CWMAMMAN
THE WAY FORWARD

ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:
THE VEHICLE FOR CHANGE

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

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Hadu Newid
seeding **change**

Cyngor Tref
Cwmaman
Town Council

Think Together
Plan Together
Do together

- **Shaping the future of Cwmaman**

Introduction. (First section)

The purpose of this report is to provide information gathered from recent community consultation exercises about a way forward for Cwmaman. It is based on the views of local people who have contributed significantly to the ideas within. The findings take account of previous intelligence, generate and stimulate new thinking, and offer an opportunity for the community, Town Council and other stakeholders to sign up to a future of collaborative working practices that reflect current needs and builds on existing assets.

The importance of community.

All over the world, attention is turning to the role that communities play in social and economic well-being. Communities are under pressure to heal the divisions caused by cuts in welfare, and help find local solutions to increasing challenges. Austerity strategies have resulted in growing inequality, hardship and poverty, which has put increased pressure on people's capacity to participate in community life. Fewer services and reduced community development support has made it harder for communities to organise collectively and to address local issues.

 In Cwmaman, the community has long demonstrated its contribution to the communities' well-being and self- help has always been a feature of local life. The area has a long- standing history, tradition and culture of community activism, volunteering and supporting charitable activities of all kinds. During the miners' strike of the mid-1980's when faced with insurmountable problems, people combined their energies, resources and ideas to find short term solutions to support one another. Today, the residents and Community Council are passionate and committed to regenerating the area, and the local Community Development Officer is ensuring that people have increased opportunities to actively engage in community life.

The renewed attention given to communities in Wales since the Welsh Government's investment in their Communities First Programme was initially very welcomed. Unfortunately, experience suggests that the rhetoric of involving communities has not always translated into effective practice. Too often communities' needs are defined externally, and priorities are set with little reference to the agendas of communities themselves.

The idea of "community" however can be over-romanticised. We all know of some communities that seem to "work" and others that do not. Communities have often been the scene of conflict, oppression and exclusion as well as "togetherness," and Cwmaman is no different. Over recent months, and through a variety of community engagement methods, it's become apparent that a sense of hopelessness prevails about the future. This is despite the numerous assets in Cwmaman which are recognised by many. There is also an understanding of how external factors contribute to this sense of hopelessness, and a desire and willingness to "get involved" and "make a difference".

Community action addresses difficult social challenges, with individuals, community groups and organisations tackling a wide range of quality of life issues from the provision of leisure to the freedom from fear of crime. It can even help strengthen the local economy by establishing food buying co-operatives and credit unions for example. It can also tackle economic exclusion by helping people access learning which can lead to employment opportunities. It can also assist economically by creating community owned assets which potentially generate long term sources of income.

Often community activities happen spontaneously, but while some communities have people with the experience, confidence and skills to set up initiatives and projects, others do not. In fact, in many cases the true potential within a community lies dormant and untapped. Community engagement interventions therefore are most effective when developing the potential and capacity of those who are often perceived as "problematic" and marginalised from every day community life.

How can community development help?

"Community Development offers a set of processes that enable communities to become confident, organised, knowledgeable and skilled, thus creating the conditions that contribute to shared empowerment and initiatives that are sustainable in the long term".

The focus therefore is to build the confidence and skills of local people and establish networks that will give communities more control over their lives and their environment. At its' core it has an educational role that provides opportunities to reflect, learn and create positive change.

Through community development, communities are encouraged to expand their awareness beyond local concerns and understand the wider economic and social forces that impact on their lives.

The need to get involved in community activity does not always come from within. Communities will often feel threatened by an external decision and will require help to organise against it. The possible closure of Cwmaman Community Centre is just one recent example of this.

Fundamentally, community development is concerned with change and growth. Giving people more decision- making power in relation to those issues which affect their lives. It is particularly concerned with challenging prejudice and discrimination which isolates, divides and excludes people from engaging in their communities.

In the longer- term community development can work with local people in relation to the structural causes of social and economic disadvantage. It can develop external or even international links which work collectively to understand and compare "the community" the effects of global, social and economic forces. This means cooperating both within and across boundaries with communities, organisations and institutions which shape our thinking and our lives.

Start with what's strong... not what's wrong!

The distinctive contribution of Asset Based Community Development.

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is a strategy for sustainable community driven development. It maintains that by mobilising human assets i.e. people, communities can drive their own development processes. In short, the approach builds on the individual, group, and community capacity which supports the development of social, economic and political life.
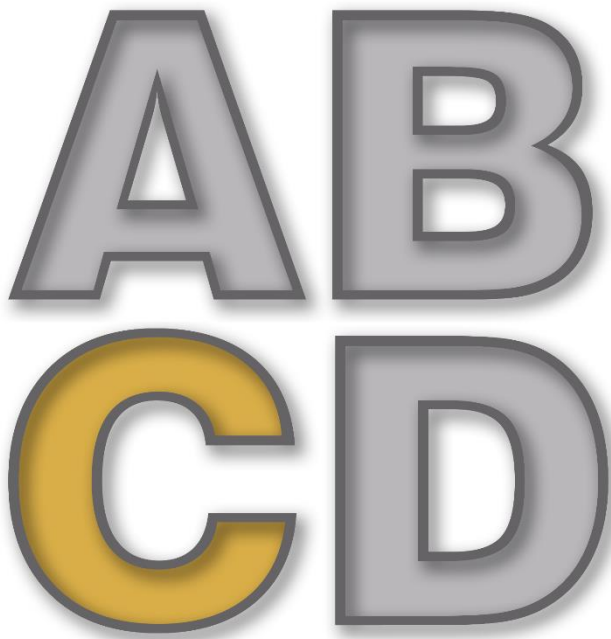
From recent community discussions held with a range of individuals and groups in Cwmaman, it would be fair to say that the adoption of asset-based approaches would be advantageous in furthering the skills, knowledge and expertise of local people. There are two reasons which support this statement.

Firstly, an asset-based approach releases the potential within communities by bringing people together to address issues of common concern. In so doing, it strengthens relationships within the community and encourages people to use their energies and resources more effectively. The process is individually and collectively empowering.

Secondly, it works where necessary to change the relationships between residents and the decision makers who shape their lives. Its aim is to ensure that communities are recognised as equal partners in production, rather than the objects of decisions and policies made elsewhere. This offers a more sustainable approach to service delivery, local government and sustainable enterprise development.

Community Consultation, Previous and Current

Review of Previous Consultations

The following extracts were obtained from a community consultation exercise undertaken in 2006. These are the most relevant points in relation to the asset related focus of this feasibility study:

- Carry out a community facilities audit to include all 'community' buildings and redundant buildings in the area.
- Work with railway society to develop passenger service – this would help young people and older people especially.
- Develop a priority list for the development of MUGA's and play spaces in consultation with young people and community.
- Funding should be obtained to allow a full feasibility study to be undertaken on extending the Resource Centre and youth facilities generally.
- Review routes and time-tables with local bus operators.
- Disseminate information to groups, such as the Old Age, about progress on the older buildings in the villages.
- Begin fundraising for projects with highest priorities. E.g. convert tennis court to MUGA.
- Instigate 'Cwmaman in Bloom' as a quick win project – ideally involving AVE and developing the community aspects.
- Developing or extending environmental projects so that more young people are involved – e.g. bulb planting.
- Keep community involved through newsletter, meetings etc.
- Carry out feasibility studies on those building highlighted in audit.

Feasibility Study

Introduction

Cwmaman Town Council has undertaken a feasibility study focussed on a range of physical assets based within the community. These are a combination of assets currently owned by the Council, those that are due to transfer over to Cwmaman Town Council from Carmarthenshire County Council and those which may transfer in the future. This study has been undertaken by Robert Venus, Community Development Officer for Cwmaman Town Council, and Derith Powell, a highly experienced community development consultant and a resident of Cwmaman.

The project brief at the outset of the project identified a number of key motivators for the study. These are summarised below:

- A desire by Cwmaman Town Council to ensure that all local assets, currently owned by Carmarthenshire County, are, where practicable, maintained for future generations.
- A need to ensure that future undertakings by Cwmaman Town Council, both in regards to the physical assets and wider actions, are delivered against the priorities of local residents.
- The requirement to gain a deeper understanding of the potential uses of the various assets and any limitations of use which each may present.
- A question of how each of the assets available to the Council can help it achieve improvements against the 7 Goals and 46 National Indicators of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.
- A need to ascertain the potential for increasing local skills, average income, tourist/visitor spend and jobs growth in the local area through effective use of the assets available.
- An overarching need to ensure that all assets are developed in a manner which is sustainable for both the Council and local residents.

Project Purpose

The key objectives of this feasibility study were:
- To identify the current needs of as broad a section of the local community as possible.
- To identify the historical, current and possible future uses of the assets.
- To identify shortfalls in existing provision to ensure delivery where it is most needed and to avoid duplication.
- To consider, against the potential uses of the assets, both local and regional needs based on provision and access to the services or facilities suggested.
- To undertake an initial assessment of the physical assets in regards to condition and their suitability for different uses.
- To create a prioritised set of possible uses for each asset based on local need.
- To outline indicative capital costs required to adapt or develop each asset against possible uses.
- Measure each proposed use against overarching legislative and funder priorities in order to ensure strategic fit.
- Produce a prioritised delivery scheme which identifies markets, cross-sector links and means of financial support.

