

INFORM

VOLUNTARY
ACTION
GWEITHREDU
GWIRFODDOL

Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil • *Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Merthyr Tudful*



MEHEFIN
1-7
JUNE

WYTHNOS GWIRFODDOLWYR VOLUNTEERS' WEEK

Volunteers' Week takes place each year between 1-7 June. Established in 1984, it provides an opportunity to celebrate volunteers and volunteering, allows organisations to thank their volunteers for their help and support, and recognises the contribution that volunteers make to our community and services delivered.

In a speech, Barack Obama is quoted as saying: *"the best way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something. Don't wait for good things to happen to you. If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope, you will fill yourself with hope".*

Merthyr Tydfil is often in the headlines for negative reasons. Our hope is that this Volunteers' Week edition of Inform will help illustrate how inspirational volunteers and voluntary organisations are making good things happen in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil, and filling it with hope.

Dathlu!
Celebrate!

Welcome to the June edition of Inform in 2019. Our aim is to provide our members with up to date news and information and we welcome contributions and feedback from all readers of this newsletter.



Contents:

Focus on	3
Volunteering Vacancies	4
News	5-12

Ruth Hopkins sadly passed away in March. Ruth was a trustee of VAMT for the previous three years and made an enormous contribution in that time. She was the Director of Interlink from 1997 until 2009 and was an incredible advocate for the third sector and remained a very active trustee with several organisations until her death. Rachel Rowlands from Age Connects Morgannwg said in a tribute *"Ruth was a fierce and dedicated advocate for the Third Sector, never afraid to ask the difficult questions that made you stop and think. She was also a committed and supportive trustee of ours for over 10 years. She will be missed by us all"*.

YOU CAN BE PART OF THIS MAGAZINE TOO!

If you could like to include an article, news item or Focus on your group in the next edition, contact VAMT enquiries for more information: enquiries@vamt.net.

Merthyr Tydfil Voluntary Action Centre

89-90 Pontmorlais, High Street,
Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8UH

Tel: 01685 353900

Fax: 01685 353909

email: enquiries@vamt.net

Office Staff

Ian Davy

Chief Officer

Hilary Edwards

Development Officer

Carol Hindley

Admin & Finance Manager

Laura Johnson

Admin and Finance Officer

Sharon Richards

Health & Social Care Facilitator/ICF Project Manager

Claire Williams

Community Co-ordinator Merthyr Tydfil

Deanne Rebane

Community Co-ordinator Cwm Taf Primary Care

Frances Barry

Volunteering Officer

Ceri Samuel

Community Zone Information and Advice Officer

VAMT's Board

Anne Roberts Chair

Helen Thomas Vice Chair

Paul Gray Treasurer

Kayleigh Nor-val

Amber Lewis

Michelle Jones

Nicola Mahoney

Mark Ward

Brian Lewis (co-opted)

Suzanne Davies (co-opted)

Adverts/Inserts policy

In each Inform we are able to insert adverts and up to 5 different leaflets from member or other organisations. We have a rate card for private agencies who wish to advertise or place inserts and prices start for £25. There is also a rate card for voluntary organisations for charges covering pre-printed inserts and inserts that need to be copied. Contact VAMT enquiries@vamt.net



@VAMTtweets
@VAMTvolunteer
@merthycarers
@merthyrMAGNET
@onevoicemt
@c1stsouth



Focus on

Cwm Taf Care & Repair

INFORM

Care and Repair helps older people to repair, adapt and maintain their homes so they can stay living independently at home for as long as possible. Our vision is a Wales where all older people can live independently in safe, warm and accessible homes



Cwm Taf Care & Repair



As the Older People's Housing Champion, we have delivered, evolved and innovated services that help older people live independently in their own homes for over 30 years. We work with a wide range of local and

national partners including Welsh Government, RCTCBC, MTCBC, Cwm Taf University Health Board and Third Sector organisations.

Our service is person centered and tailored to each individual's needs. Experienced staff visit people at home and provide advice and support on a range of issues including:

- Home repairs, maintenance & adaptations
- Home Safety
- Falls Prevention
- Energy Efficiency and heating your home
- Welfare benefit advice
- Applying for grants & benevolent funding

Cwm Taf Care & Repair have been commissioned by MTCBC & RCTCBC Supporting People to provide an intensive Casework Service in partnership with key organisations that proactively address the housing needs of people who live with dementia and their carers across Cwm Taf.

Our service will aim to:

- Avoid crisis situations that can arise when the home of a person with dementia is unfit or unsuitable for their needs and which can hasten a move into hospital or residential care.
- Reduce the response times taken when urgent repair work is needed to the home of a person with dementia by having detailed knowledge of that home e.g. type and make of central heating boiler etc.

- Have detailed knowledge of the support network of the person with dementia to make it easier to respond to potential crisis situations.
- Ensure that those with dementia and their carers have access to detailed information on housing matters when and where appropriate e.g. on first being diagnosed.
- Support the client to remain living at home with greater independence

For further information call 0300 111 3333.

For more information on the dementia service contact Julia Burgess on 01443 735930

CWM TAF
Care & Repair | Gofal a Thirwaio

Dementia Support Service

Cwm Taf Care & Repair have been commissioned by MTCBC & RCTCBC Supporting people to provide an intensive Casework Service in partnership with key organisations that proactively address the housing needs of people who live with dementia and their carers across Cwm Taf.

The service will aim to:

- **Avoid crisis situations** that can arise when the home of a person with dementia is unfit or unsuitable for their needs and which can hasten a move into hospital or residential care.
- **Reduce the response times** taken when urgent repair work is needed to the home of a person with dementia by having detailed knowledge of that home e.g. type and make of central heating boiler etc.
- **Have detailed knowledge** of the support network of the person with dementia to make it easier to respond to potential crisis situations.
- **Ensure that those with dementia and their carers have access to detailed information** on housing matters when and where appropriate e.g. on first being diagnosed.
- **Support the client** to remain living at home with greater independence

01443 735930

Please contact our Dementia Officer **Julia Burgess** for further information



Deafblind Cymru

Deafblind Cymru, a part of DBUK (Deafblind UK), is the only national charity whose main focus is on acquired dual sensory loss. We are the longest established national charity providing practical support for individuals who have difficulty with their sight and hearing. By drawing on the learnings from our long and rich history (since 1928) we've developed a set of services that meet the changing needs of the people we support. All our services focus on unlocking the person behind the disability and on how we can work with deafblind people to achieve their aspirations, no matter how simple or how adventurous. We work with individuals who are 18+, their families and carers.

