



DULAIS VALLEY

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INTRODUCTION



The Dulais Valley community area includes the electoral divisions of Onllwyn, Seven Sisters and Crynant.

The community area, bordered by the Brecon Beacons National Park to the north, offers an a number of attractions such as Cefn Coed Museum, DOVE training centre and coffee shop.

Once home to many collieries, the area has largely been reclaimed by nature and now the scenery is serene and wildlife is plentiful. Steeped in history, the area was once occupied by the Romans, who built two forts in the nearby area. The remains of Sarn Helen, an important Roman road which linked the town of Neath in the south to Caernarfon in North Wales still exist.

The Dulais Valley has a number of walking and cycling trails, woodlands and an abundance of wildlife, flora and fauna.





KEY FINDINGS FROM OUR ENGAGEMENT AND
RESEARCH EXERCISES:

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SOCIAL



Social well-being amongst survey respondents was focused on connecting with others through social activities, such as sports, choirs or meetings. In terms of contributions to social well-being, respondents discussed being active and healthy, volunteering and having a sense of place in society as important factors.

People wanted to see improvements of better access to premises for disabled people, having services and organisations nearby to engage with and better communication of what was available to enable people to take part. As elsewhere, public transport was a challenge for those unable to drive or without access to a car.





ECONOMIC



Survey respondents from the area equated economic well-being with financial self-sufficiency and the capacity to support both themselves and their families. Participants cited being free from financial worries and access to the support they required as factors which contributed to economic well-being.

Respondents also emphasised the importance of the availability of childcare, adult educational courses and affordable housing, whereas some expressed concern over the impact of cuts to services and benefit entitlements, and an increase in the cost of utility bills.

The latest census information (2011) shows that there was 3.9% unemployment in the Dulais Valley area and of those aged 16 and over, 34.3% have no qualifications, which is higher than the all Wales figure of 25.9%.

Of the 2,232 homes in the area, 1,534 (68.7%) were identified as being deprived using one or more of the following 4 dimensions of deprivation; employment, education, health/disability and household overcrowding (Census 2011).





The area comprises upland areas of conifer plantation forest, common land and hill farming. The Sarn Helen runs along the high ridge between the Dulais and Neath Valleys and St Illtyd's Way, which runs through Crynant, links the Neath and Swansea Valleys.

The area bears testament to its reliance on coal, with the Cefn Coed Colliery museum, restored areas of opencast and remnant colliery spoil tips.

There are over 21 local wildlife rich areas and three Sites of Special Scientific Interest, including important habitat such as marshy grassland.

A number of hydropower schemes providing renewable energy have been constructed on the main river Dulais, as well as its tributaries.

Residents listed access to pollution free open spaces as the main factor contributing to environmental well-being. This was set within a wide range of issues, such as having organisations to protect vulnerable species, such as the marsh fritillary butterfly. The maintenance of good quality marshy grassland in this area was considered important in helping to maintain this species population, along with the population of the narrow-bordered bee hawk-moth.

One resident defined environmental well-being as "An environment that is not only safe, but enriches your life". Factors contributing to this included feeling safe and having clean streets, clean air and open public spaces. There was concern for services being maintained, especially with regard to recycling and for care of the environment to be taken more seriously.

In terms of improvement that could be made to environmental well-being, respondents wanted clean, renewable fuel sources, stricter environmental regulation of new buildings and preventing building on green spaces, when brownfield sites are available. Some respondents with mobility issues wanted more support to enjoy the environment and local services.





The culture of the community was especially important to cultural well-being in the area, along with opportunities for adult learning, choral singing, community volunteering, religious activities and fund raising. Local people commented that the local community cinemas were both important and good value, although it was felt that other arts and cultural events were not always well promoted.

The Dulais Valley has 13 listed buildings, the majority of which are located in Crynant. There is also one community managed library in Seven Sisters.

In total there are currently 11 parks/playgrounds in the area. Eight of these have fixed play equipment; four have a Multi-Use Games Area. Dulais Valley also has four green spaces, which range from informal amenity areas to woodland.

With regards to the Welsh language, 24.4% (1,156) of residents in Dulais Valley can speak Welsh.

The number of people from black and minority ethnic groups in the Port Talbot community area is small, reflecting the position in the County Borough as a whole.

Information from the Census shows a decrease in the percentage of people who identified themselves as Christian, from 68 in 2001 to 56% in 2011. During the same period, there was also a noticeable increase in people declaring that they had 'no religion', from 21% to 34%.

Factors which could improve well-being included more learning opportunities for disabled people and funding for bringing the community together.





NEATH PORT TALBOT PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD
WELL-BEING ASSESSMENT