Qualitative community consultation and the key principles that have underpinned this work.

"The starting point for community development is always the community itself and its own groups and organisations. People come together over shared interest and problems and community development builds upon these activities"

Whilst quantitative data and the information provided from the feasibility study is extremely helpful and relevant, qualitative data provides insight into the lived experience of residents. The starting point for the face to face community consultation was to offer a range of informal ways in which residents could participate in frank discussions about current issues and concerns. The methods included a combination of questionnaires/surveys, focussed and informal discussion groups, drop in sessions, public meetings, "enthusing" and community conversations, one to one meetings, and neighbourhood community work with numerous individuals and groups of all ages to encourage maximum participation. Flexible approaches are necessary as "one glove does not fit all" and the complex needs of residents need to be considered.

The neighbourhood work undertaken was invaluable in providing access to residents who are generally perceived as "not the usual suspects" in relation to community involvement and is an approach that can ensure a more inclusive way forward for Cwmaman in the future.
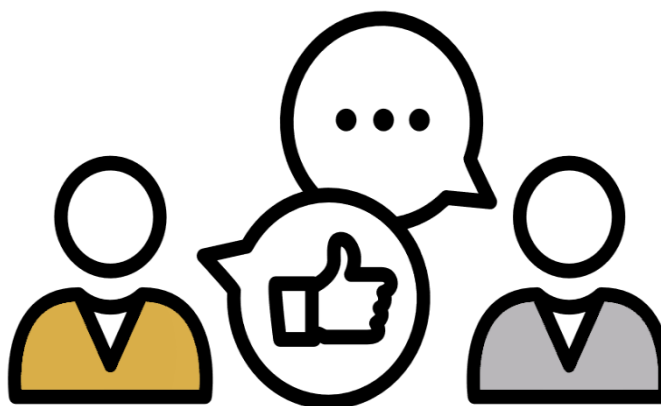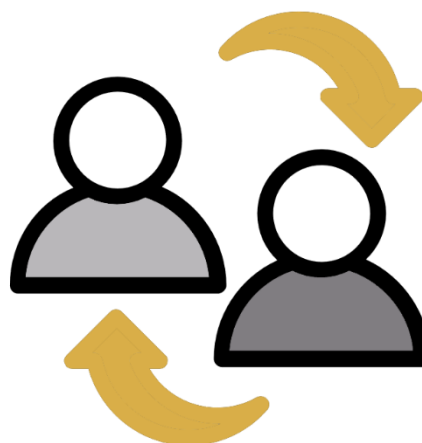
People participated from a variety of backgrounds and cultural experiences and the priority was to open- up a dialogue which would begin the process of community engagement. However, it's fair to point out that these days communities tend to feel "consulted to death" and Cwmaman is no exception. The engagement techniques adopted, enabled residents to think more deeply and beyond their immediate concerns, to thinking about **how** they may bring about changes that are sustainable in the long term.

Fostering the notion of community ownership and building relationships was an underlying principle of the engagement process. In short, the discussions enabled and supported people to come together to discuss the communities' strengths, assets, issues and challenges. The purpose was to establish the current views of residents and to explore the necessary conditions which would ensure Cwmaman is resident led, resilient and connected. Consequently, the process has provided valuable insights into the "lived experiences" of residents, the numerous assets they possess, and their possible contribution to future developments.
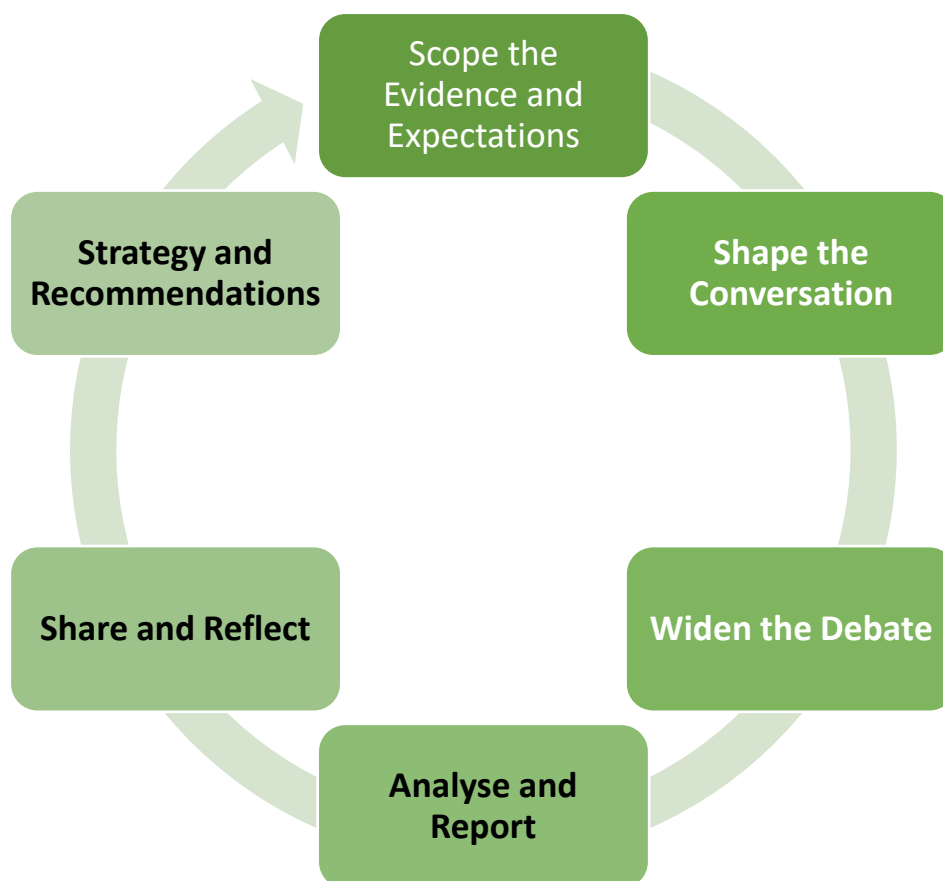
Other local key stakeholders were also encouraged to think "outside the box" about **how** they involve and interact with the community. Some of the information collated is included in this report, and can be used to inform thinking in relation future developments, working practices and recommendations.

Underlying principles /methodology of the qualitative research:

- Encourage maximum participation
- Promote equality and diversity
- Support collective dialogue and engagement
- Challenge and stimulate new thinking.

Stages of the process:

- Scope the Evidence and Expectations
- Shape the Conversation
- Widen the Debate
- Analyse and Report
- Share and Reflect
- Strategy and Recommendations

CWMAMMAN – The Findings

Cwmaman encompasses the two communities of Glanaman and Garnant in the county of Carmarthenshire, West Wales. The population of the community is 4,496 (2015 Mid-Year Population Estimates, ONS) which is broken down as Garnant – 2,179 and Glanaman – 2,317. There is a general growth trend evidenced within the historical data (2001 – 2015) of around 8%. The gender break-down for the community is quite evenly balanced with females at 2,269 and males at 2,227. The primary deviation in this appears with people over the ages of 65 where women make up a greater portion of the population.

Demographic Profile

Population

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Age Structure

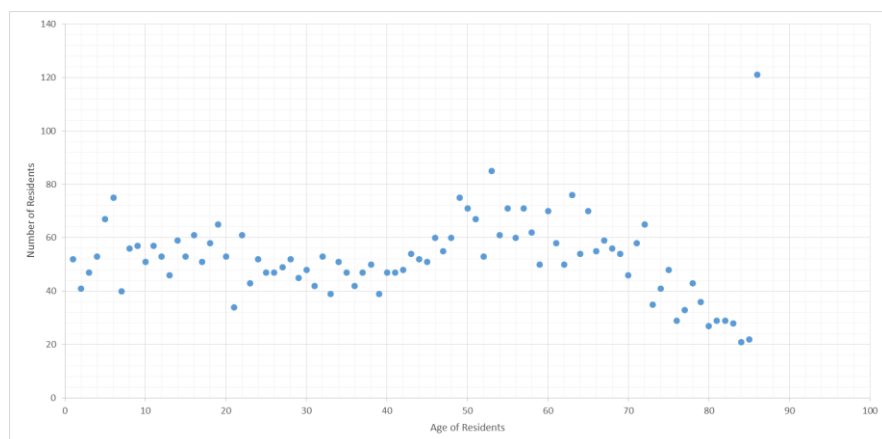The age structure for Cwmaman can be seen in Fig. 1 below.

Fig. 1: Age dispersal for the population of Cwmaman (January 2016)

Household Income and Economic Indicators

In regards to household income, the median level for Carmarthenshire is £23,825. Glanaman (£21,055) sits as the 10th lowest income community in Carmarthenshire whilst Garnant (£21,809) sits as the 16th lowest; of a total of 58 communities.

Table 1: Social Profile: *Glanaman (Ward Data January 2017)*

On average, the Table 1 and 2 above evidence that both Glanaman and Garnant perform below the Carmarthenshire average in regards to higher level/professional employment with a greater number of people employed in routine, semi-routine and lower supervisory positions.