Deafblind UK require volunteers with a wide range of skills, interests and personalities, all of whom can offer valuable input into our work in the community. We are keen to work with volunteers to tailor roles that the volunteer will find rewarding and enjoyable, whilst benefitting deafblind individuals and helping to empower them to live happy and fulfilling lives. Deafblind UK has a number of volunteer vacancies in the Merthyr area:

Befriending, either in person, by telephone (tele-befriending) or via email or social media

Befrienders give our members the opportunity to be themselves and to take their mind off their day to day stresses. We carefully match our befrienders to members who have similar interests and, as a result, they often build close and long lasting friendships. The time commitment for a befriender greatly depends on what you can give and what our member wants.

Care Home Visitor

To volunteer time with DBUK to visit our members located within a local supported housing complex, sheltered housing estate or residential home. You will be able to offer regular and friendly visits to residents who may not otherwise have any visitors, helping to increase social contact and the wellbeing of the individual. You will be on hand to offer simple low-level support to individuals, for example signposting to local groups and services, reading, helping with mail, posting letters or communicating any messages to care home or DBUK staff.

Deafblind Community Champion

The Community Champion role can incorporate a great many activities, depending on the skills and interests of the volunteer. For example: to champion and raise awareness of the work of Deafblind UK in your local community. This might involve spending time at a stand in a public place, offering leaflets or advice, or making sure that stocks of our leaflets are always available at key sites in the local area. Alternatively, you may enjoy running local events such as coffee mornings or musical events, where local people can join together in friendship and to hear more about the work of DBUK.

Digital Inclusion Volunteers

To volunteer and spend time with individuals or small groups in your local community living with sensory impairment to support them get online. To help ensure individuals with sensory loss have the confidence and support required to help them access information and to embrace digital technology to help them live fulfilling and connected lives.

Walking Volunteer

To volunteer to spend time with individuals in your local area and support them to go on short walks to increase their activity levels. To help ensure individuals with sensory loss have the confidence and support required to go outdoors and remain active in their local community to aid their wellbeing

Full training for all roles will be provided.

Merthyr Mendicants

Do you have what it takes to become a Mendicant?

- Are you looking to volunteer?
- Prepared to commit just 1 ½ hours each month to attend a monthly meeting in the Conservative Club?
- Support several fundraising events throughout the year and our Christmas fundraising program?
- Are you enthusiastic, have a good sense of humour?
- Possess good interpersonal skills when engaging with the public?

If so, come and join our happy organisation.



Community Safety Support Volunteer South Wales Fire and Rescue



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
De Cymru
South Wales
Fire and Rescue Service

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service's Community Safety and Partnerships department is looking for suitable volunteers to support the promotion and delivery of key safety messages and to participate in local engagement events and initiatives within our communities.

Main duties and responsibilities are:

- To attend and support the delivery of community safety initiatives and events throughout the SWFRS area
- Act as community safety champions, to assist in the delivery of key safety messages and road safety education amongst our target groups
- Distribution of targeted information to local communities where required
- Full induction and training provided to undertake the role effectively. Volunteers must be aged 16 or over.

Urgent call for volunteers in Merthyr to support the Armed Forces community

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, is urgently appealing to the people

of Merthyr to join its network of volunteers that provide support for the Armed Forces community.



The SSAFA Mid-Glamorgan branch is looking to recruit new caseworkers to help continue its vital work supporting veterans and their families in the area.

The journey to 'Civvy Street' can be a difficult time for some veterans. Their employment, living arrangements, financial stability and personal lifestyles all alter at the same time whilst they and their families are moving away from their support networks and trying to acclimatise to their new life.

Volunteering for SSAFA is a great way to give something back to the local Armed Forces community and meet new people. A background in the Forces is not necessary but empathy and enthusiasm is a must.

SSAFA volunteer caseworkers provide support to veterans and their families who are in need. This could include access to financial assistance, advice and support on personal affairs and access to special equipment for those with disabilities.

Volunteer Opportunities at the Furniture Revival in Rhymney



The Furniture Revival is a social enterprise specialising in the reuse and recycling of household furniture, electricals and paints with the aim of alleviating poverty in its operational areas whilst supporting individuals to increase their skills through the social enterprise to support employability locally. They currently have a number of volunteer opportunities, all of which offer opportunities for training. Travelling expenses are also paid. These include:

Retail and Admin Assistant

- Answer the main telephone in a professional manner - taking and relaying messages, booking in collections.
- Greeting and serving visitors/customers.
- Inputting data into databases, spreadsheets etc.
- Typing Letters
- Recording incoming and outgoing mail.
- Photocopying, scanning, filing and general office duties.
- Assisting with sales

Warehouse Assistant/Driver's Mate

- Collection/delivery of furniture and electrical goods.
- Assist with the cleaning and repairs of household furniture and electricals
- Assist with restocking of showrooms on a day to day basis.

Marketing Assistant

- Greeting and serving visitors/customers.
- Updating social media platforms such as Facebook, Gumtree etc
- Social media marketing
- Assisting with sales
- Updating our online store and maintaining this to make sure all items are available.

Up-cycling Volunteer

- Small repairs on items of furniture ready for resale
- Up-cycling of badly marked items – sanding down and repainting
- Adhering to customer requests for items to be Up-cycled i.e. sanding and varnishing

For further information on these and many other volunteering opportunities contact
Frances Barry on 01685 353901
or frances.barry@vamt.net

Volunteers' Stories from Gellideg Foundation

My name is Jaimee and I am 17 years old. I have been volunteering at the Gellideg Foundation Group for 21 hours a week for the past few months where I have been involved in a lot of



events such as a dementia support group and art projects with the local youth club. I enjoy typing up invoices for our Task Force as I find it very relaxing just to get on with it is one new skill I have learnt as well as taking messages and dealing with enquiries. Working in the Foundation Group is a very fast paced environment; one morning you could be typing up a report for an upcoming event whereas the next day you could be down in the kitchen preparing food and serving customers with our Cyfarthfa Catering project, which is my favourite part. I love working out all the money and serving customers throughout the day, I find that the day goes really quickly. One of the best things about working in the Gellideg Foundation is the relationship you build with the other workers, everyone is so friendly and when I first came here they were very welcoming, making me excited to carry out further volunteering here.

