

Fit for the Future

Bridgend County Borough's
Regeneration Strategy: Consultation
Draft

February 2008

Executive Summary

Introduction: our Vision and Purpose

1. This document sets out, as a draft for consultation, a new strategy for the regeneration of Bridgend County Borough.
2. In the Spring of 2007, SQW Consulting, economic development consultants, were commissioned to develop Fit for the Future, the new regeneration strategy (the Strategy) and action plan for Bridgend County Borough (Bridgend CB) which will cover the period 2008 through to 2021. Bridgend County Borough Council (Bridgend CBC), working in partnership with the Department for the Economy and Transport (DE&T) of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), and with comprehensive consultation of local businesses, agencies and people, has developed a new Vision for regeneration.

Our Vision: Fit for the Future

By 2021, Bridgend County Borough will be recognised as a self-contained, productive sub-regional economy, with a skilled and utilised workforce, in a place where people and businesses want to be

3. *Fit for the Future* defines regeneration as an over-arching activity delivering a balanced approach to revitalising the well-being of communities through social, physical, and economic improvements. The Strategy seeks to promote entrepreneurial and wealth-creating activities: it builds on and integrates economic development and tourism, urban and rural physical regeneration, and health. The Strategy also integrates with key values embedded in the Community Strategy. Working alongside other major local strategies, including Bridgend CBC's Corporate Plan, the Economic Regeneration Strategy, the Health and Well-Being Strategy, and sub-regional plans for tourism, transport and rural development, *Fit for the Future* emphasises key actions to prepare for, take and maximise opportunities for local people and businesses, and to attract new investment into the Borough.
4. Based on extensive analysis of global, national and local trends, and local consultation with partners and stakeholders, it is designed to give a clear focus to regeneration priorities and provide a platform for cross-sector working. *Fit for the Future* has been developed to bring together partners from all sectors, to bring clear focus and priorities to existing, planned and future regeneration work, providing a tool for strategic management, and also for delivery partnerships, enabling them to tackle the challenges facing the County Borough.

Bridgend today: the challenges

5. Bridgend CB has major assets, including a great natural environment, and in being home to a world-class manufacturing business. However, to develop as a sub-regional centre, it will need to

raise its competitiveness and grow the distinctiveness of its brand. In developing *Fit for the Future*, extensive analysis has established the challenges facing the businesses, people and places that make up Bridgend CB. In summary these challenges are as follows:

Challenges for businesses

- At present the overall performance of the economy is not competitive
- There is a productivity gap
- And enterprise is also an issue.

Challenges to people

- Inactivity and skills shortages in the labour market are a cause for concern
- Improving education and skills supply is a key to future prosperity and economic activity
- Success needs to be better shared to tackle deprivation, poor health outcomes and high benefit take-up.