Glanaman and Garnant have a higher degree of unemployment than Carmarthenshire as a whole and also have higher numbers of people classified as long term sick or disabled. See Fig. 2 below for representation of the relevant figures.
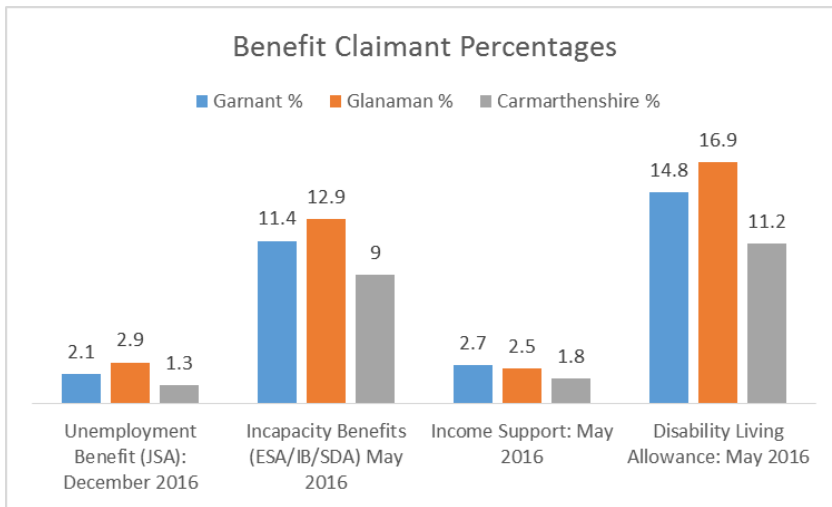
Benefit Claimant Percentages

■ Garnant % ■ Glanaman % ■ Carmarthenshire %

- Unemployment Benefit (JSA): December 2016 — Garnant 2.1, Glanaman 2.9, Carmarthenshire 1.3
- Incapacity Benefits (ESA/IB/SDA) May 2016 — Garnant 11.4, Glanaman 12.9, Carmarthenshire 9
- Income Support: May 2016 — Garnant 2.7, Glanaman 2.5, Carmarthenshire 1.8
- Disability Living Allowance: May 2016 — Garnant 14.8, Glanaman 16.9, Carmarthenshire 11.2

Fig. 2: Average out-of-work benefit claimants for Cwmaman communities compared to the Carmarthenshire average.

Economic Activity in the Population of Cwmaman

■ Carmarthenshire %
■ Cwmaman Average %
■ Glanaman %
■ Garnant %

Categories (top to bottom): Other, Permanently…, Looking after…, Student, Retired, Economically Inactive, Full-time Student, Unemployed, Self-employed, Employees: Full-time, Employees: Part-time, Economically Active
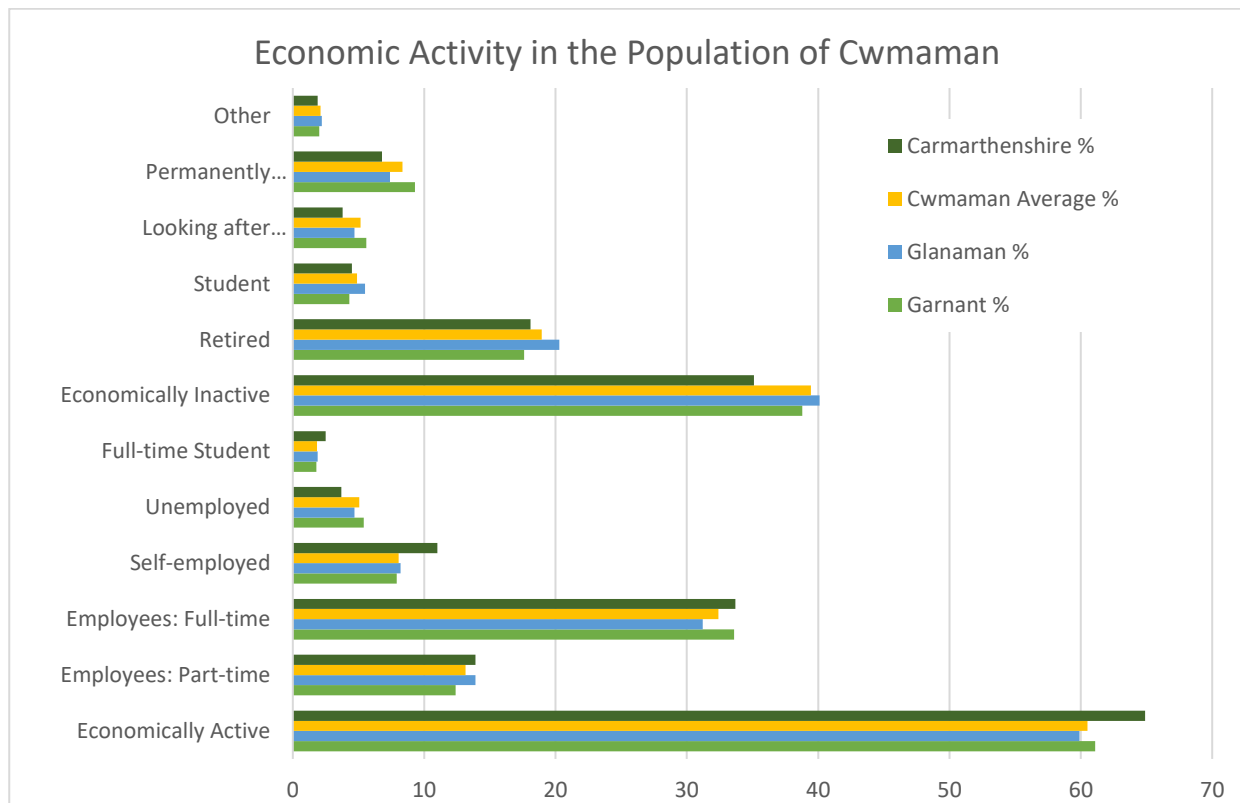
Fig. 3: Economic activity for the community of Cwmaman expressed as a percentage of the working age population.
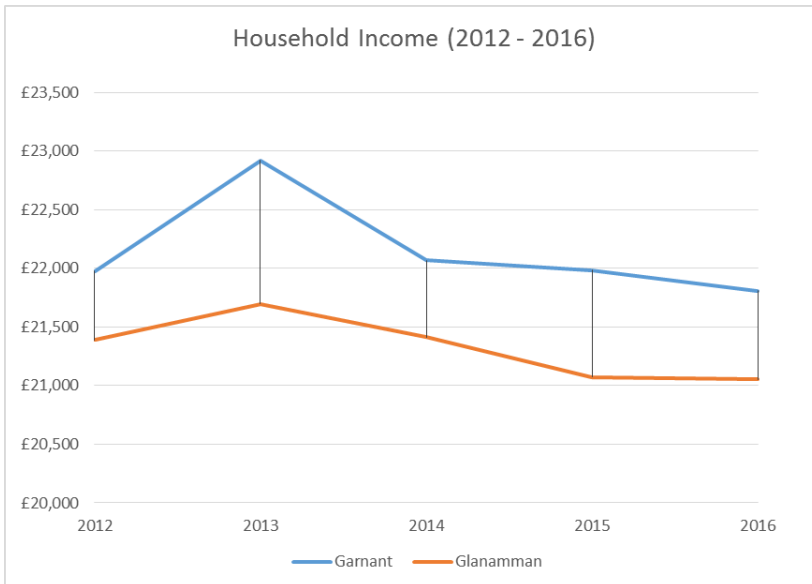
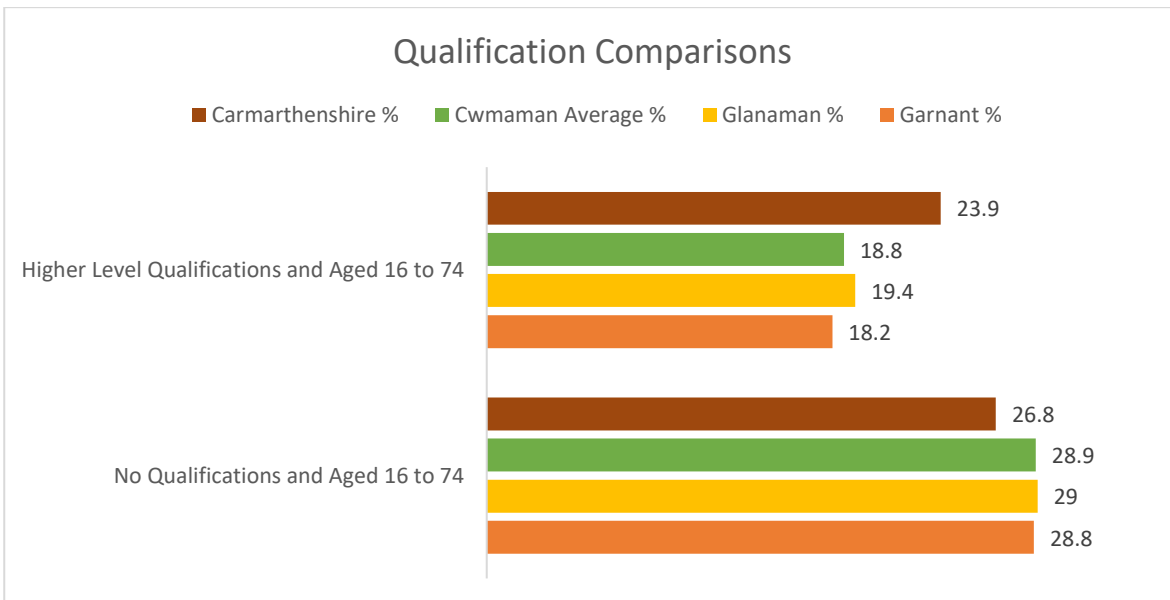**Fig. 4:** Household Income trend for Glanaman and Garnant (2012-2016)

Fig. 5: A comparison of qualifications at higher level and no qualifications for the communities of Cwmaman against the county average.

