

# What we do



Investing in People, Homes and Communities in Torfaen

## Community Investment and Involvement

### Working with young people

- **Bron Afon Busters/Youth Consultation**

This is a group of young people from Blaenavon, who work regularly with us to give their opinions on where they live and what they believe should be priorities for Bron Afon. They have formed the basis of the Bron Afon Youth Forum, which has identified the need for young person membership, aims to have an input into decision making and will identify best practice in other organisations. They have laid the foundations of real involvement in the organisation which is committed to giving them a voice.



- **The NEON Youth Project**

We secured funding from Children in Need for this project to run an Eco Friendly Fashion Show. 160 young people from five counties across South Wales took part.

- **Mini Monitors**

A pilot scheme being developed with a local primary school to highlight green issues and to keep local areas litter free.



### Improving our communities

- **Community litter picks**

We work regularly with local school children, residents and partners to litter pick public spaces.

- **Community Art**

Young people have asked us to include community art in our environmental plans.

- **Community Gardening Project**

Young people from the NEON Youth Project worked with residents to put in planters at Baker Street House. A community garden has now been proposed.

- **Pontnewydd**

We have adopted a multi agency approach in this community to change the perception of young people as being the cause of some of the problems in the area.

- **Blaenavon**

We have been working in close partnership with Communities First, local police and the Youth Service to prioritise young people's and children's facilities.



## Supporting community events

- We actively support community events with our partners, encouraging membership of Bron Afon and the involvement of young people.



## Supporting vulnerable tenants

- We have helped one of our young tenants to get advice from Jobmatch and to continue his voluntary work with local young people.
- Twenty young people from a local comprehensive school are working with us to produce a health and safety DVD for our tenants.
- We are helping residents of Hales House homeless hostel to help them with life skills such as money management, job applications and interview skills, as well as preparing them to sustain their tenancy.



## Improving our services

- We have aligned our services around seventeen communities, developing a 'community team' for each. It means we can draw on local knowledge, work more closely with the community, get a better understanding of local needs and priorities, have an increased presence in the community and create more valuable relationships.
- Our community caretakers have engaged with tenants and residents to identify problems in the community.



## The work of our Members

- At the end of March 2010, we had recruited 1375 local tenants and residents as Members. Members contributed 4380 hours of their time in helping to shape our policies and improve our services.
- Our Quality Design Forum examines our work, vets materials, looks at the work of our in house teams, the contractors we employ and the choices we offer to our tenants.
- Our Service Improvement Monitors speak to tenants to make sure they are happy with our services.
- Community walkabouts with our Members and community housing officers help us to monitor how well the areas around our homes are being looked after.
- Four area forums meet on a regular basis to discuss issues that are of concern to them.
- In November 2009, we won a Chartered Institute of Housing UK award for 'Delivering Better Accountability and Resident Involvement.'
- Members of our Communications Forum have developed a 'Bron Afon Member Approved' mark.
- Our Leaseholder Forum meets quarterly to discuss issues specific to leaseholders.
- Our Housing Support Forum explores new ways to develop the service to meet the needs of older people.



## Learning and Development

### Future Jobs Fund

- We have taken on four young people - two as cafe assistants in Bron Appétit, our on-site social enterprise cafe and two as admin. support officers.

### Work experience placements

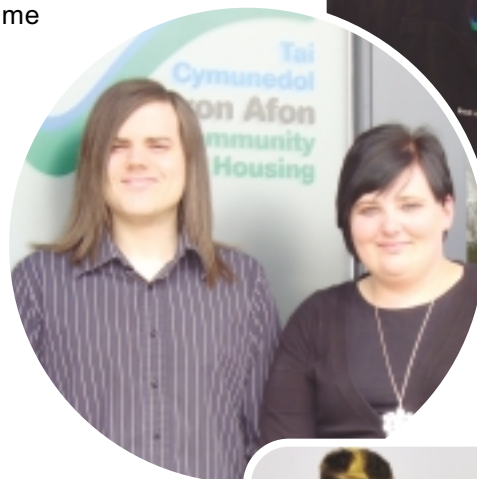
- In March 2010, we won first place in a Careers Wales Employers' Award in recognition of the large number of varied, high quality work experience opportunities we offer. This year, we hosted thirty nine work experience placements which involve young people spending two or three days with us and the remaining days in school.

### Adult work placements

- This year, we hosted thirty four adult work placements. These placements are aimed at people in Torfaen who have been out of the workplace for some time through illness or disability and who are now ready to move back into work.

### Apprenticeships

- We have forty eight apprentices, forty three of whom are in trades, one in surveying and four in administration. We deliver the programme in partnership with Torfaen Training and local colleges.