There are many other volunteers here. Carys has volunteered with our local youth club for almost 9 months. She attends every Tuesday evening for between 2 - 2 1/2 hours with our 8 to 10 year olds. She has supported our youth team in general youth activities such as outdoor sports, nature walks and team games. Her main aspect revolves around leading the arts and crafts project, setting up and packing away afterwards; she has submitted a grant to VAMT for a mental health project and successfully obtained £600 for youth club where she collaborated with a small group to produce a canvas expressing mental health issues for young people nowadays. Carys is a very positive role model to our younger peers in youth club and puts in 100% of her effort every week.

Llinos is another one of our volunteers. She has worked here for over a year helping out with basic administration roles, however her main priority is putting our receipts into a spreadsheet for our Cyfarthfa Catering project with Merthyr Valley Homes. She does this for one afternoon a week. On a Friday Llinos also

volunteers in the kitchen, should we need help, where she carries out general kitchen duties such as cooking, serving our customers food, and helping to clean up before and afterwards. Her primary role in the kitchen is to man the till and deal with customers' orders and enquiries, she handles money and helps total up the till at the end of the day when all jobs are finished.

Luke's Story

Luke O'Neill originally joined ELITE back in 2015, and was one of the first volunteers to walk



through our doors. Initially he was a shy individual and came to us low on confidence.

After just 6 weeks as a volunteer, Luke quickly progressed into an important team member, and was given a 16-hour a week contract. In just a short space of time, we could see a massive improvement in his social skills.

After gaining valuable work and social skills, Luke felt confident enough to apply for new employment opportunities, and successfully landed jobs at Game, Merthyr Tydfil and The Entertainer, Cardiff where he could gather new skills through a retail working environment.

Fast forward to December 2018, Luke expressed his gratitude for the opportunities and skills he had gained through ELITE and asked if he could give something back by volunteering – to which we were more than happy to agree!

Luke is now a volunteer mentor at ELITE Paper Solutions and offers support to his work colleagues every Tuesday & Friday. Luke had the following to say:

"It's such an amazing place to work, the team are always very supportive. I believe that I can help people joining ELITE by building up their confidence and showing them that they are capable of doing the jobs".

Deputy Minister for Transport and Economy, Lee Waters visited EPS on 2nd May, to learn about how our social enterprise works and speak to our staff. Luke very confidently discussed his experience working as a volunteer with Lee, and after the visit said:

"To discuss my achievements with Lee Waters was amazing. I felt very proud going home and telling my family about the visit."

From being low on confidence and requiring support, to becoming a mentor and supporting others, hopefully Luke's story will inspire others.

Sing Away the Blues

Thanks to Merthyr Valleys Homes and the Penydarren Social Club, Merthyr Tydfil has a new group for the over 50's

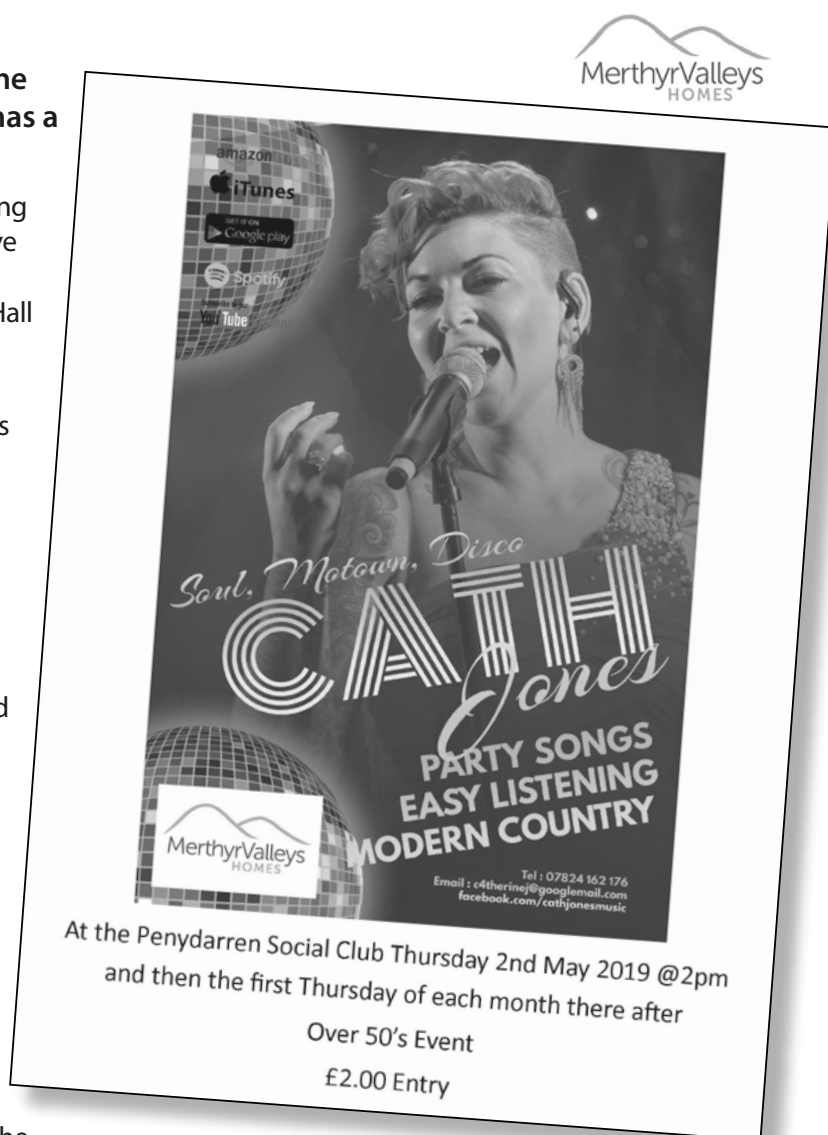
Merthyr Valleys Homes has six Community Living Schemes for residents who are over 50 and have additional needs such as mobility, or physical health. Each scheme has its own Community Hall which holds different activities but some were quieter than others.

MVH Community Living staff spoke to residents regarding social isolation and to gather ideas of what types of activities they would like to be involved in. Nights out where there were singers were enjoyed by many, particularly so they could have a sing-song. Many of the residents had lost partners so felt they were unable to go out on their own and it was quite difficult trying to get a few friends together and organise transport etc. They also felt that food tends to bring people together and like having a buffet/refreshments and some also enjoyed bingo.