Fig. 3 above shows evidence of higher levels of economic inactivity across both communities in Cwmaman when compared to the Carmarthenshire average. In particular the figures for *Unemployed* and *Permanently Sick/Disabled* are of note as these are not representative of a choice made by the people affected and may present significant barriers when change is desired.

The figures for Self-employed are also of interest as they show significantly less decision to enter into self-employment within Cwmaman than within Carmarthenshire as a whole. When considered alongside the downward trend in household income (Fig. 4), the usual catalyst of desire to increase income, thereby increasing self-employment status, seems to be unfulfilled. When considering the qualification status of residents in Cwmaman there appears to be a degree of correlation between the data for economic inactivity, employment level (Table 1 and Table 2 above) and the level to which residents are qualified (Fig. 5). Cwmaman has a lower level of higher qualified people than the county and a higher level of people of working age with no qualifications.
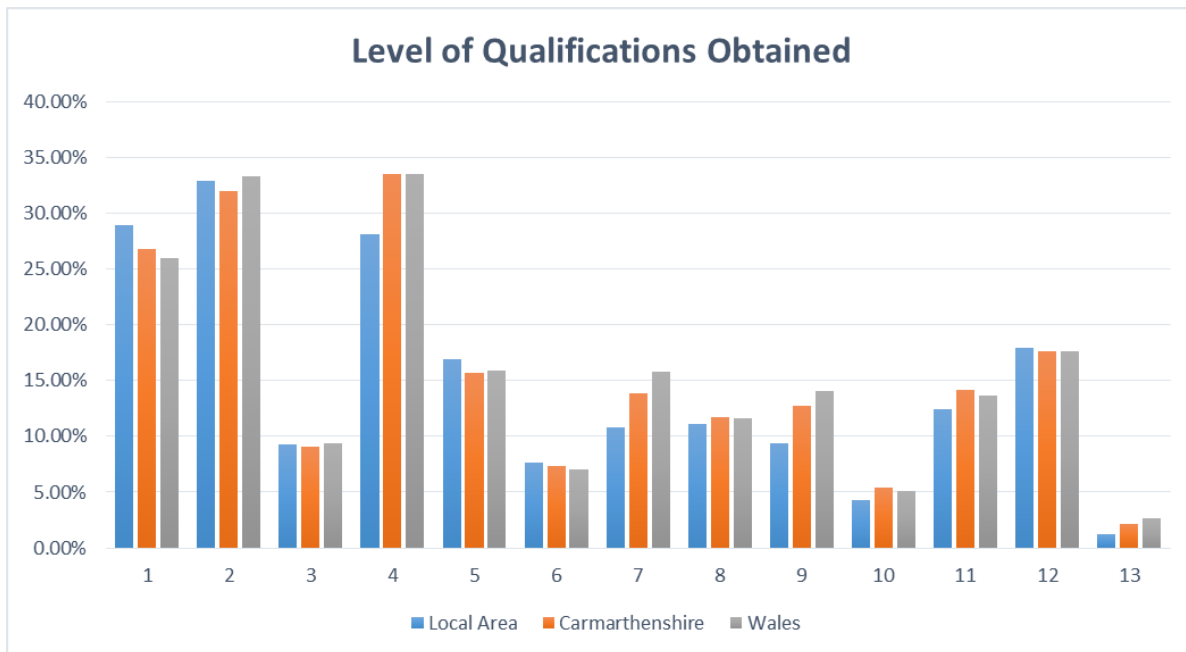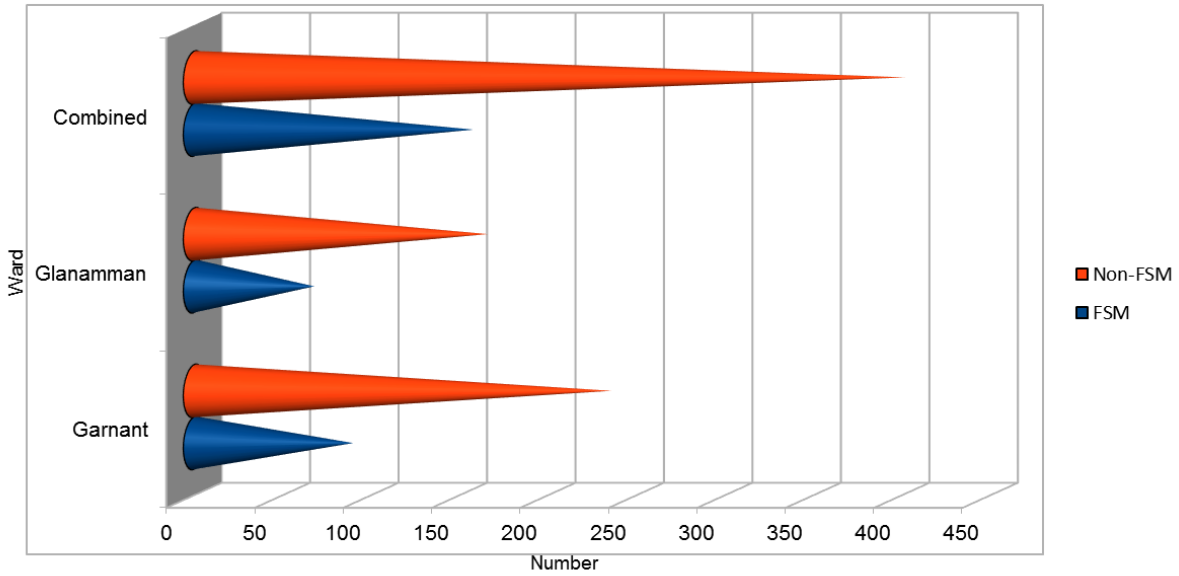
Fig. 6: Level of Qualifications obtained by resident in the local area including Cwmaman compared to Carmarthenshire and Wales averages.
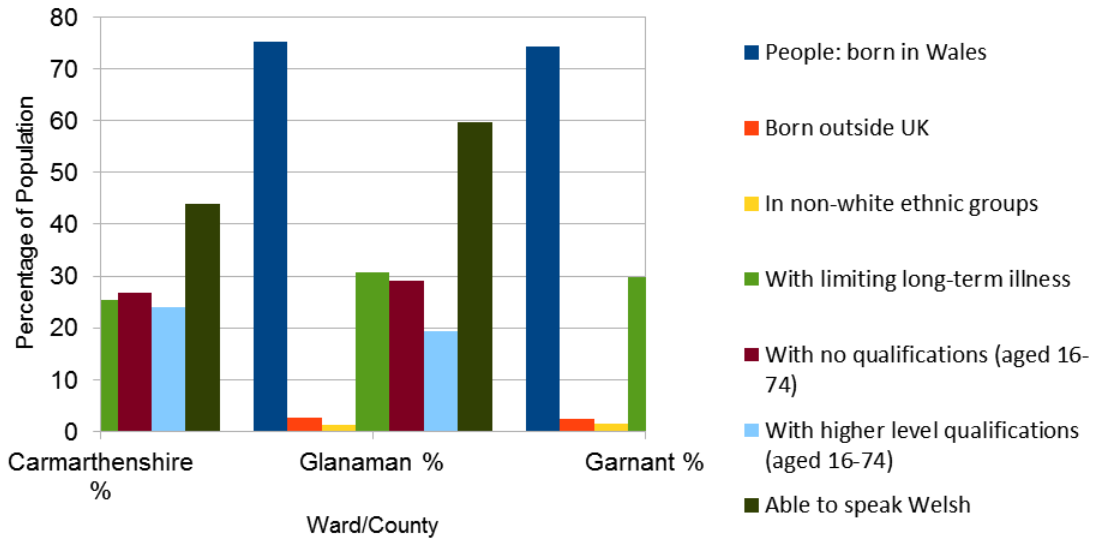
Key for Fig. 6:

