

Agenda 21 Strategy for Neath Port Talbot

2001-2006 *incorporating* Agenda 21 Tawe Afan Nedd





This Strategy was adopted on the 24th January 2001
by the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

The preparation for the plan was undertaken by
the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council with the assistance
of the Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service (CVS).
It is, however, the product of a very real partnership with a wide
range of organisations and bodies, and the contribution of local
communities and schools throughout the County Borough.

The Council and its partners have decided to combine the work
on Agenda 21 with the Community Plan. This will ensure that it
becomes a central part of all local activities and planning.

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What is Local Agenda 21?

It is an initiative launched at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 to make sustainable development a reality in communities around the world for the 21st Century. Contrary to common belief, Agenda 21 is not simply about the environment, it is also about people and their entitlement to a reasonable quality of life, and also having a say in shaping their community for the future.

The U.K. government's vision of sustainable development is based on four broad objectives.

- * **maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment**
- * **social progress which recognises the needs of everyone**
- * **effective protection of the environment**
- * **prudent use of natural resources**

Achieving sustainable development means addressing all of these objectives equally, both for present and future generations.

The links between the environment, development and the quality of

peoples lives has recently been brought to the forefront, with floods inflicting misery on thousands of people in this country. The year 2000 has been logged as the wettest Autumn on record for the UK and is seen as the “wakeup call” for all those who have been ignoring the predictions of Global Warming. Unless we reduce emissions from industry, vehicles and power stations, we can expect more of the same to come.

It is therefore timely that the Agenda 21 strategies for local areas across Britain have been requested to be in place by the end of the year 2000. It is time to be bold and look closely at how we all live our lives, personal and working, with a view to where changes can be made. Some of the choices may seem difficult, reducing our reliance on the motorcar, cutting back energy consumption in the home and at work, purchasing more wisely – based on need rather than fancy, with reduced packaging into the bargain; and of course looking after our beautiful countryside and wildlife, resisting the temptation to urbanise and manicure our natural sites.

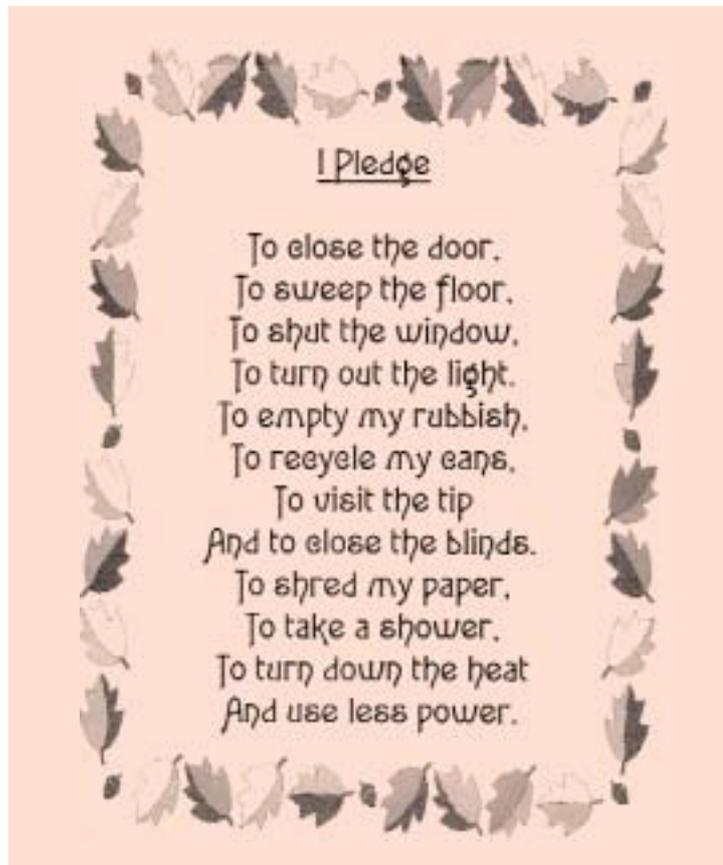
The Brundtland Commission (The World Commission on Environment and Development) defines sustainable development as:-

“Development which meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

This concentrates our minds on how future generations may view our current generation’s place in history by the wasteful, polluting and sometimes destructive way we have approached the planet and our locality. Peoples quality of life is affected by

the quality of air they breathe, the cleanliness of the streets they walk, whether they see butterflies and birds in their gardens, whether they feel safe in their communities with pleasant surroundings and friendly neighbours and whether they have enough money to fulfil their daily needs and maintain good health. All of these are aspects of a sustainable community demonstrating that environment, people and jobs are all inextricably linked.