Working with some of their tenants, staff launched a 6 week project called "Sing Away the January Blues" as residents felt that post-Christmas was quite a lonely time and left quite a few people feeling depressed as there was nothing to look forward to. The project brought together residents from all six schemes and initially was held in one of the Community Living scheme halls however after 3 weeks it had to be moved to Penydarren Social Club due to the increase in numbers. The first sessions started with 15 people attending, but by week 4 over 45 people were there! Transport and a buffet was provided, together with a lovely singer who worked with the tenants to sing the types of songs that they wanted to hear.

Much fun was had as well as dancing, socialising and there were many instances of people meeting other people who they hadn't seen for many years so were able to re-establish links.

The sessions were a great success and also included a visit from one of the local fire brigade and Age Cymru promoting different initiatives.



Following gathering feedback, the overall consensus was that residents wanted the project to continue to run and were happy to form a committee themselves to run it. Following a meeting with the chairman of Penydarren Social club and the residents a new "Sing Away the Blues" project has been launched to run on a monthly basis.

The staff at the club are supporting the residents in providing the hall free of charge, raffle prizes and organising the bingo. They are also assisting them in managing the finances. They held the first monthly event on 2 May when over 30 people attended.

"Sing Away the Blues" is open to anyone over the age of 50 who would like to attend.

Telephone befriending for older people who are lonely or isolated

Age Connects Morgannwg (ACM), is a local independent charity that provides services and support to older people over the age of 50 across Rhondda Cynon Taff, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend. ACM offer services to reduce loneliness and isolation and allow people to live independently for as long as possible.



One of the many services ACM provides is the Reaching Out Programme which offers meaningful befriending to older people. Living by yourself, feeling socially isolated or lonely can have an adverse effect on your health and wellbeing. Reaching Out works in a number of ways to help older people build confidence to maintain a healthy and independent lifestyle by creating supportive communities for them.

This service relies on the support of volunteers who offer their time to help an older person in the community. Befriending offers so much to a person who is lonely or isolated and may not speak to someone for weeks or even months! This can be simply by visiting that person for a cuppa once or twice a week, taking them to the shops or calling them for a chat.

As there are more people who are on the waiting list for this service than there are volunteers, ACM has a dedicated volunteer, Rachel, who kindly provides telephone befriending to the people who want it in the meantime. This provides a listening ear and emotional support to those who are vulnerable and lonely.

Rachel said this about volunteering; "Volunteering for Age Connects Morgannwg is so rewarding as I know first-hand that I have made a difference to someone's

life. There is so much need for this service as people don't realise how crippling loneliness can be. Even a quick phone call can make someone's day as they may not have had any contact with anyone for weeks! Volunteers are needed to make sure we can reach out to as many of these people as possible and provide the support they need."

Reaching Out improves people's wellbeing by giving them someone to talk to who cares about them. It also provides a channel of communication about the local services and groups available that they can take full advantage of. Mrs Roblin, who receives telephone befriending, said this; "It's been a brilliant service. Rachel is so friendly and makes me feel so comfortable. It's nice to talk to someone and it means that I don't bottle things up. It is definitely a service we need in our community".

ACM are always looking for new volunteers. If you would like to become a volunteer, please get in touch today on 01443 490650. You can meet new people, learn new skills and gain new experiences. No qualifications are necessary as ACM will provide all the training required. All you need is a little free time and a big heart.

Thank You to Our Volunteers from Merthyr Tydfil AFL

The Merthyr Tydfil Association Football League would like to take this opportunity to thank all the players who took part in mini football and junior football for the 2018/19 season, their dedication and commitment is outstanding.

We would also like to thank the coaches of the many teams who give up their time to train the boys and girls for weeks on end who turn up in all weathers to organise teams, prepare for training and games and then stay to clean up, put equipment away and often leave well after the training or games have finished.

Finally a massive thank you to the parents, the ones who help with organisation, put the nets up, wash the kits and support the coaches to make things a success. The season starts usually in July and goes on to May for juniors, for mini football it also lasts into the summer with festivals.

The effort that all concerned put in is outstanding and makes football a success in the Merthyr Tydfil area. Thank you all.

Royal Voluntary Service celebrates volunteers

Local volunteers from Royal Voluntary Service, one of Britain's oldest and largest volunteering charities will be celebrated during this year's national Volunteers' Week 1-7 June.



Royal Voluntary Service will celebrate its over 20,000 volunteers who support thousands of people each month in hospitals, at home and in the community. Many of its services are supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery. Through services such as Positive Steps and Good Neighbours, the focus is on building confidence, improving well-being and keeping loneliness at bay through an array of social activities and more structured support. The charity is also one of the largest retailers in the NHS, with its network of cafes and shops providing a valued haven in hospitals.

Volunteers' Week, established in 1984, recognises the contribution volunteers make to our communities every day. This year's celebration follows the launch of a major recruitment drive by Royal Voluntary Service under its 'Step Forward' campaign calling for people to volunteer in the wake of unprecedented pressure on public services.

While the challenges facing the nation are acute, equally as important is the discovery that volunteering is hugely beneficial for the individual. A recent report from Royal Voluntary Service found that volunteering boosts self-confidence, has a positive impact on mental health and teaches new skills.

All statistics and data correct at time of publication. Registered charity 1015988 (England and Wales) & SC038924 (Scotland).



Royal Voluntary Service thanks all of its volunteers for their dedication and service – thank you.

If you're interested, but not yet involved, then now is the time to Step Forward!

To find out more about Royal Voluntary Service volunteering opportunities and local services, visit royalvoluntaryservice.co.uk.



South East Wales Rivers Trust – Taff Bargoed catchment project

Gareth Edge is the Project Officer on the Taff Bargoed river catchment with South East Wales Rivers Trust. **The project so far has focussed on three key areas:**



Education - the re-engagement of the local primary school at Trelewis, within walking distance of the catchment. Class six at the school agreed to look after and bring on elvers for release into the catchment.

The Environment – Living River, an environmental, interactive story-telling workshop focussing on how people and wildlife on a typical valleys river have changed since the last ice age to the present day, has been held at four community libraries in rural wards in the catchment.

Community engagement - as part of the community engagement angle of the project we have been recruiting and training local volunteers:



Annie has taken part in multiple river/lake clean-ups in Bedlinog, Treharris, Edwardsville and Taf Fechan. Annie has successfully completed our river restoration qualification and Brusher and Strimmer training with Forest Park and Gardens. Annie has used the skills she has acquired through volunteering with us to secure meaningful employment, working with the homeless in Merthyr Tydfil. Annie is now also in the process of setting up her own volunteer group in Treharris Park.