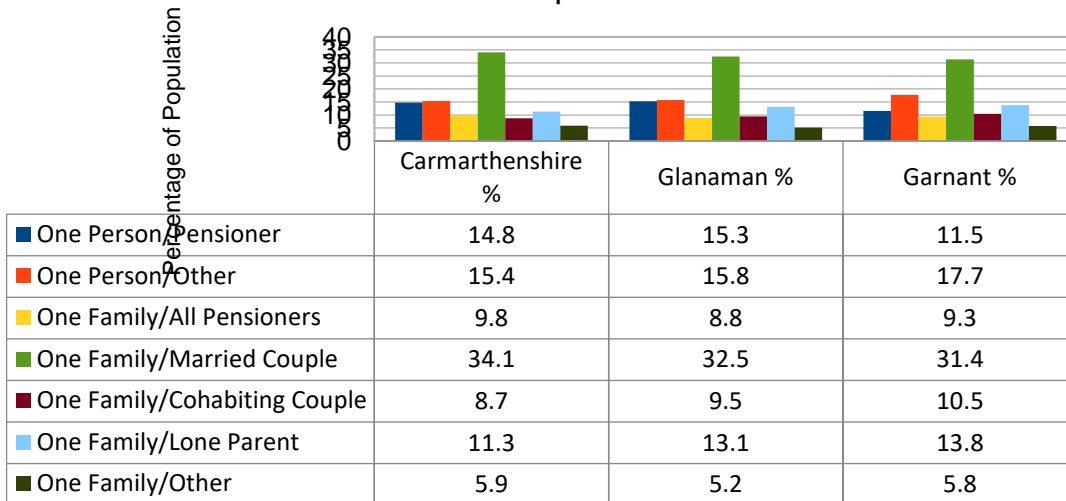| |
|---|
| **[1]** No Qualifications |
| **[2]** 1-4 O Levels/CSE/GCSEs (Any Grades), Entry Level, Foundation Diploma |
| **[3]** NVQ Level 1, Foundation GNVQ, Basic Skills |
| **[4]** 5+ O Level (Passes)/CSEs (Grade 1)/GCSEs (Grades A*-C), School Certificate, 1 A Level/2-3 AS Levels/VCEs, Higher Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Intermediate Diploma |
| **[5]** NVQ Level 2, Intermediate GNVQ, City and Guilds Craft, BTEC First/General Diploma, RSA Diploma |
| **[6]** Apprenticeship |
| **[7]** 2+ A Levels/VCEs, 4+ As Levels, Higher School Certificate, Progression/Advanced Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced Diploma |
| **[8]** NVQ Level 3, Advanced GNVQ, City and Guilds Advanced Craft, ONC, OND, BTEC National, RSA Advanced Diploma |
| **[9]** Degree (For Example BA, BSc), Higher Degree (For Example MA, PhD, PGCE) |
| **[10]** NVQ Level 4-5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Diploma, BTEC Higher Level |
| **[11]** Professional Qualifications (For Example Teaching, Nursing, Accountancy) |
| **[12]** Other Vocational/Work-Related Qualifications |
| **[13]** Foreign Qualifications |

Pupils in Receipt of Free School Meals

Population Key Facts 2017

Legend:
- People: born in Wales
- Born outside UK
- In non-white ethnic groups
- With limiting long-term illness
- With no qualifications (aged 16-74)
- With higher level qualifications (aged 16-74)
- Able to speak Welsh

Household Composition 2017

	Carmarthenshire %	Glanaman %	Garnant %
One Person/Pensioner	14.8	15.3	11.5
One Person/Other	15.4	15.8	17.7
One Family/All Pensioners	9.8	8.8	9.3
One Family/Married Couple	34.1	32.5	31.4
One Family/Cohabiting Couple	8.7	9.5	10.5
One Family/Lone Parent	11.3	13.1	13.8
One Family/Other	5.9	5.2	5.8

What do the people of Cwmaman actually think?

What changes would make Cwmaman a nicer place to live?

Increasing volume of traffic so we need a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists with more parking facilities

Tidying up and maintaining footpaths, less dog fouling more wild flower beds, more waste bins

Better use of public spaces, allotments, community gardening, address "eyesores" and derelict buildings

Bilingual public signs with more emphasis on the Welsh language and conversational welsh classes

Address social disadvantage and poverty through sustainable development projects

Invest in young people and the elderly; more activities, services and provisions for both

Develop community co-operatives and local social enterprises

Better communication between the local council and community residents, better co-ordination between community groups

More people involved in community activities and activities which relate to current issues and needs

"community spirit" Increase community cohesion, connect people more to each other

Reach out and befriend people who traditionally do not "get involved"

Improved arts, cultural and creative provision – better access to technology and modern equipment relevant to education and employment

How can we make better use of the community's physical and human assets?

Upgrade existing assets i.e. the paddling pool in Cwmamman Park

Increase advertising regarding community services, Cwmamman Golf Club and Riverside Walk and Cottage Hospital.

Raise public awareness, community links newsletter maybe

Make use of a "retail unit" on Cwmamman Rd which can be used as a call in/drop in resource centre.

Some of the physical assets can work against each other, we should develop one multi-purpose centre

Access to more community workers who work "with" residents out in the community. Grow our own community workers, through increase volunteering opportunities

Volunteering promotes a proactive community approach – helping people to give back to communities, increases well-being, confidence and boosts self-esteem

A resilient community requires people of all ages, all abilities and all parts of that community to come together to share ideas, thoughts and views

Support local businesses

Increase the use of the Community Centre

Address the issue of empty buildings "There is a need for greater economic development and increased local employment/volunteering opportunities"

"We struggle to provide our services locally to those most in need as we don't have appropriate venues within which to deliver"

What other assets could be made use of?

Exploit our cultural and linguistic heritage

Use of derelict buildings for community activities and increase social housing especially for younger people

The natural environment! We have beautiful walking/cycling areas that could form the basis of themed weekend breaks

More B&B /overnight accommodation

More use should be made of local chapel vestries for various community activities

The "Glo Man" the local monthly newsletter (papur Bro Dyffryn Aman) could also be used as a marketing tool

Develop the Communities Centre as an "Opportunities Centre"

Develop the railway line as a tourist attraction

Hen Fethel/ weddings tourist attraction, Amman Valley canoe and coricle courses

School and community projects to help develop and look after the land by Ger yr Afon as a nature reserve

Cwmamman Day Centre could be further developed

Our woodlands and natural spaces should be used more – woodland management, nature trails, woodland school and production such as coppice

What kind of change would make life better?

More support for the elderly including "care home" and "home visiting "facilities. Community Car Schemes, Men's health workshop etc

More contact between residents bringing them together

Set up a local radio station or increase the use of social media

More activities/clubs for people with disabilities. More activities/clubs for children and teenagers especially during school holidays

A welcoming pub that caters for the whole community

More employment opportunities and opportunities to learn employment related skills

Informal learning opportunities, book clubs, discussion groups, politics, anything that makes people think, community philosophy

Community Café, welcoming, nice cakes, books, newspapers, enough room to sit and chat

Alleviating loneliness for the house bound and Befriending Schemes

New community projects and initiatives established to tackle need

Safety and the use of more CCTV systems

Craft workshops- woodwork, metalwork etc in the Pen Pound workshops with appropriate equipment

Develop Shadows and increase the right kind of services for those experiencing mental health issues

A prosperous area would mean an area which supports its' inhabitants

Well-being centre that provides holistic services and has a role in the promotion of health and compliments statutory health care

Better access to new technologies, high speed internet and publicly accessible equipment

Can this change can happen?

Lots of apathy exists with people fed up at the slow pace of change whilst others want change but do little to help it happen

If there is relevant funding, and council support

Change should happen because we pay rates and council tax so it's not fair that residents don't have the services required

This depends on the commitment and enthusiasm of the council and members of the community – and a good Business and Financial Plan to attract funds from a variety of sources.

Depends on the approach adopted and the skills needed to involve the whole community and not just the usual suspects

A resilient community requires people of all ages, all abilities and all parts of that community to come together to share ideas, thoughts and views

Give examples of hurdles that need to be overcome?

Old age/isolation – addressing current issues and developing means to prevent those aged 45-65 suffering the same in the future

Better community engagement and participation on the part of the service providers and local residents

Reaching those traditionally marginalised from any form of community activities

Getting older and frail and losing independence

Work/life balance

Keeping the welsh culture and language alive

Keep on doing the same old thing and not changing anything

Unwillingness to learn and change

What barriers exist that may influence or prevent change?

Lack of government investment funding, financial constraints of CCC to support any new schemes

Isolation of individuals, lack of involvement, need to go "to" people and start where they are

Digital exclusion – lack of access to equipment and software combined with lack of skills and awareness

Transport issues – public transport cost and suitability and the affordability of owning and running a vehicle

The community getting too big with more and more new building work going on increasing the burden or infrastructure and diminishing the rural nature of the area and the original cohesive nature of the community

Not enough Community Workers working with the Town Council – too much for one person

Absence of residents' interest, apathy – many say what they want but then don't bother to make use of it

Public support and public participation is required to make new development a reality

Unwillingness to change the way we do things or to embrace change and see the potential

No voice for some people and not involved in decision making

More co-operation and team work is required with people working together better for the benefit of us all

Resources are always a problem

Poverty and deprivation

Whilst technological advancement is obviously good if not used correctly it can destroy individuality and creativity

The time it takes to get things done. A young man was killed 34 years ago at the bottom of Grenig Road, the community lobbied for a crossing, it arrived end of May 2017! Shocking!

Lack of drive and aspiration in some local people – new opportunities to see new paths for themselves need to be taken; not ignored.

How can we best use the skills and knowledge that individuals have?

People are the experts within communities. More people getting involved

Create a mechanism so that people can work together but not in an overbearing way and not through another "committee"

Difficult to come up with something that hasn't been tried before-social habits are changing and generally people do not interact in the way they did previously

Feedback from local people is essential when planning/implementing changes. The local Community Council need to take members ideas on board and then act on their views

Need to work differently

One size doesn't fit all – small or medium sized groups of activists working towards a shared interest works; large cumbersome committees do not

Passion is important to help motivate people. Finding the people with passion and a desire to make things "better" is fundamental

There is a disconnect between people because of their age. It would be beneficial to develop inter-generational projects i.e. the elderly and school children.