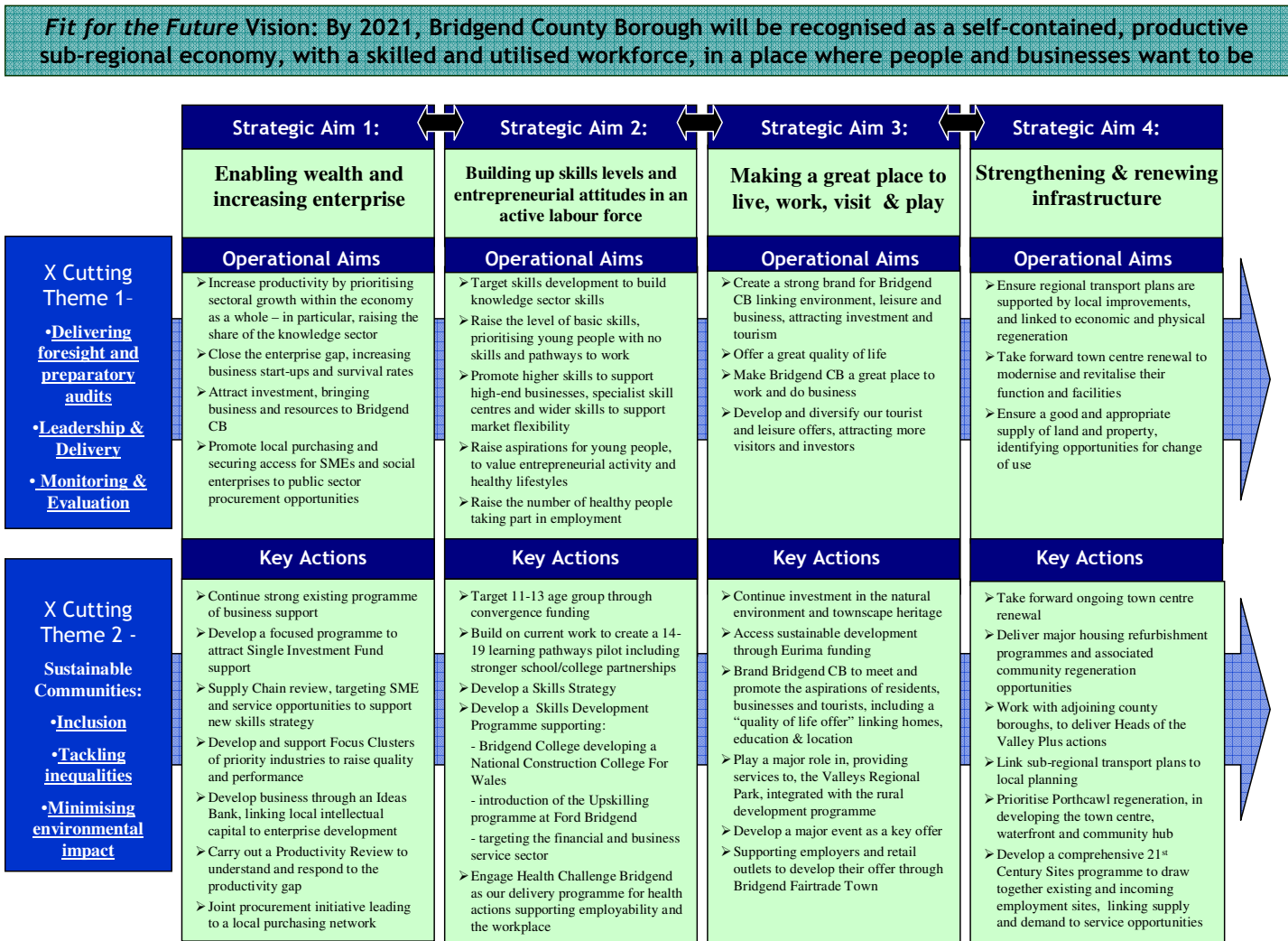
Challenges for places

- Quality of life is not highly rated against Welsh competitors
- Environment and tourism are major assets, but need improved access, visibility and differentiation from competitors
- Infrastructure development will need be focused on to attract inward investment and support job creation
- Town centre renewal is a crucial element in the regeneration of Bridgend CB.

Fit for the Future: our strategic framework

6. Our Strategy responds to the challenges facing Bridgend CB, in the context of current public sector policy, by developing a Strategic Framework (Figure 1) which identifies four key Strategic Aims. How to achieve these Aims is defined in a series of Operational Aims underpinned by a series of Key Actions. Two Cross-Cutting Themes are designed to check the actions to ensure deliverability and compatibility with key sustainable development targets in local policy and strategy documents.