Bruce has taken part in river clean-ups, as well as tackling invasive Himalayan Knotweed at Treharris Park. Bruce has successfully completed our river restoration qualification and Brusher and Strimmer training with Forest Park and Gardens. Bruce is using the skills acquired volunteering with his local group Welcome to Our Woods, running horticultural sessions at their allotments to improve community health and wellbeing.



Gareth.Edge@sewrt.org

Twitter: @TaffBargoed

Facebook: Taff Bargoed – A river for all



Volunteering for the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales

The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales is a nature conservation charity, dedicated to working with volunteers and communities to protect habitats and species. We manage over 100 nature reserves but are a small organisation with only 40 staff so the help of our volunteers is incredibly important and makes up a significant proportion of the conservation work which we are able to achieve.



Our wonderful Valleys volunteer group assist us in the work we do from Llantrisant to Merthyr Tydfil, including helping to look after the 4 nature reserves we manage in that area, but also supporting us in any other work we do such as education and community





events. We would like to say a massive Thank You to these brilliant people who have been a fantastic help and also great fun to spend time with.

Without this team of people in the Valleys in the last year we wouldn't have been able to:

- Repair and replace 600m of fencing to keep in the cows who graze our grassland
- Survey our nesting boxes for 1,316 minutes to record woodland bird activity
- Repair 6 boardwalks to stop people getting muddy feet
- Cut and clear 350m of bracken to make a fire break on a hillside that often burns
- Count the 2,923 orchids growing in our meadow so we can monitor how healthy it is
- Install 2 nature reserve entrance signs to welcome our visitors
- Create an earth bank to provide habitat for solitary mining bees
- Site and number 50 reptile sheets on the reserves so we can count our lizards and snakes
- Widen 891 meters of pathways to make them safer and accessible
- Collect countless bin bags full of rubbish from the nature reserves to keep them clean and safe

We've been lucky enough to see some wonderful wildlife whilst we've been out on our volunteer sessions, and it's also an opportunity to get some fresh air, exercise and meet people who also value the environment. If you are interested in volunteering with us please get in touch with Lorna on **07812063444** or email **l.baggett@welshwildlife.org**

Volunteering with the Connecting People and Nature Project

The Connecting People and Nature Project aims to set up opportunities for local people living within the rural communities of Merthyr Tydfil to engage with the wildlife around them. One way we have been able to do this is by asking people

to come along to their local park and take part in activities which might make them feel more connected to the wildlife there by showing them how we can value and care for it.

At Gellideg Fields we worked with children and adults to plant primroses on the woodland floor, showing them how to put them in the ground, and talking about the needs of the plant to survive and what might visit the flower in Spring. At Nant Llwynog Park volunteers came and helped to thin an area of woodland so that the plants we chose to leave in the ground would benefit from less competition for light and space. At Taf Fechan, we worked with Pontsticill community group and volunteers to plant 420 saplings which will grow into a new hedgerow and benefit all sorts of creatures from insects to birds and mammals. At Bryngoleu in Aberfan local school children discovered that hedgehogs were using the park by checking our footprint tunnels, and following on from this some children helped to install a hedgehog house for hibernation. Through these volunteering activities we have been able to enhance and protect the local biodiversity.

We have also been able to increase local skills, both in countryside management and in craft and woodwork activities. Volunteers came along to each site in February and made wooden bird nesting boxes. We were able to show them how to effectively use the tools, and how to construct



a simple box with a lid and hole. Some bird boxes were put up in the trees in the parks but people were also able to take them home for their own gardens.

The Connecting People and Nature Project also has a focus on how these types of opportunities can improve people's health and wellbeing, especially for the volunteers who repeatedly engage in the project. Our volunteer Gareth Pearson said *"They've helped me feel so much better in myself. I've discovered a hobby through taking a course with them and now take partly in weekly woodcraft activities as well as volunteering once a week in the Taf Fechan nature reserve. They are all such lovely people. I'm even considering looking into a career with them."*

Connecting People and Nature (CPAN) is run in partnership with the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales, with the following programme:

- Gellideg Fields – every Wednesday from 10am to 1pm – for 12 weeks (from 17 April). With outdoor activities over half term, including:
- A bat survey and moth trapping session – at Gellideg Fields on a Friday evening.

Future activities include:

- OCN accredited Species ID course – currently running at Parc Taff Bargoed
- Summer half term activities – at all four sites, Bedlinog, Vaynor, Bryngoleu and Gellideg
- Taff Fechan outdoor activity programme – begins in Autumn 2019

At the end of April 2019 Dawn Bowden AM, the Welsh Assembly Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, came to join one of our outdoor sessions in Gellideg. Despite the threat of rain, we made good progress tidying up the site and improving the fire pit by building some basic seating around it, in preparation for the following weeks.

Dawn was impressed by the diversity of the site with its open areas, mix of trees, and the stream and gorge running through it. She also saw the benefit of our work improving people's health and wellbeing through outdoor activities. We talked about social prescribing and the need for our health service to promote good health, as well as fixing poor health.



Dawn Bowden AM said: *"I am pleased to have the chance to join Anna, and her Gellideg fields and woodlands work, as part of Coed Lleol (Small Woods Wales), Actif Woods Wales programme. Good for wellbeing, companionship and our environment. New skills, community pride and fun for all ages."*

The programme offers so many benefits to those who come:

Debbie Cobbett, a participant in Gellideg says: *"Coed Lleol (Small Woods Wales) has gifted me a whole three hours of enforced relaxation today. Amidst great company we nestle around the fire on a log with a purpose at hand to focus and still our minds. It's proven to be a highlight of my week, I've learnt so many new skills, gained an OCN and made new friends. Thank you Anna, Richard, Carys and All for the all the brilliant engaging activities always something different and always accompanied by a welcome cuppa!!"*

Coed Lleol (Small Woods Wales) also runs the Actif Woods Wales programme in Merthyr Tydfil, with sessions every Tuesday (craft based) and Friday (walking/exercise) in Cyfartha Park. If you would like to get involved or attend any of our sessions in Merthyr Tydfil, please do get in touch.

www.coedlleol.org.uk/actif-woods-groups/merthyr-tydfil

All that glitters and sparkles at the annual Crystal Trophy Awards

The annual Crystal Trophy Awards were handed out on Thursday afternoon (4 April) with Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association, Rhondda Housing Association and Safer Merthyr Tydfil making the finals shortlist.

