Language Alun Davies will be at the meeting together with fellow taskforce member Ann Beynon and Rhondda Cynon Taf Council leader Andrew Morgan. They will be joined by Alison Ward, Chief Executive of Torfaen Council and Councillor Anthony Hunt, leader of Torfaen Council.

Our Valleys, Our Future sets out a range of aims and actions in each of the three priority areas, including:

- Closing the employment gap between the South Wales Valleys and the rest of Wales by helping an additional 7,000 people into work by 2021 and creating thousands of new, fair, secure and sustainable jobs;
- Launching three pathfinder projects to look at how services and local delivery can be better joined-up in Llanhilleth, Ferndale and in Glynneath and Banwen;
- Exploring the development of a Valleys Landscape Park, which has the potential to help local communities use their natural and environmental resources for tourism, energy generation and health and wellbeing purposes.

“I am excited to be part of this work in the valleys – this part of Wales is close to my heart; it is where I was born and brought up. I recognise that many of the problems we face are deep-seated but I am determined the taskforce will make a real difference.

“We are committed to working with Torfaen Council, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, the employment service, the police, schools and colleges and a host of voluntary organisations to help valleys communities go from strength to strength.”

The taskforce was set up a year ago to work with communities and local businesses across the South Wales valleys to deliver lasting economic change in the region; to create good-quality jobs, closer to people's homes; improve skill levels and bring prosperity to all.

The taskforce will work to maximize job opportunities in the local economy, including in retail, care and the food industry. It will also encourage and provide support for existing and potential entrepreneurs.