Figure 1: Our Strategic Framework

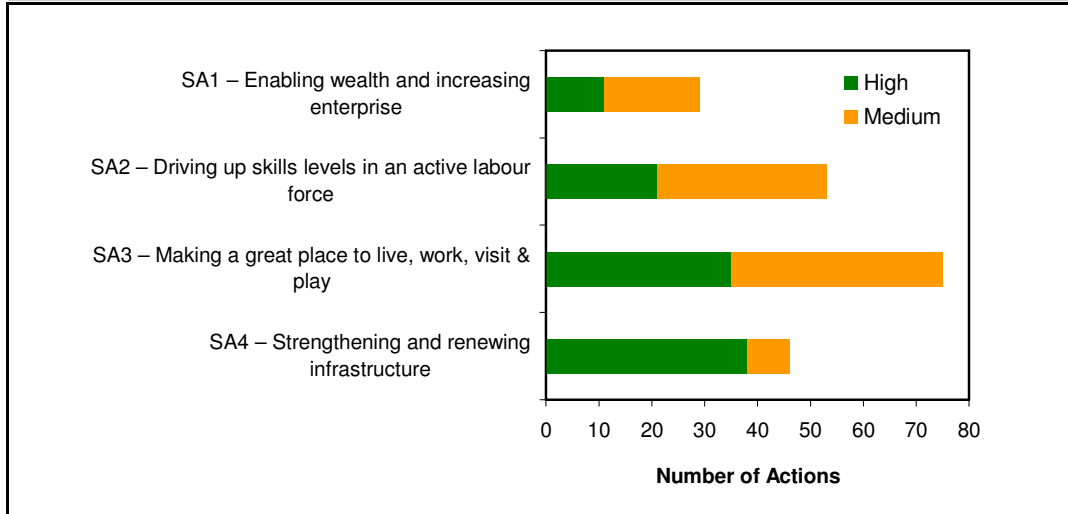


Source: SQW Consulting

Action Planning

7. Partners' Existing and Pipeline Actions have been gathered together and their importance in supporting delivery the Strategic Aims and the Operational Aims assessed. In the light of this, an additional set of Gap Actions is proposed, which either drive forward Existing and Pipeline Actions, or introduce a new action which is necessary to achieve the aims. Figure 2 shows the number of actions prioritised as being of high or medium importance to *Fit for the Future*.

Figure 2: Number of Prioritised Actions under each Strategic Aim



Source: SQW Consulting

8. A considerable range of programmes and projects have been brought together in our database of Existing and Pipeline Actions, and these are supported by funding from many different sectors, and delivered at national, regional and sub-regional levels, as well as simply within Bridgend CB. This produces a complex picture of actions resistant to uniform categorisation: for this reason, we have focused the attentions of this Strategy on key actions which can clarify its purpose and assist in developing the clear branding needed to make *Fit for the Future* a brand attracting new aspirations and investors. The shortlist remain illustrative rather than final, as actions are not of simple, single categories, but may in some instances refer to a programme (with a number of separate projects within it of varying status and priority), or a set of projects which rely on funding that has not yet been obtained. These are summarised below in Table 1.

Table 1: Illustrative Existing and Pipeline Actions and Programmes which can play into *Fit for the Future*

Strategic Aim	Illustrative Existing Actions	Illustrative Pipeline Actions
Strategic Aim 1: Enabling Wealth and Creating Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridgend Business Support Framework Social Economy Support WAG Business Support grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridgend Town Centre Business Development Plan Community Economic Development
Strategic Aim 2: Driving up skills levels in an active labour force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted action on those in danger of becoming NEETs Genesis Programme Learning Brokers Bridgend Schemes led by Careers Wales Mid-Glamorgan and Powys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equipping young people with the skills needed for employment Volunteer to Work Climbing Higher Agreement Health Challenge Bridgend
Strategic Aim 3: Making a great place to live, work, visit & play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing and Promotion activities to attract business Groundwork-led Bridgend CB schemes Townscape Heritage Initiative Grants Strategic Tourism Events Fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valleys Regional Park Rural Development Plan Caerau Community Route Maximising Opportunities for Sports Based Leisure & Tourism Go-Low
Strategic Aim 4: Strengthening and renewing infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pencoed Technology Park Infrastructure Works to Brocastle Regeneration providing new homes and commercial and community assets Investment Programme on improvements to homes and environmental/community regeneration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 Bays Project Bridgend Transport Interchange Development of Major Employment Sites ICT E Solutions