Safer Merthyr Tydfil took home the coveted Crystal Trophy and a prize fund of £1,000 for their Reconnect 50+ project.

Reconnect is a mentoring project which helps people aged 50+ who are lonely and isolated find the confidence to leave the isolation of their homes.

Each year the Crystal Trophy Awards recognise the achievements of local community groups and organisations who are working to improve health and wellbeing across Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil.

Collecting the award, Helen McShea from Safer Merthyr Tydfil said: *"I'm chuffed to bits for everyone who has participated and for the future of the Reconnect project. It will only work if people really do reconnect with one another."*

Professor Marcus Longley, Chair at Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, who presented the awards, said: *"These awards help to showcase the great work that's happening in our communities to improve health and wellbeing. Today has been an opportunity to see some of the many examples and demonstrates that we can all make a real difference."*



Other awards also presented include:

2nd Prize (£750) for Hapus Pawb? run by Rhondda Housing Association.

Hapus Pawb? is a six week health and wellbeing course for tenants and community members which supports them to better manage and improve their mental and physical health.

3rd Prize (£500) for Fit and Fed Merthyr Tydfil run by Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association.

Fit and Fed is a project to help reduce the burden of holiday hunger faced by children and young people during the school holidays. The project also runs a range of activities to help ensure that children and young people get physically active.

An opportunity to promote your services and activities at TwynFest 2019 !

Date: 27th July 2019 • Time: 10am - 5pm

Venue: Mardy Park, Glasier Road, Twynyrodyn, CF47 0TD

TwynFest 2019 is a community festival being organised by local residents. The community would like to invite local voluntary and statutory organisations to hold an information stand. If you're interested please get in touch by 19th July.

Note: You would need to bring your own table & chairs

Contact: Ravi Vedi • E: ravi@tagyouth.net • Tel: 01685 709 434 / 430

Twyn Action Group Youth Club (TAG Community Centre) Glasier Road,
Twynyrodyn , Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 0TD

Registered Charity / Elusen Gofrestredig 1159502

Community Coordinators – reaching the parts that others can't!

A winning poster highlighting the importance of the shingles vaccination has won first prize at the 16th Welsh Immunisation Conference. The poster entitled 'Improving shingles vaccination uptake – working in partnership with third sector Community Coordinators' was voted a winner by the delegates of the conference.

Rose Jones, Immunisation Nurse Facilitator at Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, said: *"The information was showcased due to the work of Health Community Coordinator Deanne Rebane in increasing the uptake of the shingles vaccination in Merthyr Tydfil, an area where uptake of the vaccination had previously been the lowest in Wales"*.

In her role, Deanne links closely with Primary Care Clusters to improve connectivity between Primary Care colleagues and the third sector.

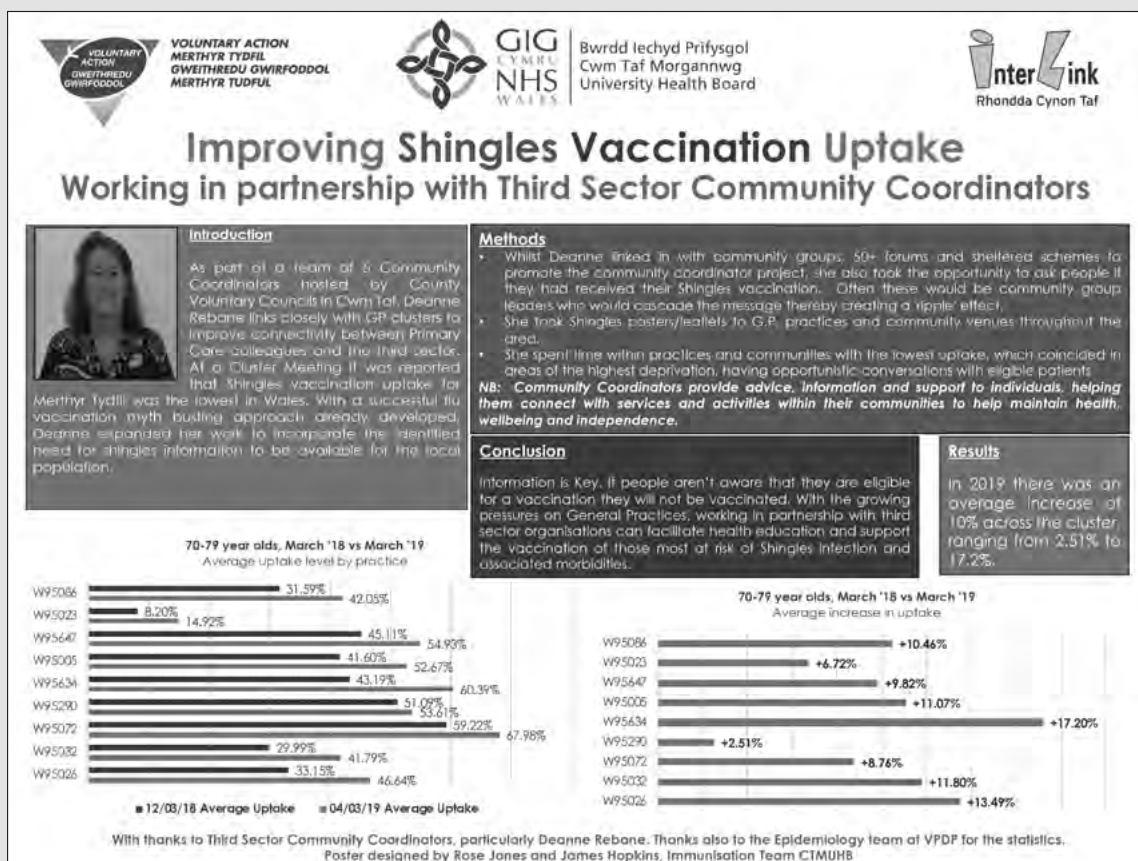
With a successful flu myth busting approach already developed, Deanne expanded her work to incorporate the identified need for information on the shingles vaccination to be available for the local population.

Whilst she linked in with community groups, 50+ forums and sheltered schemes to promote the Community Coordinator project, she also took the opportunity to ask people if they had received their vaccination. Often these would be community group leaders who would cascade the message thereby creating a "ripple" effect.

Posters and leaflets were taken to GP Practices and community venues throughout the area, and Deanne spent time with the GP Practices and communities with the lowest uptake, having opportunistic conversations with eligible patients.

The results were very impressive. There was an average of 10% increase since last year across the Merthyr Tydfil area ranging between 2.5% - 17.2%. Every practice in Merthyr increased their uptake!