What help is needed to achieve this?

Develop a Driving Change Plan that encourages the involvement of the wider community

Effective communication and information dissemination

Effective advertising for support

Do things differently

Engage with us more

More people needed

Revenue funding to develop projects and initiatives as a response to identified need

List some positive things about living in Cwmaman?

Living in a predominately welsh speaking street with excellent friends and neighbours

Scenery – the natural spaces, parks, river and mountains

Friendly people, welcoming and a very good school

Further comments about Cwmaman and its future.

Change is inevitable but is also a catalyst for transforming people's lives for the better

End the "rivalry" between Glanamman and Garnant

Work close with the Community Council as some members are forward thinking and have achieved a lot in relation to the regeneration of the area

Involve people more

The demise of our welsh identity is under threat due to the influx of people relocated to the area with no interest in heritage, language and/or traditions

Create jobs

Need to celebrate our previous successes and plan a way forward that gives hope to local people

Build on our assets

Tackle social disadvantage and poverty

Shame that the Post Office is not sited in the Community Centre

The elderly's contribution to the future of Cwmamman is limited as we feel that the future of the area is in the hands of the younger generation so we need to invest in them

Celebrate and highlight its numerous assets

Policy Context (5th section)

The Well- being of Future Generations Act and its relationship to Cwmaman

In 2015 the Welsh Government introduced the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The Act requires that public bodies work better together and with local **communities "to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales".**

The Act sets out seven well-being goals which public bodies must achieve. These are:

- o A prosperous Wales
- o A resilient Wales
- o A healthier Wales
- o A more equal Wales
- o A Wales of cohesive communities
- o A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- o A globally responsible Wales
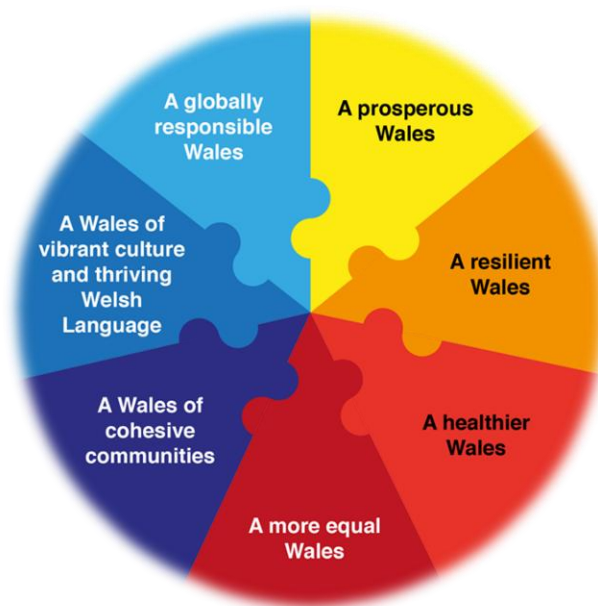
The Act identifies the following public bodies to be responsible for its implementation. They are:

- Government Ministers
- Local Authorities
- Local Health Boards
- Public Health Wales NHS Trust
- Velindre NHS Trust
- National Park Authorities
- Fire and Rescue Authorities
- Natural Resources Wales
- Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
- Arts Council of Wales
- Sports Council of Wales
- National Library of Wales
- National Museum of Wales

Each local authority area will establish a Public Services Board with the above representation, to develop and implement a local well-being plan. The plan must show how the Board proposes to achieve the seven well-being goals and each area must produce an annual review to report progress.

The above comes at a time when the Communities First programme is coming to an end and Welsh Government believes it necessary to think and act differently in relation to community regeneration and poverty. This new thinking involves closer ties with local communities in the development and delivery of local services. It involves the transfer of assets from the control of local authorities to the ownership of local communities. From a government perspective, this is a means of empowering communities to become more resilient, strong, vibrant and sustainable. As Jane Hutt (Minister for Finance and Business) stated in 2015:

"Community asset transfers provide an opportunity to help communities develop thriving and diverse localities and sustain the long -term use of property assets and services"

By recognising "community assets" Welsh Government is acknowledging the potential which lies within communities. It believes that positive change can happen and be led by local people. Welsh Government also recognises that outside experts don`t always know what`s best for communities.

The feasibility study (2017) has focused on some of Cwmaman physical assets**. However, it is important to note that these assets have no real social value without people to participate, manage, develop and sustain them.**
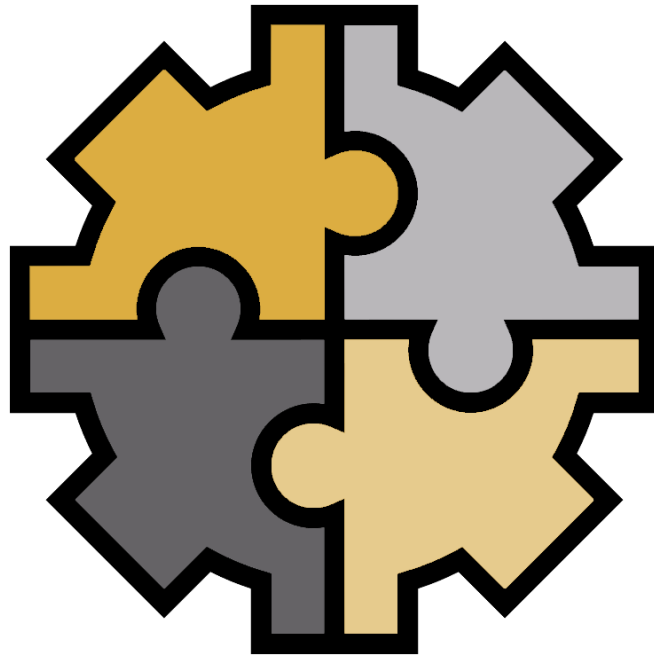
The Well-being Act recognises people as the main asset of any community. It puts people at the centre of planning and development and encourages governments to create the conditions whereby communities can truly flourish. Therefore, it`s a **facilitating** role of government and agencies to step back from **"leading"** and allow community expertise and agendas to emerge. An ABCD approach adds to the ideas within the Act by outlining precisely how people can become involved in the development process. Therefore, the Future Generations Act and an asset based approach provides a strategic fit in relation to a way forward for Cwmaman in the future.

The current policy context, the findings of the feasibility study, the face to face consultation especially the neighbourhood work, clearly demonstrate the potential benefits of asset based community development in Cwmaman. Its adoption would have positive impacts on future developments because it is local people who are best placed to identify problems and solutions within their community. ABCD encourages communities to identify and utilise the existing skills and expertise within the locality for mutual benefit. It encourages communities to identify and build upon their most valuable assets which are the people themselves.

The ABCD approach has far wider support than the Amman Valley. For example, in 2010 the Marmot review (Fair Society, Healthy Lives) concluded that service providers need to recognise the expertise within communities and work cooperatively to form new ways of providing services. It said**:**
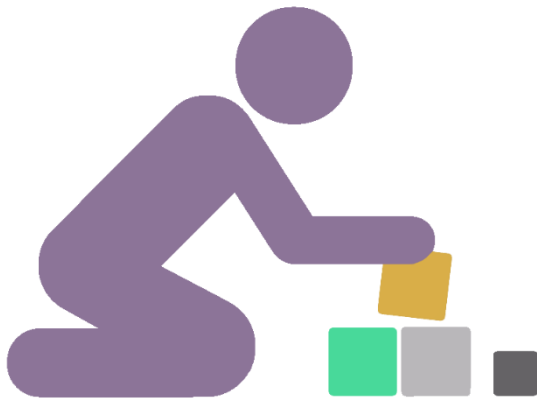
"Effective local delivery requires effective participatory decision making at local level. This can only happen by empowering individuals and local communities." This compares favourably with the Future Generations Act in relation to the benefits of community involvement.

The approach is even supported by the likes of Michelle Obama who as First Lady recently stated:

 "We cannot do well serving communities… if we believe that we the givers, are the only ones that are half full and that everyone we`re serving is half empty… there are assets… in communities, and our job… as good leaders…. is having the ability to recognise the talents in others, and help them put those talents into action". (ABCD Institute, Chicago, Illinois).

What is Asset Based Community Development?

ABCD is a strand of mainstream community development that is concerned more with community "strengths" than "needs". It differs from other interventions which tend to see communities as having long lists of "needs". In contrast, ABCD sees communities as "assets," rather than a collection of problems needing to be "fixed".

According to Professor John McKnight from the ABCD Institute; **"The purpose of ABCD is to help people remember what they already know."**

The approach draws on lessons from the past. For example, it knows that long term community participation depends upon communities being totally involved in defining local priorities and planning the way forward. Additionally, it knows that they must be actively involved in all aspects of decision making and not just "consulted". This point was highlighted numerous times during community conversations and it is our belief that more people would get involved if this approach was implemented in future.

Furthermore, it knows that the chances of good outcomes are increased when the community takes ownership of the development process. In short, local priorities must be identified by residents who also see the potential benefit of their own long- term involvement and participation.