Source: SQW Consulting

9. Gap Actions are designed to ensure that the action plan is a rounded programme for implementing *Fit for the Future*. They develop and lead Existing and Pipeline Actions, prioritise for the purpose of our Strategy actions being considered already, or create new actions which will transform. The Gap Actions are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Gap Actions under each Strategic Aim of *Fit for the Future*

Strategic Aim	Gap Actions
Strategic Aim 1: Enabling Wealth and Creating Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cluster Focus Developing a Business Ideas Bank Productivity Review Joint procurement initiative
Strategic Aim 2: Driving up skills levels in an active labour force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills Strategy Skills Development Programme Healthworks
Strategic Aim 3: Making a great place to live, work, visit & play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Branding Bridgend CB Valleys Regional Park Hosting a Major Event

Strategic Aim	Gap Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridgend – a Fairtrade town
Strategic Aim 4: Strengthening and renewing infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridgend CB 21st Century Employment Sites Transformational Action Plan • Porthcawl Waterfront and Town Centre Regeneration Transformational Action Plan

Gap Actions

10. Each Gap Action focuses and prioritises on a key step that needs to be taken to accelerate current Actions or introduce new a new activity that will underpin and take forward the Strategic Aims of *Fit for the Future*. They will be developed, alongside the Existing and Pipeline Actions, to form an integrated Action Plan, by the Executive Team responsible for taking forward *Fit for the Future*

Strategic Aim 1: Enabling wealth and increasing enterprise

Focus Clusters

11. To address the productivity and enterprise challenges facing Bridgend CB, and to raise competitiveness, Focus Clusters are proposed. The current state of clustering will be identified, and a development programme developed. Clusters are geographically proximate groups of interconnected companies - suppliers, service providers, and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and complementarities. Clustering delivers competitiveness in three ways: helping to increase the levels of productivity that firms can operate; increasing the capacity of firms for innovation and productivity growth; and stimulating and enabling new business formation that further supports innovation and expands the cluster.

The Business Ideas Bank

12. To stimulate entrepreneurial activity and encourage enterprise, activity focusing on supply chain development provides the ideal opportunity for a further, closely linked, transformational, action through establishing a 'Business Ideas Bank'. Designed to encourage new start-ups and provide new growth-oriented opportunities for existing businesses, its ultimate aim will be to develop a bank of intellectual property and licensable ideas, supplied both by local businesses and entrepreneurs and those further afield seeking the exploitation of their ideas, which can be used to seed business opportunities for would-be entrepreneurs in Bridgend County Borough.

Productivity Review

13. Further steps to raise productivity are vital, with increasing policy imperatives driving this action. The Productivity Review is about delivering increased competitiveness in established value-adding firms with growth potential: it is needed to effect a step-change in the aspirations and connectivity of the Bridgend CB businesses and public sector. To achieve this step-change in our work-place productivity, we need bring together experts from private and private sectors to establish reasons for low productivity, and then recommend tailored actions

to enable the breadth of our higher value-adding firms to grow their competitive potential. By exposing firms to specific and appropriate best practice in other places, seeing and learning from different processes, we intend for this Gap Action to secure a significant closing of our Productivity Gap with South Wales and the UK.

Joint procurement initiative

14. A short-to-medium action bringing together major procurement activity, involving schools, prisons, hospitals and the local authority, to focus opportunities for local procurement, and improved access to public sector contracts for SMEs and social enterprises.
15. In relation to this objective, actions need to be taken both by the public sector and the businesses themselves to enable the local business population to maximise procurement opportunities.