Sharon Richards, Health & Wellbeing Manager at Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil, said: *"We are pleased to have collaborated on this project which recognises the strength of the Community Coordinators and their connectivity with local community groups, members and organisations."*



FareShare Cymru are in Merthyr Tydfil!



FareShare Cymru is a registered food redistribution charity based in Cardiff, operating throughout South Wales.

We work with suppliers and distributors in the food and drink industry securing good quality, surplus food, which we then redistribute to not-for-profit organisations throughout the area, providing them with a value for money option for their supply of food and drink. This may be for their kitchens, the kitchens used by residents, cooking classes, food parcels, breakfast clubs, after school clubs etc.

The food we get is a range of fresh, chilled, frozen and dry food that has become surplus for a number of reasons, including short dates, over-ordering, packaging errors.

The belief of FareShare is that no good food should go to waste.

We have recently set up a Local Collection Point in Merthyr Tydfil. We deliver to the Merthyr Town Football Club on a Monday lunchtime and the organisations we are working with collect the food from here. We still have space for more organisations to join!

If you are interested in receiving food from FareShare Cymru or if you would like more information please contact **Katie**:
katie@fareshare.cymru
02920 362111/ 07773 618175

New Housing First service for Merthyr Tydfil

A new approach to addressing rough sleeping that has proved successful in the United States and parts of Europe and the UK has come to Merthyr Tydfil

Based at the Voluntary Action Centre and run in partnership with The Salvation Army, the Merthyr Tydfil Housing First Project will see some rough sleepers who want to be part of the project being moved from the streets directly into their own home, with no homeless shelters in between.

The service is delivered in line with the following core principles:

- People have the right to a home
- An active approach is used
- Flexible support is provided as long as it is needed
- Housing and support are separated
- Individuals have choice and control
- The service is based on people's strengths, goals and aspirations
- A harm reduction approach is used

In order to meet the project criteria, participants need to be a single rough sleeper with complex support needs and a local connection to Merthyr Tydfil (couples and non-dependent family pairs may be considered on a case by case basis).

For more information or the referral process please contact the team –

Specialist Support Worker **Cara Forsey**
07884563210
cara.forsey@salvationarmy.org.uk

Assistant Support Worker **Chelsea Lewis**
07884563208
chelsea.lewis@salvationarmy.org.uk

Project Manager **Gail Smith**
07884563209
gail.smith@salvationarmy.org.uk

New Youth Mayor for Merthyr Tydfil

The new Youth Mayor for Merthyr Tydfil has been officially inaugurated at a ceremony in the Merthyr Tydfil Civic Centre.

Krystian Maciejczyk aged 17, was delighted to take up office, saying:

'Following a very successful year as Deputy Youth Mayor I am very proud to be given the further opportunity to represent Merthyr Tydfil for another year in the position of Youth Mayor. I am thankful for all of the opportunities I have had in my position and I look forward to all those yet to come and I am very grateful for the honour of being able to represent the young people of the borough.'

Andrew Millar was inaugurated as Deputy Youth Mayor. The Leader Councillor Kevin O'Neill gave an introduction to the evening and the High Sheriff of Mid-Glamorgan Councillor Tina Donnelly also supported the occasion. Cabinet member for Social

Services and Children's Champion Cllr Chris Davies supported the young people by attending the inauguration and the Gala Ball.

The Gala Ball was held at the Guest Keen Club in Dowlais, where guests were also treated to performances from several local talented young people. It is an exciting time to join the Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum as they will be working on a range of issues that are important to them. They will continue to work on mental health, homelessness and environmental issues.

To find out more follow our Facebook page **MT Youth** or contact **Janice Watkins** on **01685 353999**.



Side by Side

If you're part of an organisation or community group that offers peer support – or are thinking about starting a group Merthyr and the Valleys Mind can help you get started.

Thanks to support from Welsh Government and Mind Cymru, they are running a series of free training and networking sessions where you can see how others have successfully run groups. You'll also be able to find support from others in your area.

There are also small grants to help you get started. This money could be used for things like venue hire, leaflets, materials for activities, amongst many other things.

Who can take part?

- Anyone involved in running a community group where peer support takes place.
- Anyone who is interested in setting up a peer support group.
- Organisations who want to support people to run a peer support group.
- Your organisation or group must be in Merthyr Tydfil or Rhondda Cynon Taf

So far over 15 community groups have applied for the £250 grants and over 25 groups and organisations

attended the launch and first training session earlier in the year. Groups are currently applying for the grants to keep their sessions sustainable, interesting and attractive to new members. Types of successful group applications include new arts and crafts materials, gardening equipment, recording equipment for choir practice, guest speakers, stationery and administrative equipment like printers and business cards but groups can also apply for funding for training, marketing and venue hire.

Side by Side brings together volunteers and community groups from the three local boroughs Merthyr, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Bridgend to deliver regular training and networking sessions for people to learn more about what peer support is and how groups can support themselves. The training and networking sessions cover topics such as communication skills, mental health awareness, group dynamics, confidentiality, boundaries, signposting, group promotion and group agreements.

The next training session in Merthyr will be held at Dowlais Community Library on July 15th 1-4pm and will include a networking buffet.

Please contact **wendy.mackay@matvmind.org.uk** or mobile **07399 347737** for more details and see the web page **<https://matvmind.org.uk/projects/side-side-cymru-peer-support-community>**

Groups need to attend either a training or networking session to apply for the £250 and there are criteria for what can be purchased.

Trelewis Community Centre

Trelewis Community Centre is a place where young and old people alike can come and enjoy themselves. We're located at the heart of the community on Mackintosh Terrace, Trelewis.



There are several groups here at the moment:

- Pre-school, available Monday to Friday during term time
- Tae Kwon Do Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings
- Youth Wednesday evenings
- Communities for Work Drop in sessions
- Parent Network Group for families affected by dementia on Monday mornings.

From the first Tuesday in June, the centre will be offering weekly sessions for Low Impact Functional Training from 10.30am to 11.30am to help those with low mobility.

We also offer plenty of activities for children during the holidays – check out our Facebook Page for up to date information.

So far we've organised community litter picks, delivered a children's Summer Arts and Crafts programme, held community days and coffee mornings, and many other events such as Treasure Hunts and discos. The centre is available to hire for parties, training sessions, meetings and community groups – contact us for booking information.

We are currently looking for volunteers to join our team in helping create a better future for our centre. Full training will be provided, along with new skills and qualifications earned.