*pledge of the children of
Llansawel Primary School*



Agenda 21 Vision for Tawe Afan Nedd

- To promote sustainable communities by encouraging and empowering local people to take forward initiatives utilising local assets, local strengths and local people.
- To provide the services and economic prosperity our local people deserve through:

Partnership and regular consultation,

Reduction of pollution and waste, while conserving our precious natural environment,

Sensitivity to the differing cultural community identities.

The starting point for progressing local Agenda 21 is the **consultation of local people** to discover the local issues (The Agenda) and local suggestions on how to deal with the

issues in a sustainable manner. At the same time the local authority, and local partner-agencies should be looking at their internal systems to try to make them more sustainable.

"A Sense of Community"

"Good Primary Schools"

"Local walks"

*"Why have I lived here all my life? -
Necessity which has become a pleasure"*

residents quotes

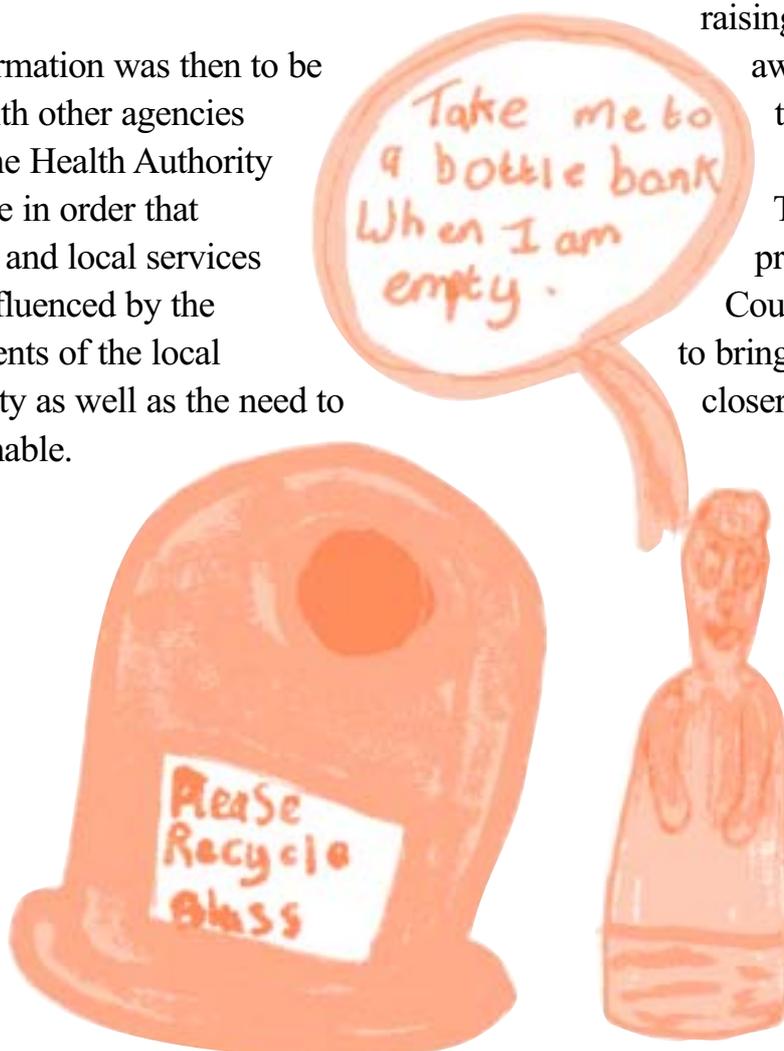
Local Background

In October 1997 the Policy Committee of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council approved a comprehensive consultation programme for local Agenda 21. It entailed collecting local community issues and suggested solutions from the wider public, school children, the voluntary sector, local businesses, community councils and of course local members and the Authority itself.