Strategic Aim 2: Building up skills levels and entrepreneurial attitudes in an active labour force

Develop a Skills Strategy

16. This short-term Action is a fundamental first step identified by all parties as crucial to our success in raising skill levels and integrating our approaches to skills development. It will improve and develop labour market intelligence, guide the wide variety of skills training and education activity already in place, and focus it to meet demand. This action will support the creation of a Market and Technology Foresight Observatory through the Local Service Board, produce a gap analysis of sector skills demand and supply in Bridgend CB and produce projections for employment growth and productivity gains in key sectors. The Strategy will target key skills gaps identified in the Strategic and Operational Aims: young people with no skills, and the need to boost knowledge-based business.

A Skills Development Programme: Targeting Growth, Targeting Skills

17. To drive change through supporting important local initiatives, this Gap Action tasks partners to produce a detailed Skills Development Programme, enabling significant opportunities that have already been identified can be taken forward immediately. This action focuses on promoting and prioritising proposals such as the creation of a National Construction College for Wales, work with the Ford engine plant in Bridgend to adapt and transfer the Upskilling programme currently delivered at the Ford Engine Plant in Dagenham, London, and targeting the financial and business services sector to grow knowledge-based skills.

Healthworks

18. Whilst the Health and Well-Being Strategy is a major driver of the health agenda, tackling underlying health issues is seen as a priority to ensure a fit and active population. Health Challenge Bridgend brings together the Council, health, social care and voluntary sectors in an alliance, and will form the platform for Healthworks, which needs to reach out and embrace the private sector employers, and the community sector. Health Challenge Bridgend

will align with public sector strategy documents and the new Health and Well-Being Strategy, in building a healthy life-line into the workplace, in work, and through supporting employers.

Strategic Aim 3: Making a great place to live, work, visit and play

Branding Bridgend CB

19. Sensitivity to the issue of potential confusion between the town and the County Borough of Bridgend underlines a more fundamental need to find a unified and unique brand for Bridgend CB. Uniting and unifying the work of partners leading the Local Service Board and this Strategy will raise aspirations of existing residents and businesses, allow new marketing material to highlight Bridgend CB's potential, and also respond to the key issue of how to differentiate Bridgend CB from its neighbours, as well as benefit from wider investment in the region. The need to develop an image for Bridgend CB which will attract further business investment, inward migration and tourism, is at the heart of Fit for the Future. The brand needs to engage private and public sector service providers in meeting local needs.

Valleys Regional Park (supported by the Rural Development Plan)

20. Acting as a crucial link between economic, social and environmental regeneration, this action to strengthen the environmental networks will enhance quality of life and support tourism and leisure. This long-term Action builds on existing work to create a Valleys Regional Park in the Heads of the Valleys Plus area and the Valleys part of the Connections Corridor. Working with key partners, including WAG and the Countryside Council for Wales, Bridgend CB will need to identify opportunities to align the programme to existing investment and activity, particularly in relation to the Rural Development Plan and projects in the Heads of the Valleys Plus area and the Valleys part of the Connections Corridor.

Hosting a Major Event

21. Bridgend CB already has a strong reputation for activity sports, in particular, golf and watersports. However, there is widespread anticipation that Bridgend CB can work with adjoining authorities and agencies to develop and market plans for high profile, prioritised programme major events. This action will build on existing capacity and expertise: the first actions will be developed from existing proposals to attract wide international coverage and knock-on tourist and leisure investment opportunities, through golf, watersports and music events. Bridgend CBC will take forward this action, to engage stakeholders and build practical outputs linked into the new brand for Bridgend CB.

Bridgend - a Fairtrade Town

22. Fair trade is being promoted as part of a WAG initiative with Wales aiming to become the world's first Fairtrade country. With the existing recognition of Porthcawl as a Fairtrade town, Bridgend's Town Centre regeneration offers an opportunity to create a further Fairtrade Town, and then Bridgend CB as a Fairtrade County Borough, strengthening both the image-building and business development aspects of Fit for the Future. The medium-term action,

bringing together the majority of businesses to promote fair and ethical trade where possible, combines wealth creation with an ethical, environmental and marketing tool.