## Money Matters

### Rent Payment Cards

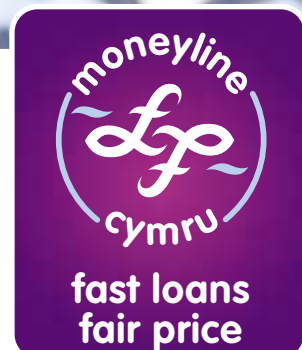
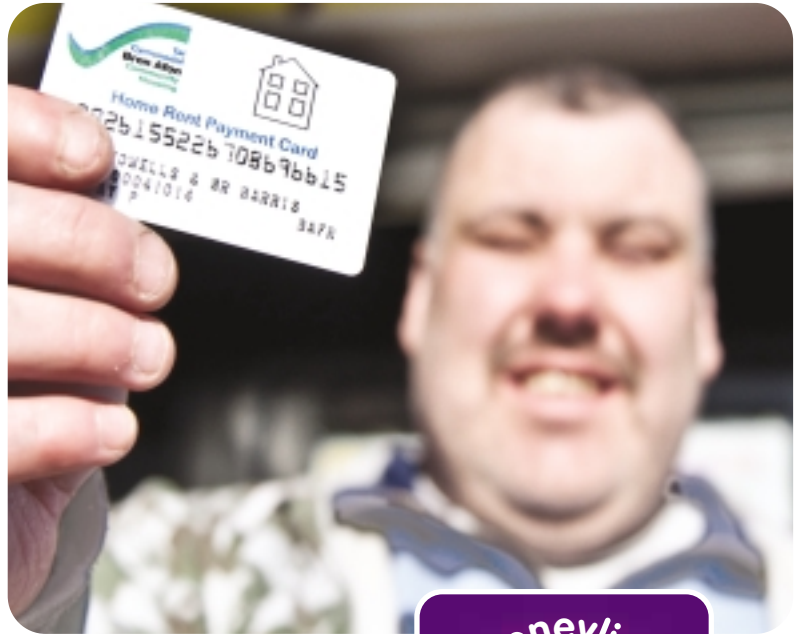
- Tenants have been telling us that the new payment cards we introduced this year have made it easy and convenient to pay their rent.

### Money advice

- After six months of engaging with tenants, we have referred 106 clients. Success stories include four tenants saved from eviction, £80k +debt written off and £8k of unclaimed benefits secured.

### Moneyline Cymru

- We have teamed up with seventeen other housing organisations to set up Moneyline Cymru, a not for profit loan company. The total interest saved by all borrowers using Moneyline Cymru rather than doorstep lenders reached £353,399.09 by April 2010.



## New Projects

### Bron Appétit

- Our on-site social enterprise cafe has now been open for a full year. We give work based experience, social skills and independent living skills to helpers with learning difficulties. Takings have at the very least doubled since our opening in May 2009. At the start of 2010, we took on two Future Jobs Funded trainees, who are gaining experience and having fun with menu planning and special theme days.

### Lottery bid

- We bid successfully for a £162,000 grant from the Big Lottery Fund. This will enable us to employ two new members of staff to work with older people.



### Green Futures

- This is an exciting programme to develop future proofing our open space investment. It gives tenants, residents, staff and other interested parties an opportunity to help us develop a sustainable open space strategy for our land and related assets including garages, car parks, trees, shrub beds etc.



**Bron Appétit** 

## Our housing investment programme

### Helping local businesses

- Super Rod Limited, a Blaenavon company, is helping our staff to rewire homes quicker so that tenants face less disruption during refurbishment.

### ARBED

- Around 300 residents in Pontnewynydd will have cheaper heating bills thanks to a £1.5 million grant from the Welsh Assembly Government's ARBED programme. The grant will be spent on building work to make them warmer and this could include solar panels and external wall insulation.

### Welsh Housing Quality Standard

- We have a framework of contractors that is almost exclusively made up of local firms. We try to use these local firms for any sub-contracted work we need, working closely with our Quality Design Forum in ensuring work is given out across the board where possible.
- We have a programme of insulated renders in the north of the Borough. Securing WAG 'ARBED' funding of £1 million for renewable energy technologies will ensure that over ten large maisonette blocks in Pontnewynydd will be improved beyond the original expectations of the business plan. The insulated render programme will be coupled with re roofing works and internal kitchen, bathroom, heating and rewiring works, making these properties WHQS compliant.

### Green outcomes

- We have turned back on 277 street lights.
- We have invested £440,000 from Heads of the Valleys funding to install solar panels in homes across the north of the Borough.
- A further £300, 000 from the Low Carbon Building Programme (Phase 2) has enabled us to install solar panels in five sheltered schemes and twenty nine blocks of flats, making savings of over 4000m<sup>3</sup> of CO<sub>2</sub> and generating in excess of 6 kw of electricity daily.
- We have worked with the Council to introduce a recycling pilot in four blocks of flats and have also introduced greener cleaning products across all of sheltered schemes.

Improvements & Major Repairs	Completed April 2008 to March 2010
Kitchens	1,659
Bathrooms	1,719
Additional Showers to existing Bathrooms	0
Boilers	1,798
Heating systems	1,561
Rewiring	2,005
New Secure Front Doors	4,618
New Secure Back Doors	4,317
New Roofs	94
Double Glazed Windows that Permit Escape in case of Fire	5,028
New Fencing Gates and Boundary Walls	25
	<b>Total 22,824</b>