This information was then to be shared with other agencies such as the Health Authority and Police in order that strategies and local services can be influenced by the requirements of the local community as well as the need to be sustainable.

The local Agenda 21 public consultation meetings were completely open and unprompted and did not restrict the individual's scope for comment as can be the case when using questionnaires. They also cover a wide range of issues thus giving a comprehensive picture of a community, not an isolated snapshot of a particular subject e.g. Crime. The community was encouraged to think of sustainable solutions to the issues thus raising environmental awareness at the same time.

The consultation process also reflects the County Borough's efforts to bring local government closer to the community.



How the public consultations were conducted

The first public meeting was held in May 98 for the community council area of Coedffranc. Since that time, 29 public meetings have taken place in every community council area and in the corresponding patches in Port Talbot and Afan where there are no community councils. Where requested, the meetings were held bilingually. These meetings were each supported by their local Community Council and County Borough Councillor with help in terms of venues, publicity and of course attendance.

Each meeting was chaired by a local non-political resident, often the local minister, member of school governors, businessman or active member of a local community group.

The local primary schools were also involved and work which the children produced, on their Agenda 21 for their community, was put on display in the public meeting. The children took home flyers publicising the meeting and also encouraged their parents to attend the meeting to view their work. This tended to give a wider cross section of adults at the meeting, than would usually attend public meetings. Support for the work in the schools came from the Local Authorities Environmental Quality Unit and Environmental Education Advisor.

Posters and handouts were widely distributed within the community boundary and press releases were put out to the locally-read papers advertising the meeting.

The meetings were facilitated jointly by officers from the Council's Environmental Quality Unit and the Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service and locally chaired. The attendances have varied from 15-75 members of the community, sometimes with a small number of children in attendance.

The public were asked to **write** down their issues and suggested solutions on post-it notes. These were then stuck on one of 12 relevant theme boards stationed around the room. The theme board titles were those agreed by Policy Committee on environmental, economic and quality of life subjects.

They are as follows:

- * **Waste & Natural Resources**
- * **Poverty**
- * **Pollution**
- * **Culture and Recreation**
- * **Wildlife & Countryside**
- * **Access to Local facilities**
- * **Work (including voluntary work)**

- * **Access to Information, Education & Training**
- * **Health**
- * **Physical Appearance of Towns and Villages**
- * **Personal Safety (Crime)**

There is a twelfth board category entitled the “Nice Board” on which people could record the positive elements of their community which they valued most a would not like to lose.

The information from these boards was then summed up with general discussion from the floor. It was subsequently transcribed as accurately as possible in conjunction with the children’s Agenda 21 comments from the school display. Full copies of write ups of the comments were then mailed out to all those who attended. These were, where requested, bilingual. The atmosphere of the meetings has been generally very positive and the use of the post-its has ensured that all attendees were able to get their views across.

In total , some **6044 issues** have been recorded from a total of **996 attendees** at the public meeting. Some **51 primary** schools have contributed their children’s work and a consultation exercise has taken place in 4 of the local comprehensives. These have generated in excess of **2119** comments.

The programme of community meetings detailed in Appendix I, has been welcomed by the attendees of the meetings as an expression of the Authority seeking to work more closely with its communities, it also demonstrated the Authority’s partnership with the Voluntary Sector. Its approach has attracted considerable media attention with articles and interviews in the local press, radio and TV in both English and Welsh. It has also been “observed” by officers from other local authorities in South Wales, Friends of the Earth and Sustainable Wales.

The resulting comments have been collated into the most “popular” subjects and are displayed in the graph overleaf. All totals expressed are minimums, since a large proportion of the comments contained more than one issue. This has produced some 73 subjects, but much of the information could be broken down further if required. The “original” comments for each community are available from the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council website. Please visit it, as it is only then that you will be able to get an understanding of the aspirations of our communities. Similarly transcriptions of the children’s poems, projects and pleas are also reproduced on the website.

[www.neath-porttalbot.gov.uk/council services](http://www.neath-porttalbot.gov.uk/council-services)

look in the Environmental section