Strategic Aim 4: Strengthening and renewing infrastructure

21st Century Employment Sites

23. This long-term Action involves deepening understanding to enable us to develop a programme to exploit opportunities already emerging, through a high quality mix of employment sites, to meet the demands of the changing economy and to create a mix of employment opportunities to meet and lead development of the various skills sets and service provision within the area. These strategic development projects are often beyond the control of Bridgend CB and could create both opportunities and threats which should be fully explored. The potential benefits of employment and business opportunities which could arise through value-added jobs and supply chain linkages should be exploited. The potential negative impacts such as potential inward and outward migration and changing requirements for health and education services will also be considered to ensure that our Strategy is fully informed by future developments.

Porthcawl regeneration

24. The development of tourism, leisure and environmental improvements lie behind this major long-term action, which is currently in its early stages, and which will be a flagship project for Fit for the Future. The prime beneficiaries of the proposed regeneration of Porthcawl include local residents and businesses, seaside visitors throughout the year, the wider hinterland community and town centre retail and service activities (including tourism). The rationale for the Action has two facets: first, to build on existing commercial competitiveness and vitality to realise the commercial development potential of the waterfront and the adjoining town centre; second, to turn the waste land of the waterfront into a vibrant area of leisure, retail and housing development to benefit visitors to the area and residents across the town.
25. The action provides a framework to coordinate regeneration activity to turn Porthcawl into a premier seaside resort through the comprehensive development and improvement of the waterfront and the town centre. This will require partnership agreement on a coordinating Strategic Regeneration Framework and Action Plan.

Cross-cutting Theme 1: Implementation capacity and partnership development

Market and Technology Foresight

26. The need to improve market and technology foresight was established early in the process of developing *Fit for the Future*, as an essential delivery capacity. The proposed Observatory, to be developed by the Local Service Board, will provide this new capacity to lead a properly resourced market and technology foresight process. This will give insights or trends which the Strategic Aims can use to drive forward Actions. This is fundamental to, for example, the production and delivery of a successful skills strategy, targeting support for SMEs and social

enterprise, and linking new infrastructure development to employment and supply chain opportunities – which we must pursue if we are to achieve the vision of Fit for the Future.

An Audit of Public & Third Sector assets

27. As part of a range of early actions to improve information and focus, identified in the strategy development process, this audit will report on a wide range of physical assets held by the Council and its public sector partners. Delivery capacity for the Strategy as a whole will be enhanced by a detailed understanding of properties available for use, for change of use and for transfer into regeneration programmes. The audit will also include assets dedicated to community use, to bring together an overview of access and availability – through this action, options for bringing buildings into use, changing use and identifying resulting opportunities for private and community sector organisations will be clarified.

Cross-cutting theme 2: Integrated delivery for a sustainable community

Ensuring inclusion, tackling inequalities and minimising environmental impact

28. These three key aims will be used to inform planning and delivery of regeneration projects. Each major action under *Fit for the Future* will be driven to maximise impact on raising inclusivity, reducing inequalities and strengthening sustainable development. The outputs and outcomes against these aims will feed into the monitoring and evaluation framework that will be established.

Implementation

29. Implementation of Fit for the Future will be the responsibility of the Regeneration and Environment Partnership (REP), a sub-group of the Local Service Board. This structure is still evolving at present, but it is envisaged that the LSB will create a Regeneration and Environment Partnership with private, public, voluntary and community sector membership, to lead the Strategy. Delivery of projects will be led by a variety of appropriate agencies and companies, with a co-ordination and support service from Bridgend CBC officers. It is proposed that an Executive Team is identified immediately to ensure that the Strategy is situated within the developing structure of the Local Service Board, and that work to develop the Action Plan is taken forward in the short-term.

Your Response

30. Your comments on this consultation draft of *Fit for the Future*, the regeneration strategy for Bridgend County Borough, are welcome and should be sent to:

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by **Friday 11th April 2008**