If you'd like more information please call **Hannah** on **01685 727894** or email **Hannah.Hall@mvhomes.org.uk**

Cwm Taf UHB are offering Carers Awareness Agored accredited training



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Cwm Taf
University Health Board

The Carer Awareness Agored training course is a tool which develops awareness of Carers and how they can be supported within the community.

By identifying Carers in the community you are able to signpost Carers for information, support and refer to local Carer information services should the Carer wish. The Agored training course is a level 1, 2 credit module. The module consists of 4 units. For each unit there are a number of examples and evidence that has to be provided on how you identify and support Carers. It does not require any identifiable information as details can be anonymised.

The course is fully funded and support will be given at every stage with an assessor attending your place of work for one hour per month (more if you want to complete sooner). There is an opportunity for the learner to develop the role of the Carer champion and make it their own project, which will enhance the own personal development.

For more information please email **cerys.gamble@wales.nhs.uk**

Carers Week 10th-14th June 2019

In readiness for Carer week, Cwm Taf UHB are holding an information stand at Prince Charles Hospital from 10th – 14th June 2019.

Would your organisation like to attend to promote what services and support you offer Carers within the community?

Please note as space is limited we only have access to one information stand.

If you would like to man an information stand for a day or morning/afternoon please email **Cerys.gamble@wales.nhs.uk**

Dates and times for Royal Glamorgan Hospital will be released shortly.



Develop your business ideas with Welsh ICE

The 5-9 Club is an 8 week structured after-hours course powered by Welsh ICE designed to support aspiring business owners through the early stages of enterprise. The course will cover:

- Idea generation
- Digital marketing
- Social media
- Business model canvas
- Funding
- Know your customer
- Branding
- Building a website
- Legal stuff
- Pitching skills

The course is also suitable for social entrepreneurs and social enterprise.

To register an interest visit welshice.org/5-9club or email lesley@welshice.org to express your interest.

Spread The Word Festival – 11th April 2019

The UK's largest children's literature festival that celebrates World Book Day



Stephens and George Charitable Trust's 'Spread The Word Festival', is an annual event that inspires and educates young people into reading. This year, we took over Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre with our theme of the 'great outdoors'. Our magical day hosted a range of events from walking with dinosaurs to inspiring tails from The World Book Day Author Peter Bently.

The aim of the festival was to demonstrate the benefits that good literacy brings, as poor literacy could mean that young people do not gain the knowledge they need to succeed in their school or adult lives. This year over 3,000 children were involved in our fun festival, each sharing their passion for reading and learning.

We hope you enjoyed our Spread The World Festival and that you can join us next year for another day full of fun, literacy and learning!



Tenovus Here Comes the Sun Schools Campaign



With summer on its way, it's time for our sun safety advisors to start visiting schools to spread those all-important sun safety messages! Skin cancer rates continue to rise in Wales, even though it's preventable in most cases. So we need to make sure we educate our children to stay safe in the sun.



Our trained Sun Safety Advisers deliver interactive class workshops which are linked to the national curriculum. Following our evaluation surveys from last year, the vast majority of teachers found our sessions age appropriate (97%), well designed and effective (93.9%).

This year we have teamed up with the Skcin Schools Sun Safety Scheme and are able to support schools who wish to achieve a sun safe school accreditation. For more information on what the accreditation involves visit our website at: tenovuscancercare.org.uk/herecomesthesunschools

For classroom sessions, we deliver a short presentation and engage the learners in a number of interactive activities, such as the Cellfie activity.

During the Cellfie session, they get to see their cheek cell under the microscope and we explain to the learners how to look after their cells by avoiding risky UV exposure.

The learners are given sun safety information and a sachet of sun cream. A parent letter and sun safety information is provided to go in the school bags at the end of the day.

The school has an option to complete a pre and post survey with the children, which will provide feedback on the effectiveness of the intervention in their school.

We're happy to supply further details or answer any questions you may have.

Please contact: **Maura Matthews** on **029 2076 8871** or email health@tenovuscancercare.org.uk



Taff Bargoed Development Trust

The Taff Bargoed Development Trust (TBDT), a registered charity, was established in 1995 following the demise of the coal industry in the Taff Bargoed Valley. Three mines closed and rendered thousands of people jobless for years to come. TBDT evolved from the Trelewis and Bedlinog Federation, an organisation developed by a handful of local volunteers concerned with the socio-economic impact caused by the loss of so many jobs which contributed to a way of life and the life blood of the community

The Trust seeks to continue to regenerate the local area through creating business opportunities and promoting education and training. TBDT also aspires to develop further enterprises in the near future that will offer opportunities to the citizens of our communities.

TBDT's latest project, a solar array (solar farm) came to fruition due to the Trust having a south facing bank that is at an incline of 10% that lends itself to the creation of a solar farm. The Trust has always been in favour of renewable projects and have also looked into heating the centre using the mine water located beneath which is at a constant 16 degrees centigrade.

Over the past two years the Taff Bargoed Development Trust has sponsored up to six local sports clubs to ensure they can survive, grow and prosper in order to continue benefitting the community the Trust serves. The Solar array will help continue this support due to the monies generated solely used in setting up a grant scheme to which local groups can apply. Why not use such an available resource to create such good and for a period of up to 25 years or more?

The grants may be based on a certain theme each year such as sport, culture, community, etc. or we may simply grant monies to those groups that are in most need to ensure they can continue their work. The Taff

Bargoed Valley contains communities with very poor deprivation figures as demonstrated by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation and the array can help to address such issues.

The array is connected to the Summit centre's electricity supply and this will benefit Rock UK, a charity themselves, by saving on their electrical costs. It will also help to reduce the centre's carbon footprint and emissions that are damaging the environment which is now such a topical matter.

Surplus electricity can also be used to energise domestic households that find it difficult to afford utility costs (The Local Scheme) who will pay a reduced tariff and this will be undertaken if the system allows. For more information contact **Howard Jackson** at the Trust telephone **01443 710827** or enquiries@tbd.co.uk



This newsletter has been published by Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil, Voluntary Action Centre, 89 – 90 Pontmorlais, High Street, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8UH. Telephone: (01685) 353900
Registered Charity No: 1118403 • Company No: 6058360

The views expressed in this edition of Inform are not necessarily those of Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil.
Croesawir erthyglau nail ai'n ddwyieithog neu'n uniaith Gymraeg.

The closing date for articles for the next edition (September 2019) is 25 August 2019.