ABCD attempts to create the conditions whereby there is total community involvement. It attempts to nurture the development of a community by drawing on the expertise which is found within local people. The purpose of ABCD is to identify and use the "assets" of a community and build from within. Local people possess valuable expertise through their knowledge, skills and relationships and are the "experts" within their own community. Local people are therefore the centre and starting point for all local development.

The values underpinning ABCD

An asset-based approach puts people at the centre of development and seeks to "empower" them. The primary purpose is to develop people to become more skilful, knowledgeable, confident, resourceful and independent. These developments will then positively impact on personal and community well -being.

Community development is about people working together to bring about change. It encourages people to identify common problems and solve them through sharing resources. Community development also encourages groups and communities to develop social networks and partnerships for mutual benefit. It encourages partnerships to work collectively and democratically, so strengthening ties of common interest. Importantly, it encourages communities to draw on outside expertise where necessary, but to remain in control of the development process. The ability of the community to control resources and the direction of development is crucial to the ABCD approach.

Community development encourages groups to challenge inequality, disadvantage and poverty. It also extends democracy by creating structures which allow greater community participation, representation and influence. In short, community development values are reference points whereby individuals, groups, organisations and communities can validate their work.

The following are some community development values which should to be applied to all asset-based strategies.

INCLUSIVE

A healthy community recognises that everyone has the right to be heard and to participate in the decisions which affect their lives. ABCD is committed to removing barriers which may be caused by age, sex, gender, religion, disability and poverty.

DEMOCRATIC

Power is shared equally across the community. All participants are equally important with equal input.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Ensures that the community is committed to fairness in society. That every member has an equal right to services and the law, and is protected from any form of abuse or exploitation. The community also has a broader commitment to "Human Rights".

COLLECTIVE ACTION

The community is committed to working together to solve local problems and to improve social, economic and environmental conditions. It believes in strength in unity as a means of creating positive change.

COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

Communities are at their best when they take ownership of their own issues and problems. Under these conditions they are more likely to develop their own asset based solutions. Communities do not respond well when problems and solutions are imposed by outside "experts".

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

A community will come together to discuss issues, exchange opinions, consider choices and make decisions. They may seek external advice but will always make the final decision. They will direct and control the process of development. They will also recognise that with "power" comes responsibility.

BUILDING FROM WITHIN

The community recognises that its members are its greatest strength. Therefore, it is committed to using and developing the skills, knowledge and expertise of residents.

Why is it different from other interventions?

Firstly, ABCD is not an approach that is imposed from the outside. The approach seeks to strengthen and develop a community`s assets from within. **To build upon what is already there.** Secondly, ABCD does not begin by identifying the "needs" of a community. Rather, ABCD begins by identifying a community`s "strengths".

It begins by "mapping" assets. These can be physical such as community centres, chapels, churches, schools, office buildings and so on. They can be services such as play schemes and meals on wheels. They can be the agencies and organisations which work in the locality and the resources they provide. Most of all it`s the people, their expertise and their social networks. By starting from a position of strength rather than need, the ABCD cup is always half full and never half empty.

Thirdly, an ABCD approach views agencies as resources and potential partners who may assist in the development of the community. Agencies do not set community agendas or control community resources but are active participants in local initiatives directed by the community itself.

Fourthly, ABCD places a huge emphasis on the role of community networks. Social networks are a valuable resource…. "I don`t know how to do this but I know someone who does"… is a helpful way of developing activity at a relatively low economic cost. Grants are not always necessary for development to take place.

Finally, a community which values every resident as an asset will indirectly increase its sense of wellbeing. Individuals will grow in confidence and develop a sense of belonging based on the knowledge that they are major stakeholders in its future.

ABCD starting points

An asset-based approach to the future of Cwmaman will begin by asking the following questions.

- **What makes us strong?**
- **What makes us healthy?**
- **What helps us cope in times of stress?**
- **What makes this a good place to live?**
- **What does the community need to do to improve its health and well-being?**
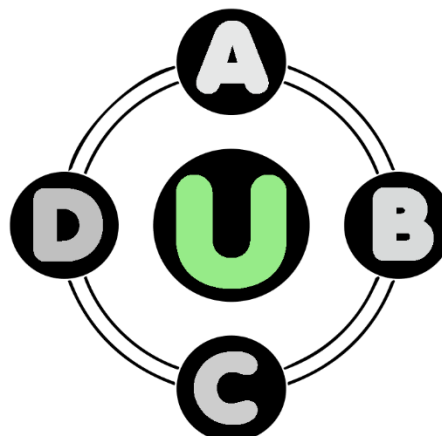
To answer these questions a community will begin by mapping its assets. It will identify what it already possesses and utilise these as a platform for further development. Below are the kinds of assets a community will map.

1 **Individual assets –** These can be the skills, knowledge, time, interests, passions and expertise held by people that can be used for the common good.

2 **The assets of Associations –** These are informal voluntary groups such as rugby clubs, play schemes, allotment associations, pub quiz teams, and fishing clubs. They provide meeting places, social opportunities, skills and knowledge which can be utilised by the wider community.

3 **The assets of formal Organisations –** These are not just services but the internal expertise organisations possess. For example, in relation to funding, planning, support and advice. In short, the resources they are willing to share with the community to enhance development and well-being.

4 **Physical assets –** These can be used or unused buildings, unused land, markets, transport systems, shops, pubs, café`s and parks. Mapping these enables residents to appreciate their community value and how they might be developed further.

5 **Economic assets-** These are the local organisations and businesses that create wealth in the area. They are the job creators and help maintain well-being by providing much needed income for families and individuals. How can local people help local business to support local people?

6 **Cultural assets –** Those aspects of community life which allow residents to creatively express themselves. It can be through various forms of art, drama and music. Such assets often reflect the values and identity of a community, providing residents with a sense of belonging and well – being. As with the above Associations, they are also a source of friendships and mutual support.

As the mapping process proceeds then so residents come to see that their community is not as "needy" as they first thought. Mapping allows them to build a picture of actual strength and potential. The picture becomes the platform from which they are able "to build from within".

Clearly from the work recently undertaken via the feasibility study and other consultations the mapping process has already begun in Cwmaman.

From here begins a process of development. The community now need to….

Find out what already works and build on it so that it becomes even more effective and sustainable.

Promote the community through its achievements and goals rather than the problems and needs. In this way, it displays to the outside world that the cup is half full and is attracting interest and participation.

Nurture the assets especially the people. Develop the networks and relationships within and beyond the community. Bring people together to solve problems and value everyone`s contribution.

Develop and build upon the knowledge, skills and expertise of residents. This will build confidence and further participation.

Involve and include everyone from the beginning. Those left out will tend to be left behind.
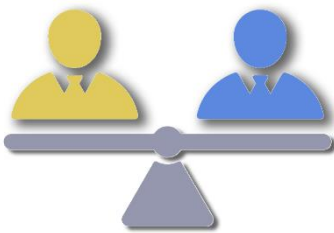
Balance structures of engagement and accountability which enable people to participate equally in decisions which affect their lives and their community.
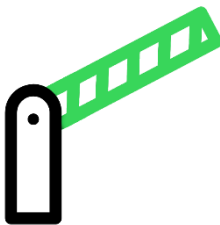
Remove structures and systems which are barriers to future community goals and aspirations.

Sustainability, long-term and in all senses, must be designed into any agreed plan, goal or solution.

The benefits of ABCD- Control, Contact, Confidence

There is a growing body of research which suggest ABCD approaches provide beneficial outcomes.

In 2010 the Marmot report stated. **"Individuals who are socially isolated are… more likely to die prematurely, it is not so much that social networks stop you being ill… but that they help you recover when you get ill".**

Work undertaken by the Northwest NHS in 2014 looked at public sector interventions to create resilient communities. Just like the Well-being Act, it concluded that public bodies must:

- Strengthen social relationships and opportunities for individuals and families, especially those in need.
- Build and enable social support, social networks… within and between communities.
- Improve the quality of the relationship between individuals, communities and professionals. The Young Foundation (2015) looked at the potential of community empowerment as a means of increasing well-being. It concluded that this was possible in three ways.

Firstly, by means of **control**. By giving people more opportunities to influence decisions through democratic processes rather than via consultation exercises.

Secondly, through **contact**. By creating and sustaining social networks with friends, family and neighbours.

Thirdly, by building **confidence**. By encouraging people to participate in community activity, to learn, increase their knowledge and develop skills.

In 2012 The New Economics Foundation was commissioned by Government to review the evidence as to how individuals can improve their well-being. It concluded that there were five ways by which this could be achieved:

1. By being connected to the local community. Having strong ties to family, friends and the wider community.
2. By being active within the community and beyond. Avoiding isolation and being involved.
3. By being aware of feel good environmental factors. Regular contact with nature.
4. Continual learning. Trying something new regardless of age.
5. By giving to others. This creates personal well-being as well as trust and reciprocity within communities.

Shifts in thinking and practice

The ABCD model rejects the idea that communities are problematic and in need. It rejects the idea that communities need "fixing" in some way. Fixing communities makes them dependent and passive as they rely on others to meet their "needs". Consequently, communities become disempowered, losing their independence and sustainability. In effect, they become vulnerable, particularly to forces outside of their control such as government cuts and economic down turns.

Before there can be a practical shift from one model to the other a radical shift in thinking is required. Governments and agencies at all levels need to view communities differently.

Professional staff and government representatives need to share power so that communities aren`t having things done to them or for them but are co- producers of their own well-being. It requires a fundamental shift in how to approach "community engagement" and how to "empower" residents. The transition would be as follows:

From starting with community needs… **to** starting with community assets.

From responding to problems… **to** identifying opportunities and strengths.

From providing services for users… **to** investing in local people as assets.

From emphasising the role of government and agencies… **to** emphasising the role and potential of communities.

From a focus on the individual… **to** a focus on the community and the common good.

From seeing residents as clients, service users or customers **to** seeing people as equal partners and local experts, who have something to contribute.

From treating people as passive and in need of services… **to** enabling them to be active and taking control.

From trying to "fix" people as problems… **to** developing their potential.

From seeing externally imposed initiatives as the answer… **to** seeing local people as the solution.

The ABCD approach is very much community centred and community led. This means that an empowered community may not always act on the issues identified by agencies and public bodies. They may well devise and prioritise a different agenda and this is an indication of "empowerment."

 ABCD is not a quick method of fixing "needs" via short term funding projects but a long- term investment in people and assets which gradually transforms social, economic and environmental conditions. It`s not a "one off" but an open -ended process which takes the lifetime of a community. It`s an ongoing cycle of controlled renewal and development.

Furthermore, an ABCD approach does not replace existing services. Neither does it undertake them cheaply. Rather, it invites agencies and public bodies to partner and support communities to become stronger and sustainable through the development of community agendas, resources and assets. It invites them to create the conditions whereby barriers to development

can be removed. It asks agencies and governments at all levels to adopt a nurturing role, encouraging communities to grow and develop in ways directed by them. It`s a process which invites residents to participate and lead, and by its nature invites good practice in relation to well-being.

It is also important to note that ABCD does not ignore "needs". Rather, it attempts to distinguish between needs which can be met in more appropriate ways. For example, through friends and family or through the co-operation between communities and agencies. Sometimes through services alone. This necessarily involves an ongoing dialogue and genuine partnership between communities that lead and agencies which support community priorities.

Additionally, it should be made clear that ABCD cannot eradicate the structural causes of poverty and inequality. It cannot directly improve wages, housing or lack of jobs. Neither is it a "cure" for community apathy or unwillingness to participate in externally funded projects. However, research tends to show that communities will support locally identified priorities rather than those imposed upon them from outside. "Apathetic" communities will suddenly become active when there`s a threat to valuable assets such as local schools or hospitals. The key is to develop priorities that the community has identified, and which they are eager to support.

The process of building from within is a long one. It has no end but does begin somewhere. Initially, there needs to be an acknowledgement that this type of approach can succeed and that over time the well-being of a community can be significantly improved. Building from within must begin with an investment in community development and the values and principles which underpin it. What this looks like in practice will very much depend upon the strategic thinking of the community itself.

Key Points of ABCD

- Communities can bring about change by recognising and utilising their own assets.
- ABCD encourages groups, individuals, organisations to work collectively and build upon existing assets.
- Community assets need to be identified. They are then merged to form building blocks for development.
- ABCD asks communities to identify areas of common concern and find their own solutions to problems.
- ABCD challenges notions that "needs" can only be met by external agencies and expertise.
- Collective approaches via the strengthening of skills/knowledge can bring about change. It`s an internal community development process which can be facilitated with external assistance.
- ABCD pays attention to assets inherent in social relationships, associations and networks. People are the key resource and asset.
- Active participation and empowerment are the basis for development – if in place then ABCD becomes a strategy directed towards sustainable development that is community driven.

Principles of ABCD

- Every community member has something to contribute to the process of change.
- Social relationships build communities – ABCD nourishes, nurtures social relationships at every level.
- ABCD always has people at its centre. They are active creative participants.
- Residents are not passive recipients of services. They are not clients or customers.
- Leaders of communities and community assets invite others to become leaders and extend democracy.
- Residents care about the things that concern them. They are not apathetic. The challenge for ABCD is to identify the motivating factors.
- ABCD approaches are open and inviting. They continually ask people to participate at all levels.
- ABCD approaches encourage agencies to "step back" and allow communities to develop through processes of individual and collective empowerment.
- ABCD encourages residents to ask questions and find their own answers, rather than accepting external "solutions" .
- "Citizen centred" community initiatives are led by local people who manage and control development.
- ABCD advocates that governments and agencies cannot solve community problems without engaging communities.
- Governments/ agencies need to create the conditions for community led development. Such conditions create opportunities for citizenship and real democracy.

Key considerations in relation to the way forward. (Section 7)

When thinking about key considerations in relation to Cwmaman's future, the following **essential characteristics** will form the foundation of future development;

- Is the community able to participation in local decision making?
- Is the community taking control of its assets?
- How can we ensure that assets are sustainable in the long term?
- Does the current organisational structures and ways of working reflect a commitment to community participation and engagement?
- How can Cwmaman become a more resilient and self -confident community?
- How can Cwmaman become more empowered and vibrant?
- How can people in Cwmaman experience better well-being?
- How can we develop the skills of residents so that they have the capacity to articulate their needs and take action to instigate and sustain community-based programmes?
- Are we reaching the right people?
- How can we develop the capacity within organisations and institutions for community engagement & participation?
- How can we connect community groups?
- What needs to happen to bring about these changes?
- How can we develop a model for change?

Conclusion (Section 8)

Community engagement is key to building sustainable communities. If local initiatives are to be effective, then the participation of the community is fundamental to their success, and providing opportunities for considering different and new way of working in the future is key. The community consultation exercises and the Driving Change Plan are just two aspects of a long -term process which starts to develop the skills and expertise of local people, and thereby begins a sustainable future for the residents of Cwmaman.

Residents have the right to enjoy the benefits of living locally but also have an equal responsibility in ensuring that Cwmaman is a good place to live. The community has a collective "power" that enables it to bring about change but this can`t happen without the participation and involvement of its members. Community involvement requires a culture of collaboration. The future of the area is everyone's responsibility but it requires a collective effort to realise the changes suggested in this report. No single person or group can make this happen.

Consultation is not co-production. People want their voices to be heard and acted upon and not through tokenistic consultation where nothing really changes. This point has been raised numerous times over recent months; "How much information do we need for change to take place"? is a common question. We have a culture of over consulting but under delivering on feedback and action. People are tired of attending meetings but never really see any positive change as a result.

Decision makers need to be led by community members who have first -hand experience of the issues that affect their lives, and the lived experience of people should be at the heart of any consultation process or focus groups meetings.

Given the assets that exists, the passion and commitment of local people, the Town Council's desire to enhance community engagement and involvement, the input of other professionals and cross sector organisations working in the area, we have an opportunity to build a better future for Cwmaman. This report provides information based on recent research about a way forward which is built on the concepts of self-help and social action. It is an opportunity to work differently with the community and partner organisations in ways that addresses social challenges and creates local initiatives that are sustainable in the long term.

Recommendations

Based on the above key considerations, and the outcomes of the recent community consultation exercises, the following are a list of recommendations that will support change within Cwmaman and offer a way forward in the future:

- Present the Report on the way forward to the Town Council, the community and all other relevant and interested stakeholders.
- All those involved and responsible for building a better future for Cwmaman should apply an ABCD approach to all aspects of the development process as outlined in this report. This will require training in ABCD approaches which can be bespoke and tailored to the needs of individuals working in different capacities within the community.
- That new structures are gradually developed to ensure maximum community inclusion and participation. Examples include a; Community Association, Community Forum, Development Trust, Working Groups etc. It may be too soon to define these structures, but their long -term purpose and emerging role can be the focus of on-going discussions as part of the way forward.
- Set up a series of "Visioning Events" or "Asset Mapping Workshops" in the near future whilst there is momentum to get involved. These events strengthen local relationships, and can be the catalyst for moving the community forward in a new way. The overall aim is to develop a shared vision of what an empowered, engaged community looks like, and the conditions required for its future development. This process encourages community ownership, so that future developments are resident led, inclusive, connected and integrated.
- From the visioning events, or action planning sessions a "Driving Change Strategy" for Cwmaman is produced and written by the community enabling residents to be   at the centre of transformational change. A Driving Change Strategy allows the community to set out what it wants to achieve for its area and how it intends to do so**.** The Plan has 2 main purposes:
1. It gives local communities a clear sense of direction.
2. It also makes it clear to others -the wider local community and other interested organisations what the community is trying to achieve. The plan should build on what is already strong, previous and existing work, and explain what the community wishes to do and how this will happen, but most importantly how the community will know if it's being successful.
- Provide learning opportunities especially in Community Engagement and elements of Community Development training. Offer shared learning opportunities between Cwmaman and other areas and projects for example with the Invest Local Project with Building Communities Trust.
- Establish a "Grow your own Neighbourhood Community Work Project"
- Set up Volunteer Bureau where residents can be recruited, vetted, supported, and trained.
- Review the work through participative evaluation, to demonstrate that this work will make a difference. The evaluation can be formal or informal but if there are adequate structures / systems of communication / feedback / dialogue in place then evaluation should automatically be built in and would be ongoing.
- The Community Council represents residents and would hopefully support transformational approaches which work to develop the skills and expertise of individuals and groups. Starting from the results of this current work, the Community Council should endorse the Driving Change Plan and help to identify appropriate human and economic resources in to achieve the recommendations of this report.